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**Implementing Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools to
Improve the Learners' Writing Skill**

**The Case of Second Year Students of English at Mohamed Kheider
University of Biskra**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Sciences of the Language

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Declaration

I, Amina **BENCHAIRA**, hereby declare that the present research, which entitled “Implementing Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools to Improve the Learners’ Writing Skill”, it has not been submitted for any institution in order to obtain a degree. I further confirm that this dissertation has been solely composed except where indicating by referencing to the work of others.

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DEDICATION

*To the fond of my little brother, who left so early so innocent and whose soul
will always be with me.*

*To my beloved parents whose, love, support, and trust have sustained me in
this worldly life.*

*To my best forever friend Kaouther, who brought me the most beautiful
memories.*

To my wonderful angels nieces and nephews

*To all of those who are meant to cross my path whether for a lesson or a
blessing.*

*Women are very slow to rouse, but once they are aroused, once they are
determined, nothing on earth and nothing in heaven will make women
giveaway ; it is impossible*

Emmeline Pankhurst, 1889



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Abstract

Learners became more self-directed due to the widespread of ICT and easy access to it. Yet, a great majority of LMD students in the section of English at Mohamed Khider University find it difficult to achieve the goal of being a competent writer. They face multiple challenges in paragraph writing due to the complexity of writing skill. This hindrance emerged from the fact that most of them are not used to writing paragraphs in English. Therefore, this study is designed to assess the hypotheses if EFL learners use online grammar and spelling checker tools their writing competence will be increased also to determine teachers' and learners' awareness about these applications, to address these matters, a qualitative research approach was adopted. In other words, the present study has been conducted under a descriptive method, because it is the most adequate one to deal with this topic during the current circumstances. In order to gather data, we administrated questionnaires to twenty-eight second-year students and interview to seven written expression teachers of science of the language in the division of English at Biskra University. The results obtained demonstrate the role of online grammar and spelling checker tools in improving the students' writing proficiency. Based on these results, the research hypotheses were confirmed. That is to say, both teachers and learners Have a positive attitude towards online grammar and spelling checkers and the implementation of these tools enhance students' writing skill. In the end, it is highly recommended for teachers to change the ways of providing feedback and base learners on what makes them more productive by adopting such techniques.

Keywords: ICT, EFL learners, Online grammar and spelling checker tools, Writing skill.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

OGSC: Online Grammar and Spelling Checkers

E.g.: *exempli gratia* (for example)

Et al.: *Et alia* (and others)

Etc: *et cetera* (and so on).

I.e.: *Id est* (it means)

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General Introduction

Introduction

Teaching-learning grammar is an important component of learning EFL and occupies a major place in it. Learning grammar is also essential to master productive skills in English. With grammar competency, learners can avoid using incorrect structures. This condition is challenging for teachers as well as students, who consider that the only reliable source of corrective feedback on their written compositions is the teacher, but it is no longer a teacher-centered approach. New technologies have emerged to contribute to the amelioration of the quality of education such as web applications that have the ability to check spelling, style, punctuation, and grammar so EFL learners in that way can receive input inside and outside the classroom.

1. Background of the Study

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have made a great impact on the educational field. Life with its different contexts and demands calls for some level of writing skill which learners consider as a difficult task because they tend to think in their mother tongue. Namely, the study is concentrated on the influence of online grammar and spelling checker tools, that is to say how autocorrect assistant applications help students enhance their writing, as foreign language writing is the most essential element of language. Therefore, grammar spelling checker is one of the main techniques used to facilitate and improve writing. It refers to any online platforms for proofreading and editing, also it can be free as it can be paid for or maybe has both options. It is utilized via electronic devices by learners to provide them with feedback in order to achieve better outcomes. Hence, the integration of autocorrect assistant tools in education is crucial to help students develop their writing skills and they are a necessity that makes the learning-

teaching process easy and effective. Writing in English unlike speaking, listening, and reading is rarely practiced outside the classroom, so what is learned inside the class is practiced inside and has a little opportunity to be developed outside. Moreover, the complexity of the writing skill has led the majority of students to struggle when they need to write paragraphs, which will result in poor writing.

2. Statement of the Problem

In the modern world, a vast majority of people have access to the internet due to the significant development of technology. Whereby, the growth of digital devices users increased incredibly, the following issue rised up to become one of the main concerns of the students. This research sheds the light on the difficulties that EFL learners face when writing paragraphs; in which, they get frustrated because of the grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and even word choice that the teacher emphasizes. They spend considerable time to edit and select the appropriate linguistic formula. Hence, as a solution it is suggested that the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools boost up learners' results and saves their time. What at first attracted our attention to the topic of trying something new is to help the students of Mohamed Khider University enhance their English language, i.e, to improve their productive skills through the integration of ICTs. Therefore, this study will investigate the efficiency of the autocorrect assistant tools in developing writing skill.

3. Significance of the Study

This study is very important in the learning-teaching process because it will show how the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools helps students to improve their writing and encourage them to write constantly. It also aims to show the positive

relationship between the usage of autocorrect assistant tools and developing learners' writing. This research is also crucial for other researchers who are searching in the same topic.

4. Research Questions

This work attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) Why writing is challenging for EFL learners?
- 2) What are the problems that students encounter when writing paragraphs?
- 3) Are EFL teachers and learners aware of the use of autocorrect assistant tools? And what are their attitudes towards these tools?
- 4) Does the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools improve learners' writing skill?

5. Research Hypotheses

This present study is based on the role of online grammar and spelling checker tools in enhancing EFL students' writing skill. The hypotheses that shall be verified through this work are:

- 1) We hypothesize that if learners employ the autocorrect assistant tools, their writing skill will develop.
- 2) We hypothesize that teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools.

6. Research Aims

The main objective of this study is to investigate whether the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools in the learning-teaching process will improve students' written production. We will also describe and discuss the opinion and satisfaction level of EFL learners and teachers. More specifically, through this research we aim to determine the challenges that students face when writing as well as to raise EFL learners' and teachers' awareness about the importance of online grammar and spelling checker tools as a way of proofreading to develop the writing skill.

7. Overall Method

In this study, the qualitative approach to the collection and analysis of data will be adopted to describe two variables: autocorrect assistant tools as the independent variable and writing skill as the dependent one. We will take second-year students of Mohamed Khider University as a sample. Then, we will distribute semi-structured questionnaires to the learners and we will interview teachers of written expression course.

8. Literature Review

Dr. Alfaki.I.M conducted a study in the teachers' college and the college of education, Nile Vally Univerisity, North Sudan in 2014. He found out through the research and after examining the students' compositions in the description of their home villages/towns that learners face problems when writing including tenses, spelling, grammar, and even cognitive ones which make the writing skill a difficult task for them.

The research entitled "You want me to check your grammar again? The usefulness of an online grammar checker as perceived by students", (2016) revealed that the majority

of learners who joined this experience needed proofreading service and they do not feel confident when they write. Hence, they agreed that Grammarly application gives detailed feedback and makes helpful suggestions for improving their work. However, some of them claimed that they could not understand the explanations that the online grammar checker offers also they do not agree with some of its suggestions which made it confusing and sophisticated.

In a recent study, which has been conducted at the Health Sciences Library Manipal Academy of Higher Education by Rao, Gain, and Bhat (2019), stated that the majority of registered participants are faculty members. The findings of the study showed that students adopt positive attitudes toward the use of autocorrect assistant tools and find them beneficial as well as facilitative for their writing of research papers. Moreover, most of them point out that the use of these tools catches contextual, spelling, and grammatical mistakes. However, a few of them were unfamiliar with this application “Grammarly” and needed training.

The review of literature on the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools illustrates that there are respondents who are unfamiliar with Grammarly application and find it of more benefit with average students, we would like to implement it with our EFL learners at Biskra University in order to eliminate writing problems and to investigate to what extent teachers and students are aware of its role in the learning-teaching process. Therefore, the current study would provide insights into the merits of autocorrect assistant tools from the perspective of students.

9. Structure of the Dissertation

The present study is divided into two parts: One is Theoretical and the other is Practical. The former consists of two chapters that are devoted to the related review of

literature on the aforementioned variables “writing skill besides to online grammar and spelling checkers as ICT tools” while the latter includes only one chapter that deals with the fieldwork and data analysis.

Chapter One

It deals with ICT in terms of its definition, role, and main components. Then, it considers the difference between traditional and new materials that are used in education. Afterward, it devotes a major part to the notion of OGSC by tackling its definition and types besides the way it works. Finally, it discusses the relationship between these tools and promoting writing.

Chapter Two

This chapter sets forth a theoretical overview of writing skill as a promising field of interest. It initiates by its nature then it shifts to providing some definitions, importance, stages, characteristics, and approaches of writing. Thereafter, it ends up demonstrating some common writing problems that are caused by certain factors.

Chapter Three

Fieldwork and data analysis are displayed in this chapter. In the beginning, it addresses the adopted research methodology for the current study as well as the data collection and analysis procedures. Secondly, it deals with the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. Finally, it presents the deduced conclusion.

10. Research Limitations

In this research, we are interested in writing in the English language and the role of online grammar and spelling checker tools in enhancing the writing skill. Yet, in conducting any research the researcher may encounter some obstacles. In our case, we faced certain difficulties during the investigation, the problem is that we could not make all the tests to support our research hypothesis. Actually, in our department the Internet is not

integrated although the laboratory exists, students seldom went there. In addition to time limitation, taking into account correcting each participant's paragraph individually in the pre-test and post-test phases. However, we tried other ways to make it possible but the COVID-19 barrier blocked us so we shifted from a mixed-method to descriptive study, and we have to mention that the data collection stage took a long time more than expected.

Moreover, this research is limited to a sample of 35 students to represent the second-year students. We know that it is not representative, but it is more judicious to work with a limited number. Last but not least, the unavailability of primary sources in relation to the first variable (i.e., online grammar and spelling checker tools) since it is a new method. That is to say, most of the references are in the form of articles and collections of previous studies. Even the study has been affected by the aforementioned limitations; we have collected the feedback which helped us to confirm the validity of the hypotheses.

Chapter One

**Online Grammar and
Spelling Checkers as ICT
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Introduction

The traditional role of teachers as information givers is changing with technology development. EFL learners became more independent due to the widespread of ICT and easy access to it. In other words, the world is witnessing a great shift, where once students went to the library to get a book for their assignments now they search online, where once they asked for pieces of advice from an expert now they check websites by and large.

Students are increasingly exposed to new technological advancements and they have to make use of it. Since knowledge that learners receive as a result of self-activity absorbed significantly better than those reported by the teacher. Technology offers online platforms known as autocorrect assistant tools that help students train and proofread their writings.

Therefore, the following chapter will tackle these concepts in depth by introducing ICT and OGSC. Initially, It deals with ICT in terms of its definition, role, and main components. Then, it considers the difference between traditional and new materials that are used in education. Afterward, it devotes a major part to the notion of OGSC by tackling its definition and types besides the way it works. Finally, it discusses the relationship between these tools and enhancing writing.

1.1 Definitions of ICT

ICT stands for information and communication technology which is usually defined as the use of technology in managing and processing information. Helena (2006, p.03) stated that “ICT is a term which covers a range of Hardware (machines) and software (application of machine)”. To clarify, ICT includes two types. On one hand, hardware represents the physical parts that can be touched such as smartphones, computers, radios...etc. On the other hand, software refers to the program which is used to

accomplish certain activity depending on a variety of resources to mention some: the Internet in the first place, social media (Facebook, Instagram..), websites, and so on.

As it is observable, ICT links two words that are information and communication in order to emphasize the merging of both technologies. Hence, information refers to all that can be communicated and understood meanwhile information technology is the use of information to meet human need or purpose (Jarmaine, 2009, p.18). Similarly, Sarkar (2012, p.30-31) agreed that ICTs can be divided into two sections. The first part represents the information and communication infrastructure. The second part represents information technology. The former refers to the physical telecommunications system and network while the latter refers to hardware and software of information collection.

In the same line, Anderson (2010, p.13) viewed ICT as “a plural term which is defined as the use of all the technologies that facilitate communication. ICTs are basically information handling tools and a varied set of goods, applications, and services that are used to produce, store, process, record, distribute and exchange information”. That is to say, ICT enables individuals to achieve several goals by using different devices and resources.

Michiels and Van Crowder (2001) have defined ICT as “a range of electronic technologies which when converged in new configuration are flexible, adaptable, enabling and capable of transforming organizations and redefining social relations” (as cited in Chapman, Slaymaker, 2003, p.03). That is to say, ICT is a diverse set of technologies that allows people to communicate in real-time with others as if they were living next door, and create a global village.

1.2 Common Components of ICT

There are numerous types used in different fields, the following are some of the most used tools in education:

1.2.1 Computers

The computer is a universal information processor, and according to Merriam-Webster (2020) “it is a programmable electronic device that can store, retrieve, and process data”.

1.2.2 Internet

The most important element, Leiner et al (1997, p. 102) defined it as “a World Wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location”. To simplify, through the use of the World Wide Web individuals can access anything at anytime and anywhere besides the potential of interacting with others.

1.2.3 Smartphones

A smartphone is a small wireless telecommunicating device, it is a developed form of telephone which saves time and shortens the distance between human beings (Toumi, 2015). However, Merriam-Webster dictionary differentiated between cell-phones and smartphones by stating that “a cell phone that includes additional software functions (such as e-mail or an Internet browser)”. This means cellulars have limited functions, mainly they are used for calling or sending a message.

1.2.4 Blogs

A blog is a type of website which contains a series of educational topics. It is written by a blog owner or other contributors to provide information (Toumi, 2015).

1.2.5 Projectors

A digital projector is a technological equipment connected to a laptop or desktop computer to show images or present information on a wall or a whiteboard. De Groot (2002, p.01)

1.2.6 Applications

They are found on digital devices such as iPads, tablets, and smartphones which are used for education or entertainment (Toumi, 2015).

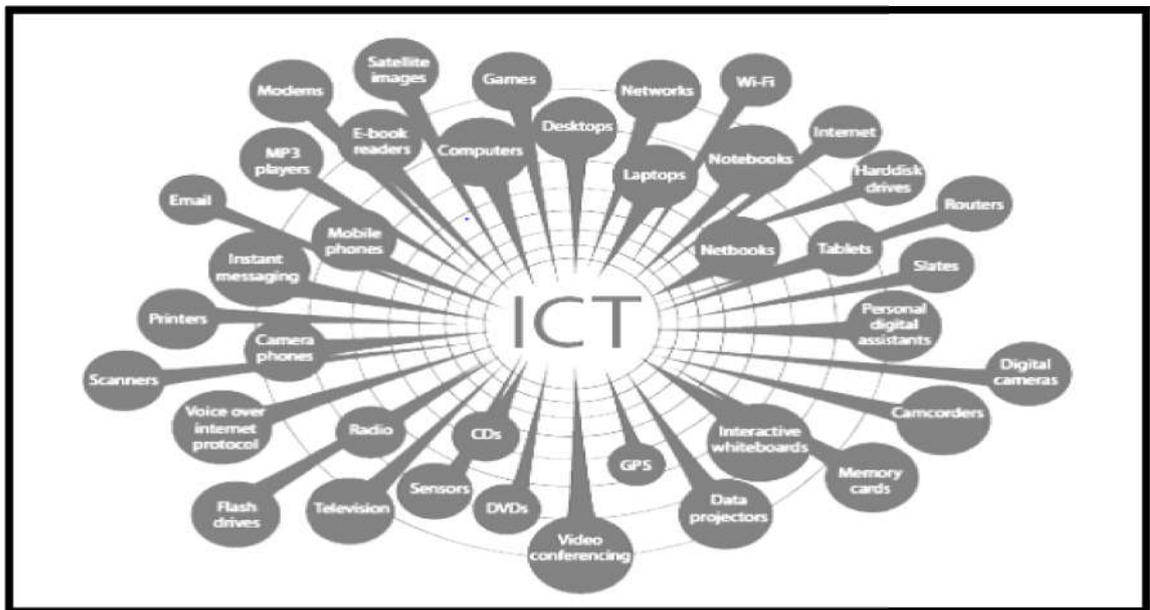


Figure 1.2: diversity of ICT as stated by Anderson (2010).

