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**The Effects of E-learning during the Pandemic on Students’  
Writing Skill**  
**Case Study of Third Year University Students at Mila University  
Centre**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree in  
**Didactics of Foreign Languages**

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## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate the work to my parents who raised me to be honest and respectful. I thank them for their support and for everything they have done for me.*

*To my brothers Lokman, Yakin, and my little sister Aridj whom I wish all the best and success in their lives.*

*My deep appreciation goes to my uncle Ramzi and my aunt Abir for their support, encouragement, and words of advice from the beginning until the last moment of completing this work.*

*To my partner Boutheyna for being so cooperative and supportive.*

*To myself for being patient.*

***Saber Boulhissa***

## **Dedication**

*This work is heartedly dedicated to my beloved and inspiring parents who switched candles of hope around me and devoted their lives to see me as a successful person, who showered me with their love, prayers, and long-lasting support whether morally, spiritually, emotionally, and financially.*

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*To all those I forgot to mention but always cheered me up*

*And, lastly, to old memories,*

*To ups and downs,*

*To lessons and blessings*

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 onset is one of the key motives for shifting from face-to-face instruction to the adoption of electronic learning in Algeria, particularly in Mila University Center as a measurement to save formal education. This current research paper attempts to investigate the effect of e-learning during the COVID-19 timeframe on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' writing skills, as well as their awareness of the concept in general and its implementation. As a result, the hypothesis embraced states that the application of online learning would have a negative effect on EFL students' writing proficiency. The research is conducted through employing questionnaires to analyze the students' and teachers' perceptions on the issue. The first survey was submitted to 80 students from the English department of Abd El Hafid Boussouf Mila University Center, out of a total population of 211. On the other hand, the second survey was administered to 10 teachers of written expression module who belong to the same department. The findings of the students' questionnaire revealed that e-learning has a negative effect on their writing performance due to shortage practice chances, the absence of guidance, as well as their poor awareness about the method, lack of technological training and appropriate materials. Additionally, the obtained data from the teachers' survey display that the adoption of e-learning has decreased the learners' writing performance because of lack of motivation and interest.

**Key words:** E-learning, writing skills, effects, COVID-19, EFL learners.

## List of Abbreviations

**CD:** Compact Disc

**COVID-19:** Corona Virus Disease 2019

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**E-learning:** Electronic Learning

**GM:** Google Meet

**Moodle:** Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

**MUC:** Mila University Center

**PDF:** Portable Document Format

**PLATO:** Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations

**Q:** Question

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**WHO:** World Health Organization

**%:** Percentage

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## **Appendices**

**ملخص (Arabic Summary)**

**Résumé (French Summary)**

## General Introduction

This current research attempts to investigate how e-learning during the pandemic affects the students' writing skills in learning EFL.

The world has witnessed drastic changes recently due to what is called COVID-19. The Corona virus pandemic has spread all over the world resulting in: high fatality rates, a global economic downturn, and educational system flaws. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, governments were advised to adopt harsh regulations including: social isolation, quarantining, and most importantly, the usage of masks. These guidelines have been recommended to reduce the possibility of a virus being transmitted through people.

The pandemic has led to significant transformations on several levels, particularly, education. In this context, Li and Lalani (2020), stated that while different nations have varied levels of COVID-19 infection, the virus has caused schools shut down in over 186 countries around the world, affecting a high number of students with over than 1,2 billion. As an attempt to reduce the intensity of the disease, the Algerian government opted for closing all schools for the sake of health preservation. E-learning was among the measurements adopted by the government to replace traditional learning. The former, also known as online learning, distance learning, and remote learning, gained popularity mostly following the widespread adoption of the internet and the web, which peaked with the outbreak of Corona virus.

The implementation of e-learning in education brought the concept of facilitating the learning process. This type of learning points out at encouraging learners to study without attending schools since it is done anytime and anywhere. Moreover, EFL learners should be proficient in all four abilities while learning a foreign language. Thus, students are expected to be able to produce academic papers, hence writing is thought to be important. Writing is

the key criterion for evaluating one's learning and intellect. It also improves the ability to communicate and think critically, as well as the ability to clarify and develop ideas to others and ourselves (Dwivedi, 2018).

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

E-learning is one of the most recent innovations in the field of education. It is based on the use of many technologies, such as the internet and other electronic gadgets. Previously, the emphasis was primarily on traditional education until the emergence of COVID-19, which resulted in multiple interruptions. Thus, e-learning is widely regarded as the only way to save formal education.

Writing is a significant ability to have when studying a foreign language, not only for academic purposes, but also for others. Mila EFL students seem to have a good speaking skill, but when it comes to writing, a lot of them struggle to produce well-written essays. That is to say, mastering a language requires more than just speaking. Furthermore, lack of practice and interest are two factors that contribute to learners' inability to produce such a skill, as more practice leads to better writing. Recently, technology has achieved a pinnacle of advancement, particularly with the outbreak of Corona virus. Thus, it is crucial to look into the impact of electronic learning on third-year students' writing performance during this timeframe.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

The researchers of this study used a questionnaire for third-year students at Mila University mainly to investigate how e-learning during the pandemic affects their writing skills. This study sheds light on the students' awareness towards using e-learning during this timeframe. Other aims include:

- To investigate the students' writing efficiency after engaging in online learning.

- To explore the learners' reactions towards using e-learning, and if they get a positive or a negative feedback on their writing skills.

### **3. Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Are the learners aware of using online learning during the COVID-19 period?
- Is the e-learning method effective in enhancing EFL students' writing proficiency?
- Are EFL students satisfied with the online learning method?
- What are the teachers' reflections regarding their students' writing skills, particularly, after the implementation of e-learning?

Based on the above mentioned questions, the research hypothesizes that:

- The application of online learning would have a negative effect on EFL students' writing proficiency.

### **4. Significance of the Study**

The research provides an understanding to the integration of new technology and different electronic tools in the field of education, and its impact on learning foreign languages, focusing on writing skills. To be more specific, the use of different electronic tools such as: E-platforms, E-books, and websites may help learners to search for new strategies in order to improve their writing skill instead of depending only on teachers. Also, this study is very important since it carries out a very recent topic that is concerned with students and how they develop their writing proficiency in relation to e-learning.

On the whole, this research is beneficial for students, teachers, and even the curriculum designers who can make probable modifications in the course content to be more suitable for learners.



- **For Students**

They learn how to engage in beneficial materials and to exploit the right opportunities to develop their writing.

- **For Teachers**

Since they represent the source of guidance, they may point students to profit from the appropriate materials to reinforce their skills.

## **5. Means of Research**

For collecting the needed data about the effects of E-learning during the pandemic on students' writing skills, this recent study utilizes a quantitative method that requires two questionnaires addressing third-year EFL students and written expression English teachers at the department of Foreign languages from Abd El Hafid Boussouf Mila University Center. This method is the most suitable one to test the validity of the above mentioned hypothesis. The students' questionnaire opts for inspecting the learners' opinions about how the implementation of e-learning affected their writing proficiency during the pandemic. On the other hand, the questionnaire for teachers seeks to perceive their perceptions about the strategies used in the applied method and its effect on the learners' writing skills.

## **6. Research Structure**

The present research consists of two main chapters; theoretical and practical, in addition to a general introduction and conclusion. The theoretical chapter is made up of two sections which review the literature related to the investigated variables. The first section deals with the concept of e-learning and its different aspects. Whereas, the second section involves the writing skill and its key components. On the other hand, the second chapter which is related to the practical part of the research comprises of two sections. The first section is concerned with the research methodology, while the second one revolves around

data analysis and the research results of both teachers' and students' questionnaires, as well as limitations of the study and the suggested pedagogical recommendations.

## **7. Definitions of Key Terms**

**-E-learning:** the process of learning that is facilitated and assisted by technological tools, which allow individuals to acquire and deliver knowledge at any time and from any location (Kaushal, 2020)

**-Writing Skill:** is a language skill that allows individuals to share and generate their perceptions in written form (Harmer, 2001, as cited in Wati & Sari, 2019).

**-COVID-19:** An infectious disease, which first appeared in the Chinese City of Wuhan in December 2019. The majority of those infected with the virus will have mild to moderate respiratory symptoms (World Health Organization, 2020).

**-Effects:** The term effect represents a result, implication, or output of some activities, occasions, agent, or cause (Tetzner, 2020).

**-EFL learners:** Any learner from a nation where English is not spoken (Hyte, 2015).

## **Chapter One: Literature Review of E-learning and the Writing Skill**

### **Introduction**

This chapter covers the theoretical part of the research. It comprises of two main sections; one for the e-learning method, while the other deals with the writing skill. As it seems, technology has transformed the entire world into a little village where individuals can easily, quickly, and cheaply share information and conduct commerce. Different aspects of life, including economics, politics, social issues, and most notably, education have become increasingly reliant on technology (Ghounane, 2020). With the advancement of machine learning and artificial intelligence services, education has witnessed drastic changes in both formal and informal settings. Furthermore, face to face learning is no longer the only way to deliver and acquire knowledge. In this context, distance classes start to thrive in the form of electronic learning, which has facilitated the learning process since individuals are able to learn whenever, wherever, and whatever they want. Moreover, writing is one of the most crucial skills to master in learning foreign languages, but that does not change the fact that it takes a lot of work to achieve. Since the thesis' topic is related to writing, the outbreak of COVID-19 made teaching such a skill via online sessions a required process which effects the students' production.

### **Section One: E-learning during the Pandemic**

#### **Introduction**

Recently, the notion of e-learning brought significant advancement to the field of education. This latter, is a method of learning based on using technological instruments such as the internet, computers, and smartphones. Since it provides flexibility in terms of time and location, in addition to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has grown rapidly and has become the most popular learning style among instructors and learners.

Hence, this section seeks to highlight relevant literature of electronic learning. In this context, the section presents the concept of e-learning through providing its historical background and how scholars defined it, in addition to its different types and how they can be implemented using various tools and platforms, as well as advantages and disadvantages of the method. The section also covers the growth of such a mode during the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis, placing a great emphasis on the main challenges that learners and teachers faced during the applicability of this new form of learning.

### **1. Definition of E-learning**

The term “e-learning” can be defined in a variety of ways. E-learning is a modern educational strategy for providing knowledge, lessons to learners, and assisting them in achieving instructional goals. It is based on the use of electronic devices such as smartphones and computers (Clark & Mayer, 2016). Based on this definition, the term e-learning can be broken into three components:

- **The what:** it is all about content, knowledge, and the best way to present it in order to make the learning process go more smoothly.
- **The how:** as stated in the definition, content is provided through electronic devices in two different ways. The first is spoken as in videos or tape recordings, while the second is printed as in digital texts and images.
- **The why:** e-learning assists learners in achieving their objectives by providing the necessary knowledge and making the learning process more convenient for them (Clark & Mayer, 2016).

Further to this, Nicholson (2007, as cited in Tibanà-Herrera, et al., 2018) argued that over the last two decades, this term has been defined as new type of learning that makes advantage of the internet’s characteristics to provide synchronous or asynchronous

interactions, educational resources, and individualized program to various communities. On the other hand, Fuller (1962, as cited in Tibana-Herrera, et al., 2018) stated that teachers and students could benefit from computer technology and network, which would enrich teaching with technological advances. Additionally, e-learning is a technological extension of distant learning which has always taken advantages of the most up to date instruments as they emerge in context of educational technology. In fact, some others considered e-learning as new generation of distance education despite substantial contrast between the two, and a critical beginning point. Furthermore, online learning is not about doing things the same way as before, but it is about doing things differently (Garrison and Anderson, 2003, as cited in Sangrá, Vlachpolous & Cabrera, 2012). However, practitioners and scholars are readjusting their perspectives, but there is still no consensus on common definitions and terminology for the word (Pande, et al., 2016 as cited in Mesrar & M'rabet, 2018)

## **2. The History of E-learning**

For the historians, learning about something in the present requires understanding its past (Stampp in Szasz, 2006 as cited in Nicholson, 2007). The following passage attempts to explain the history of e-learning from the past to the present.

The journey of e-learning began in 1924, when Sidney L. Pressy presented the first testing machine. According to Benjamin (1988), the machine allows students to test and evaluate their performance by presenting multiple choice questions to which they must chose the correct answer. The machine does not allow students to move on to the next question until they have answered correctly, and it automatically counts the correct answers. After that, in 1954, the famous professor Skinner introduced his teaching machine, which asks students to write their answers about a problem or question presented by the machine. The gadget allows

learners to test themselves and learn at the same time through offering the correct answers immediately, rather than waiting for feedback from teachers (Benjamin, 1988).

In 1960, a group of engineers led by Bitzer from the University of Illinois developed another device called Programed Logic for Automatic Teaching (PLATO), which is a teaching machine that consists of a control keyset and a screen. It was the first computer based training to provide the learners with content and lectures in the form of a textbook, in addition to allowing them to write their responses on an electronic blackboard. This machine was originally designed for Illinois University' students to use, but it quickly gained popularity and was adopted by many other schools and Universities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2021).

In addition, in the early nineties, Compact Disc (CD) based training was the trendiest e-learning innovation. However, in 1998, the internet began to supplant CD based training not only in terms of offering learning courses and resources, but also in providing a learning environment based on the personalized learning supported by study groups, discussion forum, and a variety of other features (Cross, 2004 as cited in Bezovski & Poorani, 2016).

In the late of the twentieth century, when the web and Personal Computers became phenomenal and started to thrive, the concept of e-learning began to expand (Bezovski & Poorani, 2016). In this respect, Gogos (2013) stated that people in 1980 could own computers at their homes and use them to acquire more knowledge. Following Bezovski and Porani's point, in the early 2000, organizations, businesses, and the army started experimenting electronic learning and adapting it to meet their needs (Bezovski & Poorani, 2016). In this context, Gogos (2013) stated that companies are taking advantage of e-learning to train their staff. Both new and experienced workers can learn more about the field and enhance their abilities.

The above passage of this element covered the historical development of e-learning from 20<sup>th</sup> century to the early 2000. For the digital era, Bezovski and Poorani (2016 p.51) stated that “what once was just computer based training now became take your class anywhere you go” which means that with the advancement of mobile technology, a new age in electronic learning called mobile learning has emerged. This later, can be described as a portable and lightweight platform that allows learners to participate in learning activities regardless of their locations (Bezovski & Poorani, 2016). To sum up, it is difficult to talk about the entire history of e-learning, however the above passage concludes that the e-learning method emerged and developed before the COVID-19 onset.

### **3. Types of E-learning**

Electronic learning is becoming more popular every day, and people are taking its advantage by selecting the type that best matches their needs. The following are the most common types utilized by students and teachers.

#### **3.1. Asynchronous E-learning**

Asynchronous e-learning is a type of e-learning in which students and teachers can send and receive information at any time and from any location throughout media such as email and discussion forums. Also, the lessons can be provided in a variety of formats including prepared videos, prerecorded lectures, and digital texts. Furthermore, the participants are free to schedule their log at any time that suits them because each person has his own reasons for using this type of learning; some are preoccupied with their jobs, while others are preoccupied with their families, and so on (Sistek-Chandler, 2020).

#### **3.2. Synchronous E-learning**

Synchronous e-learning differs from the previous type in terms of time and location because learners and teachers are required to be online at the same time, in order to

communicate with each other, using various means of communication such as; phone calls, video conferencing, or instant texts. The learning process in this type is almost identical to the traditional methods in that learners and teachers can interact with one another, ask questions, and share knowledge. The only difference is that participants are separated from one another and communicate through mediums rather than face to face communication. Thus, instead of learning in isolation, synchronous e-learning creates a learning environment centered on social interaction between learners, allowing them to form positive relationships and stimulate collaboration. The learner-centered approach is supported by this form of e-learning (Sistek- Chandler, 2020).

### **3.3. Blended Learning**

Also known as hybrid learning, this type combines traditional (face-to-face) instruction in the classroom with online learning since it facilitates and enhances the learning process. The hybrid learning creates a learning environment based on the student centered in which learners move from passive receivers to active participants, and the role of the teacher changes from controller to guider and facilitator (Al Musawi, 2011). From another perspective, blended learning is when traditional classroom activities are combined with electronic learning and personalized learning (Kovaliski, 2004 as cited in Bezovski & Poorani, 2016). In this context, the flipped approach is an example of the approaches used in blended learning. According to Sam and Bergman (2014, as cited in Ozdamli & Asiksoy 2016, p.102), “what is done at school is done at home, homework done at home completed in class” which means that in the flipped approach, students are provided with content at home in the form of videos or digital texts, and their role is to understand the content, take notes, then prepare questions before returning to the classroom to discuss, practice, and find answers to their questions (Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016).



## **4. E-learning Platforms**

The growth of the internet and its services has resulted in a greater use of online learning tools. This is why educational institutions are increasingly relying on virtual classrooms, which are basically online learning platforms that support face to face instruction. As a result, a number of platforms emerged, each with the purpose of making the e-learning method easier to manage (Popat, MacLean, Heppell, 2007 as cited in Oproiu, 2015). In this context, the following are the most extensively used platforms in recent years.

### **4.1. Social Media**

Social Networks are the most popular platforms for individuals to share their ideas and exchange information for a variety of political, economic, and educational reasons. The participants simply need to create an account and join a specific group to interact with (Ghounane, 2020). Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp are the most common social media networks in recent years. According to Sun (2018, as cited in Ghounane, 2020), Facebook has overtaken all the platforms as the most widely used one in the world. She further said that YouTube is the second most popular social media channel and the primary option for students to share knowledge. WhatsApp on the other hand, is placed third. Ghounane (2020) also stated that Universities in Algeria work hard to support e-learning in both formal and informal context, and they use social media platforms such as Facebook to inform students about upcoming exams, assessment, as well as other activities.

According to Ghounane (2020), Facebook was created for educational purposes, but it has grown rapidly becoming a medium of communication and social interaction between people. She also stated that through the process of sharing texts and videos, Facebook can help learners build their four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

In addition to Facebook, Maziriri, et al. (2020) stated that YouTube has a large number of educational videos available for free, making it a good option for learners to acquire important content for learning. In this context, Gilroy (2010) stated that YouTube Education is a channel on YouTube dedicated to educational information, which aims at creating a learning environment where any qualified instructor may contribute, whereas anybody can benefit and learn.

Several studies have indicated that social media is an inseparable and crucial part of this generations' life. Universities and Institutions can profit from this factor by encouraging learners to take advantage of social media in order to use it for educational purposes (Ghounane, 2020).

#### **4.2. Video Conference**

It is one of the new methods, technique, or tools used in distance learning that has gained popularity in recent years, especially since the internet' emergence. It is one of the synchronous e-learning tools that allows individuals from different locations to get in touch with each other in order to collaborate, interact, exchange information, and achieve communicative purposes (Rop & Bett, 2012).

