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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of the English Language and Literature

# MASTER THESIS

Letters and Foreign Languages  
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Sciences of the language

## Factors Affecting Teachers' Use of Automated Writing Assessment Tools in Evaluating the Academic Writing of University Students of English:

The Case of University Teachers of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
Master Degree in English: Sciences of Language

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### **Declaration**

I, Amir **Gagaa**, hereby declare that this dissertation is presented with the aim to obtain a Master's degree in Sciences of Language and is the product of my own efforts, and therefore all the contents of this dissertation is original except where references are made. I additionally certify that this work has not been submitted to any university or institution in order to get a degree or qualification.

This research work was conducted and completed at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria.

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### Dedication

First and foremost, I thank **Allah**, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for granting me the strength, patience, and determination to reach this final stage of my academic journey. Despite the difficult conditions and challenging circumstances, I have come this far by His will and support. I also extend my deepest gratitude to **myself** for enduring, striving, and never giving up, even in the darkest and most uncertain times. This work is lovingly dedicated to my **beloved mother**, whose endless sacrifices, prayers, and unwavering encouragement have carried me through. To the soul of my dear **grandmother**, may peace be upon her whose love and wisdom remain a guiding light in my life. To my **father**, for his support, and to my **siblings**, for being a constant source of strength and companionship throughout this journey .

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### Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigated the extent to which English language teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, Algeria, use Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools in evaluating university students' academic writing and the factors influencing their adoption. Driven by issues of AWA adoption and impact, the research addressed two principal issues: the extent of technology use and the factors influencing it. Data were collected via an online survey returned by 23 English teachers, yielding quantitative data regarding AWA frequency of use and platforms of preference, along with qualitative data regarding experience and issues. A single semi-structured interview also provided details, individualized data. Qualitative data were directly quoted due to the small number of interviewees. Findings show low to moderate use by teachers of AWA tools with a bias for surface level feedback tools like Grammarly, driven by ease of access and user-friendliness. The primary barriers to higher use are lack of time, inadequate access to technology and paid tools, and inadequate training and exposure to AWA features. Teachers also raised doubts regarding AWA's ability to measure higher-order writing skills such as creativity, tone, and critical thinking, emphasizing the crucial role of human judgment. The study concludes that while such benefits as efficiency are offered by AWA tools, their effective implementation into Algerian university education necessitates particular training, robust institutional support, and critical understanding of their pedagogical limitations.

**Key-words :** EFL Academic Writing, English Language Teachers , Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) , EFL Academic Writing , Mohamed khider of Biskra .

**List of acronyms**

**AES:** Automated Essay Scoring

**AWA:** Automated Writing Assessment

**AWE:** Automated Writing Evaluation

**CAAS:** computerized Aided Assessment System

**DA:** Dynamic Assessment

**EAP:** English for Academic Purposes

**EFL:** English as a foreign language

**ESL:** English as a second language

**ESP:** English for Specific Purposes

**GBA:** Genre-based Approach

**GPA:** Grade point average

**HFA:** high-level formative assessment

**IEA:** Intelligent Essay Assessor

**ITS:** Intelligent tutoring system

**L 1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**LFA:** low-level formative Assessment

**LSA:** latent semantic analysis

**PEG:** Project Essay grade

**SBA:** School-based assessment

**SFG:** systematic functional grammar

**TWE:** Test of Written English

**WRM:** writing Roadmap

**ZPD:** Zone of Proximal Development

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## **1. General introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Implementing technology in schools is a multifaceted process that is more than simply putting computers in classrooms. Ross, McGraw, and Burdette (1998) write that for technology to be utilized, it must be supplemented with proper teacher preparation, good administrative leadership, and embedded within learning goals. Their overview emphasizes that simple access is not enough teachers need to have continuous support and a clear vision of how technology will enhance learning outcomes. Lastly, the research stresses meticulous planning and consistent effort to invest in such a way that technology is utilized appropriately to facilitate teaching and learning.

### **1.2 Assessment in Academic writing**

The vital role of English teachers in providing corrective feedback to improve students' writing skills as second language learners. Writing classes are particularly demanding, requiring considerable time and effort for feedback delivery. Rubrics have traditionally helped enhance scoring consistency, validate assessments, and promote learning (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). However, research in first language (L1) settings suggests challenges in fostering learning through rubrics. This study examines the benefits and drawbacks of rubrics for grading and teaching in second language (L2) writing contexts, particularly in Japan. It aims to explore how teachers use these tools and suggests improvements to support student learning teachers feedback is crucial for students' written output automated writing assesement like rubrics as it has prose it has cons as well .

### **1.3 Language and Assessment**

L2 assessment has evolved to meet modern needs, focusing not only on tool quality but also on their role in decision-making for large-scale tests and classrooms. A key aspect is construct definition, which determines what language skills, like grammar, vocabulary, and communicative competence, are evaluated. Four main approaches have shaped this process. Recent research highlights the integration of new methods and technologies, which bring both challenges and opportunities. These advancements stress the need for ongoing improvements to accurately measure learners' abilities and support informed decisions (Purpura, 2016) focusing only on tools quality is not enough to a reliable criteria to provide feedback .

### **1.4 Assessment of Academic writing**

Effective assessment of academic writing tutorials is essential for understanding their role in student success. Thonus (2002) found that successful tutorials involve balanced conversations, including mitigated directives, affiliative overlaps, and humor, which align with participants' views of success. The study emphasizes focusing on both the tutorial process and product, recommending tutor training to enhance effective interactions and improve writing center outcomes.

In higher education, formative assessment is vital for improving students' academic writing by focusing on continuous evaluation and feedback. Shrestha (2020) highlights its role in fostering linguistic proficiency, genre awareness, and disciplinary knowledge. The chapter explores various assessment types, emphasizing Dynamic Assessment (DA) as a promising alternative. DA promotes scaffolding and social interaction, offering a more interactive approach to supporting student development

### **1.5 Challenges of Assessing Academic writing in algeria**

In the Algerian Context, Ahmed (2018) discusses challenges in assessing EFL writing in Algeria, such as low proficiency, poor grammar, and a focus on product-based assessments. The study calls for better assessment training for educators and highlights the limited use of self-assessment methods due to large class sizes and outdated methods. It notes a gap in exploring the potential of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools and digital platforms like Google Classroom for more personalized, real-time feedback.

### **1.6 Automated Writing Assessment**

In the context of advancing digital assessment methods Clarke-Midura and Dede (2010) explore the evolution of assessment through technology, focusing on virtual performance assessments. These assessments offer advantages like standardization, reduced teacher training needs, and no safety or resource concerns. They allow for interactive learning, dynamic simulations, and detailed data visualizations. The authors highlight the potential of immersive technologies to deepen insights into student learning and suggest expanding these methods to other digital media forms.

In "Automated Writing Assessment in the Classroom," Warschauer and Grimes (2008) examine the effectiveness of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) software in secondary schools. The study finds that AWE software saves teachers' time and encourages revision but does not significantly increase writing volume or improve content and organization. Its impact varies based on teachers' pedagogical beliefs and students' socioeconomic status. Despite technological advancements, human oversight is still necessary due to the software's limitations, highlighting the need for further research on AWE's educational impact.

### **1.7 Potentials of automated writing assessment**

In a study on the role of AWE tools in EFL context Parra G. and Calero S. (2019) examined the effect of AWE tools, Grammarly and Grammarly, on Ecuadorian undergraduate students' writing in an English Teacher Training Programme. The study found significant improvements in writing skills, particularly in grammar, punctuation, and style, due to immediate feedback from the tools. However, limitations in content organization and meaningful interaction indicated the need for additional teacher feedback. The study suggests that AWE tools are valuable for writing instruction but require human guidance to be most effective, with future research exploring integration with peer feedback in EFL contexts.

### **1.8 Statement of the problem**

The use of automated writing tools in EFL contexts has gained attention for their potential to enhance writing performance and support language development. These tools have been found to reduce writing anxiety, improve grammatical accuracy, and offer consistent, in-depth feedback on students' texts. For example, Hanan Waer (2021) found that using the Cambridge *Write & Improve* tool significantly reduced writing apprehension and enhanced grammatical knowledge among EFL students, especially when combined with teacher feedback. Similarly, Petchprasert (2021) explored the use of the Coh-Metrix tool to analyze EFL writing, showing that linguistic features such as cohesion and lexical flexibility play a key role in students' writing performance. Together, these studies highlight the value of integrating automated tools with teacher support to improve writing outcomes and suggest further exploration in broader EFL writing contexts.

### **1.10 Aim of the study**

This study aims to investigate the extent to which English language teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra utilize automated writing assessment (AWA) tools in the evaluation of students' academic writing. It further seeks to identify the key factors influencing their adoption



or rejection of these tools, with particular attention to aspects such as accessibility, availability of training, teachers' perceptions of the tools' effectiveness, and the level of institutional support provided, trying to answer the following questions :

### **1.11 Research Questions**

RQ 1 : To what extent do Algerian teachers of English use technology to assess learners' academic writing ?

RQ 2 : What are the factors affecting Algerian English teachers' use of technology to assess learners' academic writing at university of biskra ?

### **1.12 Methodology**

The study was conducted at Biskra University in Algeria, involving English teachers who assess university students' academic writing.

This is a mixed-methods study combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, designed to explore the extent of technology use in assessing academic writing and the factors influencing teachers' choices.

Data were collected through online questionnaire , which were sent and administered to English teachers at Biskra university to understand their perspectives and practices related to technology use in assessment.

The data were analyzed using statistical methods for the questionnaire responses, to identify patterns and insights related to teachers' use of technology in assessing writing.

