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Exploring the Influence of the Mother Tongue on EFL Learners' Writing Skills: Teachers' and Learners' Perspectives

A Case of Second-year EFL Students at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila

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Dedications

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

First, I, Sewssan Settouff, dedicate this work to my dear parents: to my father "Mezaache Settouf", may Allah have mercy on him and place him in his paradise, and to my precious mother "Khemisa Hassi" , may Allah prolong her life.

To my beloved sisters, especially "Massouda" and "Khadra", who financially and morally worked hard to make me a successful girl. Without you, none of this would have been accomplished.

To all my friends, without exception, with whom I shared my best moments at the university and university residence.

I dedicate this work to me for being a patient and strong girl for all these years.

At the end, I would like to thank you all for being by my side in happiness and sadness and for your encouragem

Sewssan

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful All the praise is due to Allah alone, the sustainer of all the worlds.

I, Amira Souibaah, dedicate this work to the most precious people:

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Thank you all.

Abstract

After years of learning English as a foreign language, large numbers of EFL students are unable to express their ideas and convey their thoughts in writing. These problems in writing are due to different reasons like lack of vocabulary and ideas, grammar rules, and thinking in their mother tongue (Arabic) rather than writing in English. The present study attempts to explore the extent to which EFL learners' mother tongue influences students' writing skills at the English Language Department of MUC. It also aims at raising both teachers' and students' awareness about the impact of first language interference on EFL learners' writing skills. In addition, this research seeks to find the difficulties that students encounter when they come to write in FL and identify the most common errors they make. In order to answer our research question which is "is L1 interference the main reason behind learners' low writing performance? two questionnaires were adopted for this study. The first questionnaire was addressed to 55 second-year English language students, and the second one was submitted to 13 teachers of the Written Expression module at the Department of Foreign Languages at MUC. The results obtained from both questionnaires indicate that second-year EFL students commit different types of errors, which are mainly due to their mother tongue interference. On this basis, some recommendations are provided for both students and teachers for reducing L1 interference as the key factor to improving students' writing skills.

Keywords: EFL learners, writing skill, the difficulties, L1 interference, and errors.

List of Abbreviations and Symbols

CA: Contrastive Analysis

CAH: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

EA: Error Analysis

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

EL: Foreign Language

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LCA: Learner Centered Approach

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

MUC: Mila University Center

Q: Question

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TCA: Teacher Centered Approach

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

EFL students may perceive writing to be one the most difficult skill to master in learning English in comparison to other skills, which are reading, speaking, and listening. Second-year Mila University Center students are among the EFL learners who may experience writing difficulties, particularly when they attempt to express their thoughts and opinions in a piece of writing. To make the writing task easier, students use Arabic. When they come to write, they typically generate ideas in Arabic and then try to translate them into English; as a result, they commit grammatical mistakes when composing their papers.

2. Aims of the Study

This dissertation sheds light on exploring the influence of the mother tongue on EFL learners' writing skills. In addition, it focuses on raising students' awareness about mother-tongue interference as the main reason for their poor writing performance. It also aims at raising students' awareness of the errors they commit because of language interference. Thus, the research work aims to find effective ways in which students can reduce their mother tongue interference as well as improve their writing skills.

3. Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- Is L1 interference the main reason behind learners' low writing performance?

- What are the common errors that second-year students encounter when writing in English?

4. Research Methodology

For collecting the necessary data about the influence of the mother tongue on EFL learners' writing skills, we conduct a questionnaire that has been administered to both teachers and second-year students at the Department of Foreign Languages at Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila University Center.

5. The Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two main chapters, theoretical and practical, in addition to the general introduction and conclusion. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical part of the research work. It is titled "Theoretical Overview of the Mother Tongue and Writing Skills". It is made up of two sections, which review the literature related to the research variables. The first section, titled "Theoretical Issues on the Writing Skill", involves the writing skill and its different aspects. The second section titled "Concepts of Mother Tongue and Language Transfer", deals with the concept of language transfer. The second chapter, titled "The Practical Chapter ", relates to the practical part of the research work. It is divided into two sections. The first section is concerned with the research methodology, data analysis, and research results of the students' questionnaire. In the same manner, the second section deals with research methodology, data analysis, and the research results of the teachers' questionnaire.

