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# Factors Affecting Third-Year EFL Students' Writing Performance at the Department of English, Batna2 University, Algeria

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**ABSTRACT:** *The majority of students encounter many writing difficulties that result in a significant dimness in producing correct written texts, such as paragraphs or essays. Many studies and research have supported that writing is a very important, but complex and difficult skill. The primary aim is to identify the main factors that hinder third-year English students at Batna 2 University from writing correctly and effectively. And to raise teachers' awareness about the obstacles affecting students' writing performance. It seeks to answer "what is the secret behind students' poor writing performance?" Additionally, it clarifies "what are the main factors that hinder students from writing correctly?" To conduct this research, two preliminary questionnaires were administered to third-year teachers of linguistics, literature, didactics, ESP, and civilization, and to (100) third-year students to confirm the issue and identify the existence of the problem. Once the issue is established, a third, more focused questionnaire is administered to (15) third-year teachers of written expression. This questionnaire was designed based on key theoretical perspectives on writing, including the process and product approaches, as well as contrastive rhetoric, to ensure its questions were grounded in established writing theory. The results confirm the validity of the research questions and reveal a severe deficiency in students' writing performance. According to the third questionnaire, this is attributed to both students and teachers. Some of the main causes include a lack of interest in writing, poor reading skills, the absence of appropriate methods and techniques for teaching writing, and the strong influence of the mother tongue on students' ability to write in English. The findings suggest that these factors do not operate in isolation but interact in complex ways, for example, a lack of reading can intensify L1 interference, while low motivation may be compounded by inappropriate teaching methods. Based on these findings, and to address this gap, a series of recommendations is proposed for teachers that may help improve students' writing performance and offer better ways to teach written expression in the future.*

**KEYWORDS:** Writing Skills, Students' Writing Performance, Third-Year English Students, Mother Tongue, Writing Difficulties.

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## 1. Introduction

The four skills of foreign language teaching and learning are complicated, particularly the writing skill. Additionally, teachers typically teach these skills in the following order: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. According to Hedge (2000), who shared this viewpoint, "adults spend 45% of their time engaging in communicative activities, listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading, and 9% writing".

Because it is considered extremely complex and challenging to learn, even for native speakers, it is positioned near the end. "Probably half of the world's population does not know how to write adequately and effectively," according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996) (p. 87). One of the most difficult linguistic abilities to master has always been writing. "It is easier to learn to speak than to write, regardless of whether it is a first or second language," Nunan (1989) concurred (p.12). It is a difficult undertaking to accomplish because it calls for a lot of effort, time, practice, and long steps.

Mastering the four skills is necessary to become proficient in English as a foreign language (EFL). Although none of us would deny their significance in the educational system today, we must acknowledge that writing is the most intricate and challenging skill to acquire. Richards and Renandya (2003) made the same assumption, stating that "there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master" (p. 303). Grammar and written expression courses are often confused by most English language learners. Leki (1997), who asserted that "their only sense of security comes from what they have learned about grammar" (p. 34), supports this point.

Put another way, a lot of students believe that knowing the rules of grammar is the key to producing quality written work in English, but what about the other facets of writing? In this regard, students frequently rush to increase their grammatical practice at the expense of practicing the particular writing rules, such as drafting, revising, editing, etc. Poor writing performance, uncertainty about how to arrange information to create a coherent paragraph or essay, a well-structured, error-free piece of writing, etc. Nunan (2000, p. 217) asserts that "producing a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing in L2 is an enormous challenge."

Unlike speaking, listening, and reading, writing in English is not performed outside of the classroom in Algeria. As a result, what is learnt in the classroom is practiced within and has few opportunities to be developed outside of it. Particularly in our English department at Batna2 University, time and practice are almost completely overlooked. Furthermore, most of students struggle while writing essays and paragraphs due to the difficulty of writing skills, which leads to subpar writing. The problem was observed among third-year students, who are typically expected to have already mastered both writing styles and grammar rules. The writing abilities of these students are incredibly poor, so we were intrigued by the third-year students. Thus, all that has been said so far heightens the researcher's curiosity about "what is the secret behind students' poor writing performance." Additionally, it clarifies "what are the main factors that hinder students from writing correctly?"

The present paper deals with the students' poor performance and achievements in writing, aiming at: (1) Identifying and analyzing some contributing factors among third-year English students at Batna 2 University that markedly restrict their ability to write correctly when they reach third year. (2) Examining the influence of both internal (e.g., motivation, language competence) and external (e.g., teaching methods, resources) factors on students' writing skills. (3) Raising awareness among teachers and students about the causes of writing difficulties and suggesting pedagogical improvements. (4) Providing some implications for improving writing instruction and student outcomes in academic writing. And finally, (5) Translating

the research findings into suggestions and guidance.

Based on the above observations, many questions are raised:(1) Why does the writing performance of third-year students decline when they reach third year? (2) What are the main factors that contribute to third-year English students' poor writing performance at Batna 2 University? (3) How do these factors influence students' writing skills in their third year? (4) To what extent are teachers aware of the writing challenges students face, and how do they currently address these in their instruction? Finally, (5) What pedagogical strategies and institutional supports can be implemented to improve third-year students' writing performance at the Department of English, Batna 2 University?

It is impossible to answer all these questions as they subsume a lot of aspects that are not viable to exhaustively cope with. A reason why this work attempts to identify and analyze some factors behind students' poor writing performance among third-year students of English.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that: *Third-year students' poor writing performance at the Department of English, Batna 2 University, might be significantly affected by a combination of internal and external factors, and/or other factors.*

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Understanding the Concept and Nature of Writing

Writing is far more than the visual representation of spoken language—it is a purposeful, organized, and creative process of communication. As Widdowson (2001) and Crystal (1999) describe, writing involves generating meaning and engaging in discovery, serving both social and personal functions (Miller, 2001, as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2003). Mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and coherence is essential (Pincas, 1992), and writing typically unfolds through multiple stages: planning, drafting, editing, and revising (Harmer, 2007a; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Hedge, 2000). Writing in a second language presents further challenges, as it requires control over unfamiliar linguistic structures and vocabulary (Lado, 2000). Despite its difficulty and the time needed to develop it (Nunan, 1989; Hedge, 2000), writing remains a powerful tool for expression, learning, and reflection (Kate & Guy, 2003; McArthur et al., 2008).

