

THE WRITING OF PARAGRAPHS BY FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: FROM CHAOS TO COHERENCE

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Abstract: This study focuses on the challenges faced by first-year EFL tertiary students, particularly in Algerian mixed-ability classes. Writing coherent and well-structured paragraphs in English represents a true challenge to poorly-taught students. The research aims to identify and understand the specific challenges, uncover their underlying causes, and propose practical remedies. The study reveals a significant overlap between grammar and writing courses in the English Department, resulting in students struggling to apply grammatical rules in their writing. Lack of writing practice and insufficient feedback time further compound the issues. An experiment involving an experimental group and a control group demonstrates that focused paragraph writing instruction significantly improves students' writing skills. The conclusion emphasizes the need for a shift in focus from learning about writing to learning to write.

Keywords: coherence, EFL students, language learning, paragraph writing, writing skill,

LA RÉDACTION DE PARAGRAPHES DES ÉTUDIANTS DE 1^{ère} ANNÉE D'ANGLAIS LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE : DU CHAOS A LA COHÉRENCE

Résumé : Cette étude se concentre sur les défis rencontrés par les étudiants de première année anglais, langue étrangère dans l'université algérienne. Écrire des paragraphes cohérents et bien structurés en anglais représente un véritable défi pour les étudiants insuffisamment enseignés. Cet article vise à identifier et comprendre les obstacles spécifiques des étudiants d'anglais de l'université de Biskra, Algérie, de découvrir leurs causes sous-jacentes et de proposer des solutions pratiques. L'étude révèle un chevauchement important et une incohérence entre les cours de grammaire et ceux d'écriture, ce qui fait que les étudiants ont du mal à appliquer les règles grammaticales dans leur écriture. Le manque de pratique rédactionnelle et de temps de feedback sont insuffisants et aggravent donc ces problèmes. Une expérience impliquant un groupe expérimental et un groupe témoin démontre qu'un enseignement ciblé sur la rédaction de paragraphes améliore considérablement les compétences rédactionnelles des élèves. La conclusion souligne la nécessité de passer de l'apprentissage *sur* l'écriture à l'apprentissage *de* l'écriture.

Mots-clés : anglais langue étrangère, cohérence, compétence rédactionnelle, écriture de paragraphe.

Introduction

Writing is an indispensable facet of personal and professional success, transcending careers and becoming a crucial skill for everyone, from writers and journalists to translators and teachers. In this article, we will delve into the significance of writing, the challenges it poses, and potential solutions, with a particular focus on first-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students. Undoubtedly, writing is a fundamental skill for effective communication, idea sharing, and goal achievement. It goes beyond being a skill for a specific profession. Rather, a versatile tool benefits individuals in various aspects of life. As Raimes (1984) categorizes writing into eight aspects, including content, structure, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, intended audience, and the writing process, the complexity of this skill becomes apparent. This complexity underscores the challenge of transforming thoughts into written language. Writing, being a complex skill, poses challenges for EFL learners. While reading might come naturally, writing involves intricate mental processes and interconnected components. Identifying these challenges is the first step toward effective instruction. In the context of EFL students, writing is not just an academic requirement. Proficient writing is essential for academic achievement and future career opportunities. Success in academic courses, including exams, largely depends on writing skills. This is particularly relevant for EFL students aspiring to be English teachers, where paragraph writing is a skill that reflects teaching experiences and supports effective instruction. Acknowledging the primary problem faced by EFL students, especially first-year university students, is crucial. Many struggle with paragraph writing, affecting not only their performance in writing modules but also in other modules. Therefore, this mixed methods paper undertakes to understand, interpret, and dispense practical remedies for paragraph writing.

The current investigation aims hopefully to:

- Identify, and diagnose common 1st year EFL university students' writing weaknesses;
- Unearth the underlying causes of EFL 1st year university students' writing problems (difficulties, challenges);
- Recommend adaptation and modification to the current grammar and writing syllabuses and to test the effectiveness of this instructional practices(lessons and activities) through an experiment.

Hence, This investigation undertakes to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the common EFL first year university students' writing weaknesses or challenges?

RQ2: What are the potential causes inflicting the case study tertiary EFL learners' with poor writing?

RQ3; what pedagogic innovations are needed to achieve successful writing?

The researcher proposes to test the following hypothesis:

H1: If the case study tertiary EFL students at the English Department (M.K.U. of Biskra) are exposed to a more focused, student-friendly instruction as to how to write effectively paragraphs, they would most probably write paragraphs that mirror faithfully what they have in mind to respond positively to written assignments.

1. Background of the Study

In this digital age, writing effectively is more important than ever before. To be functional locally and globally in the information age to express one's thoughts and put

them through informal and formal media requires a good command of the writing principles. These ultimately define who one is and what career one wishes to follow and how successful one would eventually be. In the same vein, Carroll (2013, p. 1) noted “Whatever your academic and career ambitions, good communication skills are essential and can often make the difference between success and failure”. It is obvious, then, that the interrelation between success and writing efficiently is so strong that it is not easy to deny. Vanugopala (2020, np) further corroborated “Clear writing is a sign of clear thinking. Therefore, the skill of tactful writing is essential for achieving career and business goals. Excellent writing skill not only improves communication at work and also positively affects career growth”. Overall, success in writing is a forerunner for future success in career. Writing involves several mental processes before being carried out in the final written product, and it has numerous interconnected components. It necessitates initially thinking (generating ideas), writing, and assessing their relationship to one another as well as supporting the main idea. It also necessitates the selection and retention of appropriate vocabulary. Finally, it is necessary to prioritize these concepts so that they can support the major idea, or theme of the topic. Furthermore, the writer must connect his or her ideas, make a first draft on paper or on a computer screen, revise, edit, and eventually produce the final product. Raimes (1983, p.335) categorizes writing components into eight aspects: content, structure, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, intended audience, and writing process. Efficient writing needs to be well-structured syntactically, sober stylistically, and appealing physically. Indeed, successful writing must address the following aspects: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, content, and organization (Hartfiel, et. all 1985, p. 89, cited in Hidayati, 2018). Therefore, writing is a system of sequential systems process-wise and product-wise. Grammar is a collection of rules that students can use to build sentences that make sense and are written in acceptable English (Farbrain & Whinch, 1996, p. 108, Cited in Hidayati 2018, p. 23). Vocabulary refers to the English words that students use to express themselves in their writing. As for organization, it is generally understood to stand for the ability of learners to arrange their ideas into logical cohesion and coherence in order to create a united and a comprehensible paragraph.