### **1.13 The significance of the study**

This study is important because it shows how often English language teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra use automated writing assessment (AWA) tools and what factors

affect their use. It highlights both the benefits of using these tools such as providing faster, more objective feedback and the challenges teachers face, including lack of training, limited access, and weak institutional support. The findings offer useful insights for improving writing assessment through technology and provide recommendations for teachers and policymakers to support better integration of digital tools in higher education.

# **Theoretical part**

## **Chapter One: Academic Writing**

### **1.1 Introduction to Academic Writing**

Academic writing is not the final act of research, merely passively "writing up" results, but a basic, dynamic process that affects and re-affects knowledge and the writer. (Badley , 2009 )turns the traditional notion of writing as neutral, objective, and uncreative labor on its head, proposing academic writing involves making, un-making, and re-making ideas through critical analysis and dialogue, writing is understood as a space of identity construction, critical inquiry, and significant contribution to scholarship and society (Badley, 2009) Academic writing is not about reporting mere findings and results it is a dynamic , reflective process.

### **1.2 Definition of Academic Writing**

Academic writing is defined as a mode of expression by scholars to identify the intellectual boundaries of their field and area of study. It is characterized by formal tone, significant use of third-person point of view, focused attention on research problem, and precise choice of words. This type of style seeks to communicate mutually accepted meaning about complex ideas among a scholarly community of experts and professionals, and it requires formal and logical structure to present an integrated and harmonious picture of ideas (Colorado Technical College Writing Center, 2009). Academic writing is a distinguished piece characterized by formality .

Academic writing is formal, organized language used primarily in the context of higher education. It is designed to convey ideas, arguments, or research findings to an academic audience in a logical, understandable, and evidence-based manner. Academic writing differs from informal writing in its objective tone, conservative citation of sources, and technical vocabulary, which differ by discipline. Bailey (2015) writes that this type of writing holds a central position in university learning, not only as a means of assessment but as a skill required for participating in learned discourse. It is more a matter of competence in things like organizing ideas into lucid

paragraphs, synthesizing existing written work critically, and adhering to a given system of citations. By academic writing, students are taught to construct and defend arguments, think critically, and express their comprehension of advanced topics in a professional and academic manner.

### 1.3 Difference between creative and academic writing

Addressing the challenges EFL learners face in developing academic writing skills The study by Esma Şenel (2018) is about integrating creative writing into academic Writing instruction at the B2 level of EFL learners. The study investigates whether doing creative writing activities facilitated by the SCAMPER technique (Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to other use, Eliminate, Reverse) enhances students' success in academic writing. The study, conducted over four weeks with 15 participants in a university, employed pre-tests and post-tests, as well as midterm and final writing tests. The research revealed statistically significant creative and academic writing score gains. The creative writing also enhanced students' critical thinking, self-expression, motivation, and reduced writing apprehension. The author's conclusion is that creative writing is an effective pedagogy that should be integrated into EFL curricula to enhance learners' writing capability and engagement.

The use of automated writing evaluation (AWE) holistic scores in ESL classrooms is examined by Elton (2010) argues that academic writing is influenced by unspoken rules, known as *tacit knowledge*, which are hard for students to learn because they are rarely made clear. He believes students need both general writing support and help within their own subject areas. Elton suggests that learning to write well in an academic setting should be a joint effort between writing experts and subject teachers. He also discusses how conversations between students and teachers can help reveal this hidden knowledge. Overall, the article calls for more

collaboration and reflection to improve student writing across disciplines.

#### **1.4 The importance of academic writing**

Faculty perspectives on academic writing instruction across disciplines are explored by Zhu (2004) investigated faculty perspectives on academic writing through interviews with ten business and engineering professors. The research revealed two main viewpoints about academic writing instruction. Some faculty believed writing involves general transferable skills like organization and clarity that should be taught by writing instructors, while others emphasized discipline-specific writing processes that require teaching from content faculty within each field. Both groups agreed writing is crucial for professional success, though business programs tended to integrate writing more fully into curricula compared to engineering programs which often prioritized technical skills over writing development. Faculty feedback on student writing primarily focused on content rather than writing mechanics, with limited opportunities for revision. The study highlights the complex nature of academic writing across disciplines and suggests collaborative approaches between writing instructors and content faculty may best support students' writing development .

Graduate students' attitudes toward academic writing and their impact on writing behaviors are examined by Petric (2002) investigated graduate students' attitudes toward academic writing at Central European University, where many students had no prior writing instruction experience. The study revealed that students' attitudes—shaped by cultural backgrounds and prior education significantly influenced their writing behaviors and willingness to adopt new strategies. While some students initially resisted techniques like outlining or collaborative writing, positive experiences in writing courses often led to attitude changes, though these shifts required repeated practice and reflection. The research highlighted a frequent mismatch between students' positive attitudes toward certain strategies (e.g., peer review) and their actual use, often due to time

constraints or perceived lack of control. Petric emphasized the need for writing instruction to address these affective dimensions by providing low-stakes writing opportunities, fostering self-efficacy, and encouraging metacognitive reflection through activities like writing journals and peer discussions. The study underscores that effective writing pedagogy must account for students' evolving personal theories of writing while respecting individual differences in learning preferences and cultural backgrounds .

### **1.5 Academic writing in the EFL context**

Academic writing skill at the transition point from secondary education to university life is one of the big challenges for EFL learners, particularly in formal academic writing. Some repeated issues among Lebanese secondary students, including phonemic orthographic errors, grammatical faults, and poor organization, are despite formal instruction, according to a study. In order to address these deficits, Al-Khatib (2017) recommends the Five Tier Model—a pedagogically inspired linguistic design of the Cognitive Code Approach, Error Analysis, Grammatical Accuracy, Rhetorical Awareness, and Academic Discourse Development. The model departs from the psycholinguistic, but converges to a more context-responsive orientation with a middle course between general language acquisition and academic literacy. It also emphasizes incorporating such instruction within curriculum planning and teacher training in EFL settings.

The study developed a pedagogical model to respond to Spanish-speaking EFL learners who are writing the Test of Written English and consists of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), Genre Theory, and Input-processing Theories. Its four-phase model—Noticing in Input, Writing, Noticing on Output, and Editing—is based on rhetorical features, nominalization, and metacognitive reflection to promote learners' academic writing. The approach is adaptable and foregrounds the social functions of writing and is hence usable beyond test preparation (Astorga,



2007). The model offers an equilibrium method of linguistic accuracy development, genre awareness, and learner autonomy in the instruction of academic writing.

A process-based approach to EFL academic writing instruction emphasizing recursive stages and student autonomy is advocated by Widodo (2008) advocates for a process-based approach to EFL academic writing, contrasting it with traditional product-focused methods that overemphasize grammatical accuracy. The framework structures writing instruction into seven recursive stages: pre-writing (brainstorming), drafting (idea fluency), responding (peer/teacher feedback), revising (content refinement), editing (grammar/mechanics), post-writing (publishing), and reflection (self-evaluation). Teachers act as facilitators, providing scaffolded support through structured peer review (Appendix A) and analytic rubrics (Appendix B), while students engage as active planners and critical reviewers. For example, pre-writing techniques like narrowing broad topics (e.g., from "culture" to "culture shock") help students organize ideas before drafting. The approach balances formative assessment with metacognitive reflection (Appendix C), fostering both writing fluency and autonomy. Widodo (2008) acknowledges implementation challenges but argues the process method better addresses L2 learners' needs by prioritizing idea development and iterative improvement over premature accuracy.

An analysis of content-based approaches to ESL academic writing instruction is provided by Shih (1986) argues that content-based approaches to teaching academic writing are more effective for ESL students than traditional methods focused solely on rhetorical forms or personal narratives. By integrating writing instruction with subject-matter learning, these approaches better prepare students for the kinds of tasks they will encounter in university settings. Shih outlines five instructional models that reflect this integration: topic-centered modules or minicourses that simulate university classes around specific themes; content-based academic

writing courses that use interdisciplinary readings to develop skills like summary and synthesis; content-centered ESP courses tailored to specific fields like business; adjunct EAP courses linked directly to students' academic classes; and individualized support through writing centers or tutoring .

### **1.6 Challenges facing Algerian EFL learners' academic writing**

In the context of academic publishing challenges faced by non-native English speakers by Cheriguene, Tayeb, and Kerrache (2020) analyze the problems faced by eight Ph.D. Algerian students of computer science in trying to get their research articles published in English-language journals. The authors found that many papers were rejected for poor language rather than poor ideas. First, the students were prone to adopting a heated or passionate tone instead of the dispassionate and objective tone that should be adopted in scientific work. Secondly, they lacked the right word choice. Occasionally, they adopted words used by them in their native language, which didn't quite have its equivalent in English, or else they adopted generic words, which were ambiguous. Thirdly, they weren't adopting correct verb tenses. For example, they mixed up past and present tenses wrongly, especially in the abstract and discussion parts of their work. Such language issues made it challenging for editors and readers to well understand the work. The authors suggest that Ph.D. students be provided with more training in academic writing in a bid to improve their publishability. They also recommend more intensive reading and writing exercise in English to cultivate good writing abilities .

Addressing a pressing challenge in Algerian higher education Dr. Berbar's study has direct relevance to a real and common issue among Algerian EFL doctoral students: their anxiety while writing in English. Considering that English academic writing is now a main graduation and publication requirement in Algeria, the study reflects the mounting pressure the students are facing

in terms of not just content knowledge, but also academic language skills. The study also reveals how the facts of no time, lack of supervision support, and perfectionism problems that are rampant in Algerian universities affect students' writing confidence. Moreover, that most of the respondents were females with study, work, and family responsibilities makes the significance of this study more meaningful because it mirrors the situation of most Algerian postgraduate students. The findings not only attract attention to writing anxiety but also offer practical suggestions that can be utilized by students and institutions to enable academic achievement. Overall, this study contributes much-needed data on a little-researched issue and offers a way for future improvements in the delivery of writing support in the Algerian EFL academic setting.