According to Rop and Bett (2012), video conference consists of three important components; the first is the hardware which includes the camera to allow participants to see each other, the microphone and audio system to transmit the sounds, as well as the display unit which is the screen. The network is the second component which plays a vital role in connecting people with each other. The last element goes for conference environment. Zoom and Google meet are two of the most successful platforms for video conference.

#### **4.2.1. Zoom platform**

Zoom is a video conferencing software that provides online meetings and group chats. It allows users to connect with individuals all over the world in real time through computers or smartphones (Archibald et al., 2019). Zoom is an easy application to use and very appropriate for online classes and group collaboration. To attend the online sessions, students simply need an invitation from their teacher in the form of a URL (learning technology center, 2018). According to Singh and Awasthi (2020), the zoom platform provides a number of useful features, including the capacity to accept up to 100 video participants and 49 videos on the screen. It also includes a number of other advantages such as screen sharing and screen recording. In addition to these features, the user may also add custom backgrounds to the meetings.

#### **4.2.2. Google Meet Platform**

Google meet (GM) is one of the products developed by Google. According to Benmansour (2022), GM serves as a virtual online system for learning, allowing teachers and students to interact in an academic setting. The features of google meet are similar to those of the zoom platform.

#### **4.3. Moodle Platform**

Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) is a virtual learning space that allows students to complete their learning process online. It is a free software that is designed to support a collaborative learning environment. Moodle is a new instructional framework based on constructivist pedagogy in which both teachers and learners interact, participate in group work, and produce information. Since Moodle is a free platform, the user can install it on a server and accessed from any internet connected gadget. Moreover,

the Moodle system offers a simple and logical design that is organized by sections, making it easy to use even for people with limited technology skills (Oproiu, 2015).

Furthermore, Oproiu (2015) indicated that the Moodle platform offers a variety of communication tools, including a forum, a chat section, a messaging service, and a wiki space. The users can communicate synchronically using forums, which allows learners to interact with their classmates or teachers at any time as long as they have access to the internet. Any user can start a debate on the forum, which can be about anything of general interest or about a specific issue. Besides forum, the chat service allows students to communicate in real time. The private communication is performed through the messaging service. Also, Wiki is a location in Moodle where learners can work together to accomplish group work.

## 5. Advantages Vs Disadvantages of E-learning

### 5.1. Advantages

E-learning has many benefits that have made it very popular among teachers and learners. The following are the main ones:

- **Budget-Friendly:** learners who rely on online learning do not have to travel or pay for transportation; instead, they use technology to learn. In addition to that, e-learning allows a large number of students to learn without the need to provide or construct learning spaces (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).
- **Unlimited Knowledge:** the learning process has no limitations; participants can discover, make researches, and expand their knowledge (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).
- **Flexibility in Terms of Time and Location:** learners may learn whenever and wherever they want; they are not required to attend classes and may learn at home or any other location that suits them. Additionally, they may choose the most convenient time for

them, which is especially advantageous for working students who can learn at their workplaces (Nedeva & Dimova, 2010).

➤ **Personalized Learning:** online learning allows students to learn what they want to learn besides what is relevant to their needs and interest, utilizing various websites, as well as materials rather than being forced to study a specific topic or subject. This allows them to keep motivated and enjoy their learning journey (Nedeva & Dimova, 2010).

## 5.2. Disadvantages of E-learning.

Even though the e-learning method has a lot of upsides, it actually shows some downsides.

❖ **Lack of Communication Skill:** attending online sessions can have a negative impact on the ability to communicate with others. Even if learners are knowledgeable, they lack the ability to express themselves effectively (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).

❖ **Isolation from People:** the usage of e-learning might cause a person to become alienated from the outside world. He / She might prefer to stay alone in his/her virtual environment rather than to engage with family and friends (Akhter, Shah & Javaid, 2021).

❖ **Not All Disciplines Are Suitable for E-learning:** although e-learning can be beneficial for many fields of education, students in scientific subjects such as medicine and engineering may find it difficult to rely on online learning because these aspects need hands-on experience and experiments in the real world (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).

❖ **Plagiarism and Cheating:** e-learning make it easier for students to copy someone else's work instead of depending on themselves and making their own efforts. Moreover, when it comes to online exams, teachers have no control over whether or not the students would cheat (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015).

## **6. The Growth of E-learning during COVID-19**

### **6.1. The Emergence of COVID-19**

December 2019 marked the start of an unexpected global catastrophe. It all began in Wuhan, China, when an unknown virus appeared for the first time, causing symptoms such as fever, dry cough, and sore throat. At first, people did not take it seriously, but the virus was extremely dangerous. When the corona virus began to spread quickly through China and the rest of the world, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared its transmission a public health emergency of International Concern in January 2020, and has begun to provide suggestions to help prevent the outbreak of such a virus. The measurements included wearing face mask, washing hands, and most importantly maintaining a safe distance between people because the virus can transmit by respiratory fomites or touches (Sohrabi et al., 2020).

To go further, the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered the globe. This virus promoted others to speculate that it could have been created by humans. According to WHO (2022), the virus has endergonic multiple mutations, resulting in the emergence of numerous variants including Alpha, which first appeared in November 2020 in the United Kingdom, followed by Beta which emerged in South Africa in 2020, then Gama in November 2020 in Brazil, as well as Delta and Omicron in November 2021 in various countries.

### **6.2. Education during the Pandemic**

Although the COVID-19 is not the reason behind the creation of e-learning, the pandemic's circumstances play a vital role in the method's growth. According to Isyaku et al. (2020), the recommendations to prevent the virus's spread such as keeping safe distance and quarantine, have resulted in the closure of many schools, universities, and institutions since these places are the most crowded ones. Online learning seems to be finest solution for

continuing formal and informal education in a near normal manner, and it is also the least expensive method presenting itself as the ultimate substitute for the conventional method. Dhawan (2020) determined that the world is going through major changes due to the existing COVID-19, which has affected all aspects of our lives. This effect involves even schools, colleges, and universities.

As a result, online learning emerged as the most suitable solution for both learners and teachers. Choosing the path of e-learning became an obligation rather than a choice to carry on the learning and teaching processes. According to Basilian, et al. (2020, as cited in Dhawan, 2020), with the pressing need for a sudden switch to online instructional strategy, Google's products such as Gmail, Google Drive, Google Hangouts, Google Forms, Google Classroom, Calendars, as well as Google jam board and Drawing can be extremely valuable in such circumstances. On the other hand, open board software is not a Google product, but it assists in recording group meetings in documents format. These instruments can serve as a viable substitute for traditional classes, therefore with the help of online learning, all students from different places can attend the lectures provided online and engage as active as they are in face to face classes. Teachers at Mila University Center in particular, have used this strategy to make an educational progress. They upload lessons in Portable Document Format (PDF), using platforms which are a powerful technological tools. Since this method is applied anytime and anywhere, Mila University Center administrators programmed some modules to be taught online to reduce time pressure. Additionally, there were also various exams that were done online.

Moreover, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) contributed significantly to the success of online learning during the lockdown by presenting some suggestions. The first is to choose the best method for delivering content to learners and decide whether the online courses are simply a review of previous lessons or

new ones to complete the program. The second recommendation is to establish communities to maintain the interaction between learners, teachers, and even parents in order to help each other. The third suggestion was to choose the tools that can be used by all the participants and helping them in understanding how to use the new technology through organizing training sessions to make access to platforms and websites easy for them (Isyaku et al., 2020).

## **7. Challenges of E-learning during the Pandemic**

Moving from in person classes to electronic learning is not as simple as it may seem, particularly for teachers and students who have only experienced traditional methods. Ghounane (2020) stated that old professors did not accept the idea of interacting with learners via electronic platforms, as well as referring to their reactions to Information and Communication Technology as “Technophobia”. Based on that, students, teachers, and administrators faced numerous problems during the adoption of this new technique.

In this regard, Mahyoob (2020) from the Taibah University of Saudi Arabia held a research that aims to identify University students’ challenges with using e-learning during the COVID-19 epidemic, and the possible solutions that can improve the learners’ performance to grip these issues in the future. The study was applied at the end of the second semester of 2020 on 184 students, 85 males and 99 females using questionnaire. The results revealed various technical challenges with the blackboard application since students were unable to log in and also courses were not available. Due to this, teachers and students used other platforms such as: e-mails for submitting their assignments, Microsoft teams, Google, and Zoom platforms to get over these problems and conduct some lectures. Additionally, the majority of the students are from small communities where the network is under strain. Learners had some issues with accessing online lectures, obtaining materials, and administering online tests, among other things. Also, learners were unable to open online



tests due to format that was not supported by their devices, besides a lack of knowledge with the procedure. On the other hand, Chelghoum and Chelghoum (2020) conducted a study which focused on the most prevalent challenges that instructors experienced when teaching online. Using questionnaire, the study targets 387 Algerian teachers from various subjects. The biggest issue, according to the study, was internet accessibility and students' motivation. The country's economy is linked to internet access since the existing scenario prevent authorities from providing high quality internet to citizens, especially students and teachers. Also, the lack of motivation was due to the students' unfamiliarity with the unique instruction.

To explain, Kerras and Salhi (2020) discovered through their research that Algerian learners have little experience coping with the new method, and that the majority of teachers are unprepared for the changes, leaving students vulnerable to learn without assistance. This suggests that there is a communication barrier between students and teachers, as well as a big issue with internet connectivity and lack of interactive database for students, making evaluation nearly impossible.

To be more precise, a big number of students at Mila University did not have access to the internet; therefore, it was a challenging for them to get access with that. Moreover, learners were unfamiliar with the new method due to technical difficulties in accessing platforms. Additionally, since most of the students' works were missing, administrators had difficulty making their grades together.

The above concludes, in terms of teaching via online learning, there is no distinction between developed and developing countries because during the COVID-19 timeframe, most of them had similar challenges with technology and how to deal with it.

## **Conclusion**

This part has focused on presenting the theoretical framework of electronic learning throughout providing a comprehensive understanding of its fundamental components, as well as the significant benefits that have made it highly popular among individuals and the major drawbacks that have led some others to shun it. The section also covers the method's expansion during the COVID-19 epidemic, as well as its role in saving education's future. It concludes by highlighting the primary issues of e-learning in order to find solutions for them.

## **Section Two: The Writing Skill**

### **Introduction**

Writing is a productive skill which is mainly supplement to reading, both of which are used to help people grasp languages, broaden their knowledge, and expand their vocabulary. This ability is regarded to be as a kind of human communication that encompasses emotions as well, and a significant one for learners to master. However, it is a complicated task that requires learners to fully comprehend its nature. Thus, the purpose of this section is to discuss the meaning of writing, as well as its nature, relevance, and relationship to reading. In addition, the part highlights approaches to teaching writing and the most common challenges encountered by EFL students. Ultimately, the section ends with tips for learners on how to improve their writing skills.

#### **1. Definition of Writing**

Scholars characterize writing in a number of ways. To define writing in terms of the learning process, Harmer (2004, p.31) determined that "writing (as one of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing) has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English". He also said that writing contains mechanical components, just like any other skill. Handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and the creation of well-formed phrases,

paragraphs, and texts are all examples. In addition, Harmer determined that writing has traditionally served as a tool of reinforcing previously learned language.

From a linguistic perspective, Coulmas (2003) agreed that writing is a method of storing information in the form of visible or tactile marks. Furthermore, writing is a kind of human communication based on the use of visible marks (Gelb, 1953, as cited in Coulmas,2003). This implies that writing is linked to the acquisition and dissemination of data.

According to Oxford (1990, as cited in Gautam,2019), writing is a mental activity that needs sustained mental effort over an extended length of time. Also, writing is the exploration of one's thoughts, ideas, and knowledge with the goal of producing meaning in the form of a graphological reflection (Zemel,1983, as cited in Gautam, 2019).

As a result of the previously mentioned data, writing is accomplished through a series of phases. Students must first seek for information, converting it into thoughts and ideas, after that he or she must develop information regarding the proper usage of sentences and grammatical rules.

## **2. Nature of Writing**

Due to a shortage of practice chances for writing skill, almost all EFL professors agree that students prioritize speaking above the already mentioned one. However, writing is always considered to be the most significant skill for learners to master in learning a foreign language.

According to Silva (1993), writing is a visual mode of communication that may be printed or emailed. It adheres to natural-language standards that the writer and reader can comprehend, even if these conventions change over time or are employed with particular meanings in smaller speech communities. Furthermore, writing is a complicated task that

involves the author's understanding of and ability to skillfully mix many aspects of language. On the other hand, writing is a pictorial representation of language. It is also its own linguistic system (Meletis, 2020). Coulmas (1989, as cited in Meletis, 2020), consider writing as the most significant symbol system ever devised on the planet.

### **3. Approaches to Teaching Writing**

The writing skill is primarily based on three approaches in the process of teaching and learning EFL, all of which aimed to improve learners writing proficiency.

#### **3.1. The Product Approach**

A product based approach refers to a writing method that focuses on the final product. Students frequently replicate a model text in order to write their own. In other words, they imitate a teacher's provided model piece. For example, in the writing classroom, professors present students with samples of model composition, where learners create similar compositions based on the models (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

For more details, Briere (1966, as cited in Nemouchi, 2019) determined that the product approach places a greater emphasis on writing quality over quantity and fluency. Moreover, in 1984, Pincas established four stages in the product approach: familiarization, regulated writing, guided writing, and free writing. A teacher's first step should be to propose a topic that can lead to a classroom debate, after which he/she should explain how students will write and urge them to compose a composition (Nemouchi, 2019).

#### **3.2. The Process Approach**

The process approach is found to be superior to the product one. Murray (1992, as cited in Nemouchi, 2019) stressed that a process-oriented approach to education refers to a kind of instructions that focuses on the steps a writer takes to produce meaning. In contrast to

a product-oriented approach, this instructional method culminates with editing as a final stage in text creation rather than an initial one.

The process writing approach focuses on the procedures required in generating a piece of work, and it recognizes that no text is flawless, but that a writer can grow closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing, and modifying successive revision of a text (Nunan, 1991, as cited in Sun & Feng, 2009). Additionally, Fowler (1989, as cited in Sun & Feng, 2009) acknowledged that process writing arose in response to the product approach. In that, it addressed the need to match the writing process inherent in writing one's native tongue, allowing learners to express themselves more fully as individuals. On the other hand, Harmer (2004) argued that planning, drafting, editing, and publishing are the four fundamental parts of the process approach to writing. Nevertheless, Alber-Morgan, et al., (2007) have identified the following as the most prevalent.

**a) Prewriting:** in this stage, writers start by selecting their subject matter, objective, and audience. After that, they arrange what they will write and how they will express it. Motivation plays a significant role during this stage, the writers should be strongly motivated by their theme.

**b) Drafting:** in this stage, writers transfer their previously organized ideas into a written format, focusing on making their language clear and understandable to the reader. Since the drafting stage is regarded as the most difficult step during the writing process, the following are some strategies for increasing the writer motivation: using a beloved pen, co-writing with a friend, and allowing students to produce their writing on a computer.

**c) Revising and Editing:** it can be difficult to persuade learners to review and edit their work. Teachers can conduct 5-10 minutes mini classes at this stage to provide quick and frequent direct instruction in mechanics. This will assist students in developing the wide variety of complicated abilities needed for proper writing. In addition, teachers can also

review students' writing pieces to see what kinds of mistakes they make frequently, as well as offer them a consistent approach for preparing and arranging ideas across a variety of writing tasks. Students, on the other hand, can form peer editing groups with other students and use self-monitoring tactics to improve their rewriting and editing. In this stage, teachers might also apply unexpected reinforcement by randomly selecting one skill to measure for each student's written texts.

**d) Publishing:** this is the ultimate stage of the writing process, where writers may discover how their writing influences a real audience.

### **3.3. The Genre Approach**

According to Khaldoun (2008), in the 1980s, the genre approach gained popularity in tandem with the idea that studying many sorts of written texts could assist student writers. Also, the three phases of the genre method to writing are: modeling the desired genre for students, jointly constructing a text with them, and independently constructing a text by each student (Cope & Kalantzis, 2001, as cited in Khaldoun, 2008).

To go further, this method focuses on teaching specific genres that learners must understand in order to function well in various settings. This could include a substantial concern about the written products' substance, as well as the setting in which they were created (Nemouchi, 2019). Additionally, Swales (1990, as cited in Nemouchi, 2019) referred to genre as a group of communicative goals. This suggests that some conventions and the writer's intention are linked in some way. Personal letters, for example, reveal the writer's personal stories.

To further elaborate the genre approach, Hyland (2002, as cited in Akbas, 2020) pointed that this method focuses on modelling, negotiating with the teacher, and text structure, leading to a knowledge of a cycle in writing instructions. On the other hand, Askim

(2006, as cited in Akbas, 2020) suggested that to aid writing instructions, the teacher could zoom in on the discourse qualities and goal of a given genre.

All of this points to the genre approach believed that the written form of language should be linked to the text's social purpose, which indicates a certain social setting in which a text is employed.

#### **4. The Relationship between Writing and Reading**

According to Banu (2007), people believe that writing and reading are two distinct talents, in addition to the idea that the writer is more significant than the reader since he/she is considered as an active composer of messages, while the reader is mainly a passive receiver. This has altered because in academic writing, the writer-reader interaction is emphasized. There is a clear link between writing and reading as Bazerman (1980) stated that writing teachers must foster multiple strategies of absorbing, reformulating, commenting on, and employing reading if they want to educate students to enter the written interchanges of their chosen disciplines, as well as the various conversations of personal and public concern.

To make the relationship between the two skills more clear, International Literacy Association (2020) determined that many people believe that reading is a necessary part of learning writing. The key to effective writing according to the American author William Faulkner, is to « read, read, read ». It also stated that writing and writing instructions improve the students' reading comprehension and fluency, as well as their ability to recognize and decode words in texts. Furthermore, writing and reading were not regarded as intertwined until the 1970s. They were seemed as different, albeit possibly connected, linguistic process at best. This is partly due to the fact that writing and reading have separate origins (Langer & Flihan, 2000).

According to Stotsky (1983, as cited in Langer and Flihan, 2000), researches concerning the reading and writing interaction reveal that better writers are also better readers. Better writers read more than inferior writers, and better readers compose more syntactically developed work.

On the other hand, both reading and writing are composing activities in the sense that they both entail planning, producing, and updating meaning. In addition, people must first be able to read in order to acquire the capacity to write, at least to a decent level. As people may be aware, writing entails a great deal of study, 99% of the time into stuff people don't know and even they already know ("The Importance of Writing Skills: Why It Matters to the Student", 2020).