2. Statement of the Problem

The present research is an attempt to investigate the issue and to propose some practical remedies to students’ paragraph writing weaknesses. Effective second and/ or foreign language teaching requires patience, hard work, and a deep understanding of the learners’ needs. Teachers must choose the right methodology and assign appropriate lessons, and they must be prepared to meet the expectations of their students. The teacher of EFL writing has; first of all, to study the challenges and pitfalls faced by his/her students in the process of learning paragraph writing and to find the suitable tasks (Ansari, 2012). It is indeed incumbent upon individual teachers to identify non-native, mixed-ability, EFL learners’ weaknesses in producing written works.

3. The Significance of the Study

The current research aims to recommend a rethinking and a reflective perspective of the existent situation where students’ writing competence remains insufficient because their compositions are simply a list of ideas lacking structure and clarity. Teachers often find themselves correcting form rather than contents during examinations. Stakeholders, individuals who are on the front lines of education, such as teachers, students, curriculum

designers, etc.- will be particularly interested in the study's findings. The study is crucial because it provides rigorous, practical evidence for the potential benefits of teaching grammar on one hand and teaching writing on the other to support the development of first year EFL university students' paragraph writing skill.

4. Research Methodology

The nature of the research question favors an experimental methodology to provide hard evidence to back up the researcher's claim. Furthermore, the researcher made it his point to plan questionnaires for both teachers and EFL first-year students with a view of adding more truthfulness to the outcomes of the treatment. It is claimed that in social and behavioral sciences, questionnaires and interviews are carefully planned to collect data from insiders' (i.e., participants') viewpoint. In so doing, a comprehensive understanding of the cause-effect relationship is achieved. Informative decisions are then taken to bring about the change that decision makers are looking for. The nature of this study dictates an experimental research design. This researchers' long experience in teaching writing to first year students, whose mother tongue is other than English, developed in him an intuitive feeling that EFL learners failure to produce a coherent, well-structure paragraph may be due to faulty pedagogical failure. This deductive reasoning required a "lab-like" approach to check the veracity of this hypothetical thinking. A quantitative undertaking imposes itself, thus, as an infallible means to accept or reject the hypothesis; it is a sine qua non situation. The researcher needed to try the challenge. The target population of this study is first year EFL University students enrolled at MKU during the academic year 2015-2016 .There are about (N=600) students who are streamed into 12 groups by the Administration. Each group consists of about 40 to 50 students. For practical reasons (namely, the 12 groups are assigned to different teachers among whom the present researcher) it was difficult to deal with the whole population, the researcher's sample was composed of 2 classes which were assigned randomly by the Head of the Department. The total number of the sample in both classes was (n= 92). The sample represents 15.33 % of the whole population (i.e., 80 students).It should be noted however, that 12 students were ruled out as they missed class or were unable to complete the tests. Group 11 was decided to be the experimental group (EG) and group 2 was the control class (CG).

Triangulation, which refers to the use of three instruments, is meant to attain comprehensive understanding under investigation. True experimentation is limited in that it only provides outcomes in the absence of confounding variables. In real life, confounding variables are frequently intertwined with other variable so much so that outcomes become disconcerting rather than assertive. Mindful to the importance of triangulation, it was decided that the use of more than one measurement turned out to be necessary. Document analysis (DA henceforth), which is the critical examination of a document with a view of extracting information, is an important instrument in this research. As it is within the range of this investigation to list down EFL students' deficiencies in paragraph writing, it has become necessary to undertake the analysis of the sample's paragraphs. DA aims to DA aims to contribute to the overall research process by providing evidence and insights that inform conclusions, recommendations, and future research directions. Questionnaires are widely used in social and behavioural sciences and constitute an integral part of the quantitative design. Though similar to true experiments, quasi-experimental methods also delve into cause-and-effect relationships in education. While historically, true experiments ruled the roost, combining them with research tools like quasi-experiments can bolster the

evidence for effective teaching methods. This study employs a quasi-experimental design to examine the effectiveness of the proposed instructional practices in enhancing EFL students' overall writing, with a specific focus on paragraph writing.

5. Teaching writing in an EFL context

5.1. The Multifaceted Journey of Writing

Defining writing proves complex, with various interpretations emerging from different perspectives. The Longman Dictionary suggests writing as the act of crafting written works, encompassing diverse forms like stories, poems, and articles. Expanding on this, Oshima and Hogue (1997) emphasize the inherent procession nature of writing. They highlight that writing extends beyond simply putting pen to paper – it involves a multi-phased journey. Before writing, we engage in mental preparation, shaping our thoughts and crafting how to express them. This is followed by the act of writing itself, and then the crucial stage of revision and refinement. Ultimately, writing becomes a dynamic process, not a singular action. This ability to write effectively transcends the academic sphere, impacting success in university, work, and life overall. It empowers us to communicate clearly, share our inner world, and continuously learn and grow.

5.2. Teaching Paragraph Writing to EFL Students

The reason behind the choice of the paragraph is the fact that paragraph writing represents the main writing assignments required to be produced by (Freshmen students), i.e., First year EFL university students at the English Department in MKU. For this purpose, this article tackles in depth the main subject under the investigation which is paragraph writing. It tries to consider the paragraph writing as one of the most important unit of academic writing. Knowing how to write a paragraph is the initial step to write multiple paragraphs or essays, research papers etc. In order to improve 1st year EFL University students' paragraph writing at MKB University in particular at the English Department. Broadman & Frydenberg (2008) noted that since paragraph writing is the foundation for any kind of academic writing. When the skill of paragraph writing is mastered, then it is quite easy for students to expand it to longer compositions such as essays, reports, research papers etc. In this paper we consider the paragraph definition and its relevant importance to its teaching and learning. The fundamental aspects of paragraph types which first year university students are required to write throughout their academic year will also be taken into account because they would determine the writing difficulties that the students would face.

