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## MASTER THESIS

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English Language  
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### **Syntactic problems in EFL Students' Essays: The case of Third Year ENSO students of English.**

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## **Dedication**

*To my dear parents*

*For their unsurpassed love and care*

*To my sisters and brothers*

*To my nieces and nephews*

*To all my best friends*

*To all those, I know and love.*

## **Acknowledgements**

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I would like also to appreciate the help of third-year ENS students who cooperated in the practical part of this study.

## **Abstract**

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, writing is the most difficult skill to master; syntax has been an essential element in this skill. It is common that Algerian students of English have difficulties in arranging words and phrases to create well-formed sentences. The present study aims at investigating EFL students' problems with syntax in essay writing. This case study was based on the analyses of an online questionnaire administered to third-year English students at ENSO in addition to a corpus analysis of students' essays. The main results of this study revealed that EFL students have problems concerning punctuation, diction and syntax. Concerning the syntactic problems, they were generally of tense/aspect, prepositions and conjunctions. Furthermore, lack of reading, lack of syntactic awareness and mother tongue interference were highlighted as the major sources behind the syntactic problems. Thus, teachers should pay more attention on teaching syntactic aspects, and students should be eager to learn more about these aspects.

Key words: EFL, Syntax, diction, punctuation, tense/aspect, prepositions and conjunctions.

## **List of Acronyms**

**ENS:** Ecole Normale Superieure

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**CA:** Contrastive analysis

**DA:** Discourse analysis

**L<sub>1</sub>:** First language

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**General**

**Introduction**

## **Introduction**

Writing is a significant skill in language production. It is the process of using symbols to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. Writing has become an important part in the English language learning since it is a means of communication that allows the learners to organize their ideas and opinions about a certain subject. However, writing is considered as the most difficult skill that English learners should master in EFL essay writing. Academic writing, in particular, represents a big challenge for both native as well as non native learners. This challenge stems from various problems; the major problem that students encounter is arranging words and phrases to create well-formed sentences. Thus, 3rd year ENS students At Ouargla encounter many problems and difficulties with syntax when writing essays.

### **1. Statement of the problem**

Based on a simple observation, most of EFL learners in general and third year ENSO students in particular have problems in writing, especially in producing acceptable academic essays where words and phrases should be well arranged .Students in an EFL classroom should show their awareness of the structural placement of functional and lexical entries in their writing which is essential for the formation of sentences. Even though our target students have received lessons on syntax during their earlier school years, they still face problems that hinder them in their EFL essay writing. These problems can be a result of: the nature of writing process, lack of syntactic knowledge and lack of reading; the latter leads to the purpose of the current study which is to investigate syntactic problems in EFL students' essays.

### **2. Research Questions**

The present research study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Do third year ENS students at Ouargla have problems with syntax in essay writing?

-What are the most frequent problems that EFL learners face when writing essays?

-What are the sources of syntactic problems?

### **3. Research Hypotheses**

In order to answer these questions, some hypotheses have been set.

-Among the crucial difficulties that EFL students encounter in their essay writing is syntactic problems.

-EFL students do not master syntactic rules in general.

-Lack of knowledge and reading can hinder students from arranging words and phrases to create well-formed sentences.

### **4. Aims of the study**

This academic research aims at presenting a brief description for foreign language writing skill, it also aims to identify the syntactic problems that EFL students encounter when writing essays.

### **5. Research Methodology**

In order to achieve the main objective of the research and to prove or refute the hypotheses; a descriptive method is conducted.

#### **5.1 Population**

The target students are third year ENS students of the English Department at Ouargla.

#### **5.2 Sample**

To conduct this study, 22 students from the population are chosen randomly because at this level they tackle essays and they are expected to face problems in syntax.

### **5.3 Data gathering tools**

Two data gathering tools were used to collect data about the actual study. An online questionnaire was submitted to the population in order to dive deeper in their awareness regarding the topic. Furthermore, analyzing students' papers ,via a diagnostic test, was the second gathering tool in order to identify students' syntactic problems in writing essays ,and whether they are familiar with them or not.

### **6. Significance of the study**

This is a significant study for both students and teachers; it raises students' syntactic awareness in EFL essay writing and assists them to have the ability to monitor the structural placement of words and to produce sentences in a variety of correct ways. In the teachers' case, they are expected to be more aware and pay equal attention to challenges toward syntax as well as they do to other writing aspects.

### **7. Literature review**

The history of syntax goes back thousands of years; the critical point of departure is Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (Chomsky 1957). The significance of Syntactic structures lies in Chomsky's persuasion for a biological perspective on language at a time when it was unusual and in the context of formal linguistics where it was unexpected, as Lightfoot (2002) states.

In writing, a writer must convey the messages properly to the reader through constructing grammatical structure of sentences that is systematically meaningful. The study of sentence structure is called syntax. That is to Say, studying syntax is studying the sentence. A sentence makes a complete thought, sense, and also has meaning. English has common simple sentences such as *John smokes cigars*, which is comprise a single independent clause as Radford (2009) asserts. Syntax is used for the way in which words are put together in an orderly system to form phrases and sentences. These words and

phrases play a syntactic role in the context of a particular clause or sentence; this role is called grammatical function. The latter as suggested by Hudson (2007) is the roles of words representing the constituent of given sentence structure. The most common types of constituents or roles are subject (S), verbal (V), direct object (dO), indirect object (iO), subject predicative (sP), object predicative (oP) and adverbial (A) (Glossary of grammatical terms used in Hasselgård, Lysvåg, and Johansson, 2012).

However, writing is a challenging task for EFL students, people cannot leave aside the fact that to have a good writing ability means a guarantee for having a meaningful communication through text among people as Mohammad and Hazarika, (2016) argue. A text is determined legal by the language of syntax and the disagreements with the syntactic rules. The purpose of the syntactic theory is to possess the structural sentence as acceptable or not. In this regard, Susana (2007) describes syntactic complexity as the ability to produce writing that shows how ideas and large chunks of information are represented with the use of subordinate and embedded subordinate clauses. Syntax complexity is one of the most difficult structural elements for EFL learners. According to Ortega's (2003) definition, "syntactic complexity (also called syntactic maturity or linguistic complexity) refers to the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of sophistication of these forms" (p. 492).

Various studies were conducted dealing with the syntactic difficulties and problems that face EFL learners in writing. Kharma (1983) shed light on the syntactic difficulties faced by the Kuwaiti high school students. His study was based on contrastive analysis of English and Arabic. He devised a test focusing on the problem areas and sorted out the frequency and types of the structural problems. A further study was "The syntactic features of English spoken by advanced bilingual Arabs", by Atawneh (1994) who examined the English syntactic problems persistent in the performance of educated Arabs living in

United States. Results indicate performance problems in the areas of (1) tense agreement; (2) relative clause construction; (3) indirect questions; (4) perfective tenses; and (5) use of prepositions. He furthermore explains that the degree of deviation in these areas depends on both amount of time spent in the United States and their educational level. The third study was conducted by Lin (2002) who examined 26 essays from Taiwanese EFL students at the college level. The results of this study indicated that the four highest error frequencies were sentence structures (30.43 per cent) wrong verb forms (21.01 per cent), sentence fragments (15.99 per cent), and wrong use of words (15.94 per cent) respectively.

From the three previous studies that have been mentioned, it is said that there are some problems in essay writing that seem to require attention. These problems are mostly regarding syntax. They used different point of view to analyze their data. Meanwhile, this study will use other theory to analyze the data; the syntactic theory which will cover words, phrases, and clauses. In other words, this study will only focus on those three areas.

## **8. The Structure of the Study**

The present research is divided into three chapters. The first two chapters represent the literature review; they include 35 pages, whereas the third chapter is devoted to the field work; it includes 17 pages. The first chapter tackles some key concepts that have relation with writing in general and writing essays in particular, and some problems that students encounter in writing. In the second chapter the light is spotted on the concept of syntax in addition to some sources behind syntactic problems, while the third chapter describes the participants, the research instruments, and the interpretation of the data analyses.

# **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of writing and essay writing skills. The former provides definitions of writing and its importance in EFL production, as well as, academic writing and the major stages of writing from “Planning” to “Editing”. In addition, the latter deals with different definitions of essay and their major types. Moreover, it discusses the common writing difficulties that EFL learners encounter in writing essays.

### **1.1. Definition of Writing**

Writing is a productive skill in learning a language. It is a crucial part of the communication process through which learners can organize their ideas and opinions about a certain subject. G. Yule (2010) thinks that writing is the symbolic representation of language through the use of graphic signs.

Many linguists have interested in the concept of “Writing”. For Nunan (2003), writing is a mental process which works to invent ideas; people think how to express their ideas then organize them into well and clear statements and paragraphs.

Harmer (2007) defines writing as “a process” that includes the stages the writer undergoes to write something in its final form. Furthermore, Broadman (2002) asserts that writing is a continuous process of thinking, organizing, rethinking and reorganizing. It is to master vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, appropriate content, word selection, topic and occasion. However, Fischer (2001) thinks that “no definition of writing can cover all the writing systems that exist and have ever existed”. (p. 12)

Students have to learn how to write in order to be good writers. Byrne (1991) states that the symbols have to be arranged or combined to form words, and words to form sentences, and sentences to form paragraphs and essays. EFL Writing has always been regarded as a crucial skill in both teaching and learning. As Rao (2007) asserts, EFL writing is useful in

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

two respects: First, it encourages students to think critically, organize their thoughts, and improve their ability to summarise, analyse and criticize. Second, it helps students improve their learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language. However, academic achievement necessitates a significant amount of writing; in this regard Graham and Perin (2007) proclaim that the writing skill is one of the indicators of academic success, along with being an important condition for communicating in daily life.

### **1.2. The importance of writing**

Raimes (1983) summarizes the importance of teaching writing as follow:

Writing helps our students learn. How? First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that we have been teaching our students. Second, when our students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. Third, when they write they necessarily become very involved with the new language: the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand, and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning.] (p.3)

Unfortunately, writing is the last skill to be learned, therefore, it is regarded as the least important skill for learners. According to Doff (1995) writing is possibly the least important of the four skills for many students; they are more likely to need to listen, to read and speak than to write. Writing is most certainly a research and analysis skill for them.

### **1.3. Academic Writing**

Academic writing is a distinct form of writing that is taught in colleges and universities. It follows a set of rules and is usually concerned with the formality of language. According to Macmillian dictionary, academic writing is a formal and factual style of writing that is used for essays, research papers and other academic texts. Murray

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

(2009) states “Academic writing is that set of conventions we see in theses or a published paper in our disciplines, a definition that becomes more precise once you scrutinize examples of published writing in your target journal” (p.11). Furthermore, Coffin et al (2003) assert that students’ academic writing is the kernel of teaching and learning in higher education inasmuch as students are almost entirely assessed by what they write; they are in need to master both academic and general conventions in addition to disciplinary writing requirements in order to succeed in higher education. Academic writing is taught under English for specific purposes to transmit effective and valid academic essays.

### **1.4. Stages of Writing**

EFL learners need to go through four stages in the writing process in order to produce a well-formed and structured piece of writing: planning (pre-writing), drafting, revising, and editing.

#### **1.4.1. Planning (pre-writing)**

The first stage of writing is planning or pre-writing. For Oshima and Houge (2007) planning is the way of getting ideas, choosing a topic and gathering ideas in order to explain it. The basic strategy used in the pre-writing stage is called listing. It's a pre-writing approach in which writers put down the topic on a sheet of paper, then write down everything that comes to mind until the flood of thoughts ceases.

Johnson (2008) summarizes the aim of pre-writing as generating ideas through listing, brainstorming, outlining, silent thinking, conversation with a neighbour, or power writing.

#### **1.4.2. Drafting**

Formal writing begins with drafting, which is the second step of writing. Brown and hood (1989) state “drafting stage is where you begin writing. The most important thing

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

here is to get words into paper; it is not the time to worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation, or the best wording” (p. 14). Similarly, Johnson (2008) claims that drafting stage is the first step to write down ideas on paper. “Quantity here is valued over quality, if done correctly; the draft is rambling, disconnected accumulation of ideas” (p.179). Furthermore, Harmer (2004) asserts that the first version of a piece of writing is called drafting. It is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later

### **1.4.3. Revising**

It is another phase of writing, for Johnson (2008) revising is “the heart of the writing process”. In this stage, the writers are required to revise and reshape their work multiple times; looking for flow and structure. They should re-read paragraphs and rearrange things. (p.180)

Brown and Hood (1989) assume that the most crucial part of the writing process is revision. It is a stage in the writing process where the writers must check what they planned to express, ensuring that the content and purpose are clear and appropriate for the reader in the given writing situation. It is not a matter of checking spelling, grammar, and punctuation. It also deals with arranging, changing, adding, and leaving out words. In a similar vein, shields (2010) claims that revising involves re-drafting, or re-writing, or even re-planning. According to him, this stage is more crucial than the first draft. The writers should have a clear idea about what they want to express. They may need to refine arguments or examine the supporting arguments in order to make their writing clearer by reorganizing, re-phrasing, and re-examining their view.