Academic writing poses a considerable challenge for second language learners, especially in university settings where diverse genres and expectations prevail Paltridge (2004) reviews major issues in academic writing for second language (L2) students, focusing on the writing demands they face in universities. He explains that students are often required to produce various genres such as essays, proposals, and reports, but many struggle due to unfamiliarity with academic expectations, genre conventions, and disciplinary differences. The article highlights how writing is shaped by social, cultural, and institutional contexts, and emphasizes that teaching academic writing should include not only grammar and structure but also an awareness of audience, identity, and power. Paltridge (2004 ) also stresses the importance of genre-based approaches and critical perspectives in academic writing instruction, arguing for more research on writing in real academic settings to support L2 learners more effectively .

As social media becomes increasingly integrated into students' daily communication, concerns have emerged about its influence on academic writing skills Ghouali and Benmoussat (2019) investigated the impact of social media on the written production of third-year English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) students at Tlemcen University, Algeria. The study was mixed-methods, employing questionnaires on 31 students and 22 teachers, and comparative writing tasks (one on Facebook and one in class). Findings revealed that excessive use of social media led to fossilized linguistic errors, such as informal language, abbreviations, and grammatical mistakes, which students carried over to academic writing. Whereas teachers attributed the issues to fossilization, mother-tongue interference, and overgeneralization, students explained informal writing as a result of ease and speed. Though some perceived benefits were registered (e.g., interactive learning), the study concluded that social media predominantly has a negative influence on formal writing proficiency.

### **1.7 Assessment of Academic Writing**

Dynamic assessment (DA) from Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has been shown to enhance academic writing through tutor-guided support. In one experiment involving two business undergraduate students at the Open University, students received tailored feedback via email and internet discussion boards, which enabled the identification and remediation of weaknesses such as poor information flow. The two students improved, although at different rates, illustrating DA's potential for facilitating individualized learning outcomes. The approach was more helpful and effective than typical practices, yet despite being identified as a limitation, time needs were found to be a weakness. Future uses can be improved by incorporating group-based and internet-based DA tools to increase feasibility and extend access (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012). This highlights the value of DA as an adaptive and student-centered method for improving scholarly writing, particularly in the context of online and distance education.

### 1.8 Forms of assessment

Formative assessment, while widely placed on the agenda in teaching reforms, remains insufficiently implemented in EFL writing settings, as noted in a Norwegian middle school study. While curriculum policy supports writing as a fundamental skill, classroom practice is insufficient, in that teachers place higher theoretical priority on feedback but do not implement it. Burner (2015) found that students typically associated assessment with grading and tended to receive unclear or overly critical comments, which impacted their motivation and revision negatively. Though teachers and students alike favored oral feedback due to it being more specific, constraints like scarce class time, curriculum demands, and discrepancies in the proficiency of students limited the use of formative practice efficiently. Furthermore, opportunities for revision and self-evaluation were not optimized, and teachers questioned the actual impact of feedback on student improvement. Burner (2015) emphasized that shared knowledge of formative assessment principles and constant reinforcement of positive feedback and scheduled revision time are key to tapping its complete potential for learning success. This study identifies the gap between theoretical support and pedagogical practice, calling for more concerted and deliberate action in incorporating formative assessment into common EFL writing instruction.

Writing skills by Mohamadi (2018). In this study, a comparison was made of the effect of online summative assessment, online portfolio (formative) assessment, and online collaborative formative assessment on writing skills of 130 Iranian university students of English as a foreign language. The study, employing a pretest/posttest time series design for 27 sessions, concluded that all assessment types led to development in writing skills. The online collaborative formative assessment group, however, had the largest improvement. Typically, the summative assessment

online group also exhibited measurable gains, highlighting the role of summative assessment in writing capability improvement

### **1.9 The importance of formative assessment**

The role of assessment in shaping student learning outcomes has been widely examined in the literature, with several scholars emphasizing its pedagogical implications beyond grading (Taras, 2011) discusses how assessment directly affects student learning by responding to expectations and encouraging reflection. The article argues that assessment can no longer be viewed as merely a grading process, but as a pedagogical method of communicating curriculum intentions. It emphasizes the use of formative assessment to make learners aware of their learning shortfalls and assume responsibility for their enhancement. The paper argues for more integrated assessment strategies that enable continuous learning.

This paper by Foster and Piacentini (2023) discusses how evaluation is not only critical to the measurement of students' attainment, but also to the formulation of education policy and equity. The paper reiterates that properly designed evaluation systems have the potential to inform instruction, direct learning, and support accountability while also identifying and narrowing inequalities in education. The authors make the case for more open and inclusive evaluation practices in order to increase fairness and effectiveness in education.

### **1.10 Challenges of formative assessment**

Advancements in educational assessment have prompted researchers to examine how formative assessment can be effectively integrated into classroom teaching, especially with the support of technology. Hunt and Pellegrino (2002) discuss the complexities of formative assessment in teaching, its difference from summative assessments, which qualify primarily student learning. They argue that formative assessments must be integrated into teaching to enhance

learning without disrupting it. The authors list several models, such as DIAGNOSER and SMART, that use technology to facilitate assessment and teaching. However, they acknowledge challenges, including the time it takes to implement, teachers' technical skills, and the difficulty of accurately measuring student knowledge states. They emphasize that technology can bridge these challenges by enabling continuous assessment, offering immediate feedback, and reducing logistical burdens in the classroom.

The implementation of School-Based Assessment (SBA) in secondary schools often faces significant obstacles that can undermine its intended impact on educational quality and student learning outcomes Rahman et al. (2021) examine the challenges of implementing School-Based Assessment (SBA) in Bangladesh's secondary schools. The study discovers that even though SBA was introduced to enhance formative assessment, its implementation is uneven. Teachers and students often do not have knowledge of its components, and assessment processes are often out of sync with official policy. The primary issues are inadequate monitoring, huge class sizes, excessive workload, and inadequate teacher preparation. Moreover, SBA scores do not translate to public examination marks, further reducing motivation for its adoption. Socioeconomic pressures also play a role on teachers' allegiance, while those issues of equity and reliability concerning grading persist. The study demands for policy reforms, better teacher education, and institutional changes to enable SBA to perform its envisaged role in improving learning outcomes .

### **1.11 Conclusion**

in conclusion, the chapter has addressed the nature and importance of academic writing in higher education, in the case of English as a Foreign Language. It has stated the distinctive characteristics that constitute academic writing apart from other types of writing, highlighted its importance for

students' academic performance, and elaborated on the specific challenges faced by Algerian EFL learners. Through the outline of these basic elements, the chapter has established a brief foundation for understanding the need for assessing academic writing something the following chapters will treat more fully through the lens of technology-enhanced assessment.



## **Chapter two : Automated Writing Assessment**

## **2.1 Introduction to automated writing assesement**

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) has gained more and more attention among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts due to its power to facilitate writing instruction by giving prompt and tailored feedback. Aldosemani, Assalahi, Lhothali, and Albsisi (2023) reviewed sixteen empirical studies to examine the pedagogical strengths and limitations of EFL learners' utilization of AWE tools. The review summarized that AWE systems support writing development by offering precise, timely feedback, particularly in grammatical correctness, organization, and coherence. Furthermore, AWE tools enable learner autonomy by making learners revise and reflect on their own work and simplifying the work for teachers. Despite these advantages, AWE is not always successful for every learner, the researchers report; it is success-fallible, frequently operating upon students' level of proficiency, their digital literacy, and task complexity. In addition, the authors emphasized that AWE tools are still deficient in measuring creativity, contextual suitability, and critical thinking—dimensions requiring human judgment and pedagogical sensitivity. Therefore, while AWE has the potential to act as a supplement to traditional feedback, it needs to be used in judicious balance with teacher guidance to have maximum impact on student writing development.

## **2.2 Automated academic writing assessment**

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) has emerged as a promising tool for supporting second language writing instruction through immediate, technology-driven feedback Elena Cotos discusses Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) in her 2014 article. AWE are computerized assessment systems that evaluate written texts through computer technology, particularly in second language (L2) writing. AWE aims to offer immediate and uniform feedback, generally regarded as

a solution to the pitfalls of human grading. However, Cotos thinks that these technologies hold promise, though they can never substitute for all the teaching and learning needs unless designed and implemented on purpose. Based on fields like computer science, linguistics, and pedagogy, AWE diverged from trailblazing automated essay scoring (AES) systems. Cotos insists that AWE must be supplementary and not substitute for classroom teaching, and its real worth is in being carefully integrated into pedagogy.

### **2.3 Computerized Assessment and Writing**

Automated Essay Scoring (AES) is a type of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), in which computer technology is employed to score writing on quantifiable linguistic features such as essay length, vocabulary selection, and sentence sophistication (Shermis, Burstein, Higgins, & Zechner, n.d.). Rather than establishing meaning, AES systems utilize statistical models based on human-rated essay scores to generate scores based on "proxes" quantifiable measures (Shermis & Burstein, 2003). The paper traces the development of AES from early systems like Project Essay Grade (PEG) to advanced tools like e-rater®, IntelliMetric™, and Intelligent Essay Assessor™, which use techniques like regression analysis and Latent Semantic Analysis. While AES enables efficient large-scale testing, its reliance on surface features necessitates cautious application.