6. The Evolving Landscape of Teaching Writing at University

At Biskra University, the writing skill is currently taught as a separate subject throughout the BA course of three years. The current writing curriculum and approach are language-based and accuracy-oriented. There is, in effect, an overemphasis on language mastery and grammatical accuracy through extensive sentence-level language exercise. This form of agreement arises from a widely held view that the new baccalaureate holders' language assets are limited. The primary objective of the first-year syllabus is to dedicate a substantial portion of classroom time to instilling positive language habits in students. This focus on accuracy aims to equip them with the necessary skills to meet both linguistic and examination standards. By fostering a strong foundation in language proficiency, the first-year curriculum lays the groundwork for academic success and effective communication

throughout their studies. First-year EFL university students are expected to develop proficiency in writing short texts, adhering to the rules and conventions of written English. This includes accurate grammar and sentence structure, appropriate vocabulary usage, and effective organization of ideas. However, the current approach focuses primarily on the fundamentals of the writing system and sentence construction, lacking dedicated activities on paragraph development, such as topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions. In other words, teaching other paragraph writing features are absent in the first year syllabus writing especially organizational aspects (cohesion and coherence). The written Expression syllabus for first year tertiary students is made up of two ninety minute classes per week, which makes an overall of thirty two classes per school year. The course targets to attain two main objectives: Whilst the first objective tends assist the targeted population to come to grips with grasping what sentence stands for, the second objective offers practice to help students to bridge the gap between theory and actual use of effective sentences. As for the syllabus contents, it is surprisingly grammar based. The students are expected to recognize different sentence patterns such as pattern 1 (S+V), 2 (S+V+D.O), Pattern 3 (S+V + I.O+ D.O), 4 (S +V+ S.C), pattern 5 (S+V +D.O + O.C), and 6 (it/there+ V+ S). Moreover, some sentence errors are explained and assigned as practical activity both in the class and at home. (Run on sentences, segment fragments, and comma splice) are specifically dealt with. Finally, simple, compound, and complex sentences are delivered theoretically and practically assigned. As a final analysis, first year written expression syllabus is purely grammatical one. While the official curriculum outlines the general framework for writing courses at Biskra University, individual instructors retain considerable autonomy in shaping the specific content, teaching materials, methods, and module goals. This flexibility empowers teachers to tailor their instruction to their own expertise, experience, and assessment of students' needs. As a result, writing syllabuses often reflect the unique perspectives and approaches of individual teachers, incorporating a range of ideas, methods, and materials that cater to the diverse learning styles and needs of students. In the first semester of their first year, students are taught the rules and conventions of English writing in detail. This is necessary because students need to be familiar with the basics of English grammar before they can start writing paragraphs. Therefore, writing teachers need to teach their students how to write and how to combine different types of English sentences, such as simple, complex, compound, and compound-complex sentences. Mechanics such as capitalization and punctuation are also taught during the first semester of this year. Students advance to the next phase in the second semester, which is learning how to create effective paragraphs. To help students distinguish between a paragraph and long compositions, they are initially taught what a paragraph is by using a variety of illustrative examples. Teachers then proceed to elaborate on the main (topic) sentence and the supporting ideas once they reach this stage. Students may be expected to compose their own paragraphs at this level and work together to fix their writing inconsistencies. After learning how to write coherent, grammatically sound paragraphs, students are then taught how to develop these paragraphs into essays (3 paragraphs) during the second year, the researcher also recommends instead of teaching paragraph writing in the second year as it is being taught at the English department of MKU now. The researcher suggests that to teach it in the first year and teaching essay writing in the second year.

7. The Study

The methodological design of the study requires the use of three research tools, document analysis, questionnaires, and a treatment with pretest and posttest design. We present their administration and results in the sections below.

7.1. Document Analysis

EFL students commonly struggle with writing paragraphs. First, they may have difficulty developing their ideas, writing multiple main ideas in a single paragraph or producing ambiguous ideas. Second, they may have difficulty organizing their ideas, struggling to write a paragraph with more than a single unified point. Third, they may also face grammar challenges. Fourth, they may have a limited vocabulary, making it difficult to remember all the words in English and leading to poor word choices. Paragraphs written by sample students were analyzed to identify the problems students faced when they write paragraphs. All aspects of paragraph writing problems are discussed, elaborated and analyzed.

Table 1: Features of Student' Paragraph Writing Inconstancies

Aspects of the problems	Examples	Total Errors in 40 paragraphs
1. Poor Organization	-Lack of knowledge of cohesive ties and discourse -organizing connectors Poor organization / illogical sequence - Lack of Unity in the Paragraph -Paragraph Development problem	156
2. Inability to use grammar knowledge in their writing Grammatical problems	-Tenses -misuse of prepositions & articles -Sub-Verb agreement - sentence structure/variety	97
3. Vocabulary choice	-Limited vocabulary size Word choice problem	54
4. Mechanics problems: Insufficient evidence of the use of the various phases of the writing process.	-Punctuation Problems -Spelling Problems -Capitalization Problems	39

The above table shows that students had problems with failure to achieve cohesion through inability to use transitional words or through using inappropriate ones. Another weakness is students' inability to relate grammar rules in their writing, limited vocabulary and mechanics problems. These combined weaknesses led to weak paragraph writing among students. The document analysis revealed that students struggled most with organization (cohesions and coherence) and language use, and least with vocabulary and mechanics. The writing samples were examined and analyzed in terms of writing problems of the first-year students. The samples demonstrate that the learners do have problems of organizational aspects (cohesion and coherence), punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and language use. Keeping the nature of the aforementioned problems in mind, the researchers

offer relevant remedies and suggestions to teach both grammar and writing effectively and wisely so that teachers can improve the writing skills among their learners.