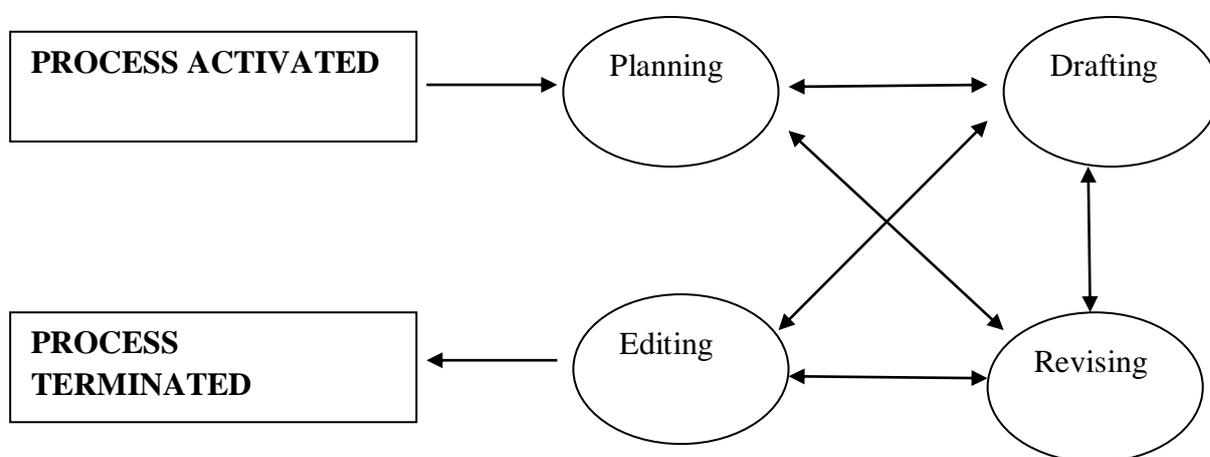
### **1.4.4. Editing**

It is the last stage of the writing process Oshima and Hogue (2006) state that the editing stage is where errors in grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation

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should be corrected. The writers have to check each sentence for correctness and completeness, also they have to check each sentence for a subject and a verb, subject-verb agreement, correct verb tenses, noun plurals. Moreover, the writers have to check the mechanics: punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, as well as they, have to check incorrectly used or repeated words.

**Figure 1.1 Krashen's Process Writing Model (Richards & Renandya, 2003, p. 315)**



### 1.5. The teaching of writing

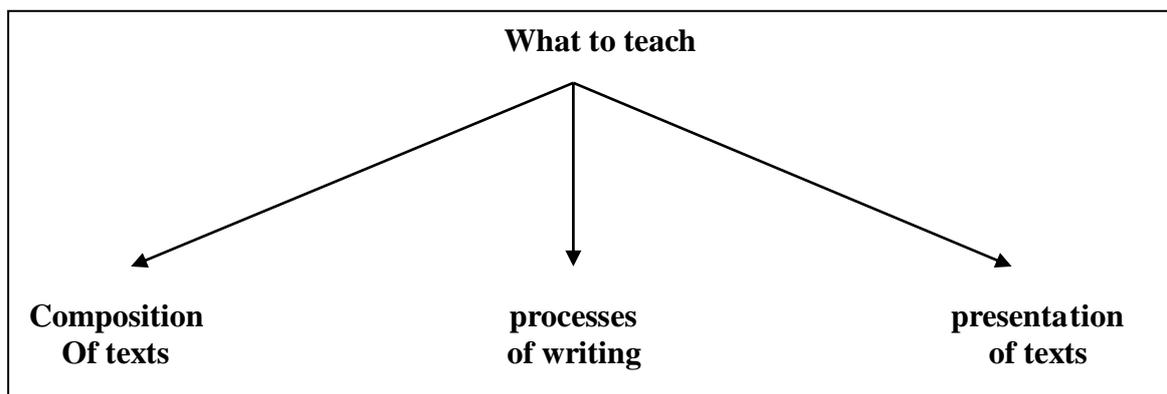
Teaching writing is an important part of all learning environments at all levels. The complexity of the writing skill and process is well recognized by the teachers in charge of this task. "Teaching writing can be frustrating and challenging, but it can also be rewarding and a breath of fresh air in a rather stagnant educational context" (Kirby & Crovitz, 2013, p. 9). For the teaching of writing, NSW Board of Studies assumes that students are supposed to understand both the purposes and the context of their writing in order to succeed at written texts. According to Adas and Bakir (2013) students need to be personally involved in writing tasks in order to make the learning experience effective and valuable.

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### 1.6. Elements in the teaching of writing

The following in the teaching of writing program are depicted by NSW Board of studies (2000); it concentrates on text compositions, the writing process, and the presentation of texts.

**Figure 1.2 Elements in teaching writing (Focus on literacy: writing, 2000, p. 22)**



#### 1.6.1. Composition of texts

According to the NSW Board of Studies, text composition comprises students gaining an understanding of the mechanics of writing, how it works, and what makes it effective. In order to do so, students must learn how to determine the purpose of their writing about various writing tasks. Furthermore, the teacher assesses the students' writing on a variety of levels; first, they assess the composition of the whole text including the text structure and the purpose. Second, the teacher assesses linguistic features such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, and then assesses surface features such as punctuation. As a result, when teaching the elements of text composition, the teacher usually follows a gradual pattern in which he begins with the most important components and ends with a final evaluation of the students' writing.

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

### **1.6.2. The process of writing**

In this element, the teacher concentrates on a key aspect of the writing process. During this phase, students are shown the basic process in order to comprehend how writing takes place. Since the process of writing is a cognitive one, that has to do with several mental operations going through the different stages of writing. In brief, teaching students the writing process and stages of writing allows them to write more frequently and critically during the writing process, which will improve their writing later on.

### **1.6.3. The presentation of written texts**

Handwriting, spelling, grammar, and punctuation are all explicitly taught before the presentation of written text. In the student's writing, these characteristics must be present at all times in order to produce effective writing. Hyland (2002), on the other hand, provides a more detailed description of the elements in teaching writing. In his description, he emphasizes three main vital elements: the writer, the text, and the reader, as following.

#### The writer

- Issues of proficiency, first language background, and prior experience
- Cognitive and motivational factors
- Knowledge of the topic
- The role of composing processes

#### The text

- Authenticity of purposes and writing tasks
- Number and variety of writing assignments
- Genre modelling and exploration
- Rhetorical and lexico-grammatical consciousness raising

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

The reader

- Orientation to specific target discourse communities.
- Need for real and multiple audiences.
- Awareness of appropriate levels of involvement and interactional strategies.
- Importance of feedback and audience response.

### **1.7. Definition of an Essay**

Essay writing is a language skill that must be mastered by university students. The term ‘essay’ is derived from a Latin word ‘exagium’, which represents one’s case. According to Oxford dictionary, an essay is “a short piece of writing on a particular subject”. The Frenchman Michel de Montaigne was the first author whose work was described as an essay. From an academic perspective, an essay is a formal piece of writing assigned to students in order to enhance their writing skills or assess their outcome.

An essay, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006), is a multi-paragraph piece of writing. This implies that, despite the fact that an essay only covers one subject, it requires more than one paragraph. It has a defined structure – an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

### **1.8. Types of Essays**

Academic essays can be categorized into four main types: descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository essays.

#### **1.8.1. Argumentative essays**

Argumentative essays are the type of objective essays used in academic writing in order to persuade the reader of some sort of truth and to make a logical argument. Razaghi and Zamanian (2014) state; “the word argument is often related to analyzing, interpreting and evaluating a certain proposal or classifying a point of view. In addition, argumentation is often taught in order students understanding information and to consider the truth

## **Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing**

.Furthermore, argumentation uses reason, persuasion, logic and different tactics to reach a certain conclusion ” (p.3). Argumentative essays are written to address contentious subjects from contrasting viewpoints in which the writer attempts to persuade or persuade the reader to agree and accept the point of view that he or she wants to convey. For instance, the writer should present his or her claims with evidence and reasoning, using examples and expert perspectives to assist the reader in developing new knowledge and taking actions. In this regard , Reinking and Osten (2000) argue “ in writing , an argument is a paper , governed on logical , structured evidence , that attempts to convince the reader to accept a claim , take some action , or do both . Argument , is also a process during which you explore and insure fully , considering different perspectives , assumptions , reasons and evidence to reach your own informed position” (p.269). Furthermore, Hogue and Oshima (2006) claimed that, “A thesis statement often expresses the opposing point of view. Notice that the writer’s opinions is expressed in the main (independent) clause, and the opposing points of view is normally put into a subordinate structure” (p 147). That is to say, the opposing argument is often mentioned as the thesis statement in the essay’s introductory paragraph.

## Chapter One: EFL Essay Writing

**Table 1.1 Organization of Argumentative Essay (Oshima and Hogue 2006, p.143)**

Block pattern	Point-by-point pattern
<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>Explanation of the issue</p> <p>Thesis statement</p> <p><b>2. Body</b></p> <p>Block 1</p> <p><b>a.</b> summary of other side`s arguments</p> <p><b>b.</b> rebuttal to the first argument</p> <p><b>c.</b> rebuttal to second argument</p> <p><b>d.</b> rebuttal to the third argument.</p> <p>Block 2</p> <p><b>e.</b> your first argument</p> <p><b>f.</b> your second argument</p> <p><b>g.</b> your third argument</p> <p><b>3.</b> Conclusion may include a summary of your point of view.</p>	<p><b>1. Introduction</b></p> <p>Explanation of the issue, including a summary of the other side's arguments.</p> <p>Thesis statement.</p> <p><b>2. Body</b></p> <p><b>a.</b> Statement of the other side's first argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument.</p> <p><b>b.</b> Statement of the other side's second argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument.</p> <p><b>c.</b> Statement of the other side's third argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument.</p> <p><b>3.</b> Conclusion-may include a summary of your point of view.</p>

### 1.8.2. Descriptive essays

A descriptive essay, according to Suzan Anker, is a written piece that provides a clear and vivid impression of the subject. It is to use all five of the reader`s senses– smell, sight, touch, taste and sound; in order to create a mental image for them. In this vein, Savage and Shafiei (2007) claim, “using specific language in descriptive writing helps give the reader

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a clear image of what something looks, feels, sounds or smells like” (p.39). This type of writing requires the writer to use several visual words to help the reader visualize the person, location, or thing he or she is writing about.

### **1.8.3. Narrative essays**

Narrative essays, like descriptive essays, are written in a unique, subjective style. According to Mc-Whorther (2012), a narrative essay recounts a series of events, actual or imagined, in a logical order. However, narration, according to Susan Anker, is writing that tells the story of a specific event or experience. Narrative essays are more intimate, experiential, and anecdotal, and they enable students to be more creative. Furthermore, they can be used to provide humour, interest, and entertainment, as well as to pique the reader's interest and get the storyteller closer to the audience. For Wyldeck (2013)" a narrative essay tells stories about real-life experiences. It generally focuses on events or feelings experienced by the writers, and describes what they have learnt from real-life situations." (p.18). In general; an introduction, plot, characters, setting, climax, and conclusion are all elements of a narrative essay.

### **1.8.4. Expository essays**

An expository essay is a piece of writing that provides a balanced analysis of a topic. Expository essays, similar to argumentative essays, are scientifically objective in which the writer explains or defines a topic, using facts, statistics, and examples. It is worth noting that expository writing covers a broad variety of essay types, including compare/ contrast essays, cause/ effect essays and classification essays.

#### **1.8.4.1. Compare and contrast essays**

A compare and contrast essay is a common pattern in academic fields where the writer explains the similarities and differences between two items. According to Susan Aker

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“comparison is writing that shows the similarities among subjects – people, ideas, situations, or items; contrast shows the differences”. Like argumentative essays, compare and contrast essays are organized in one of two ways: point-by-point or block (Oshima and Hogue 2006, p.111). They have certain characteristics as Mc Whorther (2012) asserts; compare and contrast essay makes a clear purpose like expressing ideas, informing or persuading. It considers common characteristics, examines similarities, differences, or both of them. In addition, it makes a point about a subject to spark readers` interest. Finally, it considers a sufficient number of significant characteristics and details. Compare and contrast essay is not only to present the clear but rather to clarify ambiguous differences or unexpected similarities. It helps the reader to be informed about the advantages and disadvantages of two objects compared.