Chapter One: Theoretical Overview of the Mother Tongue and Writing Skills

Introduction

In this era of globalization, learning a foreign language is becoming increasingly important to a wide range of people for various purposes. Although EFL learners encounter challenges when they tend to express themselves in EFL, they rely on their mother tongue. The influence of the mother tongue is clearly shown in the written form. Because when EFL teachers ask their students to write in the TL, many of them find it difficult, so they end up using their mother tongue to explain themselves effectively, which might cause them to make many mistakes, as a result, they produce poor pieces of writing. These mistakes are due to the difference between the learners' native language (Arabic) and the language they are learning (English), which leads to language transfer. Language transfer can be divided into two categories: negative transfer, which results from the differences between the L1 and the TL, and positive transfer, which results from the similarities between the L1 and the TL. Language transfer is a major phenomenon that affects learners' writing skills. The latter is regarded as the most important skill and plays a crucial role in teaching and learning the English language. It is one of the skills that EFL learners need to master. However, writing is also considered a difficult skill that requires practice and effort.

The majority of learners encounter challenges when they try to learn EFL. The influence of the mother tongue can be considered the main cause of these issues. The impact of the first language on the second language cannot be ignored when it comes to learning the four language skills, especially the writing skill, since the written form clearly demonstrates the impact of the native language. This chapter is devoted to the theoretical part of the research work, which is divided into two sections. The first section of this chapter is entitled "Theoretical Issues on Writing Skill", which highlights various aspects of writing skill. The second section is entitled

"Concepts of Mother Tongue and Language Transfer ", which tends to provide general information about language transfer and its main aspects.

Section One: Theoretical Issues on the Writing Skill

1.1.1. History and the Origins of Writing

The development of human's life and the changes that happened within societies led to lose the ability to communicate with others from other societies. The latter led the human to do his best to find a way through which he could communicate and understand those societies, and for this reason, human invented writing.

Writing is regarded as a recent human activity. According to Benidir (2015, p. 4) "writing is considered a recent skill, whereas speaking is considered an ancient one. Because people start communicating with each other by speaking, not by writing". Similarly, Senner (1991, p. 1) confirmed that" writing is relatively new to man. In contrast to spoken language". These authors' quotes emphasize that writing, speaking are separated systems, and writing is ancient to human life in comparison to speaking. Besides to that, writing is considered the greatest achievement in humans' civilization.

Studying the history of writing is a difficult thing because it is difficult to ascertain the information that is included in books and articles, especially with the existence of contradictions between researchers' researches. According to Van (2005, p. 10) "a pictographic writing system was created or developed circa 3000 BC; its indications were pictures. But very quickly, it changed into the script we today refer to as cuneiform". On top of that, Walker (1987, p. 7) agreed that "writing was invented in southern Iraq around 3000 BC or slightly earlier, possibly by Sumerians living in Uruk. When man first began to write, he wrote on damp clay with a pointed stick or reed not with pen and ink on paper". It implies that, Sumerians, who lived in

Mesopotamia, invented writing in the period around 3000 BC and that the Sumerian language was the first language in the world.

The writing activity went through several changes over the years. Humans used various methods for recording information. According to Hooker (2004, p.6) " the human race has adopted four main methods of recording and communicating information: pictograms, word signs (logograms), syllabic signs, and alphabet signs". It means that, the writing process went through several stages before becoming accepted and usable. The following stages are considered as writing systems, which are: pictograms system, logograms system, syllabic system, and alphabet system. The first system of writing was called pictograms, which means picture writing. It has another name, which is "cuneiform". Glassner & et al. (2003) said that the earliest writings discovered on these tablets could be partially explained as pictograms (drawings on concrete things). For instance, drawing a fish on concrete objects was meant to represent that animal. It means this system of writing consisted of drawings that suggested certain meanings and were written on wet clay tablets using reed sticks. These pictograms developed into symbols that refer to certain sounds, which are called "logograms". Walker (1987, p.9) said that "to communicate these things effectively, you need to do more than draw pictures. You have to be able to express ideas. You have to be able to record a spoken language". It means that, the systems of pictograms and logograms were not enough for the Sumerians. They wanted to communicate and record abstract ideas and speech itself, rather than objects. Over time, logograms developed into a syllabus. This syllabic system helped people in their businesses, especially in trade. After many years, around 1500 years later, these syllabi would be further shortened to just letters by the Phoenicians who lived in Egypt, which was the emergence of the alphabetic system. People started to write religious songs, epic literature, educational texts, and personal letters.