7.2. Questionnaire Administration, Analysis and Results

Questionnaires, which are a linchpin in educational quantitative research, are specifically designed for participants to obtain data from insiders' perspectives. To this end, the researcher designed two questionnaires: one for the teachers and one for the students. As for the students, open-ended self-reporting questionnaire sheets (n=80) were administered to gauge the EFL tertiary students' thoughts about paragraph writing problem and to identify factors or causes that affect students' paragraphs writing. It targeted to assess major problems that students had had in writing paragraph, (2) to investigate causes of students' problems in paragraph writing, and (3) to find out what English grammar and writing teachers were doing to help students write effective paragraphs. The first-year students were overall requested to address the following broad questions: "what are the reasons behind the most common types of writing problems among first year EFL university students from their perspectives? In order to answer the second question of the study, students were asked to answer a questionnaire about how they learn both English grammar and writing. The content of the questionnaire for teachers (eight of them) was almost similar with the content of the students' questionnaire. The following table telescopes the structure and contents of both questionnaires.

Table 2: Skeleton of the questionnaires for the participants

Questionnaire	Questionnaire for Teachers	Questionnaire for Students
Number of items	21 question-items	17 question-items
Section Titles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation of students' deficiencies in EFL paragraph writing 2. Underlying causes for EFL paragraph writing inconsistencies 3. Methods of paragraph writing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students' EFL writing skills 2. Underlying causes for EFL paragraph writing inconsistencies 3. Attitudes toward learning how to writing effective paragraph

In sum, the main causes of students' writing weaknesses were attributable to the ineffective teaching writing methods, inappropriate teaching means and materials, written expression module at the level of the English Department was predominantly devoted to grammar instruction and learning about writing rather than learning to write. Moreover, the grammar syllabus dramatically overlapped with the writing syllabus where there was a lack of writing practice and insufficient allotted time. As for the teachers of writing, they agreed that grammar was important, but they had different opinions on how to teach it. Some teachers preferred explicit instruction, while others preferred to teach it when it was needed in the context of writing.

7.3. The treatment (number of weeks / hours and content)

As this researcher was eager to come up with hard evidence to account for first year EFL students' challenges in producing accurate, cohesive, and coherent paragraphs, the resort to a quantitative instrument was inevitable. The main utilized data gathering tool, therefore, a treatment to test the effects of implementing the proposed grammar and writing courses in teaching writing skill to improve the students' writing ability. The treatment, which consisted of implement a modified writing syllabus, lasted from late September 2016 to Mid-May 2017. The syllabus focused on mechanics of writing, organization, and writing cohesively and coherently. To attain consistency in grading, the researcher sought the assistance of a fellow teacher who was requested to score both the pretests and the posttests. Interestingly, for the rater to be unbiased, the fellow teacher was not to know which test was the pretest or posttest. Again, for consistency's sake, the pretests and posttest were checked in the presence of the researcher himself.

7.4. Pretest and posttest administration scoring and results

In this research, the pre-test and a post-test have been conscientiously utilized to assess the effectiveness of a new teaching intervention. Pre-test scores of both classes(CC&EC). A pre-test is a test that is administered to participants before they receive a treatment. It is used to measure their baseline level of performance on the skill or knowledge that is being assessed. The control and experimental groups took the same pre-test at the onset of the first term of the academic year (2016-17).

The pre-test is an early test to disclose students' writing abilities prior to the treatment. Table 2 below shows the pre-test results for both the experimental and control classes in terms of organization of ideas (cohesion and coherence), grammar (language use), and mechanics. In addition to the overall mean, the mean for each category is also calculated. It illustrates the scores of both classes EC & CC and presents the students' global mean score and the mean score of each scoring aspect.

Table 3: Individual Scores of both classes (experimental and control class) in the pretest

Experimental Class						Control Class					
N	G	O	V	MS	Σ	N	G	O	V	MS	Σ
1	1	1	3	2	7.00	1	2	1.50	3.50	3.50	10.50
2	2.5	2.50	3	3	11.00	2	1	1.50	2.50	2.50	7.50
3	00	050	2	2	4.50	3	3	3	4	3.50	13.50
4	3	2	2	2	9.00	4	2	2	2	2.50	8.50
5	1	1	2	2	6.00	5	1	1	2	3	7.00
6	1.50	1.50	2	2.50	7.50	6	1.50	1.50	3	3	9.00
7	3	2	3	4	12.00	7	2.50	2.50	4	3	12.00
8	00	00	1	1	2.00	8	0.50	00	2.50	2	5.00
9	2	1	2	2	7.00	9	4	3	4	4	15.00
10	3	2	3.50	3.50	12.00	10	1.50	00	2.50	2.50	6.50
11	00	050	2	1.5	4.00	11	00	00	2.50	2	4.50
12	1.50	1.50	2.50	2	7.50	12	2	2	3	3	10.00
13	1.50	2	3	2.50	9.00	13	3	2.50	3.50	3.50	12.50
14	0.50	00	2	2.50	5.00	14	1	2	3	1.50	7.50
15	1.50	1	2	2	6.50	15	2.50	2.50	3	3	11.00
16	1.50	1.50	2.50	2.50	8.00	16	1.50	2	2.50	3.50	9.50