### **1.8.4.2. Cause and effect essays**

A cause and effect essay is a written composition that seeks to give a logical explanation of why things happen (causes) and what happens as a result (effects). It aims to explain the real situation to the readers. Using causes and effects is an organized method in discussing ideas. In this regard, Oshima and Hogue (2006) claim that this type of essays is organized in one of two ways: either as a chain or as a block. When it comes to chain organization, cause and effect are intertwined; one event causes a second one which in turn causes a third event and so on. Depending on the complexity of ideas in each link, it is more appropriate to devote an entire paragraph to one link, or include several links in one paragraph, or describe the entire chain in one paragraph. However, in block organization, the writer first discusses all the causes as a block, and then discusses the effects together in a block. It is optional for the writer to discuss either causes or effects first or discussing only causes or only effects.

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### **1.8.4.3. Classification essays**

Classification is the process of grouping items into classes or categories based on a common set of divisions, and essay classification is the process of breaking a broad subject into smaller groups. According to Susan Anker (2002), Classification is writing that organizes, or sorts, people or items into categories. Students present information that is divided into a unified basis of division. Classification essay uses an organizing principle to help students to achieve their purpose.

### **1.9. Writing Difficulties**

Like all learning problems, difficulties in writing can be devastating to a student's education. Researchers have noticed that EFL university students encounter difficulties which hinder their writing proficiency. According to Raimes (1983) the difficulties are related to many aspects of language such as punctuation, spelling and overall, grammar. However Richards & Renandya (2002) state that the difficulty is due not only to the need to generate and organize ideas using the appropriate choices of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization but also to turn such ideas into a readable text along with a particular rhetoric pattern .

#### **1.9.1. Punctuation**

Punctuation is considered as a crucial writing skill that can be difficult to master; it can be a major roadblock in the writing process. Gerhard, R and Margret, A (1914) define punctuation as a suitable mechanical device in order to demonstrate or assure the unity, the coherence, or emphasis included in the written expression of thoughts. Learners have to be aware while using punctuation marks because they influence the meaning; each one has its own interpretation. When you break a rule, the meaning you intended will be radically different. Actually, Grellet (1996) describes the role of punctuation as "To make the text

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you write clear and easy to read” (p. 8). However, Peck and Coyle (1999) state that the most common difficulty, in punctuation, that EFL students struggle with is sentence structure. They believe that “There are two main mistakes that all writers of English make. They either produce would-be sentences that are not sentences but merely fragments; or they produce would-be sentences that are not sentences but two or more sentences run together: sometimes a comma is used to link the two sentences, and sometimes the two sentences are simply fused together” (p.77).

### **1.9.2. Diction**

According to Hornby (1994) as in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, diction is choice and use of words; style or manner of speaking or writing. Diction in writing refers to word choice which is used to express ideas appropriately. Choosing adequate words is one of the most effective ways to communicate concepts in an essay. Vocabulary is an essential part of effective writing and the ability to use words must be relevant to the topic. It is very important to be aware of the words you use because as it is known words that have almost the same denotation can have very different connotations. For Starkey (2004) “Saying what you mean takes more than just an understanding of the denotation, or literal meaning of a word. Many words also have a connotative meaning. The connotation is a word’s implied meaning, which involves emotions, cultural assumptions and suggestions. Both meanings must be considered when making word choice”(p. 21) .Wilkins (1972) asserts, “Without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p.14).Therefore, mastering vocabulary is the foundation for EFL learners to write good essays and effectively communicate their ideas.

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### **1.9.3. Organization**

Organisation is another feature which makes the writing process ordered and meaningful. It is the capacity to generate thoughts and topics in a cohesive manner. In the process of writing, the information should be presented to the reader in a structured format; even short pieces of writing have regular, predictable pattern of organization. Nanun (1989) highlights some features of successful writing, one of them is organization. He claims that it is important for the writers to organize content at the level of the paragraph and the complete text to reflect given/new information and topic/comment structures. Moreover, Starkey (2004) points out that “the organization method of writing guides the reader from the first to the last sentence, making the readers able to see how the various points made by the writer work together, and also supporting the writer’s thesis” (p. 2). It is important for EFL learners to arrange their ideas in order to prevent teachers misunderstanding.

### **1.9.4. Syntax**

Syntax is the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. According to Bas Aart (1997) one of the principal concerns of syntax is the order of the words. In English, we cannot string words into a sentence randomly. For example, we can have (1), but not (2) or (3):

The President ate a doughnut.

\*The President a doughnut ate.

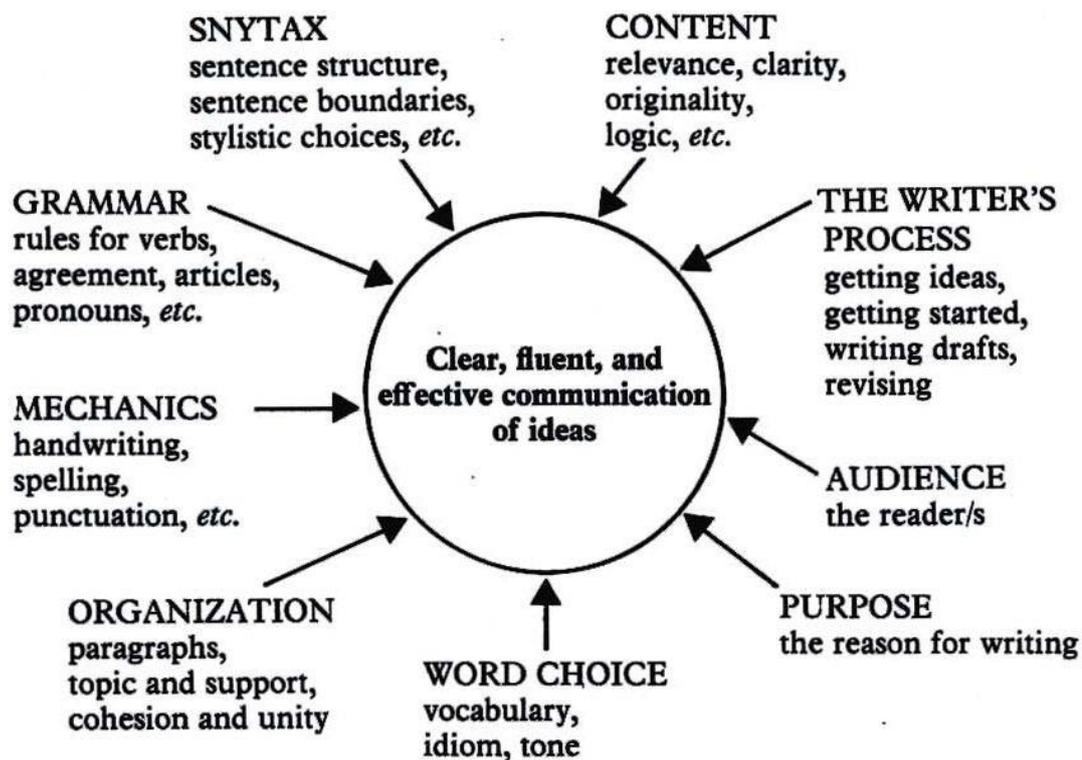
\*doughnut President the ate a.”

EFL students who struggle with writing, on the other hand, make syntactic errors because they don't understand how roles such as subject and object are allocated in

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sentences. They are also incapable of producing larger sentences requiring subordination and coordination.

Figure 1.3 Producing a Piece of Writing by Raimes (1983).



### Conclusion

In nutshell, writing is one of the basic language skills that EFL learners should master in order to perform effectively in different fields. So, this chapter dealt with an overview of the writing skill including its definition, and importance. Also, it provided the major stages of writing. Moreover, this chapter presented the definition of an essay and its major types. Finally, the light was shed on the main difficulties that EFL students face when writing essays.

**Chapter Two: Syntactic Problems**  
**in Writing**

## **Chapter Two: Syntactic Problems in Writing**

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, it is common that in EFL classrooms, students frequently experience difficulties when writing EFL essays. In addition to the writing difficulties discussed in the previous chapter, syntactic problems are among these issues. Syntax is often seen to be a source of assistance in helping EFL students improve their writing, but its application can be a source of complication and exigency, making the writing process more difficult. Therefore, this phenomenon, of syntactic problems, has a great deal of discussion during the last decades of the 20th century. This chapter is devoted to discussing the concept of Syntax, as its main concern including the syntactic problems that EFL learners encounter when writing essays. Similarly, this chapter will introduce an overview of the concept discourse, text and texture. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Error Analysis in addition to discourse analysis will also be discussed. Finally, the sources of syntactic problems will be listed to help EFL students to overcome the problems that have been mentioned before.

### **2.1. Definition of Discourse**

According to Richardson (2007), the word “discourse” is a trendy concept that has been viewed and defined by many authors as what discourse is and the way the term ought to be used. That is to say, the definition of discourse varies among different academics and studies. For Gernsbacher, et al (2003) Discourse is a term used to refer to any stretch of spoken or written language longer than a single sentence. However, Markee (2015) considers discourse as the level that specifically deals with how sentences are combined into larger units of spoken or written text and how it is potentially organized by levels of language namely phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse. Linguistically, he considers discourse to be a formal construct that should be regarded as traditional levels of language. In other words, discourse is one of the four stages of language construction. To

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sum up, discourse, in general, refers to a form of language use in which language is studied in specific contexts in both written and spoken texts.

### 2.2. Text, texture and discourse

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define text as “not just a string of sentences. In other words, it is not simply a large grammatical unit, something of the same kind as a sentence but differing from it in size—a sort of super-sentences, a semantic unit”. (p.293) Therefore text is made up of clauses and sentences that are connected. They also identify the key elements that constitute a text:

[A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit like a clause or a sentence: and it is not defined by its size. A text sometimes envisaged to be some kind of super-sentence. A grammatical unit that is larger than a sentence but is related to a sentence in the same way that a sentence is related to a clause... a text is not something that is like a sentence, only bigger: it is something that differs from a sentence in kind... a text does not consist of sentences. It is realized by, or encoded in, sentences] (pp.1-2).

To determine whether a group of sentences constitutes a text or not, we should have a look at the syntactical relationships that exist between the sentences, thus, create texture; based on Halliday and Hasan’s view. Therefore, texture is what organizes a text. It is to say that text which lacks a texture is a mere group of words set together randomly. However, discourse as Martinez (2011) refers to is “The corresponding social practice, a form of language use. In other words, discourse is determined by social phenomena. It refers to the communicative meaning of language”. (p.5)

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### **2.3. Definition of Discourse Analysis**

The term “Discourse Analysis” was first introduced by Zellig Harris as a way of analyzing connected speech and writing. In this regard, McCarthy (1991) claims that discourse analysis arose from research in a variety of disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology. He states that “discourse analysis refers to the study of the relationship between language and context” (p.7). McCarthy, furthermore, defines discourse analysis “as a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline which finds its unity in the description of language above the sentence and an interest in the contexts and cultural influence which affect language use” (p.7). However, Walsh (2011) asserts that Discourse Analysis is the study of spoken or written texts. Its focus is on words, and utterances above the level of sentence. Its main aim is to look at the ways in which words and phrases function in context. To sum up, Walsh (2013) claims that discourse means written and spoken texts produced in particular contexts and for specific purposes. Besides, discourse analysis is the study of spoken or written texts as a means of understanding. For him, it is an umbrella term for analysing longer stretches of spoken and written language in context.

### **2.4. Ways of Analysis**

Syntactic problems are one of the several elements that interact and influence EFL learners' linguistic performance. As a result, contrastive analysis and error analysis have been regarded as important pillars in the investigation of syntactic errors in EFL students essay writing.

#### **2.4.1. Contrastive Analysis**

“Fries” was the first to develop Contrastive Analysis (1945). It became a pedagogically significant notion in the field of second language teaching with the release of Lado's book

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'Linguistics Across Cultures' in 1957. Contrastive Analysis is the process by which the mother tongue and the target language are compared to identify the differences and the similarities between them. This process is intended to anticipate the areas of difficulties the learner of the target language generally encounters. In this vein, Saville-Troik (2006) points out that contrastive analysis is an approach to the field of second language acquisition that requires predicting and explaining learner difficulties on the basis of comparing the first language with the second language to find out similarities and differences. Accordingly, Selinker and Gass (2001) maintain that the purpose of the contrastive analysis is to find out potential errors in isolation to determine what learners need to learn and what they do not in second language learning situation. As a result, the process of teaching and learning can be easy and achievable.

### **2.4.1.1. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

Contrastive analysis hypothesis is regarded as an extension of the concept of contrastive analysis. According to Brown (2000), the study of two separate languages is one of the most famous challenges for applied linguists. The data comparison on multiple pairs of languages is commonly known as contrastive analysis hypothesis. Thus, it is necessary to discuss its two versions, namely the strong version and the weak version.

#### **2.4.1.1.1. Strong Version**

The Strong version focuses on predicting potential errors that may arise while learning or using a second language. According to Keshavarz (2012), the strong version of contrastive analysis hypothesis focused on the barrier to second language learning which is mainly attributed to the interference of the first language. Furthermore, Wardhaugh (1970) argues that the strong version needs linguists to have a set of linguistic universals formulated within an exhaustive linguistic theory, which deals sufficiently with syntax,

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semantics, and phonology (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 211). That is, the difficulties have previously been identified.