To sum up, writing has been one of the most humans' significant intellectual achievements. They used to record and communicate information through different writing systems, which developed over the years; from pictograms to logograms, then logograms developed into syllabus and syllabus changed into alphabet. Since then, writing has advanced to the point where it is now considered an essential language-learning skill.

1.2.2 Definition of Writing

Writing has become a necessary talent for both learners and professionals in today's world. Since writing is a difficult concept to define, we cannot give a single definition of it. Experts attempted to describe writing from different perspectives. According to Pincas (1992, p. 25), "writing is a system of graphic symbols, i.e. letters or combination of letters which relate to the sounds we produce while speaking". This definition indicates that writing is the transformation of sounds we make when speaking by using symbols that symbolized the spoken language, these symbols refers to the letters (alphabets). Another definition is given by White (1988, p. 10) who said that "writing is the process of expressing ideas, information, knowledge, or experience and understanding the writing to acquire the knowledge or some information to share and learn". The definition implies that, writing can be defined as a tool of communication that involves putting thoughts, ideas, events, and feelings into written form in order to communicate them with people. Furthermore, Nunan (2003, p. 88) defined writing as "the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express them in good writing, and arranging the ideas into a statement and paragraph clearly". The definition highlights that, writing is the process of creating knowledge, thoughts, and ideas, then transferring that knowledge into a written form in a collection of connected phrases or paragraphs that are presented in a specific order. For Gillet (2010), writing is a social activity, which used for daily purposes; people share messages by writing formal/ informal letter, emails and other different communicative sources such as social media. The above different definitions show that writing

is a system of transferring letters into meaningful words, tool of communication, a way of thinking, and a social practice.

It is clear that writing is an important skill that we need both for individual or social reasons, that is why there different viewpoints between scholars about its definition.

1.1.3 The Importance of the Writing Skill

Writing has been seen as very important for human beings since ancient times. It becomes necessary in today's life because it is needed for various aspects.

First, writing is one of humankind's most powerful tools. It enables us to communicate with those who are separated from us by space or time, enabling us to keep up personal ties with our families, friends, and colleagues, (MacArthur, et al, 2008). It means that, writing is crucial for communication, since people express themselves through writing in newspapers, academic essays, personal letters, and e-mail messages. People also exchange information and messages with one another. In addition, it enables the development of connections between communities, which makes them coherent despite their geographical and temporal separation. From a different point of view, writing is essential for humans' health. It has such a significant impact psychologically and physically, since writing about one's experiences, feelings helps lower blood pressure and reduce stress (Macarthur et al., 2008, as cited in Smyth, 1998).

In addition to being a vital tool for communication, writing is regarded as the most crucial skill in teaching and learning English. Walsh (2010) stated that, writing is important for learners in both education and workplace. Students who lack the ability to communicate effectively in writing will find it difficult to interact with peers, professors, and employers. Additionally, writing should not be considered just one of the most important language skills to learn but also an effective way to learn languages, (Raimes, 1983). It means that writing helps learners learn how to generate their ideas, organize their thoughts, and express their feelings in a well-defined and accurate context. In addition, it helps them master the language

they are learning, in which they learn new vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. Moreover, considering writing as a productive skill, it allows learners to be creative and critical thinkers, in which they can create new information and think critically to produce this information in appropriate written content. According to Harmer (2004, pp31-33), there are four main reasons why writing is important for students:

1- Writing encourages them to focus on accurate language use because they think as they write, which may lead to language development as they resolve problems that the writing puts into their minds.

2- Writing helps them reinforce the language that has been taught. In which they use the knowledge they have learned while the learning process is taking place.

3- Writing can be helpful for a variety of different activities. Especially for students who have lower level, writing gives them time to think about ideas they want to express.

4- Writing can be used as an integral part of a larger activity where the focus is on another activity such as language practice, acting out, or speaking.

In conclusion, writing is a crucial means of communication and an essential skill that should be practiced and mastered by people generally and students especially. Because it is now a part of daily life for individuals and is used for a variety of purposes, including education, employment, and intercommunity contact. As a result, students should understand the value of writing and give it enough time and attention.

1.1.4 The Difference between L1and L2 Writing

Teaching writing to non-native speakers is a little bit hard, since they are not familiar with a second language. EFL learners who write in a second language (L2), especially those who have a low proficiency level in L2, rely on their first language (L1) while writing to

maintain the writing process and avoid linguistic breakdown. They do so because they are unaware of the differences involved in both L1 and L2 writing.