17	1.50	2	3	3.50	1.00	17	1	1	3	2	7.00
18	00	00	1.5	1	2.50	18	0.50	1.50	2	2	6.00
19	1	1	2	3	7.00	19	4	4	3	3	14.00
20	0.50	1	2	2	5.50	20	1.50	2	2.50	2.50	8.50
21	2	2	3	3	10.00	21	0.50	0.50	1.50	1.50	4.00
22	2	2	3	2.50	9.50	22	3.50	3.50	4	3.50	14.50
23	050	1.50	2	2	6.00	23	3	3	3	4	13.00
24	2	050	3	3	8.50	24	00	00	1.50	1	2.50
25	00	00	2	2	4.00	25	2.50	2.50	3.50	3	11.50
26	1	1	2	3	7.00	26	1	1	2	1.50	5.50
27	2	2	2	3	8.00	27	2	2	2	2	8.00
28	3	2	4	4	13.00	28	3	2.50	3.50	3.50	12.50
29	3.50	3.50	4	3	14.00	29	1	1	2	2	6.00
30	1	0	2.50	1.50	5.00	30	0.50	0.50	2	2	5.00
31	3	3	4	3	13.00	31	2	2	3	3	10.00
32	3.50	3.50	4	3	14.00	32	0.50	1	1.50	1.50	4.50
33	1.50	1.50	2	2	6.00	33	1	1	2.50	1.50	6.00
34	2	1.50	3	3	9.50	34	2	1	3	3	9.00
35	3.5	3	4	4	14.50	35	3.50	3	4	3	13.50
36	00	00	1.5	1.5	3.00	36	3	2	3.50	3.50	12.00
37	1.50	2.50	2	2	8.00	37	0.50	00	1.50	1.50	3.50
38	2.50	2.50	2.50	2.5	10.00	38	1	1.50	2.50	2.50	7.50
39	2	2	2.50	2.50	9.00	39	1.50	2	3	3	9.50
40	2	2.50	4	4	12.50	40	1	2	3	2	8.00
ΣN	ΣG	ΣO	ΣV	ΣM	ΣX	ΣN	ΣG	ΣO	ΣV	ΣM	ΣY
40	65	57.5	103	101	335.5	40	69	67.5	110	104	351
Asp	G	O	V	M	X	Asp	G	O	V	M	Y
S	1.62	1.43	2.75	1.52	8.36	Sum	1.72	1.68	2.76	2.60	8.77

The following codes are used in table 2:

- N**: number of subjects
- ΣX** : the sum of the scores of the experimental class
- X**: the arithmetic mean of the scores of the experimental class
- ΣY** : the sum of the scores of the control class
- Y**: the arithmetic mean of the scores of the control class
- G**: grammar
- O**: organization
- V**: vocabulary
- M**: mechanics

8. Analysis and Interpretation

The above results of the pretest indicate that the students' writing performance was less than what was expected, i.e. lower the minimum of passing grade 10 points for the two classes 28 students out of 40 did not reach the pass grade 10. Only 12 students got the average i.e. 10 points for EC. Whereas 25 students out of 40 did not reach the pass grade 10, only 15 students got the average i.e. 10 for CC. Based on the data above table 2, it can be noticed that the two classes were approximately equal performance grades in their

paragraph writing. The mean scores of both classes were insimilarrange. EC (mean = 8.24) and CC (mean = 8, 76), indicate that there is a slight difference (0.54) between the two groups in the pretest scores, therefore, any later significant improvement in students' writing skills will be considered or due to the implementation of the proposed grammar and writing courses. Meanwhile, the mean of each aspect of writing in pretest as displayed in the following table and diagram for the two groups. From the calculation of the mean score, it was found that the pretest mean score was 8.24 for EC and 8.76 for CC and it indicated that these scores were too far from the standard score10. The control group's performance is no different from the experimental group's performance, either. This is evident in the pretest scores, which show that the two groups were very similar in terms of overall and average scores.

Table 4: Means of Scores on the Pretest for Both Classes

Classes	Pretest mean
Experimental class	8.24
Control class	8.78
Differences in the means	0.54

The pretest scores of both classes are graphically represented in figure 1

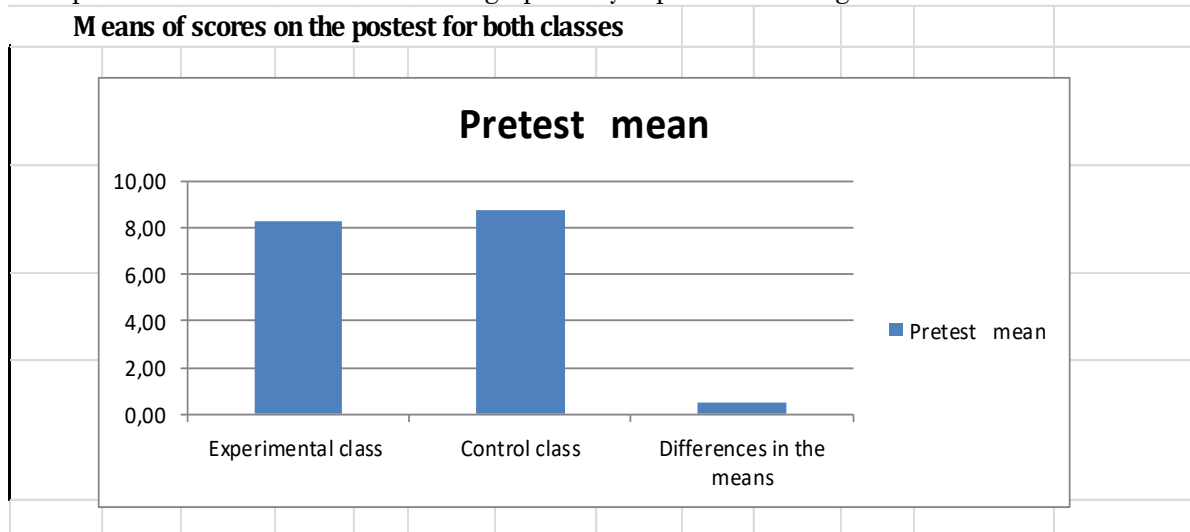


Figure 1 Means of Scores in the Pretest for both Classes

Figure 1 reveals that the experimental class started with a mean score slightly below the control group, with a minimal difference of 0.54 points. Importantly, this discrepancy isn't statistically significant, indicating that both groups entered the study with roughly the same level of writing proficiency. This paves the way for attributing any future improvement in the experimental group's post-test scores to the targeted intervention, provided the experiment is executed meticulously and extraneous variables are kept in check.