In contrast to speaking and listening, which occur naturally, writing is a learned, productive skill that demands explicit instruction and sustained effort (Harmer, 2007a). It has often been undervalued in language education, where the focus has traditionally been limited to grammar drills (Richards, 1990). Yet writing is more cognitively complex than speaking and requires careful planning, rewriting, and idea development (Nunan, 1989; Tribble, 1997; Zamel, 1992; White & Arndt, 1991). Writers may apply strategies from their first language, which can either aid or hinder their English writing, depending on the compatibility of writing conventions (Friedlander, 1997; Blanchard & Root, 2004). As "thought on paper," writing improves with ongoing practice and revision (Stark, 2005). Without immediate feedback, writers must anticipate reader needs, making writing a demanding but learnable skill that evolves with time and experience.

### 2.2 Writing and the Other Skills

Speaking and writing are two very different, but equally productive abilities. Speaking comes naturally, but writing needs to be taught (O'Grady et al., 1996; Raimes, 1994). Writing demands accuracy and preparation and is more formal, structured, and sophisticated (Brown & Yule, 1983; Raimes, 1994; Halliday, 1985, as cited in Nunan, 1989). Additionally, it is "decontextualized," which means authors have

to foresee what the reader will need (Nunan, 1989). Writing is particularly challenging for EFL learners due to issues with handwriting, punctuation, and formality (Brookes & Grundy, 2001; Harris, 1993).

Writing is more information-dense than speech, according to Halliday (1989, as cited in Harris, 1993, p. 8), who defined lexical density as the ratio of content words to structure words. In contrast to spontaneous speech, writing benefits from preparation and a clear structure, according to McCarthy (1991, p. 25). Ur (1991, p. 161) highlighted that writing needs to be taught, but talking comes easily. Similarly, Hyland (2003, p. 49) affirmed Harris's (1993) notion of situational distinctions by stating that, in contrast to writing, which needs to be clearer, speech depends significantly on common context.

While reading is receptive and writing is productive, however, both abilities promote literacy and learning (Hyland, 2003, p. 53). By providing both input and a model, reading aids in the development of writing abilities (Eisterhold, 1991, as cited in Sadek, 2007, p. 202). Research indicates that better writers read more frequently and are also better readers (Stotsky, 1983; Eisterhold, 1991, both mentioned in Kroll, 1997 & Sadek, 2007). Directional (reading influences writing), non-directional (both share underlying skills), and bi-directional (both influence each other) are the three hypotheses that describe their relationship (Charge & Taylor, 1997; Sadek, 2007, pp. 202–204). Five important linkages were emphasized by Harris (1993, pp. 81–86): reading and writing are parallel, personal, reciprocal, interdependent, and aid in world exploration. "Two-way relationship" is how Manzo and Manzo (1995, p. 113) characterize this. Poor writing performance, particularly among university students, is associated with a lack of reading (Mansouri, 2006).

### 2.3 Writing as an Important Skill

Although writing is a crucial part of learning a foreign language, students frequently find it to be the most challenging skill (McArthur et al., 2008, p. 1). It supports both physical and mental health and is a potent tool for self-expression (McArthur et al., 2008, p. 11). Many pupils have poor writing skills despite its importance (NCW, 2003, p. 7; Persky et al., 1999, p. 2). Writing fosters social meaning and accommodates a variety of learning preferences, particularly for people who find speech difficult (Hyland, 2003, p. 69). It is essential for assessment, particularly in situations where oral testing is impractical, and it helps to reinforce vocabulary and grammar. Although some contend that speaking or listening is more important than writing (Doff, 1995, p. 148), writing is essential in social, professional, and academic settings. Writing to learn (developing information through writing) and learning to write (mastering the technique) are its two main functions. Overall language development is supported by these interrelated responsibilities (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 23). Writing is ultimately a difficult but necessary skill that needs to be taught in conjunction with other language abilities.

### 2.4 Factors Affecting Students' Writing Performance

It is commonly acknowledged that writing is the most intricate and challenging language skill (Harmer, 2007a; Nunan, 1989; Tribble, 1997). It calls for demanding subskills as well as the creation, organization, and translation of ideas into cohesive prose. However, as will be covered below, it is influenced by a number of internal, external, and other elements.

#### 2.2.1 Teachers as a Source of Poor Writing Performance

Students' writing performance is greatly influenced by their teachers, either favorably or unfavorably. While teachers who place too much emphasis on mistakes, give monotonous assignments, or discourage writing might demotivate students, students frequently choose instructors who inspire and relate to them.

Motivating, fostering innovation, and providing constant support are all important aspects of a teacher's job (Harmer, 2007b). The absence of efficient remedial feedback and reinforcement is a significant problem.

They are frequently demotivated by traditional grading that emphasizes comparison over personal growth (Graham & Perin, 2007). While selective correction and the use of symbols are more beneficial, overcorrection, such as the overuse of red ink, can irritate students (Harmer, 2007a, 2007b). The majority of students rely on their teachers for thorough, goal-oriented feedback, even though peer assessment is beneficial (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harmer, 2006b). Furthermore, teachers frequently emphasize vocabulary and grammar for tests rather than promoting written structure and critical thinking (Harmer, 2007b; Raimes, 1994). Continuous, balanced, and sensitive to the requirements of each individual student are the hallmarks of effective feedback (Leki, 1997). Overall, a lack of motivational support, unimaginative instruction, and ineffective feedback can all contribute to subpar students' writing performance.

### 2.2.2 Students as a Source of Poor Writing Performance

Students' poor writing performance is affected by several interconnected issues. Lack of reading is a significant problem since it restricts their vocabulary, grammatical variety, and general fluency. Students who read more tend to write better, according to research by Krashen (1984) and Eisterhold (1997). However, many students do not regularly read, which has a detrimental effect on their writing development. The detrimental transfer from the students' first language is another factor. Before translating into English, many students write and think in their original tongue, such as Arabic, which might result in grammatical and structural mistakes.