There are significant differences between L1 and L2 writing that can be found in almost every aspect of written texts and discourse, (Hinkle, 2003, pp9-10). The following sentences can be used to sum up some of these differences:

> ➢ -Discourse and rhetorical organization
>
> ➢ -Ideas and content of writing
>
> ➢ -Rhetorical modes, for example: narration, argumentation, and exposition
>
> ➢ -Reliance and eternal knowledge and information
>
> ➢ -Discourse and text cohesion

Hedge (2000) said that writing in L2 takes more time than writing in L1 because L2 learners frequently misunderstand how to translate their L1 ideas into English. On the other hand, Crossley and McNamara (2009) stated that,

> In the field of second language writing studies, the distinction between L1 and L2 writing has a long history. Silva (1993) found a number of notable discrepancies in her review of the literature on the differences between English L1 and L2 writing. These distinctions include the idea that L2 writers utilize more but shorter T-units, fewer but longer phrases, more coordination, less subordination, less noun modification, less passivation, and less cohesion techniques, including more conjunctives and lexical connections". (p.120)

The quotes above demonstrate that, L1 writing differs from L2 writing since L1 writers have more fluency and effectiveness than L2 writers do. Because they have a greater background, knowledge, and vocabulary in their mother tongue. As a result, they feel more at ease and confident when writing in their L1. While L2 writers make more mistakes, use shorter sentences and repeat words more frequently when writing in their L2.

1.1.5 Approach to Teaching Writing

Teaching writing becomes an important field in learning EFL. Consequently, several approaches have been adopted. According to Hassan & Akhand (2011, p. 78), "EFL practitioners suggest three approaches, which are: the product approach, the genre approach, and the process approach". Similarly, Richard & Rodgers (2001) agreed that the teaching of writing is characterized by the adoption of three main approaches. The product approach, the genre approach, and the process approach. It means that, teaching writing skills based on three main approaches: the product-based approach, the genre-based approach, and the process-based approach.

1.1.5.1 The Product-based Approach

A product-based approach is a traditional and common used for EFL writing instruction. According to traditional programs in EFL teaching, learners are taught to write with a focus on producing correct language rather than selecting, organizing, and presenting ideas for effective communication with a reader, (Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014). It emphasizes that the product-based approach focuses on the outcome and correct form of the written work rather than the process by which it was created. Hedge (1988, p. 5) stated that " the final product includes seven aspects: correct grammar, rich vocabulary, sensible punctuation, correct use of rules, correct spelling, connecting ideas on information to create topics, and organizing content in a concise manner". It implies that, in the product-based approach teachers are required to teach learners how to use the right and suitable grammar and vocabulary, to apply rules and use punctuation in a correct way to write accurately and with coherence. Klimova (2014, p. 148) stated that "the product-based approach usually requires providing a sample text to be analyzed. According to this model, learners are supposed to write similar texts". Typically, in the product approach the teacher provides learners with a model of written work. Each model text contains numerous

examples of specific type of language. They follow the model to create or produce new piece of writing. Hayland (2003) outlined the four stages of a product-based strategy.

1.1.5.1.1 Familiarization

This step entails providing students with a standard model of texts and teaching them language features such as grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and so on.

1.1.5.1.2 Controlled writing

In this stage, learners practice writing through writing separated paragraph, complete passage, etc. In other words, learners are supposed to manipulate texts using previously learned language features.

1.1.5.1.3 Guided writing

Through conversation, the creation of a joint work, and the assessment of learners writing, the teachers guides their students to organize their ideas and arrange their paragraphs to create a coherent text.

1.1.5.1.4 Free writing

During the last stage, learners are asked to use the patterns they have developed in the previous stages and write texts on their own.

In short, the product-based approach sees writing as primarily concerned with the structure of the written work and the final version of it rather than the content itself and the process by which it was produced. As the students are passive and the teacher provides input on language elements and structure, we may claim that the traditional approach is TCA.

1.1.5.2 The Genre-based Approach

There is a similarity between a genre-based approach and a product-based approach. Writing in the genre-based approach regarded as an extension of the product-based approach,

since learners have opportunities to study a wide variety of writing patterns, for example, business letters, academic reports, and research papers, said Badger and White (2000). Genre writing means writing different types of texts for different purposes. Consequently, a genre-based approach is associated with ESP, in which learners are required to write any type of text about any content for any reason. As a result, students are motivated to be creative. They can produce their own research papers.