## **5. The Importance of Writing**

Writing has always been regarded as the most significant human innovation; as a result, while teaching and learning the English language, the former is introduced as the most difficult to acquire and the essential to master.

According the University of Arizona Global Campus' staff member (2021), writing is used mainly as a major mean of gathering information and communicating with others. People may speak confidently with anyone by improving their textual communication. Furthermore, because people often read others' words before meeting them face to face, writing is considered as the first impression that individuals have on each other. Thus, others make a conclusion about one's intelligence and character based on errors, unorganized, or incomplete concepts in his/her writing.

From a different perspective, writing is essential since it is widely employed in higher education and jobs. Students who lack the ability to express themselves in writing will struggle to communicate effectively with teachers, employers, peers, and just with anybody



else. Thus, writing is used for a lot of professional communication (Walsh, 2010, as cited in Klimova, 2012). Additionally, written communication is a unique feature of the human species. Over years, writing has aided individuals in informing, collaborating, and alerting others, while recorded history, culture, and knowledge have benefited society. So, how people succeed in using the gift of writing in today's world is entirely up to them (Brink, 2020).

For more details, writing as a skill, allows students to learn a variety of other useful skills that will aid them in academic, professional, and personal endeavors. It also gives learners the opportunity to understand all the laws of their language as well as how to better arrange their thoughts utilizing the language. Also, writing is important to students for a variety of reasons, one of which is that it can boost their confidence and sense of accomplishment ("The Importance of Writing Skills: Why It Matters to the Student", 2020).

To take things even further, there is no doubt that writing can be found almost everywhere. Writing is required whether people choose to continue their academic path, pursue a career in accountancy, or pursue a career as a designer. Additionally, good writing skills enable individuals to better express themselves, communicate appropriately with others, and have all the information they require to meet their needs. Moreover, many positions need applicants to demonstrate their writing abilities as part of the application process. Writing stimulates the imagination by improving the brain function which aids in the development of speaking and communication abilities (Corona, 2021).

## **6. Writing Difficulties of EFL Learners**

The following are the main five writing difficulties of EFL learners.

### **6.1. Lack of Motivation**

Because writing is the most difficult and sophisticated skill, EFL students are less inclined to practice it afterwards. Thus, teachers are recommended to drive learners through the involvement in such a skill since motivation is considered to be the major reason behind human conduct.

“It is accepted for most fields of learning that motivation is essential to success: that we have to want to do something to succeed in it” (Harmer, 2001, p.51). In other words, anyone will almost surely fail to make the necessary efforts if he/she is not motivated. Furthermore, people’s attitude can alter and influence the motivation that brings pupils to the work of learning English. It is also important thinking about what and who these are because they are part of the reality that surrounds student’s feeling and involvement in the learning process. Therefore, the teacher is the most significant aspect in sustaining a student’s motivation (Harmer, 2001, p. 51).

According to Mauliya et al. (2020), students lack of motivation, apathy, preference for playing and eating inside the classroom are all examples of internal disturbance. In other words, the external elements are influenced by family, economic issue, and classroom setting, while the internal factors are influenced by laziness.

## **6.2. Lack of Reading**

Better writers are better readers, and better readers are better writers according to Stotsky as it is mentioned above. Based on this foundation, EFL students completely disregard the reading skill which is closely linked to writing productivity. As a result, as students read more, they not only gain knowledge but also expand and enrich their vocabulary.

According to Rintaningrum (2019, as cited in Pradani, 2021), reading is one of the most fundamental skills to master because it provides the foundation for learning a variety of

subjects. It provides benefits such as expanding one's repertoire of knowledge, opening up new information, the ability to explain information to others, and increasing concentration. Therefore, it is critical to support a country's progress through teaching reading since it is a valuable skill.

### **6.3. Mother Tongue Interference**

In this process of acquiring a second language, students are more likely to commit multiple mistakes. For Harmer (2001), students who learn EFL already have a strong grasp of at least one other language, and when the first language and English collide, there is often misunderstanding which might lead to errors in a learner's English usage. Linguistically, the difficulty of mastering a specific structure in a second language is determined by the differences between the students' native language and the language they are attempting to learn (Rustipa, 2012).

It can be deduced that, positive transfer is related to the prior information which enhances the learning activity, that is to say, when previous item is correctly applied to the current subject area. When one tasks' performance interferes with the performance of another, this is referred to as negative transfer. The latter is known as interference, and it occurs when previously learned materials interferes with succeeding materials, i.e. a previously learned item is wrongly transferred or connected with a newly learnt one (Zhao, 2019).

### **6.4. Punctuation**

Punctuation marks are a challenge for most EFL learners because they overuse commas and periods depending on their native language patterns. In other words, because there is no capitalization in Arabic, students are allowed to construct extended sentences, whereas in English, they excessively overuse inappropriate punctuation marks. Therefore,

understanding the second language's grammatical norms is necessary for mastering punctuation. In addition, Harmer (2001), stated that individuals can produce an unlimited amount of sentences once they grasp the grammatical rules of a language instinctively.

### **6.5. Run-on Sentences**

Several students who speak Arabic as their primary language compose interminable phrases with no periods and infinite commas on a regular basis. In Arabic, run-on sentences are acceptable and there is no problem in writing them. As a result, English teachers should provide students with remedies to this problem, such as inserting periods and then utilizing connectors to begin new sentences (Gomez, 2010).

### **6.6. Redundancy**

As agreed in Gomez (2010), in contrast to English, the Arabic language accepts synonyms repeated in a single phrase because it demonstrates the writer's eloquence and emphasizes the subject. Students might be giving editing activities to work on conducting short sentences without duplication, and teachers could present a list of synonyms and advice students to use them in their writing to reduce redundancy.

## **7. Tips for Better Writing**

Since writing is widely regarded as the most important skill for learning a second language, teachers can instruct students on how to improve their writing skills in a number of ways. The following are the major ones for better writing.

According to Gogana (2020) and Borsellino (2021), these are the major points for improving the writing abilities:

### **7.1. Keep a Diary**

Nothing may be more important or beneficial than writing every day when it comes to honing writing skills. People are free to write whatever they want in their diary and then go back and revise it. Here they might consider how they might phrase these statements in such a way that they make sense to a hypothetical reader.

## **7.2. Planning and Outlining**

An outline is a simplified sketch of the points or subjects that the paper someone is working on will cover, and how he/she intends to organize the content which can serve as a guideline as in writing. Creating and following an outline guarantees to include all of the key information in the correct order without being redundant or deviating from the main purpose.

## **7.3. Read and Learn**

Reading, and a lot of it, comes second to writing when it comes to boosting writing abilities. Readers may ask themselves if an author of a book they have read succeeded in making his argument obvious, and if they would do anything differently if they were the ones who wrote it. In this kind of thoughtful, critical reading goes a long way.

## **7.4. Vocabulary and Word Choice**

Because writing is a kind of communication, learners will need to be skilled at using words and stringing them together to convey their point. Knowing several synonyms for a single word or being conversant with advanced vocabulary items are not the only ways to have a large vocabulary arsenal. Thus, students should also be aware of word collocations and the various implications that certain words can have.

## **7.5. Structure of Writing**

Even if learners only have 350 words to work with, the essay must be well-organized because it is not enough to know where the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion go

in their work, besides knowing which point they will prove in which section of the text. In addition, any writer must consider outlining his/her writing in the same way that he/she would when creating a picture. In terms of the flow of writing and its logical structure, proper outlining goes a long way toward making it far more clear and cohesive for the reader.

### **7.6. Revising and Editing**

Editing is the process of revising and modifying a piece of anyone's writing in order to strengthen it. It is possible to update or edit a piece by making substantial changes to its structure, organization, or content. In addition, it is also possible proofread a piece of writing, looking for misspellings, grammar errors, or typos. In other circumstances, writers might change sentences or paragraphs to make them flow better or to represent a specific tone. Strong editing skills can be valuable in a variety of professional scenarios, from proofreading a report or presentation for a colleague to identify an error in an email they are about to send to the entire organization.

### **7.7. Be Aware of the Audience and the Appropriate Tone to Use in Writing**

It is critical to determine who will read the writings and what kind of language is appropriate before starting writing, as well as considering how formal it is. If the author is writing for a teammate, he/she might use a more relaxed tone and word choice than if he/she is emailing a client or preparing a formal presentation. In most professional contexts, emojis and numerous punctuation marks should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

### **7.8. Get Feedback on Writing**

Ask a teammate, manager, or someone else to read a piece of writing and offer suggestions to how to improve it. If this person is a colleague, it might be easier to ask him to provide written comments on something he already have read.

## **8. Teaching Writing via Online Learning during the Pandemic**

The most challenging skill for students to learn has always been writing; yet, with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching such a skill via online classes became a critical concern.

Synchronous online teaching cannot fully substitute face-to-face interaction. Thus, there are methods to structure education like those where students have opportunities to discuss their writing through learning with teachers and peers. Breakout rooms are available in Zoom so teachers can divide students and have them work on an activity in smaller group of peers. Throughout this process, participants can share their displays or collaborate on a Google document while discussing a task. It is a great method to get students collaborate on writing or discussing a reading content. Moreover, students can utilize the internet to examine their own vocabulary usage and discover new words to be included in their writing. Lex Tutor provides a few distinct vocabulary profiler tools that are pretty easy to use, despite the lack of style in the interface. Students can examine how their word choices fit into different levels of English vocabulary (first thousand words, second thousand words, etc.) after copying in a text they produced (Gilliland,2020). On the other hand, Gehr (2020) stressed that digital writing conferences provide students with written feedback on their writing. It is an opportunity to include one-on-one writing instruction to fit the individual needs of students. Teachers can give differentiated assessments and personalized instruction through the use of varying levels of feedback for writers. In this context, Ghounane (2021) stated that in recent years, Facebook has become a haven for young and old individuals from all walks of life. Since students and teachers began to establish groups, education has not been an exception. As a result, most academics and institutions are considering how to include this platform into the teaching and learning process. Regarding learning writing, Melor, et.al (2012, as cited in, Ghounane,2021) revealed through their study that by reading each other's

remarks, students can pick up new language. They also demonstrated how engaging in Facebook group conversations might assist students in finishing their essays more quickly.

To go specifically, teachers of written expression at Mila University Center used online portals to submit lectures in PDF format, then provides students tasks to complete based on the lectures, which were afterwards graded. In addition, some of them used E-libraries as a teaching tool and required students to write essays summarizing what they learned in lectures. Furthermore, some teachers followed specific tactics to improve the students' reading and writing skills. Students were instructed to read books and then provide written analysis based on what they acquired, whereas others were asked to keep response journals to specific stories. As a result of school closure during the COVID-19 onset, students used to submit their works via emails, and through these techniques, they may enhance their writing proficiency.

## **Conclusion**

This section presents an overview of the writing skill and its basic components. Although writing is widely regarded as a significant ability, it is a difficult task that requires extensive practice. As a result, this section focuses on the most common approaches for teaching writing, as well as its nature and how it relates to reading. Furthermore, the part also covers how this skill was taught during the pandemic, and the main difficulties encountered by students in their process of learning. Eventually, it concludes with some recommendations on how to improve one's writing performance.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter comes to a close. It covers the general fundamentals associated with the term e-learning, focusing on its inception with the first testing machine, reaching the digital era. In addition, it shed lights on how e-learning was applied in relation to teaching writing



skills throughout the pandemic's timeframe, using its various types such as synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning. The chapter also emphasizes on the main technological tools and platforms of the method besides their role in teaching writing, as well as the main challenges encountered in terms of adopting this mode. On the other hand, the chapter highlights the key aspects of the writing skill and how significant it is, emphasizing on how reading and writing are complementing in nature. Since writing is a complicated skill to master, the chapter offers tips for students to overcome obstacles during the learning process. Furthermore, the chapter shed lights on the thesis' variables by connecting them in order to carry out cohesion and coherence.

## **Chapter Two: The Field Investigation on the Effects of E-learning during the Pandemic on Students' Writing Skill**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to cover the practical part of the research. It deals with the analysis of the obtained data from students' and teachers' questionnaires. Furthermore, this chapter describes the method and tools used to collect the required information in order to examine the application of e-learning in Mila University Center during COVID-19, and its impacts on third Year EFL students' performance in writing. In addition, the chapter attempts to answer the already set research questions and to assess the validity of the hypothesis throughout providing a description for the aim behind each question, as well as a detailed analysis and discussion of the acquired findings. Ultimately, the chapter also highlights the most barriers encountered by the researchers, besides various pedagogical recommendations for both students and teachers, finishing with some suggestions for further research concerning the topic.

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This section concerns with the research methodology. It highlights the research mean used in collecting the needed data, besides identifying the study's population and sample. In addition, this part describes both teachers' and students' questionnaires, and determines the aim behind each question.

#### **1. Means of the Research**

In gathering data, two questionnaires are used for both English University teachers and students. The aim behind using such a tool is to collect more details about the thesis' theme and to test the suggested hypothesis, besides to answer the research questions.

“questionnaires are any written instruments that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown, 2001, p.6, as cited in Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2010, p.3). According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), the most compelling features of questionnaires are their extraordinary efficiency in terms of researcher time, effort, and financial resources. By distributing a questionnaire to a group of people, one can gather a large amount of data in less than an hour, and the human commitment necessary is a fraction of what would be required if the same number of people were interviewed. In addition to cost-effectiveness, questionnaires are also extremely adaptable, which means that they can be utilized successfully with a wide range of individuals in a wide range of situations and for a wide range of themes.

## **2. Sample and Population**

The participants of this research belong to the English Department at Mila University Center for the academic year 2021-2022.

The study’s target population includes 80 students from different groups out of a total number of 211 third-year English University students. Moreover, the purpose behind selecting those students is that they have more familiarity with the e-learning method.

The second sample of the research involves 10 teachers of written expression module whom are PHDs, Magister, and Master two degree holders. Teachers were selected because they are well-experienced with teaching writing skills. Thus, both samples may provide perceptions about the online mode and how written expression was taught during the pandemic timeframe, and how this latter affected the students’ writing proficiency.

## **3. Description of Questionnaires.**

### **3.1. Description of the Students’ Questionnaire**

In order to gather the needed data for this recent study, the researchers used both close and open ended questions. The former is utilized to keep respondents active rather than feeling bored, while the latter are designed for the sake of allowing them to freely voice their ideas about the topic. This questionnaire is divided into (4) four main sections.

**Section 1:** this section consists of 4 questions about the students' general information including: gender, age, English competence, and their psychosocial state during the quarantine. Q1+Q2 aim at gathering information about learners' age and which gender is more prevalent from the total sample. Furthermore, Q3 is designed mainly to discover the participants' level in learning EFL. Then, Q4 addresses how the students' psychosocial state was during the quarantine and whether it affected their process of learning or not.

**Section 2:** this section which is entitled "Electronic Learning", consists of six different questions aiming at investigating the informants' perceptions towards the new applied mode. Q1+Q2 are directed to explore the students' awareness of the online learning concept, in addition to whether they are satisfied or not with this latter. Moving to Q3 which intends to find out if Mila University Center used video conference classes and if participants were truly involved in such a process, as well as their measure of involvement. Q4 seeks to determine which learning style is the most popular among students. Then, Q5 is split into two parts. In the first part, students are asked to express their views on whether online learning can totally replace face-to-face instruction, while the second one focuses on their justifications to support their notions. This question is designed since learners have longer experience with the e-learning mode. Moreover, in Q6, students are addressed to identify the challenges that they encountered throughout the implementation of online learning.

**Section 3:** this section which is related to the writing skill, consists of six questions aiming at collecting data about students' perspectives towards this skill. The first question is

posed for students with the objective of describing their current level in writing. Q2 and Q3 are designed to identify the importance of writing in comparison to the other skills, as well as to see whether learners are motivated to improve such a skill or not. Moreover, in Q4, students are given the opportunity to choose more than one item, aiming at identifying the most prevalent obstacles they face when it comes to producing a piece of writing. Q5 attempts to find out how many chances do students have to practice classrooms' writing. The final question (6) seeks for discovering if teachers provided any practice activities during the COVID pandemic, and if so, what kind of activities were supplied.

**Section 4:** this ultimate section consists of 3 main questions that relates the thesis' variables in order to investigate the impact of e-learning on students' writing skills. In the first question, participants are asked to express their views about whether or not the implementation of the online mode improved their writing skills. Q2 seeks to determine the best way for learners to improve their writing proficiency. Eventually, Q3 is designed to complete the previous questions in a form of an open ended one, for the sake of giving students' freedom to express their perspectives on the application of e-learning at Mila University Center in terms of teaching and learning writing skills, as well as whether they believe it is a beneficial or an unsuccessful experience.

### **3.2. Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire attempts to investigate their perceptions towards teaching written expression module via electronic learning, as well as its impact on their students' writing performance. This questionnaire consists of 13 different questions divided into 4 main sections.

**Section One:** this section concerns with the teachers' general information made up in three questions, aiming at collecting data about their experience with teaching writing skills.

Q1 aims at identifying the teachers' professional degree in order to discover which degree is more dominant at Mila University Center. Q2 and Q3 aim at gathering information on the type of activities used by instructors to teach written expression module and to check if they all follow the same curriculum, in addition to how long they have been teaching it.

**Section Two:** "Teachers' Impressions about the E-learning Method" comprises of 3 questions aiming at determining teachers' viewpoints on the implementation of this mode of learning. In the first question, teachers are requested to offer their views on whether Mila University students engaged in e-learning platforms during Corona virus pandemic. Q2 and Q3 are intended to determine teachers' evaluation for the implementation of online learning at MUC, as well as their favorite mode of teaching after experimenting with both online and traditional methods.

**Section Three:** this section contains 4 questions about the writing skill, with the goal of obtaining data about teachers' impressions on their students' writing performance. Q1 seeks to assess students' level in writing by teachers. The purpose behind Q2 and Q3 is to see if teachers believe their students are interested in enhancing their writing abilities, in order to overcome the biggest obstacles they encounter. The last question (4) explores the key obstacles that teachers face when teaching writing.

**Section Four:** to collect data from teachers' viewpoints on the effect of e-learning on their students' writing performance, this section finishes with 4 questions incorporating the thesis' variables. Q1 and Q2 seek to identify the methods adopted by instructors to teach written expression during the University lockdown, as well as to determine whether these strategies include any practice chances and if their students receive feedback on their assignments. The third question attempts to discover whether e-learning had a positive or a negative impact on students' writing performance, or if it had no effect at all. Ultimately, Q4

seeks to ascertain teachers' opinion on using technology to help students improve their writing production

## **Conclusion**

This section comes to an end. It provides an understanding of the selected means and its main advantages in conducting a research, as well as determining the reason behind choosing third-year EFL students and written expression teachers. Ultimately, the section offers the questionnaires' description.

