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The Effect of Virtual Interactions on Students Writing

The Case Study of Third Year EFL Students

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Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to those whom I love most in my life, those who supported me and believed in me since my childhood, my parents who gave me strength and confidence. May ALLAH bless and protect them.

To my both siblings:my little sister, and my younger brother Achraf who is in Russia now going after his studies, may god bless and help him reach his goals in life.

To all my favorite people:

Acil, Mahieddine, Achraf, Youcef, Dayaa, Kheiro, Islam, Moustapha who supported and encouraged me along this quest.

Finally, this work is dedicated especially to my grandfathers "Khelifa Saada & Maamar Benmaamar" who passed away and left a huge emptiness in my life. May they rest in peace.

Mounir

Dedication

To my family and friends who supported me all along this journey,

this work is dedicated.

Fawzi

ABSTRACT

The study at hands deals with students' virtual interactions and their effect on academic writing. It further seeks to know whether or not Third Year English Students at Mila University use common internet writing practices in both their virtual interactions and academic writing, and if they do, how much of an effect these internet writing practices have on their academic writing. In order to respond to such questions, we opted to use both a questionnaire and an interview to gather and analyse the needed data. The students' questionnaire was submitted to fifty (50) participants and the interview was conducted with ten (10) teachers at Foreign Languages Department at Mila University. The research findings do confirm that Third Year English Students at Mila University do use common internet writing practices both in their virtual interactions and academic writings, and those internet writing practices are causing a decrease in the students' academic writing value. By the end of the study, a set of pedagogical recommendations were proposed to help to reduce the spread of this phenomenon and encourage the students to use more formal language both in their academic writing and virtual interactions.

Key words: students' virtual interactions, academic writing, internet writing practices.

List of Abbreviations

ACMC: Asynchronous Computer Mediated Communication

CF: Corrective Feedback

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Langage teaching

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

HTML: Hypertext Markup Language

HTTP: HyperText transfer Protocol

IBM: International Business Machines

IOS: iPhone/iPad Operating System

L1: First Language

L2: Second Langaue

MMC: Mobile Mediated Communication

RSS: Really Simple Syndication

SCMC: Synchronous Computer Mediated Communication

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

TESL: Teaching English as a Secong Language

UI: User's Interface

US: United States

USB: Universal Serial Bus

USD: United States Dollar

WWW: World Wide Web

XML: Extensible Markup Language

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General Introduction

1. Statement of the problem

Technology has been taking big zero-gravity moon steps since the invention of internet, smartphones, and faster personal computers. All these inventions have made communication with peoples from different parts of the world a much smoother and easier experience. In relation to this development, learning new foreign languages should be an easier task to do with the extra help that these inventions provide. The Writing skill is one of the four skills that leaners must learn in order to master any new language.

Lately, academic writing is facing certain new writing practices that started to spread out across internet and especially on social network platforms that can have an effect over academic writing of EFL students. EFL students use social networks as much as any other students and they are likely to be exposed to these new unconventional ways of using English in virtual interactions. The spread of these writing practices raised the question of whether these practices infiltrated students' academic writing or not?

2. Aims of the Study

The current study attempts to shed light on the daily virtual interactions of third year EFL students by focusing on the students' usage of common internet writing practices, and to what extent do these writing practices had infiltrated students' academic writing. It also seeks to reduce the effect of such a phenomenon by giving some pedagogical recommendations, on the one hand, for the teachers to help the students to reduce the effect of such a phenomenon on their academic

writing, on the other hand, for the students to encourage them to learn more about how formal writing conventions should be.

3. Significance of the Study

This study endeavors to draw the attention of both students and teachers to how much of influence could internet writing practices have on students' academic writing. It also seeks to enrich and investigate previous research results that were done on this phenomenon.

4. The Research Questions

This current study aims to answer the following questions:

1- Do third year EFL students use common internet writing practices in their virtual interactions?

2- Are these writing practices transferred to their academic writing? If so, how much of an effect they have on their academic writing?

5. The Hypothesis

In light of the above research questions, we hypothesize that:

1- Students' virtual interactions could have a negative effect on academic writing.

6. Means of Research

To gather information for the study at hand, we decided to use both a questionnaire for students and an interview for teachers. The questionnaire was subbmitted to third year EFL students at the Department of Foreign languages, Mila University. The targeted population of our research is third year students, from whom we randomly selected participants. The questionnaire seeks to investigate how often EFL third year students of Mila University tend to use common internet writing practices in their virtual interactions, and whether they use those practices in their formal academic writing. The teachers' interview was conducted with teachers who taught third year EFL students written expression and other random teachers whom their subject matters also require students to write essays or paragraphs.

7. Structure of the Study

The research at hand is mainly consisted of three chapters. The first and second chapters deal with the theoretical aspect of the study, whereas the third chapter is completely devoted to the practical side.

The theoretical part, that is chapter one and two, sheds light on the two variables of the current research being academic writing and virtual interactions. The first chapter covers the writing skill by mentioning key elements that contribute to the process of learning and teaching academic writing. Meanwhile, the second chapter handles the students' virtual interactions with a focus on the new internet writing practices and other related elements such as Mobile-Mediated Communication, Computer-Mediated Communication, in addition to social media and Facebook. The practical part, chapter three, tackles the analysis and the interpretation of the collected data from both student's questionnaire and teacher's interview.

Chapter One: Writing

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Introduction

It is known that in order to learn any foreign language, you'll have to master the main four skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. All of those skills are quite important, however the most important one, at least from a student's perspective, is the writing skill. Writing is a sophisticated process that follows certain steps which need to be obeyed by the students in order to produce a good piece of writing, as Ransdell and Levy (1996: 93) reaffirm that when they defined writing as "a process that requires extensive self-regulation and attentional control...writers must change ideas into text, repair organization and mechanics, and monitor their success - all while trying to formulate a coherent message".

In this chapter we tried to cover some aspects that surround the field of writing, starting by giving some definitions of writing by different researchers and writers. Then we moved on to discuss and explain the writing process with giving some writing strategies that were proposed by researchers such as Arndt (1789), Wenden (1991), and Sasaki (2000) which the students can use while writing. After that, we tried to explain the components of the writing skill, and then shift off to academic writing with its definitions, characteristics, and purposes. We concluded with focusing on the teachers' side of writing by discussing the different approaches the teachers might use to teach writing effectively, with shedding light on feedback, its importance in teaching writing, and which type (teachers feedback or peer feedback) to use for better results.

1.2. Defining Writing

Writing is one of the four fundamental skills of English language, it is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable, legible and understandable form. It is a very difficult and complex process. It requires some important skills in order to make it clear and acceptable. Historians agree that writing existed five hundred years ago due to the need of recording information about different domains in life. It is one of the most important language skills which represents the development of expressing human desires by letters and different other symbols. Basically, writing is defined by the English Oxford dictionary as: "a sequence of letters, words, or symbols marked on a surface". Many definitions were given to writing, for Nunan (1989):"writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate communication by means of conventionally visible marks"(p36). It means that writing is a very difficult concept that requires some important rules that must be followed in order to communicate.

According to McArthur (2016) : "writing is a complex social and cognitive process that requires shared understanding with readers about purposes and forms, knowledge of content, proficiency in language, as well as motivation" (p1). This indicates that writing necessitates not only time but also opportunities to write and quality instruction.

1.3. The Writing Process

The writing process offers authors specific steps or stages to follow in order to complete a piece of writing (Caswell & Mahler, 2004). Seow (2002) argued that the

process of writing involves four main phases: planning, drafting (writing), revising, and editing. Such stages are not sequential or placed in order as shown in figure 1.1, but rather recursive. It means writers can go back and forth to the various stages of the writing process, if appropriate. Student writers are capable of re-planning, re-drafting and re-editing even when they think they have entered the final draft.
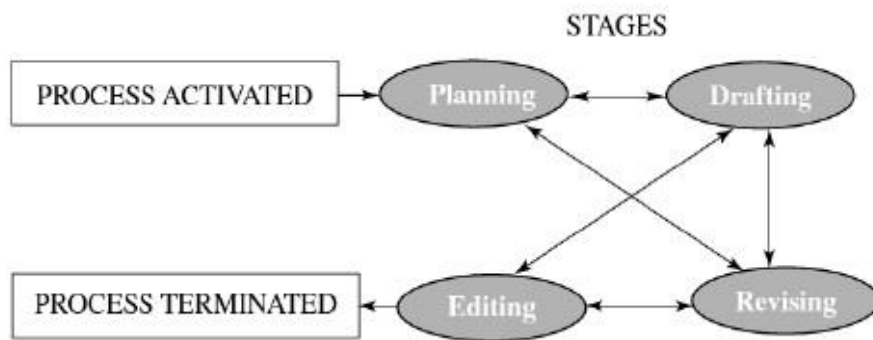
Figure 1.1: The Stages of The Writing Process (adopted from Seow, 2002)

During the writing process, students are taught the ability to solve problems that allow them to meet specific objectives at each level (Seow, 2002). Additionally, teachers are required to schedule specific activities at each level to improve specific writing skills. As suggested by Seow (2002), the four steps of the writing process follow:

1.3.1. Planning

Pre-writing is also referred to here. It is an exercise in the classroom that teaches students to write and it consists of generating ideas and thought. The teacher can provide various pre-writing activities for students, such as: brainstorming, clustering, free writing, and asking questions from journalists (what, when, where, who, and how). Spontaneousness is a prerequisite for all these activities in that

students focus on writing everything that crosses their minds without worrying about correctness and form, or how much they have produced.

1.3.2. Drafting

It is also known as writing where there is a sufficient gathering of information and ideas, and students may start writing the first draft. At this point, fluency is the primary concern of the students which means that grammatical precision and neatness should be completely ignored. It is highly recommended that students consider their audience while writing (teacher, peers, family members, or friends) to follow a well-suited style and tone of writing that will give direction to their writing work.

1.3.3. Revising

Based on the input they get from their instructor or peers, student writers make changes not corrections to their piece of writing at a level of meaning and ideas. This stage could be the most challenging and fearsome stage for students as they ignore what needs to be done (Caswell & Mahler, 2004). When they think what was written is inadequate, students will review what was written to add new or more ideas. Revising is therefore done to enhance content and arrangement of concepts so that the public understands them.

1.3.4. Editing

This stage involves the correction of surface-level errors such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax and structure of sentences. Students are editing their papers as they prepare to write the last draft which the instructor will review. Editing is preferred to be left to the end so that the students concentrate more on the material and the flow of ideas that corrections may disrupt.

Ultimately, the phases of the writing process are interrelated as one step helps to accomplish the next stage. If students learn how to proceed correctly at each point,

the standard of their writing improves. More importantly, it is vital that both teachers and students recognize that each stage is important and does not replace the other because each stage helps to accomplish a certain goal.

1.4. Writing strategies

Many writers tried to cover this one side of writing by conducting some studies and researches to understand what are the strategies or steps that the students follow in order to produce a piece of writing . Some of those writers are: Arndt (1789), Wenden (1991), and Sasaki (2000). Each one of them concluded with strategies that might be different from the others but still as helpful as any of them.

1.4.1. Arndt's (1789) Writing Strategies

Arndt's (1789) was one of the very first studies that dealt with this aspect of writing by investigating the composing activities of six Chinese postgraduate EFL students as they produced pieces of writings in both their first and foreign languages. By the end of this study Arndt concluded that students mainly use 8 strategies that are explained in the table below:

Strategies' category	Definition
Planning	Finding a focus, deciding what to write about.
Global planning	Deciding how to organize the text as a whole.
Rehearsing	Trying out ideas and the language in which to express them.
Repeating	Of key words and phrases - an activity which often seemed to provide impetus to continue composing.
Re-reading	Of what had already been written down.
Questioning	As a means of classifying ideas, or evaluating what had been written.

Revising	Making changes to the written text in order to clarify meaning.
Editing	Making changes to the written text in order to correct the syntax or spelling etc…

Table 1.1: Arendts' writing strategies

1.4.2. Wenden's (1991) Writing Strategies

In her study, Wenden (1991) tried to investigate the metacognitive and cognitive operations that students use to regulate their writings. She investigated eight students of ESL by requiring them to write a composition on the computer and by doing so she studied how they used those strategies in their writings. The following table summarizes her findings:

Metacognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies	
	Clarification	-Self-question. -Hypothesizing. -Defining terms. -Comparing.
Planning Evaluation Monitoring	Retrieval	- Rereading aloud or silently what had been written. - Writing in a lead-in word/expression - Rereading the assigned question. - Self-questioning. - Writing till the idea would come. - Summarizing what had just been written (in terms of content or of content or of rhetoric). - Thinking in one's native language.
	Resourcing	- Ask researcher - Refer to dictionary
	Deferral	

	Avoidance
	Verification

Table 1.2: Wenden's writing strategies

1.4.3. Sasaki's (2000) Writing Strategies

Sasaki's (2000) study investigated EFL learners' writing process using different data sources that included their written pieces, videotaped their behaviors while writing, stimulated recall protocols and analytic scores given to the written texts. The results of this study made Sasaki concludes with the writing strategies explained in the table below:

Writing strategies	Definition
Planning	
(1) Global planning	Detailed planning of overall organization
(2) Thematic planning	Less detailed planning of overall organization
(3) Local planning	Planning what to write next
(4) Organizing	Organizing the generated ideas
(5) Conclusion planning	Planning of the conclusion
Retrieving	
(1) Plan retrieving	Retrieving the already constructed plan
(2) Information retrieving	Retrieving appropriate information from long-term
Generating ideas	Memory
(1) Naturally generated	
(2) Description generated	Generating an idea without any stimulus
	Generating an idea related to the previous description
Verbalizing	
(1) Verbalizing a proposition	
(2) Rhetorical refining	Verbalizing the content the writer intends to
(3) Mechanical refining	write

(4) Sense of readers	Refining the rhetorical aspect(s) of an expression
Translating	Refining the mechanical or(L1/ESL) grammatical aspect(s) of an expression
Rereading	Adjusting expression(s)to the readers
Evaluating	
(1) ESL proficiency evaluation	
(2) Local text evaluation	Translating the generated idea into ESL
(3) General text evaluation	Rereading the already produced sentence
Others	
(1) Resting	Evaluating one's own ESL proficiency
(2) Questioning	Evaluating part of the generated text
(3) Impossible to categorize	Evaluating the generated text in general
	Resting
	Asking the researcher a question
	Impossible to categorize

Table 1.3: Sasaki's writing strategies

1.5. The Components of the Writing Skill

Learning to write in English is such a complex difficult task to achieve; it should be restricted to a set of rules and criteria. An effective piece of writing should include according to Starkey (2004: 2) organization, coherence, clarity, with accurate language and word choice.

1.5.1. Organization

Organization is considered the first thing that can be achieved in the writing process. Ideas, information, and goals should be arranged first in advance before the writing starts, so as to create an outline of the desired text or article.

Organization allows the author to read the piece he or she is able to write quickly. This aspect (the organization) often assists the reader in recognizing the writer's ideas and intent.

As stated by Starkey (2004), organization helps readers explain how the points are related and how their thesis is supported. He also claims that "the direction and purpose you get from organization helps your reader to believe what you are saying and to willingly follow your lead."(2).

Organization involves a set of strategies to make the piece of writing clear, legible and to give it the value of the writing process. A substantial technique called pre-writing that includes free writing and brain storming. The prewriting technique in organization for Starkey (2004) is the preparation of the work that comes after reading and collecting the prewriting knowledge. For Galko (2002: 10) "brainstorming is to let your ideas flow without judging them" which means that the technique of brainstorming is very important for creating and enhancing one's writing. According to Galko, free writing is what pops into your head without stopping with focusing on a particular subject. While for Starkey (2004: 10) "free writing" may best be called "flow writing", since the most critical part of this pre-writing method is the flow or momentum that comes when you stick with it.

1.5.2. Clarity

Clarity is one of the most critical aspects of the writing process. The intention behind writing a text or a paragraph is to get a reader's response, so the writer should be transparent to make his / her text understandable. Writing isn't just a

pen and paper, often attempting to build a new insight goes beyond that. Starkey (2004) listed four basic elements in making writing simple and precise:

1) Eliminate ambiguity: the writer should not use vague terms or sentences that have a different meaning so that the reader can clearly understand the target.

2) Powerful, descriptive adjectives and adverbs: the writer should be conscious that powerful adjectives and proverbs have a strong impact on the reader's standpoint, so he/she should be careful when it comes to write adjectives, adverbs, and phrases.

3) Be brief and concise, according to Starkey (2004: 15) "there are two equally important approaches to more concise writing: eliminating unnecessary words and phrases, using the active (as opposed to passive) voice whenever possible."

4) Avoid needless repetition: repeating phrases, details and ideas may often kill the meaning and the clarity of the written work.

Often students will lack clarity because most of them assume that the information they offer is enough to make the reader understand the concept, this is possibly the most common mistake they commit when writing. Clarity, however, was never something that could be overlooked or misused when making a piece of intelligible writing.

1.5.3. Coherence

Coherence in writing is a quite crucial skill. Kane (2000) and Creme and Lea (2008) have proved that coherence plays a major role in the production of a good writing work. Murray & Hughes (2008: 45) noted that "a good writer "sticks" their ideas together so that they act as links in a chain, each link connecting the one before it with the one after. If any links are missing, the connections become unclear and the argument structures break down".

Coherence makes the concepts interlinked so that the reader can easily grasp the writing content. In academic writing, all writing skills must be included properly, each in its natural place. Coherence is one of those skills that cannot be overlooked in academic writing, many students do not pay attention to the mess that can be detected in a text or paragraph that is clear from the coherence criteria.

1.5.4. Word Choice

The writer must carefully choose his word. According to Starkey (2004), the word choice exhibits the learner's style of choice of lexical objects and structures to convey his message. Starkey claimed there are two aspects that the learner would take into consideration when choosing his words: denotation and connotation.

Denotation is "the literal meaning of the word" Starkey (2004: 22), it means that the writer has to be sure of the proper sense of the word. The ambiguity may arise from words that sound or look similar (but they have very different meanings), words and uses that sound correct (but in reality they are not considered Standard English), or words that are misused so much that their misuse is considered right.

Connotation is all about the author's feelings, opinions, suggestions that may be positive, negative, or neutral. "The writer should be selective concerning the words because any mistake can be taken as a misunderstanding from the reader that can annoy or insult him/her. That means being aware of inclusive language, and avoiding slang, clichés, and buzzword" (Starkey; 2004: 24)

1.5.5. Mechanics

"The term "mechanics" refers to the appearance of words, how they are spelled and arranged on paper." Kane (2000: 15). The writing mechanics, according to Starkey include grammar, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. Brooks and Penn (1970: 20) state that "for one thing, in writing, we must understand the structure of the language, what the parts of speech do, how the words relate to one another, what individual words mean the rules of grammar and punctuation."

1.5.5.1. Grammar

The author must be aware of the rules of grammar and how to use them properly, such as: pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc.

- **Pronoun**: According to the oxford dictionary a pronoun is used to replace a noun already mentioned or already known, mostly to prevent the noun being repeated.
- **Adjective**: a term that names a noun's feature, such as humble, dark or literal
- **Adverb**: is the word describing the verb.

- **Prepositions:** is a word that regulates, and usually precedes, a noun or a pronoun and expresses a relationship to the next word or item in the clause.

1.5.5.2. Capitalization

"Capitalization is necessary both for specific words and to start sentences and quotes" Starkey (2004). Capitalization is a critical aspect in academic writing; the writer should be restricted to the rules of capitalization and therefore should give them as much importance as he/she gives to another writing skill because most students write often only in order to obtain a degree without considering that these types of mistakes are committed while writing academically, especially ignoring the skills which are very critical in producing simple and comprehensible texts and essays will hold on to them during their educational and even academic careers.

1.5.5.3. Punctuation

Starkey (2004) states that punctuation is an integral aspect of academic writing in English. With correct punctuation, your writing will be more refined and professionally appropriate, and you can more clearly express your speech. According to Starkey (2004). Murray & Hughes (2008: 185) punctuation suggests pauses and the limits of sentences also help the reader grasp what is written.

Therefore, Capitalization and punctuation are two essential elements in writing as Murray & Hughes (2008: 185) said "they indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. A well punctuated and capitalized piece of

writing should make the work easier to read and understand and will therefore help it make a more favorable impression on your readers."

1.6. Academic writing

"Online library of Leeds University" (n.d.) describes academic writing as a clear, concise, focused, structured and backed up by evidence. Its purpose is to aid the reader's understanding. It has a formal tone and style, but it is not complex and does not require the use of long sentences and complicated vocabulary. Each subject discipline will have certain writing conventions, vocabulary and types of discourse that you will become familiar with over the course of your degree. Macmillan dictionary precisely defines it as a formal and factual style of writing that is used for essays, research papers and other academic texts (Macmillan dictionary online, 2020). A simpler definition of academic writing by (Whitaker, 2009) is it is considered to be any piece of writings which the students produce during their university studies.