1.3 The Role of ICT in Education

ICT provides a collection of applications and online tools that become inevitable in daily life job by and large. As far as education is concerned, ICT has a significant role in supporting the teaching-learning process. Meenakshi (2013, p.04) confirmed that:

Technology (internet) in another side can be the most effective way to increase the student's knowledge. Being aware of the significant role of ICT (internet) in our life, especially in the educational activities, education authorities should be wise enough in implementing the strategies to empower ICT in supporting the teaching and learning process in the classroom. ICT is not just the bloom of the educational activities, but also it will be the secondary option to improve the effective and meaningful educational process.

In the same line, Nwigbo and Madhu (2016, p.06) asserted that "ICT can enhance teaching by enhancing what is already practiced or introducing new and better ways of learning and teaching. It has a positive effect on behavior, motivation, communication, and process skills of students and teachers". To simplify, ICT creates a desirable environment for both teachers and learners which makes them more interested and involved. Thus, they perform better. Furthermore, it contributes to the amelioration of language learning as Ammanni and Aparanjani (2016, p.01) put it:

Because of its interactive and dynamic nature, ICT has the stamina to meet the needs of the individual student by providing opportunities to direct their learning and to pursue information. With the usage of ICT students can learn any subject especially English with ease.

1.4 New Versus Traditional Materials

To begin with, materials can be any tools or techniques that are used during the learning-teaching process such as dictionaries, projectors, handouts, and so on. They are considered as sources of input. Accordingly, Richards and Rodgers (2014, p.35) pointed out that “Materials allow learners to progress at their own rates of learning and use different styles of learning; they also provide opportunities for independent study and use, and to provide opportunities for self-evaluation and progress in learning”. That is to say, the instructional materials vary between traditional resources (use of board and chalk) and new resources (use of projectors) which are an integral part of learning. However, the latter is considered as a learner-centered approach in which students become more engaged and adaptive. Hence, the integration of ICT has a powerful function in the classroom since it changed the learning dimensions (Amrani, 2018).

1.5 Benefits of ICT in EFL teaching-learning

ICT has influenced all domains and has become a routine in human beings' life, according to Fu (2013, as cited in Cherifi, 2019) the major benefits of ICT are summarized in these points:

Initially, it improves EFL teaching-learning quality in terms of making learners more independent and self-directed, through using multiple resources they get feedback and instructions which develops their critical thinking. In addition, it creates a desirable environment and provides authentic materials that make knowledge acquisition more accessible. Last but not least, it promotes cooperative and distance learning through interaction with others.

Despite the infinite benefits of ICT, there are some aspects that both learners and teachers should be aware of such as using ICT illegally. That is to say, for cheating or plagiarism which is reported by Krikwood (2013, p.03):

Growth in use of ICT has increased the potential for plagiarism among students. The “copy and paste” facility makes it easy for students to assemble an assignment from a variety of sources, while sophisticated search engines make it easy to locate sources from around the world.

To sum up, ICTs are aids that facilitate EFL teaching-learning if only users know how to take advantage of these tools because they are considered as double-edged weapons.

1.6 ICT, Writing Systems, and Web Interactivity

Education in the globalized era requires teachers and students to have good computing and digital skills since the widespread availability of the Web and numerous computer-based writing systems are used widely in the teaching-learning operation. (Hegelheiler, 2006). Wible et al., (2001) reported that “content providers often end up accommodating their content to existing systems rather than imagining first how the technology should be designed to accommodate the needs of the content and the learners” (p. 298). Noting the exponential growth in the number of Web-based educational systems, Maddux (2002) stated that the failure of Web-based instruction refers to the lack of effective interactivity, which he called “the most promising, yet scarce characteristic that can be built into Web pages” (p. 10)

Many types of technological devices are used when teaching and when assessing students’ writing performances. For this Maddux (2002) distinguished between two types

of uses of technology. The first type uses, according to him “make it quicker, easier, or more convenient to teach in traditional ways while the second type uses make it possible to teach in new and better ways that are not otherwise available” (p. 10). In the same vein, Wible et al. (2001) argued that Web-based writing environments should be developed expressly to meet the unique needs of particular learning domains in ways that traditional classrooms cannot (p. 298).

To put it differently, Kuo et al., (2002) described the Intelligent Web-based Interactive Language Learning system developed to address these needs; through stating the significant features that these recent resources share in common. To begin with, they are built on or around learner texts (a learner corpus), that they are searchable, and that they are Web-based. They further added that the tools in these resources put more emphasis on grammatical and lexical errors rather than on organizational and rhetorical problems. According to what has been mentioned, the systems attempt to simultaneously address learners’ needs (e.g., the appropriate level of difficulty, clear feedback, and accessible metalanguage), teachers’ needs (e.g., elimination of repetitive tasks, increase learner independence, and identification of error patterns), and researcher needs (e.g., tracking student use of the system).

1.7 Grammar Checker

The widespread of technological devices and the easy access to the Internet make learning, teaching, and assessing writing performance easier than it was before. The emergence of ICT offers the opportunity to do several tasks whether online or offline through using different platforms and programs. Grammar checking websites and applications are considered to be one of the main tools that help writers reduce and

overcome their written mistakes/ errors. They are very useful since they check the correctness of the input sentence (Bhirud, Bhavsar, & Pawar, 2017).

1.7.1 General working of grammar checker

Bhirud et al., (2017) in their work entitled “Grammar Checkers for Natural Languages: A Review” explained the way grammar checkers work as follows: grammar checkers accepts input in form of documents, paragraphs, or sentences. However, it then breaks down input into small units. Corresponding language punctuation marks are used to identify the completion of the sentence. According to their study, generally, for checking the validity of sentences, the following modules are used, which can be described in an algorithmic form (stepwise) as follows:

- **Sentence Tokenization:** This involves word segmentation. The sentence is tokenized into words followed by breaking down words into constituent morphemes and populating lexical information about the word from the lexicon.
- **Morphological Analysis:** Morphological analysis returns word stems and associated affixes.
- **Part-of-Speech Tagging:** Assigning the appropriate parts of speech.
- **Parsing Stage:** Checks the syntactic constraints (agreement constraints) between input words and the formation of the Hierarchical phrasal/dependency structure of the input sentence. In case there is a grammatical error the program will provide an auto-correction mechanism or present a suggestion list to the user.

Bhirud et al., (2017) further added that the output of the Grammar Checker application should summarize the grammatical errors in the input document sentences and optionally auto-correct the errors or at least provide correction suggestions. Accordingly,

many grammar checkers have been developed for different foreign languages using different approaches.

1.7.2 Grammar checking approaches

Bhirud et al., (2017) declared that three grammar checking approaches are used, which are as follow:

1.7.2.1 Rule-based grammar checking

According to Naber (2003), rule-based grammar checking is the most common approach. The input text is checked by rules formed from the corpus, unlike the data-driven approach, rules are generated manually. It requires expertise and extensive labor. However, rules are easy to configure and also programmed (Manchanda, Athvale, & Sharma, 2016).

1.7.2.2 Data-driven grammar checker

According to Bhirud et al., (2017) this approach utilizes a corpus that may be crafted manually or extracted automatically from many journals, magazines or documents, online resources. Two sub approaches are included under the data-driven approach. The first one is a corpus-based approach that ensures the correctness of the sentence by checking the input text against the corpus and the other approach deals with probabilistic/statistical checking of the input text.

1.7.2.3 Hybrid grammar checker

It combines both data-driven and rule-based grammar checker. So it is more robust and achieves higher efficiency. Bhirud et ., (2017).

1.8 Types of Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools

Many Grammar and spelling checker tools existed whether online or offline, they are used for educational and noneducational purposes. Rao, Gain and Bhat (2019) listed the following examples:

- Ginger
- After the Deadline
- Grammar Check
- Hemingway App
- Language Tool
- Online Correction
- Paper Rater
- Spellcheck Plus
- WhiteSmoke
- Grammarly

1.9 Grammarly Software

Qassemzadeh and Soleimani (2016) stated that Grammarly Software is a type of Corporation, which is founded in 2009 by Alex Shevchenko and Max Lytvyn, but the key people which have a crucial role are Brad Hoover. They added that its main generating unit is located in San Francisco in the United State of America. It is used by many people around the world whether they are teachers, students, researchers, or writers for the sake of checking grammar, spelling, and other mistakes. Also, it can offer other services such as proofreading and plagiarism detection.

Furthermore, “Grammarly” checks more than 250 types of errors in writing, structure, format, sentences, vocabulary, and wordiness. Rao et al., (2019).

1.10 OGSC as sources for Proofreading and Feedback

Hattie and Timperly (2007, p.81) viewed feedback as “a consequence of performance”. To simplify, it is the information, instructions, or comments that EFL learners could have from teachers, peers, or someone else who is experienced in order to correct the committed errors. (as cited in Benidir, 2007). Hence, feedback is an important phase in EFL learning that is used to improve the writing skill by reducing mistakes. Harmer (2001, p.84), added that most students find correction a deseperating operation if they get back their written production covered with red ink (underlinings and crossing-out) which affects their self-esteem since they get shy from the teacher. Thus, OGSC is supposed to be one of the dynamic tools that enjoyably provide feedback and proofreading it also increases their self-reliance and promotes their writing proficiency.

Conclusion

All countries throughout the world try to cope with the expansion of information and communication technology. Education is one of the fields affected by ICT. Hence, this chapter tends to introduce something new to learning and teaching a foreign language. More specifically this chapter is divided into two sections, the first tackled the concept of ICT in terms of its definitions, components, importance as well as the difference between the materials used in it, to conclude with its benefits. Meanwhile, the second part dealt with OGSC as a feedback tool in detailed.

Chapter Two

Writing Skill

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Introduction

English became a universal language and learning it is a must. Learning any additional language will definitely contribute more in the overall to human development. In Algeria, English is considered a foreign language which makes the process of learning it a serious undertaking. Therefore, learners should be proficient not only in speaking but also in writing. A good learner masters the receptive and productive skills.

Writing skill has been known as one of the determinant factors of language proficiency. It is more than taking a pen and jotting down ideas or completing a written assignment on time and getting a good grade in writing is fundamentally about learning how to make a piece of writing interesting, persuasive, and a pleasure to read. However, learners frequently experience difficulties with starting and getting on with writing paragraphs due to its complexity.

This chapter is a theoretical part that attempts to present the notion of writing through its nature, definition, importance, stages, and characteristics of good writing. Besides, it mentions some approaches to writing. Finally, it shows the common problems and the reasons that impede students from writing effectively.

2.1 Nature of Writing

Human beings learn and acquire language through both written and spoken ways so that they can improve their communicative competence. Therefore, writing is a mean of communication which is of great importance as Carroll (1990, p.01) put it:

Without doubt, the most important invention in human history is writing. It provides a relatively permanent record of information, opinion, beliefs,

feelings, arguments, explanation theories. Writing allows us to share our communication not only with contemporaries, but also with future generation. It permits people from the near and for distant past to speak to us.

Hence, writing is a visual representation of speech that links the past with the present and through which people can give a good account of themselves. However, the written form has remained for most of its history a minor occupation due to the concentration on spoken language as Brookes and Grundy (2001, p.01) stated:

The study of language in the twentieth century has tended to concentrate on spoken language, many linguists from de Saussure through to Chomsky, for what seemed like good reasons at the time, neglected the written mode in favour of the spoken. This, however, contributed to the fact that writing was for a long time a neglected area in language teaching.

Although writing and speaking are both productive skills, the latter is naturally acquired as a result of exposure unlike the other which has to be learned consciously in formal classrooms. According to Harris (1993, p.78) “writing is not an innate natural ability but is a cognitive ability”. That is to say, speech is the primary concern of linguists since all human beings grow up speaking their native language. Indeed writing is not an easy form of expression, Nunan (1989, p.12) agreed that “it is easier to learn to speak than to write no matter if it is a first or second language”. In a similar vein, Norrish (1983, p.65) asserted that “In written medium, information has to be transmitted without any aid from sources other than the language itself. It seems to follow from this that more attention is needed to be paid to the language as a code in short to the grammatical and lexical system than is the case with speech.”

2.2 Definitions of Writing

The term writing has been defined by several scholars and researchers from different perspectives depending on their field of study. Nevertheless, all linguists agreed that writing is a complex skill. Harmer (2007, p.360) pointed out that “of all skills, writing is the one that teachers and learners seem most reluctant to focus on because it requires them to make special efforts” writing is a crucial part in the language learning and teaching process which needs conscious and mental efforts. Similarly, Jozef (2001, p.05) said that “writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representation of knowledge, and of experience with subjects”.

Moreover, Crystal (2006, p.257) clarified that “writing is a way of communicating which uses the system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression”, indeed writing is means of communication in which people can express their thoughts and feelings. According to Schmandt-Besserat (2007, p.07) “writing is a system of graphic marks that represent the units of a specific language”. Yet, Byrne (1993, p.01) believed that “writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as a speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to a certain convention, to form words and words have to be arranged to form sentences”.

In other words, writing is an act of making up words into sentences then these latter are grouped in an organized way to form paragraphs. Lado (2000, p.248) stated that “we mean by writing in a foreign language the ability to use structures, the lexical items and their conventional representation in the ordinary matter of fact writing”. Hence, writing is a logical process that takes into account specific elements. It is the ability to employ

structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary correctly to form a comprehensible composition that communicates a message. Hyland (2003, p.03) claimed that “one way to look at writing is to see it as marks on a page or screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences structured according to a system of rules”

Writing skill has a strong relationship with other skills as Nation (2009, p.113) reported it “is an activity that can usefully be prepared for by work in the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading. This preparation can make possible of words that have been used receptively to come into productive skill use”. To explain, the more learners spend efforts the more they become competent and knowledgeable about the rules of language. To conclude with, Fischer (2001, p.12) viewed that “no definition of writing can cover all the writing systems that exist and have ever existed”. Indeed writing has been given numerous definitions due to its complexity and the before-mentioned ones are some examples of it.

2.3 Importance of Writing

Writing skill is regarded as one of the basic elements of human communication since the world has become so text-oriented. Crystal (2003, p.26), in his book entitled *English as a Global Language*, stated that “English is now so widely established that it can no longer be thought of as ‘owned’ by any single nation”. To simplify, English is a global language that links people from all over the world, and writing in English plays a vital role in realizing this intercultural communication. In terms of pedagogy, writing is crucial in foreign language teaching-learning as students need to write down notes and take written examinations in order to fulfill their educational needs. Kelly (1969, p.145) pointed out that:

By practicing writing, a person learns proper word usage to persuade the reader to listen to them. The writer does this by using "key words" at proper intervals, the writing process helps to develop the skill of critical speaking.

To explain, through writing learners focus on the accurate language use because they think as they write in order to convey a message, also in writing students have a longer time to choose the appropriate word rather than in speaking which helps them build strong sentences and develop their sub-skills. Bacon (1989) added an important and inspiring proverb which is that "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man". According to Harmer (2004, p.03) "Thus, we no longer have to ask ourselves whether writing is a good thing or not. We take it as a fundamental right." (as cited in Annab, 2016). Hence, writing has infinite benefits. Therefore, writing skill is a necessity that must be learned by all human beings to cope with society and its needs.

2.4 Stages of Writing (The Writing Process)

Langan (2001, p.113) defined writing as "a process that involves discovering a thesis, supporting it, organizing thoughts for the first draft, revising and editing the final draft". That is to say, writing is a sophisticated operation which is made of several steps starting from an idea in mind to a successful piece of written work. In the same line, Hedge (2000, p.124) put it as follow:

It involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organising information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading and reviewing it, then revising and editing. It involves a complex process which is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second language writers.

This means writing depends on a series of strategies and stages, although there is no total agreement on the definite number of these steps. Scholars recognize that the following are the most recursive ones.

2.4.1 Pre-writing

Pre-writing is the initial stage, in which students generate ideas about a certain topic through using a variety of techniques such as brainstorming, mind mapping, free writing, and listing. Its main objective is to keep writing and gather information as many as possible to achieve a meaningful paragraph. Parson (1985, p.115) declared that “students who are encouraged to engage in an array of prewriting experiences have a greater chance for writing achievement than those enjoined to ‘get to work’ on their writing without this kind of preparation” (as cited in Hali, 2013). To conclude, this step represents the departure point towards the final paragraph which is very important.

2.4.2 Drafting

It is the stage in which learners develop a first version of writing as Donohue (2009, p.12) stated it “the students are able to craft their own writing” that means students in this phase put together all that has been collected about the main topic into a composition without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, accuracy, spelling, etc. In other words, the focus is on content (introduction, supporting ideas, and conclusion) not the linguistic features. Johnson (2008, p.193) asserted that it is the stage “where students make the first attempt to capture their ideas on paper.”