## **Section Two: Data Analysis and the Research Results**

### **Introduction**

The second section of the practical part covers the data analysis and the results of the conducted study. It discusses in details the findings of both teachers' and students' responses concerning their perceptions about the writing skill, the e-learning method, and particularly the effects of e-learning during the pandemic on students' writing skills. Furthermore, this part emphasizes on limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

### **1. Students' Questionnaire**

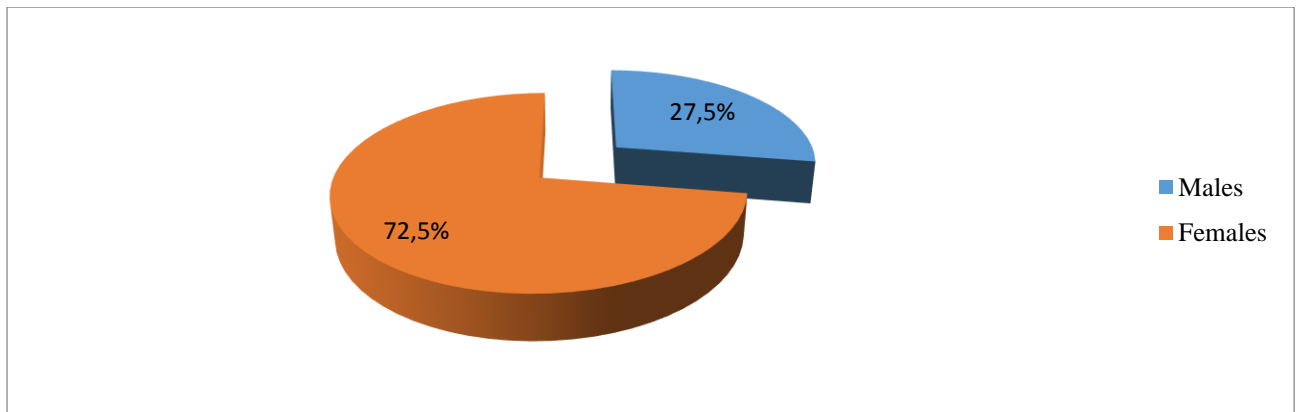
#### **1.1. Data Results and Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire**

##### **Section One: General Information**

**Question 01:** What is your gender?

a) Male

b) Female



**Figure 01: Students' Gender**

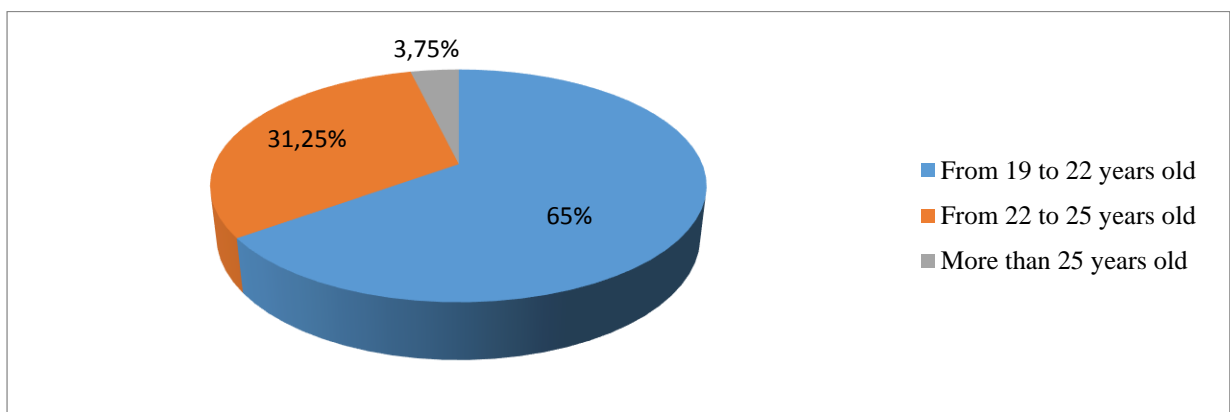
The findings reveal that females make up the bulk of the participants (58), representing 72,5% of the total sample. On the other hand, males are in the minority representing 27,5% of respondents, or 22 students out of 80.

**Question 02:** How old are you?

a) 19 to 22

b) 22 to 25

c) More than 25



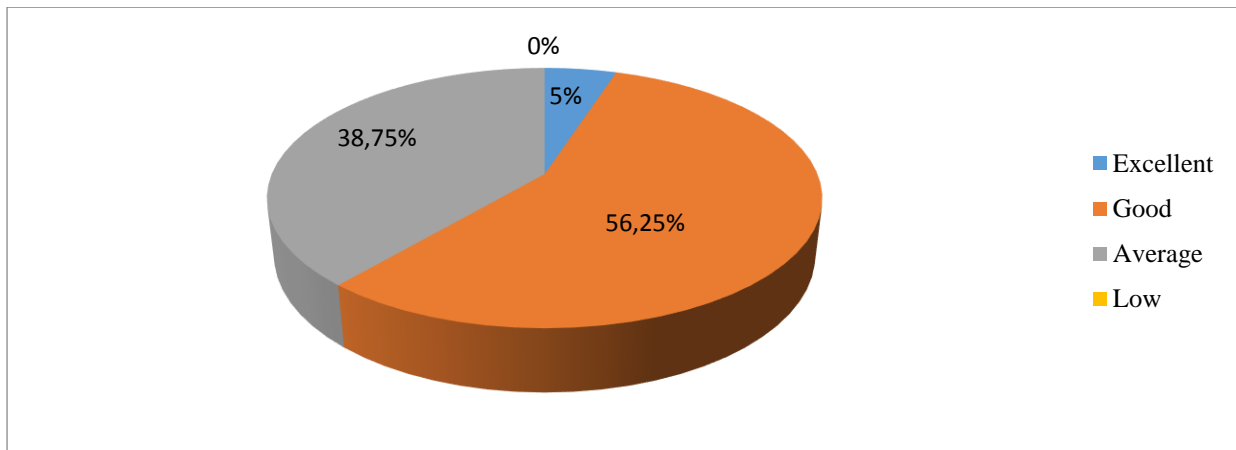
**Figure 02: Students' Age**

The above figure illustrates that 65% of students are aged between 19 to 22 years old representing the lump of the sample. However, 31,25% of the respondents are aged between 22 to 25, and only 3,75% of them surpass 25 years old.

**Question 03:** How do you evaluate your level in English?



a) Excellent      b) Good      c) Average      d) low

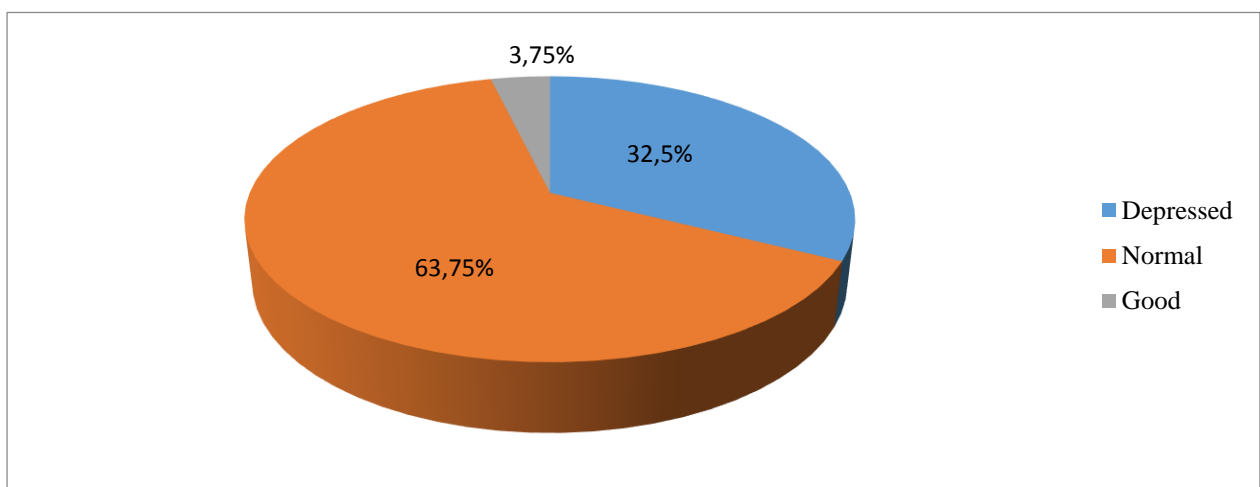


**Figure 03: Students' Level in English**

According to the above statistics, only 5% of students consider themselves excellent in English. Additionally, a high percentage of informants with 56,25% represents those who believe that their level is good. On the other hand, the average degree represents 38,75% of the whole sample, whereas none of students opted for the low level. This is probably due to their passion in learning foreign languages.

**Question 04:** How do you describe your psychosocial state during the quarantine?

a) Depressed      b) Normal      c) Good



**Figure 04: Students' Psychosocial State during the Quarantine**

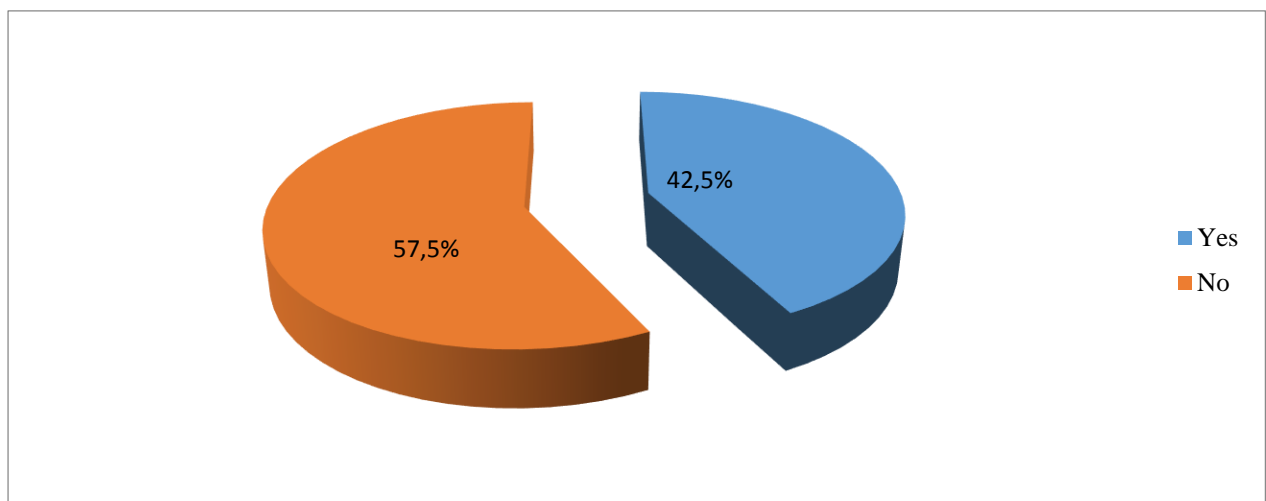
The collected data display that during the quarantine that the Algerian government imposed to reduce the COVID outbreak, 63,75% of respondents coexisted normally with the situation, whereas 32,5% of them were depressed since they witnessed the new condition for the first time. Moreover, the remaining percentage 3,75% of the sample goes for individuals who felt okay. As a result, students were affected by covid19 at different levels, particularly their education.

## Section 2: Electronic Learning

**Question 01:** Before the pandemic, were you aware of the concept of e-learning?

a) Yes.

b) No



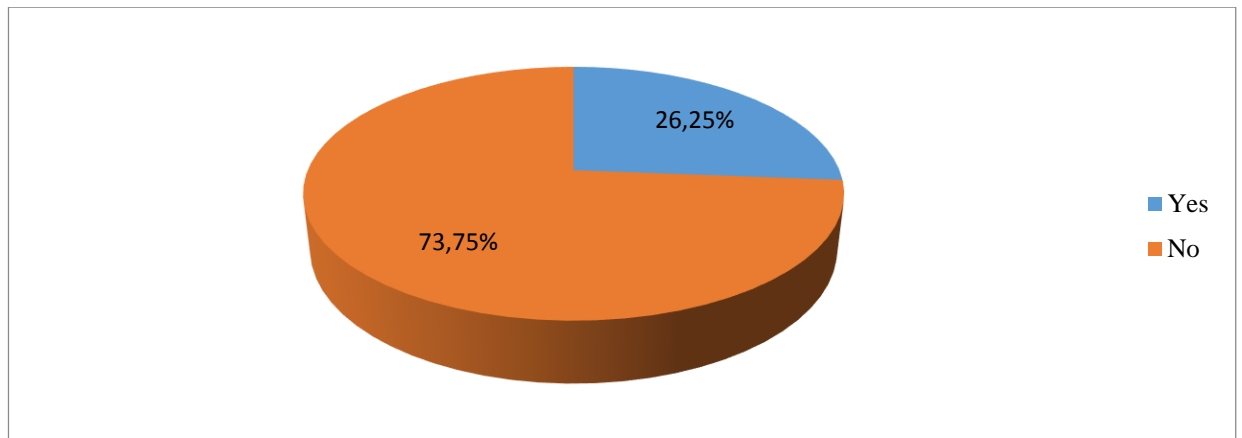
**Figure 05: Students' Awareness of the Concept of E-learning**

The findings in figure (5) reveal that the highest percentage which is 57,5% represents students who were not aware of the concept of e-learning until the COVID onset. In contrast, 42,5% of learners confirmed that they did have an idea of this new technique of learning. This implies that perhaps those students were familiar with studying online before the adoption of this method in universities.

**Question 02:** Are you satisfied with the e-learning method?

a) Yes

b) No



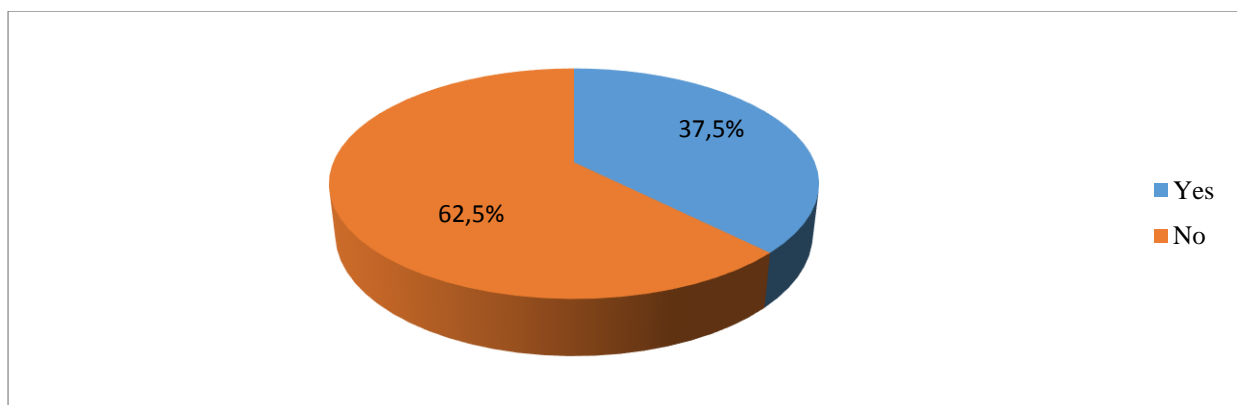
**Figure 06: Students' Satisfaction with the E-learning Method**

Based on the data collected, a high number of respondents with 73,75% of the total sample were not satisfied with the application of the e-learning method. However, only 26,25% symbolize those who were totally pleased with this mode. The results evince that probably those who were satisfied are workers, and this strategy assisted them in balancing their study and job schedules. Nevertheless, those who were dissatisfied with the current method may lack the required conditions such as: internet, technological materials, and technological training to engage in such a manner of learning.

**Question 03:** Have you ever participated in video conference classes?

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 07: Students' Participation in Video Conference Classes**

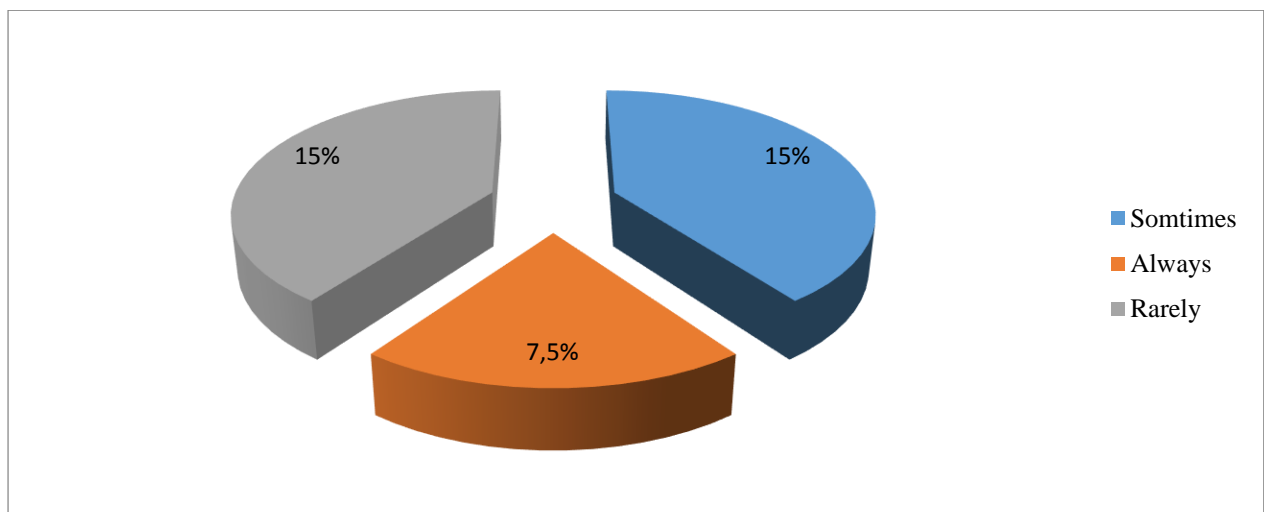
It can be seen that, this question is divided into two parts. The first part indicates that 62,5% of students did not participate in video conference classes, while the remaining 37,5% represents those who did experience the already mentioned strategy.