1.6.1. The Purpose of Academic Writing

There are several purposes of academic writing, however, if you ask a student about it, he will immediately think about writing an essay to answer a question asked by his teacher or tutor in an exam paper or a homework, and this is just one small purpose of academic writing. Baily (2003) discussed this in his handbook entitled 'Academic Writing – A Handbook for International Students' and saw that there are mainly four reasons for academic writing which are; firstly, to report on a piece of research a writer has conducted. Secondly, to answer a question the writer

has been given or chosen. Thirdly, to discuss a subject of common interest and give the writer's view. Finally, synthesize a research done by others on a topic. Of course those four reasons do not summarize all the purposes. Academic writing can be in a form of an expository paper that explains, discusses, or informs the audience about a certain topic. It can also be a narrative one that tells a story or a descriptive paper that describes a concept, an idea or even a state of mind. We can talk about the different purposes of academic writing without reaching to an end, so to sum up , no matter what the writer is trying to convey, whether an idea or knowledge about a certain topic, he needs to write it in a formal and objective way with evidence (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7. Characteristics of Academic Writing

Academic writing is a complex intellectual activity that demands the mastery of many language characteristics and features. It. As stated in University of Southern California Libraries official website: "Characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective (usually), a clear focus on the research problem under investigation, and precise word choice. Like specialist languages adopted in other professions, such as, law or medicine, academic writing is designed to convey agreed meaning about complex ideas or concepts for a group of scholarly experts". (Hartley & James, 2008)

1.7.1. The Big Picture

The overall structure of academic writing is systematic and rational, as opposed to fiction or journalistic writing. It must be coherent and possess a logically

ordered flow of ideas; this means combining the different pieces to form a unified whole. Narrative connections should be formed between sentences and paragraphs, so that the reader can follow the point. The introduction should provide a summary of how the remainder of the paper is structured and, in the article, all references are properly cited. The introduction will provide a summary of how the remainder of the paper is structured and all references in the paper are properly cited (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.2. Tone

The general tone relates to the mindset conveyed in a written piece. The inclusion of the points of others equally and in a fitting narrative tone is very critical in the paper. When the writer describes a position or statement with which he disagrees, he should explain this statement correctly and without the language being loaded or biased. The author is supposed to examine the research question in academic writing from an authoritative perspective. Therefore, he should clearly state the advantages of his points, using language which is rational, not aggressive or hostile (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.3. Diction

Diction refers to the word chosen in the paper. Word selection knowledge is critical because terms with nearly the same denotation (dictional definition) may have very different connotations (implied meanings). This is especially true in academic writing, as terms and terminology may establish a complex sense that represents a specific idea, principle, or phenomenon derived from that discipline's epistemological culture (e.g., the principle of rational political science choice). Concrete terms (not general) that convey a particular meaning are better used. If that

cannot be achieved without misleading the reader, then in the sense of how that word or expression is used within a discipline, the writer needs to clarify what he means (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.4. Language

Analysis issues in the social sciences are often dynamic and multidimensional. So it's necessary for the writer to use unambiguous language because well-structured paragraphs and simple thematic sentences allow a reader to follow his thinking lines without a struggle. In the academic writing, the language should be descriptive, structured and convey precisely what the writer wants it to mean by the avoidance of the use of vague expressions that are not specific or precise enough for the reader to derive exact meaning ("they," "we," "people," "the organization," etc.), abbreviations like 'i.e.' ("in other words), 'e.g.' ("for example"), or 'a.k.a.' ("also known as"), and the use of unspecific determinate words ("super," "very," "incredible," "huge," etc.) (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.5. Academic Convention

Citing sources in the body of your paper and providing a list of references as either footnotes or endnotes is a very important aspect of academic writing. It is essential to always acknowledge the source of any ideas, research findings, data, paraphrased, or quoted text that you have used in your paper as a defense against allegations of plagiarism. Equally important, the scholarly convention of citing sources allows readers to identify the resources you used in writing your paper so they can independently verify and assess the quality of findings and conclusions based on your review of the literature. Examples of other academic conventions to follow include the appropriate use of headings and subheadings, properly spelling out

acronyms when first used in the text, avoiding slang or colloquial language, avoiding emotive language or unsupported declarative statements, avoiding contractions, and using first person and second person pronouns only when necessary. (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.6. Evidence-Based Reasoning

Assignments also ask the writer to share his own views about the issue of research. What is respected in academic writing, though, is that views are founded on what is sometimes referred to as evidence-based reasoning, a clear understanding of the applicable body of knowledge and theoretical debates inside the writer's field, and also beyond it. The writer requires evidence from academic sources to back up his opinion. It should be viewed as a rational statement, an unbiased stance because the quality of the proof is what decides whether the claim is solid or not. The goal is to persuade the reader by a well-documented, coherent, and logically organized piece of writing about the validity of the opinion. This is particularly important when bringing forward solutions to problems or delineating suggested course of action (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.7. Thesis-Driven

Academic writing is "thesis-driven," implying that the start point is a specific viewpoint, theory, or position applied to the chosen subject of study, such as evaluating, confirming, or disproving answers to the research questions posed for the subject. Thus, a problem statement without the research questions will not qualify as academic writing because merely defining the research problem does not determine for the reader how the writer can help solve the problem, what aspects he thinks are

most important, or proposes a method for collecting data to better understand the problem (Hartley & James, 2008).

1.7.8. Complexity and Higher-Order Thinking

Academic writing deals with complex problems involving higher-order analytical skills to grasp the study problem (e.g., critical, reflective, logical, and creative thinking as opposed to, for example, descriptive or prescriptive thinking). Higher-order thinking capabilities include cognitive mechanisms that are used to grasp, address problems, and communicate concepts or explain abstract ideas that cannot be easily acted upon, pointed out, or illustrated with pictures. One of a good teacher's most important qualities is the ability to illustrate ambiguity in a way which is intuitive and relevant to the subject being discussed, so thinking of the written work this way is one of the main functions of academic writing--examining and explaining the significance of complex ideas as clearly as possible. The writer must therefore take on the role of a good teacher by summing up a lot of complex knowledge into a well-organized combination of ideas, principles, and suggestions that contribute to a better comprehension of the research issue (Hartley & James, 2008).

Producing a piece of writing

SNYTAX
sentence structure,
sentence boundaries,
stylistic choices, *etc.*

CONTENT
relevance, clarity,
originality,
logic, *etc.*

GRAMMAR
rules for verbs,
agreement, articles,
pronouns, *etc.*

THE WRITER'S PROCESS
getting ideas,
getting started,
writing drafts,
revising

Clear, fluent, and effective communication of ideas

MECHANICS
handwriting,
spelling,
punctuation, *etc.*

AUDIENCE
the reader/s

ORGANIZATION
paragraphs,
topic and support,
cohesion and unity

WORD CHOICE
vocabulary,
idiom, tone

PURPOSE
the reason for writing

Figure 1.2: The Writing Features (adopted from Raimes, 1983, p.11)

1.8. Teaching Writing

"…writing will be used as a generic term to refer to all the various activities that involves transferring thought through paper." (Dvorak quoted in Lee &Vanpatten, 1995, p. 214).

The purpose of writing is to express ideas, thoughts and to convey messages to the reader in a very correct spelling, punctuation, grammatical structure and selection of vocabulary. Standard language always demands writing more than speech. In this context Ur (2001:163) states: "much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech more carefully constructions, more varied and precise vocabulary, more correctness of expression in general". Therefore, teaching how to write successfully is among the most critical lifelong skills teachers give their students. Harmer (1998, p. 79) describes that the reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a skill in its own right which is by far the most important reason for teaching writing; in other words, writing is a basic language skill, just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write a letter, how to put written reports together, they need to know some of the writing's special conventions such as punctuation, and paragraph construction, just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately. It could be said that writing is an important language skill, it is a productive skill that shows how skillful the student is in writing and discovers the talented students in this field. In addition, writing is a way that a student can express his ideas or thoughts on the paper. Bottom line is, writing is an activity that supports students to analyze and synthesize their discrete knowledge about language items into a text that is acceptable in English

writing convention by using the appropriate paragraph structure and it must be taught correctly.

In the 1960s, writing concerns were divided into components L1 and L2 in which L2 writing was part of second language studies or Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), resulting in the disciplinary division of labor. Writing in a second language originated as a subdiscipline (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). After this, teaching writing was proposed with a plethora of pedagogical approaches. Kaplan (1966) argued that writing exceeds sentence-level structures as paragraphs are also specific to languages and cultures should, thus, be considered. This gave rise to rhetoric or organizational structure and later contrastive rhetoric came to exist, contrasting the organizational structures of written discourse in paragraphs (Matsuda, 2003). Following this, two approaches have dominated L2 writing instruction, namely the product approach and the process approach.

1.8.1. Approaches to Teaching Writing in L2 Context

In the last few decades of English language teaching, three key approaches to teaching writing have been promoted, namely the product approach, process approach, and genre approach. Each approach, while having its own significance and playing an important role in the teaching and learning of writing in the framework of EFL (Al- Mahrooqi, Thakur, & Roscoe, 2015), is the process approach at the heart of the study with considerable attention to the product. The application of each of the aforementioned approaches to teaching writing relies, among other aspects, on the curriculum. Throughout that sense, the Algerian Universities' second year writing curriculum is focused exclusively on the writing of paragraphs and essays, excluding

genres writing. As opposed to this context, the genre approach falls beyond the range of this study as it sheds light on teaching students a range of genres such as: diary writing, letter writing (business and personal), autobibliography, just to name a few. In return, it is hoped that students to whom genre writing is taught will create the genre amalgam, respecting their social and linguistic conventions.

1.8.1.1. The Product Approach

The product approach to writing was prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s (Hyland, 2004). It is the culmination of the collaboration between structural linguistics and the behaviourist theory of L2 learning that existed mainly during the 1960s (Silva, 1990). The product approach focuses on the written text, with great attention to the structure of the language. At its height are accuracy, grammar and lexical skills that are a fundamental requirement for teaching writing (Augustin Llach, 2011). In other words, elements such as precise word selection, specific syntactic patterns, morphological inflections, the use of cohesive tools, when incorporated into a coherent piece of writing, are a successful piece of writing (Hyland 2003; Mastuda, 2003; & Silva, 1990).As a consequence, weak and insufficient writing skills are expressed in the commitment of lexical and grammatical errors(Augustin Llach, 2011). Therefore, to learn and improve writing, extensive pieces of writing are needed (Kroll, 2003). Particularly, grammar and lexis are overemphasized by the product approach, and writing is viewed as a vehicle through which learners' vocabulary and grammar are strengthened (Hyland, 2003; Silva, 1990). In this sense, writing is not an end in itself.

Leki (1991) referred to the product approach as the text-based approach in which mistakes made by students were forbidden. Consequently, error correction was

extensively researched and highly regarded as the product approach concerned with how to better remove mistakes and not how to correct them (Leki, 1991).In this approach, students are merely provided with a model text to imitate; therefore, learners' writing development is considered to be the output of imitating these model texts provided by the teacher (Hyland, 2004).On these grounds, writing is nothing but practicing and reinforcing grammar patterns through habit formation.

Hyland (2004) claims that this process consists of four phases starting with *Familiarization*, in which learners are taught some grammar and vocabulary features via a letter. The second phase is *Control*, where learners are directed in writing, having to pick fixed patterns from the replacement table supplied by the teacher. The third phase is *Imitation*, where students in the directed writing imitate a model text; finally, *Application*, where students use the patterns they have learned to write in the free writing stage. It is notable that during the controlled writing stage, students practice writing by filling gaps, completing sentences, and transforming tenses into a short text, aiming on accuracy achievement and preventing errors. Throughout this sense, it is believed that writing is a "combination of lexical and syntactic forms"(Hyland, 2004, p. 4), and quality writing is the display of knowledge of such form alongside knowledge of the rules that are used to create texts. With this being said, Effective writing is defined by accuracy and consistent exposure; meaning and communication content are not concealed by any space.

Nevertheless, the predetermined sentences are very limited in context, prohibiting students from moving beyond them, or writing in specific circumstances of writing, rather than the ones they were provided with. Nevertheless, Hyland (2003) claimed that measurements of syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy should never be indicators of a student's success in writing, as the purpose of writing

instruction is not to train in explicitness and accuracy, but on the grounds that each text is an answer to a given communicative situation. Given the importance of creating surface forms of writing, it is equally necessary and unavoidable to consider how the meaning that students want to express is formed by words, sentences, and discourse. Implementing formal features alongside written content is more likely to maintain written quality that combines all aspects of the development of writing. Correspondingly, this study is based on the process approach without neglecting the form which is equally essential to the development of writing.

1.8.1.2. The Process Approach

Cuming (1998) argued that "writing is text, is composing, and is social construction" (p. 61). That implies shifting emphasis from product to process to writing socio-cultural contexts. Building a hypothesis about the essence of L2 writing, the process approach to writing often emerges from fields such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Contrastive Rhetoric, Written Discourse Analysis, Functional Language Usage, and Academic Purposes English (EAP) (Silva & Matsuda, 2001). Furthermore, in the 1970s and 1980s, theories of L2 writing were based on English L1 writing research and hypotheses of writing processes(Silva & Matsuda, 2001). The learners in the process approach are emphasized as active writers and independent text creators and language developers (Hyland, 2003). This approach's doctrine is to teach learners the different phases of writing in order to accomplish a writing task (Hyland, 2003). With this being said, this approach centers on how the students move from creating ideas to turning them into usable writing pieces.

The process approach regards writing as a cognitive process comprising several phases that interact (Grabe, 2001; Hyland, 2003; Kroll, 2003; Matsuda, 2003;

Wang & Wen, 2002; Weigle, 2002). The primary proponents of the process approach, Flower & Hayes (1981), refer to planning, drafting, revising, and editing as the key stages of this process. In addition, the writing process stages are not linear, but rather recursive, interactive, and simultaneous. To put it differently, all the work is feasible for analysis, evaluation and revision before any text is generated (Hyland, 2003). Flower and Hayes (1981) identified four features of writing as proponents of cognitive theory, which considers writing process to be a method of cognitive problem solving:

- The writing process is better understood as a collection of distinct cycles of thinking arranged by authors in the composing art.

- The writing process has a highly integrated hierarchy in which any given process can be combined with any other.

- Composing itself is a goal-directed process of thought led by an increasing web of goals owned by the writer.

- Writers create their own goals in two key ways: by generating both high-level goals and supporting sub-goals which embody the writer's developing sense of purpose, and then, at times, by changing major goals, even establishing entirely new ones based on what has been learned in the act of writing.

In addition, the process approach is focused on the expression of communication and meaning (Silva, 1990; 2000; Zamel, 1983). Discourse and contextual factors of language use such as audience, aim, and content of a particular culture are all taken into account in the process model, where writing is rather

considered a social activity (Hyland, 2003; Weigle, 2002). Form; however, is as important as content in the process approach.

Hence, the task of the teacher is to direct students through the process of generating and refining ideas, with no particular attention being paid to form at the point of idea generation. Specific pre-writing exercises may be designed to help students generate appropriate ideas on the content in which strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, journaling, clustering, and more can be used (Hyland, 2003). After pre-writing, students begin drafting in which several draft versions are needed, extensive feedback is given and content-text revisions are created, surface correction to the editing stage is maintained (Raimes, 1992).

While teaching these processes to students is crucial, raising students' metacognitive awareness about these processes is a priority (Raimes, 1992). The teacher's response to students' writing is fundamental (Kroll, 2003) not only because it amplifies students' motivation to write, but also because it is an opportunity for teachers to provide overt correction and teach explicit language. Despite that error correction is at issue, it plays an important role in guiding learners to move from one stage to another in the writing process, accompanied by teacher or peer feedback (Ferris, 1997). According to Ferris (2011), the process approach is a strong advocate of corrective feedback (CF) provision as it suggests that teachers should provide learners opportunities to write multiple drafts with substantive revision and feedback while still in the process of writing and not at the end.

Because the process approach is the dominant approach in L2 writing teaching today (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), and "remains popular and convincing" (Hamp-Lyons, 1991, P.140), it was selected in this study as it is the approach used in the

second year writing syllabus being the most suitable approach to teach beginner writer students, who are second year students, paragraph writing. In sum, a synthesis of the different writing orientations constitutes taking the best from each approach (Hyland, 2006) depending on the nature of research.

1.9. Feedback in Teaching Writing

Feedback is a fundamental element in the writing process.It can be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. In other words, it is the comments, questions, and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce 'reader-based prose' Flower, (1979). Lalande, (1982) defined feedback as any procedure used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong, it was also described as any information which provides a report on the result of a certain behavior (Richard, Platt, & Weber, 1985).

1.9.1. Teacher's Feedback

The biggest controversy about teacher's feedback is hovering about whether to deliver it directly or indirectly. On the one hand, direct corrective feedback is defined as the provision of the correct linguistic form or structure above or near the linguistic error. It may include the crossing out of an unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme, the insertion of a missing word/phrase/ morpheme, or the provision of the correct form or structure (Bitchener, 2008: 105; Ellis, 2009: 98).On the other hand, indirect corrective feedback takes place when an incorrect form is indicated, but no correct form is made available. The indicators may be in one of four ways: underlining or circling the error, recording in the margin the number of errors

in a given line, or using a code to show where the error has occurred and what type of errors it is (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, 2009). Despite this controversy, yet many studies proved that both direct and indirect feedback are effective in increasing and bettering the students' writing levels. While (Ferris and Helt, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Marzban and Arabahmadi, 2013) see that indirect feedback contributes to students' writing especially on accuracy, (Chandler, 2003; Bitchener et al., 2005; Sheen, 2007) argue that direct feedback can also improve accuracy too in students' writings. The bottom line is, due to this controversy one can argue that teachers should just use both direct and indirect feedback interchangeably to make sure that all the students benefit from it and increase their writings level.

1.9.2. Peer Feedback

Thanks to the new writing strategies, a shift has happened from providing feedback by the teachers only to being provided between the students themselves too and it's called peer feedback.(Hansen & Liu, 2005; Lam, 2010) argue that peer feedback can be seen as an effective hands-on learning experience because it helps increase students' writing competence through letting them play the roles of both the author and the reviewer. (Farrah, 2012) sees that the main role of peer feedback is to let the students participate in the process of sharing thoughts, receiving and providing constructive feedback to enhance their writing.

Peer feedback will allow the students to be the main actors and modelers in the process of learning; this point will develop in the learners a sense of autonomy which will make them better at critical thinking, adopt a clear criterion to offer good quality feedback and last but not least have an ability to reflect upon their writings, justify it and whether to accept or reject suggestions (Liu & Carless, 2006).

Despite all those positive points of view about peer feedback, there are some researchers who claim that peer feedback does have some negative sides. One of these negative sides is what Rollinson (2005) believes to be a time-consuming activity to do in the classroom. Another one is what Speck (2000) found in his study that students lack the skill and appropriate level to be able to criticize and evaluate their classmates' writings and still prefer their teachers' feedback rather than their peers because they lack confidence in them.

1.10. Conclusion

Writing in linguistics is a very detailed and nuanced approach. The fact that particular skills and techniques are taught has made it very hard to obtain particularly for foreign language learners. The fact that certain languages only have their spoken form also contributes to the written language negligence. The spoken form also leads to the negligence of the written language. Academics in the field noted and responded to this negligence. The spoken and written form of a language should go hand in hand, and no approach should prevail over another.

This chapter provided a general view of academically writing and the necessary skills to write, explaining how academic documents and articles should be written and what are the errors often made by writers; particularly students; when writing academically to differentiate between what should be written on papers and what they actually write. Writing is a very complicated process particularly for second-language writers; it should therefore be taken seriously so as not to slip into circumstances that will be described in chapters two.

Chapter Two: Virual Interactions

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   2.2.1. Definition of Social Media

   2.2.2. Categories of Social Media

   2.2.3. Social Networking (SNSs)

      2.2.3.1. Most Common Social Networking Sites and Applications

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2.5. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

   2.5.1. CMC in English Language Teaching (ELT)

      2.5.1.1. Web 1.0 Technologies

2.1. Introduction

The whole world has turned to a "small village" with no doubt. The globe has been unified and changed by the development of technology as the perfect medium to investigate the vast extent of knowledge. Social networking sites although has been reorganized as an important resource for education today, studies however show that students use social networking sites such as Facebook for fun, to kill time, to meet existing friends, or to make new ones (Ellison, Stienfield and Lamp 2007). Cited in Tharinee Kamnortsin, 2014.

Students are increasingly drawn to and affected by social media networks. Social media as a means of student-to-student interaction has become part of a controversy today, impacting their academic performance; due to their addictiveness and access to it.

EFL students are directly involved in this study. There is a strong link between social media and ELT students' academic performance; thus, social media is adversely combined with their academic achievement due to the use of abbreviations when texting directly impacts their formal writing and is more important than its advantages.

2.2 Social Media

The use of Social media is being swiftly increasing during the last few years. It is not only being used by the working people but also there is a heavy rise in the use of social media by the students or we can say in education society. The use of social media has created a positive impact on society. With the help of Internet, all the social site and various applications are available which can be accessed easily, also allow

users to converse and interact with each other, to create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual, and audio content. It has a vital influence on our life as it helps a lot in every field of life such as the political field, economic field, and educational field.

2.2.1. Definition of Social Media

Social media are forms of electronic communication that facilitate interactive base on certain interests. Social media include web and mobile technology. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) define social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content." (Cited in Tharinee Kamnoetsin, 2014).

Social media are commonly described as types of electronic communication like social networking and microblogging websites through which users build online communities for sharing and exchanging information, ideas, private messages, as well as other content, such as videos. In other words, this social networking is seen as the technical equipment people use to communicate and interact with each other through posting and commenting on each other in various networks.

2.2.2. Categories of Social Media

Social media is a general concept and it has several different categories

- **Social networking:** is a social media sub-category. It includes very popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and others that allow users to comment on

profiles, join communities, share photos, and stay in contact with online acquaintances.

- **Social news:** is about engaging through voting and commenting on the posts. When articles touch a lot of likes and constructive reviews and feedbacks, then they will be considered successful. Yahoo news is chosen as the most popular example because users can voice out their reactions to certain issues.

- **Social bookmarking:** is another category where websites are branded to allow users to browse via book of websites identified by others.

- **Social photo and video sharing:** is to communicate by exchanging pictures and videos, and by commenting on the user application.

- **Wikis:** is to communicate by inserting and modifying already existing documents (Wikipedia, Wikia).

2.2.3. Social Networking (SNSs)

Social networking is generally the use of the Web to make data about yourself accessible to others, particularly people with whom you share a common interest to send them texts. Boyd and Ellision, 2007 (cited in Rebecca Sawyer, 2011: 4) define social networking sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system".

William, Boyd, Densten, Chin, Diamond, and Morgenthaler (2003) said that SNSs are online communities of internet users who want to communicate with other

users about areas of mutual interest, whether from a personal business or academic perspective. The millions of SNSs have transformed the thought of global village into a reality whereby billions of people communicate through social networking sites. (cited in Peter Osharive, 2015).

2.2.3.1 Most Common Social Networking Sites and Applications

- **Twitter:** This social networking site allows users to upload short messages (called tweets), containing a limited number of letters (up to 280 letters) to get their message worldwide. Twitter also helps you to advertise your companies and even purchase immediately via tweets, with the increasing trend for online shopping.

- **Instagram:** was introduced as a specific forum for social networking, solely focused on posting images and short videos (1-minute maximum). This photo/video-sharing social media application helps you to catch the best moments of your life with a phone camera and turn them into works of art.

- **Tumblr:** acts as a platform for social media and microblogs that can be used to find and follow stuff you want. Also, it can be used to post something to a short-form blog, like multimedia. It also allows you to customize anything.

- **Youtube:** is the largest social networking video sharing platform in the world that allows users to upload, download, update, comment on, and like videos. This social network is available worldwide, and also enables users to create a YouTube channel where they can post all of their personal videos to show their followers.

- **Viber:** is a multilingual social platform, accessible in more than different languages, it is known for its quick text and voice messaging capabilities. You can also exchange images and videos and audio messages with Viber. It gives you the ability to dial non-Viber users via a Viber Out tool.