While some writing techniques can be effectively transferred from L1 to L2 (Friedlander, 1997), writing in English frequently calls for unique abilities that need to be acquired independently (Nunan, 1989; Carson et al., 1990). An additional obstacle is the absence of drive. Students are less inclined to participate in writing assignments when they lack confidence, are afraid of making mistakes, or experience anxiety when writing. A lack of intrinsic motivation cannot be made up for by even excellent training (Harmer, 2006a). Addressing the internal obstacles that prevent students from writing well in English, such as poor reading habits, interference from their first language, and low motivation, is crucial to improving student writing.

### 2.2.3 Inadequate Instructional Approaches and Techniques in Teaching Writing

Over the past two decades, writing instruction has undergone significant transformation, shaped by pedagogical research and evolving classroom practices. Raimes (1994) stresses the importance of focusing not only on *what* to teach in writing but *how* to teach it. Various instructional approaches have emerged, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, the Controlled-to-Free Approach emphasizes grammar accuracy, moving from structured exercises to freer writing (Raimes, 1994; Leki, 1992), while the Free-Writing Approach prioritizes fluency and expression over correctness. The Paragraph-Pattern Approach helps students understand text organization through analysis and imitation of model texts. In contrast, the Grammar-Syntax-Organization Approach teaches these components in an integrated manner. The Communicative Approach encourages purposeful writing for real audiences (Harris, 1993), and the Product Approach focuses on accuracy and form but tends to neglect the writing process (Nunan, 1989; Tribble, 1997; Zamel, 1992). The Process Approach, meanwhile, supports creativity and improvement through drafting, peer feedback, and revision (Silva, 1993; Hedge, 2000). While no single method is universally effective, combining elements from different approaches based on students' needs often yields the best results.

Equally important is the selection of appropriate teaching techniques. Teachers must select strategies that align with their students' needs, the classroom context, and their teaching philosophy.

According to Raimes (1994), educators should reflect on how writing aids language learning, how to select relevant topics, address student errors, and manage classroom dynamics. Effective techniques include integrating reading materials, which expose students to useful vocabulary, structures, and cultural contexts that inform their writing, and using visuals, which create shared experiences and stimulate language use. When applied consistently, these strategies enhance both student motivation and writing quality. Ultimately, a lack of well-matched approaches and techniques can significantly hinder students' writing development.

## 3. Method and Procedures

### 3.1 Method

This study employs a descriptive method to analyze and identify the problems affecting students' writing. As Cohen et al. (2005, p. 44) define, methods are used to gather data for analysis and interpretation. Burns and Grove (2001, p. 248) explain that descriptive design helps detect problems in practice to improve outcomes. The research strategy outlines how the study is implemented, focusing on real-life situations to generate future solutions (Biggam, 2008, p. 82).

### 3.2 Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

Polit (2001, p. 233) defines the population as "the total number of cases that satisfy a given set of criteria." We have collaborated with the following to gather the information we need about the writing proficiency issues faced by third-year students at the Department of English, Batna2 University. The study's student population consists of nine groups, representing 500 English third-year students at Batna University. Due to their students' difficulties with written expression, the population is also expanded to include 15 additional third-year professors of linguistics, civilization, literature, didactics, and ESP. Additionally, 15 teachers in the study's population instruct first, second, and third-year students in written expression.

Sampling is the process of choosing a collection of individuals, occasions, actions, or other components to examine. When the elements are people, they are called subjects. They are chosen from the specified target population so that the sample's members are as representative as feasible (Polit, 2001, p. 235). Under typical circumstances, studying the entire population is neither desired nor feasible. For example, managing 500 students in the same department requires a significant investment of time, money, and effort. Therefore, the best method to select the sample for the first, second, and third years is to use randomization. According to Brown (2001, p.72), "each individual in the population must have an equal chance of being selected ", which lessens the impact of bias and improves objectivity. Therefore, we employed a random sample that represented one-fifth of the population. We collaborated with 100 students in this regard. Additionally, because of their students' difficulties with written expression, the sample has been expanded to include 15 third-year instructors of linguistics, civilization, didactics, ESP, and literature in addition to 15 first-, second, and third-year teachers of written expression.

### 3.3 Research Instruments

In order to gather the required data, a pilot study via two preliminary questionnaires has been used to find out if the teachers' opinions about difficulties with written expression, thereby validating the existence of this type of pedagogical disability. To verify that there are issues with written expression, the 100 students are given the second preliminary questionnaire. Additionally, we used the Center Archive of the English Department at Batna 2 University to examine and evaluate 100 (1/5 at random) copies of third-year

students' exam copies with grades ranging from 00.00 to 09.75 in various modules, paying particular attention to paragraph and essay writing. Following confirmation of the current issue, a thorough examination of its causes is required. For this reason, a third main questionnaire has been conducted and administered to first-, second-, and third-year teachers of written expression, which was piloted and then analyzed. The design of this third questionnaire was explicitly informed by the theoretical frameworks reviewed in the literature section, particularly the process and product approaches to writing instruction, contrastive rhetoric regarding L1 influence, and sociocultural perspectives on motivation and feedback. Each question was developed to probe these theoretical areas, ensuring that the instrument was not merely exploratory but grounded in established writing theory.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

| N° | Questions | Yes % | No % | Yes Fr. | No Fr. | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Do you think the first- and second-year syllabi lead to satisfactory achievement in students' writing skills? | 0% | 100% | 0 | 15 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Q2 | Are writing skills easily assimilated by students in their first academic year? | 100% | 0% | 15 | 0 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Q3 | Do Overcrowded Classrooms hinder the students' writing performances? | 100% | 0% | 15 | 0 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Q4 | Do you include reading strategies when teaching writing? | 100% | 0% | 15 | 0 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Q5 | Do students adhere to all stages of the writing approach? | 100% | 0% | 15 | 0 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Q6 | Is second-year students' writing performance considered satisfactory? | 0% | 100% | 0 | 15 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Q7 | Is three years of written expression enough to develop students' writing performance? | 6.66% | 93.33% | 1 | 14 | 0.07 | 0.25 |
| Q8 | Do students have difficulty writing in English? | 100% | 0% | 15 | 0 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Q9 | Are these writing difficulties manageable? | 93.33% | 6.66% | 14 | 1 | 0.93 | 0.25 |

Table 1. Participants' Yes/No Responses on Writing Skills and Instructional Practices

Table 1 displays the following results with respect to the number and type of 09 questions (Yes/No questions) that clarify some instructional practices of the writing skills. These questions examine a number of topics, including the syllabus's efficacy, students' comprehension of writing techniques, the effects of packed classrooms, the incorporation of reading strategies, adherence to the various writing stages, overall student satisfaction with writing performance, writing difficulties students encounter, potential solutions to those difficulties, and the suitability of the time allotted for teaching written expression.