To summarize, the strong version of the contrastive analysis hypothesis is based on a comparison of the first and second languages before the learners' errors occurring.

### **2.4.1.1.2. Weak version**

The weak version, on the other hand, tries to explain the sources of learners' errors. Keshavarz (2012) states “The weak version is a model with diagnostic and explanatory as opposed to the predictive claim of the strong version” (p. 11). In a similar vein, Brown (2000) asserts that the weak version entails a post explanation of learners' difficulties.

To conclude, the weak version of contrastive analysis hypothesis tries to provide a post description of second language learners' errors. That is the sources of these errors that are attributed to the native language interference.

### **2.4.2. Error analysis**

Error analysis is a systematic investigation of learners' errors. Gass and Selinker (2001) define error analysis as a type of language analysis that focuses on learner errors. It contrasts learners' foreign language errors with the foreign language's form. However, Brown (2000) believes that “the fact that learners do make errors, and that these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner, led to a surge of study of learners' errors called error analysis” (p. 218). That is to say, error analysis is a process that is used to observe, analyze, and classify learners' errors. Based on Brown views error analysis differs from contrastive analysis in that it attempts to investigate errors attributed to all conceivable sources, not only those originating in the learner's native language.

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### **2.4.2.1. Error Vs mistake**

To properly analyze learners' language, it is necessary to distinguish between the terms mistake and error. According to Brown (2000), “an error, a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflects the competence of the learner” (p.217). That is to say, an error is a significant departure from the correct form of a native speaker's language that reflects the learners' true grasp of the target language.

Mistakes, on the other hand, are defined as the misuse of previously acquired knowledge. In this regard, Brown (2000) claims that “a mistake refers to performance error that is either a random guess or a “slip”, in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly” (p. 217). That means a mistake is a non-competency error that occurs when a known system is used incorrectly. Accordingly, Keshavarz (2012) states that mistakes are an arbitrary deviation rather than a systematic error, and they present performance mistakes that might occur in either speech or writing of native speakers, including slips of the tongue, false start, and lack of subject-verb agreement in long complex structures.

In a nutshell, errors happen frequently; they are produced by the absence of a rule and are linked to competence. Mistakes, on the other hand, are rare and linked to performance since the students have already understood the rule.

### **2.5. Syntax**

The word 'Syntax' is derived from the ancient Greek word Syntaxis, which is divided into two syllables (syn= "together," and taxis means "an ordering"). It literally means "setting out together" or "arrangement." Syntax is a linguistic branch that deals with how we construct sentences. In this regard, Vappingo (2011) asserts that syntax is concerned with how a sentence is ordered and structured and involves the type of the sentence used.

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Furthermore, Human languages, according to Van Valin and Lapolla (1997), are used to integrate meaningful parts to make words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, all of which are combined to make coherent writings.

Modern syntax research aims to describe languages in terms of rules; the rules and principles that control a language's sentence construction. Regardingly, Kim and Sells (2008) claim “the study of English syntax is the study of rules which generate an infinite number of grammatical sentences” (p.11).

The following are some various definitions provided by linguists in order to obtain a better understanding of syntax:

- Jim Miller (2002) states, “Syntax has to do with how words are put together to build phrases, with how phrases are put together to build clauses or bigger phrases, and with how clauses are put together to build sentences.” (p.xii)
- Syntax is the study of the choice of words and how these words are combined with one another, how they are ordered to create coherent and meaningful sentences. Hudson (1992)

We can deduce from the definitions above that studying syntax is beneficial for a variety of reasons such as to assist us in more effectively clarifying the patterns of English sentences, and to enable us to study sentence structures in an explicit and particularly systematic manner. Moreover, it helps to develop the students' writing performance through studying how sentences are structured and how they are well-formed, as well as to assist them in recognizing how to use the various rules in order to construct cohesive and grammatically accurate sentences by emphasizing the order of words, phrases, and sentences and the relationships that exist between them.

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### **2.6. Syntactic problems**

Syntactic problems are problems of linguistic processing. They involve structural relations between words or phrases. Despite the importance of syntactic aspects of the English language, their use is one of the challenges faced by English language learners including problems in copular verbs, concord, time/aspect, adjectives, prepositions, infinitival to, articles, and conjunctions.

#### **2.6.1. Copular verbs**

According to the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Linguistic Terms (2004), 'Copula' is defined as an intransitive verb that links a subject to a noun phrase, an adjective or any other constituent that expresses the predicate. However, Quirk et al. (1985) state that the term 'copular' refers to the verb 'BE', and copular verbs are those verbs functionally equivalent to the copular which are also called 'copulative', 'equivalent', 'intensive' or 'linking verbs'. Copular verb is also defined by Biber, Conrad, and Leech (2000), that is, a verb that is used to associate an attribute with the subject of the clause. The attribute is usually expressed by the subject predicative following the verb. Copular verbs can be classified in a variety of ways, depending on the standards used. According to Quirk et al. (1985), copular verbs are divided into four groups:

- (i) "Be" the principal copular verb.
- (ii) "Verbs of seeming" including seem, appear, and the perception verbs look, sound, etc.
- (iii) "Verbs of remaining" including remain, keep and stay.

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(IV) the resulting copular verbs are in the main “verbs of becoming” such as come, get, go, grow, turn, prove and some copular phrasal verbs end up, turn out, and wind up.

The copular verb is frequently omitted by EFL students in their sentences; a verbless sentence can be defined as a sentence with the absence of an explicit verbal copula in the present tense. As in the Arabic language which considered to be one of the unique aspects of the syntax. Accordingly, Abu-Jarad (2008) points out that the omission of the copula is very common among Arab learners of English. Copula omission specifically tends to occur when the speaker ignores a helping verb; ignoring the helping verbs “is”, “are”, etc, occurs when translating Arabic into English because of the syntactical differences in the languages – copulas do not exist in Arabic, This is, therefore, considered a negative transfer from L1.

To sum up, EFL students tend to think in Arabic when writing English essays, resulting in copula errors.

### 2.6.2. Concord

Crystal (1988) states “concord or agreement is a way of showing that two grammatical units have a certain feature in common” (p. 50). That is, the two grammatical units share a number, person, gender, or case trait.

Examples: Agreement in number and person

(i) She is happy. (Singular subject, singular verb)

(ii) They are happy. (Plural subject, plural verb)

Examples: Agreement in gender

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(i) She found her keys.

Examples: Agreement in case

(i) We went to the store today. (Nominative)

(ii) My mother bought us new clothes. (Objective)

(iii) I spoke to my friend yesterday. (Possessive)

In English, all grammatical persons do not take an “-s” ending in the verbs, except the third person singular in the present tense, as a result, most students often drop the “-s” ending because they consider it as a redundant feature. Errors of this nature are caused by false concept hypothesis rather than mother tongue interference as Yankson (1994) states.

### 2.6.3. Tense/aspect

According to Angela Downing and Philip Locke (2006) “Tense is the grammatical expression of the location of events in time. It anchors an event to the speaker's experience of the world by relating the event time to a point of reference. The universal, unmarked reference point is the moment of speaking – speech time; in the narrative, a point in past time is usually taken as the reference point” (p.352). That is tense, in English, is distinguished by inflation, particularly in the past and present tenses. However, aspect is concerned with how the event is regarded in terms of duration and completion.

Students commit tense errors because of false concepts hypothesis; for Rod Ellis (1994), this source of errors arises when the learner does not fully comprehend a distinction in the target language. For example, the use of "was" as a marker of past tense in "One day" (p.59) Furthermore, a verb's tense is the form it takes to indicate when something happened. The degree of completeness of an action or state is referred to as an

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aspect. The latter's major concern is whether the activity is completed, partial, ongoing, or yet to occur.

To illustrate, EFL students struggle to use progressive rather than non-progressive aspects. Because verbs in Arabic do not occur in the progressive aspect so Arabic EFL students either delete the progressive morpheme [-ing] or eliminate the auxiliary verb.

### 2.6.4. Adjectives

Adjectives, according to Andrea DeCapua (2008) are easily recognized due to their inherent characteristic to describe nouns. Howard (2007) also contends that adjectives are used to characterize nouns and pronouns; they provide more details about people, places and things. Furthermore, Andrea DeCapua (2008) claims that adjective order in English is not random, and that distinct sorts of adjectives appear in a specific sequence. The only exceptions are adjectives of general description and adjectives of physical state (size, shape, colour), which may have their order reversed.

In fact, the rules for adjective word order are very complicated, and different grammars disagree about the details as Michael (1995) asserts. Consequently, adjective order can be challenging for EFL students. These challenges could be due to interference from their mother tongue, as adjectives appear after the noun in Arabic, whereas in English, they appear before the noun they modify. For example

\*I have car black.

I have a black car.

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### 2.6.5. Prepositions

According to Wishon & Burks (1980, p.285) "Prepositions are connective words that show the relationship between the nouns following and one of the basic sentences: subject, verb, object or complement." Additionally, Grubic (2004) claims that there are two sorts of prepositions: simple (closed class, that is new single prepositions cannot be invented) and complex (open class, that is new combinations could be invented). Simple or single-word prepositions such as: in, on, at, under, onto, etc, and complex or multi-word prepositions such as: as well as, by means of, owing to, with a view to, in regard to, etc.

Moreover, prepositions can be used with distinct parts of speech to connect grammatical elements, some prepositions used with the same word to convey a different meaning. In this regard, Brown (2003) states that the preposition's function is: "To connect a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also shows how that noun or pronoun is related to the other word" (p. 570). The majority of English prepositions are of multi-functions i.e. they can be used in a variety of ways and take different places in a sentence depending on the context. In this vein, Vas (2006) suggests three functions of prepositions:

A- They can link a noun to another noun: e.g. He buys a basket of fruits.

(Noun) (Noun)

B- They link a noun to an adjective: e.g. she is keen on birds.

(Adj) (Noun)

C- They link a verb to a noun: e.g. they go to school.

(V) (Noun)

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Prepositions in English, on the other hand, are tough to be used even for advanced English learners; Arabic EFL learners in particular strive to form a one-to-one correspondence between Arabic and English prepositions. As a result, they either omit the preposition or use the wrong one.

**Table 2.1 Scott and Tucker's categories of prepositional errors (1974).**

<b>Types of errors</b> <b>Explanation</b>	<b>Substitution</b>	<b>Redundant</b> <b>(addition /insertion)</b>	<b>Omission</b>
<b>Definition</b>	The most frequent Type; the selection of inappropriate preposition.	The use of unnecessary preposition.	It is the opposite of redundant type; deleting the required preposition where it is obligatory.
<b>Example</b>	<b>In</b> Tuesday. (instead of <i>on</i> )	He enters <b>into</b> the room.(unnecessary <i>into</i> )	I was born 26 <sup>th</sup> January ,1998 (I was born <i>on</i> ...)

### 2.6.6. Infinitival "to"

According to George and Burks (1980), Infinitive is verbal consisting of the word to plus a verb, and functioning as a noun, adjective, or adverb. That is to say, the term verbal refers to the fact that an infinitive is formed from a verb and hence expresses action or a state of being. However, the infinitive may function as a subject, direct object, subject complement, adjective, or adverb in a sentence.

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Examples:

(i) I love to sleep. (Noun)

(ii) Joel wants a book to read (Adj)

(iii) The students were excited to go on a field trip. (Adv)

In many other languages, the infinitive is a single word, often with a characteristic inflective ending like 'chanter' in French and 'cantar' in Spanish which mean 'to sing'. Arabic, on the other hand, has no infinitive (Infinitive takes the past simple form). In this case, it is difficult for Arabic EFL learners to employ the infinitival to correctly.

Example:

\*I like watch movies.

I like to watch movies.

### 2.6.7. Articles

Articles in English are one of the most essential linguistic devices used in second language writing, they play a crucial role in conveying participants' messages. According to Long man Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010), articles are “a word which is used with a noun, and which shows whether the noun refers to something definite or something indefinite” (p.32). There are two types of articles in the English article system: the definite article "the", the indefinite article "a" or "an" and zero article '∅'. In this vein, Quirk (1972) states that ‘the’ is used with specific nouns, while ‘a’ or ‘an’ is used with non-specific nouns in the singular, while ‘∅’ is used with non-specific nouns

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in the plural, proper nouns, mass nouns, abstract nouns, and non-count nouns, such as 'flour', 'juice', etc.

However, In the Arabic language, the use of definite articles is different. Definiteness is limited to nouns or adjectives and even days of the week. Indefinite articles, by contrast, do not exist in the Arabic language. Consequently, EFL Arab learners tend to omit the indefinite articles while they are writing due to their mother tongue interference.

Example:

\*He is engineer.

He is an engineer.