2.3 Facebook

Online social networks have now spread around the globe and Facebook is world's largest social network become so popular for young people that they hardly use email or other way of communication (Kirkpatrick 2010, 85). People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to be informed and entertained within their social circle, and to share and express what matters to them (Facebook facts, 2013). Launched on February 4, 2004 Facebook, an innovation of a nineteen year old Harvard University student for connecting university campus students (Grossman, 2010). At the time of Facebook launch, Founder had no idea this social network would turn from a small networking site to a giant online social network (Communities.net, 2007). In September 2013, there are more than 1.19 billion monthly active members using Facebook worldwide and 82% of monthly users are outside of the United States and Canada (Facebook facts, 2013). "We have entered the age of Facebook, if Facebook were a country it would be the third-largest, behind only China and India". (Grossman, 2010)**.**

2.3.1. Definition

Facebook is a social networking website that was originally designed for college students but now open to anyone 13 years of age or older. Facebook users can

create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. Friends can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages.

Each Facebook profile has a "wall," where friends can post comments. Since the wall is viewable by all the user's friends, wall postings are basically a public conversation. Therefore, it is usually best not to write personal messages on your friends' walls. Instead, you can send a person a private message, which will show up in his or her private Inbox, similar to an e-mail message.

Facebook allows each user to set privacy settings, which by default are pretty strict. For example, if you have not added a certain person as a friend, that person will not be able to view your profile. However, you can adjust the privacy settings to allow users within your network (such as your college or the area you live) to view part or all of your profile. You can also create a "limited profile," which allows you to hide certain parts of your profile from a list of users that you select. If you don't want certain friends to be able to view your full profile, you can add them to your "limited profile" list (Christensson, 2008).

2.3.2. Development of Facebook

With the rapid growth in the field of online social networks, Facebook is considered to be the largest social network site on the internet today. In February 2004 an undergraduate student of Harvard University Mark Elliot Zuckerberg launched the TheFacebook network site for the student of the university (Grossman, 2010). Only within 24 hours, around 1,200 Harvard University students had got a membership and signed up. In 2005 the new name has been purchased and it became from TheFacebook.com to Facebook.com. At that time, membership to the website

was limited to Harvard and almost all US university students. In time for the fall semester of 2006, Facebook began accepting membership of anyone over the age of 13 around the world (Grossman, 2010). According to Facebook's Press Room, the social networking site currently has more than a billion monthly active users and 618 million daily active users (Facebook facts, 2013).

Like other online social network sites, with Facebook you can make friends, search people, and communicate with them as well as share photos and videos. Heiberger & Harper, 2008 have given a brief introduction of some of the most popular functions of Facebook "Facebook is a synthesis of many Internet-based communication tools previously in wide but disconnected use. It integrates static user-designed Webs (personal pages), synchronous (instant messages) and asynchronous chats (wall posts), picture uploading, group formation, event hosting, Web development tools, dynamic searches, RSS feeds (news feeds), blogs (weblogs), mass and individual messaging, and e-mail, plus two unique qualities: networks and friends. These last two functions give users a one-of-a-kind online socialization experience, allowing them to limit the visibility of their content based on school affiliation, region, and friends. Facebook offers all of this with one log-in on one web site" (p. 20).

Today, Facebook is embraced by almost all types of internet users, but students from the universities and colleges are the largest percentage of active Facebook users, which is about 30% of all users (insidefacebook.com, 2009). According to Fletcher 2010, if we do a comparison of Facebook with other online social network sites like MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn we found these sites have a combined total of 76 million users. Facebook has a definite edge over the other online

social network sites. More than 1 in 4 people who browse the Internet not only have a Facebook account but also they are active monthly users (p. 32).

2.3.3. Facebook Features

To join Facebook, the user must first create an account with a correct email, user name, password, gender, and date of birth. Now users can add friends and share content after creating an account. Facebook provides a range of features such as messages, photo and video sharing, automated notifications whenever a user changes his or her profile, and users can create or enter groups according to their different preferences. Users can also fill out their contact information in their profile, such as marital status, favorite books, series, videos, teams, and they can also include their college and job info.

2.3.3.1. Facebook Applications

The main application of Facebook is its own feature which has been discussed below. Further, Facebook is a combination of these features offered by Facebook Company and third party software development industry. For instance news feed, timeline, games, instant messaging, shopping lists are usually categorized as third party softwares. There is hundreds of applications have been offered on Facebook pages, user can install any application. (Facebook.com, 2013).
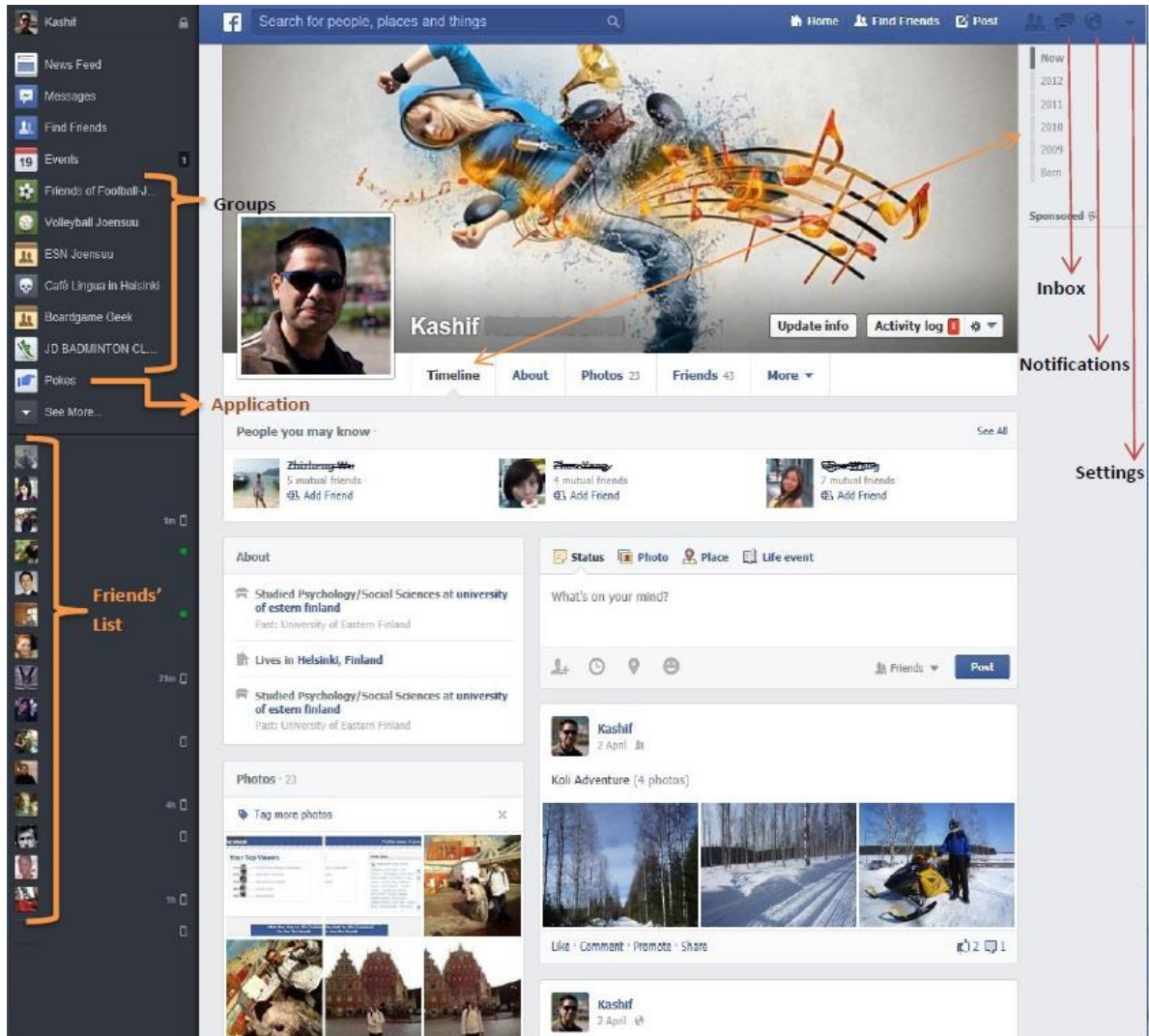
Figure 2.1: Demonstration of A Profile Page on A Facebook Application

2.3.3.2. Search

There are two main search options on Facebook page:

1. It is a general search facilitating user to search people, places and things (pages, groups, and apps) connected with Facebook.

2. The friends search (Find Friends) with in user's own friends network.

Basically Facebook search permits user to search anyone in the entire Facebook network, as long as user did not impose any security on their public

Facebook profile detail. Facebook uses Bing search engine for his external searches and user can sort the search results by people, places, groups and pages (Facebook.com, 2013).

2.3.3.3. News Feed

This is considered to be the most viewed Facebook page among Facebook users. News feed is a kind of an alternative home page (Wall) in which users can see the constant updates and activities of their friends and groups. The aim of the News Feed pages is to bring and highlight the users' activities on one page like profile changes, birthdays, upcoming events, photos and videos sharing. User's conversations and comments on the News Feed can be seen to other users if there is no security set. Users can also restrict their posts on Facebook by using security options. In addition to other users' posts, the Wall also displays other events that happened to other profiles (Facebook.com, 2013).

2.3.3.4. Timeline

Timeline is a new type of dynamic page display in which the user can see the categorizations of his posting history. The user can experience the Timeline through scrolling his own profile page or other users' profile pages. This feature includes status updates, photos, videos, and locations you have visited. Recent Facebook profile design is divided into two columns, line draw in the middle presenting the period of time. Surfing the Facebook Profile of any user photos, videos, and posts will automatically be in the time stream depending on the period of time in which they were created or uploaded. Like the Wall and News Feed, users can set privacy settings on Timeline to restrict other users to see their profile and post history.

2.3.3.5. Facebook Photos

This feature allows users to create, upload and delete online photos, videos, and albums (Facebook.com, 2013). It is also a quite frequently used Facebook feature that can be accessed from the main page of the user profile. By the time of writing this thesis, 300 million photos are being uploaded daily on Facebook.

2.3.3.6. Events

The "Event" is the announcement of a program that is going to happen in the near future. Facebook provides the opportunity to create and launch events for other Facebook users to keep them informed. When it comes to event creation, the user needs to fill the required details like event name, location, event type, time and date. According to security options set for the event, it can be public or private. The users who have been not invited for the event cannot view the event page or announcement on their news feed.

2.3.3.7. Groups

Groups provide a closed space for small groups of people to communicate about shared interests. Creating and administrating the group is similar to a blog. Every Facebook user can create a group and he can add or permit the other interested user to join the group. Members can receive notifications by default and view each other posting within the group. Group members can participate in chats, upload photos to shared albums, collaborate on group docs and invite members who are friends to group events (Facebook.com, 2013).

2.3.3.8. Pages and Likes

This feature is quite commercial and popular among businessmen and celebrities. Page allows real organizations, businesses, celebrities and brands to communicate broadly with people who like them. Pages may only be created and managed by official representatives. Page information and posts are public and generally available to everyone on Facebook. Anyone can like a page to become connected with it and get News Feed updates. There is no limit to how many people can like a Page. Page admins can share posts under the Page's name. Page posts appear in the feeds of people who like the Page and their friends (Facebook.com, 2013.)

2.3.3.9. Notifications

It is basically the popup messages which appear at the right top of the Facebook page to inform you about the most recent activity affecting your profile. The most common examples are if some friends comment on your photo or share something on their walls then you will get a notification about that activity. A user can control the notification through notification settings options. Notification is one of the unique features of Facebook which is directly connected with human curiosity nature. It might be difficult for curious Facebook users to hold themselves without checking newly received notifications.

2.4. Social Media and Education

Social media is a fundamental part of daily life for most people. Schools and colleges are no exception. Recently, many institutions have started tapping social

media to provide better service and assistance to teachers and students. The most common social media sites nowadays are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These sites are not only easy to use and easy to access but most certainly, almost anyone can join. RdouanFaizi and Abdellatif El Afia (2013) examined the potential benefits of using social media in education. A thorough examination of a large set of these online tools has revealed that social media have many educational advantages. It has been found out that these web-based applications can improve communication among students and between teachers and students. Both teachers and students can interact with each other in a matter of seconds. Social media can also be used to promote students' engagement. Students who often complain of being intimidated or bored in the classroom may feel comfortable to express their creativity and voice their opinion on a social network website. Another finding of this study is that social media applications foster collaboration as they allow students to work together to achieve a common goal. However, there are drawbacks associated with the general use of social media and the use of specific forms of social media. Even in many of the studies reporting positive effects, some researchers comment upon the disadvantages associated with the use of social networking in education.

2.4.1. Benefits of Social Media in Education

Despite being a recent addition to the Internet landscape, social media have witnessed an exponential growth. It is now infiltrating nearly every field, including the educational arena. These online social networks are increasingly being used for different reasons not only by students but by teachers as well (Mazer & Murphy, 2007). Moreover, after a thorough examination of a wide range of social media, it has been found out that these tools present many educational advantages for both

students and instructors, hence, contribute in providing opportunities for further learning.

2.4.1.1. Social Media as Communication Channels

Studies have shown that the successful running of any learning experience depends on many things, one of which being effective communication between teachers and their students. If no proper communication between teachers and students is available, both teaching and learning will become difficult. For this reason, teachers need to continuously monitor students in order to be aware of any trouble the latter are having. Understanding the students' problems, fear or confusion will help faculty better understand students' learning difficulties. The more connected the teachers are to their students, the more likely they are able to help students learn quickly and at a high level (Jones & Jones, 1981). In this respect, a lot of educational institutions complain nowadays of their students' erratic behavior and poor scholastic performance. Educational experts believe that this is partially due to the absence of "connection" between teachers and students. Actually, experience has shown that if there is not enough communication between teachers and students, the feedback process remains thin or vague and optimal learning is not achieved. Proper communication between both parts can, therefore, remedy this problem. Given that Internet users, the majority of which are students, use social networks mostly to keep in touch with friends, colleagues, peers, and family, it is important to explore the possible benefits that such networking tools can offer to modern education. These web-based platforms could actually be used to enhance communication between the different actors of the educational system, namely, student, faculty and staff.

Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, for instance, can serve as backchannels for communication among students and between teachers and students within or between classes. Instructors can answer students' questions via a Facebook page or Twitter feed, post homework assignments and lesson plans, extend in-class discussions, send messages and updates, schedule or announce forthcoming events, and inform learners about special lectures, panel discussions or guest speakers. This teacher-student interaction will certainly contribute in understanding various learning-related difficulties and solving them in less time. Social media can improve communication not only between students and teachers but also among students. The latter can use social networks to talk to each other about upcoming assignments or tests. They can get details from their classmates about materials that will be covered on a test or the requirements for one or more assignments. If students are having trouble with a certain topic, they can go to classmates on a social networking website to get assistance and catch up online. Similarly, as blogs and wikis involve the contribution of multiple users, these collaborative tools can successfully enhance interactivity among students (Lin & Yuan, 2006).

2.4.1.2. Social Media as Engagement Tools

Social media tools are also effective ways to increase students' engagement. As the social features of social media resources have attracted the attention of millions of people around the globe, these same features are also capable of drawing the attention of students to the learning opportunities provided by their academic institutions (Rutherford, 2012). A student who hardly ever participates in class may get actively engaged in co-constructing his learning experience with his teachers, collaborating with his fellow colleagues, and may feel more comfortable to

express himself and to share his resources and ideas on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube (McLoughlin & lee, 2007). Using tools such as Google Apps for Education or Ning would enable students to have access to valuable learning resources regardless of time and place. Within the traditional classroom, providing students with additional learning materials can be very expensive and logistically complicated. However, using social media can enhance the learning experience. In fact, inviting students to participate in the different learning activities available on social learning platforms would serve to support academic engagement by extending the amount of time a student spends in doing his homework or related school projects (Rutherford, 2010). Moreover, given that many students often complain of getting bored or intimidated at school, the dynamic and participatory nature of many social media resources could be used to engage or re-engage bored or shy students. Collaborative and participatory tools like Wikis, blogs, Google Docs can encourage students to become active participants or even co-producers rather than passive consumers of content (McLoughlin & lee, 2007).

2.4.1.3. Social Media as Collaborative Platforms

Another vital benefit of social media is that they foster collaboration. Collaboration means working together jointly, intellectually, and socially to achieve common goals. Within an online learning community, collaboration refers to any instructional method in which students work together in groups towards a common goal (Mattessich, Murray-Close & Monsey, 2011). As such, collaborative learning can be viewed as encompassing all group-based instructional methods, including cooperative learning. Given the importance of collaboration in the learning process, a great number of social media tools serve as platforms for learners to gather and share

information and resources from both internal and external collaboration networks. Online learners, who could be students, educators, or any other individual in the community, can thus generate their own learning content and take advantage of collective knowledge. In this sense, social media are an effective means to create channels of collaboration between students and teachers and amongst students. Research has demonstrated that students learn better when they are actively involved in the process and that students working in groups tend to learn more and retain it longer than in other instructional formats (Dawley, 2007). While simply acquiring information can be carried out alone, students' problem-solving skills are often better enhanced in a collaborative environment. Social media actually allow students to work together on projects beyond an individual's capability. This category of collaborative social media tools includes wikis, which are websites or open forums that allow multiple users to exchange and work on the same content. According to Parker and Chao (2007), wikis are ideally suited to collaborative writing due to their open editing and review structure. Authors such as Thorne and Payne (2005) noted that wikis are unique because they blur the line between the author and the audience by allowing multiple users to edit and add to the wiki.

2.4.2 Disadvantages of Social Media in Education

When it comes to education, there's no doubt that social media has a great impact on this field, and despite its advantages, it comes with many disadvantages as well including:

- Online social networks are increasingly being used for different reasons not only by students but by teachers as well (Murphy & Simonds, 2007). For this reason, a number of critics have started questioning the validity of social

software in learning environments, stating that such tools may disengage students from learning traditional skills and literacies (Brabazon, 2007) or even destroy the traditional roles of teacher and learner (Sickler, 2007).

- There is a lack of time to learn these new technologies, resulting in a lack of confidence, unfamiliarity and confusion (Ellison & Wu 2008).

- The narrow use of social media (for example, blogs) can be less attractive and less positive for learners compared with contexts where there is a wider range of choices around social media for student learning and interaction (Weller, Pegler & Mason 2005).

- Some students are less supportive of social media being used for what they perceive to be the less enjoyable purposes of learning, education and training (Madge et al. 2009; Tess 2013). They feel that social media is for bonding and sharing with friends, and educational and training organizations should not highjack its use for non-social purposes. In addition, as Friesen and Lowe (2011) remind us, social media was not developed for formal education. Simply because it is so widely available and used by young people does not validate its suitability for learning, education and training.

2.5. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to "the use of networks of computers to facilitate interaction between spatially separated learners; these technologies include electronic mail, computer conferencing, and online databases" (Jonassen et al., 1995, p.15). Using these tools allows and promotes support between peers. Another key feature in the use of this medium is collaborative work between learners. Also, it was affirmed by Sharma & Barret (2007) that CMC can play a role

in structured formal language learning in a number of ways starting from those students taking an entire class online to those taking only a part an online class, which we refer to by "hybrid learning", or blended learning. Ranging from e-mail to more modern tools like blogs and wikis, which have been used in various degrees by teachers with their students, CMC can be classified under two categories in terms of taxonomy:

- Synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) is a real time communication where students communicate at the same time using chat rooms for instance.

- Asynchronous computer-mediated communication (ACMC) is a delay-time communication where students communicate at different times using such tools like weblogs and wikis.

Synchronous tools fall outside the scope of this research which is primarily based on an asynchronous tool, namely the wiki. As for the contribution of asynchronous tools, Macdonald (2001) assumes that it offers a great potential in that it presents opportunities for students to develop independent, self-directed learning, and to be more engaged with a high sense of community.

2.5.1. CMC in English Language Teaching (ELT)

According to Evans (2014), media refers to those tools or means that convey a pedagogical message. He describes them as "those textual, visual, or aural resources used for the didactic purpose of teaching English as a foreign language" (p. 218). Evans further discussed that among the functions or roles of media is that it provides platforms for communication and collaboration between learners. A distinction is

made between two types of CMC technologies which are web 1.0, and web 2.0 which is the core of this study.

2.5.1.1. Web 1.0 Technologies

The web has become the most significant technology of the 21st century. The World Wide Web (WWW) has been in an ongoing change and evolution since its beginnings and has undoubtedly been the largest information platform worldwide (Murugesan, 2010). The web's evolution actually started with the traditional web or now referred to as web 1.0 which is the first phase of the web, and a read-only medium. The latter connects information rather than people, and is a one-way publishing device. In other terms, its primary function is to publish information to be accessed by anyone using the internet (Murugesan, 2007). Subsequently, it gives birth to such protocols as HTTP, HTML, XML, Java, Java Script, Web Browsers, Web sites, among many others. With 1.0 tools, students could find information online and use it to write reports or exposés using the word processor or powerpoint. In addition, they could show their work (only printed) to their teacher and peers in class, and store it in portfolios (Soloman & Schrum, 2007). Jolliffe et al., (2001) referred to the situation where the web and internet technologies can be used and assist learners who are studying at a learning institution, like the university, as web-based learning support. They further explained that web-based learning support is where learning and some activities are taking place traditionally, in a face-to-face environment, but another portion of learning is taking place on the web involving email, chat rooms, discussion forums, and so forth.

2.5.1.2. Web 2.0 Technologies

In 2004 Tim O'Reilly coined the term web 2.0. Web 2.0 is also called wisdom Web, people-centric Web, participative Web, and read/write Web (Murugesan, 2007). O'reilly (2005) cites a number of examples of how Web 2.0 can be distinguished from Web 1.0, such as web 1.0 was mainly a platform for information, but Web 2.0 is also a platform for participation. Web 1.0 can be used for the delivery of the course materials and for communication, but web 2.0 can be integrated in an e-learning environment marking a shift from the transfer of knowledge to the construction of knowledge (Virkus, 2008). For McGee and Begg (2008) "web 2.0 represents a group of Web technologies with a user-centric focus that actively changes and evolves with user participation" (p. 164). The notion of creativity went from linking and clicking to creating and sharing. This implies individuals can not only find and read the information but also create and share their own information (Soloman & Schrum, 2007). Web 2.0 marked a transition from isolation to interconnectedness for end users. These web-based tools encompass blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking sites, to name but a few (Murugesan, 2010). They allow users to edit, comment and polish a document collaboratively rather than individually (Soloman & Schrum, 2007). In this context, Lin (2007) has pointed out that "Web 2.0 represents a paradigm shift and how people use the Web. While most users were once limited to passively viewing Web sites created by a small number of providers with markup and programming skills, now nearly everyone can actively contribute content online" (p. 101).