8.1. Frequency Distribution

All statistically based research requires the use of descriptive statistics and graphic representations to visualize how subjects performed on each test. This section discusses the logic behind experimental research, in which researchers make claims about a population based on data from a sample of that population (Nunan, 1999, p. 28). One important descriptive statistic is frequency, which shows how many students scored the same on a particular task. The frequency distribution of the pre-test (the arrangement of scores from lowest to highest and the frequency of each score) is shown in the following table.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Both Groups' Score Value in the Pre-Test

Experimental Class		Control Class	
Scores(\bar{X}_e)	Frequency(F)	Scores(\bar{X}_e)	Frequency(F)
2.00	1	2.00	00
2.50	1	2.50	1
3.00	1	3.00	00
3.50	0	3.50	1
4.00	2	4.00	1
4.50	1	4.50	2
5.00	2	5.00	2
5.50	1	5.50	1
6.00	3	6.00	3
6.50	1	6.50	1
7.00	3	7.00	2
7.50	2	7.50	3
8.00	3	8.00	2
8.50	1	8.50	2
9.00	3	9.00	2
9.50	2	9.50	2
10.00	3	10.00	2
10.50	0	10.50	1
11.00	1	11.00	1
11.50	0	11.50	1
12.00	2	12.00	2
12.50	1	12.50	2
13.00	2	13.00	1
13.50	0	13.50	2
14.00	2	14.00	1
14.50	1	14.50	1
15.00	1	15.00	1
ΣF	40	ΣF	40

The table above shows the pre-test scores for both classes, with the frequency of each score calculated. Many interesting points can be deduced from the table:

* The score value range from 02 to 15

The specification score of students for both classes can be seen in the below table of distribution frequency of pretest. The research findings of pretest reveal that out of 40 students in the EC, only 8 students obtained total score in range 0-5, which represent 20% of the EC. However, nearly the same result were recorded in CC where 7 students had the total scores in range 0-5, which represent 17.5% of students who got below 5 in the CC. There were 20 students who obtained total score in range 5.5 and 9.5 (Below 10 pass grade) and who represent 70% for EC and 62.5% for CC.

Table 6: Frequency Distribution of both Classes' Scores Value in the Pretest

EC			CC	
Score Internal	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 5	8	20%	7	17.5%
5.5 - 9.5	20	50%	18	45%
10 - 12	6	15%	7	17.5%
12.5 - 15	6	15%	8	20%

For more illustration, a graphic representation can be used to represent the frequency distribution of the pre-test's score values. A frequency graph can help illustrate the distribution of pre-test scores. The graph shows that the experimental group scored more frequently in the 7, 9, and 10 ranges, while the control group scored more frequently in the 6, 7.5, and 9 ranges. The two groups' scores are very similar, as the frequency graphs shows.

Table 7: Mean of Each Aspect of Writing Score in Pretest for both Classes

	Experimental Class	Control class
Aspects of Writing	Mean	Mean
Grammar	1,63	1,73
Organization	1,51	1,69
Vocabulary	2,58	2,76
Mechanics	2,53	2,60

It is apparent from the above table and diagram, the highest mean score of both classes EC & CC is vocabulary where the mean score is 2, 58 for EC and 2, 76 for CC. Meanwhile, the lowest score is organization of ideas for both classes, which is 1, 51 for EC and 1, 69 for CC. It means that all students either EC or CC struggle with the four parts of writing, particularly organization.

8.2 A comparison of the two classes' pre-test scores.

This table provides a detailed comparison of the pre-test scores of the two groups.

-Grammar

Table 8: A comparison of the two classes' pre-test scores in grammar aspect

Experimental Class		Control Class	
Scores(Xe)	Frequency (F)	Scores(Xe)	Frequency(F)
00	6	00	2
050	3	050	6
1.00	5	1.00	9
1.50	8	1.50	5
2.00	8	2.00	6
2.50	2	2.50	3
3.00	5	3.00	5
3.50	3	3.50	2
4.00	00	4.00	2
4.50	00	4.50	00
5.00	00	5.00	00
ΣF	40	ΣF	40

By calculating the frequency of grammar aspect for both classes, we can notice that the two classes achieved almost nearly the same score concerning grammar.

-Organization

Table 9: A comparison of the two classes' pre-test scores in organization aspect

Experimental Class		Control Class	
Scores(Xe)	Frequency (F)	Scores(Xe)	Frequency(F)
00	7	00	5
050	3	050	2
1.00	7	1.00	7
1.50	6	1.50	5
2.00	10	2.00	6
2.50	4	2.50	3
3.00	1	3.00	5
3.50	2	3.50	2
4.00	00	4.00	2
4.50	00	4.50	00
5.00	00	5.00	00
ΣF	40	ΣF	40

Additionally, by calculating the frequency of the aspect of organization, we notice that nearly the two classes scored the same score value.

-Vocabulary

Table 10: A comparison of the two classes' pre-test scores in vocabulary aspect

Experimental Class			Control Class	
Scores(Xe)	Frequency (F)		Scores(Xe)	Frequency(F)
00	00		00	00
050	00		050	00
1.00	1		1.00	00
1.50	2		1.50	4
2.00	16		2.00	7
2.50	5		2.50	8
3.00	9		3.00	11
3.50	1		3.50	5
4.00	6		4.00	5
4.50	00		4.50	00
5.00	00		5.00	00
ΣF	40		ΣF	40

After calculating the vocabulary aspect, we found that the control class scored higher than the experimental class (Students received 2 were 16 in EG vs. 7 in CG).

-Mechanics

Table 11: A comparisons of the two classes' pre-test scores in mechanics aspect.

Experimental Class			Control Class	
Scores(Xe)	Frequency (F)		Scores(Xe)	Frequency(F)
00	00		00	00
050	00		050	00
1.00	2		1.00	1
1.50	3		1.50	6
2.00	12		2.00	8
2.50	7		2.50	5
3.00	10		3.00	11
3.50	2		3.50	7
4.00	4		4.00	2
4.50	00		4.50	00
5.00	00		5.00	00
ΣF	40		ΣF	40

After calculating the frequency of the last aspect of mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) of both classes, the researcher found that the CC also scored higher the EC (students got 2 were 12 vs. 7 in CC). For further illustration below a graph is used to clarify the results of each group.