2.4.3 Revising

At this stage, students review what has been written and make rearrangement. Savage and Mayer (2005, p. 160) reported that writers have to “evaluate their outline, take

out ideas that do not support their arguments, add clarifications or examples, check their work to make sure that their writing is clear and accomplishes the goals of the assignment”. To put it differently, Hedge (1988, p. 23) pointed out that “Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar until later” (as cited in Souyeh, 2019).

2.4.4 Editing

Before submission, learners make the final readjustments in terms of mechanics and so on. That means checking for mistakes at the level of a sentence to be corrected in the paragraph. According to Smith (1982, p.145) “The aim of editing is not to change the text but to make what is there optimally readable” (as cited in Hali, 2013). To clarify, after proofreading students make improvements in order to form an understandable passage.

2.4.5 Publishing

The last step after making the necessary changes, students write the final version of the paragraph which is well-formed and polished. Johnson (2008, p.199) stated that “Having an audience responds to your writing makes it come alive”. That is to say, learners are now ready to share their pieces of writing. Hence, the role of the teacher in this phase is to evaluate the students’ writing by providing feedback.

To conclude, all that we have mentioned so far is non-linear, i.e., the writing process is recursive and the writer may go backward and forward in order to check the written production constantly. The following schema by Harmer summarizes all the previous stages.

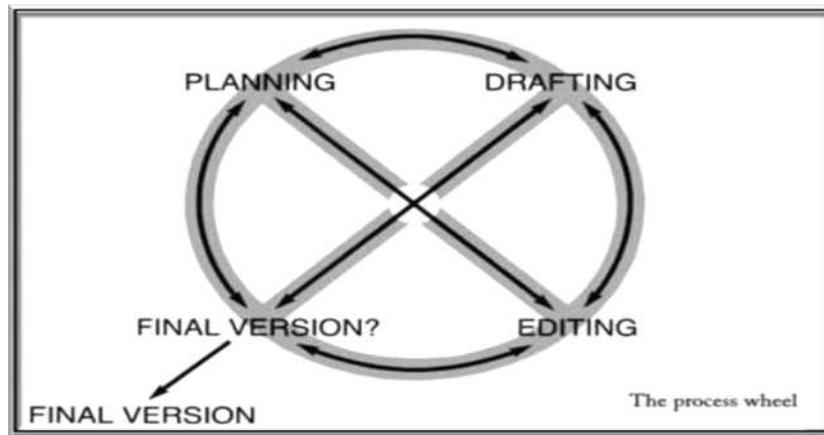


Figure 2.1 The Process Wheel according to Harmer (2004, p. 06 as cited in Annab 2016)

2.5 Characteristics of Good Writing

Good writing entails specific criteria which help to connect and arrange ideas so that they smoothly flow in a logical order to deliver the intended meaning of a given piece of writing.

2.5.1 Organization

Starkey (2004, p.02) stated that "the direction and purpose you get from organization helps your reader to believe what you are saying and to willingly follow your lead". In other words, organization is the structural framework of writing that shows how ideas are linked together starting from the introductory sentence to the concluding one. In the same vein, Bowen and Cali (2003, p.02) asserted that "organization is the progression, relatedness, and completeness of ideas". Hence, it is a basic element that maintains the unity of the paragraph.

2.5.2 Clarity

Since learners write with a specific purpose in mind for a certain audience they should avoid ambiguity in order to make the written production accessible to the reader. The key to achieving clarity is to be precise and concise. Just as the saying goes “write to express, not to impress”. That is to say, to eliminate any word or phrase that may convey more than one meaning or multiple interpretations.

2.5.3 Coherence and cohesion

Murray and Hughes (2008, p.45) viewed that a good writer is the one “who sticks his ideas together as links in a chain, each link connecting the one before it with the one after. If any links are missing, the connections become unclear and the argument structure breaks down.” To explain, a coherent paragraph is the one that satisfies two criteria: relevance which means every single idea should support the main topic. Besides the effective order, that means ideas must be arranged logically through the use of transition words. To conclude, coherence and cohesion are defined in the same way, yet the latter stands at the level of the linguistic items.

2.5.4 Word choice

In order to make the piece of writing comprehensible, writers need to carefully select the appropriate words. According to Starkey (2004), they should consider two elements: denotation (the literal meaning of words) and connotation (the implied meanings which involve emotions and cultural assumptions). Therefore, it is very important to differentiate between the two aspects and try to use the correct lexical items. Doing so ensures that the reader understands what the writer is trying to convey.

2.5.5 Mechanics

It refers to the appearance of words which is mainly concerned with punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and even handwriting whether it is illegible or not. All these elements influence one another and affect the delivery of the message. Murray and Hughes (2008, p.185) reported that “they indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. A well punctuated and capitalized piece of writing should make your work easier to read and understand and will therefore help it make a more favourable impression on your readers”. To put it differently, having a good knowledge of the global conventions such as starting a paragraph with indentation is very significant in putting together a good written production.

In addition to all these rules learners should take into consideration not only the content but also the form and language used. That is to say, the material existed in the composition, development of ideas through illustration and its originality as well as the construction, grammar, and sentence structure.

2.6 Approaches to Writing

There are several approaches to develop practice in writing skill. Applying one approach or another depends on what the teachers want their students to do. We spot the light on the main ones, the product approach is concerned with the finished product or the text, and the process approach is related to the processes of writing that enable the product to be achieved. While the genre approach deals with the use of appropriate language in a given situation.

2.6.1 The product approach

The product approach as Pincas stated it is “mainly about linguistic knowledge with attention paid on the proper use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices.” (as cited in Hashemnezhad, 2012). Also, Gabrielatos (2002, p.05) defines this approach as “a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually is presented and analyzed at an early stage.” (as cited in Kamrul, & Moniruzzaman, 2010). Therefore, this traditional approach in writing focuses on correctness and form of the learner’s final production through providing the learners with a modal text where they are asked to read and analyze it from different points of view such as grammar structure, content, and sentence organization. Then, they imitate and construct their own pieces of writing similar to the modal text introduced earlier.

2.6.2 The process approach

The process writing is an approach in which students focus on the processes and steps by which they produce their written productions rather than the products themselves. Hence, the students are required to finish the final product, yet the steps they get to follow are more foregrounded because an effective text will not be a mere imitation of other models. This approach considers writing as a combination of interconnected, non-linear processes that emphasize students’ creativity and thinking. Bayat (2014) reported that “the process writing approach interprets the act of writing as a series of distinctive thinking processes” (as cited in Lima, 2015, p. 20).

2.6.3 The genre approach

According to Lingzhu (2009, as cited in Nagoa, 2018, p.134) “The idea underlying a genre-based approach to writing is that texts differ in their purposes and that meanings

can be communicated through language in different ways depending on the discourses that prevail in different cultures”. This means texts are related to real-world contexts taking into consideration the cultural backgrounds as well as social situations, and we mainly refer to Swales’ work that communication purpose shapes how text is realized because the aim behind writing differs so the audience; for instance, a thesis statement is essential to argumentative essay due to the communicative purpose which is to persuade something. Therefore, different types of writings like narrative, report, personal letter.. etc. so-called ‘genre’ and each one has specific characteristics of layout, content, organization, and language. In other words, “genre refers not only to types of literary texts but also to the predictable and recurring patterns of every day” as clarified by Junho in his article (2011, p. 122).

2.7 Common Writing Problems

Learning English as a foreign language cannot be separated from creating errors even for a native speaker. Nonetheless, in the writing process, there are several writing problems occurs when the writer starts and goes on writing among these problems the following:

2.7.1 Grammar

For many people, grammar is considered to be the most difficult part which is defined as the set of rules by which words are combined to formulate meaningful sentences. Wilox (2004, p.23) asserted that “grammar can mean a system of rules which allows the users of the language in question to create meaning, by building both meaningful words and larger constructions of sentences” these elements are inseparable from writing that include: tenses, prepositions, agreement, word order .. etc. Native

speakers are unconsciously aware of a great range of it, unlike EFL learners which stand as obstacles for them due to lack of knowledge. Hence, they need more instruction to improve and be able to write correctly as Harmer (2015, p. 23) reported “perhaps our greatest responsibility, therefore, is to help our students develop their language awareness: their ability to spot grammatical patterns and behaviors for themselves”.

2.7.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary can have a great influence on students writing for the reason that English is neither their first nor second language so many words are not common to them. According to Tosuncuoglu (1973, p.136), “any language has its own difficulties concerning word’s mastery” (as cited in Hamdaoui, 2016). That is to say, English is a rich language and learners find difficulty in recalling certain words to be used. Richard and Rodgers (1986, p.255) mentioned that “vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how learners speak, listen, read and write”. To simplify, learning English entails learning its vocabulary which is not an easy task to do.

2.7.3 Spelling and punctuation

On one hand, Hughes and Searle (2000) argue that "Spelling is more arbitrary than systematic, a matter of learning each individual word rather than generalizing across words" (as cited in Boras, 2003, p.10). To clarify, the problem with the English language is that its words are not directly related to their sounds, i.e, there is more than one way to spell a sound or more than one way to pronounce a letter due to its similarity which makes confusion to the learners and leads to misspelling. The incorrect spelling is perceived also as a result of a lack of reading and carelessness. In the same sense, Frith (1980, p. 496)

declared that “Learning to read should imply learning to spell, and learning to spell should imply learning to read” (as cited in Annab, 2016). Hence, reading and spelling are interrelated and complete one another.

On the other hand, punctuation is a set of clues used as an aid to clarify the meaning of the sentence, just as in speaking; intonation, pauses, stress, and pitch are used. According to Seely (1998 as cited in Hamdaoui, 2016), punctuation is a group of conventions that plays a crucial role in reading as well as in writing. However, using punctuation marks in itself is a challenging task for the learners because they are changing over time, also the way of using them differs from person to another as a result the meaning may change completely. Therefore, students need to pay attention when punctuating the whole paragraph.

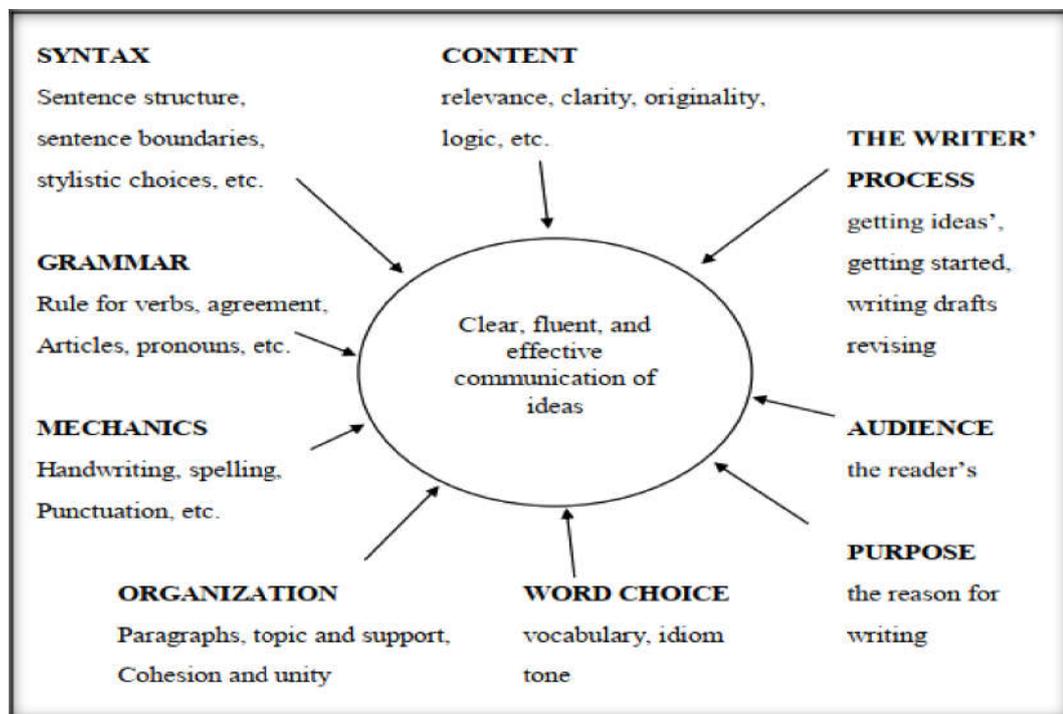


Figure 2.2: Producing a piece of writing, Raimes (1983, p.06 as cited in Annab, 2016)

To sum up, writing is considered as a sophisticated skill for both native and non-native learners. According to the above figure, Raimes (1983) provided many features such as, syntax, context, writers' process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, and grammar that are necessary components in producing a good piece of writing. Hence, teachers and learners should focus more on these elements besides to the previously mentioned ones.

2.8 Factors That Affect Students' writing

The majority of EFL learners when they start to write inside or outside the classroom settings, they encounter difficulties which hinder their writing skill. That refers to many reasons. The following paragraphs explain some possible factors that affect students' writing. It includes a lack of reading, lack of practice, anxiety, inadequate time, and mother tongue interference.

2.8.1 Lack of reading

It is agreed by scholars that better readers are better writers. Raimes (1994, p.42) highlighted the vital role of reading in a foreign language "the more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns, organizational flow, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language". To simplify, it is through reading one can acquire new knowledge and learn more about language rules. Therefore, learners who do not read much their sub-skills do not improve.

2.8.2 Lack of practice

Hedge (1988, p.11) reported that "my own experience tells me that in order to become a good writer, a student needs to write a lot". That is to say, one way to develop

writing skill is to spend extra effort and write more often. Since the reason behind students' poor writing is that they do not practice nor receive feedback in writing.

2.8.3 Anxiety

Brown (2001, p.336) draws attention to anxiety as a present feeling while writing stating that “You may have felt a certain level of anxiety building within you as you felt the pressure to write in class essay that would be judged by the teacher, graded and returned with no chance for future revision”. To put it differently, anxiety refers to a difficulty in relaxing as a result of fear of failure of not being able to achieve good results. Also, the fear of committing mistakes is another reason that prohibits students from writing.

2.8.4 Inadequate time

Time is of great importance in writing, according to Urquhart and McIver (2005, p.23) who stated that “when you provide your students with the time they need to prewrite, draft, revise, and edit you are helping them improve as writers” (as cited in Souyeh, 2019). To clarify, writing skill is complex by nature since it consists of many stages; hence, time management is a crucial element in the writing process and each step should be given its needed time in order to obtain an effective piece of writing.

2.8.5 Mother tongue interference

Weigle (2002, p. 37) reported that “in order to write good English, I know that I had to be myself actually meant not to my Chinese self. It meant that I had to create an English self and be that self". The influence of the native language is one of the major factors that can hamper students' writing since they think about the mother tongue language instead of the target one when writing their sentences. In the same vein, Daulay

(1982, as cited in Hamdaoui, 2016) viewed interference as “the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language”. That is to say, learners use their phonological, grammatical, lexical, and orthographical rules of their native language ignoring that each language has its own conventions.

Conclusion

Just as learning the rules of tennis is not the same as being able to play it, learning the rules of language does not make individuals good writers. Writing is one of the major literary skills that need to be mastered by all human beings. In this chapter we spot the light on the notion of writing; its nature, definition, importance, stages, characteristics, and approaches as well as highlighting the common problems in writing and some reasons behind these difficulties. From what has been stated, we bring to an end that writing is a complex form of communication because it is both a skill and a means of self-expression.

Chapter Three
Fieldwork and Data
Analysis

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Introduction

The current chapter presents the fieldwork of this study, which is about investigating students' writing challenges, and common errors/ mistakes that they share in writing paragraphs. In doing so, a descriptive study has been adopted to collect and analyze data. Accordingly, the data collection tools consist of the students' questionnaire and teachers' interviews. These data gathering tools are conceptualized on the basis of the theoretical part of this research study. The present chapter is an attempt to gather data in order to investigate the main research questions. Additionally, it seeks to analyze and discuss the obtained results and use the findings to avail and validate the research hypothesis stating that the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools can help foster EFL learners' writing skill.