Web 2.0, however, defies a widely agreed-upon, concise definition—perhaps because the underlying phenomenon is huge; multiple definitions and interpretations were attributed to it by different scholars (Alexander, 2006; O'Reilly, 2006; Zimmer, 2008). O'Reilly (2005), for example, defined the term Web 2.0 as follows:

"Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of the platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an "architecture of participation," and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences" (p.5).

Web 2.0 harnesses the Web in a more interactive, dynamic, and collaborative manner than its predecessors web 1.0, emphasizing peers' social interaction and collective intelligence, and engaging its users more effectively (Murugesan, 2007). Taking full advantage of the newly emerging technological tools of web 2.0 tools like blogs and wikis will certainly create a more dynamic and communicative environment amongst teachers and students in a constructivist environment (Thomas, 2009).

2.5.1.3. Web 2.0 in EFL teaching

Learning is a complex process (Allan, 2007). Understanding the theoretical ideas that underpin learning is very helpful and essential in that it enables researcher practitioners along with teachers to develop and deliver effective blended programs and activities. Web 2.0 support three learning theories that are socially oriented. They can be divided into three main movements: constructivism, socio-cultural theory, and situated cognition. Allan, (2007) pinpoints that the three are not mutually exclusive and there is an overlap between them. In explaining the importance of exploring the

potentials of web 2.0 when aligned with the learning theories mentioned above in this section, particularly social constructivism, McLoughlin and Lee (2008) said: "The affordances of these technologies, coupled with a paradigm of learning focused on knowledge creation and networking, offer the potential for transformational shifts in teaching and learning practices, whereby learners can access peers, experts, the wider community and digital media in ways that enable reflective, self-directed learning" (p.649).

Learning is now learner-centered, viewing learners as active participants in the construction of knowledge and meaning. In addition, learning should be based on real-life and authentic situations and should also be a social process. In this vein, constructivism is strongly and closely linked with learner centeredness (Allan, 2007). In an EFL context, knowledge construction using web 2.0 is linked to collaborative group work (Allan, 2007). Dillenbourg (1999) insists that this collaboration takes place only when learners share more or less the same level, working towards the same goal and work together. Allan further argues that collaborative learning is beneficial as it increases motivation; this is true due to the sharing of ideas and support of students to each other online when learning the foreign language. At the same point, Vygotsky (1978) suggests that learners perform better and at higher intellectual levels when they work in groups than when they work individually; this is referred to as "cognitive apprenticeship". The latter is similarly present in virtual communication processes which are increasingly playing an important role in cognitive apprenticeship (Allan, 2007). Hence, based on a social constructivist perspective, Web 2.0 tools provide EFL learners with opportunities to discuss, reflect, argue, explain, present, share, and give feedback to one another and to others online. Also, it can help these

learners to develop collaborative and learning abilities which enable them to become self-guided (Ehlers, 2009).

2.6. Mobile-Mediated Communication (MMC)

Most of us wake up in the morning and the first thing we do is to take a sneak peek on our smartphones either to check our e-mail, our social media accounts, or even just to see how's the weather for the day. Actually, we could just activate the voice assistant on our smartphones whether it being Siri, Alexa, Bixby, or Google Assistant and just ask it to read our e-mail, set up a timer, or play a certain music track. Our smartphones have replaced many devices such as Television, Radio, Digital Cameras, Navigation Devices, USB Drive, Portable Audio Recorder, eBook readers, and even Computers but before reaching this point of development smartphones had to make a long journey that started off on 1973.

April 3, 1973 technically marked the beginning of the cell phone era, although it wasn't accessible for the public use not until for another decade, when Martin Cooper made a call from a Motorola DynaTAC 8000x cell phone to Bell Labs in New Jersey. Six years later, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT) introduced the 1G phone service publically in Tokyo, and then it took another four years to move it to the mainstream worldwide in 1983. One year later (1984), the famous Motorola DynaTAC 8000x was finally on sale for a whopping 3,995 USD.

The 1990s carried with it the famous IBM's Simon Personal Communicator which is considered to be ahead of its time due to its touch screen, calendar, address book, the ability to send e-mail, Apps, and other widgets that would become standards for today's smartphones. Moving on the 2000's era where things changed drastically

due to two main reasons: the first one being the introduction of 3G Network on 2001 and the second was the born of the first true smartphone when Steve Jobs announced the first iPhone on Macworld 2007 with its large touch screen, unbelievably sleek UI and stunning design. Since 2007 smartphones kept on evolving and developing with more Apps added, better Operating Systems (IOS, ANDROID), faster hardware and features added year after year all for the sake of making the smartphone a one device to rule them all.

2.6.1. Definition of MMC

The jump from the era of simple 2G cell phones to the era of 3G/4G smartphones changed the way we use our phones on a daily basis. Modern smartphones unable us to share, communicate, and interact with people from all over the world whether with messaging apps, video conferencing apps or simply calling apps. All of this has led to the rise of what so-called Mobile-Mediated Communication which can be defined as the process of exchanging one's thoughts and attitudes via mobile gadgets (Kelsey & Amant, 2008).

2.6.2. The Use of (MMC) in Teaching Foreign Languages

Approaches to teaching foreign languages have developed and changed throughout the course of the years. Starting with the very old ones which are called the grammar-translation and direct method, reaching to the most modern ones who are the communicative approach and computer-assisted language learning "CALL".

Due to technology advancement, we have now smartphones that have equal specs to laptops. Some companies had already made use of that by creating apps that

help people learn a foreign language through it by online tutoring such as " Palfish, VIP talk, Tutoring Lab, and Cambly ".

Despite the spread of such apps, we barely see any formal use of smartphones in our schools and universities to teach foreign languages. Smartphones usage is so minimum and it is only limited to creating some Facebook groups to exchange courses between the students.

One of the fewer examples that demonstrated a successful way on how to use MMC as an informal learning setting for language exposure was done by Almekhlafy & Alzubi (2016). They created a WhatsApp group with 40 students and 4 native speakers and let them interact and text each other with of course some grounding rules and the results of this experiment were positive to a certain extent. Almekhlafy & Alzubi (2016) claimed that the leaners were able to exploit what they learned in the classroom and apply it properly, also they stressed the important role of mobile in creating an appropriate virtual environment, where students get the chance to practice and use the language effectively,

2.7. The Emergence of New Writing Practices in Virtual Interactions

The main reason for which smartphones ever existed is to make communication between peoples a much faster and sleeker experience, due to that, the way we write text messages has changed a bit in terms of respecting grammar rules and correct spelling of words, etc…. so we decided to shed light on those new practices and discuss them.

2.7.1. Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialism

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialism have been increasingly used since the dawn of texting and instant messaging. These terms can be so confusingly frustrating because they are used interchangeably on a daily basis and despite sharing the same concept of shortening a word or a phrase, they are still slightly different from each others. On the one hand, Abbreviation mainly shortens a word or a phrase by keeping its first chunk and leaving out the rest of it such as abbr. for abbreviation, or approx. for approximate and it is still said as the full word. On the other hand, Acronym and Initialism are quite related to each other's with the slightest difference being Acronym often simplifies a long organization name, word, phrase, scientific term, or an idea and the shorten word it produces must be spelled out such as SCUBA which stands for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, or in the digital world when texting and say ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing), LOL (laughing out loud) ,etc…, while Initialism can be considered as a subset of Acronym with the one difference that is it produces short words that we do not spell out but we rather enunciate each letter such as FYI (for your information), BTW(by the way), TGIF (thank god it's Friday). Acronym and Initialism had become major key points that define how we should use language in instant messaging and virtual interactions in general.

2.7.2. The New Letter and Number Homophones

Homophones are considered to be each two or more words that have the same pronunciation but differ in meanings such as 'knight' and 'night', 'site' and 'sight', 'peek' and 'peak'. By applying the same rule, social media users took this notion and start making new letter and number homophones and even mixed the two together in what is called "Homophony". The first type is letter homophone which is mainly a letter that is pronounced the same way a word or a part of a word is

pronounced such as: 'U' that stands for 'you', 'C' that refers to 'see', 'Y' for 'why'. The second type being the number homophone, that in a so familiar way to the first one, it is a number pronounced the same way a word or a part of a word is pronounced. For example, we have 'l8' for 'late', '2night' which means 'tonight', '4' for 'four'. The last one is the combination of both letter and number homophones in a way that half of a word is presented with a letter and the other half is a number. Some examples of such a homophony are: 'L8' for 'late', 'b4' means 'before', 'U2' as in 'you too'.

2.7.3. Emoticons and Emojis

Social media apps have increased in numbers in the last years and became an addiction especially to the younger generation. We use social media to share our ideas, feelings and communicate with others especially through instant messaging. However, texting doesn't always convey our feelings the way we intend to and can easily be misunderstood by the receiver due to the lack of face to face interaction. So here comes the role of both emoticons and emojis to help and enrich the way we convey our thoughts, ideas, and express our feelings in a much understandable way.

The term emoticon is mainly a portmanteau that is combined from the two words emotion and icon. Crystal (2001, p.36.) defines emoticons as keyboard characters that convey an emotional facial expression. Bodomo (2010) also stated that emoticons are symbols that use keyboard strokes for the sake of expressing someone's emotions in an online conversation. From the definitions above, we see that emoticons are very effective tools to convey our body language, verbal tone, and facial expressions in online texting. Some of the most commonly used emoticons are ':-)' which represents a happy face, '>_<' to express anger, '@_@' for boredom.

Emojis are dated back to the year of 1999 when Shigetaka Kurita first ever introduced them to the Japanese users. Not to confuse them with emoticons, emojis come in a form of pictographs yellow faces, objects, or symbols. The inspiration behind it was manga art and kanji characters and the very first ones came in a very simple pixel art of '12 pixels by 12 pixels'. Apple embedded these emojis in its first iPhone keyboard to be more appealing for the Japanese market, however, the North Americans discover it and soon enough it became trending all over the world. It is worth mentioning that emojis play the same role as emoticons in online communication but with them being more commonly used nowadays than emoticons.

2.7.4. Capitalization and Punctuation

Capitalization and Punctuation are the standing ground of written language. We are taught to capitalize the first letter of defined terms, beginning of sentences and proper nouns, etc… and we use punctuation to mainly separate units of grammar such as tenses, clauses, and so on. However, these rules have changed drastically in online writing and texting and they are used in an unconventional random way.

Bodomo (2010) discussed these unconventional punctuation usages concluding that there are no rules for using punctuation in online texting and its non-standard usage serves only some functions such as expressing hesitation, emotions, moods, also to smooth the communication, and to show familiarity in informal situations.

Social media users tend to violate the intended use of capitalization and use it according to their own terms. Nicole Gallucci (2019) wrote an article discussing these violations and the new creative usages concluding with some of the most

common ways the internet community uses capitalization. He started by pointing out the most common use which is capitalizing the whole word or sentence to indicates screaming or anger: A: were hv u been? B: d beach duh A: U WENT 2 D BEACH WITHOUT ME!!! B: pipe down ive been dere only 4 few min. Then he mentioned how Twitter users took the capitalization game to a whole new level by three ways; Firstly, they tend to capitalize the first letter of certain words to emphasize them and this trend is even used by the USA's president Donald Trump. Secondly, some extreme users tend to follow capped words with a trademark symbol '™' as if their words are brands. Finally, they capitalize the first letter of words in hashtags to make them more accessible and understandable.

2.7.5. Repetitive Letters

"Letter repetitions could be interpreted as emulating an extension (repetition) of the phoneme encoded by the repeated letter" (Kalman & Gergle, 2014). The act of typing some letters repetitively while texting is a quite spread behavior between social network users. They tend to type some letters in a word repetitively to either express, convey, or put emphasis on a certain feeling, mood, or emotion. (Bodomo, 2010) argued that there is no apparent rule that determines which consent or vowel should be repeated and the whole process depends on the user's own subjective choices. Some common examples in which repetitive letters is used are: the word "please" that express a certain feeling of desire or begging, some users write it "pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaz", others "pleezzzzzzzzz" so we can see that some preferred to repeat the letter "e" whilst other opt for the letter "z". Another vivid example is "yes" where some users write it "yeeeeeeeeeeeeeees" others write it "yessssssssssss".

A study that was made by (Kalman & Gergle, 2014) came to conclude that the use of repetitive letters is often, but not always, an emulation to the spoken nonverbal cues such as indicating a loud shout "WOOOOOOOOOOHOOOOOOOOOO, Daddy's getting a new Blue Wave Bay boat!!!! WOOOHOOOO'', expressing human-made sounds" And pfffffff, he is away'', and even emulating a stretched out morpheme in spoken conversation ''I was in an electronics store the other night... Panasonic has 9" Portable DVD player (like your sony) with an 8 h battery...$999.00 US. It is sweeeeeeet''.

2.7.6. Jargon and Slang

Jargon and Slang are considered as special types of language varieties with the main difference being, a jargon is a specific terminology used within a specific group of people or professions whereas slang is the use of extremely informal spoken words or expressions between peoples who share similar social backgrounds and age.

Both jargon and slang are imported to social media with the invention of new terms and words that are made specifically for this virtual environment. Starting with slang, Megan Ellis (2019) sheds light on some of the most common new slang terms that are used on different social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Some examples are: 'Twitter Egg' which means a random twitter user with less credibility, 'Social Notworking' a term used to describe peoples who procrastinate their jobs by spending time on social media instead, 'Tweeps' refer to Twitter users, 'weird flex but OK' a way to react to others barging about unworthy achievements. Now moving on to Jargons that are used left and right in social media platforms and you can get easily confused if you are not social media savvy. Some of

the most common jargons are: 'MEME' which is a funny text, image or video that goes viral and let the others create their version and share it, 'HASHTAG' it is to connect your post with other peoples posts that share the same subject, 'FILTER' is an effect created on photos or videos taken through Instagram. Social media jargons and slangs are increasing day per day to the point where you can find forums and blogs that are dedicated only to keep track of them.

2.7.7. Logograms (Logographs)

Before addressing the term logogram, we ought to address its origins. There are mainly three writing systems which are: syllabic, alphabetic, and logographic. The last one is where logogram was ever generated and it refers to a written or pictorial symbol that represents a word, part of a word, phrase, or a morpheme. The American Heritage Dictionary of The English Language also defined logograms as "a written symbol representing an entire spoken word without expressing its pronunciation". Japanese, Korean, and especially Chinese are great examples of a logographic writing system. English, on the other hand, uses primarily an alphabetic system which technically means it contains no logograms; however that's not completely true. English does have few logograms that are still being shared with other languages such as '&, @, #, $, %' we would read them 'and, at, hashtag, dollars, per cent' and even mathematic signs too 'minus', 'multiplied by', 'divided by', 'square root of'(Crystal, 2010). Numbers too are considered to be logograms especially 2 and 4 which indicate 'two, to, too', 'for, four'. Those signs in particular are most commonly used in online interactions on all social network platforms.

2.8. Raising Awareness about These Practises

People from all over the world use social networks on a daily basis to talk with friends, share selfies and thoughts, or simply scroll down their news feed just out of boredom.

The latest statistics showed that there are over 2 billion monthly active users on Facebook only. With what we discussed above about how people text while using social networks and the increasing numbers of users, one can only imagine how EFL learners are frequently exposed to these practices and even use them themselves when texting and how much of an effect they have on the learners academic writing. With those huge user numbers, students are most likely to be exposed to texting language more than being exposed to academic English in books and articles, etc…

Many researchers wrote articles, books and condemned researches about this phenomenon to address it and raise awareness about its effects on academic writing. As (Kern, 2006; Ali 2012) claimed that the increasing number of the new English varieties that appear under the Social Media influence is a real threat to the Standard English varieties, also Crystal (2005) stated that shortenings like abbreviations, acronyms, and logograms are gaining more and more superiority over standard English in social media. Of course the effect on students' academic writing vary from one to another and we can't stop this phenomenon from spreading more, however, from our positions as students we should encourage our fellow colleges to at least use English with its conventional form of words, rules of punctuation and capitalization while they are using social networks.

2.9. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the internet is considered to be one of the most important inventions in the 20th century. Internet affected almost every major aspect of our lives sometimes positively, other times not so much. With internet came social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, VK, Whatsapp and the list goes on, these platforms had affected one of the most important things that define us as human beings which is language.

In this chapter, we shed light on how social networks had a major impact over how we use English to communicate on those platforms versus how we use it in its formal form. We noticed that this internet language has created its own norm and variety which no longer abide to the standard norms and conventions of formal writing. By the end, we tried to raise awareness about this phenomenon and give a minor advice that would at least help reduces its effects over students' academic writing.

Chapter Three: The Impact of Virtual Interactions on the Students' Academic Writing

(Findings & Disscussion)

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3.1. Introduction

While the first and second chapters deal with the theoretical part of our dissertation, the third and last chapter covers its practical part. It is dedicated to answer the questions and achieve the aims of the study. It starts with discussing the means of the study, then the sample, after that it starts to tackle both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview with their analysis. In the end, it discusses and interprets the main findings with also mentioning the limitations of the study and suggesting some pedagogical recommendations.

3.2. Means of Research

In attempt to answer the questions of our dissertation, we opted to use both a questionnaire for the students and an interview for the teachers to gain more credible results. The questionnaire was submitted to fifty (50) randomly chosen Third Year English students at Mila University, whereas the interview was completed via interviewing ten (10) teachers who teach at Mila University.

3.3. Sample

The present study is conducted in the Department of Foreign Languages at Mila University. The population used in our study is consisted of Third Year English students and some teachers of English at the foreign languages department. The population of the students is (180) from which we randomly selected fifty (50) students to be our sample. The reason behind choosing Third Year English Students is due to the fact that at this level they are presumably better at writing essays and paragraph than First and Second Year Students. For the interview, we randomly

interviewed ten teachers that at least use paragraph and essay questions in their exams.

3.4. The Students' Questionnaire

In order to gather and analyze the needed data to answer the questions of our thesis, we opted to use a quantitative research tool that is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was subbmitted to (50) Third Year EFL students at Mila University.

3.4.1 Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire at hand consists of twenty seven (27) questions divided into three sections. The first section is made up of five (05) questions that deal with students' background information; their attitudes towards learning English and writing tasks. Moving to the second section, entitled "Students and Academic Writing", which is also consisted of five (05) questions that mainly tackle the second variable of our dissertation which is academic writing. As for the third section, entitled "Students and Virtual Interactions", it is consisted of seventeen items; four (04) of them are multiple-choice questions, whereas the rest are close-ended. The four first questions deal with what the students use most for connecting to internet and what do they use those devices most for. The fifth, sixth and seventh questions shed light on how frequently students use e-mail, and do they use it the way it is meant to be used or not. Through questions eighth and ninth questions we try to know what social networks do the students use most and how frequently do they use it. The tenth seeks to see what type of language the students use on social networks. the eleventh question tries to uncover whether students respect formal language rules while writing on social networks or not. The twelfth question seeks to know the rules students violate most while using social networks. Question thirteen discusses the most

informal writing habits students tend to use on social networks. The next two questions deal with the students' opinion about whether their writings on social networks have an impact on their academic writing, and if it's a positive or negative impact. Question sixteen aims to know whether the students use informal writing habits in their academic writing. Finally, question seventeen uncovers the students' opinion about the reason behind using informal language in their academic writing.
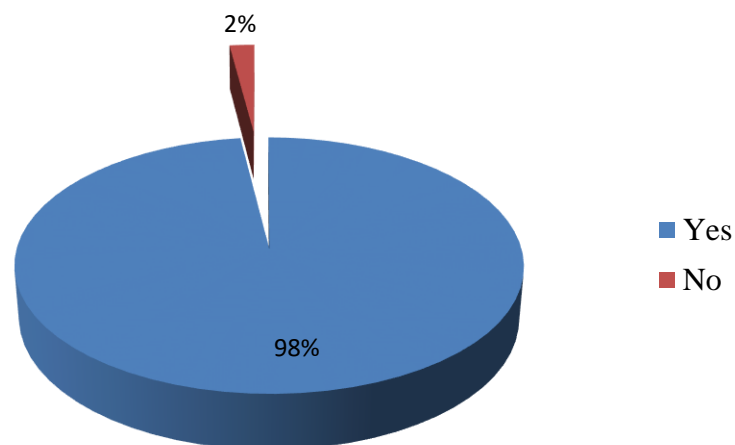
3.4.2 Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

The administration of the students' questionnaire was done through Facebook due to the outbreak of COVID-19, and took about a month to gather all the answers needed.

3.4.3 Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

### 3.4.3.1. SECTION ONE: Learning English

Question n°1 : Do you like English?

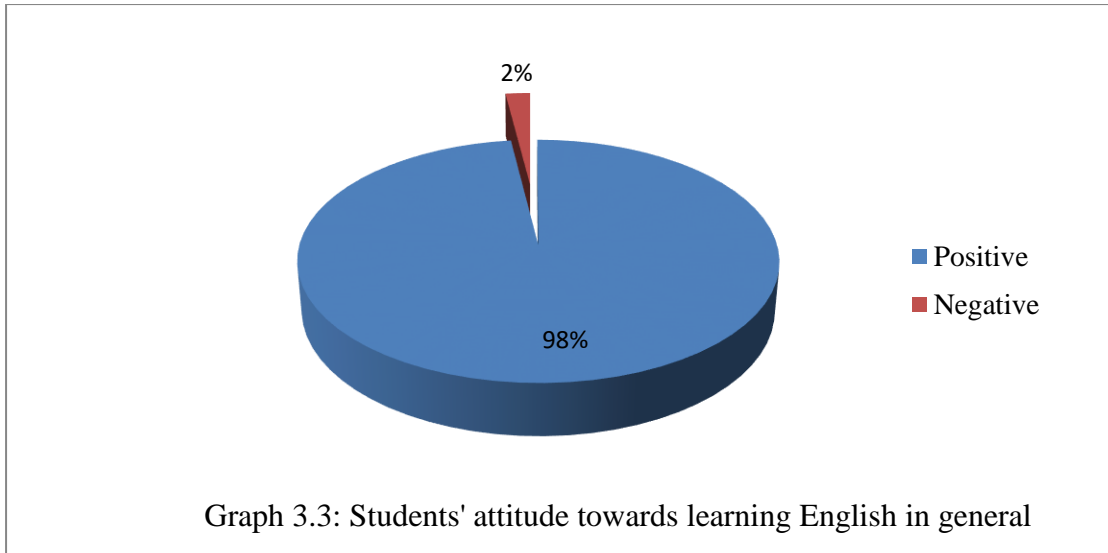Graph 3.1: Students' attitude towards English

The table above shows that a striking majority of the respondents (98%), i.e., 49, have a positive attitude towards English. Whereas, the left (2%) represents one respondent that has a negative attitude.