### 2.6.8. Conjunctions

"Conjunction" is a part of speech that is used to link clauses or sentences together; as well as to coordinate words within the same clause. According to Setyawan (2013), conjunctions are words function to relate words, phrases, or sentences that can be classified into coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions. In writing, conjunctions play a vital role; without conjunctions, the text's meaning will be illogical. However, conjunctions, in Arabic, are indeclinable words used in a sentence to join together the different parts of speech. They serve to connect words and sentences and to express their relation to each other. Due to the influence of Arabic language, the learners are unable to use English conjunctions properly.

Example:

\*I am single, and my dream is to buy a big house and a nice car and I don't have money.

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I am single. My dream is to buy a big house and a nice car but I don't have money.

### **2.7. The sources of syntactic problems**

In this section, it is established that EFL students face a variety of syntactic problems. The occurrence of these problems could be caused by various sources such as the nature of the writing process, lack of reading, lack of syntactic awareness and mother tongue interference.

#### **2.7.1. The nature of writing process**

According to Richards (1990), the nature and significance of writing in language teaching, particularly in foreign language teaching, has been underestimated. Furthermore, in terms of complexity and difficulty many surveys proved that language production is difficult.

Nunan (1989) States:

Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and letter for action. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts. (p. 36)

That is to say; writing is far more difficult than any other activity in which EFL students have to pay close attention to its aspects in order to avoid syntactic problems.

#### **2.7.2. Lack of reading**

Better writers are better readers; students who don't read a lot can never achieve a good level in writing. Raimes (1983) believes that people who read a lot are more guaranteed to

## Chapter Two: Syntactic Problems in Writing

become competent writers. According to him, “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” (p.50). Therefore Kroll 1997 asserts that it is reading that gives the writer the feel for the look and texture of reader based prose. Reading really affects EFL essay writing in which EFL teachers should pay more attention on their students reading competence in order to create such good writers. In any case the two skills go hand-in-hand, and one cannot function without manipulating the second. We often read to get the information we need to include in our writing. However, this ideal way to improve students writing is totally neglected among EFL students so students usually face syntactic problems.

**Table 2.2 Reading and Writing Connection (Menzo & Menzo, 1995, p.113)**

Reading to write	Writing to read
<p>1-Reading increases the knowledge individuals have to write about.</p> <p>2-Reading instills knowledge of linguistic Pattern and form.</p> <p>3-Reading builds vocabulary and familiarity with writer craft</p>	<p>1-Understanding of subjects, making subsequent reading easier.</p> <p>2-Writing helps one to read like a writer, hence, sparking insights into writer mechanism and enhancing comprehension.</p> <p>3-Revision in writing or making changes at various point in the process, involves many of the same high-order thinking strategies involved in critical reading.</p>

## **Chapter Two: Syntactic Problems in Writing**

### **2.7.3. Lack of syntactic awareness**

Syntactic awareness is defined in detail by Herriman (1991). Three aspects, according to him, make up syntactic awareness: “(a) Awareness of the sentence as a basic unit of written language, (b) an awareness of grammatical acceptability and well-formedness as it [sic] relates to sentences or word strings, and (c) judgments about the relations between syntactic structure and semantic properties of sentences, e.g., synonymy and ambiguity” (p. 330). Besides what has been mentioned, syntactic awareness also includes two high-level abilities: the ability to formulate the rules of syntax and to identify what the rules are and the ability to intentionally control and reflect on one’s knowledge of syntactic rules or one’s performance on a task testing syntactic knowledge (Layton et al., 1998). EFL students often are unconscious during writing; some of them did not take lessons in syntax and some of them do, but they ignore the use of syntactic rules.

### **2.7.4. Mother tongue interference**

In addition to the lack of syntactic awareness among EFL students, mother tongue interference is another source that could be behind the syntactic problems students encounter in writing academic essays. Friedlander (1997) asserts that students think in their L1 when they are writing essays in the target language. This happens when they transfer their writing abilities and background knowledge from their first language to the target language. That is to say, most EFL students' thoughts are triggered by Arabic rather than thinking in the target language, resulting in syntactic mistakes. Such a fact has inspired some researchers to investigate this dilemma; Though EFL teachers do insist on the need for EFL students to think and write in English, their students sometimes deviate from such a call. In this vein, Friedlander (1997) claims “writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second

## **Chapter Two: Syntactic Problems in Writing**

or third language” (p.109). However, Blanchard and Root (2004) state “writing remains a difficult skill to acquire and each language has its own writing conventions that the writer needs to learn them without interfering with other language or languages” (p. 204).

### **Conclusion**

As established, this chapter sheds light on the different literatures related to the subject of investigation. The key concepts that have been tackled are syntax, discourse analysis and the ways of analysis in addition to the main concern of the study: syntactic problems and the sources behind them. Since the purpose of the current study is to raise students’ syntactic awareness in EFL essay writing and assist them to have the ability to monitor the structural placement of words and to produce sentences in a variety of correct ways.

# **Chapter Three: The practical part**

## **Chapter Three: The practical part**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapters demonstrated the two main variables of the study; they shed light on the different aspects of writing, as well as the different writing difficulties in general and the syntactic problems in particular. This chapter, on the other hand, is exclusively devoted to the practical fieldwork which is a descriptive study (qualitative) to investigate the syntactic problems that EFL learners encounter when writing essays. To reach the aim of the study, a students' online questionnaire was administered to identify learners' views of writing. In addition, corpus analysis of EFL students' essays was done to inspect students' possible areas of syntactic problems they are likely to encounter. This chapter covers a description of the participants and research instruments; it includes an analysis of the questionnaire and a corpus analysis of students' essays. Moreover, this chapter deals with a discussion of the findings and ends with suggestions and recommendations for further research.

### **3.1. Participants and instruments**

Third-year, secondary and middle school, students at the department of English at L'Ecole Normale Supérieure, Ouargla, during the academic year 2019-2020 were chosen to be the population of the study. To conduct this study, 22 students from the population are chosen randomly because at this level they tackle essays and they are expected to face problems in syntax. They were asked to write a well-structured essay in which they describe their life changing experience. This sample was selected based on the assumption that the participants have achieved an advanced level in their writing proficiency. Besides, they have background knowledge concerning syntax and essay writing. Moreover, to conduct this study, two tools were chosen to collect data, a questionnaire and a diagnostic test.

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### **3.2. Methodology**

This study based on an online questionnaire was submitted to the population in order to dive deeper into their awareness regarding the topic (Appendix A). The questionnaire is composed of ten (10) questions mixed between closed questions where students are required to choose 'yes' or 'no' answers, and with multiple-choice questions where they are asked to pick their answers. In addition, there exist other spaces for further personnel answers. Moreover, the questionnaire is categorised into three main types. Questions (1) and (2) are under the background information of the students. The second type, question (3) to (8), entitled "Academic Essay Writing" deals with aspects related to writing essays and the difficulties that EFL students encounter. Consequently, the third part of the questionnaire, question (9) and (10), entitled "Syntactic Problems in Writing" addresses issues related to syntactic problems and the sources behind them.

This study is also based on the evaluation of twenty-two descriptive essays (Appendix B). Basically, it aims to examine the syntactic problems third-year ENS students encounter when writing essays. During the diagnostic test, students were given some instructions in order to understand the subject. They were given an hour and a half to write a well-structured essay in which they describe their life-changing experience.

### **3.3. Results**

#### **3.3.1. Analysis of Findings from Students' Questionnaire**

##### **Section one: General Information**

##### **Item One: Students' gender**

### Chapter Three: The practical part

**Table 3.1: Students' gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	5	39	44
<b>Percentage %</b>	11.4%	88.6%	100%

**Pie-chart 3.1: Students' gender**

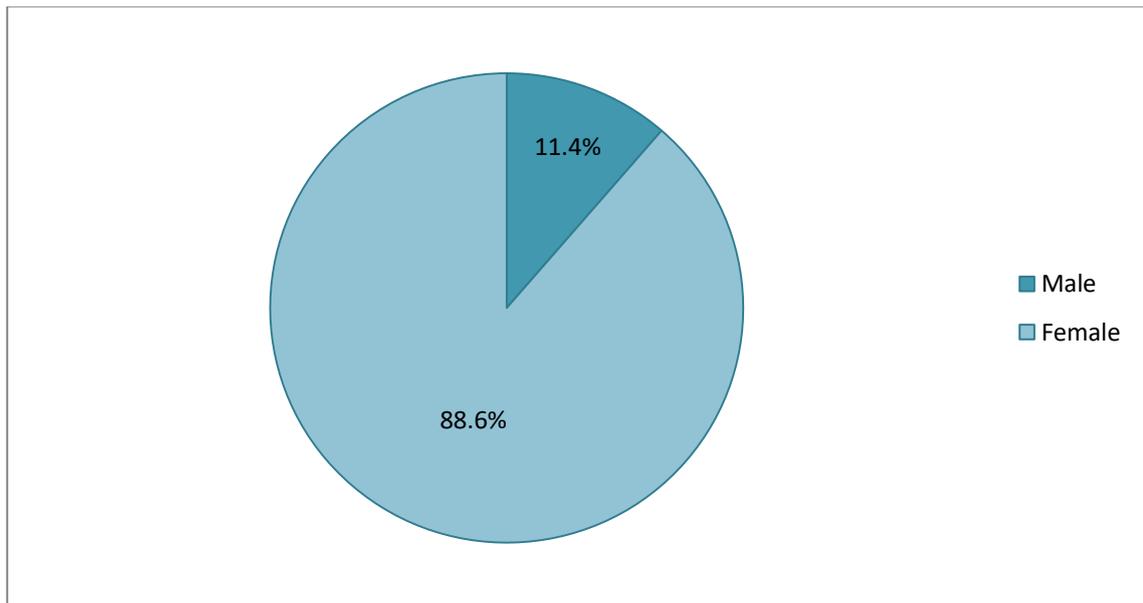


Table 3 and Figure 3 show that female students made up the majority of the population (88.6%). Males, on the other hand, account for only 11.4% of the total population.

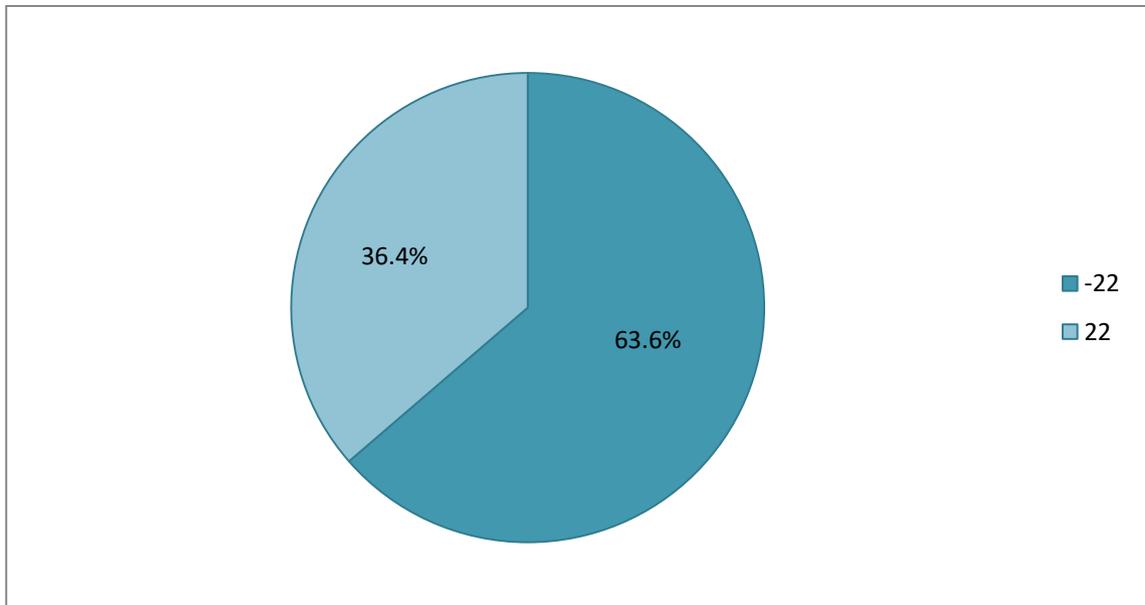
#### **Item Two: Students' age**

**Table 3.2: Students' age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>+22</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number</b>	28	16	44
<b>Percentage %</b>	63.6%	36.4%	100%

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**Pie-chart 3.2: Students' age**



The age of the students varies, as seen in Table 3 and Figure 3.2. They are 36.4 percent older than 22 and 63.4 percent younger than 22. Because the ENS requires a high degree, some students attend the ENS after their second or third attempt.