3.1 Review of Research Methodology

3.1.1 Choice of the Method

The research approach can be defined as the theoretical framework of research that a researcher follows depending on the nature of her/ his study. Creswell (2014, p.04) states that "qualitative approach is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human people". That is to say, this type of research approach deals with describing, exploring, or understanding a specific phenomenon. Therefore, we adopted the qualitative approach since the aim of this study is to reveal the usefulness of online grammar and spelling checker tools in enhancing EFL learners' writing skill. Also, For the reason that it is suitable for the nature of the current study, it helps to get more detailed and credible responses. More importantly, it gives the chance to describe teachers' and students' attitudes towards these tools.

3.1.2 Sample of the Study

Due to time and our research nature, a case study (small-scale study) is adopted as a research design. Furthermore, as a representative sample for this study, we dealt with EFL students and teachers in order to check the validity of the hypothesis and gather some information that helps to answer the research questions.

➤ For Students

The population of this study was Second Year EFL students (Science of the Language) at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. We have chosen this population because second-year students are supposed to write paragraphs. As beginners, they need guidance to improve their writing skill in order to guarantee that they will write effective essays next year. Thus, from the whole population (second-year students) we worked with twenty-eight (n=28) who have been chosen according to a random volunteering technique because the questionnaires were distributed online.

➤ For Teachers

We have chosen the Random Sampling Method to select seven written expression teachers at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. These teachers are experienced and teach different levels not only second-year students to collect their feedback to feed the study.

3.1.3 Data Collection Tools

Data collection methods are crucial in fulfilling the research objectives and the researcher should carefully choose them in order to have effective results. In our study, we delivered a semi-structured questionnaire and interview respectively to EFL students and teachers. There are two main reasons for selecting these data-gathering tools. First, it seeks

to detect students' and teachers' familiarity with online grammar and spelling checker tools as well as their awareness about its benefits in addition to keeping much close to both students and teachers in order to gather extra information.

3.2 Students' Questionnaire

3.2.1 Aims of the Questionnaire

On one hand, the students' questionnaire was designed to detect their background information relating to the notion of writing skill as well as to reveal the reasons behind writing hindrance. On the other hand, it seeks to diagnose their awareness about the benefits they achieve when using online grammar and spelling checker tools in the writing process.

3.2.2 Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administrated to second-year students in the division of English at Biskra University during the academic year 2019-2020. This questionnaire discusses an issue that is shared by almost all students, the majority of them face the same difficulties in writing skill for that we attempt to improve it through the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools. Additionally, the questionnaire took a long time, for many reasons such as it was not handed but delivered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and not all students were available. Nevertheless, all participants gave beneficial answers and rich information.

3.2.3 Description of the questionnaire

The students questionnaire mainly consists of twenty-four (24) question differ from open-ended to close-ended questions to limit students to the research's theme boundaries

and make them free in giving much more details about our main topic. Moreover, the questions were direct and clear, few of them needed to be justified also we included multiple-choice, likert scale, and rating scale questions. In the end, we left the learners the opportunity to add whatever they want (comments, suggestions, etc).

3.2.4 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Part One: Personal Information

This section contains five questions (from item 1-5), it is concerned with general information of the learners in order to obtain credible results.

Item 1. Would you specify your gender, please?

Table 3.1: Students' Gender

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Male	4	14%
b. Female	24	86%
Total	28	100%

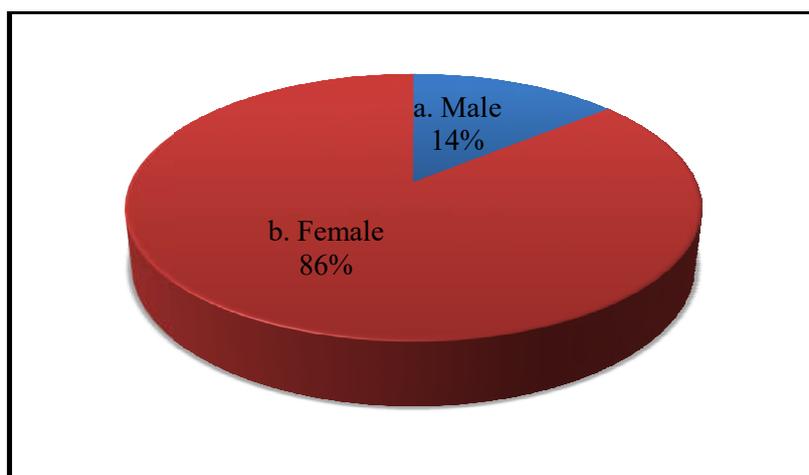


Figure 3.1: Students' Gender

Table (3.1) demonstrates the distribution of gender in our sample. It is observable that 24 out of 28 respondents were females this is about (86 %) which consolidates that females are more interested in learning foreign languages and English in particular. Males in general tend to prefer scientific fields of study. Therefore, we found only 04 males out of 28 with a percentage of (14 %).

Item 2. How do you consider your level in English?

Table 3.2: Students' Evaluation of Their Level in English

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Outstanding	1	4%
b. Good	19	67%
c. Average	7	25%
d. Low	1	4%
Total	28	100%

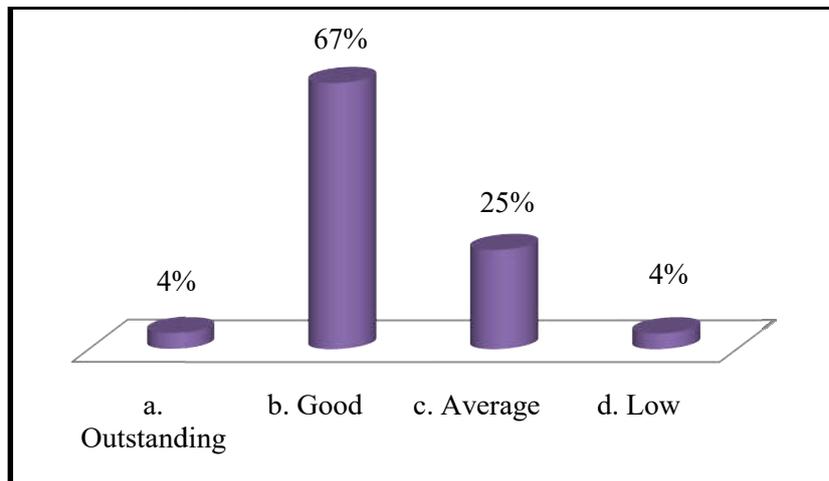


Figure 3.2: Students' Evaluation of Their Level in English

This question was asked to respondents to give their evaluation of their level in English. As the table indicated, the majority (more than half) of respondents perceive

themselves as good students that represent (67%), while 07 respondents that represent (25%) claimed that they have an average level. As it is shown four percent is repeated twice that represents one respondent who declared that his/her level is outstanding meanwhile the other one admitted that she/he has a low level. Consequently, we conclude that learners encounter difficulties that prevent them from getting an excellent level.

Item 3. To what extent each of the following language learning skills is important for you?

Table 3.3: The degree of Importance of Language Learning Skills for Students

Options	Very important		important		Somehow important		Not important at all	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
a. The reading skill	4	14%	19	68%	5	18%	0	0%
b. The listening skill	12	43%	12	43%	4	14%	0	0%
c. The speaking skill	16	57%	11	39%	1	4%	0	0%
d. The writing skill	20	71%	3	11%	4	14%	1	4%

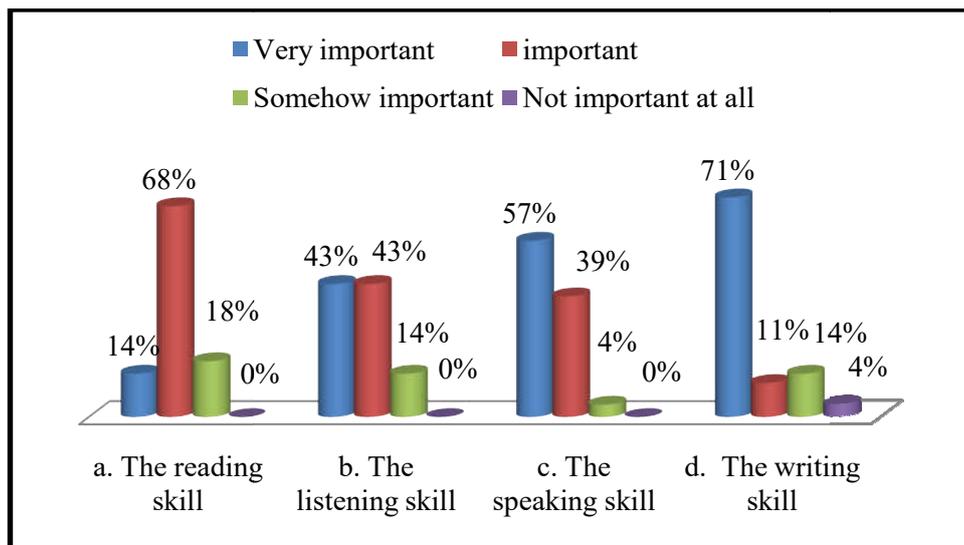


Figure 3.3: The degree of Importance of Language Learning Skills for Students

This item sought to determine to what extent the four skills are important to EFL learners. To simplify, we asked them to classify the skills according to their level of importance (from very important to not important at all).

Initially, a high percentage of (68%) stressed that “the reading skill” is important in the learning process. Whereas, the percentage of (18%) claimed it is somehow important, and (14%) pointed out that it is a very important skill. Moreover, no one stated it is not important. Thus the majority of EFL students consider reading as an important language learning skill.

Secondly, as table and figure (3.3) showed a percentage of (43%) is equally repeated. That indicates that respondents argued about the importance of “listening skill” some viewed it as an important skill others saw it as a very important learning skill. On the other side, no one provided a negative response and the lowest percentage was (14%) which claimed that listening skill is somehow important. Thus, from the statistics mentioned we infer that the importance of listening is undeniable in EFL learning.

Furthermore, when the respondents were asked to classify “the speaking skill”, none of them noted that it is not important. Yet, (04%) claimed that it is somehow important. While the highest percentage (57%) confirmed its great importance and (39%) affirmed that it is an important skill. Hence, the biggest number of respondents agreed that speaking is a very important skill in learning a foreign language.

Similarly, the last given element was “the writing skill” unlike the previous skills (04%) indicated that it is not important at all. However, a percentage of (14%) stated it is somehow important, and (11%) pointed it is an important skill. Next to that, a high

percentage of (71%) asserted that writing skill is very important. Hence, the majority of respondents consider writing as a crucial skill.

All in all, from the statistics mentioned above we deduce that students are interested in speaking and writing since they are productive skills. Learners find that writing skill is the most important one for the reason that the major tasks are given in a written form. Nevertheless, they are not aware that these skills work on parallel and must be mastered.

Item 4. In which skill do you find more difficulties?

Table 3.4: Students' Difficult Skill

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Listening	3	11%
b. Speaking	11	39%
c. Reading	1	4%
d. Writing	13	46%
Total	28	100%

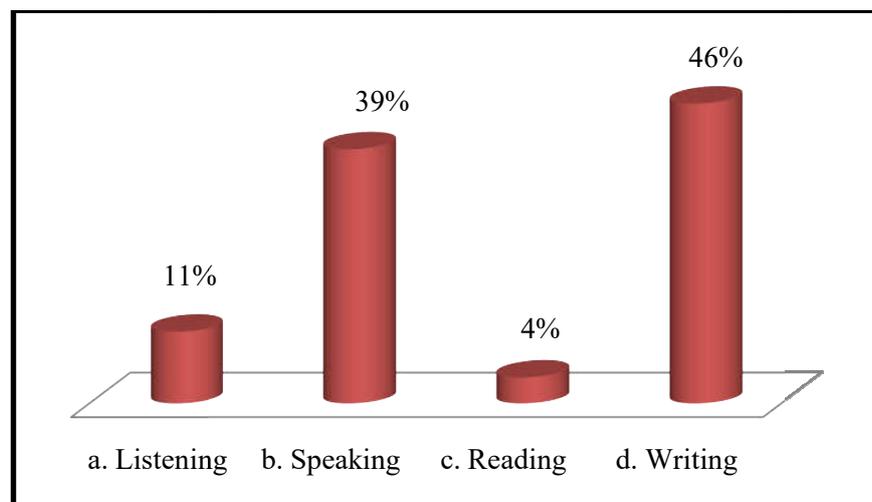


Figure 3.4: Students' Difficult Skill

Statistically speaking, nearly half of respondents “13” that represent (46%) find more difficulties in writing skill. Whereas, a percentage of (39%) correspond that they face difficulty in speaking. As for listening it was about (11%) and only (04%) that represent one respondent demonstrated that she/he encounters difficulty in the reading skill. Thus, second-year students as beginners suffer when it comes to the production phase due to the complexity of the language rules which differ from skill to another.

Item 5. How do you evaluate your writing skill?

Table 3.5: Students’ Evaluation of Their Writing Skill

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Poor- I definitely need some help	0	0%
b. Acceptable- but I know I could improve	1	4%
c. Good- I could improve with some advanced tips	14	50%
d. Excellent- I do not think I could improve much	13	46%
Total	28	100%

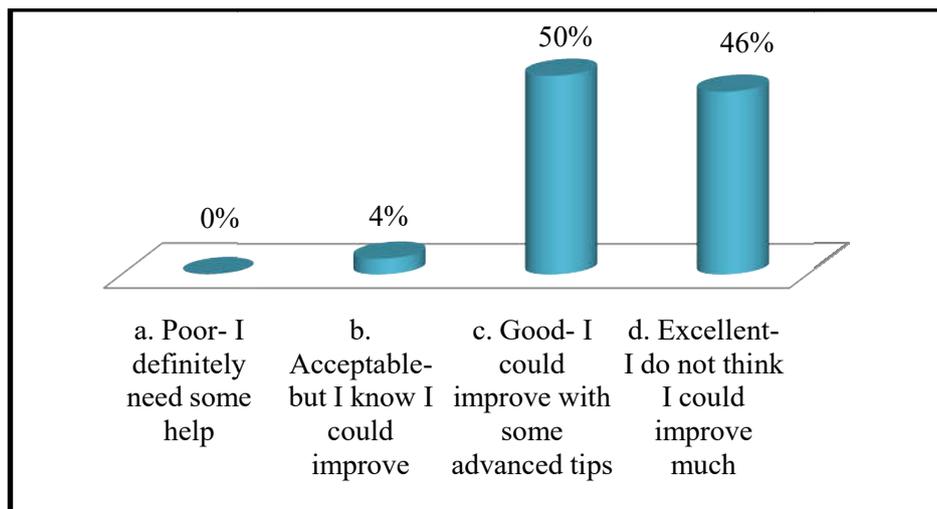


Figure 3.5: Students’ Evaluation of Their Writing Skill

From table (3.5) half of the respondents which represent (50%) declared that they have a good level in writing yet they could improve with some advanced tips. Next to that, a considerable percentage (46%) refers to those who have selected “I do not think I could improve much”, and who perceive that they have excellent writing proficiency. This means that their level of self-confidence is high. Moreover, none of the respondents provided a negative answer about their writing level and only one of them claimed that she/he has an acceptable writing skill. Hence, we conclude that students are not aware of the complexity of writing skill since most of them consider themselves good writers. EFL learners need guidance for betterment.

Part Two:

This section is devoted to collect data about “writing skill” and “online grammar and spelling checker tools” which are the variables of this research study. It contains nineteen questions (6-24).

Item 6. Are you satisfied with the way the course of written expression is being taught?

Table 3.6: Students’ Satisfaction with the Way the Course of Written Expression is being Taught

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	13	46%
b. No	15	54%
Total	28	100%

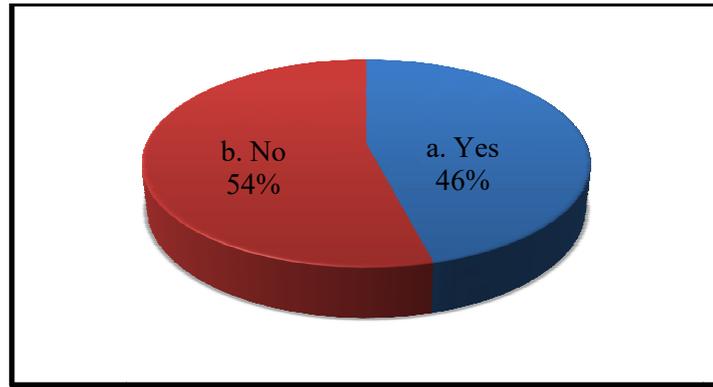


Figure 3.6: Students' Satisfaction with the Way the Course of Written Expression is being Taught

As a departure point, we tended to know whether students are satisfied with the way of teaching written expression course. From figure (3.6) it is observable that more than half (54%) of respondents provided a negative answer. The reasons behind their dissatisfaction level may refer either to the teachers' style or the materials used. Hence, we aim at raising EFL learners' and teachers' awareness towards new methods.