The Computer Aided Assessment System (CAAS) was established to give feedback to poor college students' writing by integrating direct and indirect assessment such as essay writing and multiple-choice. It is meant to be used in large institutions with not many faculties, and it has writing portfolios, diverse professional reviewers, clear achievement standards, and synchronized digital platform. It is a reliable option with various randomly assigned reviewers and has been found valid and consistent in U.S. trials, serving as beneficial feedback for both students and

administrators (He, Liu, & Ren, 2011) the computer aided assesment systems is very helpful for large-sized classes .

In an effort to enhance second language writing through technology, Davoudi and Ataie-Tabar (2015) explored the impact of a Computerized Dynamic Test of Writing (CDTW) on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL students with the help of guided support in pre-writing, drafting, and reformulation stages. Targeting four crucial sub-skills of writing, the study revealed that the experimental group, particularly lower-achieving students, outperformed the control group significantly. The learners also showed positive attitudes towards the computerized mode, mentioning its helpfulness in writing. The findings confirm CDTW as an effective, learner-responsive medium for promoting L2 writing development.

## **2.4 Technologies of Automated Writing Assessment .**

Research on technology-assisted writing instruction has demonstrated its potential to improve key textual features, Crossley et al. (2013) study analyzed the effectiveness of the Writing Pal Intelligent Tutoring System (W-Pal) and Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) module on increasing cohesion among the writings of high school students. With 64 participants, the study compared a group who worked on the whole W-Pal system—strategy instruction, games, and essay writing with feedback—to another group working on the AWE feedback module only. Results, conducted with Coh-Metrix and the Writing Assessment Tool, indicated increased utilization of global cohesion features across both groups and demonstrated that both AWE in isolation and the complete ITS positively impact writing cohesion. The study underscores the significance of automatic cohesion measures and identifies global cohesion as key to enhancing general writing quality.

## 2.5 Teachers' and students' perspectives

While automated writing evaluation tools are increasingly used in language learning, Wang (2015) studied Taiwanese university students' experience with using Criterion® Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) in an EFL context, reviewing comments from 53 English majors and 530 writings. Students appreciated the tool's instant scoring, grammar feedback, and organization and development comments that helped them revise correctly. They were less satisfied with style feedback, scoring rubric, and 'Plan' tool, reporting lack of usefulness. The study found Criterion® to be effective in selecting elementary grammatical mistakes but not as reliable for other intricate issues like tense and word order. Most of the students chose both teacher and automated feedback, highlighting the significance of human feedback over automated grading.

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems are increasingly used in language classes to assist writing instruction and feedback. Jiang et al. (2020) examined the impact of AWE, here the Pigai system, on second language writing instructors' feedback behavior in a Chinese university based on Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) theory. Data from 11 EFL instructors collected through interviews, observations, questionnaires, and system records revealed three types of AWE adoption: resisters like Mei and Yan who distrusted Pigai and preferred traditional feedback; surrogate users such as Juan and Zhou who relied heavily on Pigai to reduce workload but provided minimal teacher scaffolding; and supplementary users like Yi and Jin who integrated Pigai's feedback with teacher instruction to support MLE principles like intentionality, reciprocity, and transcendence. Pigai utilized reduced lower-level grammar comments, focusing instructor time on higher-order issues of content and organization, and encouraged multiple-draft tasks due to instant feedback. Teacher belief, contextual factors (e.g., large classes, limited curricula), and teacher agency impacted the implementation of AWE. This study concludes that

while AWE systems like Pigai are at the forefront of changing feedback practice and enhancing writing improvement, their success depends on teachers' active participation, pedagogical training, and institutional contexts .

## **2.6 Potentials of automated writing assessment in academic writing**

The use of technology in English teaching provides tremendous avenues for improving student motivation and learning outcomes. Suliman and Alqarni (2023) conducted a study to investigate Saudi Arabian English teachers' attitudes towards using technology in English classes in the global movement towards e-learning. With the use of quantitative questionnaires in various institutions, they found that teachers viewed technology as improving student participation, enabling interaction, and diversifying teaching practices. Tools like educational software, online sites, and smartboards were seen to enhance learners' linguistic ability through access to authentic materials and instant feedback. Technology also played a crucial role during COVID-19 since it enabled continuity via online and hybrid learning. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, low technical expertise, lack of training, and diversity in digital competency hinder smooth integration. Suliman and Alqarni highlight the importance of teachers' preparation and confidence, along with the support of institutions, professional development, and pedagogical consistency, in ensuring the effectiveness of technology use. The study concludes that technology holds tremendous potential to revolutionize the instruction of the English language but its effectiveness relies on a well-planned and supported strategy that addresses opportunities and challenges (Suliman & Alqarni, 2023) lack of training and infrastructure issues are two major issue for adapting and embracing tech-led teaching and learning .

## **2.7 The impact of Automated Writing tools on EFL learners' writing accuracy and**

### **Motivation**

In recent times, the integration of artificial intelligence in language learning has gained attention. Wei, Wang, and Dong (2023) used a randomized controlled trial to test the impact of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) on Chinese EFL writers' writing skills. The study, involving 190 participants, used the AI-based Grammarly tool to provide feedback for the completion of tasks, coherence, lexical choice, and grammar. With controls for English skill and writing self-efficacy, results showed that AWE-trained students significantly outperformed the control group on all assessments of writing. Writing self-efficacy was a significant pre-test predictor of gain, indicating learners' belief as key to advancement. Social Cognitive Theory guided the study, emphasizing that immediate, targeted feedback in AWE raises motivation and writing skills. It also referenced the Technology Acceptance Model, that attitudes towards the tool's usefulness by students determine adoption. As challenges like large classes impose a limitation on teacher feedback, AWE offers scalable and frequent practice opportunities. It fills a research gap by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of AWE in the Chinese EFL context with substantial contributions towards writing instruction integration with AI technologies (Wei, Wang, & Dong, 2023) AI-based tools play a significant role in providing immediate , instant , corrective feedback .

The effectiveness of automated tools in enhancing students writing skills Miranty et al. (2023) investigated the impact of two open-source writing programs, Grammark and Grammarly, on improving Indonesian university students' English writing in four months. Thirty-five students used the software in class, while writing tests were conducted before, halfway through, and at the conclusion of the study. The results showed that writing greatly improved since the tools allowed self-correction, increased error awareness, and honed writing skills. The students reported that they

found it enjoyable to use the programs and felt more confident writing. The researchers, however, noted that even though Grammarly and Grammarly are useful writing improvement programs, instructional intervention is required to elucidate the tools' limitations and attain their best performance (Miranty et al., 2023). Integrating AWA tools into the instructional environment has shown great potential in improving students' writing performance.

To investigate the role of automatic feedback in developing EFL students' writing abilities within online learning environments Taşkıran, Yazıcı, and Aydın's research looked into how automatic feedback (AF) can contribute to the improvement of EFL students' writing skills in online learning environments. Students employed the Write & Improve tool to obtain instant, individualized feedback for their writing assignments. The research revealed that the students who applied the tool most often showed phenomenal improvement in the scores of writing. Student interviews also reflected that they viewed the feedback as encouraging, straightforward, and beneficial to self-learn. The study is based on the Interaction Hypothesis, which places particular importance on the role of feedback in learning language, and shows that AF tools can provide feedback even where there are no teachers. In general, the research confirms the possibility of automatic feedback as an important resource for assisting students to improve their writing in massive open online learning programs (Taşkıran, Yazıcı, & Aydın, 2022). Ultimately, the study highlights that automatic feedback tools like Write & Improve can play a vital role in fostering writing improvement, especially in large-scale online education contexts where teacher feedback may be limited or unavailable .

The majority of Algerian university students cannot write English after years of studying, and traditional paper tests are poor feedback for improvement. Ghouali and Ruiz Cecilia (2021) aimed to determine if improvement in the writing skills of 42 first-year English language learners



at Tlemcen University could be achieved by implementing Moodle, a web-based learning management system. The participants were divided into two groups and were either given traditional tests or engaged in Moodle-based writing activities and tests. The Moodle group learned better, thanks to personalized feedback, error explanations, additional learning materials, and the chance to learn at their own pace. Moodle also contributed student independence, monitoring of progress, and increased motivation through a fresh, modern learning environment. Although some students initially resisted technology, the majority were able to cope and gain from it. The study finds that the integration of Moodle in writing assessment has pedagogical merits through improved quality feedback, satisfying the individual needs of each student, and facilitating a collaborative learning atmosphere, hence making it an worth-considering approach for enhancing English education in Algerian universities (Ghouali & Ruiz Cecilia, 2021) moodle-based assesement could enhance written output of telmcen first-year students majoring English .

The benefits of using Grammarly Dewi (2022) analyzed the perceptions of EFL learners towards Grammarly as an Automated Writing Evaluation and concluded that the majority of students viewed it positively for its contribution to the detection and fixing of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word choice errors, enhancing paraphrasing, and vocabulary. The tool's convenience and usability at any point in time were also appreciated. Still, students cited constraints such as restricted features in the free version, the price of the premium upgrade, and offline inaccessibility. Due to these drawbacks, Grammarly effectively provides corrective feedback instantaneously and therefore forms an effective tool for quality writing improvement and promoting language acquisition in EFL environments.

## 2.8 Challenges, Perceptions, and the need for Human-AI Feedback balance for in AWE use

The impact of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools on the English writing quality of university students was examined by Wang, Shang, and Briody (2013). Through their research, they found that AWA can improve the precision of writing by providing immediate and detailed feedback on surface features such as mechanics and grammar. Nonetheless, with all these advantages, the researchers found that most teachers are still hesitant to depend entirely on these tools because they are worried that their inability to accurately measure more advanced levels of writing skill, i.e., content generation and argumentation, will limit their utility. This reluctance is reflective of the hesitance towards using AWA technology in classroom use, where there is a strong need to combine AWA with other methods of teaching to rectify its limitations at present.