### Section two: Academic essay writing

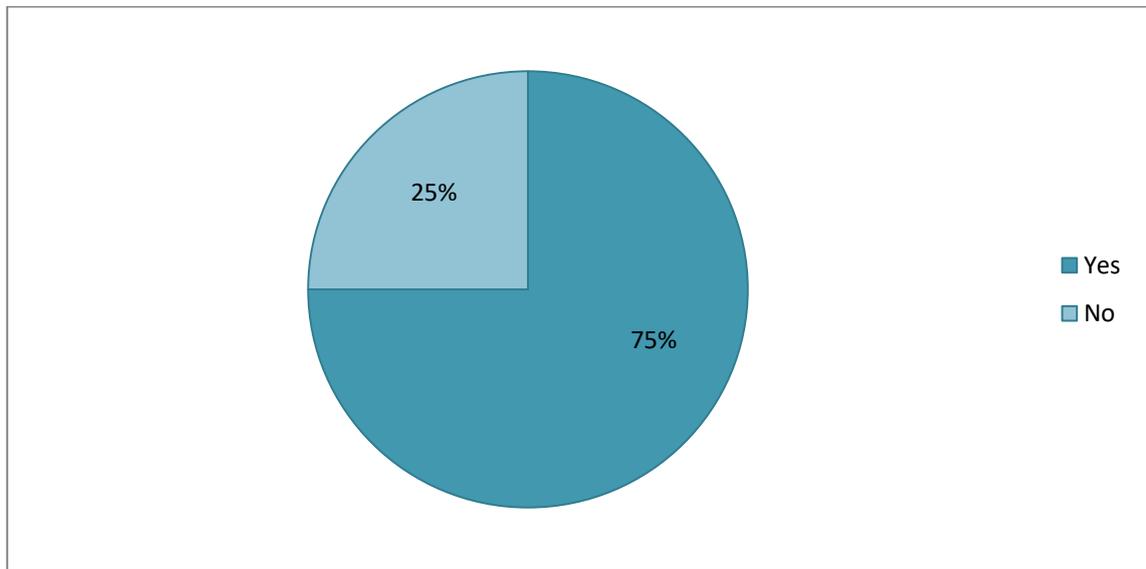
**Item Three:** Students' Preference of Writing.

**Table 3.3: Students' Preference of Writing**

Option	Yes	No	Total
Number	33	11	44
Percentage %	75%	25%	100%

### Chapter Three: The practical part

**Pie-chart 3.3: Students' Preference of Writing**



As indicated in the Table and the figure above, 75% of students say they like writing, while 25% say they do not.

#### **Item Four: Student's Level of Writing Proficiency**

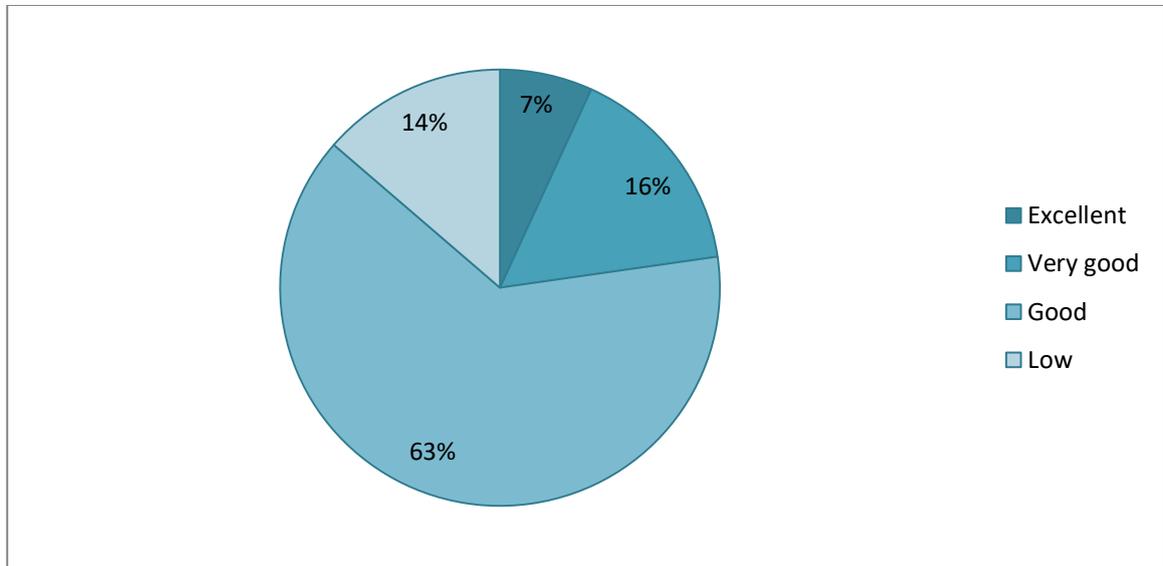
**Table 3.4: Student's Level of Writing Proficiency**

Level	Excellent	Very good	Good	Low	Very low	Total
Number	3	7	28	6	0	44
Percentage	6.8%	15.9%	63.6%	13.6%	0%	100%

When students were asked to rate their writing proficiency, only 6.8 % of them said that they are excellent at writing; furthermore, 15.9% said that they are very good. Moreover, 63.6% said they have a good level. On the other hand, 13.6% of the students answered that it was low.

### Chapter Three: The practical part

**Pie-chart 3.4: Student's Level of Writing Proficiency**



#### **Item Five: Students' Essay Writing inside the Classroom**

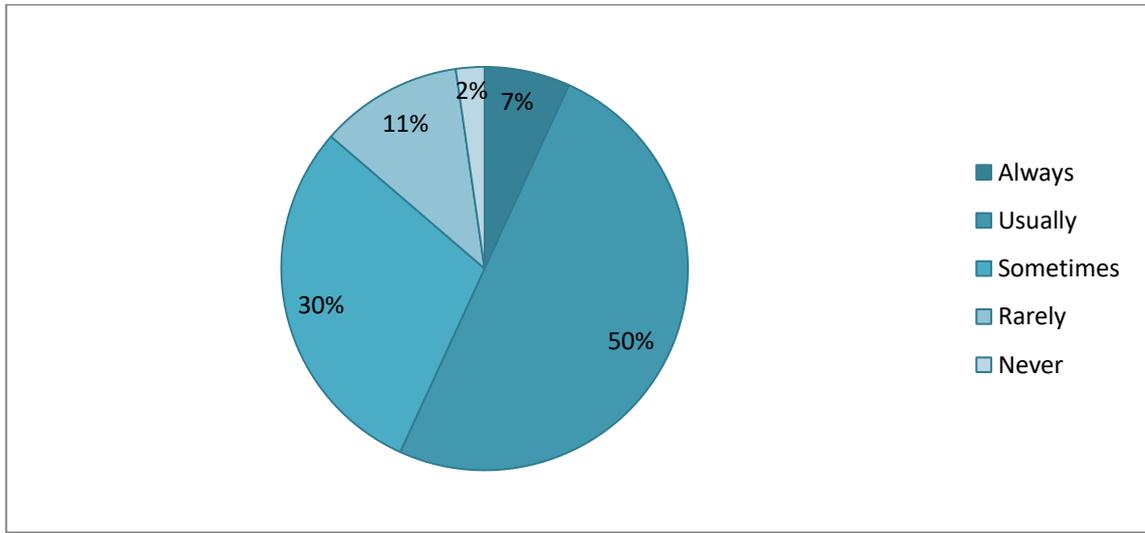
**Table 3.5: Students' Essay Writing inside the Classroom**

Answers	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Number	3	22	13	5	1	44
Percentage	6.8%	50%	29.5%	11.4%	2.3%	100%

Table 5 shows that half of the students (50%) stated that they are usually required to write essays in classroom. Furthermore, 29.5 per cent said they sometimes write inside the class. In contrast, 11.4 per cent stated that they are rarely assigned to write essays in class, while only 6.8 per cent declared that they always do. It was alleged that the remaining never did.

**Chapter Three: The practical part**

**Pie-chart 3.5: Students' Essay writing inside the Classroom**

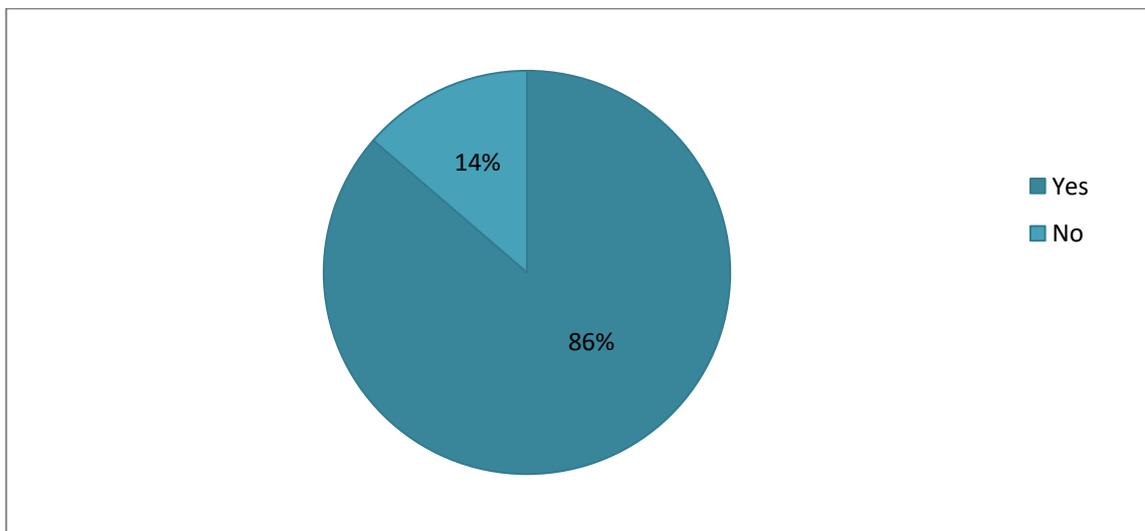


**Item Six: Students' Knowledge about Writing Academic Essays**

**Table 3.6: Students' Knowledge about Writing Academic Essays**

Option	Yes	No	Total
Number	38	6	44
Percentage (%)	86.4%	13.6%	100%

**Pie-chart 3.6: Students' Knowledge about Writing Academic Essays**



### Chapter Three: The practical part

Both Table and Figure 3 present that 86.4 per cent of the students know how to write academic essays, whereas 13.6 per cent do not.

**Item Seven:** Type of Essays.

**Table 3.7: Type of Essays**

Answers	Descriptive	Narrative	Argumentative	Expository	Total
Number	12	11	15	6	44
Percentage(%)	27.3%	25%	34.1%	13.6%	100%

**Pie-chart 3.7: Type of Essays**

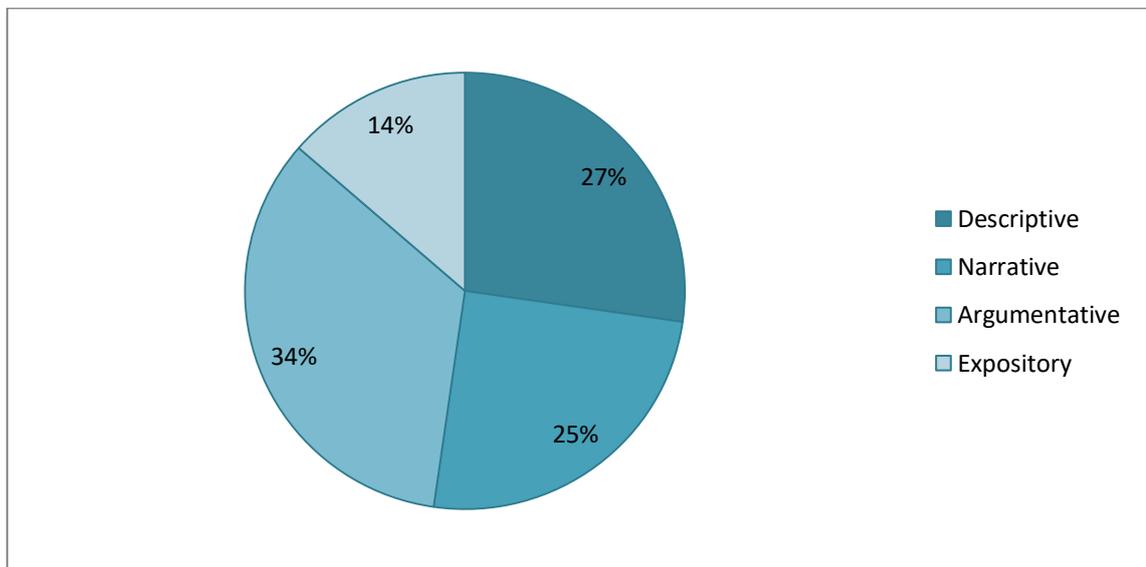


Table and Figure 7 illustrate that 34.1 percent of students believe argumentative essays appeal to them more, while descriptive essays were favoured by 27.3 per cent of respondents. However, narrative essays were preferred by 25% of respondents, while expository essays were preferred by just 13.6 per cent.