Item 7. To what extent do you think that written expression course is important in EFL learning?

Table 3.7: The Importance of Written Expression in EFL Learning

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Very important	24	85%
b. Important	3	11%
c. Neutral	1	4%
Total	28	100%

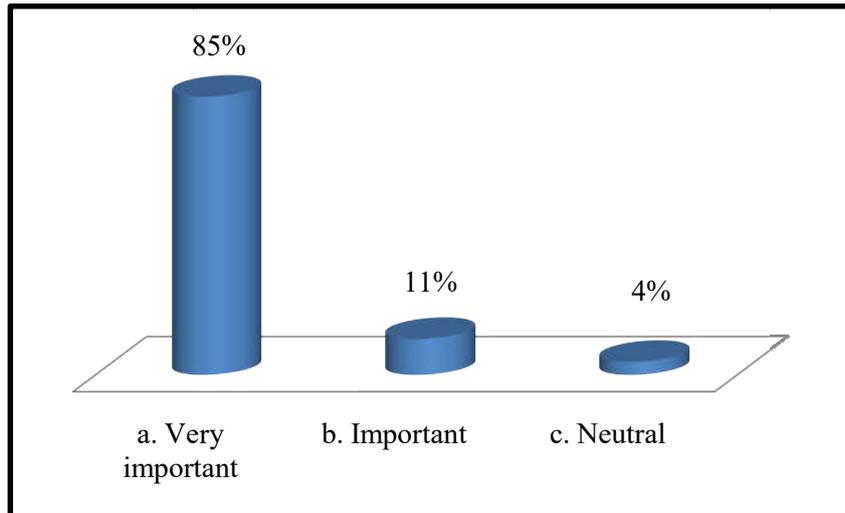


Figure 3.7: The Importance of Written Expression in EFL Learning

This designed item sought to know to what extent students think that written expression course is crucial in EFL learning. A big number of respondents (85%) asserted that it is very important and some of them (11%) assumed that it is important while one of the respondents gave a neutral answer. To sum up, the majority of EFL learners are aware of the great importance of written expression course because only through this course they can develop their writing proficiency.

Item 8. What makes writing a hard task to do?

Table 3.8: The Reason that Makes Writing Task Difficult

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Time limitation	9	32%
b. Anxiety and self-confidence	5	18%
c. Lack of motivation	6	21%
d. All of them	8	29%
Total	28	100%

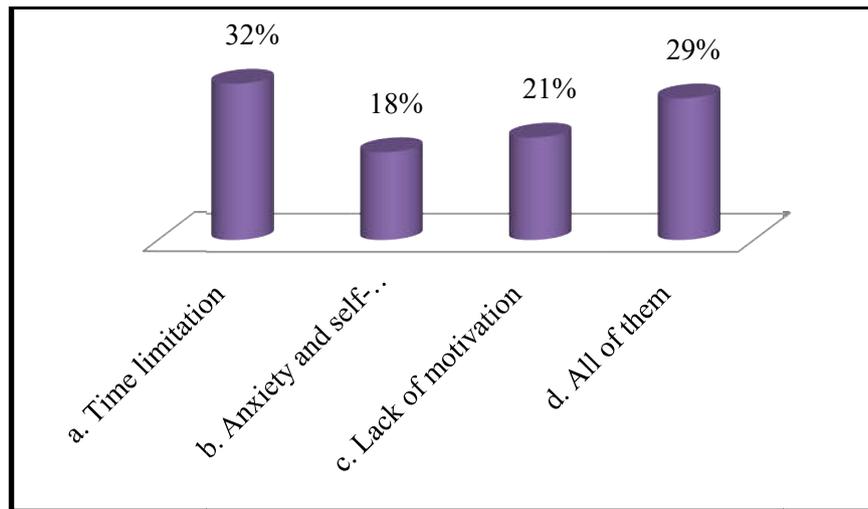


Figure 3.8: The Reason that Makes Writing Task Difficult

The purpose of this item is to determine the reasons behind students' writing inability. To begin with, a percentage of (32%) indicated that a writing task is difficult due to time limitation while (18%) demonstrated that it is because of anxiety and self-confidence whereas (21%) reflected a lack of motivation factor. Next to that, eight of the respondents that represent (29%) selected the option "all of them" which means that they agreed that all the previous reasons affect writing activity. Furthermore, we have asked students to add any other obstacles so they have stated the following:

Others

- Ideas and content, is the most difficult part for me, because mastering writing rules can be done through writing lessons, but the content and ideas are for the learner to develop, which takes much time and effort.
- Brainstorming the ideas besides the unfamiliarity with the topic addressed
- Knowing the appropriate conventions and rules of writing
- Lack of academic terminology
- The topics
- I have grammar problems

To summarize the yielded data, students' writing ability is affected by a variety of factors. One of the main reasons is time constraints since they write under pressure in the classrooms they push themselves to finish at the given time. Hence, EFL learners need to learn the correct concept of writing skill and find solutions to the aforementioned challenges.

Item 9. According to you, what are the main reasons behind poor writing? (You may choose more than one option)

Table 3.9: Reasons behind Students' Poor Writing

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Mother tongue interference	0	0%
b. Lack of reading	3	11%
c. Lack of practice	3	11%
d. Lack of guidance	1	3%
e. More than one reason	19	75%
f. All of them	2	7%
Total	28	100%

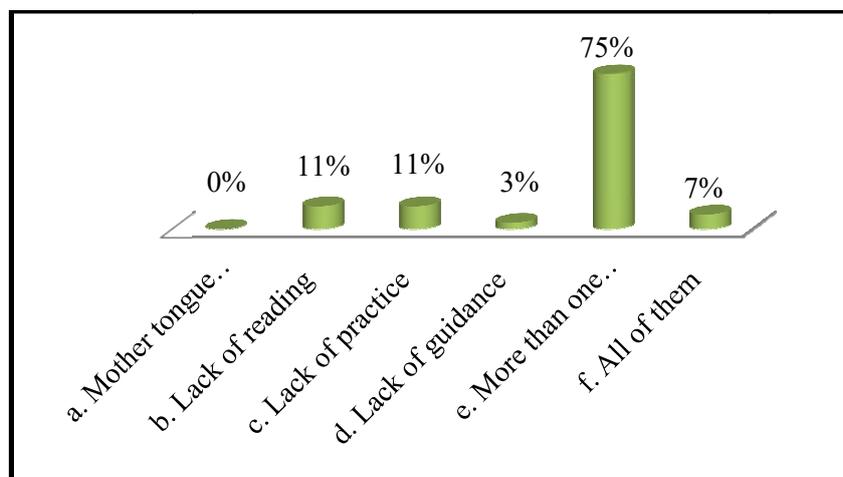


Figure 3.9: Reasons behind Students' Poor Writing

An interesting data gathered from this item, As it is illustrated in the above table, none of the respondents have selected the option mother tongue interference; which reflects that they did not experience it before or they do not take it as a serious issue. Furthermore, an equal percentage of (11%) outcomes those who have chosen lack of reading is behind writing hindrance and the other (11%) have agreed it is because of lack of practice while one of the respondents that represent (03%) stated it is due to lack of guidance. However, a noticeable number of respondents (75%) have chosen more than one option, and (07%) of them selected all the previously mentioned reasons. Thus, we deduce that writing proficiency is affected by different factors. Also, EFL learners are not aware of the consequences that can be resulted from the native language (Arabic).

Item 10. What are the different types of difficulties you face when writing your paragraphs? (You may choose more than one option)

Table 3.10: Type(s) of Difficulties Students Face When Writing Their Paragraphs

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Grammar	2	7%
b. Word choice	0	0%
c. Punctuation	0	0%
d. Spelling	2	7%
e. Generating ideas	3	11%
f. More than one difficulty	21	75%
Total	28	100%

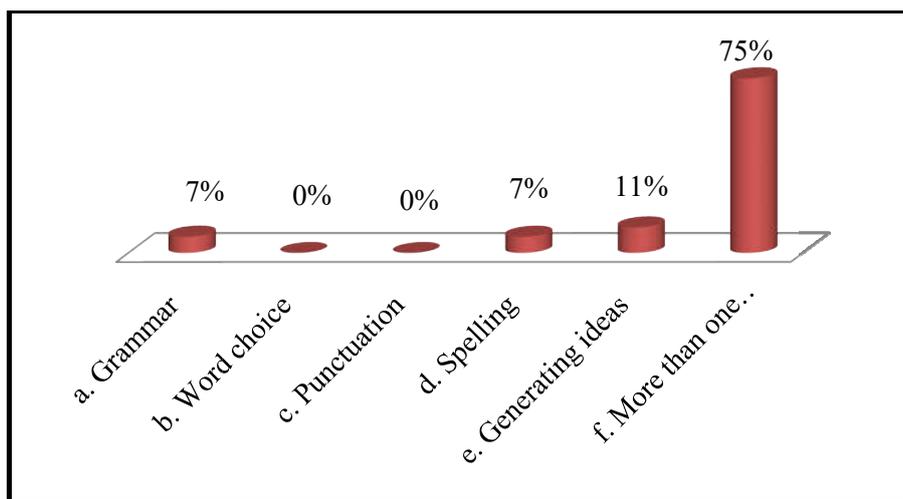


Figure 3.10: Type(s) of Difficulties Students Face When Writing Their Paragraphs

Most of the students find themselves unable to write accurately because they face a series of difficulties that affect their writing. It is observable that none of the respondents have selected that poor writing is resulted by word choice and punctuation. Yet, an equal percentage (07%) represented those who face grammar difficulties and another (07%) have spelling issues whereas (11%) find that generating ideas is the hardest part about writing paragraphs. Otherwise, (75%) of respondents have chosen more than one option. That means students encounter multiple obstacles related to the linguistic background and the writing process. Therefore, we infer that EFL learners are conscious of their writing deficiency and need help to improve.

Item 11. Do you always follow the writing steps when producing your paragraphs?

Table 3.11: Students' Responses about Whether They Follow the Writing Steps When Producing Their Paragraphs or Not

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	11	39%
b. No	17	61%
Total	28	100%

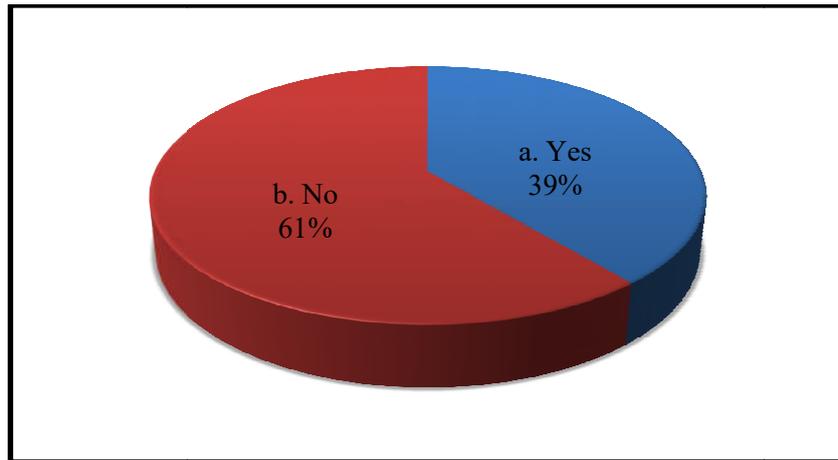


Figure 3.11: Students' Responses about Whether They Follow the Writing Steps When Producing Their Paragraphs or Not

Through this item, we spotlight on the writing process and its role in polishing students' written production. Figure (3.11) indicated that a considerable number of respondents (61%) do not follow the writing steps when producing their paragraphs, which explains their poor level of writing.

If yes, why?

This sub-question objective is to verify students' awareness of the writing process. So we asked them if they respect the writing steps to state the reasons and they provided the following:

- Because writing a coherent and cohesive (a meaningful) paragraph is our target by following the academic criteria of writing a paragraph.
- To make sure that I didn't forget anything and do mistakes
- Because it is effective in organizing the ideas, correcting the language used in writing, and checking for different mistakes.
- To achieve a proper piece of writing

- It becomes more a habit not intended to do it but it helps though some steps can be thought of. Not written
- To make the paragraph arranged.
- To correct mistakes.
- I think this is the only way to do it right
- To create an adequate and well written piece of writing
- To have a good coherent paragraph
- To check for any mistakes and make my writing clear

To conclude, a minority of EFL learners are aware of the importance of the writing process in reaching the final version of the written production and developing their writing skill in general.

Item 12. Where do you find it difficult to do a writing task?

Table 3.12: Settings Where Students Find Difficulties in Writing Tasks

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. In class	25	89%
b. At home	3	11%
Total	28	100%

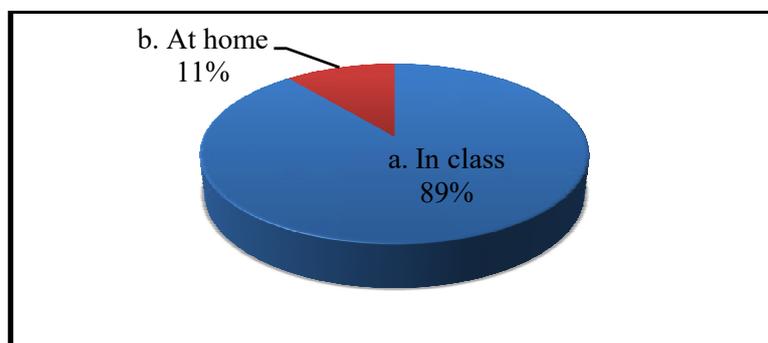


Figure 3.12: Settings Where Students Find Difficulties in Writing Tasks

The above table (3.12) revealed that a large number of respondents 25 out of 28 find it difficult to write in the class rather than at home. That is to say, students write at ease at home since they can check dictionaries and use the Internet to consolidate their writings also they are not limited by time so they can review their written productions.

Item 13. How often do you write outside the classroom?

Table 3.13: The Frequency of Writing Outside the Classroom

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Always	0	0%
b. Sometimes	3	11%
c. Rarely	10	36%
d. Never	15	53%
Total	28	100%

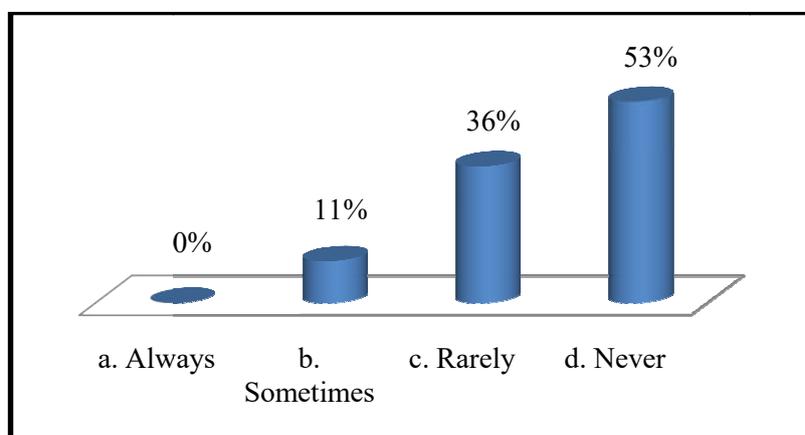


Figure 3.13: The Frequency of Writing Outside the Classroom

This item sought to know whether students have the habit of writing at home. Statistically speaking, almost half of the respondents (53%) do not write outside the classroom. Furthermore, (36%) of them affirmed that they rarely do while (11%) stated that sometimes they write outside the classroom. Thus, we infer that students rely only on

the course given by the teacher and they do not practice what they have learned. Therefore, EFL learners need to train themselves to develop their writing skill.

Item 14. What tools/ sources do you use when writing your paragraphs?