It is hard for most students to write English, so scholars are trying out different ways to help them. (Fan, 2023) tested whether a no-cost computer program called Grammarly that gives feedback on writing could help Chinese university students who have limited English skills. The researcher divided 67 students into two groups. The first group received teacher and Grammarly feedback on writing, while the second group received teacher-only feedback. After several weeks of writing exercises, both groups performed similarly. The Grammarly group did not fare significantly better on grammar, vocabulary, or sentence structure. The study also asked students to comment on Grammarly. Some students liked the grammar and vocabulary feedback, but others found the feedback confusing or hard to understand. The study revealed that students' proficiency level in English and their mindset regarding feedback would impact the usefulness of Grammarly. Thus, while Grammarly could be helpful to some, it might not be helpful to all.

Rahimi, Fathi, and Zou (2024) examined the effect of automated written corrective feedback (AWCF) on EFL learners' college-level writing using Engeström's activity theory. They compared an electronic group provided with AWCF to a non-electronic group provided with traditional feedback. Findings showed that the AWCF group significantly improved grammar and task fulfillment but showed slower development in coherence, cohesion, and lexical resource than the non-electronic group. Qualitative data indicated that AWCF students were working with enthusiasm, understanding feedback better, and embracing its immediacy, although some lacked individualized comments. The study concludes that while AWCF can support some of writing, it cannot be an all-inclusive alternative for human feedback and recommends a blend of the two for effective EFL writing instruction.

The shift in teaching practices the recent pandemic had on EFL Vietnamese teachers' Nguyen and Terry (2022) examined the impact of emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the COVID-19 pandemic on Vietnamese EFL teachers' emotion, pedagogy, and professional growth. Through survey and interview with 172 teachers, the study was able to conclude that teachers experienced stress, anxiety, and frustration because of technical problems, more work, and concerns about student engagement. Nevertheless, the teachers showed resilience through the acquisition of new digital tools and instructional strategies. Their own welfare in turn directly corresponded with how comfortable they were with online teaching and the level of institutional support that they experienced. Teachers who perceived that they were more trained and supported experienced lower anxiety levels and were also less susceptible to change. The study highlights the importance of ongoing professional development, emotional support, and institutional resources in making the teachers appropriately adapt to distant learning during emergencies and otherwise.

Rahimi, Fathi, and Zou (2024) examined the effect of automated written corrective feedback (AWCF) on EFL learners' college-level writing using Engeström's activity theory. They compared an electronic group provided with AWCF to a non-electronic group provided with traditional feedback. Findings showed that the AWCF group significantly improved grammar and task fulfillment but showed slower development in coherence, cohesion, and lexical resource than the non-electronic group. Qualitative data indicated that AWCF students were working with enthusiasm, understanding feedback better, and embracing its immediacy, although some lacked individualized comments. The study concludes that while AWCF can support some of writing, it cannot be an all-inclusive alternative for human feedback and recommends a blend of the two for effective EFL writing instruction.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Chapter Two has traced the historical development, key technologies, and pedagogical applications of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) systems for academic writing. It reviewed major platforms such as AES, CAAS, CDTW, and intelligent tutoring systems, highlighting their ability to deliver immediate feedback, strengthen writing coherence, and support large-scale instruction. The reviewed literature confirms that AWA tools contribute positively to the development of learners' writing and assist teachers in managing feedback more efficiently. However, their value is highly dependent on how thoughtfully they are integrated into the instructional context. The findings also emphasize that, although these tools are effective in improving surface-level aspects such as grammar, spelling, and coherence, they fall short in addressing deeper writing features like organization, argumentation, and content development. Some studies caution against over-reliance on such tools, pointing out challenges such as limited features in free versions, usability issues, and the varying impact based on learners' attitudes and competence. Overall, AWA tools are useful for scalable and efficient feedback, but they function best when combined with human judgment and supported by pedagogical training and

institutional backing.

In this context, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which English teachers at Biskra University use automated writing assessment tools to evaluate students' academic writing, and to identify the factors that either facilitate or hinder their usage. To this end, the study addresses two research questions:

**To what extent do Biskra teachers of English use technology to assess learners' academic writing?**

**what are the factors affecting Algerian English teachers' use of technology to assess learners' academic writing?**

# Practical part



## **Chapter 4 : Methodology**



#### **4.1 Study design**

The aim of the present study is to explore the extent to which Mohamed Khider University of Biskra English language teachers use Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) instruments in Assessing university students' academic writing and to identify the most significant factors that affect or discourage their use. The study seeks to explore the teachers' experiences, attitudes, and concerns towards integrating AWA in writing evaluation with the aim of both determining the possible benefits and drawbacks of using such instruments in an educational setting. This study adopts an exploratory design by employing a semi-structured questionnaire for quantitative data and one in -depth interview for qualitative data to explore teachers practices , attitudes , and beliefs about AWA. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods, while qualitative insights were presented through direct quotations of teachers' perceptions due to the limited number of interviews. This mixed-method approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the issue and supports informed pedagogical interventions to enhance writing evaluation practices at the university level.

#### **4.2 Context and participants**

The population sampled in this study includes English language teachers at Biskra University, with a total of 23 participants. The gender distribution reveals a predominance of female teachers (69.6%) compared to their male counterparts (30.4%), reflecting common trends in language teaching in Algeria. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 55 years, with the most frequent age groups being 25, 33, 35, 39, and 45, each comprising 8.7% of the sample, suggesting a diverse teaching age group in terms of age. The year of graduation also varied widely, with 2021 being the most common (17.4%), followed by 2017 and 2020 (13% each), indicating a balanced mix of newly graduated and more experienced teachers. Notably, a majority of respondents (78.3%) reported

teaching language-related modules, either independently or alongside field-related subjects, which closely aligns with the focus of this research on the integration of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools. Moreover, participants' teaching experience spans from 5 to over 30 years, offering a range of insights into the adoption and perception of AWA tools across different stages of professional development.

### **4.3 Data collection tools**

#### **4.3.1 Teachers questionnaire**

For collection of quantitative data and limited qualitative data, a hybrid questionnaire was utilized in order to survey the English language teachers in Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The questionnaire contained primarily closed-ended items with an emphasis on assessing AWA tool usage frequency, preferred platform, and most frequently utilized forms of assessment in their classrooms. In order to continue this purpose, the survey also featured some open-ended items so that individuals could provide more in-depth of their experience, attitudes, challenges and perceptions regarding AWA tools. It was chosen for administration because it can gather a general picture of teaching practices and opinions regarding automated writing assessment which gives both quantitative information as well as some contextual understanding relevant to the study research questions.

#### **4.3.2 Teacher Interview**

To derive in-depth and individualized understanding of the use of AWA instruments, one experienced teacher was interviewed via a semi-structured interview. The interview covered in-depth opinions on the benefits, limitations, and situational conditions for using AWA in teaching writing. It was a suitable approach to provide unstructured discussion, whereby the respondent could elaborate critical matters and reply based on insights that may not be accessible from

questionnaires. The interview served to complement the quantitative data with some qualitative data and added valuable context to the overall patterns radiating in the study.

#### **4.4 Data analysis**

For analyzing the data collected, this study utilized quantitative and qualitative analysis methods according to its mixed-methods study strategy. Closed-ended items of the questionnaire's quantitative data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) to identify trends in Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tool usage and favored platform options. Since only one interview was conducted, a full thematic analysis could not be carried out with the limited qualitative dataset. The teacher's responses from the in-depth interview were thus quoted verbatim and expounded to highlight key points about the use, advantages, limitations, and contextual matters of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools. They were augmented by some selected perspectives of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. This was a means of enabling the study to provide a rich description of teacher practice and attitudes, despite the small sample, and answer the research questions with relevant qualitative support.

#### **4.5 Validity and reliability of the study**

The validity of the tool utilized in this study on "The Use of Automated Writing Assessment Tools in Evaluating Academic Writing" was ensured by expert verification carried out by an my supervisor an applied linguistics teacher . This step was significant in ascertaining the validity and reliability of the tool. Specialist advice helped to trim the questionnaire items to best capture the AWA use constructs of extent of use, tool preference, and issues of context. This validation process was crucial in ensuring that the questionnaire was suitable to the research objectives and would provide meaningful, pertinent, and dependable outcomes.

#### **4.6 Ethical issues**

This study was carried out in line with academic ethics. The study's nature and purpose were made known to each of the participants prior to their participation. Each participant provided their informed consent, and each one of them had the right to withdraw or decline at any time without penalty. Although the survey contained basic demographic data such as age, gender, and professional history, no personally identifiable data (i.e., addresses or names) was collected. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality of all information collected and for academic use only. The participant interviewee was also informed of their rights and agreed willingly to share their experience. The research design provided respect for autonomy, privacy, and dignity of the participants in every phase.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

Finally, the present study used an exploratory mixed-methods strategy to examine the frequency with which English language teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra utilize Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools when grading academic writing and identify the most influential factors on their use. With a combination of a semi-structured questionnaire and teacher in-depth interview, both quantitative data on usage patterns and qualitative data on teacher experience and perception were obtained. Analysis of data combined descriptive statistics with interpretive analysis of the qualitative feedback to offer an in-depth insight into the problem. Validity was established through expert review, and ethical principles were maintained scrupulously throughout the study. This research approach has served as the ground for resolving the research questions and for guiding future pedagogical decisions regarding the application of AWA tools in higher education essay evaluation.

## **Chapter 5: Results and Discussion**

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the current study according to the two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do Biskra University teachers of English use Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools to assess students' academic writing?