If yes, how often ?

a) Sometimes

b) Always

c) Rarely



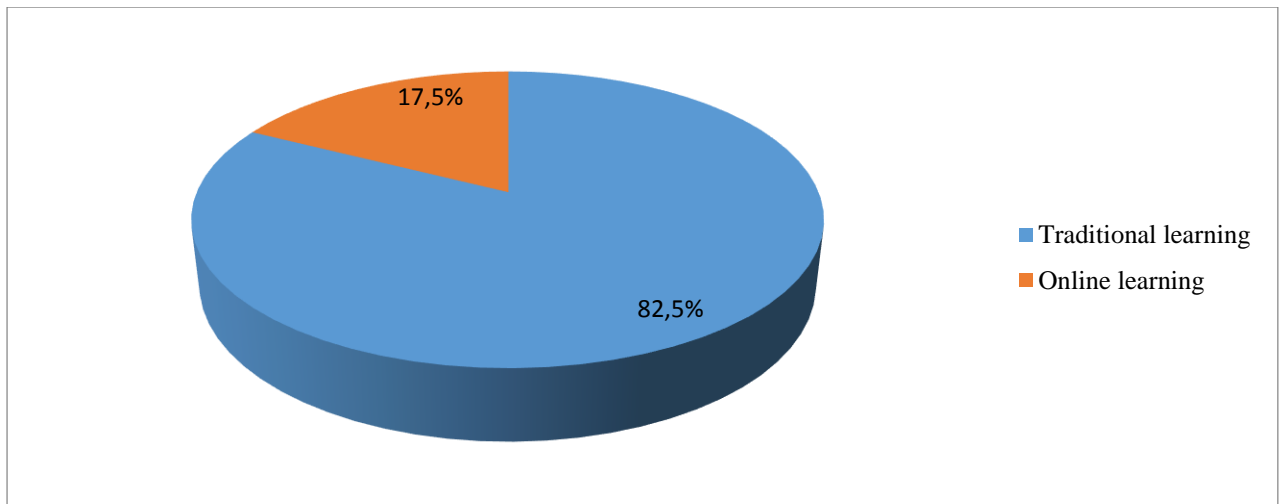
**Figure 08: Frequency of Participation in Video Conference Classes by Students**

For students who opted for yes, 15% of them stated that they sometimes participated in video conference classes. On the other hand, 7,5% of respondents claimed that they were always present in video conference classes. Another 15% represents for those who rarely engaged in such kind of sessions while learning.

**Question04:** Which method of learning do you prefer the most?

a) Traditional learning

b) Online learning



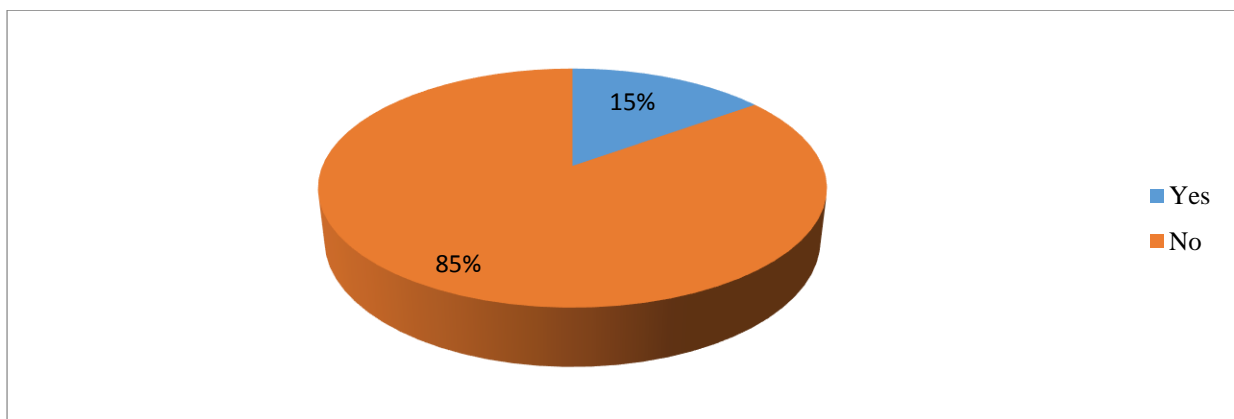
**Figure 09: Students' Preferred Method of Learning**

The students' answers demonstrate that most of the sample with 82,5% preferred traditional learning, whereas only 17,5% of them chose the e-learning mode. As a result, learners may identify their perspectives based on their requirements.

**Question 05:** Do you believe that online learning can completely replace face-to-face instruction? Justify.

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 10: Students' Views about Replacing Traditional learning with Online Learning**

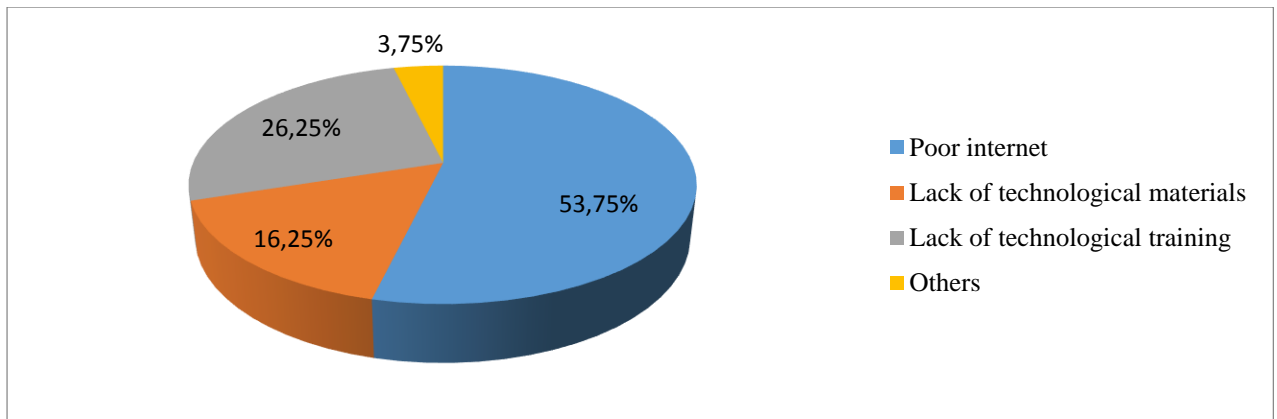
There are two components of this question. The results of the first part reveal that 85% of learners representing the bulk of the sample claimed that online learning cannot fully

replace face-to-face instruction. Alternatively, only 15% of students supported the idea that this new kind of learning can be used satisfactorily instead of face-to-face instruction.

For informants who opted for yes, only few of them justified their answers claiming that the online method is more comfortable in terms of time management through balancing their study and work schedules. In addition, this new applied mode helped those learners to collect information from various sources including YouTube videos, e-learning platforms, and so on. By contrast, students who believe that online learning cannot replace face-to-face instruction stated that most of them do not have the same financial status in terms of internet connection and technological materials. Furthermore, many respondents were not familiar with the absence of source of guidance since the teacher works more on maintaining the students' needs by making courses more understandable and simple, using different teaching approaches. Also, informants argued that the traditional method creates an active learning environment where learners collaborate and exchange ideas, unlike the online mode where learners found themselves less motivated and less interested. Otherwise, there were some students who considered the online method as an alternative just in hard times like the recent pandemic, but it will never replace the traditional one forever. Eventually, a considerable number of participants ignored justifying their answers.

**Question 06:** Which challenges did you face when attending online classes?

- a) Poor internet
- b) Lack of technological materials
- c) Lack of technological training
- d) Others



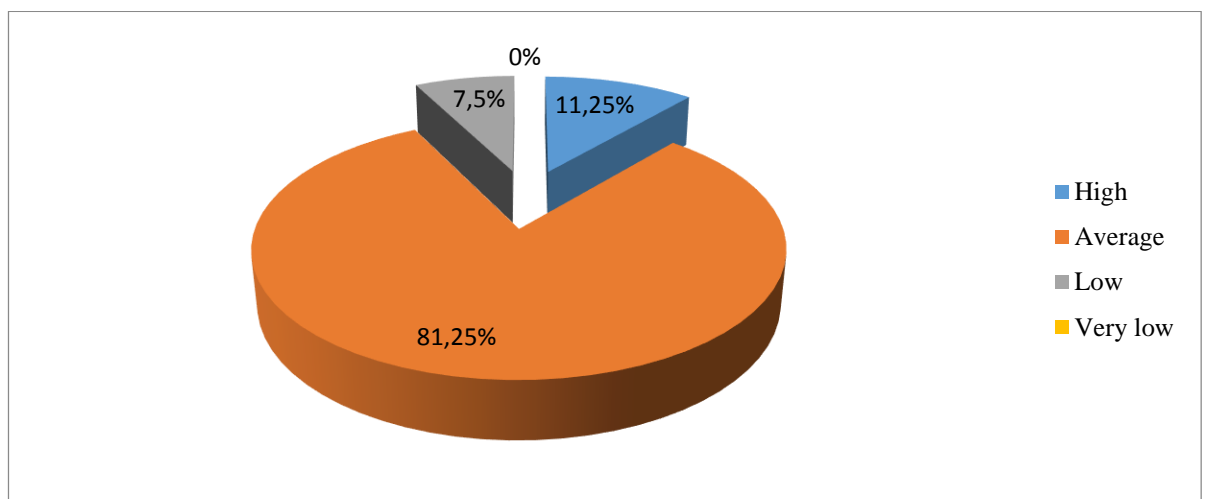
**Figure 11: Students' Main Challenges in Online Classes**

As displayed above in figure (11), the informants biggest issue was poor internet with 53,75%, reporting that it made them unable to enroll in online classes. Also, another 16,25% of the whole sample opted for lack of technological materials as a significant stump. Moreover, 26,25% of students claimed that they lacked technological training, whereas only 3,75% of them chose other choices, citing that lack of attention and understanding are the reasons behind their inability to participate in online classes.

### Section 3: The Writing Skill

**Question 01:** How would you evaluate your level in writing?

- a) High                      b) Average                      c) Low                      d) Very low



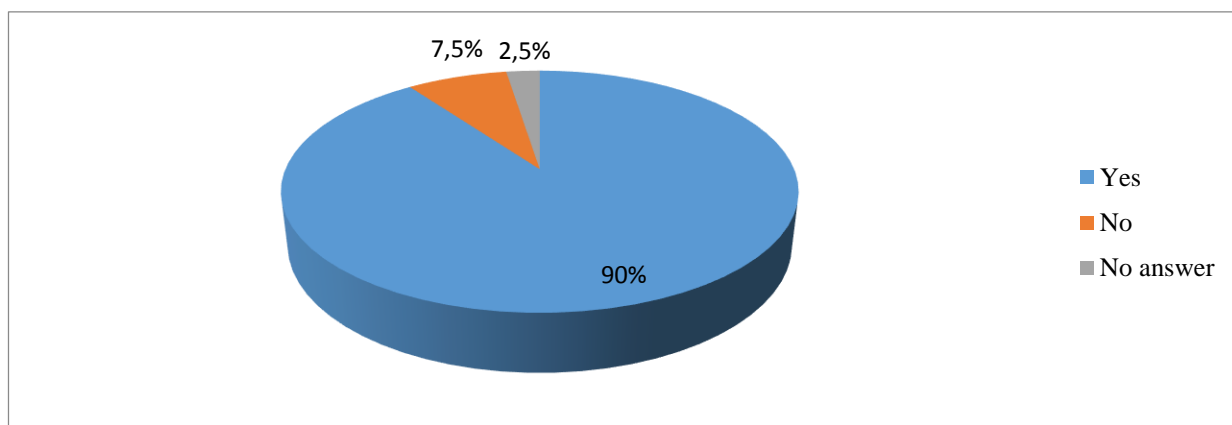
**Figure 12: Students' Level in Writing**

In terms of the learners' level in writing, statistics show that the majority were average writers with 81,25%. In addition, 11,25% of students considered themselves as highly qualified writers, in contrast to the remaining 7,5% who described their level as low. For the very low degree, none of the participants selected this option.

**Question 02:** Do you believe that writing is as significant as the other skills? Why?

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 13: The Significance of Writing Skills for Learners**

According to the data collected, a high number of respondents representing 90% of the total sample agreed that writing is extremely an important skill for learners to master. Another 7,5% goes for those who did not consider writing as significant as the other skills. Furthermore, there was only 2,5% of participants who did not provide their perspectives about the question.

In terms of respondents who considered writing as a valuable skill, they provided the following justifications:

- Writing is a means of communication where learners can express their ideas and emotions.



- Writing is complementary to the other skills since learners are obliged to read to learn new words in order to be used later in their writing and speaking situations.
- Writing is needed for academic researches through evolving the learners' critical thinking.
- Writing improves the students' level by enriching their vocabulary.

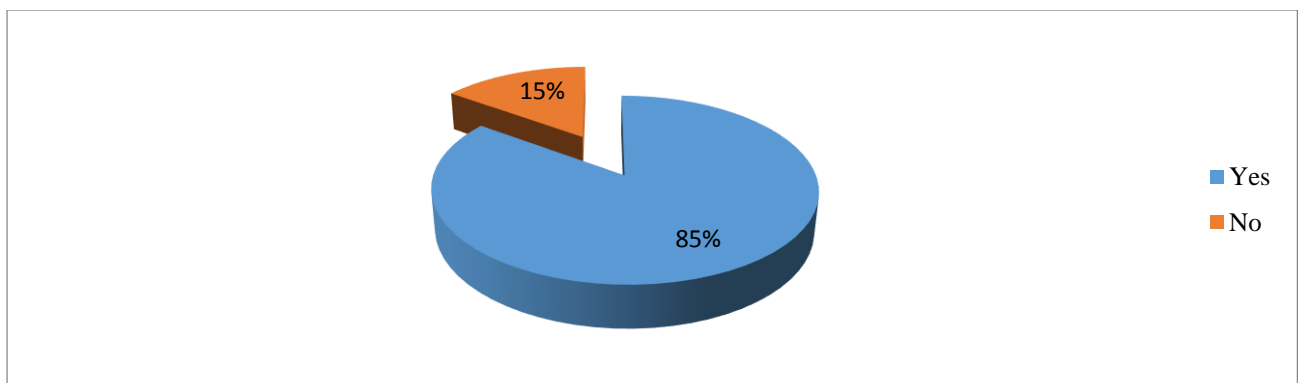
The rest of informants did not provide any justifications.

For those who selected no, the whole percentage neglected offering justifications may be for being not interested in answering such open-ended questions.

**Question 03:** Are you motivated to improve your writing skill?

a) Yes

b) No

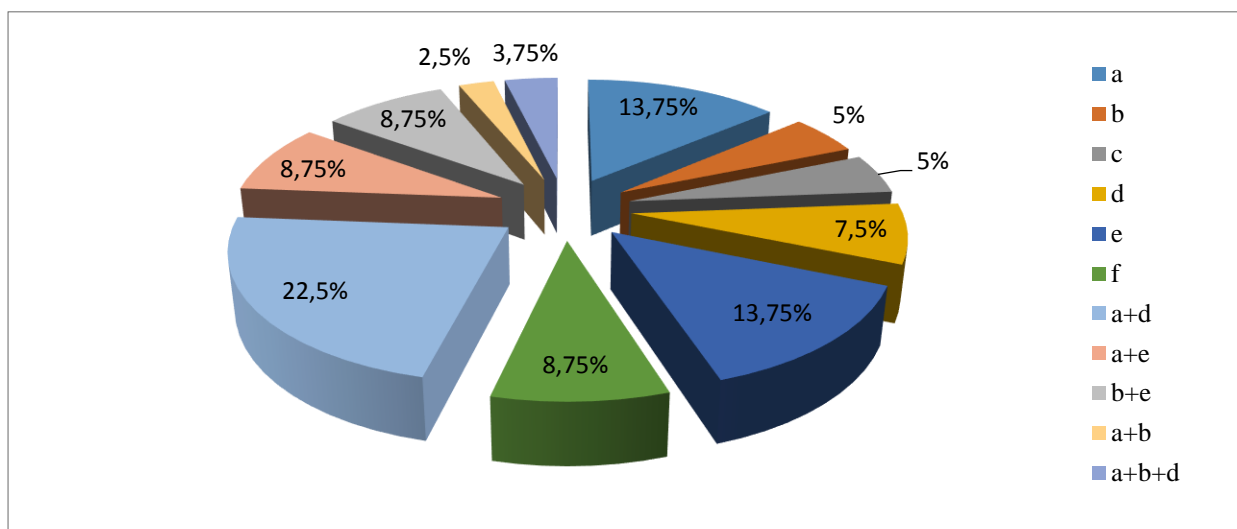


**Figure 14: Students' Motivation to Improve their Performance in Writing**

From the above figure, it can be clearly observed that a lot of informants with 85% were motivated to improve their writing abilities. However, 15% of students determined that they were not motivated to develop their abilities in such a skill may be because they are not interested in improving their writing skill.

**Question 04:** What are the obstacles you face usually when it comes to writing?

- a) Lack of vocabulary      b) Punctuation      c) Spelling      d) Lack of ideas  
 e) Structure      f) All the above



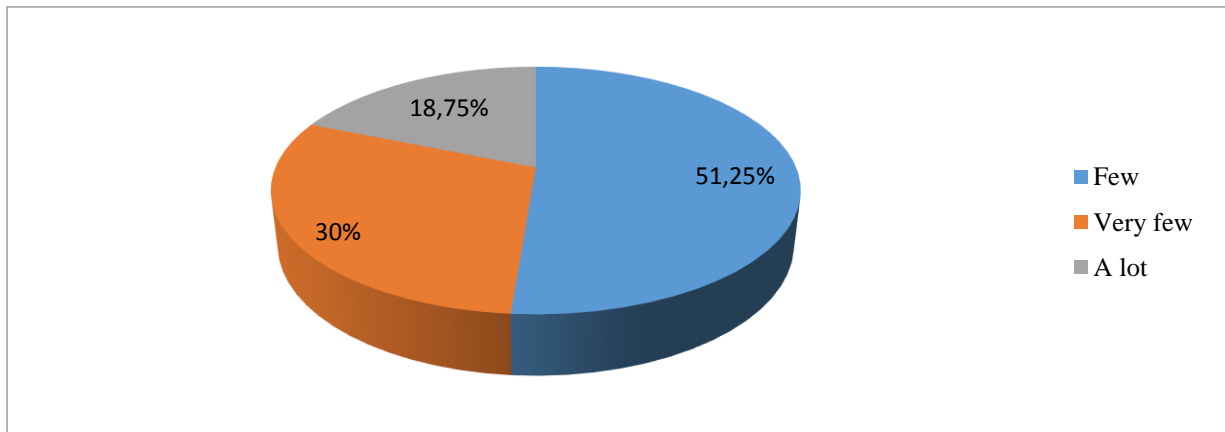
**Figure 15: Students' Major Obstacles when Writing**

The data obtained from the above figure show that students were given the choice of picking more than one option. 13,75% of participants faced difficulties in vocabulary as their linguistic repertoire is insufficient, 5% of them had problems in terms of punctuation since they did not know when to apply the appropriate punctuation marks. Another 5% of informants stated that they had spelling issues, while 7,5% considered themselves poor in producing ideas. Moreover, 13,75% of respondents had obstacles concerning the structure, whereas 8,75% opted for all the options.