Table 3.14: Tools/ Sources Used by Students When Writing Their Paragraphs

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Books	0	0%
b. Web sites/ Internet	22	79%
c. Dictionaries	6	21%
Total	28	100%

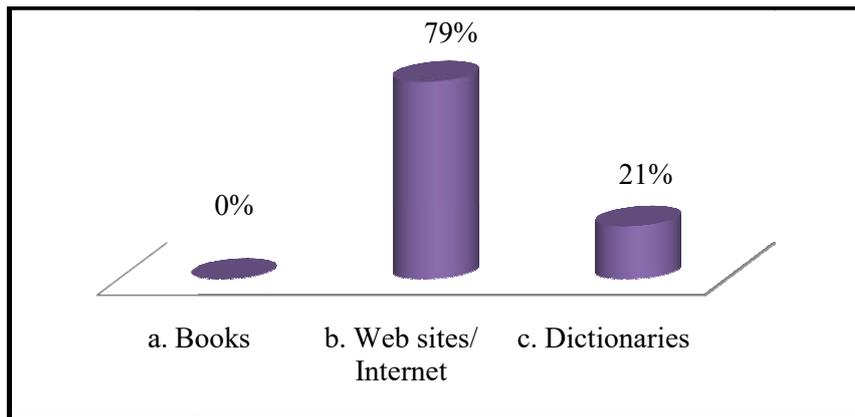


Figure 3.14: Tools/ Sources Used by Students When Writing Their Paragraphs

The above table (3.14) illustrated that many respondents (79%) use websites and the Internet to write their paragraphs while (21%) ensured that they use dictionaries and none of them stated that they use books. Thus, the majority of EFL learners tend to use technology since it is easy to access and more interesting for them. That means ICTs facilitates the process of writing.

Item 15. Does your teacher allow you to use dictionaries to check the right spelling and meaning of words when writing?

Table 3.15: Students' Responses about Whether Their Teachers Allow Them to Use Dictionaries

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	24	86%
b. No	4	14%
Total	28	100%

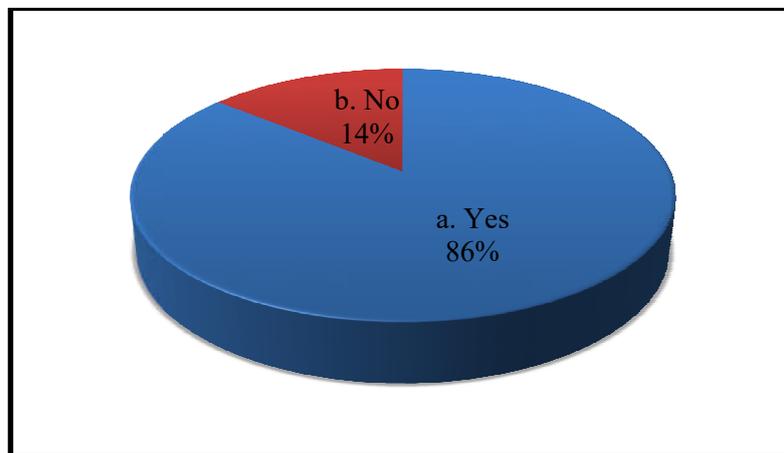


Figure 3.15: Students' Responses about Whether Their Teachers Allow them to Use Dictionaries

As it is clearly shown in the above table, the majority of respondents (86%) confirmed that teachers allow them to use dictionaries in order to check spelling and the appropriate word. Thus, we deduce that EFL teachers are aware of their students' needs. Indeed second-year students are considered beginners who need feedback and guidance.

Item 16. How often do you use the Internet to write a paragraph?

Table 3.16: Frequency of Students Use of Internet to Write a Paragraph

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Always	9	32%
b. Often	15	54%
c. Rarely	4	14%
d. Never	0	0%
Total	28	100%

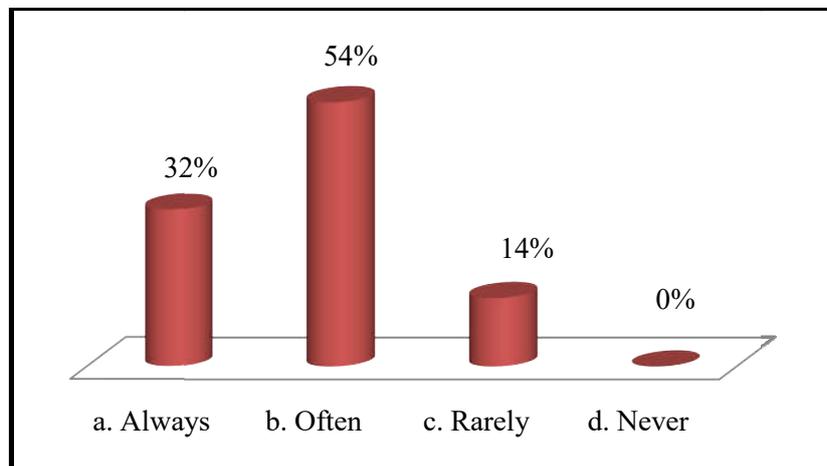


Figure 3.16: Frequency of Students Use of Internet to Write a Paragraph

Statistically speaking, nearly half of the respondents (54%) ensured that they use the Internet most of the time in order to write a paragraph. Furthermore, (32%) of them affirmed that they use it always while (14%) claimed that they rarely use it. However, no one of them stated that they never use the Internet. Hence, we infer that students rely on technology to accomplish a given assignment. That it is to say the integration of ICTs including the Internet is beneficial and inevitable in the learning-teaching process.

Item 17. What types of online platforms/ applications do you use most? (You may choose more than one answer)

Table 3.17: Students’ Most Used Online Platforms/ Applications

Option	Percentage	Percentage
a. Educational websites	13	46%
b. Edu-blogs	1	3%
c. Online grammar and spelling checker tools	3	12%
d. More than one answer	10	36%
e. All of them	1	3%
Total	28	100%

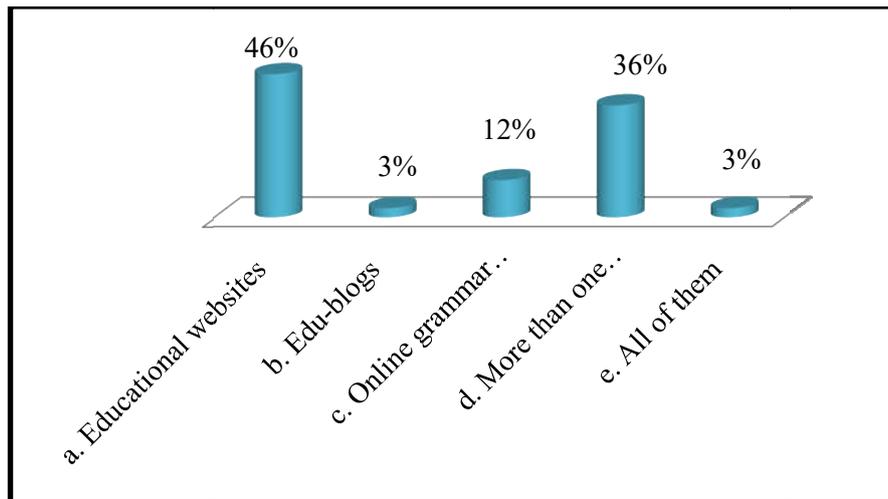


Figure 3.17: Students’ Most Used Online Platforms/ Applications

From table and figure (3.17), it is indicated that (46%) of the respondents use the educational websites as their main source, and (12%) of them use online grammar and spelling checker applications. Yet, an equal percentage (03%) represents one respondent and reflects the use of edu-blogs and the other (03%) refers to the use of all the previously mentioned tools. Next to that, (36%) of respondents declared that they use more than one

source. Hence, students fulfill their needs through the use of ICTs. Therefore, we infer that the implementation of technology is a necessity for EFL learners.

Item 18. Do you agree that the teacher plays a crucial role in providing corrective feedback?

Table 3.18: The Importance of Teacher’s Corrective Feedback

Option	Percentage	Percentage
a. Yes	27	97%
b. No	1	3%
Total	28	100%

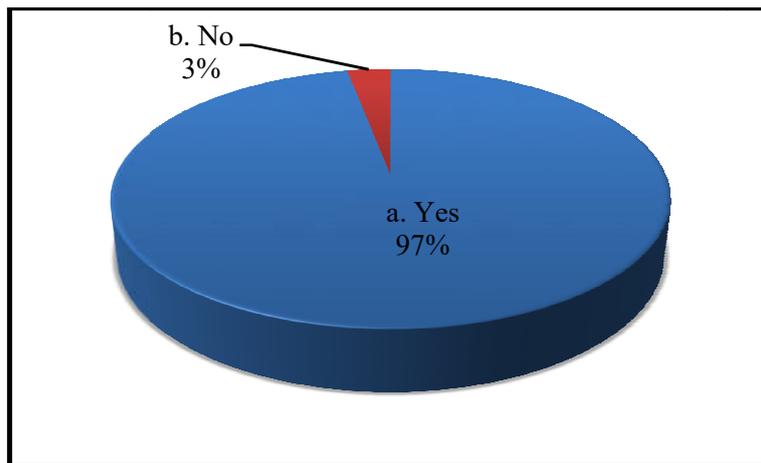


Figure 3.18: The Importance of Teacher’s Corrective Feedback

It is clearly shown in the above table, the majority of respondents (97%) agreed that the teacher has a vital role in providing corrective feedback. Therefore, the existence of a relationship between teacher and feedback has been validated. That means EFL learners should pay attention to their teachers and benefit from their comments.

Item 19. When correcting your written productions, on which aspect(s) does your teacher focus more?

Table 3.19: Aspects of Which Teacher’s highlights When Correcting Students’ Written Productions

Option	Percentage	Percentage
a. Content	2	7%
b. Form	5	18%
c. Language	5	18%
d. All of them	16	57%
Total	28	100%

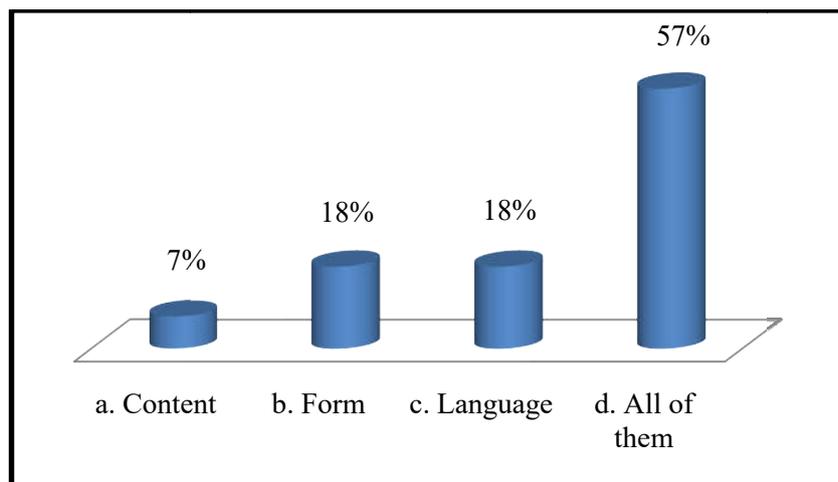


Figure 3.19: Aspects of Which Teacher’s highlights When Correcting Students’ Written Productions

Others

- Grammar mistakes
- Grammar
- Structure and form of the sentences

- Knowing how to use a language with its elements from a word, punctuation, a verb... Is very crucial to communicate your message with the interlocuter/ reader.

As it is illustrated in the above table, The lowest percentage of (07%) represents the respondents who declared that when correcting their pieces of writing the teacher focus on the content rather than form and language. Next to that, an equal percentage of (18%) outcomes those who have selected form and the other (18%) claimed that language is what the teacher emphasizes most. However, more than half of respondents (57%) affirmed that the teacher pays attention to all the aspects: content, form, and language. To sum up, from students' answers and the statistics gathered we deduce that writing is restricted with certain criteria that must be respected and presented in any written production. Indeed writing skill is concerned with language use, sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and mechanism.

Item 20. Do you depend only on your teacher's and / or your mates' feedback?

Table 3.20: Students' Responses about Whether They Depend Only on Their Teachers/Mates' Feedback

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	17	61%
b. No	11	39%
Total	28	100%

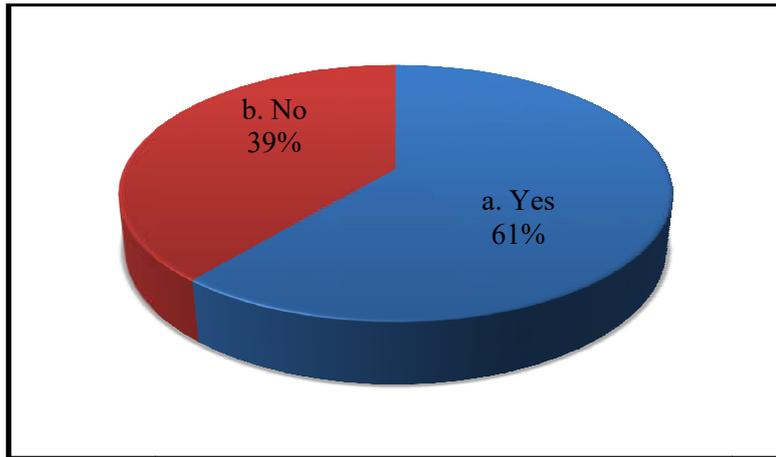


Figure 3.20: Students' Responses about Whether They Depend Only on Their Teachers/Mates' Feedback

If no, please mention the other sources of feedback

- I do a comparison between someone's paragraph on the internet and check my mistakes.
- Checking in internet
- Online website
- Internet
- Google translate.
- The internet
- After receiving the teacher's feedback, I always try spot and revise my mistakes and errors
- I sometimes check on the internet and compare whether I followed the appropriate process in writing.
- Online checkers

This item sought to determine the ways that are used by students in order to get feedback. Statistically speaking, the highest percentage of (61%) of respondents confirmed

that they depend only on their teachers and mates' feedback. Whereas, (39%) of them stated that they use other methods as stated above. Hence, we infer that most students prefer to get direct feedback from teachers and classmates however they consider ICTs to do so. That means EFL learners are aware of the crucial role of feedback and use a variety of sources in proofreading their pieces of writing.

Item 21. Are you familiar with online grammar and spelling checker tools such as (Grammarly)

Table 3.21: Students' Familiarity with Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	16	57%
b. No	12	43%
Total	28	100%

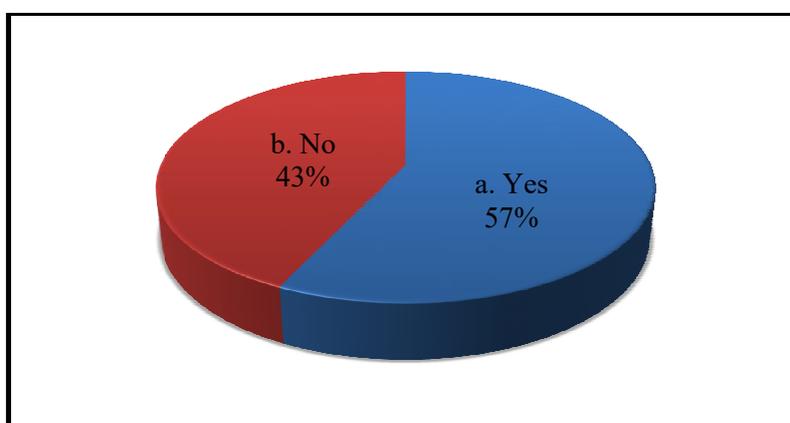


Figure 3.21: Students' Familiarity with Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools

As it is clearly shown in the table (3.21), more than half of respondents 16 out of 28 declared that they do know online grammar and spelling checker tools. Still, some students are not aware of these types of applications this represents (43%) of respondents. Therefore, the main aim behind this item is to raise EFL learners' awareness about these

types of tools such as “Grammarly” which helps them to correct their own mistakes and learn from it.

Item 22. Do you use online grammar and spelling checker tools for proofreading?