Question n°2: How long have you been studying English?

Graph 3.2: Students' spent time on learning English
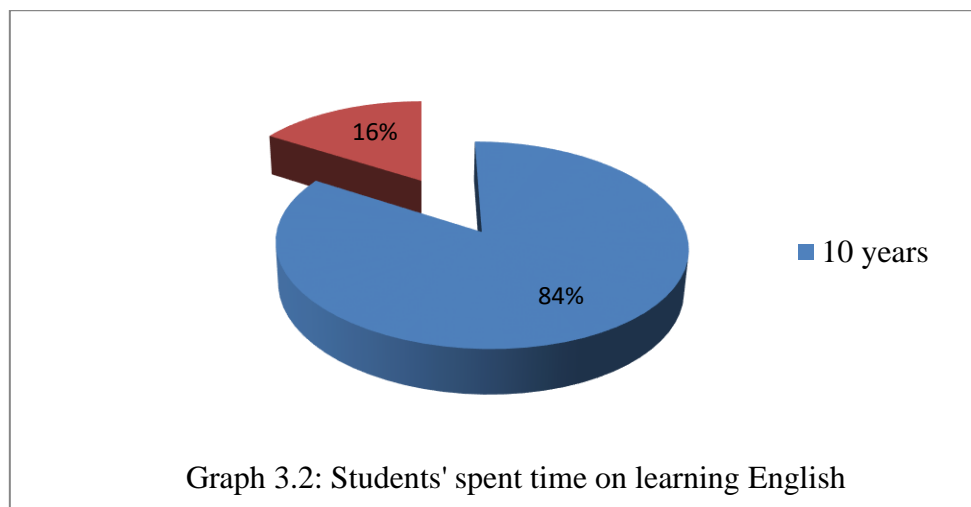
The table above differentiates between two groups of respondents. Whilst the first group spent around (10 years) studying English, the other one spent over (10 years). The first group represents the majority with an (84%), i.e., 42 respondents, while the second group is a minority of (16%), representing eight students, who have spent over 10 years in learning English. Note in mind that they started counting from middle school.

Question n°3: What is your attitude towards learning English in genera**?**

Graph 3.3: Students' attitude towards learning English in general

The figure above clearly demonstrates that a striking majority of the participants, represented in (98%), i.e., 49 students, have a positive attitude towards learning English in general. Only a (02%) minority, which is represented in one student, claims to have a negative attitude.

Question n°4: How often do you write?

Graph 3.4: Students' writing tendency
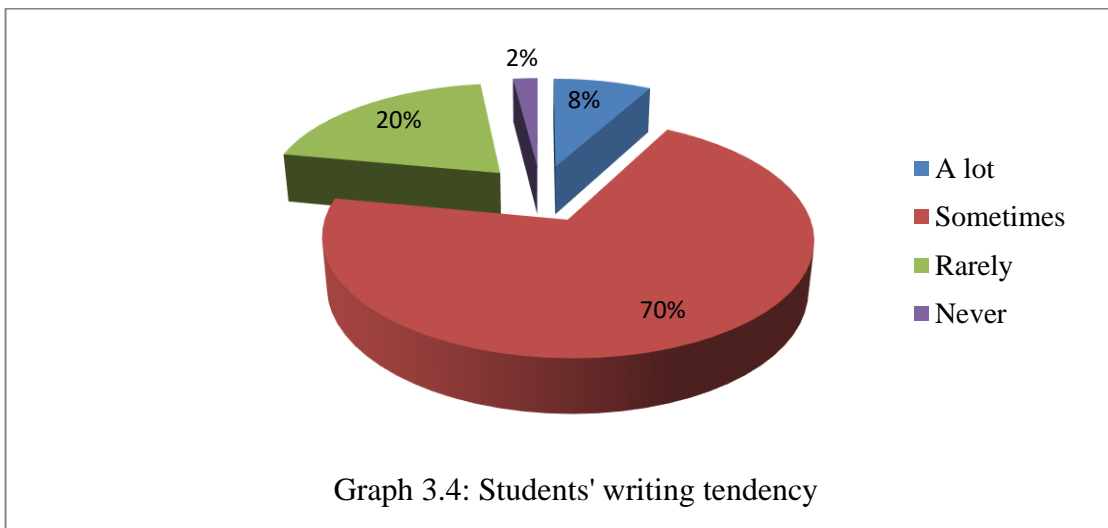
As the figure above demonstrates that (70%) of the students, represents 35 students, have a tendency to practice writing sometimes. Ten students, accounts for

(20%), claim that they practice writing rarely. An (08%), stands for 4 students, declare that they do write a lot. A minority of one single student (02%) confesses that he never writes.

Question n°5: Do you like writing tasks?

Graph 3.5: Students' attitude towards writing tasks
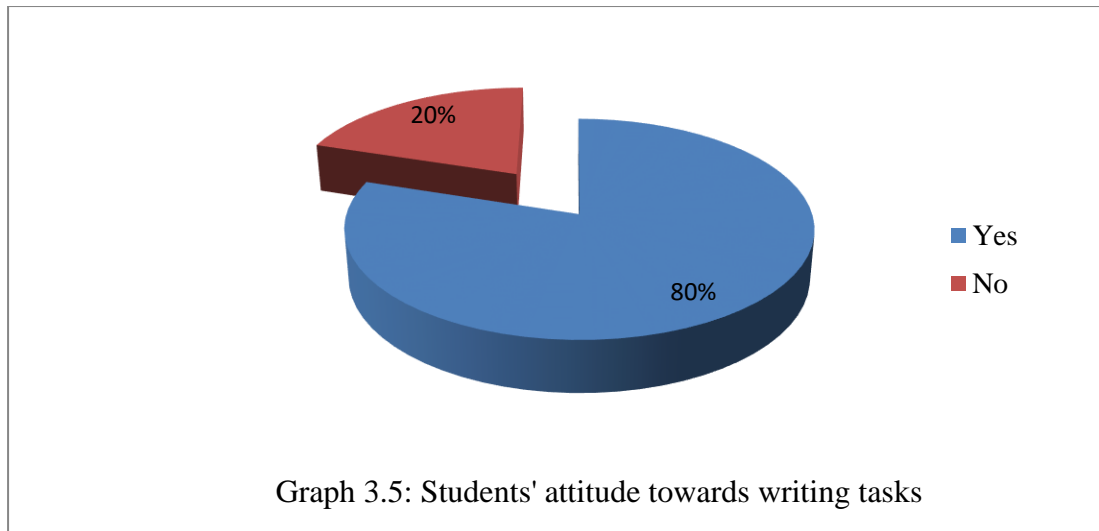
Students' attitude towards writing tasks plays a major role in" whether the students will produce good pieces of writings or not? "That's the reason behind asking this question. The figure above shows that, on one hand, there's a majority of (80%) that represents 40 participants, claims to like writing tasks. On the other hand, a minority of (20%), stands for 10 students, have said that they don't like writing tasks.

3.4.3.2. SECTION TWO: Students and Academic Writing

Question n°6: Do you think learing academic writing is important or not?

Graph 3.6: Students' attitude towards the importance of academic writing
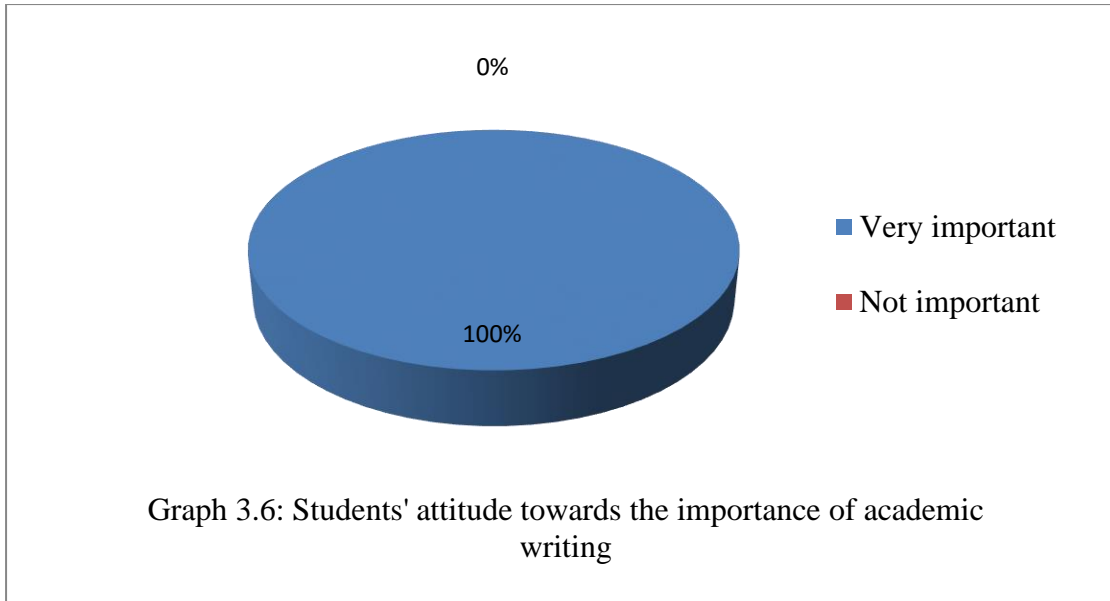
When the present researcher asked whether learing academic writing is important or not, all the participants answered by 'it is important', the result show that (100%) of the students agree that learning academic writing is crucial.

Question n°7: How would describe your writing level?

Graph 3.7: Students' writing levels
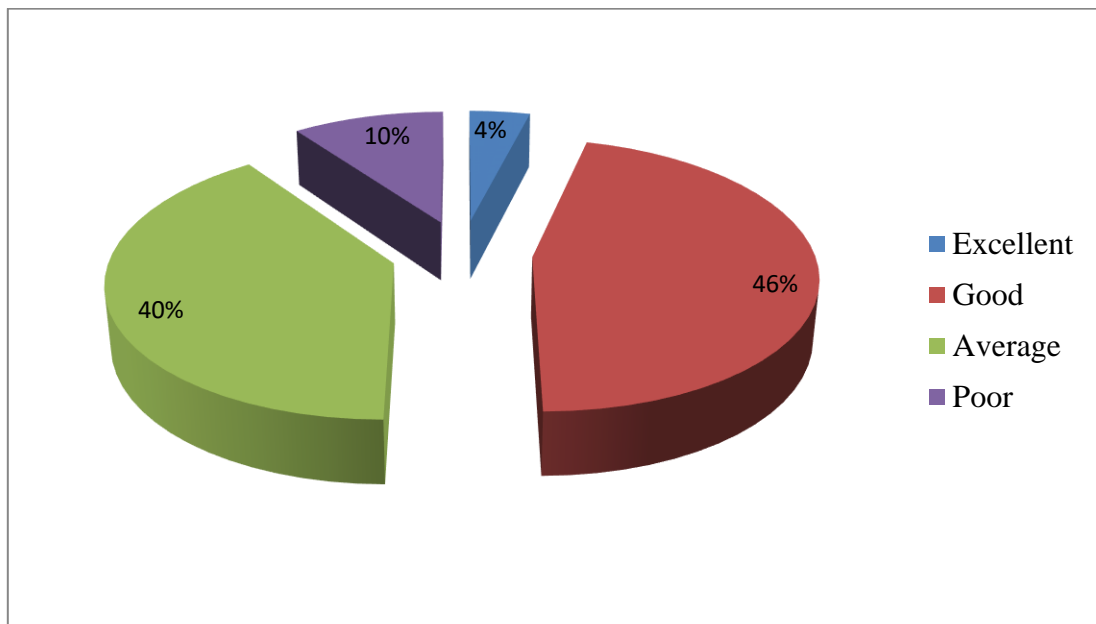
The answers on this question have varied from poor to excellent, whereas (10%) of the answers were 'poor', (40%) were 'average', (46%) were 'good', and only (4%) were 'excellent'. The results show us that the majority of students' writing levels are between average and good.

Question n°8: How often do you write in the classroom?

Graph 3.8: How Often Do Students Write In Classroom

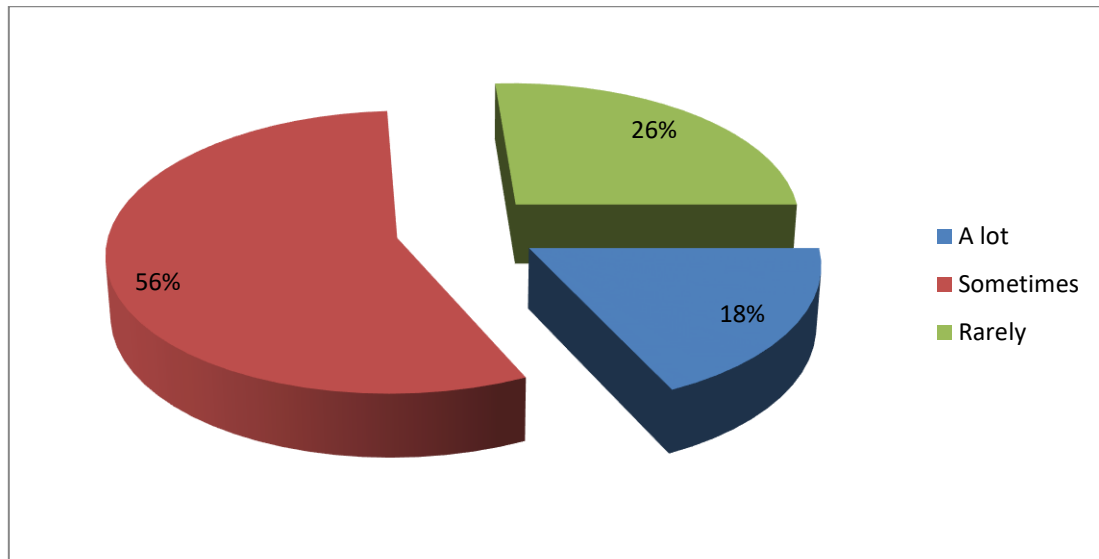According to the analysis of the data, (18%) of the participants said they write a lot in the classroom, while the majority said they write sometimes in the classroom which was (56%) of the participants, and (26%) said they rarely write in the classroom. The results revealed that the majority of students don't really write that much inside the classroom with the exception of a minority that writes a lot which represents only (18%).

Question n°9: What are the difficulties you face most while writing?
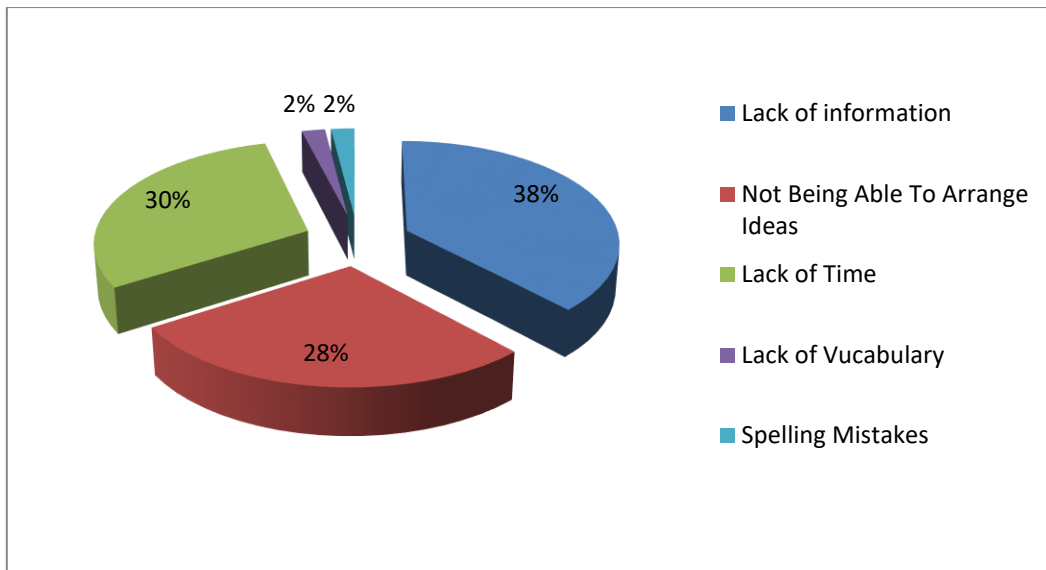
Graph 3.9: The Difficulties Students Face When Writing

The findings concerning this question show that 38% of participants often have a lack of information about the subject, while 28% said they have a problem arranging their ideas when writing, 30% said they suffer with the lack of time, and only a minority of 4% said they lack vocabulary and/or commit some spelling mistakes. The results above show that the majority of participants' answers were divided into three which are the lack of information, not being able to arrange ideas and lack of time which means that these are the most dominant problems that the students face when writing.

Question n°10: What are the types of errors you commit most while writing? (Multiple choices were allowed)
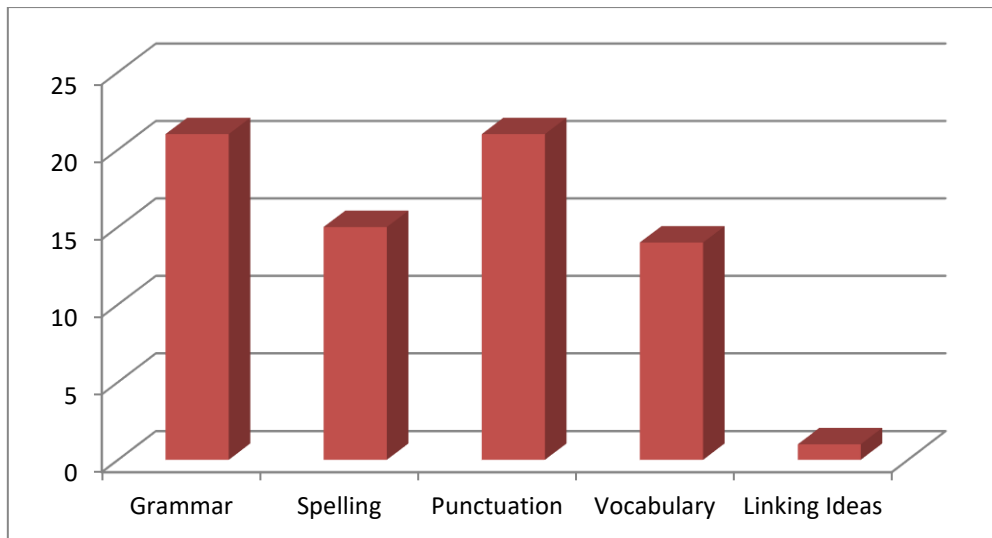
Graph 3.10: Writing Errors Committed by Students

In this question, (42%) of answers were into grammar errors commitment, while spelling mistakes were about (30%), punctuation errors were (42%) of the answers, (28%) of answers goes to vocabulary, with (2%) goes to an additional answer mentioned by 1 participant which is linking ideas together problems. The results revealed that most of the students have a hard time with grammar and punctuation in the first place, but they also commit some spelling and vocabulary mistakes from time to time.

3.4.3.3. SECTION THREE: Students and Virtual Interactions

Question n°11: Do you own a smartphone?

graph 3.11: Students owning phones
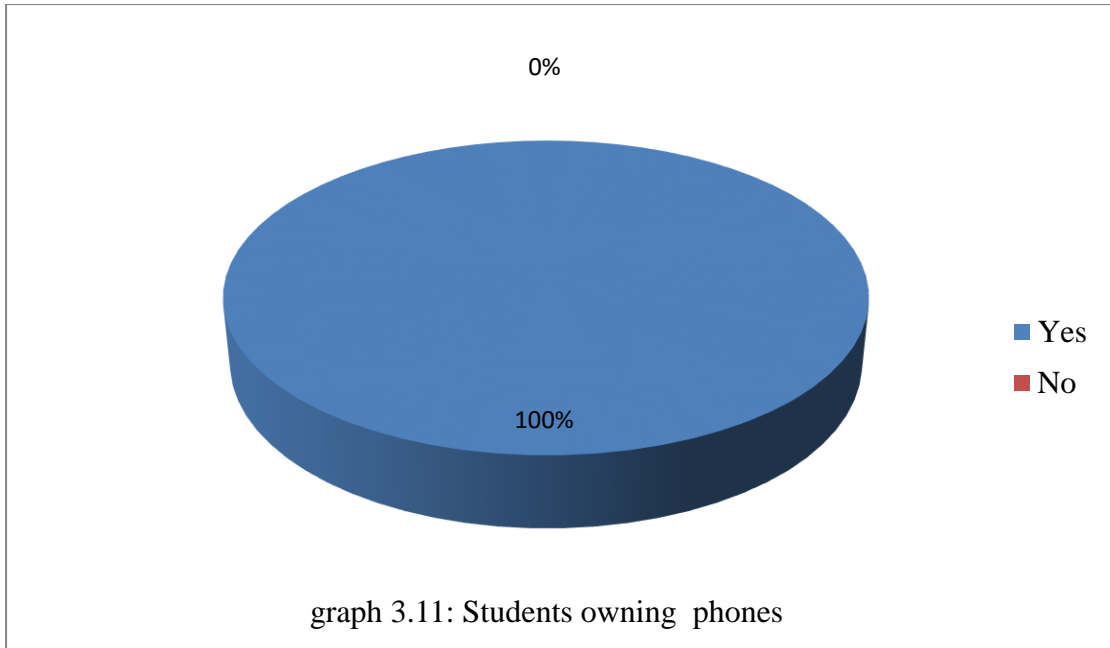
When asked, (100%) of the participants answered by yes, which obviously means that the smartphone is a very important element of the students' daily life

Question n°12: Do you own a PC?
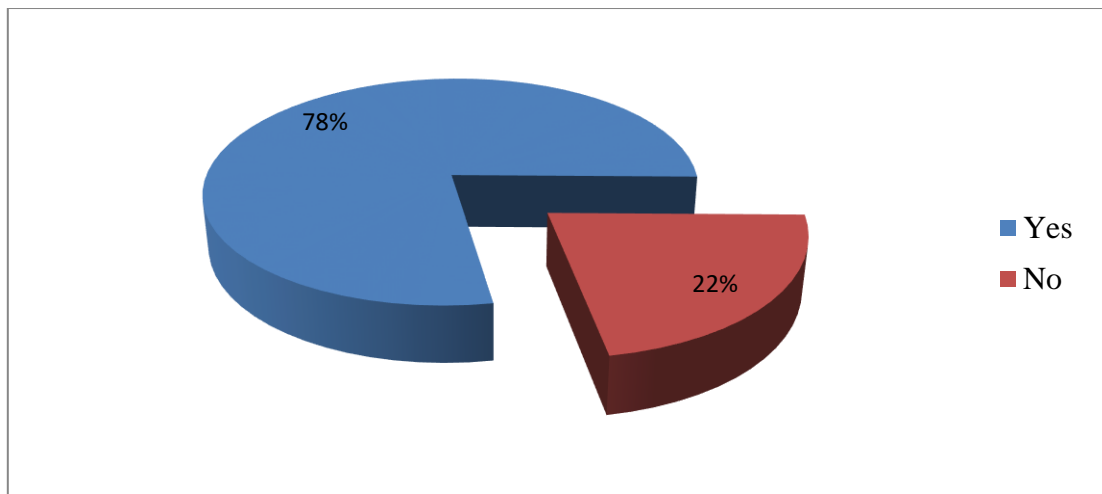
Graph 3.12:Students Who Own a PC

According to the findings, (78%) of participants said they do own a PC, and the remaining (22%) said that they don't. Unlike the smartphone, the results of this question revealed that the PC is not as common. This means either some students don't use it, or they're not able to have one.