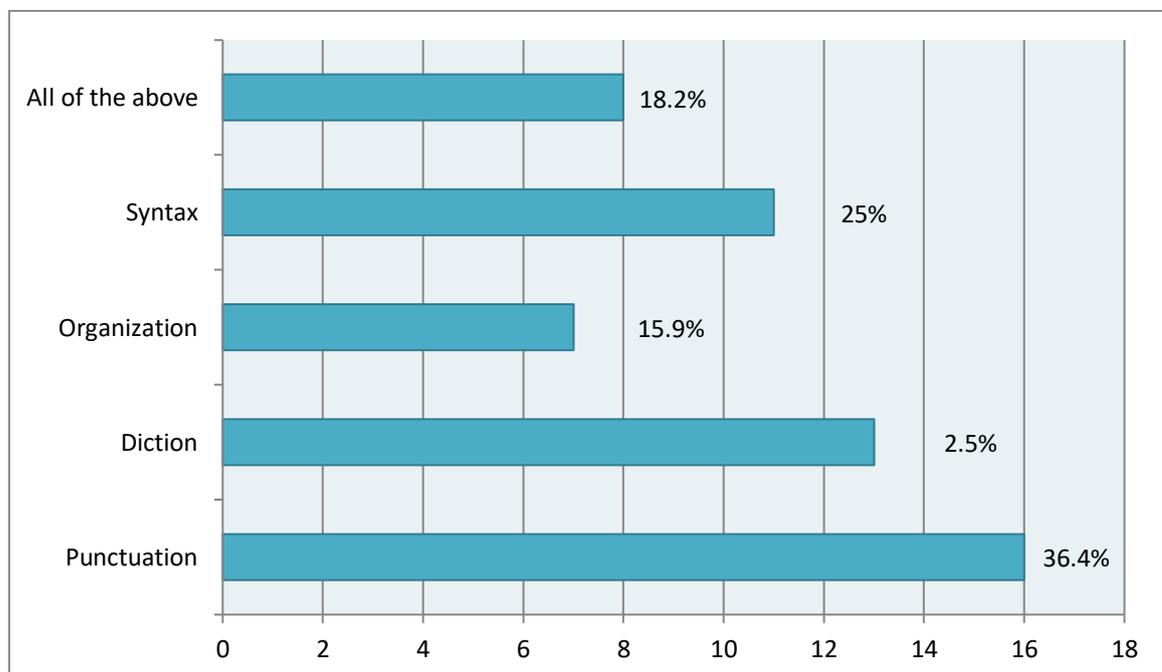
**Item Eight:** Aspects of Difficulties in Writing.

### Chapter Three: The practical part

**Table 3.8: Aspects of Difficulties in Writing**

Aspects of difficulties	Answers	
	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Punctuation</b>	16	36.4%
<b>Diction</b>	13	2.5%
<b>Organization</b>	7	15.9%
<b>Syntax</b>	11	25%
<b>All of the above</b>	8	18.2%
<b>Total</b>	55	100%

**Bar Graph3.1: Aspects of Difficulties in Writing**



According to table 3 and figure 3, punctuation and syntax are students' most difficult aspects with a percentage of 61.4 %. Furthermore, organization is ranked second with a 15.9% percentage. On the other hand, the least aspect of difficulties is diction (9%);

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whereas, 18.2 per cent of the students chose “all of the above” as their option. In addition, two respondents added cohesion and tenses as personal answers.

#### Section Three: Syntactic problems in writing

##### Item Nine: students’ syntactic errors

**Table 3.9: Students’ syntactic errors**

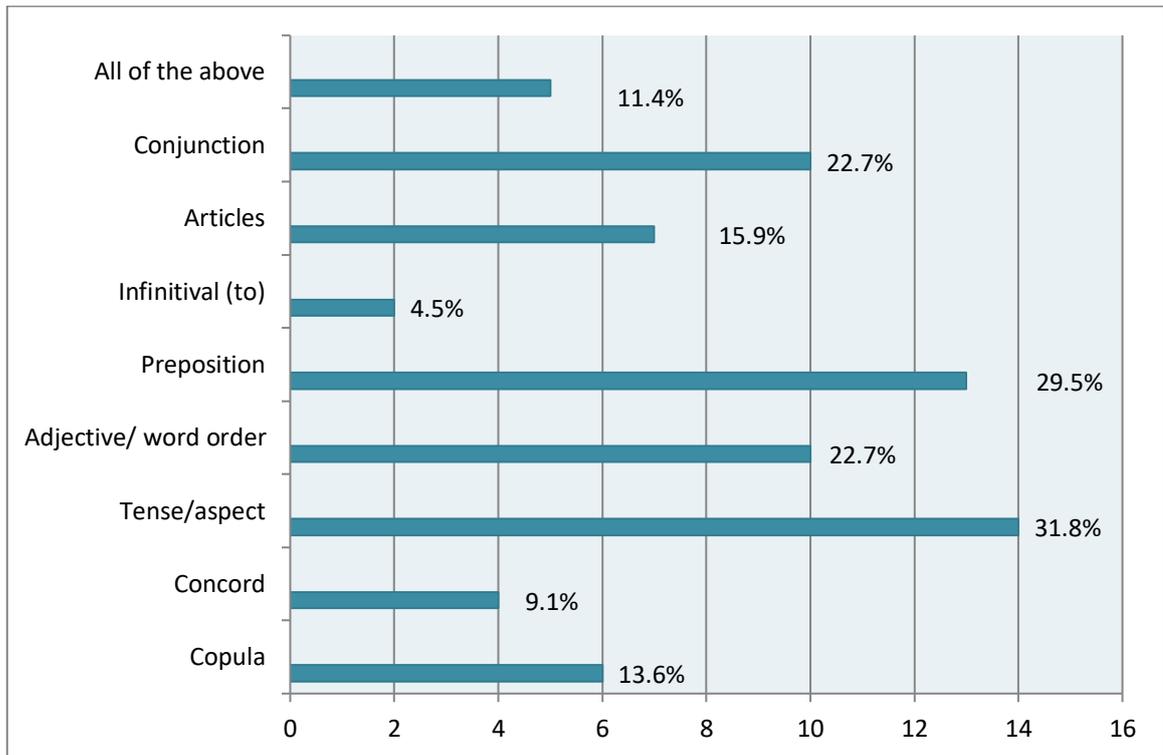
Syntactic errors	Answers	
	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Copula</b>	6	13.6%
<b>Concord</b>	4	9.1%
<b>Tense/aspect</b>	14	31.8%
<b>Adjective/ word order</b>	10	22.7%
<b>Preposition</b>	13	29.5%
<b>Infinitival (to)</b>	2	4.5%
<b>Articles</b>	7	15.9%
<b>Conjunction</b>	10	22.7%
<b>All of the above</b>	5	11.4%
<b>Total</b>	71	100%

Table 3 provided frequencies and percentages of each syntactic problem; tense/aspect (31.8%) and prepositions (29.5%) were the most common syntactic problems that ENS students encounter, whereas each of adjective/word order and conjunction are ranked next with 22.7 per cent. Furthermore, articles (15.9%) and copula (13.6%) took the third place. On the other hand, concord (9.1%) and infinitival to (4.5%) were among the fewest

### Chapter Three: The practical part

syntactical problems that ENS students encounter. Finally, only five (5) students have problems with all of the above.

**Bar Graph 3.2: Students' syntactic errors**



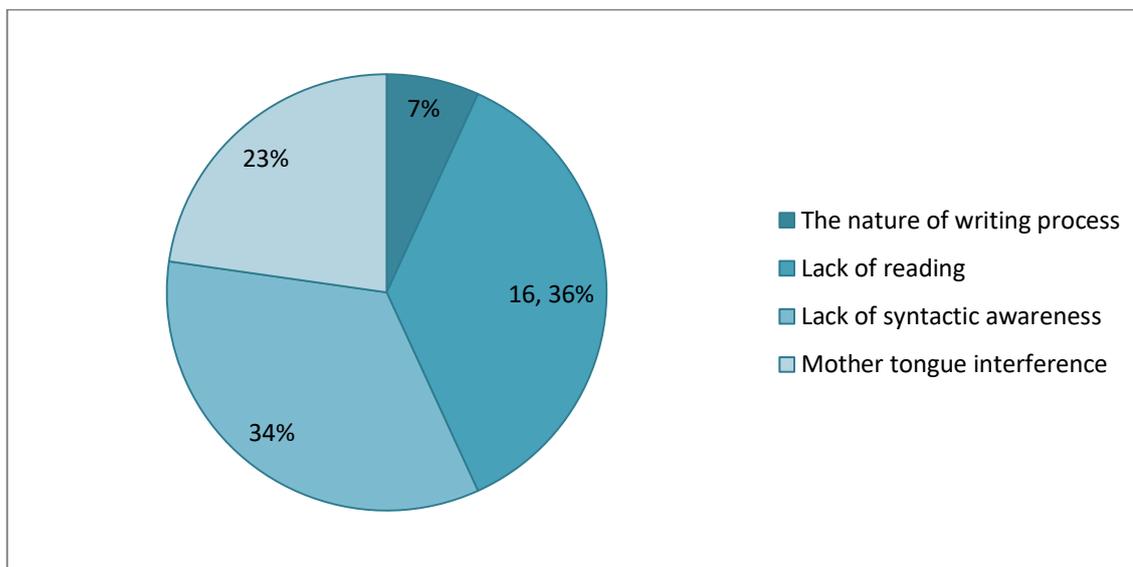
**Item Ten:** The sources of syntactic problems

**Table 3.10: The sources of syntactic problems**

Sources	Number	Percentage %
The nature of writing process	3	6.8%
Lack of reading	16	36.4%
Lack of syntactic awareness	15	34.1%
Mother tongue interference	10	22.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Chapter Three: The practical part

**Pie-chart 3.8: The sources of syntactic problems**



When enquiring about the reasons why students encounter syntactic problems during writing, the following results have been found. The highest rate of students (36.4%) associated the reason to lack of reading; almost a similar percentage (34.1%) represents lack of syntactic awareness, while (22.7%) of the student claimed that mother tongue interference is the reason. On the other hand, only (6.8%) of students asserted that the nature of writing process is the source behind ENS students' syntactic problems.

### 3.3.2. Corpus Analysis of Student's essays

As a second tool of collecting data for this study, several students' diagnostic test papers have been collected and examined for identifying the students' syntactic errors. The main aim behind implementing this means was to take a closer look at students' current level. Therefore, in this study fifteen (15) copies of students' written essays were gathered and selected randomly to be inspected. Students were asked to write about their life-changing experience as it is demonstrated in appendix (A).

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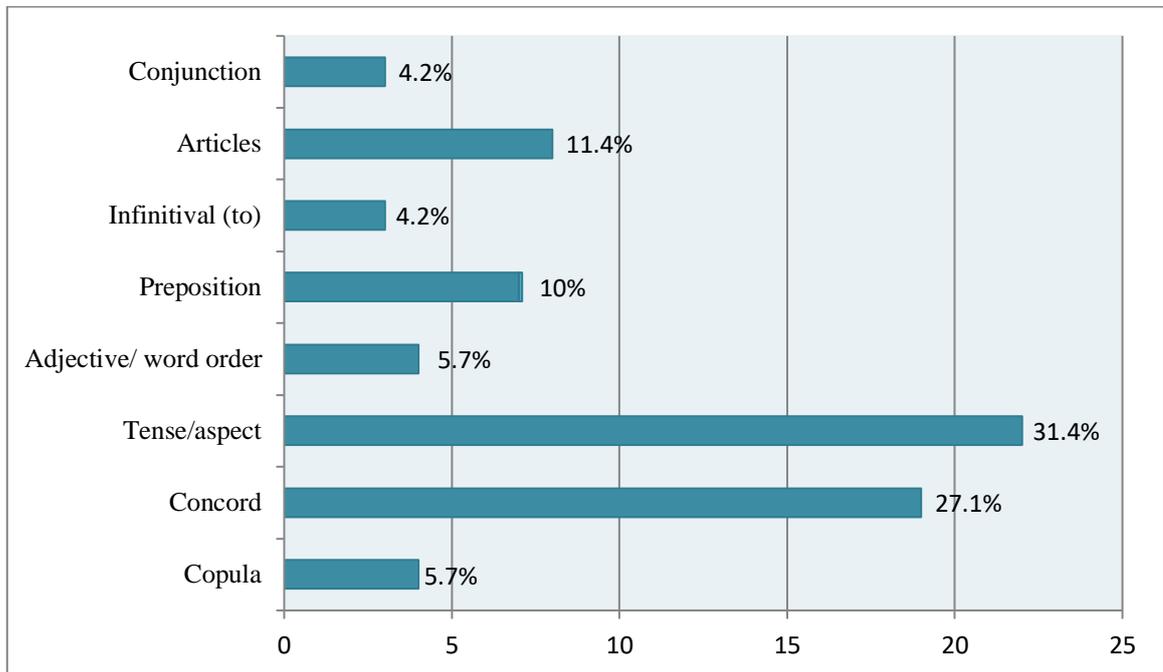
**Table 3.11: Students' syntactic errors**

<b>Syntactic errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Copula</b>	4	5.7%
<b>Concord</b>	19	27.1%
<b>Tense/aspect</b>	22	31.4%
<b>Adjective/ word order</b>	4	5.7%
<b>Preposition</b>	7	10%
<b>Infinitival (to)</b>	3	4.2%
<b>Articles</b>	8	11.4%
<b>Conjunction</b>	3	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	70	100%

The table above shows the analyses of syntactic errors in students' essays. According to the table, there exist two major errors with high frequency in students' essays. Tense/aspect and concord had the highest frequency with a percentage of (31.4%) and (27.1%) of the total number of the errors. Articles and preposition's errors come in third and fourth, respectively, with a proportion of (11.4%) and (10%). However, less frequent errors were copula and adjective/ word order with a (5.7%) equal percentage for each. Furthermore, infinitival to and conjunction's errors appeared in approximate percentage (4.2%) for each.