RQ2: What are the factors affecting Algerian English teachers' use of AWA tools?

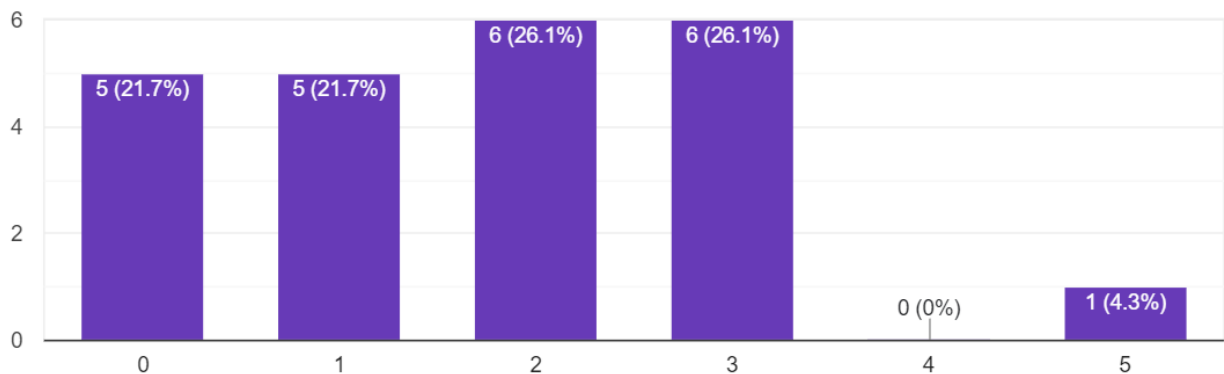
A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was used to analyze both questions. The following sections are organized accordingly teachers' perceptions were quoted from both the questionnaire and the interview .

### 5.1 Algerian EFL teachers' use of AWA technology to assess learners' academic writing

**Figure 1**

*Frequency distribution of how often teachers use technology to assess the written output*

23 رداً



#### 5.1.1 Description of results

The bar chart illustrates the distribution of responses from 23 university lecturers about how much they use technology to assess the written work of English students. The measurement is 0 to 5, where 0 is "Never" and 5 is "Always." Of the information provided, 5 teachers reported a level of use as 0, and 5 reported level 1. The most common responses were levels 2 and 3, with

both being selected by 6 players. Conversely, level 4 did not have any responses, and only 1 teacher claimed to have utilized technology at level 5. This is an indicator of varied levels of technology use by teachers, with the majority being in the middle levels.

### **5.1.2 Discussion of results.**

The graph explains to what extent university English teachers utilize technology while assessing students' written assignments. Though there is some variation along the scale from 0 (Never) to 5 (Always), the outcome tends to be heavily centered around the lower and middle parts of the scale. Ten participants (approximately 43%) documented specific limited or no use (levels 0 and 1) and twelve participants (approximately 52%) documented moderate use (levels 2 and 3). Interestingly, level 4 did not have any instances, and there was just one participant who used technology at all times at level 5. This trend shows a robust underuse of technology in writing assessment across the sample. Failure at levels 4 and 5 higher-level use might reflect not only individual teacher inclinations but also systemic limitations such as limited institutional backing, insufficient training, or skepticism regarding the legitimacy of automated writing assessment (AWA) tools. Furthermore, the focus on moderate levels of use may indicate that while certain teachers are inclined to take up digital tools, their uptake remains tentative and incomplete. This data, in part answers the original research question insofar as it reveals that utilization of AWA technology is set in place but not fully integrated. At a critical level, these findings raise large pedagogical and institutional questions: Why are teachers not heading in the direction of more frequent and certain use of these technologies? Do available technologies align with their teaching goals, or do they fail to keep pace with the complexity of academic writing assessment?

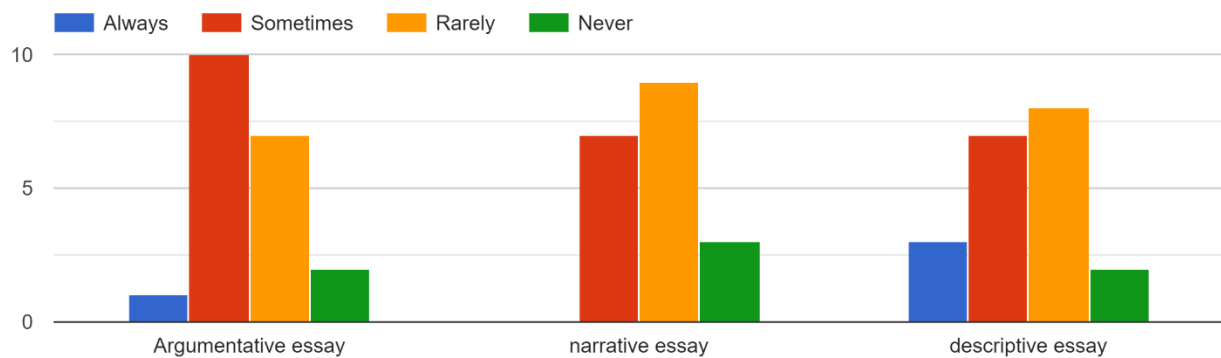
These are problems that later qualitative data and examination of contextual factors attempt to answer.

## 5.2 The usage frequency of AWA across different essay types

**Figure 2**

*Usage of AWA across different essay types*

how often do you use AWA in each essay type ?



### 5.2.1 Results of the study

The bar chart displays the frequency of use of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) for three kinds of essays: argumentative, narrative, and descriptive. For argumentative essays, 5 respondents use AWA always, 7 use it sometimes, 6 seldom, and 5 never. For narrative essays, 4 respondents use AWA always, 7 sometimes, 5 seldom, and 7 never. Among descriptive essays, 4 respondents reported they always use AWA, 7 sometimes, 6 rarely, and 6 never. The statistics indicate the categorization of 23 participants' answers to every type of essay into four categories in terms of frequency: always, sometimes, rarely, and never.



### 5.2.2 Discussion of the study.

The results reveal substantial variation across teachers' Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) application on varying categories of essay. AWA appears to have increased application in argumentative essays, as 12 participants reported using it always or sometimes compared to narrative and descriptive essays with 11 and 10 participants respectively. By way of contrast, descriptive and narrative essays both possess higher counts of non-use, with 7 and 6 each reporting that they never use AWA with these types. This would suggest that teachers may find AWA tools more helpful or useful for grading argumentative essays, the forms more likely to be formal and amenable to surface comments regarding grammar, coherence, and organization—targets typically targeted by such tools. The relatively lesser application in descriptive and narrative essays may be attributed to the subjective and creative nature of these essay formats, which may require deeper semantic and stylistic analysis beyond the capacity of current AWA tools. Such findings establish that the writing task impacts the viability of integrating AWA, emphasizing the importance of balancing assessment tools with the nature and role of the writing genre.

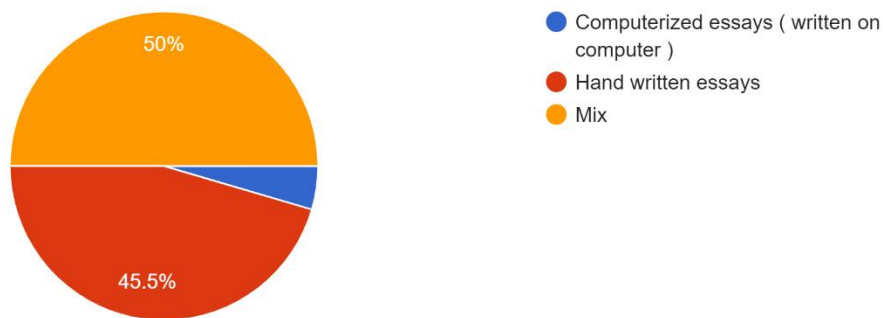
### 5.3 Modes of essay submission

**Figure 3**

*Essay submission forms*

In your academic writing tasks , do you mostly ask students to write ?

22 responses



#### 5.3.1 Results of the study.

The pie chart indicates the type of essays that teachers most often ask students to generate or assign. From the chart, the largest percentage of essay assignments, which is 50%, is accounted for by the orange category, which is not labeled in the legend. Handwritten essays account for 45.5% of the assignments, and computerized essays typed on a computer have the lowest percentage at 4.5%. This data shows that the essay type described by the orange slice is assigned most often by teachers which is the option of MIX , followed by handwritten essays, and computerized essays least of all

#### 5.3.2 Discussion of the study.

The results of the study, as illustrated by the pie chart, reveal clear preferences among teachers regarding the types of essays they assign to students. The data show that the majority of

essay assignments fall into the category represented by the orange segment, accounting for 50% of all assignments, though the specific type is not labeled in the provided legend. Handwritten essays are the next most common, making up 45.5% of assignments, while computerized essays written on a computer are assigned the least, at only 4.5%. This distribution suggests that traditional methods of essay writing, particularly those that do not involve computers, remain predominant in educational settings. The relatively low percentage of computerized essays may reflect either limited access to technology or a continued emphasis on handwriting skills in assessment. Overall, the results indicate that while there is some adoption of digital tools, most teachers still prefer more conventional essay formats when assigning written work to students.