Question n°13: How often do you use your smartphone and PC?
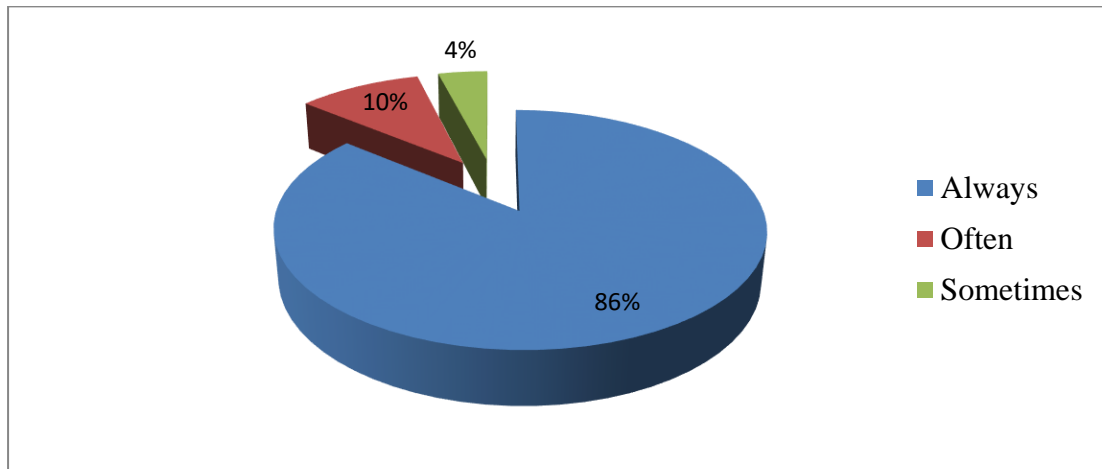
Graph 3.13: How Often Do Students Use Their Smartphone and PC's?

The Statistics of this question show that the vast majority of (86%) of the participants use their Smartphones and PC's always, (10%) of the participants said they use them less frequently, while (4%) said they use them rarely. Although the results have varied, the majority of students seem to always use their smartphones and PC's, which means that it is a daily habit and a part of their daily life.

Question n°14: What do you use them for? (Multiple answers were allowed)
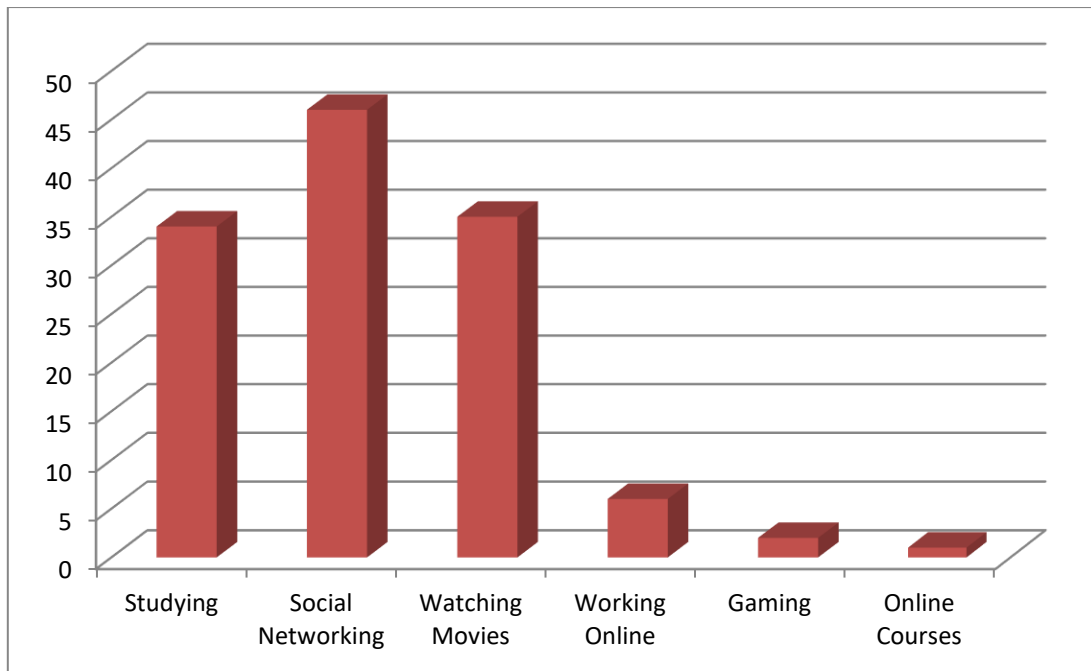
Graph 3.14: The Uses of Students' Smartphones and PC's

Answers reveal that studying, social networking, and watching movies and videos are the most dominant things that the students use their smartphones and PC's for, few other answers were into working online, and some participants mentioned some additional uses including gaming and online courses

Question n°15: Do you have an e-mail?
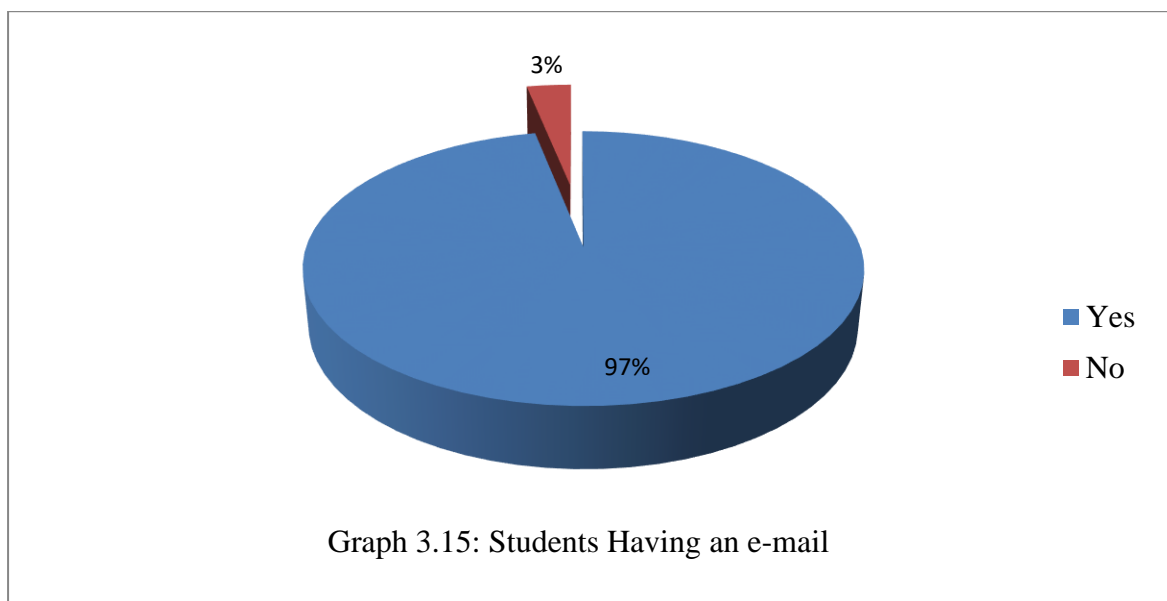
Graph 3.15: Students Having an e-mail

The results show that the vast majority of the participants representing 98% have eMails which mean that it is very important to them.

Question n°16: How often do you use it?
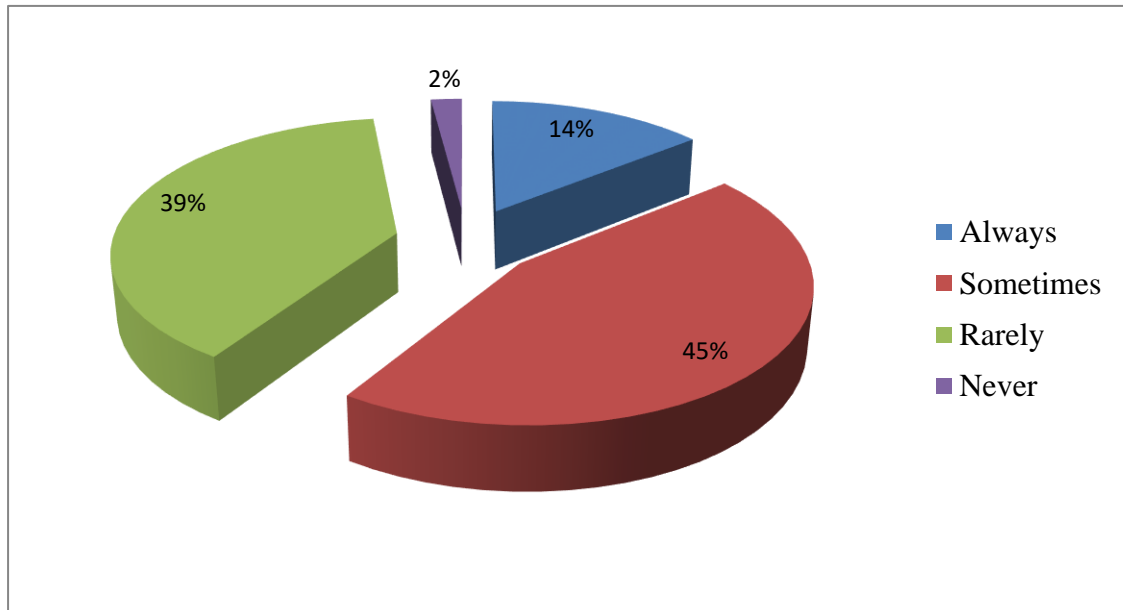
Graph 3.16: How Often Students Use their eMail

(14%) of the participants said they always use their eMail, while(44%) said they use it sometimes, (38%) said they rarely use their eMail, and (4%) said they never use their eMail (assuming they have one) as shown in the graph above.

Question n°17: Do you use it to write formal or informal letters or both?
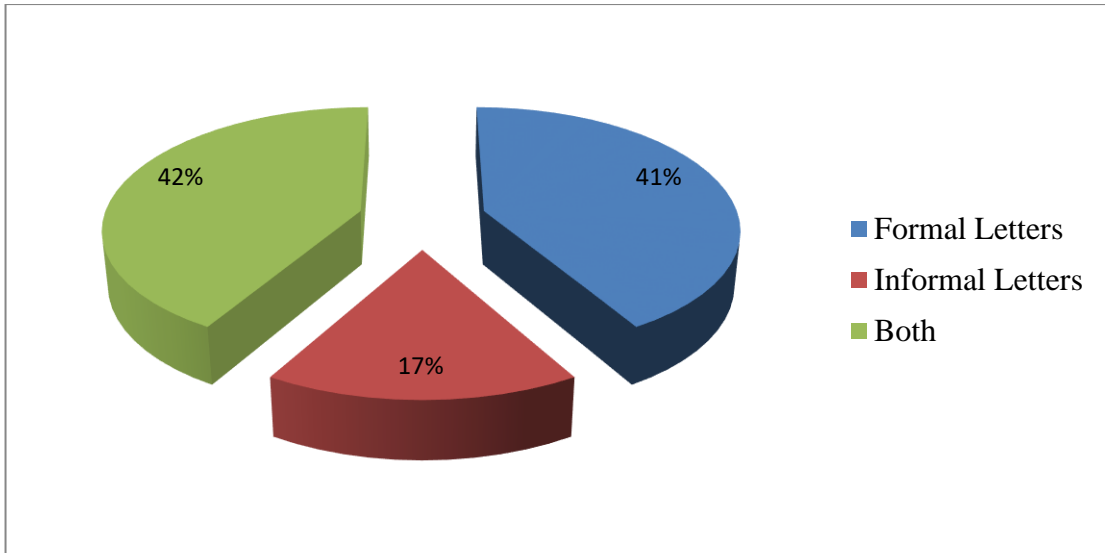
Graph 3.17: How Do Students Write Using Their eMails

Participants were asked about how they write using their eMails, we collected 48 answers in this question where (41%) of participants said they use their eMail to write formal letters, another (42%) said they use it to write both formal and informal letters, while a minority that represent (17%) said they use eMail to write informal letters.

Question n°18: What are the social networks you use most? (Multiple choices were allowed)
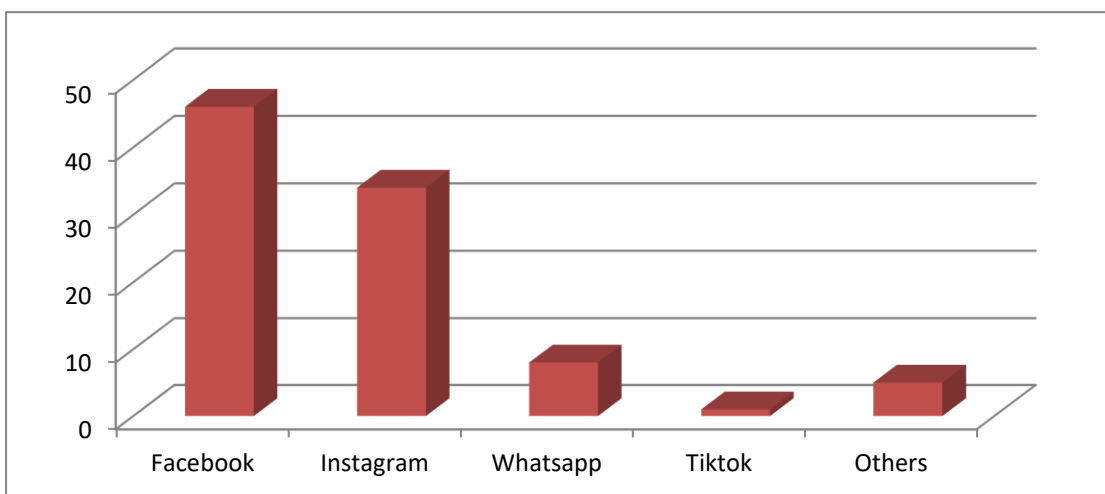
Graph 3.18: Social Networks That the Students Use Most

According to the analysis of data, the majority of students gave more than one choice concerning the social networks that they prefer and use most. Facebook has the majority of answers which is 46 and represents (92%) of answers, Instagram has 34 answers which represent (68%) of participants, Whatsapp has 8 answers which is (16%), and Tiktok which has one answer that represents (2%). Some participants mentioned some other 5 additional social networks that they use from time to time that are represented by a total (10%) as shown in the graph above.

Question n°19: How often do you use those social networks?

Graph 3.19: Students' frequency of using social networks
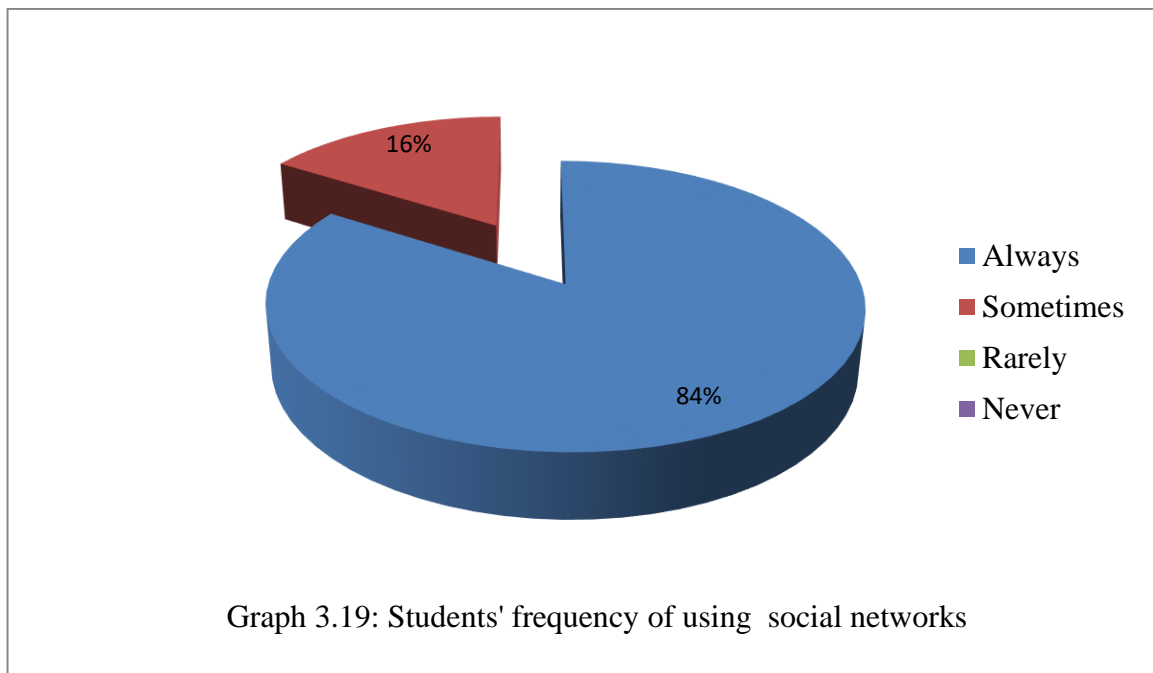
The graph above clearly shows that all the participants use social networks without any exceptions. The striking majority of the participants (84%), representing 42 students, do use social networks always. Whereas, (16%), i.e., eight students declare that they use them only sometimes.

Question n°20: What type of language do you use most on social networks?

Graph 3.20: Students' type of used language on social networks
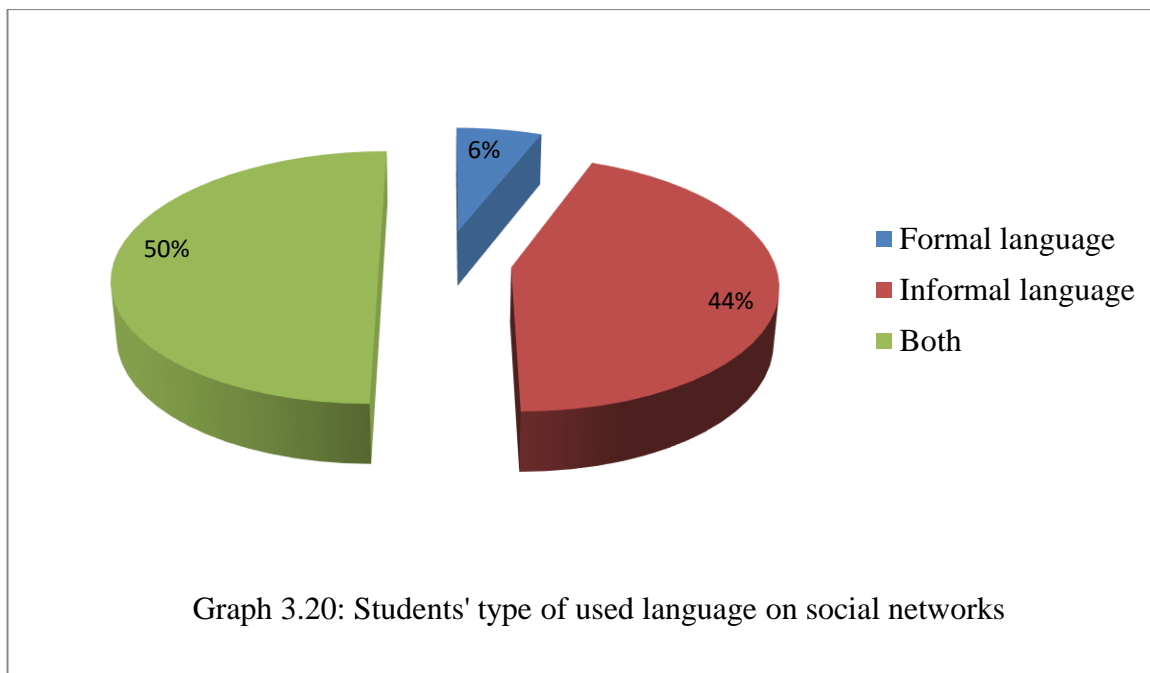
The results obtained from the graph above shows that half of the subjects (50%), representing 25 students, tend to use both formal and informal language on their social networks. (44%), i.e., 22 students, declare to only use informal language. Only a (06%) of the subjects tend to use formal language. These results clearly demonstrate that the students have a more tendency towards the use of informal language than the formal one on their social networks.

 Question n°21: Do you respect formal language rules while writing on social networks?
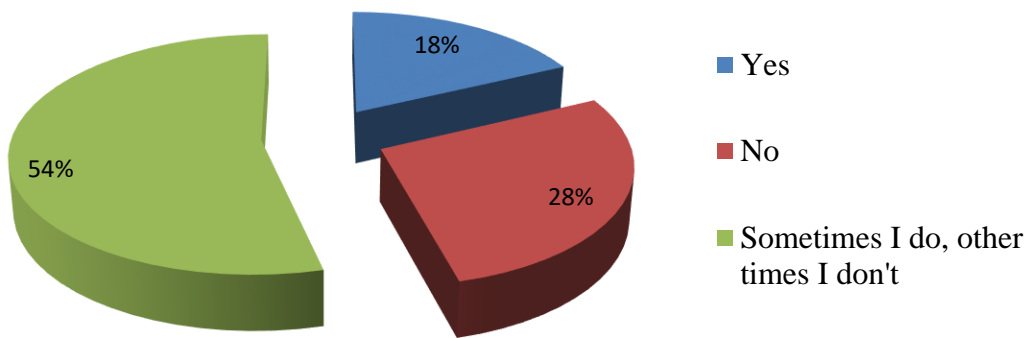
Graph 3.21: Students' tendency to respect formal language rules

A quick glance at the table above shows that (58%) the students have a tendency to respect the rules sometimes. Followed by (28%), representing 24 students who clearly admitted to never respect the rules. The remaining nine students opted for respecting the rules on their social networks.