## Chapter Three: The practical part

**Bar Graph3.3: students' syntactic errors**



### 3.4 Discussions

In this part, we will deal with the interpretation and discussion of the results we have found in both the online questionnaire and the written samples conducted with third-year ENS learners.

The analysis of the students' questionnaire, in section one, has revealed that female students made up the majority of the population, because females prefer teaching more than males do. As a result, they chose ENS to achieve their goals. Concerning question number two, the students' age varies; the majority are under the age of 22, while the remainder are older due to the fact that ENS requires a high degree, some students attend it after their second or third attempt.

Regarding section two, the third question revealed that 75% of students like writing because it allows them to express their thoughts and selves, while the remaining 25% disagree due to the nature of the writing process. In the fourth question, when

### **Chapter Three: The practical part**

students were asked to rate their writing proficiency, only 6.8 % of them said that they are excellent at writing because they master the basic rules of writing; furthermore, 15.9% said that they are very good, this indicates that they receive high grades in written expression, as well as for whom claimed that they have a good level they still need practice to improve their writing. On the other hand, 13.6% of the students answered that their writing proficiency is low may refer to the lack of practice. Question five shows that half of the students (50%) stated that they are usually required to write essays in classroom. In addition, 29.5 per cent said they sometimes write inside the class because a “written expression” module is included in their actual grade. Furthermore, question six indicates that 86.4 per cent of the students know how to write academic essays, whereas 13.6 per cent do not. This refers to some students’ lack of practice and concentration inside the class. According to the results of question seven, student’s preferences for the type of essay they prefer to write vary; the majority of students believe argumentative essays appeal to them more in which they address contentious subjects from contrasting viewpoints, while descriptive essays were favoured by 27.3 per cent of respondents because they allow them to be creative through using a vivid language. However, 25% of respondents preferred to tell stories, while 13.6 per cent preferred to explain or define a topic, using facts, statistics, and examples while writing essays. Question eight dealt with the aspects of writing difficulties that ENS students encounter when writing essays; punctuation and syntax are students’ most difficult aspects with a percentage of 61.4 % because they usually produce fragments rather than sentences and they don't understand how roles such as subject and object are allocated in sentences. Furthermore, organization is ranked second with a 15.9% percentage in which students are incapable to generate thoughts and topics in a cohesive manner. On the other hand, the least aspect of difficulties is diction (9%) which is a serious problem because without diction nothing can be

### **Chapter Three: The practical part**

conveyed; whereas, 18.2 per cent of the students chose “all of the above” as their option. In addition, two respondents added cohesion and tenses as personal answers.

Section three is concerning syntactic problems in writing; the results of question nine provided frequencies and percentages of each syntactic problem; tense/aspect (31.8%) and prepositions (29.5%) were the most common syntactic problems that ENS students encounter because students are not concerned with how the event is regarded in terms of duration and completion in addition, the majority of English prepositions are of multi-functions so they struggle while using them. The tenth and last question in this questionnaire required students to mention the sources they believe are accountable for the difficulties stated previously. When enquiring about them, the following results have been found. The highest rate of students (36.4%) associated the reason to lack of reading since the majority of students are not interested in exploring extra books; almost a similar percentage (34.1%) represents lack of syntactic awareness because students do not have the ability to formulate the rules of syntax and to identify what the rules are and the ability to intentionally control and reflect on one’s knowledge of syntactic rules. while (22.7%) of the student claimed that mother tongue interference is the reason because students think in their L1 when they are writing essays in the target language. On the other hand, only (6.8%) of students asserted that the nature of writing process is the source behind ENS students’ syntactic problems.

The analysis of students’ essays revealed that there exist two major errors with high frequency in students’ papers. Tense/aspect and concord had the highest frequency of the total number of the errors. Students committed tense/aspect errors such as “they give me” instead of “they gave me”, “I was wait for a long time” instead of “ I was waiting for a long time” ; as mentioned earlier students are not concerned with how the event is

### **Chapter Three: The practical part**

regarded in terms of duration and completion, they also do not distinguish tense inflation. When speaking about concord they fail in showing that two grammatical units have a certain feature in common like “It tell you” and “I doesn’t know”. Articles and preposition’s errors come in third and fourth, respectively, with a proportion of (11.4%) and (10%). Students committed articles’ errors such “All those experiences change a something inside us” and they tend to omit the indefinite articles while they are writing due to their mother tongue interference. Concerning prepositions, a student wrote “she went in her home” and this may refer to her ignorance about the preposition’s function. However, less frequent errors were copula and adjective/ word order with a (5.7%) equal percentage for each. Errors such “all what I need just to celebrate” and “the most worse experience” may refer to students lack of concentration. Furthermore, infinitival to and conjunction’s errors appeared in approximate percentage (4.2%) for each.

#### **3.5. Limitations of the study**

Despite the fact that the current study has achieved its aim, there are three limitations that restricted the work. First, the study was to be held at Biskra University, but due to the current situation (Covid 19), I had to deal with existing papers. Second, the sample was small; it consists of twenty-two participants. Thus, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Third, since it was a diagnostic test, the participants did not take the test seriously at the beginning till the teacher talked with them.

#### **3.6. Suggestions for Further Research**

Future research can be conducted in the same topic considering the following suggestions. First, future studies can be conducted to investigate other types of syntactic errors, with a particular focus on the various stages of writing that students go through. Second, other data gathering tools might be conducted to support and generate different

## **Chapter Three: The practical part**

findings such as class observation and teachers' interview. Third, other researchers can replicate this study by investigating other sources of syntactic errors that impede EFL students' ability to write essays.

### **3.7. Recommendations**

Regarding our findings, we suggested the following recommendations:

- Teachers should devote more sessions for students to teach them Syntax.
- Teachers should provide pupils with a variety of topics to allow them to practice syntactic components and grasp syntax.
- Teachers should provide students with detailed feedback and solutions to prevent students from committing errors.
- Students should put more attention to the outline process and use drafting in order to organize their ideas.
- Students should engage in additional reading activities in order to improve their writing abilities
- Minister of higher education should integrate Syntax as a separate module.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the practical part of the research, in which the analysis of both the online questionnaire and students' essays was conducted. We provided a description of the participants and research instruments. Furthermore, an analysis of the questionnaire and a corpus analysis of students' essays were interpreted. Moreover, this chapter dealt with a discussion of the findings and suggestions and recommendations for further research.

# **General conclusion**

## **General conclusion**

Writing is a difficult cognitive process that involves meticulous attention to rules and the use of the target language. During writing essays, third-year ENS students generally hesitate to write, for they strive to find the proper words, struggle with the organisation of their thoughts and the syntactic rules, or they may find punctuation difficult. The present thesis was conducted to investigate the syntactic problems encountered by EFL students in writing essays as well as highlighting the sources behind these problems.

In order to confirm or refute the hypothesis, a descriptive study was conducted. It focused on identifying students' writing difficulties, and the common syntactic errors they commit. This is done through an online questionnaire administered to third-year English students at L'ecole Normale Supérieure de Ouargla which detailed several writing difficulties. In addition, the corpus analysis of students' essays confirmed that students make syntactic errors during writing essays.

The findings of this research reveal that third-year English students at ENSO encounter different syntactic problems. According to the results obtained from the online questionnaire, students seem to have main difficulties concerning punctuation, diction and syntax, in addition to committing errors concerning tense/aspect, prepositions and conjunctions. Whereas, the corpus analysis of students' written essays reveal that the majority of errors found were about tense/aspect, concord and articles. Moreover, lack of reading, lack of syntactic awareness and mother tongue interference were highlighted as the major sources behind the syntactic problems. As a result, teachers are encouraged to use the findings to improve their teaching strategies in the future, while students are encouraged to adopt the findings to improve their writing proficiency.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: students' questionnaire

#### Students' Questionnaire

In order to prepare my graduation thesis entitled "Syntactic problems in EFL Students' Essays", I would like to enlist your assistance in completing this questionnaire. The latter aims to investigate the problems students usually encounter when writing essays.

*\*Obligatoire*

1. Section One: General Information 1.Gender: \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Male  
 Female

2. 2.Age: \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- 22  
 +22

3. Section Two: Academic essay writing 3.Do you like writing? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Yes  
 No

4. 4.How do you evaluate your writing proficiency? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Excellent  
 Very good  
 Good  
 Low  
 Very low

5. 5. In class, how often are you asked to write essays? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Always  
 Usually  
 Sometimes  
 Rarely  
 Never

6. 6.Do you know how to write academic essays? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Yes  
 No

7. 7. Which type of essays do you prefer writing? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- Argumentative
- Descriptive
- Narrative
- Expository

8. 8. While writing essays, what are the aspects you are likely to find difficulties in? \*

*Plusieurs réponses possibles.*

- Punctuation
- Diction
- Organization
- Syntax
- All of the above

Autre :  \_\_\_\_\_

9. Section Three: Syntactic problems in writing. 9. While writing essays, what are the syntactic errors you commit most? \*

*Plusieurs réponses possibles.*

- Copula
- Concord
- Tense/aspect
- Adjective/word order
- Preposition
- Infinitival (to)
- Articles
- Conjunction
- All of the above

10. 10. According to you, what are the sources behind the syntactic problems you encounter when writing essays? \*

*Une seule réponse possible.*

- The nature of writing process
- Lack of reading
- Lack of syntactic awareness
- Mother tongue interference
- Autre : \_\_\_\_\_

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Google Forms

Appendix B: sample essay

3 ✓

Diagnostic Test

Write a cohesive and coherent essay in which you describe your life-changing experience.

It has been three years since my life starts changing. When I was a younger, I used to rely on my parents on everything, but since I got passed my baccalaureat exam things started to change.

In summer 2017, I passed my baccalaureat exam and I was happy to begin my higher studies at university. I always dreamed of being an English teacher, thus my choice was Quangbi's E.N.S. Day by day, enrollments were done and then I started thinking and worrying about me living far from my parents.

My first days at campus were exciting, being able to live with my friends, and being officially a university student. Then life started getting harder. I was facing troubles in adapting to this new life style, studying, cooking, cleaning and washing which are done all by your own.

Another matter which is being financially self-dependent is amazing. To know how to economize and to manage your money, to decide what is necessary to buy and what is not, was not an easy thing for me, for it was my parents' task.

Living ~~that~~ without my parents was astonishingly weird, but realizing that I am mature enough to rely on myself, and with the presence of my elder sister, the life in campus seemed to be easier.

## ملخص الدراسة

في سياق اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية تعد الكتابة أصعب مهارة يمكن إتقانها، حيث تعتبر القواعد اللغوية من العناصر الأساسية لهذه المهارة. و من الشائع أن الطلاب الجزائريين للغة الانجليزية يواجهون صعوبات في ترتيب الكلمات و العبارات لتشكيل جمل متناسقة . تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استكشاف مشكلات القواعد اللغوية التي تواجه طلاب اللغة الانجليزية خلال كتابة المقالات، استندت هذه الدراسة على تحليل استبيان الكتروني اجري لطلاب السنة الثالثة لغة انجليزية بالمدرسة العليا للأساتذة بورقلة، بالإضافة إلى تحليل مجموعة من مقالات الطلاب . حيث أظهرت أهم النتائج أن لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية مشاكل تتعلق بعلامات الترقيم، انتقاء المفردات و القواعد اللغوية حيث تتمثل المشاكل المتعلقة بالقواعد اللغوية في صيغة الأفعال، حروف الجر و أدوات الربط وعلاوة على ذلك تم تسليط الضوء على قلة القراءة، الافتقار إلى إدراك القواعد اللغوية و تدخل اللغة الأم بصفته المصادر الرئيسية وراء مشاكل القواعد اللغوية و لهذا و جب على الأساتذة الاهتمام أكثر بتدريس القواعد اللغوية كما و جب على الطلاب التحمس أكثر لمعرفة هذه القواعد. الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، القواعد اللغوية، انتقاء المفردات ، علامات الترقيم ، صيغة الأفعال ، حروف الجر، أدوات الربط .