Table 3.22: Students’ Use of Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools for Proofreading

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Yes	14	50%
b. No	14	50%
Total	28	100%

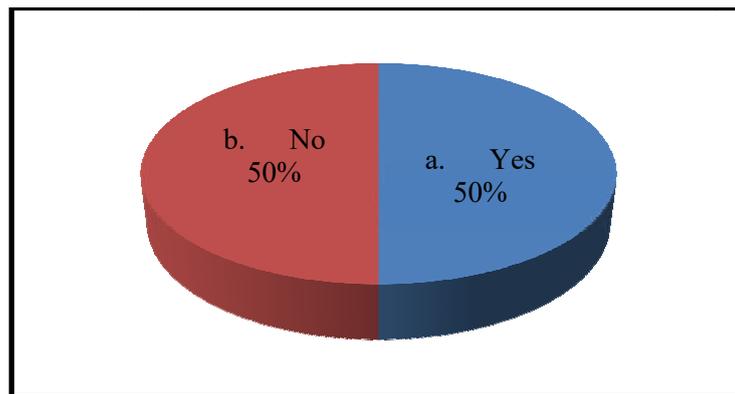


Figure 3.22: Students’ Use of Online Grammar and Spelling Checker Tools for Proofreading

Students’ Justifications

a) For “Yes”

- To make sure that I’m correct
- In order to check the mistakes and correct it
- While writing I usually make unintentional mistakes and don't notice them until I got them corrected by the checker.
- Because it is useful and helps a lot

- "because of the time and its easy way "
- It helps to improve
- To correct what I have write if I did mistakes
- Easy, fast and practical
- They correct the mistakes
- It helps me to correct the punctuation and word choice
- I rely hundred percent on those applications and online cites with the same function because it is helpful a lot
- Because it helps much
- It's so helpful
- It helps me correct my grammar mistakes and provide me with better ways to express my ideas in a more comprehensible way.

b) For "No"

- Just for laziness
- Most of time I don't have connection
- I'm not familiar with using them
- I don't know this application simply
- I refer to my classmate for proofreading and correcting spelling and grammatical mistakes, because I can discuss with her and ask her for explanation.
- I often use dictionary
- Only for correcting grammatical mistakes
- I didn't need them before
- I am not used to them
- Usually I correct my mistakes alone
- I believe I do better without it if I proofread
- I just don't.

- I prefer direct correction from the teacher. Or a mentor who revise my work face to face. He just mentions where the mistake is.
- Because I don't know this kind of applications

This item sought to know if students use online grammar and spelling checkers as a source of feedback and a tool for proofreading. The above table demonstrated that a percentage of (100%) is divided equally into (50%) that represents the respondents who do not use online grammar and spelling checker tools while the other (50%) ensured that they use these types of applications. When we asked them to provide a justification they gave various reasons. On one hand, students do not know this type of application otherwise they prefer the traditional methods, i.e., to get feedback from teachers or peers. On the other hand, learners appreciate the existence of these tools since it helps them to reduce their written mistakes in a short time. Indeed online grammar and spelling checker tools are a practical way of proofreading and all EFL learners should be aware of its vital role in correcting errors/mistakes.

Item 23. On a scale of (1-5), how do you rate the degree of difficulty of using grammar and spelling checker tools?

Table 3.23: Grammar and Spelling Tools Difficulty

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. 1 (very easy)	6	21%
b. 2 (Easy)	12	43%
c. 3(Somehow difficult)	8	29%
d. 4 (Difficult)	2	7%
e. 5 (very difficult)	0	0%
Total	28	100%

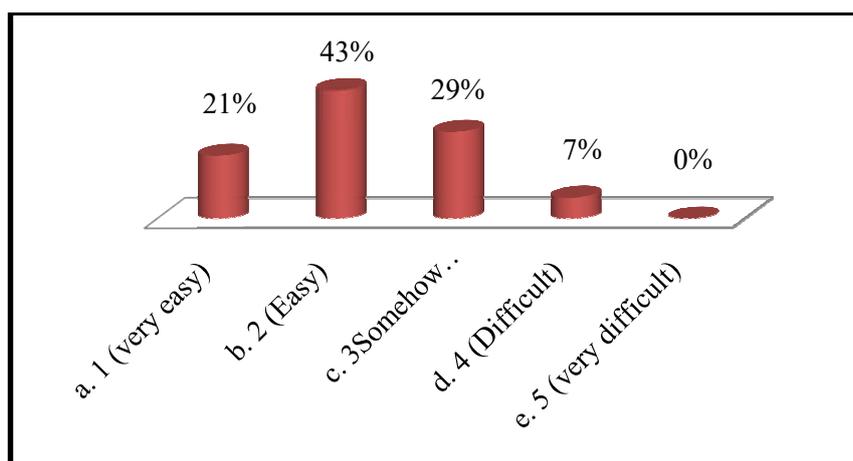


Figure 3.23: Grammar and Spelling Tools’ Difficulty

Statistically speaking, although (29%) of the respondents claimed that the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools is somehow difficult and (07%) of them stated that it is hard to use. The highest percentage (43%) of them affirmed that these applications are easy to use and (21%) viewed that it is very easy to deal with. Hence, we infer that either students are ignorant when it comes to ICTs because this type of application work by artificial intelligence, or their level is low so they cannot understand the suggestions given by these tools. Therefore, EFL learners should train themselves and try new ways of learning since it is the era of technology.

Item 24. In your opinion, to what extent can online grammar and spelling checker tools be useful for ameliorating EFL students’ written production?

Table 3.24: The Usefulness of Online Grammar and Spelling Checkers for Ameliorating EFL Students’ Written Productions

Option	Respondents	Percentage
a. Very useful	18	64%
b. Somehow useful	10	36%
c. Not useful at all	0	0%
Total	28	100%

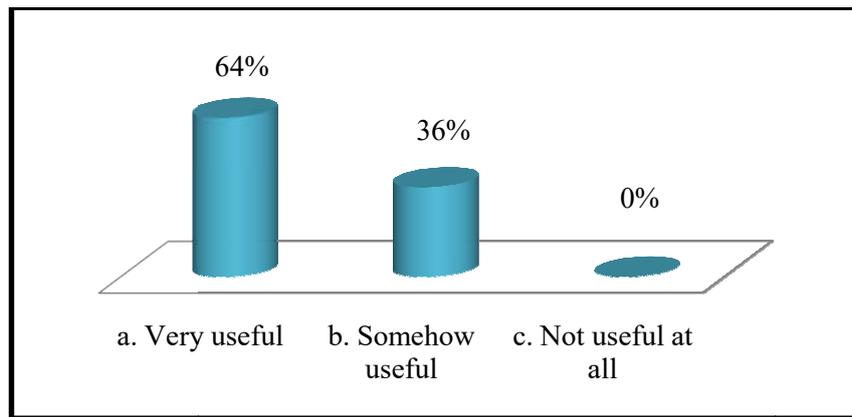


Figure 3.24: The Usefulness of Online Grammar and Spelling Checker for Ameliorating EFL Students' Written Productions

Students' justifications

a) For "Very useful"

- They literally play the role of a teacher that reviews your writings and improve them by correcting the spelling or grammar mistakes.
- It's faster and much easier than books
- Because it marks all. The mistaking parts and provide the correct form for any problem (grammar/spelling)
- It helps students to correct their mistakes, and improve their written English
- Help not to fall on the same mistakes or errors next times.
- Useful because it gives us the correction immediately
- Because it shows all your mistakes and u correct it yourself. Thus, u know your weaknesses and u improve them
- It would help them correct what they have written without the interference of their teachers
- Because it's easy to use and practical in which it solves tense and grammar issues

- It demishes errors and helps the writer how to formulate concise and meaningful sentences
- It eliminates redundancy
- Because they show you your mistakes
- It sometimes corrects your wrong ideas
- Sometimes rushing into writing and even if revised, so it checks after me
- It helps them be more aware of what they are writing
- It corrects all errors and mistakes
- It helps me brainstorm for new ideas to use in my writing.
- It shows me where I did a mistake with explanation and suggestion

b) For “Somehow useful”

- When the student realizes his mistakes, he will remember next time to write correctly
- It depends
- Many ideas at one place
- Because it can't be used everywhere only when using internet and not used in the classroom
- I consider them somehow useful because in a way they correct spelling and grammar mistakes but sometimes the correction is wrong. For the reason that it remains a computer software and can't understand what the writer means all the time, so the software makes corrections based on what it "thinks" the writer means.
- "If these checker tools do that automatically with a one bottom. The student can't learn from his mistakes “

- The learner should not depend on such tools, they can be used at the beginning of learning writing, but at the end, the learner must depend on himself to have a good language when writing.
- It can be a good aid but we cannot depend on it 100%
- "I use them all the time because it is quick and easy. The negative about it is that I can't learn in this way because I don't remember the rules"

The objective of this item is to detect the role of online grammar and spelling checker tools in the writing process. It is evident from the table (3.24) that none of the respondents stated that it is not useful and a minority of them (36%) claimed that it is somehow useful. Furthermore, (64%) of the respondents confirmed that the use of these applications is very useful. That is to say, students have a positive attitude towards the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools and the answers given by the respondents proved what we have said in the previous item. Therefore, EFL learners need to cope with technology and practice more to train their minds and reach better results in writing.

3.3 Teachers' Interview

3.3.1 Aims of the Interview

The under-investigated study interview was designed to get insights into the students' writing problems. Also, it seeks to determine teachers' points of view towards the role of online grammar and spelling checker tools as a means of ICTs in promoting EFL learners' writing proficiency.

3.3.2 Administration of the Interview

For the administration phase, the interview was conducted with written expression teachers in the division of English at Biskra University during the academic year 2019-2020. To begin with, the interview was not face to face and did not take a recorded form since it was submitted online via teachers' emails. Moreover, the interview was answered in one week and the teachers were collaborative, they shared their information and experiences.

3.3.3 Description of the interview

The interview was done with seven (07) written expression teachers at the University of Biskra. It is composed of two major sections that are devoted to the research's variables (writing skill/online grammar and spelling checker tools). Furthermore, the interview was semi-structured which contains eleven (11) questions, few questions demanded full answers while others required yes/ no answers with some explanations.

3.3.4 Analysis and Interpretation of the results

As a tool to gather data from teachers, this interview is designed to obtain information opinions, thoughts from teachers that will be analyzed, interpreted, then used to reinforce our study.

Item 1. What does “Writing skill” mean to you as a foreign language teacher?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	It is a communicative productive skill that EFL learners need and have to master so as to accomplish different tasks (write a production, research paper/ dissertation, answer in tests/ exams...)
Teacher 02	A way of foregrounding thoughts
Teacher 03	It is the knowledge and ability to express ones' ideas clearly and effectively in written form
Teacher 04	It is the ability to Communicate an idea (s) in an accurate sense with coherent and cohesive language with a great attention to mechanics of writing.
Teacher 05	It is the ability to express oneself effectively and clearly in the foreign language in the written form.
Teacher 06	Writing is simply a basic skill
Teacher 07	It is a written form to express oneself accurately & fluently.

Table 3.25: Teachers' definition of writing skill

The first question aims at getting an overview regarding the essential meaning of writing skill according to the teachers’ perspective. Most of them shared one main thought which is that writing skill is one way of transmitting ideas accurately depending on the rules of language to deliver an effective message. Hence, the written form is a crucial means of communication in a foreign language.

Item 2. How do you evaluate your students' writing proficiency? (Outstanding, average, poor)

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Average for the majority. Good for a few.
Teacher 02	Average but some students are doing really good job
Teacher 03	It is average because writing is challenging task even in L1 and when it comes to writing in FL the challenge is greater
Teacher 04	Average. Yet it varies from one student to another.
Teacher 05	It is average for the majority because they face many difficulties when it comes to writing in the target language
Teacher 06	Very poor
Teacher 07	Average

Table 3.26: Teachers' evaluation of students' writing proficiency

Teachers are expected to evaluate their students' level in writing from excellent to low. The table above demonstrates that all of them agreed that learners have an average level, while (teacher 06) claimed that they have a poor level. Nevertheless, a few teachers admitted that there are some very good students when it comes to writing. To conclude, learners' writing proficiency differs from one to another, and teachers are not satisfied with their level since they still suffer from many problems that affect their writing.

Item 3. Do you encourage your students to write outside the classroom?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Giving them extra practice and assignments, encouraging them to have a diary/note book and write about anything they experience, like or dislike.
Teacher 02	That's exactly what I'm doing
Teacher 03	Yes, I usually do and I advise them to have a journal in order to record their diaries day by day
Teacher 04	Yes, I do.
Teacher 05	Yes, I do. I advise them to have a journal where they can free write every day
Teacher 06	Yes of course
Teacher 07	Yes

Table 2.27: Teachers' encouragement for writing

This designed item sought to know whether EFL teachers motivate their students to make extra efforts and write outside the classroom. To clarify, teachers confirmed that they do advise learners to write constantly. E.g (teacher 01, 03, 05) pushes learners to depend on themselves and develop their writing skill by giving them extra practice to do at home or by urging them to have journals.

Item 4. Do you ask your students to write about topics that require Internet access?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Yes
Teacher 02	Yes, I did.
Teacher 03	Yes. Sometimes academic topics require concrete support which May be derived from the internet
Teacher 04	I sometimes do.
Teacher 05	Yes, why not! Concrete support is necessary in academic writing

Teacher 06	Yes
Teacher 07	Most of the time because learners need a support to rely on.

Table 3.28: The use of the Internet in writing

Since it is a globalized world we tended to know if teachers consider ICTs in their daily job life. Hence, the table above illustrates that all teachers implicitly urge their students to use the Internet by asking them to write about topics that require Internet access.

Item 5. What do you think of using the Internet to write a paragraph?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Students can see different styles of writing, can use checkers to correct themselves, can download references, read articles/ notes/ texts. The texts students will find will serve as a reference for them in terms of correctness and organization: students can use them as models to organize their ideas, apply coherence and cohesion, see how punctuation and mechanics are used, use some vocabulary, see how grammar works...
Teacher 02	internet helps widening students' scope while writing it gives them access to a variety of sources
Teacher 03	I do not see any problem on the contrary it can be helpful but the student must acknowledge the sources he has used
Teacher 04	Two-edged sword! It has its pros and cons.
Teacher 05	It may be beneficial to collect and gather supporting ideas
Teacher 06	Might be of help
Teacher 07	As a starting point yes but they should rely on themselves. They take the form not the content.

Table 3.29: Teachers' opinion about using the Internet in writing paragraphs

This item seeks to reveal teachers' awareness about the integration of ICTs in learning. Regardless of (teacher 04) who stated that the Internet has its disadvantages, the

majority of teachers gave positive responses concerning the use of the Internet in writing paragraphs. From the table above we infer that the Internet facilitates the process of writing. To explain, the Internet provides the students with examples of the target subject, so they can make comparison and improve their piece of writing in terms of vocabulary, cohesive devices, and grammar.

Item 6. When correcting your students' written production, do you focus on the form or content? What are the most frequent errors/ mistakes you find?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	I focus on both because they are both important. The most frequent mistakes are grammatical and spelling ones.
Teacher 02	The focus should be on both. Student frequently encounter problems related mainly to grammar and cohesion
Teacher 03	It depends on the level. If the students are beginners I focus on the form (language). In case the students are advanced they would probably have surpassed language difficulties, so I emphasize content. Errors in grammar and sentence structure
Teacher 04	Correcting students' composition must cover both aspects. The most common errors are the ones related to sentence structure.
Teacher 05	I focus on both. For novice writers we tend to emphasize on form, while for advanced writers we care more about content
Teacher 06	Both form and content, and the majority of students commit grammatical errors, punctuation, cohesion and coherence
Teacher 07	On both. Organization of ideas, mechanics, coherence, cohesion & relevance.

Table 3.30: The correction of students' paragraphs and their errors frequency

This item seeks to specify the aspects that written expression teachers pay attention to during the correction of their students' paragraphs also it aims at identifying the types of errors/ mistakes that are committed by learners. The table above manifested that the emphasis is on both form and content. Next to that, most of the teachers declared that the major problems that students have are related to grammar and cohesion besides other issues. Hence, writing is a hard task for EFL learners for that they face many difficulties during this process and good writing is a combination of all language aspects.

Item7. Do you advise your students to proofread their pieces of writing? How?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Yes of course. By asking a peer (peer feedback), or by relying on dictionaries to check for spelling and vocabulary use, using internet / online grammar checkers and correctors, ... (this refers to self-assessment). It greatly improves students' autonomy.
Teacher 02	Yes, I ask them to read their paragraph many times
Teacher 03	Yes, sure by going through their piece of writing again and again or by using peer correction
Teacher 04	Of course. By the end of their writing and before submitting it for assessment, students need to review their products by themselves or with the help of a peer.
Teacher 05	Yes, by using grammar and vocabulary checkers
Teacher 06	Yes, either by doing it themselves or by giving it to a classmate or teacher
Teacher 07	Yes. Through self-assessment& peer assessment.