Question n°22: What are the rules you violate most while writing on social networks?
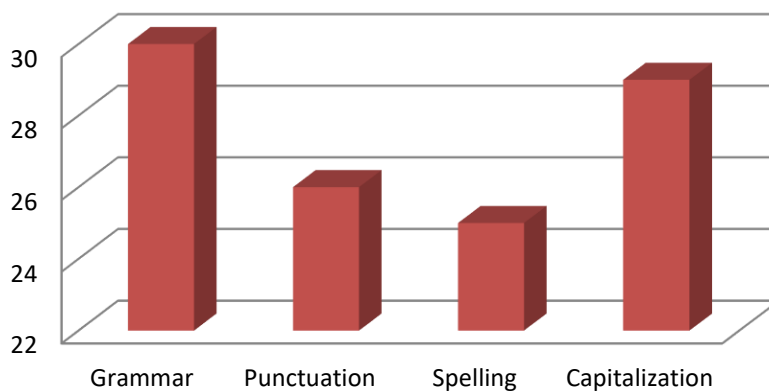
Graph 3.22: Students' most violated writing rules

The aim of the question above is to investigate the most violated writing rules the students tend to commit on their social networks. The results shown on the graph demonstrate that, the participants ticked the violation of "Grammar" thirty times followed by "Capitalization" with an almost identical number that is 29 times. Then, "Punctuation" and "Spelling" ticked 26 and 25 times at a row. Note in mind that two students added that they use slangs a lot.

Question n°23: What are the most informal writing habits you use most on your social networks?

Graph 3.23: Students' most used informal writing habits
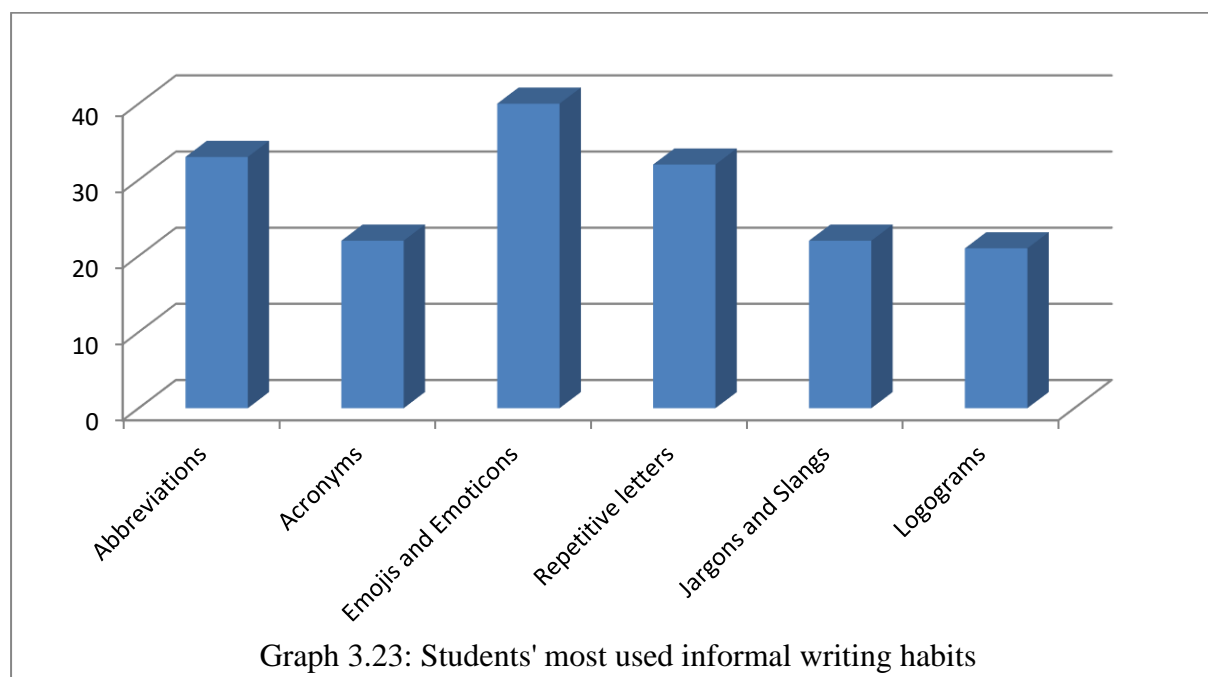
The graph clearly shows that the subjects tend to use the aspect "Emojis and Emoticons" more than the others for it was ticked 40 times. Followed by "Abbreviations and Repetitive letters" that got 33 and 32 ticks at a row. Then finally the rest of the aspects "Acronyms, Logograms, Jargons and slangs" got approximately

the same number of ticks (between 21 and 22 ticks). These results indicate that the subjects do use every single aspect of informal writing habits on their social networks.

Question n°24: Do you think that your writings on social networks have an impact on your academic writing?

Graph 3.24: Opinion about the effect of social networks writings over academic writing
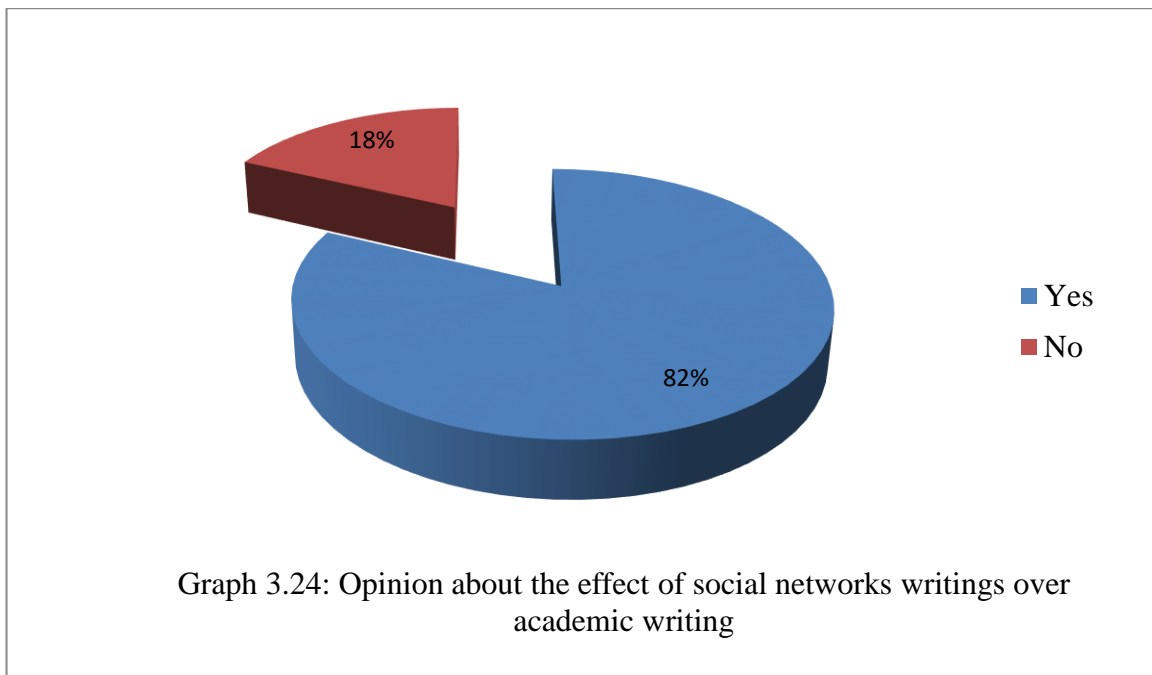
A quick glance at the table above shows that the majority of the participants (80%), representing 41 students, do believe that their writings on social media have a certain effect over their academic writing. Whereas the left (18%) of the participants don't think that it affects their academic writing.

Question n°25: If yes, is it a negative or positive effect?
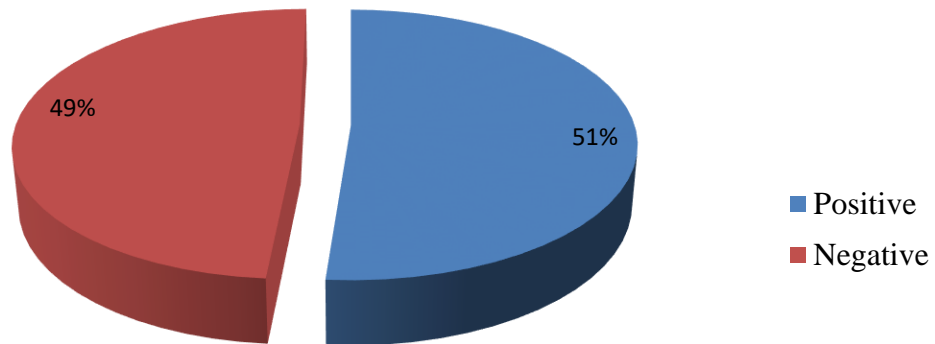
Graph 3.25: Positive and Negative effect of social networks on writings

The results shown in the table clearly demonstrate that the two choices have an almost identical number of ticks, 21 and 20 ticks for "Positive effect" and "Negative effect" at a row.

Question n°26: Do you use any of your informal writing habits in your academic writing?
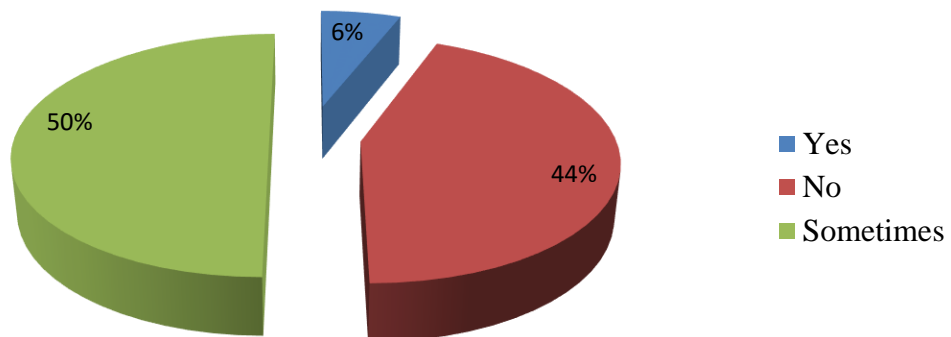
Graph 3.26: Students' usage of informal writing habits

The results show that half of the subjects (50%), representing 25 students, do use informal writing habits every now and then in their academic writing. Twenty two students admitted to have never used these informal writing habits, whereas (06%) of the subjects, i.e., 3 students, admitted that they tend to use them.

Question n°27: Do you think that the use of informal language in your academic writing is due to the overuse of social networks?

Graph 3.27: The relation between social networks and the usage of informal language in academic writing
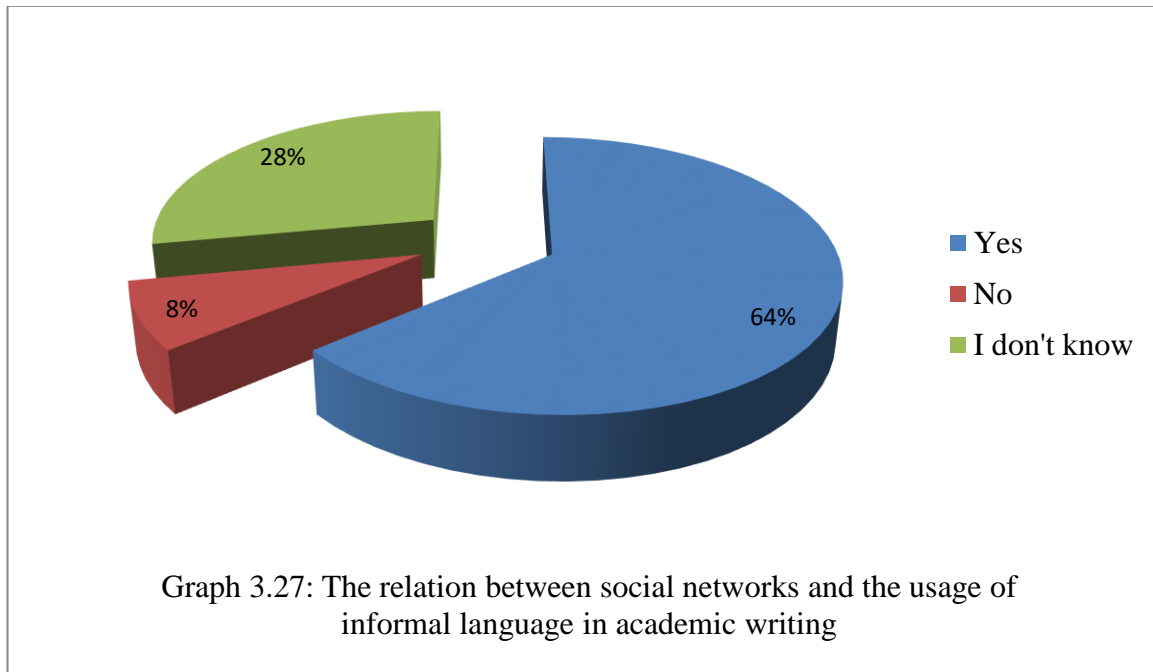
The results obtained show that (64%) of the participants, representing 32 students, do believe that the use of informal language in their academic writings is due to the overuse of social networks. (08%) of the subjects argued the opposite stating that they don't see any relation, whereas (28%) chose to be neutral by stating that they don't know.

3.5. The Teachers' Interview

In order to gather and analyze the needed data to answer our thesis questions, we opted to use a qualitative research tool that is the interview. The interview was conducted with (10) teachers who teach at Mila University in the department of Foreign Languages.

3.5.1 Description of the Teachers' Interview

The teachers' interview at hands consists of eleven (11) questions divided into two sections. The first section covers the teachers' background information with two questions; how long they have been teaching at Mila University and how often do they use paragraph and essay questions in their exams. The second section consists of nine (09) questions that are mostly open-ended with the exception of one being a multiple-choice question. The first question addresses what the teachers care about most while they correct their students' exam papers. The second and third ones seek to know whether or not Third Year EFL Learners at the University of Mila transfer some of their internet writing practices to their academic writings, and the frequency of its occurring. The fourth question sheds light on what are the most internet writing practices found in their students' academic writings. The fifth question uncovers the teachers' opinions about why their students commit such errors. The sixth question mainly deals with teachers' opinions about how bad internet writing practices affect students' academic writing. The last three questions focus on how do teachers correct their students' errors, how they address this issue with the students and last but not least the teachers' suggested solutions to reduce this phenomenon.

3.5.2. Administration of the Teachers' Interview

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 the interview was done online. The interviewees were asked the same questions, and it took approximately two weeks to gather the needed answers.

3.5.3. Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

3.5.3.1. SECTION ONE: Background Information

Question n°1: How long have you been teaching at the University of Mila?

Graph 3.28: Teachers's experience in teaching at Mila University
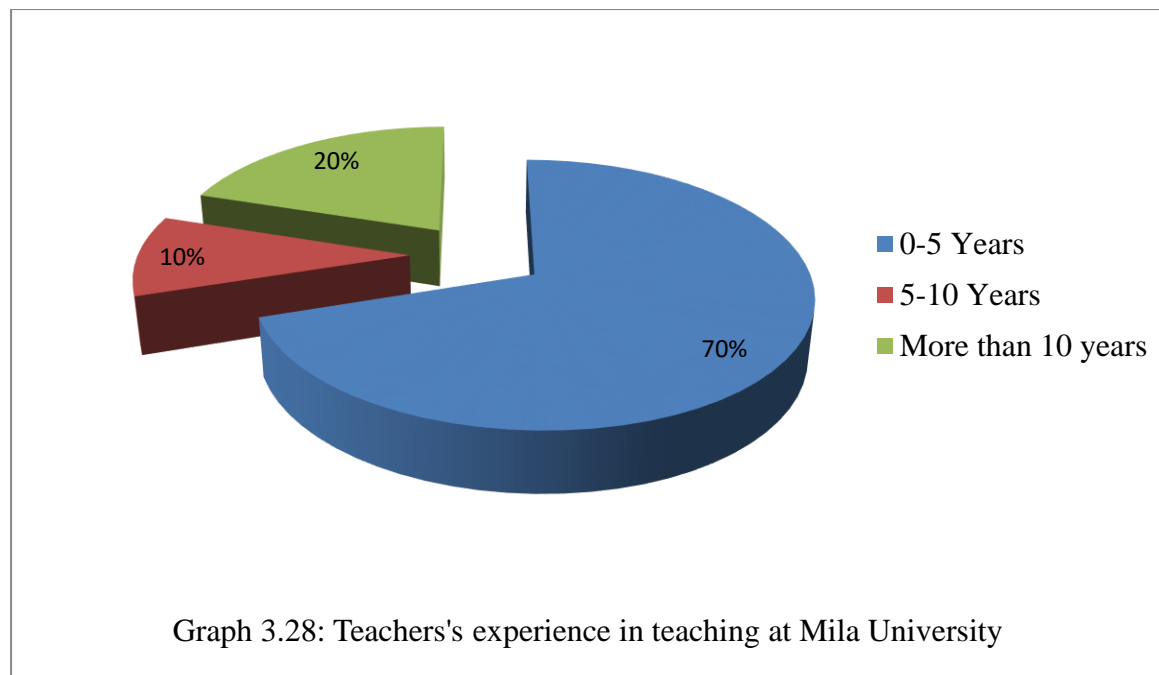
The results demonstrated in the graph show that a huge proportion of the interviewees, i.e., (70%), have an experience of teaching at Mila University for approximately 5 years, (10%) of the participants declared to have an experience of 5 to 10 years, whereas the rest (20%) of the subjects claimed to have taught more than 10 years.

Question n°2: How often do you use paragraph and essay questions in your exams?

Graph 3.29: Teachers' tendency to use essay and paragpah questions
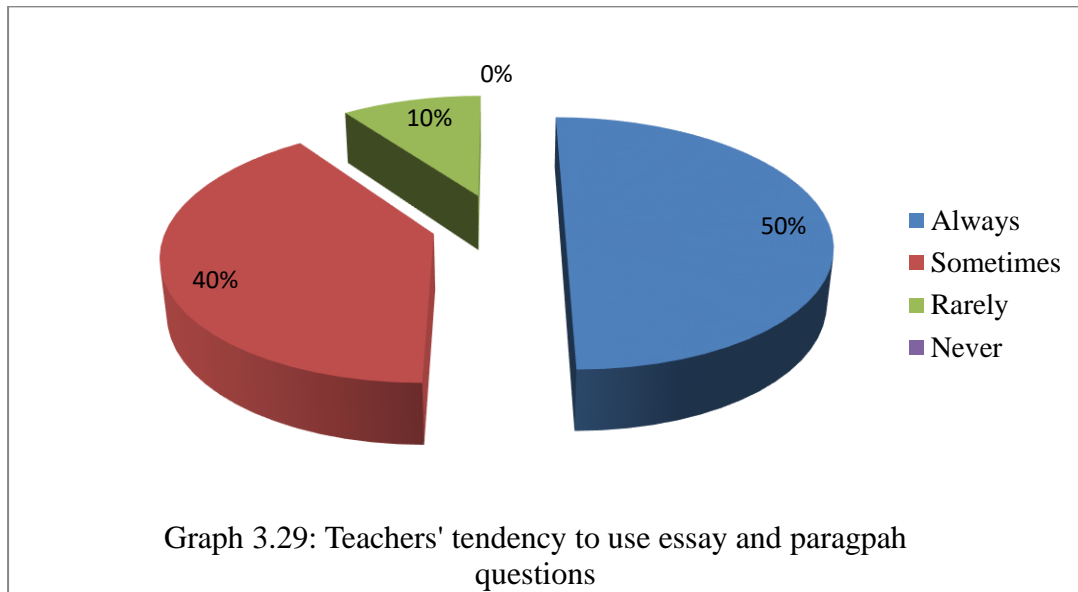
A quick glance at the graph above shows that half of the participants declared that they always use essay and paragraph questions in their exams. (40%) of the subjects, representing 4 teachers, stated that they use them sometimes, whereas only (10%) claimed to use them rarely.

3.5.3.2. SECTION TWO: Students' virtual interactions and their academic writing

Question n°3: What do you care about most (the content or the respect of grammar rules and correct use of vocabulary) when you correct your students' exam papers?

Graph 3.30: Teachers' main focus while correcting students'
academic writing
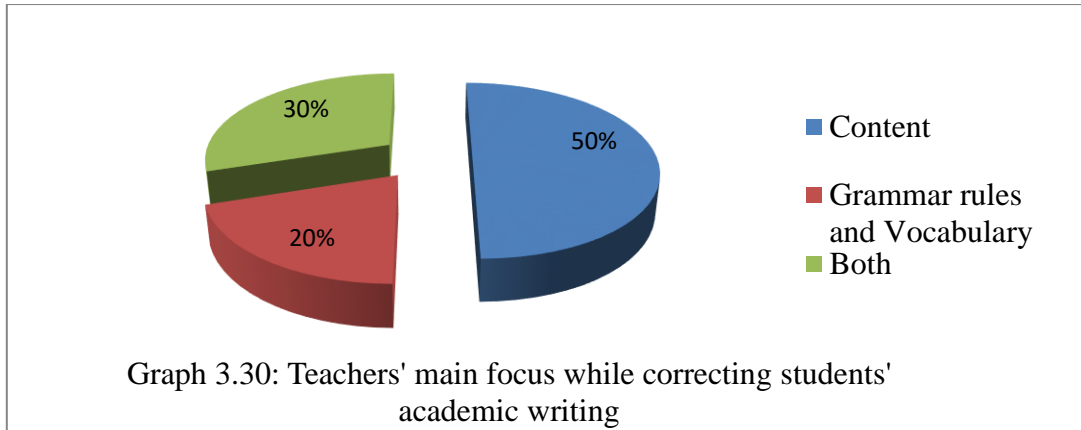
The results obtained show that (50%) of the subjects, representing 05 teachers, argued that they only care about Content, whereas (20%), i.e., 02 teachers, admitted to only care about the correct use of Grammar and Vocabulary. The remaining (30%) of the subjects, i.e., 03 teachers, declared to take into consideration both choices.

Question n°4: Do Third Year EFL Learners at the University of Mila transfer some of their internet writing practices to their academic writings?