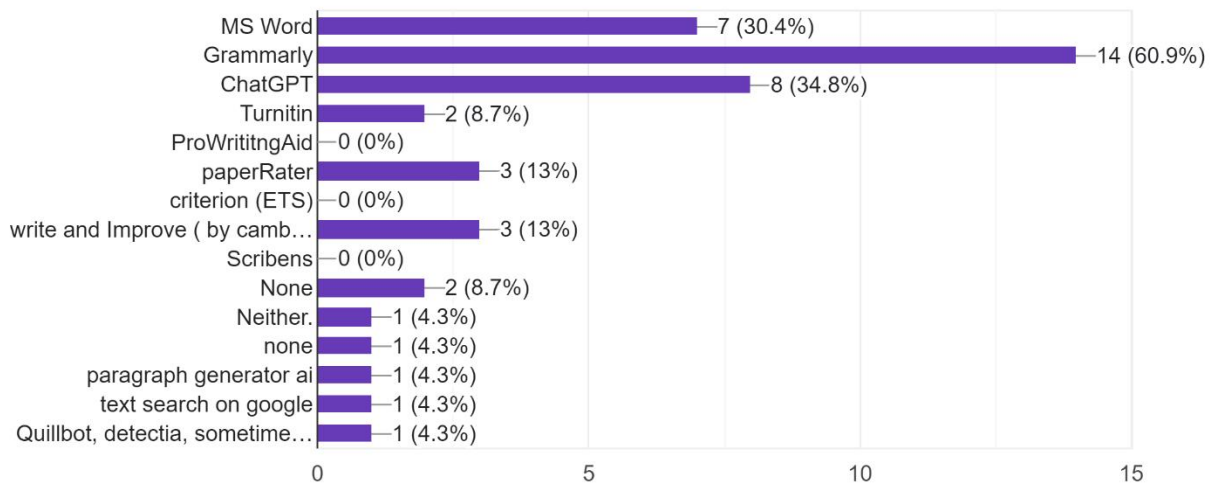
## 5.4 Platforms teachers use to assess students' academic writing

**Figure 4**

*Platforms used for assessing students' written output*

If you use technology to assess the written output of your English students, what platforms do you use? (Tick all that applies)

23 responses



### 5.4.1 Results of the study

The bar chart shows the responses of 23 teachers with regard to the technology tools utilized to assess learners' academic writing. The most indicated tool is Grammarly by 14 teachers (60.9%), followed by ChatGPT with 8 responses (34.8%), and MS Word with 7 responses (30.4%). Others are Turnitin and "None" with 2 teachers (8.7%), and paperRater and criterion (ETS), each with 3 teachers (13%). Several other responses, i.e., "based on Google," "none," or "generator ai," had been provided once each (4.3%). None of the software like ProWritingAid and Scribens, produced any responses.

### 5.4.2 Discussion of the study

The findings of this study show that surface-level feedback tools, especially Grammarly, are the most frequently used AWA platforms among university English teachers. This preference appears to be driven by factors such as familiarity, accessibility, and ease of use, which aligns with Wang, Shang, and Briody's (2013) finding that perceived usefulness and simplicity are crucial in technology adoption for writing assessment. Several teachers emphasized these points, describing such tools as *"useful for assessing grammar, structure, and content,"* and noting that they are *"accessible and free"* and offer *"real-time collaboration and commenting."* One teacher reflected on how exposure to the concept during the questionnaire helped them recognize its value, stating: *"The term 'automated writing assessment' was new to me at first, but as I started answering your questionnaire and reading more about it, I came to understand its advantages."* These advantages, as reported by participants, include providing *"quick and consistent feedback,"* the ability to *"help in assessing large numbers of students efficiently,"* and tools that *"save time, promote student independence, and track progress."* However, consistent with the same study's mention of limitations in automated evaluation, the teachers also reported significant concerns. One respondent explained, *"One of the main disadvantages of AWA is that it often focuses heavily on surface-level features like grammar, spelling, and structure, rather than content, creativity, or critical thinking."* Another teacher warned that students might begin *"writing to please the algorithm"* and lose touch with their authentic voice. This concern was echoed by a literature teacher who remarked, *"As a teacher of literature, traditional assessment allows me to truly understand my students their tone, intentions, and what they're trying to express, even when their grammar isn't perfect."* For this teacher, and others, *"a human touch is needed to appreciate nuance and interpretation,"* especially in disciplines that rely on emotional depth and critical

insight. While many educators acknowledge the utility of automated tools, they also remain cautious, recognizing that such systems are best used as supplements to not substitutes for teacher-led, interpretive feedback.

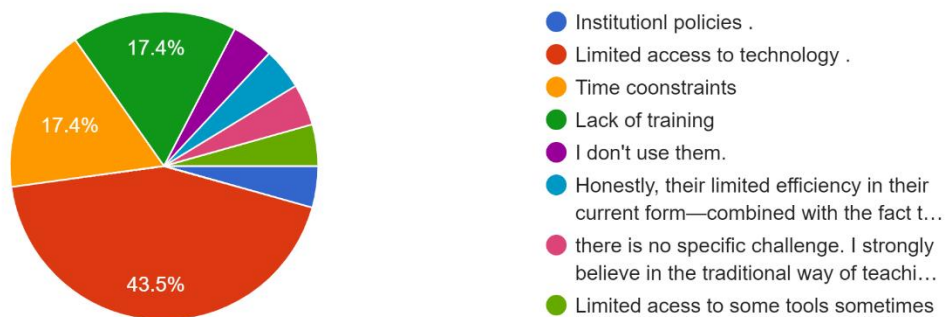
### 5.5 The factors affecting Algerian EFL teachers' use of AWA technology to assess learners' academic writing

**Figure 5**

*Challenges faced by Algerian English language teachers using AWA*

What are the challenges that hinder your use of automated writing assessment tools?

23 responses



#### 5.5.1 Results of the study

The pie chart illustrates the challenges that students faced using automated writing assessment tools, based on 23 responses. The challenge reported by the largest proportion of respondents (47.6%) was time. The second challenge was limited access to technology (19%). 9.5% of participants identified lack of training as a challenge. "Policies at my institution," "I don't use the tools," "Improper initial training," "A lack of acceptance of these tools," and "Limited access to some tools," represented the smallest segments of the pie chart (numbering in the low

percentages). Collectively, the most significant challenges to teacher use of monitoring in automated writing assessment tools are time and limited access to technology.

### 5.5.2 Discussion of the study

The barriers to the adoption of automated writing assessment (AWA) tools among university English teachers are multifaceted, involving both practical constraints and attitudinal resistance. The preferences reported in the study, as illustrated in the pie chart, reveal that time is the most significant obstacle, cited by 47.6% of respondents. Teachers indicated that integrating AWA into writing instruction demands extra preparation and effort, which they are often unable to afford due to their existing workload. This aligns with Wang, Shang, and Briody (2013), who found that teachers perceived the integration of AWA systems as an added burden rather than a supportive aid. Infrastructural challenges also emerged as a key factor, with 19% of teachers reporting limited access to reliable technology or facing institutional constraints such as poor broadband or local policies. As one teacher briefly put it, *"We mainly lack training. The second challenge would be limited access to technology."* Another commonly cited issue was a lack of familiarity and professional training. Teachers echoed this in their own words: *"Honestly, I am somehow unfamiliar with how AWA tools work or how to integrate them into writing instruction."* Others shared that AWA's capabilities may not match their pedagogical needs, especially in tasks requiring interpretation and creativity. One teacher elaborated, *"I find traditional methods more effective for understanding my students' intentions, tone, and deeper meanings... AWA tools often focus on surface-level aspects like grammar and structure."* Another respondent also highlighted that *"Lack of training among students and the unconscious use of technology"* remains a challenge. These reflections underscore that beyond access and awareness, there is also philosophical hesitation toward replacing human judgment with automated feedback, particularly in contexts like literature

where nuance and subjectivity are crucial. Collectively, these findings reinforce that both practical limitations and deep-seated beliefs shape teacher resistance to AWA, and addressing these concerns will require systemic efforts that prioritize training, raise awareness, and align AWA tools more closely with teachers' instructional values .

## **5.7 conclusion**

### **5.7.1 The extent to which Biskra University teachers of English use technology to assess learners' academic writing**

The findings show that English teachers at Biskra University make moderate to low use of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools, and most of the answers are bunched up at the lower and middle ends of an interval scale of frequency from 0–5. Notably, 10 out of 23 teachers said they never or rarely used technology (levels 0 and 1), 12 said they used it to some extent (levels 2 and 3), and just one teacher said she always used it (level 5). The pattern indicates that AWA instruments are not yet integrated into current assessment procedures. Qualitative comments from the teachers further provide evidence for underuse. These argued mainly in favor of human, manual assessment for reasons including the need to feel the tone, intent, and imagination of students quantities which they believe no technology can accurately assess. teacher X claimed *"I think hand written output makes students more active and strenghten their memorization."* Others discussed inadequate training, institutional reliance on traditional practices, and time constraints as key hindrances. One instructor, for instance, testified, *"We are still using the traditional methods of assessment since we are not trained to do otherwise."* Others acknowledged that technology can enhance marking, reduce human error, and assist with plagiarism detection but that their implementation is intermittent and context-specific. The instructor who was interviewed also supported these observations, stating that they use rubrics and holistic grading but rely on



technology only in some cases primarily for typed assignments or plagiarism checks. These findings indicate that although the AWA infrastructure is in place, its utilization is inconsistent and experimental, limited by pedagogical and practical limitations.