Those who selected more than one item, 22,5% representing the highest percentage of the sample opted for both lack of vocabulary and ideas as their main challenge. Alternatively, 8,75% chose lack of vocabulary and structure. Punctuation and structure were selected by 8,75% of students, while another 2,5% goes for those who opted for both lack of vocabulary and punctuation. Finally, the remaining 3,75% represents learners who selected lack of vocabulary, lack of ideas, and punctuation. As a result, it can be concluded that third-year EFL learners have different obstacles when it comes to producing a piece of writing.

**Question 05:** How many opportunities do you have to practice writing in classrooms?

- a) Few                      b) A lot                      c) Very                      d) few



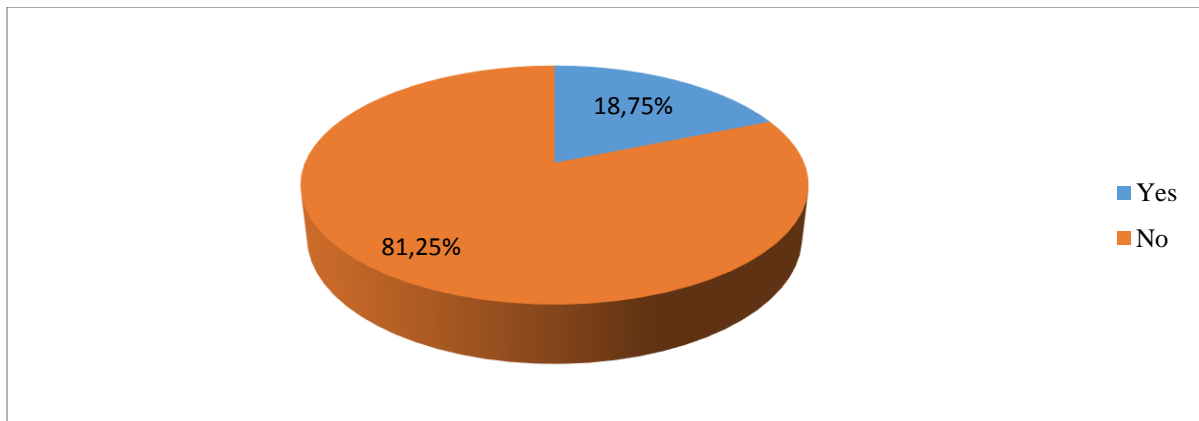
**Figure 16: Students' Opportunities to Practice Writing in Classrooms**

In this regard, the results reveal that the number of respondents which exceed half of the sample with 51,25%, had few classroom chances to practice their writing. Whilst, 18,75% of participants claimed that they had a lot of practice occasions to work on their writing abilities. By contrast, 30% of the rest of students opted for very few opportunities for writing practice.

**Question 06:** Did teachers provide writing practice activities during the COVID-19 outbreak?

- a) Yes    b) No

If yes, what are they?



**Figure 17: Students' Perceptions on whether their Teachers Provided Writing Practice during the Pandemic**

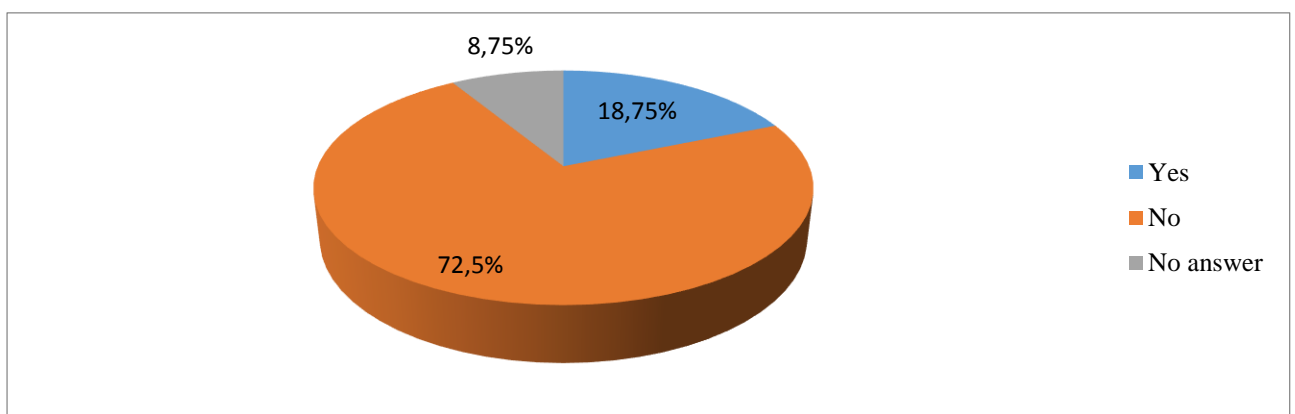
According to the participants' responses, the priority with 81,25% goes to those who opted that teachers did not provide writing practice activities during the COVID-19 epidemic. On the other hand, few informants representing 18,75% of the total sample claimed that their teachers supplied some writing assignments including writing essays, responses, as well as summarizing short stories and novels.

#### **Section 4: The Effects of E-learning on Students' Writing Skills**

**Question 01:** Do you believe that your writing has improved as a result of your online sessions? Justify.

a) Yes

b) No



### **Figure 18: Students' Opinion about the Improvement of their Writing due to Online Sessions**

As the figure 18 reveals, the highest percentage of respondents with 72,5% stated that their writing abilities did not improve after the adoption of the e-learning method. By contrast, only 18,75% of informants claimed that online classes played a vital role in enhancing their writing proficiency. The rest 8,75% represents students who did not give their views about the inquiry.

Few respondents whose writing has improved justified their answers, claiming that they followed native speakers' online courses through watching recorded videos, in addition to uploading e-books, reading articles, and using electronic dictionaries which resulted in reinforcing their grammar, vocabulary, and flow of ideas. This contributed in developing their listening, speaking, and reading skills as well. Others did not justify their answers. On the other hand, students who opted for no justified their answers by providing the following reasons:

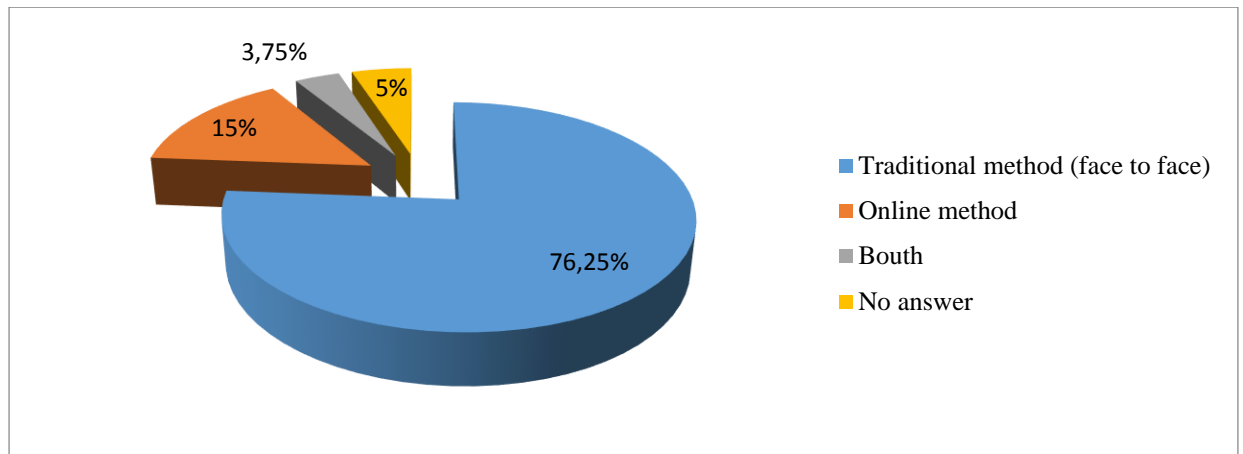
- Lack of writing practice chances.
- Problems of connectivity.
- Insufficient time to take notes in video conference classes.
- Lack of motivation.
- The absence of teachers' feedback.
- The absence of source of guidance.

Others did not support their responses.

**Question 02:** Which method do you believe is appropriate for improving your writing proficiency?

a) Traditional Method (face to face)

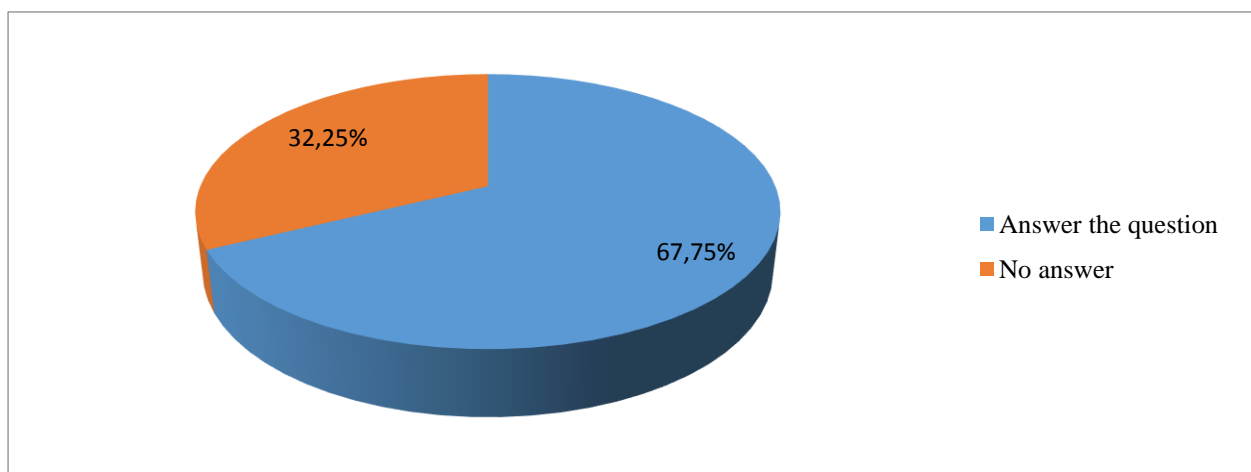
b) Online method



**Figure 19: The Appropriate Method of Learning for Students to Improve their Writing Proficiency**

The results obtained denote that the majority of participants, representing 76,25% chose the traditional style of learning as their preferred one to improve their writing proficiency. On the other hand, 15% of learners opted for the new applied online learning as the most appropriate one. 3,75% represents for students who voted for both modes, whereas the remaining 5% represents those who did not answer the question at all.

**Question 03:** In few lines, give your perspectives about the application of e-learning in Mila University Center in terms of teaching and learning writing skills.



**Figure 20: Students' Perspectives about the Implementation of E-learning in MUC in Terms of Teaching and Learning Writing**

It is clear from figure (20) that the majority of participants with 67,75% believed that the online mode is obviously not an effective way at Mila University Center in terms of teaching and learning writing skills. Learners started with criticizing the e-learning process in general, supporting their views with the following justifications:

- The absence of the appropriate strategies to teach such a skill via online sessions.
- The absence of interaction between teachers and learners which resulted in lack of practice chances.
- Lack of technological training.
- Lack of technological materials.
- The online learning process did not consist of any practice assignments or tasks for learners to work on developing their writing proficiency.
- Lectures were uploaded via university e-learning platforms without providing any explanation.

By contrast, students who claimed in Q1 that their writing has improved as a result to online sessions, belong to the remaining 32,25% of students who did not provide any perspectives about this question.

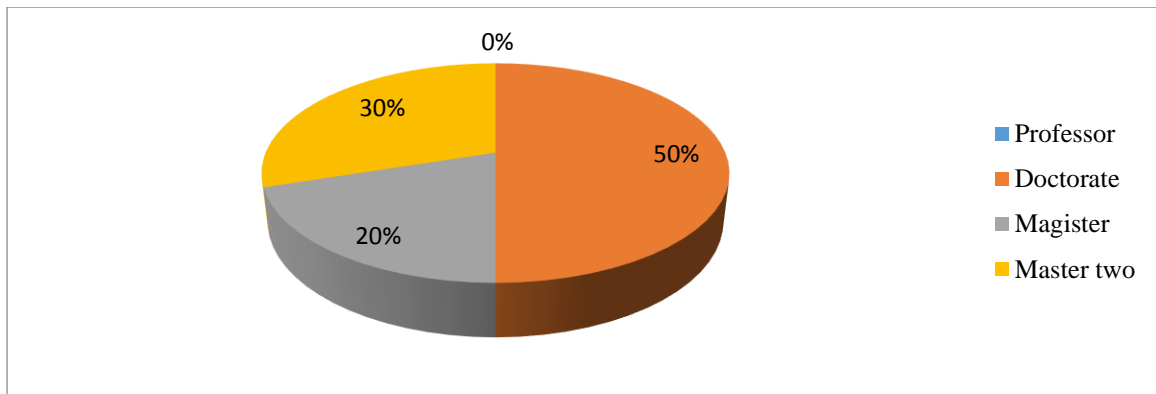
## **2. Teachers' Questionnaire**

### **2.1. Data Results and Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire**

#### **Section One: General Information**

**Question 01:** What is your professional degree?

- a) Professor      b) Doctorate      c) Magister      d) Master two



**Figure 21: Teachers' Professional Degree**

According to the obtained data, 50% of teachers are PhD holders. Another 30% represents those with Master Two degree, while the remaining 20% goes for participants who have Magister degree since none of them is a professor.

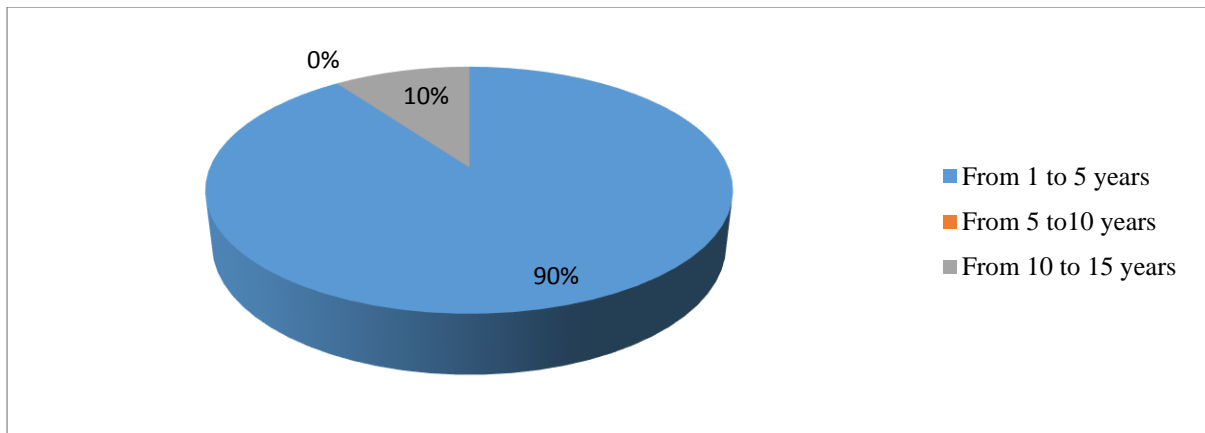
**Question 2:** What do you usually teach in written expression?

This open-ended question is designed to find out what teachers typically cover in written expression module. According to the sample, teaching writing depends mainly on the students' level (first, second, and third year). Basically, teachers focus on developing learners' competence as regards writing a cohesive and coherent essay, starting from the basic level of phrases to identifying types of sentences (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex). In addition, teachers focus on teaching techniques of writing depending on punctuation, syntax, and how to organize ideas reaching types and structure of essays, as well as how to prepare a reading report (critical analytical reading) to work on developing the students' critical thinking.

**Question 3:** How long have you been teaching written expression?

- a) From 1 to 5 years      b) From 5 to 10 years.      c) More than 10 years





**Figure 22: Teachers' Experience with Teaching Written Expression**

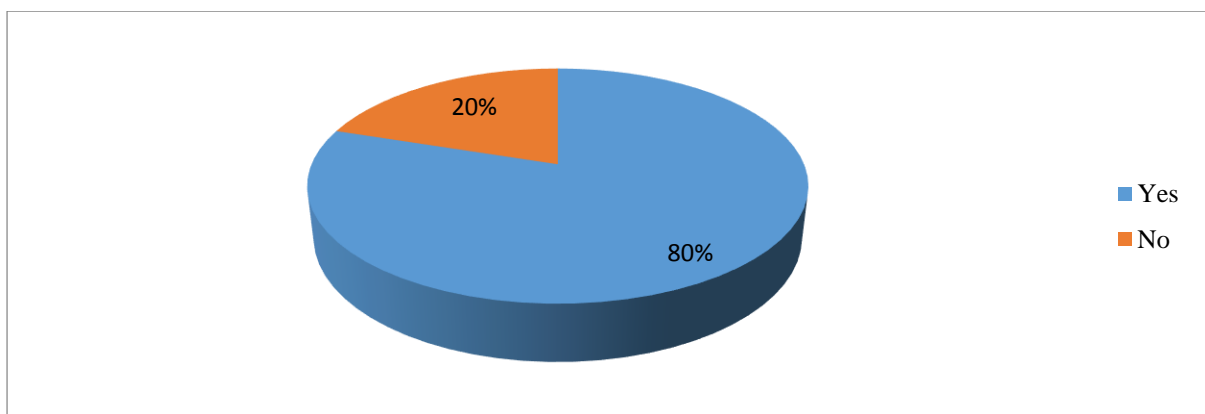
As it reveals in figure (22), the dominant percentage with 90% represents teachers who had the experience of teaching written expression from 1 to 5 years. In contrast, only 10% of the sample taught writing for more than 10 years, and no one opted for 5 to 10 years.

### **Section Two: Teachers' Impression about The E-learning Method**

**Question 1:** Do you believe that EFL learners at Mila University exploited e-learning during the COVID-19 epidemic?

a) YES

b) NO

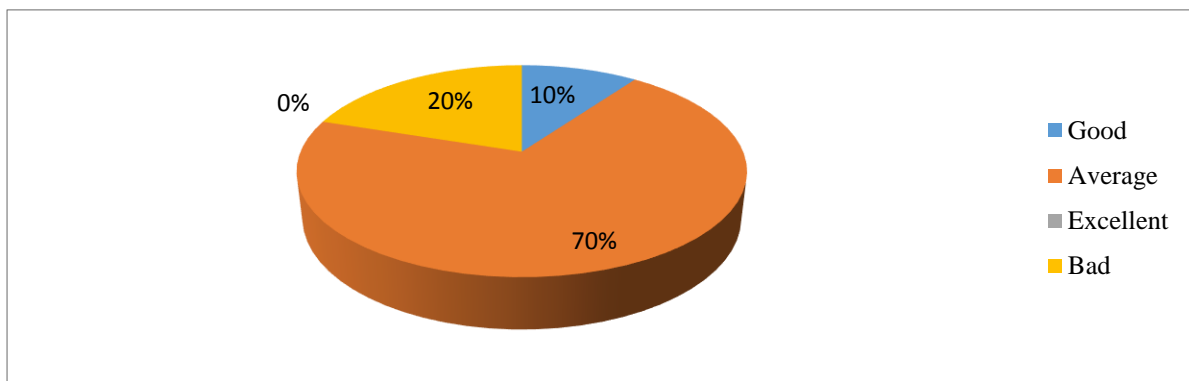


**Figure 23: Teachers' Perceptions Towards Exploiting E-learning by MUC Students**

The results above illustrate that 80% of teachers stated that Mila University students took advantage of e-learning during Corona virus pandemic, while 20% of them believed that they did not exploit it at all. This is may be related to the barriers that students faced during their learning process.