For Q1, all respondents (100%) appear dissatisfied with the syllabus of both levels. This fact implies that, in addition to the teacher and the student, the writing problems can be derived from the syllabus; however, we cannot overlook the fact that, compared to the official curriculum for first and second years, teachers of written expression usually draw from their own experiences, adding or removing aspects that can impair students' performance. This result shows that writing skills extend beyond the previously

mentioned prerequisites; they also require the integration of other elements, such as practice, motivation, time, and small group work.

In Q2. All respondents (100%) state that their students struggle to learn how to write in their first year of written expression classes. "Students struggle with language production [writing] for several reasons" (Harmer, 2007b, p. 251). According to Tribble (1997), "writing is a difficult skill to acquire" (p. 65). They went further to explain that First-year students are in a transitional phase as they move from secondary school to university, requiring adequate time to adjust to the new academic environment. They enter the Department of English from diverse educational backgrounds, which contributes to varying levels of preparedness. Many struggle with a lack of interest, concentration, and consistent writing practice, compounded by a limited and poor vocabulary. Additionally, students often hold the misconception that writing is merely the application of grammar rules. Furthermore, the absence of clear continuity between the first- and second-year syllabuses creates confusion and hinders their academic progress. We may conclude that students are not responsible for acquiring written expression; rather, teachers are primarily responsible for making the module engaging and pleasurable by outlining the value of writing in English language learning.

Regarding Q3, all the respondents (100%) declare that the out-numbered classes affect the learners' written performances. In this respect, out-numbered classes are another factor that hinders students from writing well. In large classes, it might be challenging for the instructor to reach the student at the back and for the student to request and get prompt attention. (of Hammer, 2007a, p. 128 ). They contend that one of the most crucial factors that should be taken into account during the teaching and learning process is working circumstances. They continue by asserting that an effective teaching and learning process cannot take place in a class with more than fifty students. Instead of teaching, teachers put in a lot of work and energy to help the students relax and behave appropriately; yet, this work and energy may be in vain. We believe that this issue is mostly related to the administration, whose job it is to minimize the size of the student body and provide a conducive environment for writing instruction. Therefore, instructors' duties are to instruct, not to consider solutions to this issue.

The results, in Q4. show that all the respondents (100%) agree that reading strategies should be used while teaching writing. This raises the question of whether or not teachers know when and how to utilize them. Furthermore, this outcome runs counter to the findings of students' exam papers, which are riddled with errors and repetitions. Regarding the procedure and justifications for their use, the teachers give us a number of strong arguments. According to them, integrating reading into writing instruction is essential, as language skills are inherently complementary. One effective approach involves first analyzing a model text closely, then guiding students to produce similar work, allowing them to internalize structure and style. Exposing learners to a variety of texts helps them become familiar with different styles, registers, and rhetorical devices, enriching their writing abilities. Additionally, reading plays a crucial role in helping students recognize and correct their own mistakes by offering concrete examples of proper usage. It also provides exposure to diverse sentence structures and text types, enhancing both their linguistic awareness and overall writing competence.

For the stages of the chosen approach Q5, all respondents (100%) state that they firmly require their students to respect the different steps of the selected approach, as seen in Figure 7. These phases are crucial because they enable students to produce successful final products. According to Tribbe (1994), "students who proceed straight to composition are likely to produce poorly when writing" (p.55). But these phases take a lot of time, which is a serious issue. They claim they do not have enough time to complete this assignment effectively. They feel that there is insufficient time for writing practice in class and are

dissatisfied with the amount of time allocated to the selected phases of the approach.

Q6. According to the responses we gathered, every informant (100%) expresses dissatisfaction with the writing proficiency of second-year students. We can use the argument that the students are ill-prepared for their first year of written expression to explain this phenomenon. Therefore, if the beginning is incorrect, the subsequent steps will also be incorrect. This suggests a lack of enthusiasm; students' demands in writing and reading are not met by the syllabus, practice, or adequate time. As a result, they are unable to assist in reaching a good writing level.

Although one teacher (6.66%) chose the affirmative response, "Yes," Q7 reveals that the majority of respondents (93.33%) believe that teaching written expression over three academic years is insufficient. When we contrast this circumstance with the standard course of action, it is accurate. Their goal is to teach written expression at the master's level.

As for the writing difficulties in Q8, all respondents (100%) acknowledge that their students struggle with writing in English. When we examined their exam papers, both in terms of form and substance, it was accurate. And section 2 closely reflects this fact. "Probably half of the world's population does not know how to write adequately and effectively," according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996) (p.87). This implies that not only do our pupils suffer when they do it well, but that everyone, even in their L1, may.

For the possibility to manage these difficulties in Q9, the statistics, in Table 1, report that the majority of instructors (93.33%) say that it is feasible to overcome the challenges causing students to do poorly in writing. The remaining teacher, who makes up (6.66% ) of the sample, says "No," indicating that there are no problems. Naturally, a problem cannot exist without a solution. To find appropriate solutions to lessen the writing issue among third-year students, all of the teachers, students, and administration should work together. In order for students to be able to respond to questions that call for a paragraph or essay and are connected to their field of study (different modules), teachers of written expression are expected to equip their students with the various conventions, techniques, and rules that govern the writing skill.

Therefore, a large portion of the work is expected to be completed by the other instructors of (Civilization, Literature, Linguistics, Oral Expression, etc.) in addition to the responsibility of the teacher of written expression. "This cooperation is based on the fact that all formal and informal assessments can only be conducted in writing," they contended. For example, it is sometimes hard to assess oral aptitude using oral skills due to the time constraints and the huge number of students involved.