Table 3.31: Teachers' encouragement for proofreading

The table above shows that all teachers urge learners to proofread their written production either through self-assessment (rereading the composition over and over) or peer assessment (classmate’s feedback). Furthermore, among these teachers (teachers 01 and 05) advise their students to use grammar checkers as a tool for proofreading. That is to say, some teachers consider ICTs in their teaching and they are aware of its benefits.

Item 8. Why is corrective feedback important in the writing process?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	It permits learners to identify their mistakes and weaknesses in writing and to evaluate their progress. It also improves their writing as students know which errors that should not do again.
Teacher 02	Indeed, it is. It helps achieving the final version of students’ paragraph
Teacher 03	It points out to the learner his Errors to avoid them in the future. It helps the teacher to test the effectiveness of his teaching material and techniques and to alter them according to the students’ progress in writing
Teacher 04	It lets students discover their weaknesses and strengths in order to make improvements.
Teacher 05	It points out to the students his areas of difficulty so that he can improve himself
Teacher 06	It raises students' awareness of their own mistakes
Teacher 07	It is the appropriate way to improve the writing process.

Table 3.32: Importance of corrective feedback in the writing process

The objective behind this item is to know to what extent corrective feedback is important in the process of writing. All the interviewed teachers asserted that it is a crucial element as stated by (teacher 06) “it raises students’ awareness of their own mistakes”. In

other words, it widens students' scope to achieve the ultimate goal which is a good piece of writing.

Item 9. In your opinion, is the time allocated to the written expression course sufficient for developing EFL students' writing proficiency?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	No
Teacher 02	No
Teacher 03	No, it is not. Especially because of the class size (overcrowded)
Teacher 04	No, it is not.
Teacher 05	It is not sufficient, so teachers should find strategies to solve the problem. For example, by flipping the classroom
Teacher 06	It is enough but the way it is taught is what really needs to be reconsidered.
Teacher 07	No. Learners need more time for practice.

Table 3.33: Teachers' opinion about the time devoted to written expression course

This item allows us to know whether the time that is allocated to the written expression course is enough for students to eliminate their writing problems. To clarify, from teachers' replies we deduce that learners should spend more effort and practice at home because the time devoted to the written expression course is no sufficient to fully develop their writing proficiency due to overcrowded classrooms.

Yet, (teacher 06) has another view (the time is sufficient) and what should be taken into consideration is how the course has been taught that refers either to the teachers' communication style or the materials/methods used.

Item 10. What does the “Online grammar and spelling checker tools” concept mean to you?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	They are online programs very useful to revise and proofread a written production. The learner introduces his/ her piece of writing and the program highlights the mistakes in grammar, spelling, lexis and suggest corrections.
Teacher 02	A helping tool
Teacher 03	They are devices which help students to proofread their written pieces
Teacher 04	They are useful and helpful applications to ease the process of writing by detecting automatically the error and suggesting the correct version.
Teacher 05	They are devices which may provide assistance to novice writers to check and correct their errors
Teacher 06	It's is a tool that might help students reduce their writing errors
Teacher 07	It is a way to correct mistakes.

Table 3.34: Teachers' definition of online grammar and spelling checkers

The purpose of this item is to detect teachers' familiarity with online grammar and spelling checker tools as a source of feedback. The table above shows that all teachers consider OGSC as helpful aids that correct students' errors/ mistakes automatically as (teacher 01) stated “Very useful to revise and proofread a written production.”. That is to say, they are online platforms that play the role of proofreaders in the process of writing.

Item 11. From your perspective, do you think that online grammar and spelling checker tools are beneficial? In what way?

Teachers	Responses
Teacher 01	Yes, they are. They are easy to use, free, do not take time, the students can use them alone without external help. They help diagnose students' weaknesses, facilitate the process of revising and proofreading to polish the work, and improve their writing skill.
Teacher 02	Yes, but to some extent as it makes students so addicted to it and not to their own skills
Teacher 03	Yes. They facilitate students and teacher tasks. They help students to improve their grammar knowledge and spelling
Teacher 04	Yes, they are. They minimize the number of mistakes in a piece of writing. They also help students in editing their final products.
Teacher 05	Yes of course, they help much to proofread and improve students written productions
Teacher 06	They are inevitable since the majority of students rely on their smart devices to do homework.
Teacher 07	I personally do not use it and I have never advised my students to use it.

Table 3.35: Teachers opinion about online grammar and spelling checkers' usefulness

The last question aims at gathering teachers' points of view that is related to the notion of using online grammar and spelling checker tools in developing EFL learners writing proficiency. The table above illustrates that the majority of teachers have a positive attitude towards OGSC tools except for (teacher 07) who stated that “ I personally do not use it and I have never advised my students to use it”. Furthermore, they pointed out that it is of great importance in the writing process in terms of minimizing students'

errors/mistakes and polishing their written productions. Nevertheless, (teacher 02) declared that learners should rely on themselves in order to not be addicted to these types of tools.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the main concern was implementing a new procedure of proofreading and explaining students' errors/ mistakes as a distinctive tool from the traditional methods: teachers' and peers' feedback. The data gathered from the questionnaire and interview reveal that second-year students face serious challenges and problems that hinder their writing proficiency and affect their written productions. So they are trying to improve their writing skill through feedback and proofreading. Moreover, the responses given by students and teachers showed that they are aware of the vital role of online grammar and spelling checker tools in developing this skill. Therefore, the integration of ICTs in education has become a necessity. That is to say, the hypothesis was confirmed and most of the research questions stated previously answered in our practical part.

Findings and Recommendations

- Teachers are extremely doing their best to promote learners' writing proficiency, through guidance, encouragement, and giving pieces of advice. Thus, students must be more active and try new techniques to achieve better results.

- The process of writing benefits students a lot because it gives them the chance to organize their ideas and correct their mistakes then submit a neat paper. Therefore, it should be taught in the early stages and applied step by step.

- Both of the teachers and students have agreed with the effectiveness of using online grammar and spelling checker tools on fostering the writing skill. Hence, we should spread its culture among EFL teachers and learners.

- Since the LMD educational system is based on the students' independence in learning, we suggest the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools and we urge teachers to raise their learners' awareness to adopt this way of learning.

- Teachers find it uneasy to work on developing the students' writing skill within such crowded classes. Therefore, more time should be devoted to the written expression course and learners must rely on themselves.

- Since students find that time constraints the most challenging in writing any composition teachers should give them some hints about time management through teaching them the basics of the writing process.

- The main factor that affects negatively the quality of writing is the lack of feedback. This calls for engaging the students within some applications and practices to train them more about the different rules of language and aspects of writing.

General Conclusion

This investigation aims at raising EFL learners' awareness regarding the necessity of integrating ICTs in education to get rid of the teachers' dependency through the application of significant techniques which work on enhancing their writing skill. Therefore, as an alternative to this issue, we suggest that the use of online grammar and spelling checkers can be an efficient tool to handle learners' writing issues.

This descriptive study, entitled "Implementing online grammar and spelling checker tools to improve the learners' writing skill" has been conducted for the sake of certifying the previous assumptions. It consisted of three main chapters. The first chapter dealt with the first variable which is online grammar and spelling checker tools. It included the notion of ICTs. The second chapter dealt with the second variable which is the writing skill. It is concerned with the different aspects of the writing process. On the other hand, the third chapter embodied fieldwork. The questionnaire and the interview were conducted as a data-gathering tool with both second-year students and written expression teachers at Biskra University.

The analysis of the questionnaire and interview findings has ensured our hypothesis that the implementation of online grammar and spelling checker tools does improve EFL learners' writing skill. Moreover, such outcomes ensured the positive impact of the integration of ICTs within the educational field. Teachers asserted that they try to do their best to make their learners aware of the importance of corrective feedback. This appeared when they provided them with different pieces of advice and guidance about the fact that doing extra practice outside the classroom trains them to be good writers. Moreover, students showed a positive response towards the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools since they utilize the Internet in their everyday life.

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Appendices

Appendix 01:

Online Grammar and Spelling Checkers more specifically Grammarly is supposed to be one of the dynamic ICT tools that have the potential to boost learners' writing proficiency through providing feedback. We have asked our respondents to write a paragraph in which they describe and narrate the day they met an old friend. Here is one sample and how it appears on the homepage of Grammarly.

The screenshot displays the Grammarly interface. On the left, a sample paragraph is written: "Add a title. We hope you're well! It was a pretty normal day until it wasn't, and that was right after I recognized who she was, my dear old childhood classmate, friend and who comes up to be my nextdoor neighbour too. We were very close till we didn't, but I managed to recognize who she was the moment I laid my eye on her at our favourite book store; even though she looked completely as a stranger, but she was too familiar. I remembered the last time I met her, few weeks before Romaissa and her family moved back to their city. I knew that there was something wrong about her, but I remained silent. Her voice brought me back to the present. And I knew that she was thinking the same as me, we both have changed, but still our souls remained the same, she was just visiting her old city walking the streets, we we used to run across, feel the same old feelings, and meet her old friends, maybe. We spent the afternoon together catching up what we both have missed from each others lives. As much as I enjoyed the day, yet I was very sad for seeing her leaving again, but at least this time, we said good bye."

The interface shows several error alerts:

- PUNCTUATION:** A green box highlights the word "and" with the message: "It seems that this sentence contains a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses. Consider inserting a comma to separate the elements."
- Spelling alerts:** A list of words with suggestions: "nextdoor" (Correct your spelling), "neighbour" (Change the spelling), "favourite" (Change the spelling), "book store" (Correct your spelling), "as" (Change preposition), and "few" (Add an article).
- GRAMMAR:** A green box highlights the word "others" with the message: "It appears that the word **others** should use the genitive case. Consider changing the noun." Below this, a detailed explanation of the genitive case is provided, including examples of correct and incorrect usage.

The right sidebar shows the overall score of 58 and various performance metrics like Clarity, Engagement, and Delivery.

Incorrect: An hour later I found the ball in my **brothers** room.
Correct: An hour later I found the ball in my **brother's** room. (one brother)

The way it works

Appendix 02:

Students' Questionnaire:

Dear students, the current questions and the answers that you will give are mainly used for scientific research. In other words, your answers will be used anonymously in order to investigate the learners' writing issues as well as the effectiveness of using online grammar and spelling checker tools in their paragraph

1) Would you specify your gender, please

a) male b) female

2) How do you consider your level in English?

a) Outstanding

b) Good

c) Average

d) Low

3) To what extent each of the following language learning skills is important for you?

	Very important	Important	Somehow important	Not important at all
The listening skill				
The speaking skill				
The reading skill				
The writing skill				

- 4) In which skill do you find more difficulties?
- a) Listening
 - b) Speaking
 - c) Reading
 - d) Writing
- 5) How do you evaluate your writing skill?
- a) Poor- I definitely need some help
 - b) Acceptable- but I know I could improve
 - c) Good- I could improve with some advanced tips
 - d) Excellent- I do not think I could improve much
- 6) Are you satisfied with the way the course of written expression is being taught?
- Yes No
- 7) To what extent do you think that written expression course is important in EFL learning?
- a) Very important
 - b) Important
 - c) Neutral
- 8) What makes writing a hard task to do?
- a) Time limitation
 - b) Anxiety and self-confidence
 - c) Lack of motivation
 - d) All of them
- 9) According to you, what are the main reasons behind poor writing?
(you may choose more than one option)
- a) Mother tongue interference
 - b) Lack of reading
 - c) Lack of practice
 - d) Lack of guidance

10) What are the different types of difficulties you face when writing your paragraphs?
(you may choose more than one option)

- a) Grammar
- b) Word choice
- c) Punctuation
- d) Spelling
- e) Generating ideas

11) Do you always follow the writing steps when producing your paragraphs? (generating ideas, drafting, editing and revising) ?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If yes why ?

.....

.....

.....

12) Where do you find it difficult to do a writing task?

- a) In class
- b) At home

13) How often do you write outside the classroom?

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

14) What tools/ sources do you use when writing your paragraphs?

- a) Books
- b) Web sites/Internet
- c) Dictionaries

15) Does your teacher allow you to use dictionaries to check the right spelling and meaning of words when writing?

- a) Yes b) No

16) How often do you use the Internet to write a paragraph?

- a) Always
b) Often
c) Rarely
d) Never

17) What types of online platforms/ applications do you use most? (you may choose more than one option)

- a) Educational websites
b) Edu-blogs
c) Online grammar and spelling checker tools

18) Do you agree that the teacher plays a crucial role in providing corrective feedback?

- a) Yes b) No

19) When correcting your written productions, on which aspect(s) does your teacher focus more?

- a) Content
b) Form
c) Language
d) All of them

20) Do you depend only on your teachers' and/or your mates' feedback ?

- a) Yes b) No

If no, please mention the other sources of feedback?

.....
.....
.....

21) Are you familiar with grammar and spelling checkers such as “Grammarly”?

- a) Yes b) No

22) Do you use online grammar and spelling checker tools for proofreading?

- a) Yes b) No

Justify your choice in both cases

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.....
.....

23) On a scale of a 1-5, How do you rate the degree of difficulty of using grammar and spelling checker tools?

- Very easy very difficult

24) In your opinion, to what extent can online grammar and spelling checker tools be useful for ameliorating EFL students' written productions?

- a) Very useful
b) Somehow useful
c) Not useful at all

Justify please

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.....
.....

Thank you

Appendix 03:

Teachers' Interview

Many learners find that speaking an idea is much easier than writing it because they do not receive additional help or practice outside the classroom. Accordingly, the current interview spots the light on the writing skill, in a nutshell, the emphasis is on how the use of online grammar and spelling checker tools could help students to write more effectively. Therefore, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions.

1. What does "writing skill" mean to you as a foreign language teacher?

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2. How do you evaluate your students' writing proficiency? (outstanding, average, poor)

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.....
.....

3. Do you encourage your students to write outside the classroom?

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4. Do you ask your students to write about topics that require Internet access?

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.....
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5. What do you think of using the Internet to write a paragraph?

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6. When correcting your students' written production, do you focus on the form or content? What are the most frequent errors/ mistakes you find?

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7. Do you advise your students to proofread their pieces of writing? How?

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8. Why is corrective feedback important in the writing process?

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9. In your opinion, is the time allocated to the written expression course sufficient for developing EFL students' writing proficiency?

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10. What does "online grammar and spelling checker tools" concept mean to you?

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11. From your perspective, do you think that online grammar and spelling checker tools are beneficial? In what way?

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.....
.....

Thank you

المخلص

أصبح المتعلمون أكثر توجيهها ذاتيا بسبب انتشار تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات وسهولة الوصول إليها. ومع ذلك، فإن الغالبية العظمى من الطلاب في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خيضر يجدون صعوبة في تحقيق هدف أن يصبحوا كتابا أكفاء. فهم يواجهون تحديات متعددة في كتابة الفقرة بسبب تعقيد مهارة الكتابة. وقد ظهر هذا العائق من حقيقة أن معظمهم لم يعتد على كتابة فقرات باللغة الإنجليزية. لذلك، تم تصميم هذه الدراسة لتقييم الفرضيات فيما إذا كان متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يستخدمون أدوات المدقق النحوي والإملاني عبر الإنترنت، فسيتم زيادة كفاءتهم الكتابية أيضاً لتحديد وعي المعلمين والمتعلمين بهذه التطبيقات لمعالجة هذه الأمور. لقد تم اعتماد نهج بحث نوعي. بمعنى آخر، أجريت الدراسة الحالية بالمنهج الوصفي، لأنها أنسب دراسة للتعامل مع هذا الموضوع في ظل الظروف الحالية. من أجل جمع البيانات، قمنا بإدارة استبيانات لثمانية وعشرين طالباً في السنة الثانية وإجراء مقابلات مع سبعة من مدرسي التعبير الكتابي لعلوم اللغة في شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة. توضح النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها دور أدوات المدقق النحوي والإملاني عبر الإنترنت في تحسين كفاءة الكتابة لدى الطلاب. بناءً على هذه النتائج تم تأكيد فرضيات البحث. وهذا يعني أن كل من المعلمين والمتعلمين لديهم موقف إيجابي تجاه المدققات النحوية والإملانية عبر الإنترنت، كما أن تنفيذ هذه الأدوات يعزز مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب. في النهاية، يوصى بشدة أن يغير المعلمون طرق تقديم التغذية الراجعة وأن يوجهوا المتعلمين على ما يجعلهم أكثر إنتاجية من خلال اعتماد مثل هذه الأساليب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، أدوات المدقق النحوي والإملاني عبر الإنترنت، مهارة الكتابة.