Graph 3.31: Students' tendency to transfer internet writing practices
to their academic writings
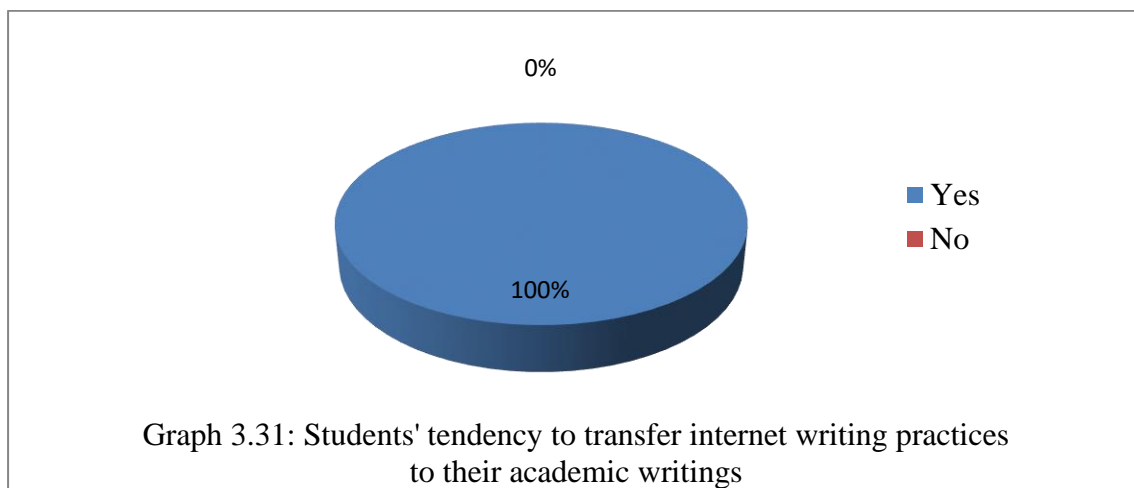
The graph clearly demonstrates that all the teachers have agreed that Third Year English students at the Mila University do transfer some of their internet writing practices to their academic writing.

Question n°5: If so, how often does that happen?

Graph 3.32: How often students use internet writing practices in their academic writing
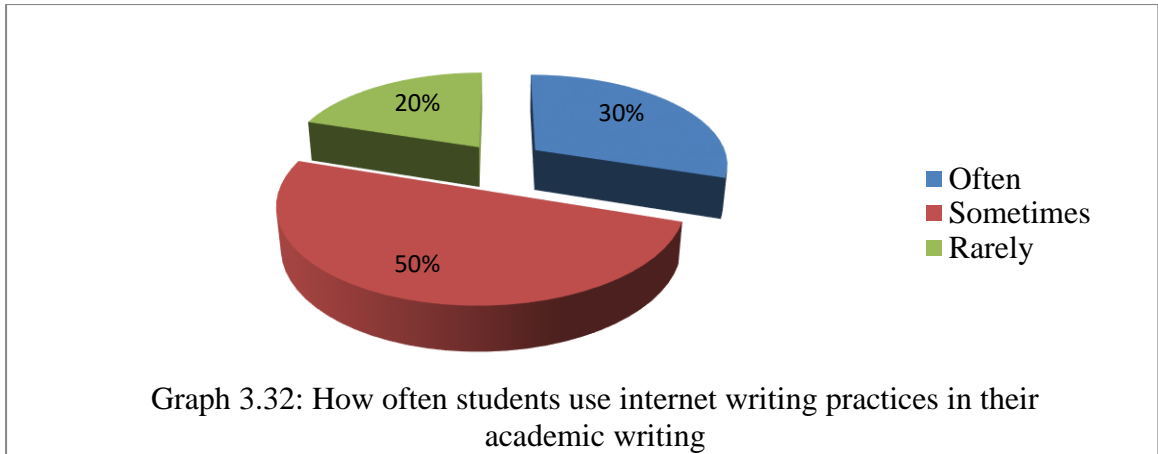
The results obtained show that (50%) of the subjects, representing 05 teachers, believe that the students' usage of internet writing practices in their academic writing happens only sometimes. (30%) of the subjects, i.e., 03 teachers, claim that the students do use those internet writing practices often, whereas only (20%) admit that the students only use them rarely.

Question n°6: What are the most internet writing practices found in your students' academic writings?

Graph 3.33: Common internet writing practices found in students' academic writing
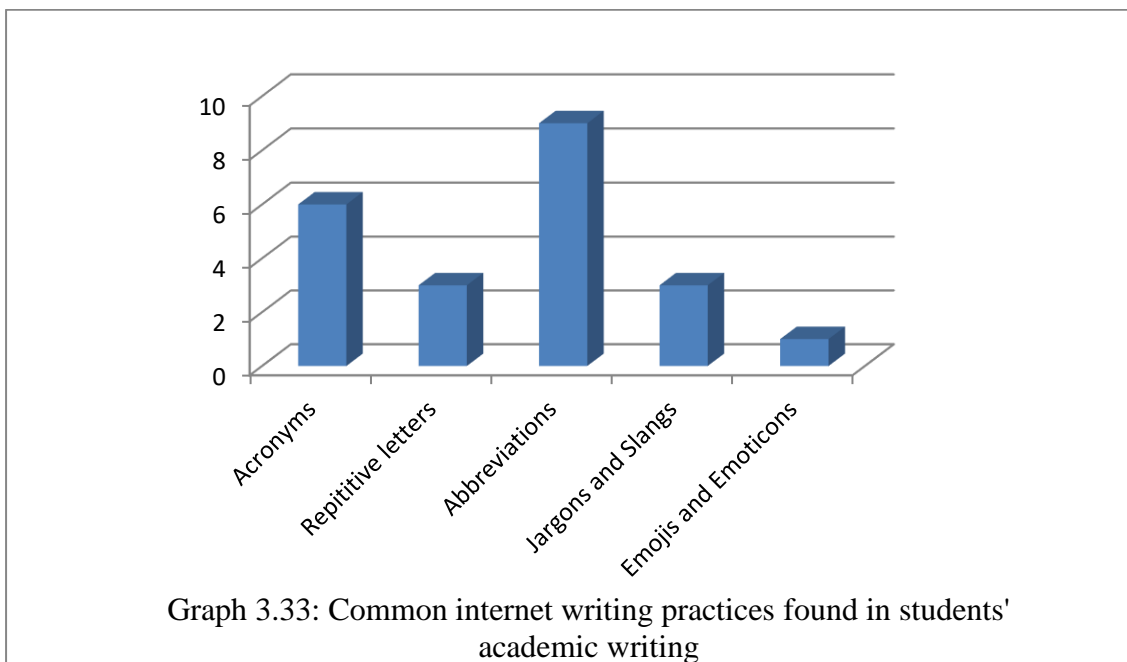
The graph above clearly shows that the subjects ticked the "Abbreviation" option 09 times followed by the "Acronyms" option ticked 06 times. Then both "Repetitive letters" and "Jargons and Acronyms" shared the same numbers of ticks being it 3 ticks. Last, the "Emojis and Emoticons" option only ticked 01 time. These results mean that the students tend to use "Abbreviations" and "Acronyms" in their academic writing more than any other norm of Cyber Language.

Question n°7: Do you think that students commit such errors due to stress and lack of time in exams, or due to the excessive use of ''Cyber Language'' in their virtual interactions?

Graph 3.34: Teachers' opinion about the reasons behind committing such errors
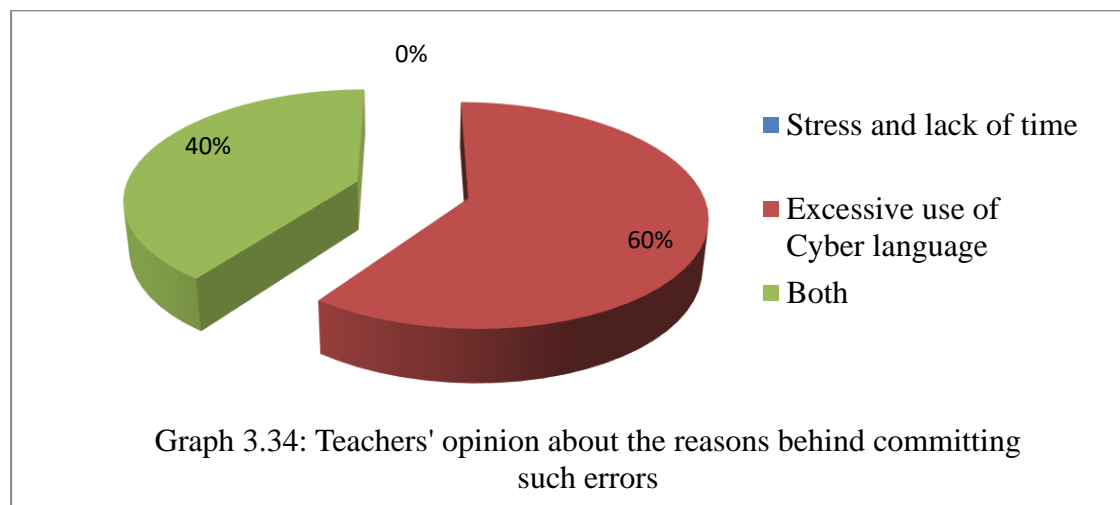
The graph above shows that (60%) of the subjects believe that the reason behind such errors is the excessive use of Cyber Language, whereas the rest (40%) of the participants claim that both "stress and lack of time" and "excessive use of Cyber Language" are the reasons.

Question n°8: How bad do these internet writing practices affect students' academic writing?

In response to this question, all the subjects have agreed that internet writing practices do affect students' academic writing badly. One of the subjects argued by saying" Indeed it is bad for their academic writing. For instance, when they use abbreviations frequently, they may forget the correct spelling of those words. Also, there is a chance of misunderstanding by the reader when internet writings." Another one claimed that "Cyber Language does not respect the conventional codes of academic writing and spelling, so it badly affects academic writing." One last example of what the subjects said is "It is certainly not a positive effect. I think it results in poor writing styles."

Question n°9: How do you correct these mistakes?

In response to this item, all the subjects claimed that they do correct these mistakes using different techniques. For instance, one subject said "I correct them by insisting on using the correct words and expressions in their writing. In addition to that, I highlight those practices and tell them that they are not acceptable in academic writing." Another participant admitted to correct those mistakes by saying "I correct the word by giving them its equivalent in academic English." One last example of what the subjects said is "I try to give comments and make sure to draw my students' attention to it." All in all, most participants have declared that they use the technique of giving the right formal form of the wrong words used by the students.

Question n°10: How do you address this issue with your students?

The subjects gave a variation of answers to this question at hand. Each teacher has his own way of dealing with this matter; the first one stated "I give them some pieces of advice at the beginning of the academic year. One of them is to never write the way you address your friends." The second one said "Whenever my students have a writing task, I try to remind them to never use any of their internet language writing forms in academic writings. Also state that those writing behaviors are totally unacceptable." The third one also claimed that he discusses it with his students and informs them how bad its overuse can decrease their writing value. The fourth said, "I explain to them the requirements and rules of academic writing and how they differ from colloquial use of the language in virtual spaces." The last example given by the fifth one said "In any writing session, I make sure to highlight the difference between formal and informal English and how can we use them appropriately." All the suggestions given by the teachers are considered to be valid and good ways to address the issue with the students.

Question n°11: What are your suggestions to reduce this phenomenon?

Teachers gave a variation of good suggestions to reduce this phenomenon, however, they mostly agree on one suggestion which is advising the students to read more books. Another suggestion was proposed by a teacher saying "raising the awareness about the horrible effects that this phenomenon can have over the students' academic writing. I also try to flip this situation by encouraging my students to use formal language more in their virtual interactions", two other teachers also supported this last suggestion saying "I advise learners to use formal language in their virtual interactions" and "correct language use should be transferred to social media and not

the opposite. This way, students can develop their language inside and outside the classroom."

3.6. Discussion and Interpretation of the Main Findings

The results obtained from both analyzing the students' questionnaire and teachers interview revealed many facts about the students' virtual interactions and their effects on academic writing. After analyzing the students' questionnaire we noticed that Third Year English Students tend to use internet writing practices both in their academic writings and virtual interactions, although this usage differs in frequency from a student to another. The most used internet writing practices by the students in their academic writings are: emojis, abbreviations, acronyms and repetitive letters. The analysis the the teachers' interview clearly confirmed what the analysis of the students' questionnaire concluded with. It revealed that students' academic pieces of writings do contain some internet writing practices. The most internet writing practices found by the teachers are: abbreviations, acronyms and repetitive letters.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations that faced the accomplishment of this study are the outbreak of COVID-19 and failing to get vivid examples of the students' pieces of academic writings. The first affected us in the way of not being able to travel to further libraries, but it was slightly overcome through the use of online ones. The second was overcome through the use of the teachers' interview.

3.8. Pedagogical recommendations

3.8.1. Recommendations for the Teachers

- Teachers should draw their students' attention to such practices in order to avoid them.

- Teachers should advise their students to read more books.

- Teachers should encourage their students to use formal language in social networks too.

- Teachers should raise students' awareness about how badly these writing practices can decrease their writing level.

- Teachers should develop their students' academic writing from an early age.

3.8.2 Recommendations for the Students

- Students should differentiate between formal language and colloquial language that they use with their friends.

- Students should carry out formal writing habits to use in their virtual interactions.

- Students should read more books and be exposed to more formal writing.

- Students should pay attention more to correct sentence structure.

- Students should practice how to write essays more often outside the classroom.

- Students should use peer feedback in order to enhance their academic writing.

3.9. Conclusion

This last chapter is mainly devoted to the field of our study. It tried to inspect the effect of virtual interactions of Third Year English Students at Mila University on

their academic writing by using both a questionnaire and an interview. The results obtained through the analysis truly show that the students tend to use internet writing practices in their academic writings. That is said, teachers should raise awareness about this phenomenon and its devastating negative impacts on students' academic writing.

General Conclusion

The present dissertation attempted to investigate Third Year English students' virtual interactions and their effect on academic writing at Mila University. It attempts to know whether or not Third Year English Students at Mila University use common internet writing practices in both their virtual interactions and academic writing, and if they do, how much of an effect these internet writing practices have on their academic writing. The aim behind conducting such a research is to draw the attention of both students and teachers about how students' virtual interactions, and the use of Cyber Language, can harm their academic writing. In the process of answering the questions posed by our dissertation, we opted to use both a questionnaire for the students and an interview for the teachers at The Foreign Languages Department, Mila University.

The dissertation at hand was divided into three chapters. On the one hand, the first and second chapters covered the theoretical part of the dissertation by shedding light on academic writing and students' virtual interaction, at a row. On the other hand, the third chapter covered the practical part of the dissertation by using both a questionnaire for the students and conducting an interview for the teachers to gather and analyze data at The Foreign Languages Department, Mila University.

The findings gathered by the research at hand did confirm that Third Year English Students at Mila University have a certain tendency to use some internet writing practices in academic writing which they carried from their virtual interactions. The results also demonstrate that the most used internet writing practices, as concluded from both the teachers' interview and the students' questionnaire, are abbreviations, repetitive letters and acronyms. It also revealed that those internet writing practices are causing a decrease in the students' level of academic writing.

In light of such findings, educational concerns are raised about this phenomenon. Both teachers and students should work together to decrease the effect of such a phenomenon on academic writing.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Learning English

Section Two: Students and Academic Writing

Section Three: Students and Virtual Interactions

Appendix B: The Teachers' Interview

Section One: Background Information

Section Two: Students' virtual interactions and Academic writing

Appendix A

The Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

The questionnaire at hands aims to collect data about the effect of the students' virtual interactions on their academic writings. We would be so grateful for your help to accomplish this research. Please, use a cross (×) to indicate your chosen answer in the appropriate box (you can choose more than one answer when necessary), and add your explanations whenever needed. Your answers will be kept completely anonymous and only used for the sake of this research purposes.

Section One: Learning English

1- Do you like English?

□   Yes

□   No

2- How long have you been studying English?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……...

3- What is your attitude towards learning English in general?

□   Negative

□   Positive

4- How often do you write?

- ☐ A lot

- ☐ Sometimes

- ☐ Rarely

- ☐ Never

5- Do you like writing tasks?

- ☐ Yes

- ☐ No

Section Two: Students and Academic Writing

6- Do you think that learning academic writing is:

- ☐ Very important

- ☐ Not important

7- How would you describe your writing level?

- ☐ Excellent

- ☐ Good

- ☐ Average

- ☐ Poor

8- How often do you write in the classroom?

- ☐ A lot

- ☐ Sometimes

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

9- What are the difficulties you face most while writing?

☐ Not having enough information about the subject

☐ Not being able to arrange your ideas

☐ Lack of time (especially in exams)

Others:…………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………….

10- What are the types of errors you commit most while writing?

☐ Grammar

☐ Spelling

☐ Punctuation

☐ Vocabulary

Others:…………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………..

Section Three: Students and Virtual Interactions

11- Do you own a smart phone?

☐ Yes

☐ No

12- Do you own a PC?

- ☐   Yes

- ☐   No

13- How often do you use your smart phone and PC?

- ☐   Always

- ☐   Often

- ☐   Sometimes

- ☐   Rarely

14- What do you use them for?

- ☐   Studying

- ☐   Social networks (Facebook, Instagram…)

- ☐   Watching movies and videos

- ☐   Working online

Others:……………………………………………………………………………

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15- Do you have an e-mail?

- ☐   Yes

- ☐   No

16- How often do you use it?

☐ Always

☐ Sometimes

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

17- Do you use it mostly to write:

☐ Formal letters

☐ Informal letters

☐ Both

18- What are the social networks you use most?

☐ Facebook

☐ Instagram

☐ Whatsapp

☐ Tiktok

Others:…………………………………………………………………………

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19- How often do you use those social networks?

☐ Always

☐ Sometimes

☐ Rarely

☐ Never

20- What type of language do you use most on social networks?

☐ Formal language

☐ Informal language

☐ Both

21- Do you respect the formal language rules while writing on social networks?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sometimes I do, other times I don't.

22- What are the rules you violate most while writing on social networks?

☐ Grammar

☐ Punctuation

☐ Spelling

☐ Capitalization

Others:……………………………………………………………………………………
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…………………………………………………………………………………………….

23- What are the most informal writing habits you use on your social networks?

☐ Abbreviations

☐ Acronyms (FYI : for your information)

☐ Emojis and Emoticons

☐ Repetitive letters (pleeeeeeeeeeeeease)

☐ Jargons and Slangs

☐ Logograms (&: and)

Others:……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
……………...

24- Do you think your writings on social networks have an impact on your academic writing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

25- If yes, is it a:

☐ Negative impact

☐ Positive impact

26- Do you use any of your informal writing habits in your academic writing?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Sometimes

27- Do you think that the use of informal language in your academic writing is due to the overuse of social networks?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

Appendix B

The Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers,

You are kindly requested to answer the following interview in order for us to complete our dissertation that deals with the students' virtual interactions and its effects over their academic writings. The interview aims to gather information about how often students transfer some internet writing practices to their academic writings, and to what extent do these practices harm their writings.

Section One: Background Information

Q1- How long have you been teaching at Mila University?

- ☐ 0 – 5 Years

- ☐ 5 – 10 Years

- ☐ More than 10 years

Q2- How often do you use paragraph and essay questions in your exams?

- ☐ Always

- ☐ Sometimes

- ☐ Rarely

- ☐ Never

Section Two: Students' virtual interactions and Academic writing

Q3- What do you care about most (the content or the respect of grammar rules and correct use of vocabulary) when you correct your students' exam papers?

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Q4- Do Third Year EFL Learners at the Mila University transfer some of their internet writing practices to their academic writings?

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Q5- If so, how often does that happen?

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Q6- What are the most internet writing practices found in your students' academic writings?

- ☐ Acronyms

- ☐ Repetitive letters

- ☐ Abbreviations

- ☐ Jargons and Slangs

- ☐ Emojis and Emoticons

Others:…………………………………………………………………………………………
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Q7- Do you think that students commit such errors due to stress and lack of time in exams, or due to the excessive use of ''Cyber Language'' in their virtual interactions?

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Q8- How bad do these internet writing practices affect students' academic writing?

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Q9- How do you correct these mistakes?

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Q10- How do you address this issue with your students?

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Q11- What are your suggestions to reduce this phenomenon?

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Thank you for your cooperation and precious time.

الملخص:

تتناول الدراسة التي بين أيدينا التفاعلات الافتراضية للطلاب وتأثيرها على الكتابة الأكاديمية. تسعى هته الدراسة أيضًا إلى معرفة ما مدى ميل طلاب السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة ميلة إلى إستخدام ممارسات الكتابة الشائعة عبر الإنترنت في تفاعلاتهم الافتراضية؟، هل يقومون بنقل هته الممارسات و إستعمالها في كتاباتهم الأكاديمية؟، إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، فما مدى تأثيرهته الممارسات على جودة كتاباتهم الأكاديمية؟ للإجابة على مثل هذه الأسئلة اخترنا استخدام كل من الاستبيان والمقابلة لجمع وتحليل البيانات المطلوبة. تم تقديم الإستبيان إلى خمسين (50) طالبا أما المقابلة فقد أجريت مع عشرة (10) مدرسين بقسم اللغات الأجنبية بجامعة ميلة. تؤكد نتائج البحث أن طلاب السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة ميلة يستخدمون ممارسات الكتابة الشائعة على الإنترنت في تفاعلاتهم الافتراضية وكتاباتهم الأكاديمية معا وتتسبب هته الممارسات في انخفاض جودة الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلاب. بحلول نهاية الدراسة تم اقتراح مجموعة من التوصيات التربوية للمساعدة في الحد من إنتشار هذه الظاهرة وتشجيع الطلاب على استخدام اللغة الرسمية أكثر في كلا من كتاباتهم الأكاديمية وتفاعلاتهم الافتراضية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التفاعلات الافتراضية للطلاب ، الكتابة الأكاديمية ، ممارسات الكتابة الشائعة عبر الإنترنت.

Résumé:

L'étude en cours traite principalement les interactions virtuelles des étudiants et leurs effets sur l'écriture académique. Il cherche à savoir: 1-est-ce que les étudiants d'anglais de troisième année de l'Université de Mila ont tendance à utiliser des pratiques d'écriture Internet courantes dans leurs interactions virtuelles? 2-portent-ils ces pratiques à leur rédaction académique? 3-si oui, quel effet ont-ils sur leur écriture académique? Afin de répondre à ces questions, nous avons choisi d'utiliser à la fois un questionnaire et une interview pour recueillir et analyser les données nécessaires. Le questionnaire des étudiants a été soumis à cinquante (50) sujets et l'interview a été menée avec dix (10) enseignants du Département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Mila. Les résultats de la recherche confirment que les étudiants de troisième année en anglais de l'Université de Mila utilisent des pratiques d'écriture Internet courantes à la fois dans leurs interactions virtuelles et leurs écrits académiques, et ces pratiques d'écriture diminuent la valeur d'écriture académique des étudiants. À la fin de l'étude, un ensemble de recommandations pédagogiques a été proposé pour aider à réduire la propagation de ce phénomène et encourager les étudiants à utiliser un langage plus formel à la fois dans leur rédaction académique et leurs interactions virtuelles.

Mots clés : les interactions virtuelles des étudiants, l'écriture académique, les pratiques d'écriture Internet courantes.