Additionally, "writing instruction should be integrated with speaking/writing, listening/writing, and reading/writing instruction." Byrne (1991, p. 69) asserted that "integrating all four skills, so that the use of one leads naturally to the use of another, is an effective way of providing this kind of context for writing." "Common goals result from a common and unified program of written expression and grammar at both levels, first and second year."

The teacher who said "No" acknowledged that students write purely for test credit. They have no desire to acquire writing abilities to become proficient writers in the future. For them, passing the tests is the only important thing. Furthermore, educators lack the necessary training to impart this difficult talent.

Regarding the other type of the remaining questions (Q10-Q), these questions are intended to expand and confirm the previous answers, starting with:

**Q10. What are the prerequisites for writing?**

| Prerequisites | Participants | % | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Motivation and Reading | 11 | 73.3% | 0.73 | 0.44 |
| Grammar | 7 | 46.7% | 0.47 | 0.50 |
| Vocabulary | 6 | 40.0% | 0.40 | 0.49 |
| Writing Skills | 5 | 33.3% | 0.33 | 0.47 |

Table 2. Classification of Writing Prerequisites

The purpose of this item is to find out what the teachers think about the skills that students should have in order to write properly. Furthermore, we want to check if the actual actions are in line with the theoretical plans. Eleven (11) of the respondents initially believed that the two primary prerequisites for writing were reading and motivation. For them, success and accomplishments depend on motivation. "[Motivation] is one thing to initially whet the student's appetite with appropriate motivational techniques," according to the majority of academics (Dornyei, 2005, p. 72). Students must thus be highly motivated in order to complete their writing assignments and write in English at a level that is adequate.

Regarding reading, the same group of educators contended that reading is an essential component of writing. Additionally, the two abilities are closely related; that is, writing benefits from reading. They asserted that this is why it is our responsibility to motivate our pupils to read. They went on to say that teaching writing should be done through reading. According to Raimes (1994), who developed this method, "reading can do far more in teaching of writing..." (p. 60). Fowler (2006, p. 2) also states that "good writing depends on extensive reading, not only previous reading of other works, but also frequent scans of your own piece, the one you're working on." "To write, you must first read; writing is an offshoot of reading..." he continues (p. 6).

Grammar comes in at number two. Students who are able to make grammatically accurate sentences are able to produce correct paragraphs and essays, according to seven (07) teachers. "Students should know (1) how to properly construct a sentence; (2) subjects and verbs must agree in number," according to Carroll (1990, p. 1)

Vocabulary is regarded as the third prerequisite for (06) instructors. This group of educators actively advocated the idea that "students write better the more lexical items they have." On the other hand, five (05) teachers believe that writing abilities are a must for writing. These subskills include capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and so on. Carroll (1990) reaffirms this point, asserting that "proper spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and language usage are required" (p.2).

**Q11. What is good writing? you can tick more than one box.**

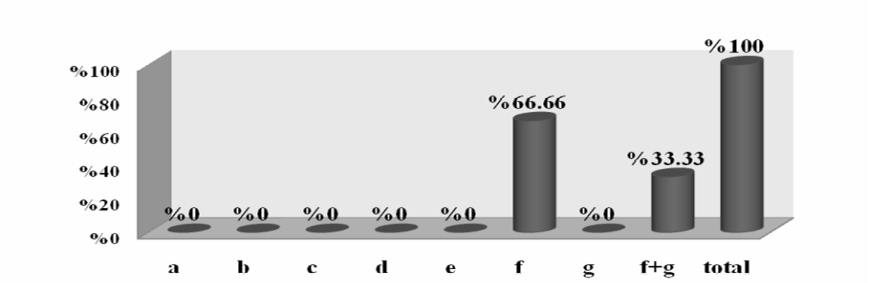



Figure 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Good Writing

Most teachers (66.66%) chose f 1 and g 2 equally. In other words, they acknowledge that proper

language, excellent ideas, precise terminology, spelling, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and concentration are all components of effective writing. They contend that a good piece of writing combines all of these elements. These elements must be interconnected; they cannot function independently. But in addition to these factors, the other educators (33.33%) mentioned that excellent writing at the third-year level requires a combination of key elements, starting with the students' willingness to write, which serves as the foundation for meaningful engagement with the task. At this stage, the use of advanced vocabulary becomes essential to express ideas with clarity and precision. Equally important is the ability to think critically and organize thoughts coherently. Moreover, students need to engage with issues and ideas that are both interesting and intellectually stimulating, as these provide valuable content worth exploring and developing in their writing. This shows that the students understand the many meanings of writing, but it's crucial to understand how to use them to assist students in writing better. Crucially, they do not provide us with the most important factor that influences writing, whether favorably or unfavorably.

**Q12. What approach is used to teach writing?**

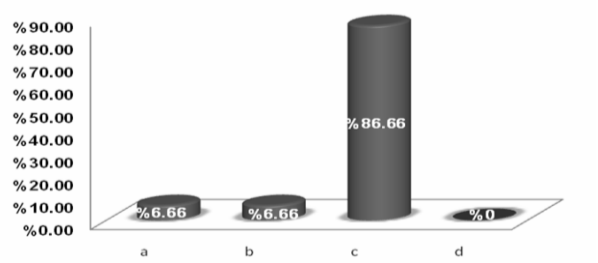



Figure 2. Approaches to Teaching Writing

This question is an expansion of Q 8 in Table 1 that clarifies the approach (se) used to teach writing. Both the process and the product approaches are utilized to teach writing abilities. Depending on the requirements, circumstances, and instructional settings, they can be used singly or in combination. The majority of respondents (86.66%) support the usage of both techniques, according to the findings analysis. However, as students are typically evaluated based on their final test product, one teacher asserts the usage of the product approach. Furneaux (1999, p.65), who asserts that "writing is ultimately judged by content, not process," lends credence to this viewpoint. When it comes to teaching writing, the other instructor thinks the process method is helpful. This indicates that our teachers are knowledgeable about the many methods used to teach writing. However, there are still questions about when, how, to whom, and under what circumstances they are utilized.