**Question 2:** How do you rate the applicability of e-learning at Mila University Center?

- a) Good      b) Excellent      c) Average      d) Bad

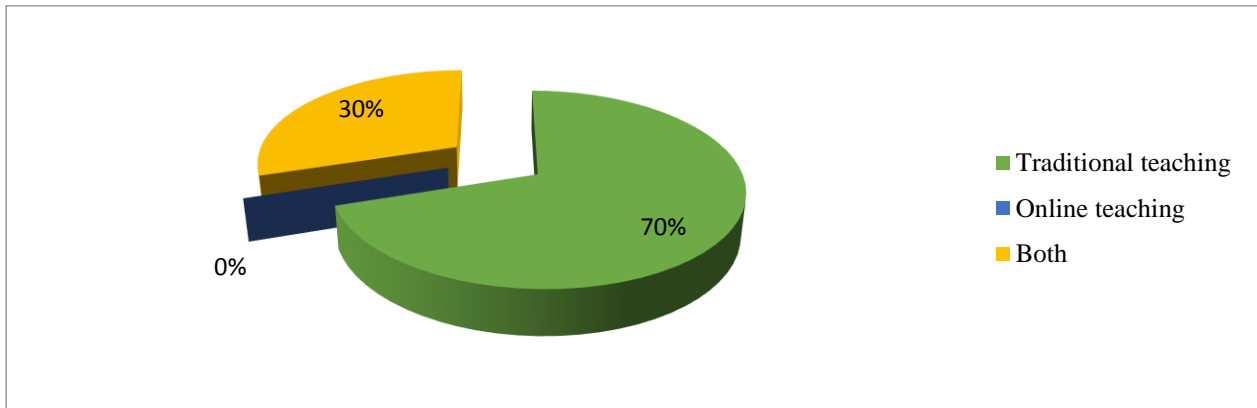


**Figure 24: Teachers' Evaluation for E-learning at MUC**

The findings in figure (24) indicate that the majority of teachers with 70% agreed that the process of e-learning at Mila University Center is average. 20% goes for informants who opted for bad, whereas only 10% of them claimed that this method is a good one. None of the teachers considered e-learning as an excellent experience.

**Question 3:** Which method of teaching do you prefer the most? Justify.

- a) Traditional teaching      b) Online teaching



**Figure 25: Teachers' Favorite Mode of Teaching**

As it seems, this question is divided into two parts. The findings of the first part reveal that a large number of teachers representing 70% of the total sample opted for traditional teaching as their preferred one. The remaining 30% represents teachers who voted for both methods, and none of them considered the online method to be a reliable one to teach.

Teachers who opted for traditional teaching provided the following justifications:

- Online modes are extremely difficult to apply unless both students and teachers are well-equipped to comply with their various demands.
- It is the best method for teacher and learners because it motivates learners (all) to interact directly with their teacher and this helps to facilitate the learning process unlike the online teaching (few learners).
- It is important to speak face to face to students, explain points, give feedback, and clarify misconceptions.
- Online learning is completely new at Mila University Center, and students are not yet familiar with it. Consequently, Students and teachers have to be very cautious and introduce a gradual change.

- Algerian Universities are far beyond online teaching as it should be. There exists a dearth in terms of means and the training of both learners and teachers.

Teachers who opted for both methods provided the following justifications:

- Both methods are required in the teaching/learning process. Traditional classroom gives students a chance to connect face to face. At the same time, there is also value in e-learning because it is flexible and offers convenience.
- Both are beneficial in the current context characterized by accelerated technological changes. As teachers, it is important to apply these techniques because it is even funnier and easier to teach online.
- Both methods are good, the problem is just the bad internet access and the lack of development equipments.

### Section Three: The Writing Skill

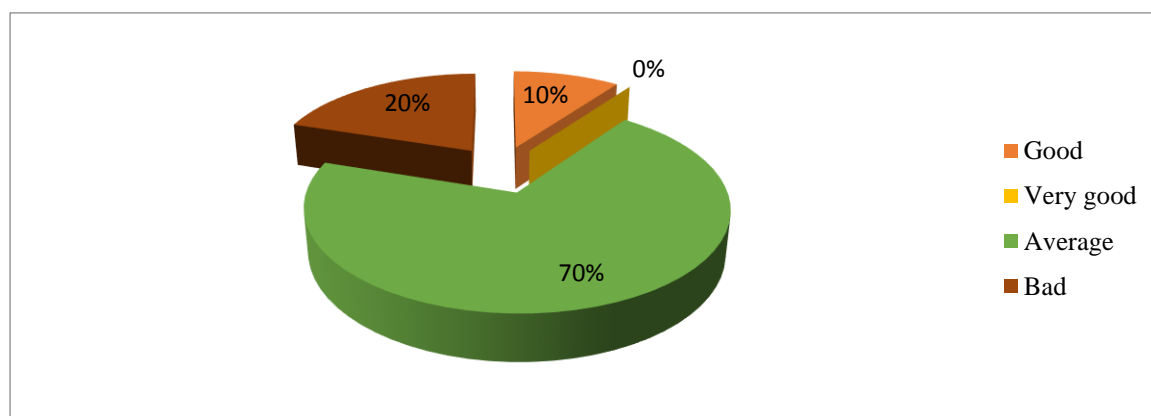
**Question 1:** How do you evaluate your students' writing skill?

a) Good

b) Very good

c) Average

d) Bad



**Figure 26: Teachers' Evaluation for their Students' Writing Skills**

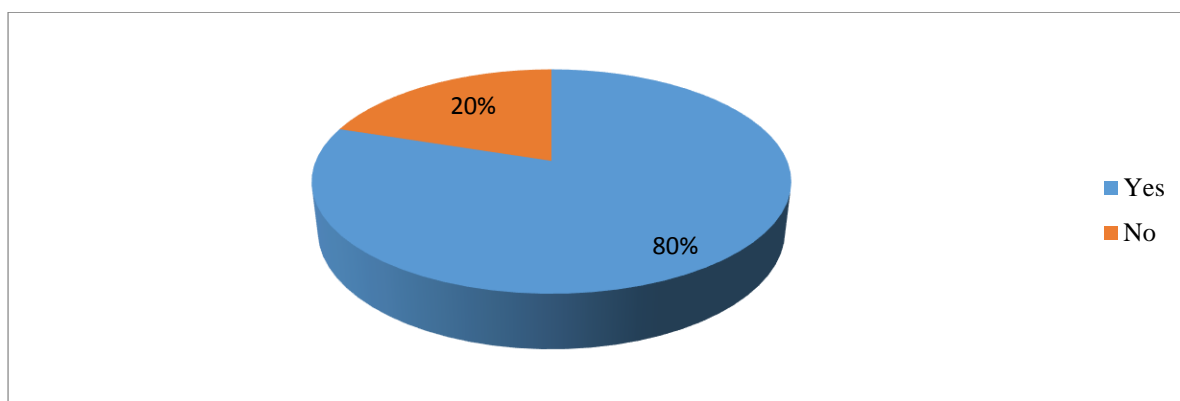
In terms of the teachers' opinion concerning their students' writing skills, results indicate that the majority of instructors with 70% opted for the average level, while 20%

claimed that their students are bad writers. In contrast, only one teacher representing 10% believed that his/ her students have good writing skills. For the very good level, none of the teachers chose this option.

**Question 2:** Do you believe that students are interested in improving their writing skills?

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 27: Teachers' Views Towards their Students' Interest in Improving their Writing Skills**

According to the figure above, a large number of teachers (80%) believed that their learners are interested in improving their writing skills, possibly because their students are making efforts since they are aware of the significance of mastering this skill in second language acquisition. However, 20% of them claimed that their students have no desire to improve their abilities in such a skill, perhaps for being less motivated.

**Question 3:** What are the major difficulties of EFL learners in writing?

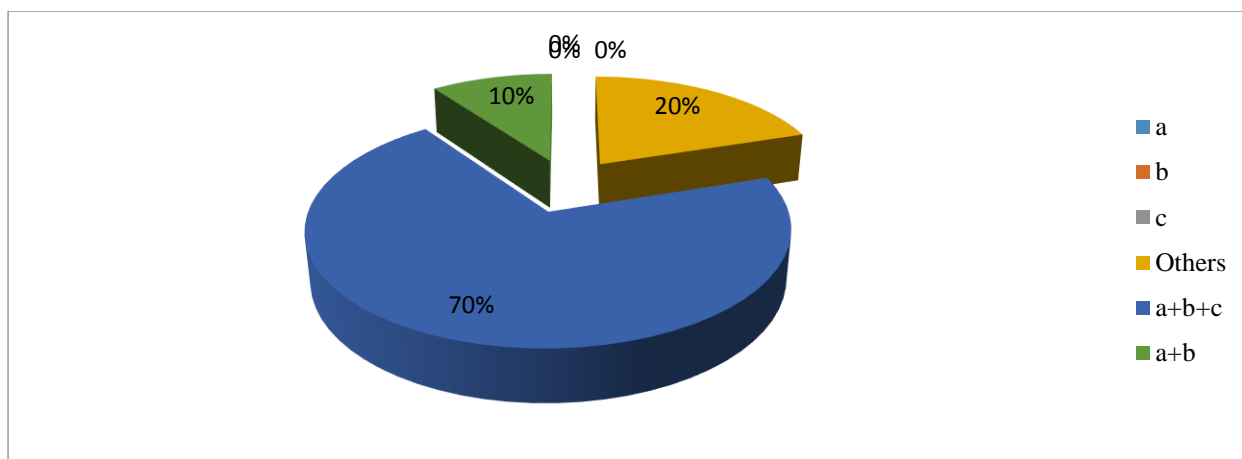
a) Lexical

b) Grammatical

c) Mechanical (punctuation, spelling and

organization of ideas)

d) Others



**Figure 28: EFL Learners' Major Difficulties in Writing According to their Teachers**

It is clear from figure (28) that the majority of teachers with 70% opted for lexical, grammatical, and mechanical issues (a + b + c) as the most writing difficulties of EFL learners. The other 20% represents respondents who provided other difficulties including lack of creative thinking, misuse of vocabulary items, and lack of diction. On the other hand, only 10% of the sample chose lexical and grammatical problems.

**Question 4: Which difficulties do you face when teaching writing?**

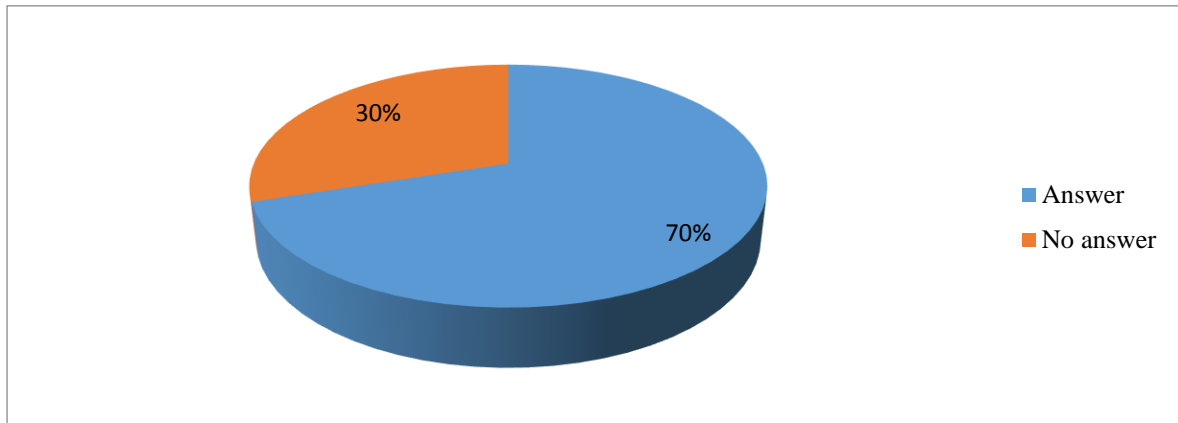
Since writing is considered to be the most complex skill to master, teachers faced various difficulties regarding their process of teaching this skill. In this sense, instructors provided different barriers:

- Keeping students motivated.
- Tracking down learners' errors.
- Deciding on the most convenient form of feedback to use.
- Crowded classes.
- Materials and time constraints to teach students.
- Students have low interest in learning writing.
- The absence of a reading module affects negatively students' writing style.

- Students' weaknesses in writing (lack of vocabulary, organization of ideas, and mechanical issues).

#### Section four: The Effects of E-learning on Students' Writing

**Question 1:** Which methods did you use to teach writing via e-learning?



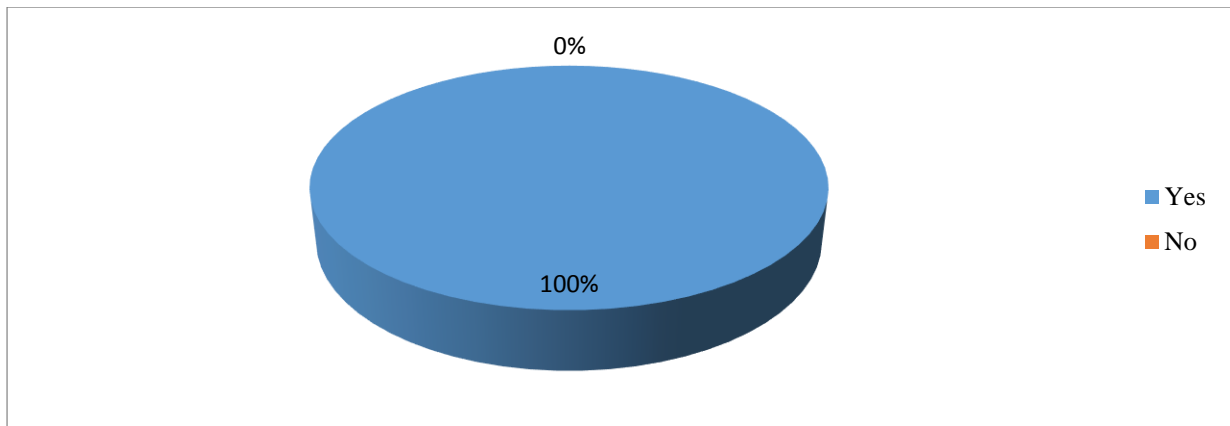
**Figure 29: The Adopted Methods by Teachers to Teach Writing via E-learning**

It is clear from the above figure that 50% of teachers used some different methods to teach writing via e-learning, including uploading lecture content at the online platforms, virtual meetings, making reference to E-libraries and PDF reading materials, then providing collaborative distance writing activities based on the previous lectures. For example, students were given books to read then provide written analysis (summarizing or paraphrasing), in addition to writing essays. The other half of the sample with 50% did not answer the question at all, may be because they did not teach writing via e-learning.

**Question 2:** Do you correct your student' assignments?

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 30: Students' Assignments Correction by Teachers**

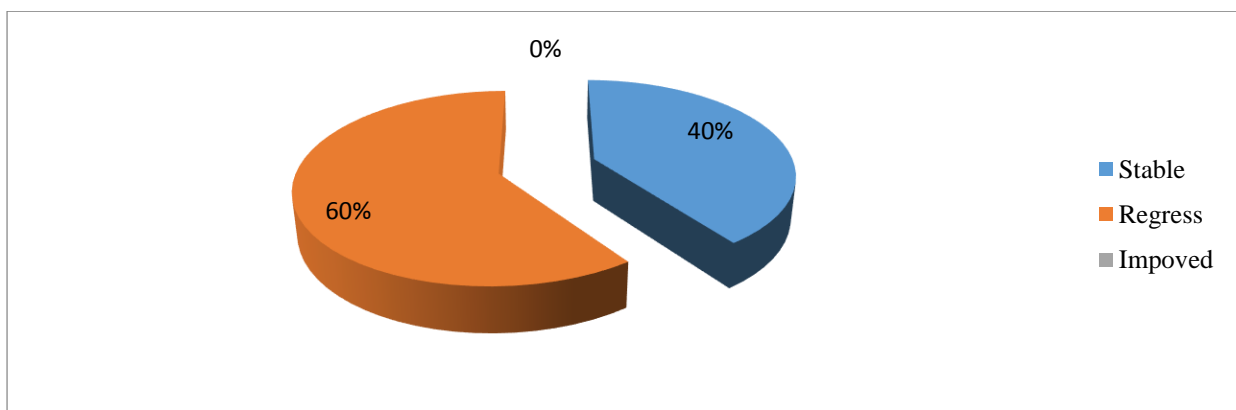
Based on the collected data, all the teachers representing 100% declared that they corrected their students' assignments, which is a very significant way to provide them with feedbacks, allowing them to identify and avoid their mistakes in the future.

**Question 3:** How do you assess your students' writing abilities after participating in e-learning sessions? Justify.

a) Improved

b) Stable

c) Regress



**Figure 31: Teachers' Evaluation for their Students' Writing Performance after Participating in E-learning Sessions**

According to the collected information, the majority of participants with 60% believed that their students' writing regressed after engaging in online sessions. 40%



represents teachers who claimed that their students' performance was stable, which means that e-learning has no effect on their writing production. Finally, after using e-learning, none of the teachers agreed that their students' writing has improved.