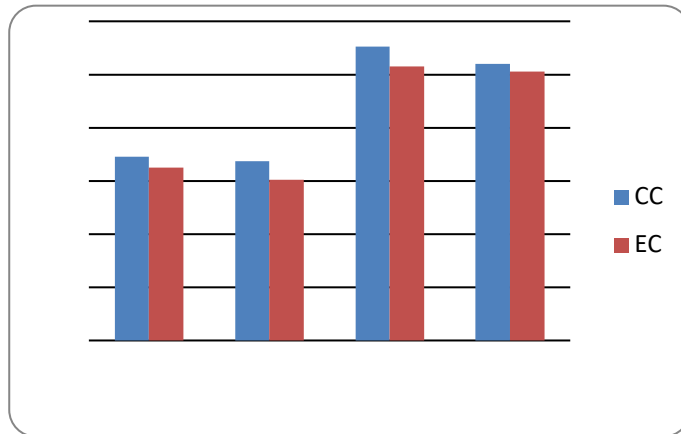


Figure 2: the frequency graph illustrates (The results of each aspect in both groups)

The frequency graph shows that scores of 0, 1, 3, and 4 are the most common in both the experimental and control classes on the pre-test. The two lines nearly overlap, indicating that the two groups have similar ranges of scores.

8.3. The Result of the Posttest for both Classes (EC & CC)

Both the experimental and control class students were given 60 minutes to complete the pre-test at the beginning of the course, and the post-test at the end of the course. The following table shows the mean scores of both groups in the post-test for grammar, organization of ideas, vocabulary, and mechanics. The mean of each category was calculated in addition to the global mean.

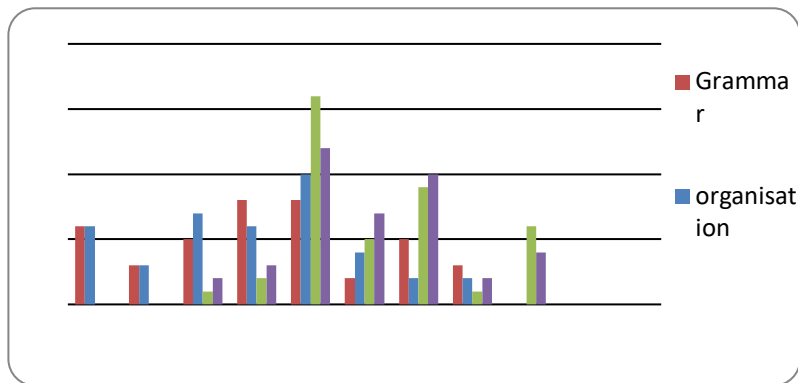


Figure 3: the frequency graph of values (0, 1, 3, & 4) in both groups

Table 12: Scores of the post-test for both classes

Post-test											
Experimental Class						Control Class					
N	G	O	V	MS	Σ	N	G	O	V	MS	Σ
1	2,5	2,5	3	2,5	10,5	1	2	1,5	4	3,5	11
2	3,5	3	3,5	3,5	13,5	2	2	1	2,5	2,5	8
3	2	1,5	2,5	2,5	8,5	3	2,5	2,5	3,5	3,5	12
4	3	2,5	3	3	11,5	4	1,5	1,5	3	3	9
5	2	3	3	2,5	10,5	5	2	1	2	2	7
6	2,5	2,5	3	3	11	6	2	1	3	3	9
7	3	3	4	4	14	7	3,5	2,5	3,5	3,5	13
8	1	1	2,5	2,5	7	8	0,5	0,5	1,5	1,5	4
9	2,5	2,5	2,5	3	10,5	9	4	3,5	4,5	4	16
10	3	3,5	4	4	14,5	10	1	1,5	2	2,5	7
11	1,5	1,5	2,5	3	8,5	11	1	0	1,5	1,5	4
12	2	2	3	3	10	12	2,5	2	3	2,5	10
13	2,5	3	2,5	3	11	13	3,5	2,5	3,5	3,5	13
14	2	2	2	2	8	14	1,5	1,5	2	2	7
15	2	2	3	2	9	15	2,5	2,5	3	3	11
16	2,5	2	3	3	10,5	16	2	2	3	3	10
17	1	1	2	2	6	17	1	1,5	2	2,5	7
18	1,5	1	2	2	6,5	18	1,5	1	2	1,5	6
19	3	2	3,5	3,5	12	19	3,5	3,5	4	4	15
20	2	1,5	2,5	2,5	8,5	20	1,5	1,5	2,5	2,5	8
21	3,5	2,5	3,5	3,5	13	21	0,5	0	2	1,5	4
22	3	2	3,5	3,5	12	22	3,5	3	4	3,5	14
23	3	2	2,5	2,5	10	23	3,5	3	3,5	3	13
24	2,5	2,5	3	3	11	24	0	0	2	1	3
25	1,5	1,5	2,5	2	7,5	25	2,5	2,5	3	3	11
26	3	3	4	3	13	26	0,5	0,5	2	2	5
27	2,5	2,5	3	3	11	27	2,5	2	2,5	2	9
28	3,5	3,5	4	4	15	28	3	3	3,5	3,5	13
29	4	4	4,5	3,5	16	29	1,5	1	2,5	2	7
30	2	2	3	2	9	30	0,5	0,5	2	2	5
31	4	3,5	4	4	15,5	31	2,5	1,5	3	3	10
32	4,5	4	4	4,5	17	32	0,5	0,5	2	2	5
33	1,5	2,5	3	2,5	9,5	33	1	1	2	2	6
34	3	2,5	3,5	3	12	34	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	10
35	4	4	4	4	16	35	3,5	3	4	3,5	14
36	1	1	2,5	2,5	7	36	3	2,5	3,5	3	12
37	2,5	2,5	3	3	11	37	0,5	1	1,5	1	4
38	3	3	3,5	3,5	13	38	1,5	1,5	2,5	2,5	8
39	2,5	2,5	3,5	3	11,5	39	2,5	2	3	3	10,5
40	3,5	3,5	4	3,5	14,5	40	2,5	1,5	3	2,5	9,5
ΣN	103	97,5	125,5	120	446	ΣN	79,5	67	110	103,5	360
Aspect	G	O	V	M	X	Aspec	G	O	V	M	Y
Mean	2,58	2,44	3,14	3,00	11,15	Mean	1,9875	1,675	2,75	2,588	9,00
Scores of the post-test for both classes											