**Q13. List these reasons?**

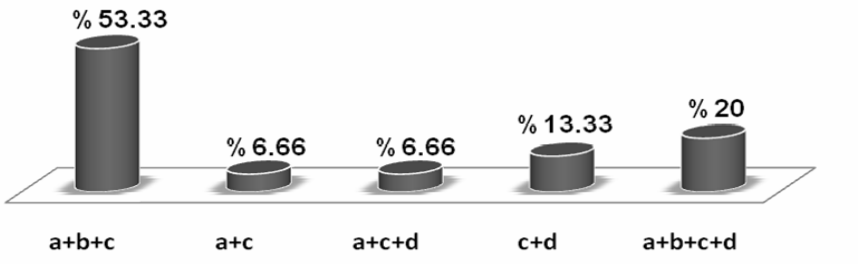



Figure 3. Reasons behind Students' Poor Writing Performance

In Q8, all the teachers confirm that third-year students face some difficulties in writing. Thus, the next questions (Q13-Q17) are intended to highlight, explain, and list these difficulties as far as the teacher, the learner, and the approach are concerned. with the possibilities to solve them. We see that teachers combine two to four possibilities in their integrative selections. Additionally, option (c), which stands for "learner," appears frequently in each selection. As a result, the student is initially categorized; next, (a), which stands for "teacher," discusses the significance of these two components with writing challenges, independent of other criteria ("b" and "d"). The following statistics are obtained from the examination of the findings: According to the majority of respondents (53.33%), the curriculum, the learner, and the teacher are to blame for students' poor writing skills.

The (20%) category attributes students' poor writing performance to deeper-rooted issues that begin long before university. They point to a lack of serious training in English during primary education, which leaves students without a strong foundation in the language. Additionally, these teachers observe a general lack of willingness among students to write in English, which significantly affects their engagement and progress. Compounding the problem is students' limited involvement in extensive reading, which restricts their exposure to varied vocabulary, structures, and writing styles essential for effective writing development.

The household, the students' previous education (middle and secondary schools), and, of course, inept teachers are the main causes of the writing challenges that students face. According to the 13.33% category, these difficulties are attributed to the students themselves. But according to one teacher, these elements are mostly the result of the "teacher" and the "student." The two components form the basis of our inquiry.

According to the final category (6.66%), students are strongly related to their mother tongue, which hinders the learning of the target language, especially writing, in addition to the teacher and learner. This implies that L1 may also have an impact on students' writing abilities. Friedlander (1997) claims that "writers do any of their work in their first language" (p. 109) in this regard. This indicates that writing in this manner hinders learning English because it improperly transfers vocabulary and structures from L1.
Q14. What makes the teacher a source of students' poor writing performance?

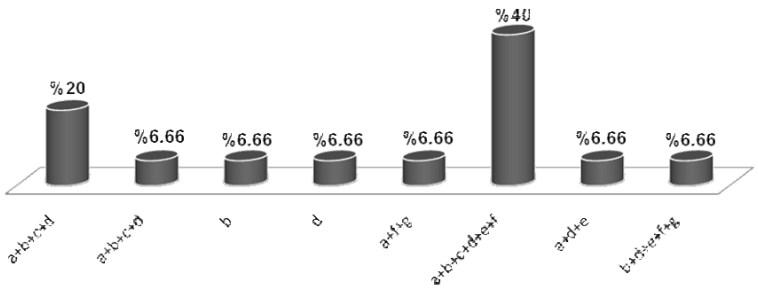



Figure 4. Teacher as a Source of Students' Poor Writing Performance

One part of the writing challenges is seldom justified by the teachers, as seen by the statistics presented in Figure 12. Therefore, it is significant to note that the majority of respondents (40%) emphasize that the following factors can be linked to this handicap: the proper writing instruction technique, the teachers' response (correction and response) to students' work, and, lastly, the teacher's motivation, i.e., a motivated teacher can produce motivated learners (writers). Each of these findings explains the actions taken in section 2.

**Q15. What makes the student a source of poor writing performance?**

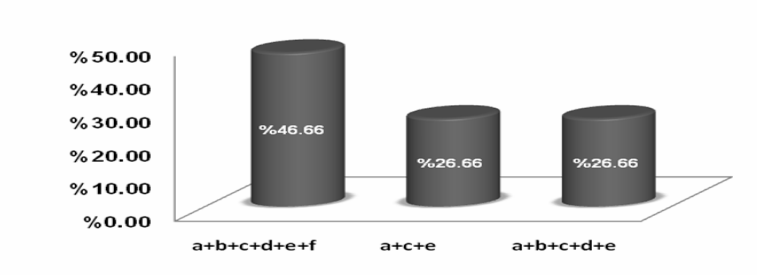



Figure 5: Student as a Source of Poor Writing Performance

According to Figure 5' s findings, the majority of the informants (46.66%) concur with each of the elements discussed in Section 2: reading, motivation, prior knowledge, and L1 effect. There are now more factors.

**Q16. At which structural aspect of language are these difficulties?**

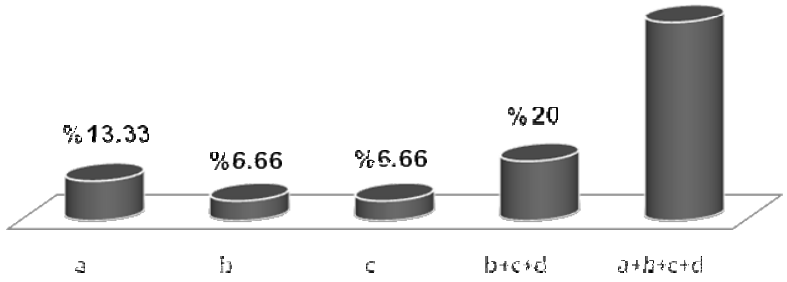



Figure 14. Students' Difficulties in the Structural Aspects of Language

Regarding the students' structural challenges, such as the sentence, paragraph, and essay, the majority of instructors (66.66%) confirm that their students encounter challenges at all of the aforementioned levels. This implies that if the starting is incorrect, the subsequent actions will also be incorrect. The learner's subsequent work (paragraph or essay) will suffer if they are unable to construct a proper sentence. because an essay is a collection of several paragraphs, whereas a paragraph is a collection of sentences. Students also struggle with spelling, word order, usage, and other issues, according to the same professors. All the teacher (100%) agree that they distribute homework to their pupils. Regular assignment distribution will raise students' writing proficiency. However, as stated in (Q21) below, other barriers prevent the teaching of written expression.