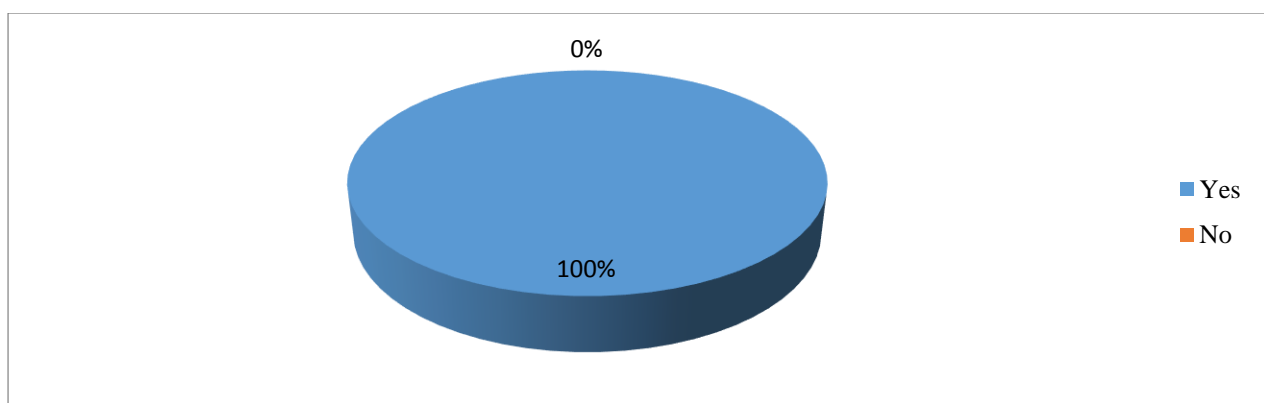
Teachers who opted for the third option (regress), justified their answers claiming that e-learning aggravated the perennial conundrum of the lack of exposure to written instances of language which, in turn, led to regressing students' performance. Additionally, students lost creativity and motivation due to the problem of over dependence since e-learning provided them with opportunities to plagiarize. Moreover, students need to attend sessions of writing because they need instructions and assessments of their teachers to improve their performance. For teachers who opted for stable, only one supported his/her choice stating that students did not make any improvement because of lack of interest and reading.

**Question 4:** Do you believe that technology can help students to enhance their writing skill?

Justify.

a) Yes

b) No



**Figure 32: Teachers' Perceptions about whether the Use of Technology Can Help Students to Enhance their Writing Skills**

The above figure reveals that all the informants with 100% believed that the appropriate use of technology is effective to enhance students' performance in writing.

Teachers supported their views claiming that writing is not a skill that comes easily, even for the most experienced ones. Instead, it takes time and the willingness to learn. It can take years to improve writing skills, though this process can often be speed up with the assistance of technology. For example, the usage of proper software tools can be beneficial like E-platforms, podcasts, electronic feedbacks, plagiarism checker, the use of e-books and sites that can help with grammar, spelling, and even sentence structure. These are great for catching errors that students might miss when proofreading their own work. Technology, as well, provides room for collaborative and cooperative writing techniques in which learners can intensify their writing rates. However, the majority of instructors determined that technology in this case, did not help students to develop their performance due to the inappropriate use, lack of technological training and materials.

### **3. Discussion of the Results**

#### **3.1. Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire**

The main purpose behind conducting this questionnaire is to investigate students' perceptions about the adoption of e-learning at Mila University Center, and its effect on their writing skills. This survey consists of 19 questions separated into 4 sections which was distributed by hand and via emails to 80 third-year English students out of a total number of 211.

The findings of the first section which focuses mainly on students' profiles, revealed that the most dominant percentage of respondents are females in contrast to males who represent the minority. Informants are aged between 19 to 25 years old with only few number of those who are over than 25; this implies that they are roughly the same age. Furthermore, the results illustrated that participants are between good and average levels in terms of

learning English as a second language. In addition, the results revealed that most of informants were in a normal psychosocial states during the quarantine.

Also, the findings of the obtained data showed that the majority of respondents have negative views about the impact of electronic learning on their writing skills. It is argued that participants were not satisfied about the e-learning mode and they made their judgments based on the fact that most of them were not aware of the concept until the COVID-19 onset. Moreover, the students' responses revealed that they encountered a number of obstacles during the implementation of this new method, including inadequate internet access, their financial situations, and lack of knowledge in dealing with technology due to the lack of training. Besides that, Mila University Center's e-learning process was mainly centered on posting lectures to platforms with no participation in video conferencing sessions, which were supposed to make lectures more comprehensible. It seems that these were the primary factors behind respondents' dissatisfaction, which led to a stronger attachment to traditional instructions.

The results illustrated that nearly everyone in the sample is aware of the importance of the writing skill. This increased their motivation to improve such a skill in the future. However, learners' responses indicated that teachers did not supply sufficient practice activities for them to work on developing their writing proficiency inside classrooms. Additionally, the data demonstrated that learners struggle with generating ideas, arranging structure, and spelling errors. The former explains why learners regard themselves as average writers.

Eventually, the analysis indicated that Mila University Center failed in teaching written expression module via e-learning classes due to the significance lack of the necessary strategies to make e-learning a successful process.

To sum up, all of the above results reported that a huge number of students have negative perceptions about the implementation of Electronic learning in teaching and learning writing.

### **3.2. Discussion of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers' questionnaire intends to gather further data on their attitudes towards implementing electronic learning in teaching written expression, and how it affected their students' performance.

Based on the obtained results from section one which deals with the teachers' background, it can be determined that Mila University teachers of written expression are highly qualified with sufficient expertise in teaching the most perplexing skill to achieve. Additionally, they all agreed that they follow the same course curriculum, starting with the initial elements of sentences, progressing to the completion of a well-coordinated and coherent essay.

Regarding the second section, the findings shed lights on the notion that although EFL learners at Mila University used e-learning during COVID outbreak, teachers rated the mode's applicability as average, possibly due to the hurdles that students had already mentioned. Moreover, during the pandemic timeframe, the experience of adopting electronic learning as a way to save formal education resulted in a stronger attachment to traditional instruction by teachers, which explains the fact that both teachers and students consider face-to-face interaction as a best way to deliver and acquire knowledge.

To go further, the results illustrated that teachers of written expression regarded their students as average writers because of the major obstacles they encounter such as lexical, grammatical, and mechanical issues, as well as lack of creative thinking, diction, and vocabulary misuse. Besides, teachers' responses highlighted that they struggle from a variety

of problems when teaching writing including: students' motivation, error tracking, crowded classes, and so on. However, all the previously mentioned results do not deny the fact that teachers believe their students are interested in improving their writing skills.

Finally, it is clear through the analysis that teachers depended on a variety of electronic platforms to teach writing via e-learning. Yet, it cannot be denied that teaching the writing skill via e-learning is a hard task to accomplish, since half of the sample ignored providing feedback on the inquiry. Furthermore, the correction of students' assignments made the majority of teachers evaluate their writing abilities as regressing, while others as stable after engaging in e-learning sessions due to several factors, the most significant of which is over dependence, which resulted in losing creativity, interests, and motivation. However, teachers concluded that technology, if used appropriately, would enhance students' writing proficiency.

#### **4. Limitations of the Study**

During the process of conducting this recent study, the researchers encountered some obstacles and issues which are stated as follow:

- lack of resources, particularly books.
- In gathering data, it was not always possible to meet students and teachers due to the new applied process of learning (15 days online and 15 days face-to-face).
- Because the majority of students were absent in classrooms, questionnaires had to be resubmitted electronically in order to complete the required sample, which took more time than it was expected.
- Insufficient justifications provided by students and teachers.
- An interview was designed for teachers, but it was turned into a questionnaire instead due to their busy schedules.

- An experiment could not be carried out due to the insufficient time.

## **5. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations for both teachers and students can be suggested as follow:

### **5.1. For Students**

- Students are recommended to reinforce their technological training to avoid problems in coping with online learning.
- Students should work more on keeping themselves motivated.
- Students should take into consideration their teachers' feedbacks to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- Students are recommended to be more aware of the appropriate use of technology.

### **5.2. For Teachers**

- Teachers should provide a reading module to help learners develop their critical and creative thinking.
- Teachers are recommended to look for new strategies of teaching writing online where both students and teachers can interact with each other.
- Teachers should work on expanding their knowledge in terms of dealing with online teaching.
- Teachers should provide more writing practice chances for learners.

## **6. Suggestions for Further Research**

Following the completion of this study, the researchers provide some suggestions for further research:

- Other researchers are advised to be precise and unambiguous in their questions, as well as to avoid asking too many open ended questions, as the respondents will not respond seriously.
- In order to obtain additional information about their work, researchers are recommended to use more than one tool, such as interviews, experiments, and questionnaires.
- They are recommended to reach as many participants as possible.

### **Conclusion**

The last section of the practical part concludes with a full analysis of each question from both students' and teachers' responses, in addition to a comprehensive discussion of the obtained results in order to attain the research aims. Moreover, this section finishes with the most difficulties faced while conducting this study, as well as future recommendations and suggestions.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter covers the practical part of the conducted research. It explores the impact of electronic learning on students' writing performance by discussing the findings of both teachers' and students' questionnaires. Based on the responses, it is clear that respondents agree that e-learning has a negative effect on students' writing skills, validating the already set hypothesis. The majority of learners blame their regressed level on lack of practice opportunities and interaction with teachers. On the other hand, teachers determined that learning online made students less motivated, less interested, since both of them were unprepared for online instructions, resulting in the misuse of technology since it may lead to better results if handled properly. As a result, some pedagogical recommendations are suggested.

## General Conclusion

The current dominance of technology pushed the field of education to adjust with recent advancement, since the technological revolution has shattered the barriers of conventional method through shifting to electronic learning. This latter, which peaked with the COVID-19 onset, was a turning point where both teachers and learners discovered new strategies for acquiring as well as delivering knowledge easily, cheaply, and quickly. Moreover, learning EFL became one of the most vital aspects in everyone's life because it is regarded as the language of the world and the key to the gates of wisdom. In this context, English writing is the most sophisticated skill to grasp even for the most competent ones. Patience and willingness are two key aspects which are required in the learning process since writing takes longer time than the other skills to be improved, but it can be accelerated with the help of technology. The issue that needs to be investigated is whether or not using e-learning helped students to enhance their writing skill. Thus, a questionnaire is designed for both teachers and students in order to explore their perceptions about the effects of e-learning during the pandemic on third year EFL students' writing performance at Mila University Center.

This research paper is divided into two main chapters; the first one covers the theoretical framework of the research and consists of two sections. The first section deals with the e-learning concept emphasizing on its main definitions, historical background, and types, as well as its platforms, tools, and advantages versus disadvantages, in addition to the implementation of the method and the major challenges encountered during the pandemic. On the other hand, the second section focuses on writing and the main approaches for teaching it. It also discusses the relevance, nature, relationship between writing and reading, as well as the difficulties faced by EFL students during the writing process and several



strategies for overcoming these difficulties. The section also goes into the strategies of teaching written expression module through online sessions.

The second chapter concerns with the field work of the study, which deals with the analysis and discussion of the collected data from teachers' and students' questionnaires. The results of the students' survey indicate that they have negative views about the new applied mode of learning in terms of enhancing their writing proficiency due to their insufficient technological training and materials, as well as connectivity issues, lack of practice chances, and the absence of interaction with teachers. Additionally, the teachers' responses show that they were dissatisfied with their students' grades in written expression module after engaging in online classes, claiming that they lost interest to write which resulted in a loss of creativity because they believe that students need assessments and instructions of their teachers.

Eventually, it is obvious through the lines of the research that both teachers and students support the traditional instruction over the online method since it is the most suitable one to meet their needs.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix (A)

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear third-year students,

The reason behind this questionnaire is to study the effects of e-learning during the pandemic on students' writing skills. Thus, you are cordially requested to answer the following questions in order to investigate your attitudes and perspectives towards the topic. Your answers will be so helpful for the completion of our research. Please, use a tick (✓) to indicate your chosen answer and specify your options when needed.

#### Section One: General Information

1. What is your gender?

a) Male

b) Female

2. How old are you?

a) 19 to 22

b) 22to 25

c) More than 25

3. How do you evaluate your level in English?

a) Excellent

b) Good

c) Average

d) low

4. How do you describe your psychosocial state during the quarantine?

a) Depressed

b) Normal

c) Good

**Section Two: Electronic Learning**

1- Before the pandemic, were you aware of the concept of e-learning?

a) Yes                       b) No

2- Are you satisfied with the e-learning method?

a) Yes                       b) No

3- Have you ever participated in video conference classes?

a) Yes                       b) No

• If yes, how often?

a) Sometimes

b) Always

c) Rarely

4- Which method of learning do you prefer the most?

a) Traditional learning

b) Online learning

5- Do you believe that online learning can completely replace face- to-face instruction?

a) Yes                       b) No

• Please justify your answer

.....

.....

.....

6- Which challenges did you face when attending online classes?

a) Poor internet

b) Lack of technological materials

c) Lack of technological training

d) Others

.....  
.....

### Section Three: The Writing Skill

1- How would you evaluate your level in writing?

a) High

b) Average

c) Low

d) Very low

2- Do believe that writing is as significant as the other skills?

a) Yes

b) No

Why?

.....  
.....

3- Are you motivated to improve your writing skill?

a) Yes

b) No

4- What are the obstacles you usually face when it comes to writing?

a) Lack of vocabulary

b) Punctuation

c) Spelling

d) Lack of ideas

e) Structure

f) All the above

5- How many opportunities do you have to practice writing in classrooms?

a) Few

b) A lot

c) Very few

6- Did teachers provide writing practice activities during the COVID-19 outbreak?

a) Yes

b) No

• If yes, what are they?

.....  
.....

**Section Four: The Effects of E-learning on Students' writing skill**

1- Do you believe that your writing has improved as a result of your online sessions?

a) Yes

b) No

• Justify

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

2- Which method do you believe is appropriate for improving your writing proficiency?

a) Traditional face to face

b) Online method

3- In few lines, give your perspectives about the application of e-learning in Mila University Center in terms of teaching and learning writing skills.

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**Thank you**

## Appendix (B)

### Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We would be so grateful if you could respond to the following questionnaire about the effects of e-learning on students' writing skills during the COVID-19 epidemic. Your answers will help us in our research to indicate whether e-learning has had a beneficial impact on students' writing proficiency. Please, use a tick (✓) to indicate your chosen answer and specify your options when needed.

Thank you in advance for your contribution and cooperation.

#### Section One: General Information

1- What is your professional degree?

a) Professor

b) Doctorate

c) Magister

d) Master two

2- What do you usually teach in written expression?

.....

.....

.....

3- How long have you been teaching written expression?

a) From 1 to 5 years

b) From 5 to 10 years

c) More than 10 years



## Section Two: Teachers' Impressions about The E-learning Method

1- Do you believe that EFL learners at Mila University exploited E-learning during the COVID-19 epidemic?

a) Yes

b) No

2- How do you rate the applicability of e-learning at Mila University Center?

a) Good

b) Excellent

c) Average

d) Bad

3- Which method of teaching do you prefer the most?

a) Traditional teaching

b) Online teaching

Please justify:

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

## Section Three: The Writing Skill

1- How do you evaluate your students' writing skills?

a) Good

b) Very good

c) Average

d) Bad

2- Do you believe that students are interested in improving their writing skills?

a) Yes

b) No

3- What are the major difficulties of EFL learners in writing?

- a) Lexical
- b) Grammatical
- c) Mechanical (punctuation, spelling, and organization of ideas)
- d) Other.....  
.....

4- Which difficulties do you face when teaching writing?

.....  
.....

**Section Four: The Effects of E-learning on Students' Writing Skills**

1- Which methods did you use to teach writing via e-learning?

.....  
.....

2- Do you correct your students' assignments?

- a) Yes
- b) No

3- How do you assess your students' writing abilities after participating in e-learning sessions?

- a) Improved
- b) Stable
- c) Regress

Justify:

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

4- Do you believe that technology can help students enhance their writing abilities?

a) Yes

b) No

Please justify:

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your assistance**

## المخلص

تعد بداية فيروس كوفيد 19 أحد الدوافع الرئيسية للتحول من التعليم وجهاً لوجه إلى اعتماد التعليم الإلكتروني في الجزائر، لا سيما في مركز جامعة ميله كوسيلة لإنقاذ التعليم الرسمي. تحاول هذه الورقة البحثية الحالية التحقيق في تأثير التعليم الإلكتروني خلال الإطار الزمني لكوفيد 19 على المهارات الكتابية لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية، بالإضافة الى وعيهم بالمفهوم بشكل عام وتنفيذه. نتيجة لذلك، تنص الفرضية على أن تطبيق التعليم عبر الإنترنت سيكون له تأثير سلبي على الاداء الكتابي لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. و بذلك تم إجراء البحث من خلال استخدام استبيانين لتحليل آراء الطلاب والاساتذة حول هذا الموضوع. تم تقديم الاستبيان الأول إلى 80 طالبًا من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في مركز جامعة عبد الحفيظ بوصوف ميله، من اصل 211. و من ناحية أخرى، تم تقديم الاستبيان الثاني الى 10 اساتذة التعبير الكتابي الذين ينتمون إلى نفس الكلية. وهنا كشفت نتائج استبيان الطلاب أن التعليم الإلكتروني له تأثير سلبي على أداء الكتابة بسبب نقص فرص الممارسة، و كذلك غياب الارشاد، اضافة إلى ضعف وعيهم بالطريقة، ونقص التدريب التكنولوجي والعتاد المناسب. زيادة على ذلك، فقد اظهرت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من استطلاع الاساتذة أن اعتماد التعليم الإلكتروني قد قلل من أداء المهارات الكتابية للمتعلمين بسبب نقص الحافز والاهتمام.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التعليم الإلكتروني ، مهارات الكتابة ، الآثار ، كوفيد 19 ، متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية.

## Résumé

L'apparition de la COVID-19 est l'une des principales raisons pour lesquelles on est passé de l'enseignement en personne à l'adoption de l'apprentissage électronique en Algérie, en particulier au Centre universitaire de Mila comme mesure pour sauver l'éducation formelle. Le présent document de recherche tente d'examiner l'effet de l'apprentissage en ligne pendant la pandémie de COVID-19 sur les compétences en rédaction des étudiants d'EFL, ainsi que leur connaissance du concept en général et de sa mise en œuvre. Par conséquent, l'hypothèse adoptée indique que l'application de l'apprentissage en ligne aurait un effet négatif sur la compétence en rédaction des étudiants d'EFL. La recherche est menée au moyen de questionnaires pour analyser les perceptions des étudiants et des enseignants sur le sujet. La première enquête a été soumise à 80 étudiants du département d'anglais du Centre universitaire Abd El Hafidh Boussouf Mila, sur une population totale de 211. D'autre part, le second sondage a été réalisé auprès de 10 enseignants du module d'expression écrite appartenant au même département. Les résultats du questionnaire des étudiants révèlent que l'apprentissage en ligne a un effet négatif sur leur performance d'écriture en raison de la pénurie de chances de pratique, de l'absence d'orientation, ainsi que de leur mauvaise connaissance de la méthode, du manque de formation technologique et de matériel approprié. De plus, les données obtenues du sondage auprès des enseignants montrent que l'adoption de l'apprentissage en ligne a réduit le rendement des apprenants en matière d'écriture en raison d'un manque de motivation et d'intérêt.

**Mots-clés :** apprentissage en ligne, compétences en rédaction, effets, COVID-19, apprenants de l'EFL.