### **5.7.2 The factors affecting Algerian English teachers' use of technology to assess learners' academic writing**

The findings of the study indicate that several key factors influence teachers' use of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools to evaluate students' written output, with time constraints emerging as the most significant. A majority of participants (47.6%) reported that limited time to assess a large number of essays drives them to seek technological support, as one teacher explained: *"Sometimes you are under pressure as a teacher to evaluate a big number of essays... but with the use of AI and automated writing tools, I can do that in a very short time."* However, access to these tools remains a challenge due to financial limitations and restricted availability, as highlighted by a participant who stated: *"Those tools are not free, and there's no way to get access or pay for the premium version."* Additionally, a lack of training and unfamiliarity with the tools prevents many teachers from effectively integrating them into their writing instruction. Some admitted being *"unfamiliar with how AWA tools work or how to integrate them,"* while others expressed concern over the accuracy and completeness of automated feedback. As one teacher noted, *"All what is generated should be customized. We have to revise it and see if it aligns with my assessment criteria."* Furthermore, teachers questioned the ability of AWA tools to evaluate higher-order aspects of writing such as creativity, tone, and analysis, with one respondent emphasizing that *"AWA tools often focus on grammar and structure, which may not fully capture the depth of a student's analysis or creativity."* Collectively, these insights suggest that while AWA tools offer

time-saving advantages, their effectiveness is constrained by limited access, lack of training, and concerns about their ability to provide holistic and pedagogically sound feedback.

## 6. General conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the factors affecting teachers' use of Automated Writing Assessment (AWA) tools to evaluate students' written output. Moreover, it also examined the challenges educators face during the implementation of such technology in writing instruction. It investigated how AWA tools influence assessment practices in higher education.

The nature of the research followed a mixed-methods approach, involving a questionnaire completed by 23 teachers to gather insights into their experiences, along with an interview Conducted with one teacher to provide in-depth reflection on the use and perception of AWA tools.

The study confirmed that while AWA tools offer benefits such as saving time, enhancing feedback quality, and supporting the evaluation process in large classes, several factors hinder their consistent use. These include limited access to technology, lack of training, cost of premium tools, unfamiliarity with the tools' functions, and doubts about the depth and reliability of their feedback.

Overall, the study concluded that AWA tools can be effective aids in assessing writing, but their integration requires appropriate teacher training, institutional support, and awareness of their limitations. Further research is needed to explore how these tools can be optimized and adapted to suit various educational contexts.

### **Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

Since AWA tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT have demonstrated practicality and growing relevance in academic writing assessment, several pedagogical and institutional recommendations can be suggested:

- Teachers should integrate AWA tools at the beginning of writing lessons to activate prior knowledge or at the end as a reflective activity to reinforce key concepts and writing strategies.
- Teachers can employ AWA tools for formative assessment to gauge students' engagement in real-time, monitor progress, and provide consistent feedback that guides revision .
- Institutions should ensure stable internet access and device compatibility across classrooms to avoid technical interpretation during the use of online AWA platforms.
- Policy-makers and school administration should advocate for access to advanced features of premium versions of AWA tools , which allow for more detailed feedback , customization , and integration of multimedia content .
- Educators must enroll in training on how to use AWA tools effectively, both from a technical standpoint and from a pedagogical perspective, ensuring the tools enhance but do not replace teacher input.
- Teachers are encouraged to combine AWA tools with traditional teacher-led feedback and peer-review activities in order to support diverse learning styles and encourage deeper engagement with writing.
- Teachers and students should not trust and rely on AI-powered tools blindly but we should customize everything all what is AI-generated should be customized .

**Limitations of the study**

There are several limitations to this research that must be referenced. Firstly, the research is on a limited number of teachers from a single university and therefore can decrease the generalizability of the results. Secondly, for time reasons, only one teacher was interviewed and with the potential to decrease the degree of qualitatively richer insights. Lastly, teachers' views only were in focus and not students' views or a measurement of real improvement in their writing, which would have provided a better account of the effectiveness of automated writing assessment tools.

**Recommendations for future research**

Future research could extend the findings of this work in several ways. First, a more representative and larger group of teachers from more than one institution would increase external validity. Second, more in-depth interviews or even class observations may produce more textured insights into how automated writing evaluation tools actually function. Third, future research could incorporate students' opinions and analyze their actual writing development to gain better insight into the efficacy of the tools. Finally, exploring the long-term impact of utilization of such tools on teaching processes as well as on improvement of students' writing would be a great contribution to the field.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Teachers Questionnaire**

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Teachers questionnaire

# Teachers questionnaire

Please read the information sheet below before completing the survey.

**Project title**

Exploring teachers' use of Automated Writing Assessment in assessing academic writing .

**The purpose of the study**

Exploring to what extent and the contributing factors of teachers' use of automated writing assessment in evaluating the academic writing of university students .

**Role of the participants**

As participants, you will complete a survey exploring your use of automated writing assessment and what challenges hinder you .

**Requirements for participation**

To take part in this study,

**1- You should be working as a university teacher of English (either as a specialty or as an additional language).**

**Anonymity and confidentiality**

Participants are ensured that the data are collected for research purposes and not to evaluate them personally. All of the information provided by participants of this study will be encoded and anonymized. The personal details of participants, including personal information, will not be disclosed in any dissemination of the study results.

**Storing and using data**

The data collected in this study will be stored at the main researcher's online university account. The data will be analyzed by the main researcher only and reported in tables and figures that grant privacy and anonymity to the participants.

For further details about the study, participants can get in touch with the main researcher through the following contact details:

**Researcher:** Amir Gagaa

**Affiliation:** Department of English, University of Biskra

**Email:** amir14gagaa@gmail.com

**Phone:**0774049558

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\* Indicates required question

Profile information

5/22/25, 4:30 PM

Teachers questionnaire

1. Gender \*

*Mark only one oval.*☐ Male☐ Female

2. Age \*

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3. ?Year of graduation \*

---

4. ? what is your highest teaching qualification \*

*Mark only one oval.*☐ BA in English Language☐ MA in Science of Language (or related field)☐ MA in Literature/ Civilization (or related field)☐ PhD in Science of Language (or related field)☐ PhD in Literature/ Civilization (or related field)

5. ? Are you teaching \*

*Mark only one oval.*☐ Language-related module (Written Expression, Oral Expression)☐ Field-related module (E.g., Linguistics, Literature, Civilization)☐ Both

5/22/25, 4:30 PM

Teachers questionnaire

6. ?Are you \*

*Mark only one oval.*☐ Tenured Professor ( Permanent full-time lecturer )☐ Adjunct lecturer ( Part-time teacher )

7. ?How long have you been teaching \*

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Part 1: The use of Automated writing assesement to assess academic writing

8. To what extent do you use technology to assess the written output of your English students ? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

0 1 2 3 4 5

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

9. ?Why \*

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Teachers questionnaire

10. ? do you usually ask your students to write

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Argumentative essay
- ☐ persuasive essay
- ☐ narrative essay
- ☐ others
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. In your academic writing tasks , do you mostly ask students to write ?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Computerized essays ( written on computer )
- ☐ Hand written essays
- ☐ Mix

12. If you use technology to assess the written output of your English students, what \*  
platforms do you use? (Tick all that applies)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ MS Word
- ☐ Grammarly
- ☐ ChatGPT
- ☐ Turnitin
- ☐ ProWrititngAid
- ☐ paperRater
- ☐ criterion (ETS)
- ☐ write and Improve ( by cambridge English )
- ☐ Scribens
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5/22/25, 4:30 PM

Teachers questionnaire

13. how often do you use AWA in each essay type ?

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<b>Argumentative essay</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>narrative essay</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>descriptive essay</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Why do you prefer these particular platforms/ over the others ? \*

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15. What are the advantages of automated writing assessment? \*

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5/22/25, 4:30 PM

Teachers questionnaire

16. What are the disadvantages of automated writing assessment? \*

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Part 2: The factors affecting your use of technology

17. What are the challenges that hinder your use of automated writing assessment tools? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Institutional policies .
- ☐ Limited access to technology .
- ☐ Time coonstraints
- ☐ Lack of training
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18. ?Can you provide the specific challenges \*

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Teachers questionnaire

19. Briefly describe your experience in using AWA in assessing academic writing of university English language students ? \*

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## Appendix 2

### Teacher Interview

**Are you familiar with automated writing assessment (AWA) tools?**

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**Have you ever used an AWA tool to evaluate your students' writing? If yes, which one(s)?**

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**How often do you use AWA tools in your assessment practices?**

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**Do you think that these AI tools provide accurate feedback ?**

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**What are your general impressions of AWA tools in writing assessment?**

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**What advantages have you noticed when using AWA to assess students' writing?**

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**What challenges or limitations have you experienced with AWA tools?**

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**What factors influence your decision to use or not use AWA tools (e.g., time, training, reliability)?**

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**Do you believe AWA tools can effectively support the evaluation of university students' academic writing? Why or why not?**

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**How do you think students respond to feedback generated by AWA tools?**

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**Do you think integrating AWA tools into the Algerian higher education system would be beneficial? Please explain.**

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### Résumé de l'étude :

Cette étude à méthodes mixtes a examiné l'adoption des outils d'évaluation automatisée de l'écriture (AWA) par les enseignants d'anglais de l'Université Mohamed Khider de Biskra, en Algérie, pour évaluer l'écriture académique des étudiants. Il s'agissait de deux points majeurs : le niveau d'adoption des outils AWA et les facteurs influençant leur adoption. Les données ont été récoltées à l'aide d'un questionnaire en ligne complété par 23 enseignants et un entretien semi-directif, puis analysées avec l'assistance des statistiques descriptives et citation directes. Les résultats ont montré une faible à modérée utilisation des outils AWA, avec un fort souci de préférence vers des plateformes ciblées sur la correction de surface telles que Grammarly, du fait de leur accessibilité et facilité d'utilisation. Les principaux obstacles à une adoption plus large incluent le manque de temps, l'accès limité aux outils payants, et l'insuffisance de formation. Les enseignants ont également exprimé des réserves quant à la capacité des outils AWA à évaluer des compétences rédactionnelles de haut niveau telles que la créativité, le ton et la pensée critique, soulignant l'importance du jugement humain.