**Q17. What difficulties arise when teaching writing skills**?

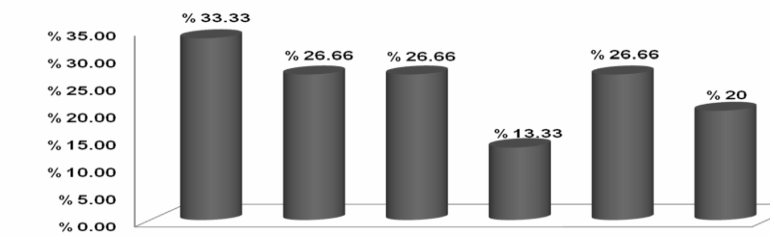



Figure 6. Teachers' Problems in Teaching Writing Skills

By asking this question, we hope to learn whether there are any other issues beyond the well-known ones that hinder instructors of written expression. We have, in fact, gotten a lot of answers and justifications. It is evident that every reply discusses the same issues. Additionally, the process of teaching and developing written language is equally impacted by each of these issues. Thirty-three percent of teachers believe that they do not have enough time or practice to do their jobs effectively. All instructors (Questions 12–13) agreed to raise the level of written expression instruction to master's since they were found to be inadequate for practicing writing skills. Overcrowded classrooms are the main issue that our teachers deal with when trying to accomplish their objectives when it comes to teaching writing. They also bring up the issue of giving every student the same amount of time and attention.

Additionally, two significant issues mentioned by our informants (26.66%) are terminology and interest. The vocabulary (repertory) of our students is extremely restricted and subpar. They feel compelled to convert their thoughts into "French" or "Arabic" to avoid leaving their copies blank. Another issue the teachers see is a lack of motivation, since many say that kids write aimlessly. Additionally, (26.66%)of the respondents state that "receiving new other students from different groups, who were taught by different teachers in the first year, makes us unable to complete what they have started in the first year" as another barrier to the transition from first to second years.

For the simple reason that they are accustomed to "spoon-feeding" learning and do not understand the concept of research, students do not associate various writing scenarios that teachers suggest, which is another issue that makes it difficult for teachers to effectively carry out their duties. Regarding writing instruction, (13.33%) of the respondents said that there are issues with the way writing skills are taught. Since there is no one right way to teach writing, one teacher supports flexibility in the classroom. Teachers should be free to have their conversations and not only follow the syllabus; at the very least, they should be able to update or make changes to it. Another educator, however, disagrees, asserting that there is no standard "manual" or "course book" for teaching writing. Allowing educators to educate whatever they see fit might cause problems and occasionally inconsistencies. This might be explained by the dearth of instructors with the necessary training to teach writing.

Lastly, (20%) of teachers still use the following criteria when evaluating students' writing: "Assessment of writing as a product or as a process." Indeed, in the many writing disciplines (literature, linguistics, civilization, etc.), students are frequently evaluated based on their final work.

## 5 Discussion

The analysis of the teachers' responses reveals a shared belief in the crucial importance of writing as a skill that significantly contributes to the development of other language competencies. All respondents agree that written expression should not be neglected, as doing so would undermine students' overall language progress. They emphasize that writing is a complex process that demands sustained effort, consistent practice, and active engagement. Students must understand that effective writing is not simply about applying grammar rules but involves mastering multiple components, including grammar, vocabulary, writing conventions, and, most importantly, motivation.

A recurring concern is the lack of motivation, interest, and practice, which are seen as fundamental barriers to student progress. Even when students receive effective instruction, many do not apply what they have learned, resulting in repeated errors and stagnant performance. This is compounded by weak

foundational training, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels, and by students' poor reading habits, which limit their exposure to vocabulary, sentence structures, and coherent text organization. As Eisterhold (1993, as cited in Sadek, 2007, p. 202) notes, better writers tend to be better readers, and strong reading habits are closely linked to improved syntactic maturity and writing quality.

Rather than functioning as isolated causes, the factors identified, such as L1 interference, poor reading habits, and low motivation, appear to interact in mutually reinforcing ways. For instance, students who read infrequently lack exposure to diverse English syntactic structures, making them more reliant on direct translation from their mother tongue, which in turn increases L1 interference. Similarly, low motivation may not only result from unengaging instruction but may also be exacerbated by a lack of perceived progress, which is itself tied to limited practice and insufficient feedback. This suggests that students' writing difficulties are not merely the sum of separate obstacles but emerge from a complex interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and affective factors.

Teachers also express dissatisfaction with several instructional and curricular factors that negatively impact students' writing performance. These include the limited number of hours allocated to writing instruction, a lack of coherence between syllabuses across academic years, and recent program changes that lack clear objectives and sufficient scope. Moreover, classroom practices often prioritize oral skills over writing, leaving the latter underemphasized and underdeveloped. Students, as a result, continue to struggle with mastering basic writing norms and techniques across sentence, paragraph, and essay levels. These challenges are further exacerbated by students' lack of foundational knowledge in English, minimal writing practice, large class sizes that limit personalized feedback, and a general disinterest in reading, which directly affects the quality of their written work. The insufficient time devoted to writing further hinders their progress, making it difficult to create opportunities for meaningful improvement. Therefore, enhancing writing performance requires not only improved instruction but also increased motivation, a supportive classroom environment, and stronger teacher-student relationships.

In terms of instructional approaches, the majority of teachers report using a combination of the product and process approaches, often supported by reading activities. However, they stress that reading alone is not sufficient to foster effective writing unless students are also encouraged to read outside the classroom and engage actively with texts. Writing must be taught systematically and strategically, and many teachers support the extension of writing instruction to the Master's level, arguing that such continuity is necessary for long-term writing development.

The importance of teacher training is also highlighted. Teachers argue that those responsible for teaching written expression should be well-trained and possess strong writing skills themselves. Pre-service training is essential, as it equips future teachers with the tools needed to guide students through the demanding process of writing. A teacher who lacks writing competence cannot be expected to support students effectively.