At the beginning of the course, the two classes had nearly the same level of writing skills; with the experimental class scoring 0.54 points lower than the control class on average. In the post-test, both classes improved their scores, but the experimental class improved more, with an average increase of 1.3 points compared to 0.6 points for the control class. As a result, the experimental class's final achievement was 0.5 points higher than the control class's. Before the experiment, the control class also had a higher percentage of students who achieved excellent and passing grades. However, after the experimental class was taught the proposed grammar and writing courses, there was a significant difference in this aspect between the two classes. The experimental class made greater improvements in writing than the control class, despite the fact that the control class had a higher percentage of students who achieved excellent and passing grades before the experiment. Grammar and writing lessons played a key role in the experimental class's improvement. Overall, the experimental class had a higher increase in mean scores

and percentage of passes than the control class. This suggests that grammar and writing courses can enable quicker improvement in writing ability, especially among students in the experimental class.

9. Discussion

The data analysis showed that the experimental class's writing improved in all aspects in the post-test (mean = 11.15) compared to the pre-test (mean = 8.24). The control class's writing also improved slightly in the post-test (mean = 9.00) compared to the pre-test (mean = 8.24), but the improvement was not as significant as the experimental class's improvement. The result of the data analysis revealed that every aspect of students' writing improved in EC in the posttest pretest = (8.24) posttest = (11.15) whereas the CC students 'writing have made a slight improvement, and it can be considered as a stable improvement in the posttest pretest = (8.24) posttest = (9.00.) Overall, the results of the study supported the main research hypothesis proposed by the researcher. It was proved that the EC performed much better on the post paragraph writing test than the CC (11.15vs9.00) Thus, the proposed grammar and writing courses have a positive effect on improving First year EFL students writing in general and in paragraph writing in particular in terms of organization of ideas, grammar(language use),word choice, and mechanics. In sum, when being taught and put in practice, the different stages of the writing process successfully helped the EC to compose accurate and well-organized paragraphs where the sentences are logically related, the ideas are clearly stated, the vocabulary is carefully chosen and their writing is free from grammar and mechanics errors. All students' categories have made a great progress in the posttest (Good, Average and Weak learners). Even the low proficiency level progress in EC was better than the average of learners in CC. The low proficiency learners in CC have not made any improvement at all. This means that the treatment is significant and efficient. Therefore, it can be stated that our last hypothesis was proved and confirmed. As for the findings of the questionnaire for students, they are reported as follows. The students were asked whether they have problems in writing and to report about the types of problems in writing in English. All the students reported that they have serious problems with grammar errors, punctuation marks, and expressing the main idea and developing details of paragraphs. Moreover, they had problems of organizing their ideas using cohesive devices appropriately. They claimed that they had sufficient ideas, but they had problems with how to transmit their ideas in written form. The questionnaire for teachers yielded interesting outcome supporting our claim. The teachers were asked a question to report the major causes of their students' problems in writing in English. All the teachers agreed that their students rarely practiced writing. As writing is a skill that needs a lot of practice, lack of practicing writing became the major cause for students' poor performance in writing in English. According to the teachers, students' lack of interest in writing in English was one of the major causes that affected students' writing. Moreover, the writing activities found in the module are not motivating. Most of the activities focus on grammar and as a result they didn't help students to improve their writing.

10. Summary of Research, Recommendations for Improving EFL Writing Instruction

Problem:

Traditional grammar methods and outdated curriculum hinder EFL students' writing proficiency.

Solution: Implement a coordinated approach with these key recommendations:

1. **Shift grammar focus:** Teach grammar within real-world writing contexts, not in isolation.
2. **Differentiate instruction:** Tailor writing activities to individual needs and difficulties.
3. **Use diverse approaches:** Integrate process, product, genre, and post-process approaches.
4. **Increase writing practice:** Allocate more time (3sessions/week, 1.5 hours each) for writing instruction.
5. **Combine grammar and writing:** Offer a single course with one teacher for optimized learning.
6. **Focus on paragraph structure:** Prioritize rhetorical organization over sentence-level grammar.
7. **Provide holistic feedback:** Evaluate organization, vocabulary, mechanics, and coherence using shared rubrics.
8. **Implement practical strategies:** Emphasize practical tips, critical thinking, writing tools, and innovative teaching methods.
9. **Promote regular practice:** Encourage diary keeping and practice sessions with feedback.
10. **Review and update curriculum:** Design separate, logical syllabuses for L1, L2, and L3 levels.
11. **Encourage research:** Investigate intercultural interference, L1/L2 writing styles, and discourse markers.

These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of writing instruction, address students' challenges, and bridge the gap between theory and practice for a more impactful EFL writing experience.

Conclusion

The investigation has undertaken to understand and attempt to remedy EFL paragraph writing. The triangulation has disclosed interesting outcomes summarized as follows. At the structure level, the EG students demonstrated sentence that they could organize their paragraphs vertically: a topic sentence, supporting (s), and concluding sentence. The students were in the capacity of avoiding a parallel discussion of two topics while advancing the topic sentence as it is the habit in the Arabic writing style (Kaplan, 2014). They were able to ease readers, without being detailed, into the focal point. They were aware of the importance of coming up with evidence to support their claim. The students provided facts, reasons, and examples to back up their claim. Finally, students made some effort to summarize in a fresh way the focal point. As far as the linguistic aspect was concerned, the EG students managed to write simple sentences with a minimum amount of syntactical, spelling, and mechanics of writing errors. Although the students relied on the most used punctuation marks (namely, commas and full stops), they were mostly able to write capitalization where necessary. It should be noted that the most used tenses were the present and past simple; they avoided other tenses either because they do

not fit the nature of the topic or their shaky knowledge and command thereof. As native speakers, the EG students whose mother tongue was Arabic found it hard to spell correctly some words without the assistance of the teacher or online dictionaries.

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