From a pedagogical standpoint, teachers advocate for a number of practical solutions to address the challenges in writing instruction. These include: reducing the number of students per group to allow more personalized feedback; ensuring that written expression is taught by qualified instructors; increasing the time devoted to writing instruction; and adopting teaching techniques tailored to students' specific needs and levels. Teachers also emphasize the need for effective correction strategies, a stronger focus on accuracy, and engaging, relevant topics to enhance student motivation.

Moreover, a collaborative teaching model is encouraged, in which instructors from all modules work

together to reinforce writing skills and ensure consistency in language instruction. Writing is a lifelong process, and improving it requires not only effort from students but also sustained institutional support. Teachers stress the need for universities to implement coherent and effective language policies, backed by concrete measures that encourage a genuine revival of interest in learning a foreign language, particularly writing.

In short, not all teachers of written expression at the first, second, and third-year levels are satisfied with their students' writing abilities. They argue that the willingness to write and read is the primary driver of writing success, especially for first-year students who are still adjusting to academic writing demands. Both students and teachers face various challenges, but all agree that good writing is the result of integrating multiple aspects of form and content. Addressing these issues through better training, motivation, curriculum planning, and institutional support can significantly enhance students' writing performance.

## 6. Implications

To improve writing instruction. First, it is crucial to boost student motivation, which can be accomplished by utilizing pertinent subjects, fostering a positive learning atmosphere, and stressing the importance of writing from an early age (Bruning & Horn, 2000). Extending written expression to the advanced level is required to give sufficient practice, as present classroom time is constrained and frequently underutilized. Methodologically speaking, the product approach, which evaluates writing based on results, is more appropriate for second and third years of study, whereas the process approach is more suited for first-year students (Harmer, 2006a; Kraples, 1993; Horowitz, 1986).

Effective feedback is also essential but frequently absent; even in huge class sizes, teachers should provide precise, targeted remarks and symbols to direct students' progress (Chaudron, 1988). Focus and the development of self-correction skills are enhanced when students receive selective correction, which addresses only specific elements such as grammar or punctuation (Harmer, 2007a). Writing can become more audience-driven and captivating with the help of technology like blogs, the internet, and CALL tools (Beatty, 2003). Last but not least, teachers from all subject areas should work together to help students apply their writing abilities in a variety of academic settings. These tactics work together to create a versatile, useful framework for improving writing education in academic settings. To make these recommendations more concrete, the following specific strategies are proposed:

**1. For Motivation and Engagement**

a. Use genre-based writing tasks connected to students' content modules (e.g., writing a critical analysis in literature or a case study in ESP) to increase relevance.
b. Incorporate peer-review sessions where students exchange drafts and provide structured feedback using guided rubrics, fostering a sense of audience and collaboration.

**2. For Collaborative Teaching**

a. Establish cross-module writing workshops where teachers from linguistics, literature, and civilization jointly assess and provide feedback on common writing assignments, ensuring consistency in expectations.
b. Develop a shared writing rubric used across all modules to help students understand that writing quality is evaluated uniformly, regardless of the subject.

**3. For Instructional Approaches and Feedback**

a. Implement a staged writing process for major assignments: proposal → first draft → peer feedback → revised draft → teacher feedback → final submission. This ensures students engage with multiple stages of writing.
b. Use focused error correction codes (e.g., "VT" for verb tense, "WO" for word order) instead of full corrections, requiring students to identify and correct their own errors, thereby promoting autonomy.
c. Introduce short, low-stakes writing tasks (e.g., 5-minute free writes or reflection logs) to reduce writing anxiety and build fluency without the pressure of formal grading.

**4. For Institutional Support**

a. Create a university-level writing center offering one-on-one tutoring sessions, workshops on academic writing conventions, and support for both students and teachers.
b. Advocate for smaller class sizes in written expression courses to enable individualized feedback and more interactive writing instruction.

The following list provides a summary of these implications.

1. Increasing *motivation* to write.
2. *Collaborative* teaching of writing skills.
3. *Extension* of written expression to the advanced level (master's level).
4. Appropriate *approach* to teach writing at the university level.
5. Appropriate use of *feedback*, *selective correction*, and *technology.*

## Conclusion

Writing is, without a doubt, the most significant invention in human history. It offers a somewhat permanent record of facts, viewpoints, convictions, emotions, arguments, justifications, theories, and so forth. Additionally, writing enables us to communicate with future generations as well as our peers. It enables us to hear from people in the near and far past.

Given all of the advantages and beauty of writing, why do so many students struggle to write at a level that meets their needs? Students frequently don't understand the value of writing as a skill; so, how can they write well or compose proper sentences, paragraphs, and essays? In their home tongue, second language, or foreign language, students truly struggle to explain themselves properly and methodically. In this way, writing effectively is a process that requires practice and education.

This implies that writing requires time, reading widely, and practice, all of which are vital components. The latter involves a number of challenges and is a complex skill. In various academic contexts, our students never manage to learn how to write accurately. They struggle greatly with it and, as a result, are unable to write texts that are acceptable, such as essays and paragraphs. Students are expected to have a strong writing ability by their third or even fourth year of university, which is regrettably not the case after two academic years of instruction. We think there isn't a magic bullet to get over this. We cannot, however, take it easy and wait for decisions to be made from the top down.

The time has come for classroom instructors to take action to challenge them to respond to these questions and bring attention to the issues they confront. In order to improve their teaching and learning environment and help students enhance their writing skills, this will assist both teachers and students in calling forth their potential. The causes of these subpar outcomes that impair our students' writing

performances have thus been examined in this study, along with two other crucial elements that may contribute to writing issues: the teacher and the student.

As far as the teacher is concerned, the findings reveal that most teachers attribute these challenges to three factors: an inadequate response (correction and response) to students' work, a lack of a suitable approach and technique for teaching writing, and, finally, low teacher motivation results in low-motivated students. Regarding the learner, the results showed that most teachers believe that students' low writing performance is caused by L1 and a lack of reading, practice, and motivation. They went on to note that these issues arise at every level (essay, paragraph, and sentence).

Nonetheless, the results show that these writing challenges can be addressed or at least lessened. The extension of written expression to the third year and the fact that teaching written expression should be a collaborative endeavor, that is, not solely the responsibility of the written expression teacher but of all the teachers of all the modules, are the most crucial factors that will enable this to occur.

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