The genre-based approach to teaching writing focuses primarily on teaching specific genres that students need to master in order to succeed in particular contexts. This could involve placing more attention on the text's content as well as the environment in which it was written, (Nemouchi, 2014). Conversely, Sari (2019) argued that,

> In genre-based approach writing styles, means how something is written. Words that are use and the way the information is organized. The purpose and focus of genre writing is not only to enable the writer to write, but it focuses also the writer writes to pursue a certain goal. For example, how to describe, how to report, how to retell, how something is done or how something is carried out, etc. (p.33)

It reveals that, in a genre-based approach, while writing, the writer focuses on many aspects at once. The style in which the text will be written, the purpose of the text for the reader, and the people to whom the text will be addressed. In other words, the writers tend to answer three questions: how to write, to whom to write, and for what reason.

Hayland (2007) proposed five stages of a genre-based approach, which are: setting the context; modelling, joined instruction, independent instruction, and the last stage, comparing.

1.1.5.2.1 Setting the context

The first stage of the genre-based approach includes identifying the genre's purposes and the settings where it is frequently used.

1.1.5.2.2 Modelling

This stage deals with analyzing typical genre samples that have been given to the students to identify the genre's development stages, defining their characteristics, and identifying potential variations.

1.1.5.2.3 Joint Construction

During this stage, teachers serve as guides. Through exercises that concentrate on specific stages or purposes of the work.

1.1.5.2.4 Independent Construction

The learners are supposed to write their own texts, then evaluated by the teacher.

1.1.5.2.5 Comparing

The last stage requires relating what has been learned to other genres and contexts in order to understand how genres are designed to achieve particular social purposes.

1.1.5.3 The Process-based Approach

According to Tribble (1996, p. 37) "the process-based approach is an approach to teaching writing that stresses the creativity of the individual writer and that pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models". It implies that, the process-based approach is a new approach to teaching writing in comparison to the product-based approach. Unlike the product-based approach that focuses on the final product, the process-based approach focuses on the process in which the writer goes through rather than the final product. Tangpermoon (2008, p.4), said, "process-based writing is viewed as the way writers actually work on their writing tasks from the beginning stage to the end of the written product". On the other hand, Harmer (2004, p.31) affirmed that "the writing process is the stages the writer goes through to produce something in the final written form". The process-based

approach sees writing as a process that a writer must go through in order to produce the finished piece of writing. With this method, the teacher should explain to the learners that the writing they have on their papers is just the beginning of the writing process and not the final product. In this approach, writing is essentially not taught, but rather learned through exercises that teachers provide their students to help with the writing process. Therefore, the process-based approach is a LCA.

The writing process involves a series of steps to follow in producing a finished piece of writing. There is no total agreement on the definite number of stages within the writing process, but the most recursive ones are: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, Nemouchi (2014, p.42).

1.1.5.3.1 Pre-writing

Planning is another word for it. It is the most important step in the writing process. In this step, the learners think about the topic they are going to write about and collect information and ideas before they begin to write. In addition, think about the purpose of the writing, are they going to narrate a story, describe something, or explain an idea? In pre-writing, learners do some activities to collect information, such as reading about the topic, watching videos, listening to records, etc.

1.1.5.3.2 Drafting

Drafting considers the second step in process-based approach. Learners start writing down the information they collect in the first step on the paper. This step involves developing ideas and thoughts into meaningful words, sentences and paragraphs. Besides, the writer does not pay attention to the organization of thoughts, the appropriate terms of vocabulary, or the spelling, (Scott & Vitale, 2003).

1.1.5.3.3 Revising

During this step, the learners read or revise their works in order to discover the mistakes and the errors they made in their writings; checking spelling, grammar and punctuation in addition to content and the connection between ideas. Furthermore, revising includes checking that purpose of writing is clear and appropriate for the reader.

1.1.5.3.4 Editing

Editing is the process of correcting errors that writers find on their written work in previous stage. According to Alodwan & Ibnian (2014, p.148), "it usually includes: correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation".

1.1.5.3.5 Publishing

Publishing is the last stage in the process-based approach. It involves delivering the final version of a piece of work to teachers and classmates.

To sum up, for better writing, the learners need to know the quality of the final product, consider the genre of writing and the process of it.

1.1.6 The Difficulties of Writing Skill

Learning to write in either L1 or L2 is one of the most difficult task students encounter? (Hayland, 2003). Similarly to that point, Westwood (2008, p.56) agreed that "written language is perhaps the most difficult of all skills to acquire because its development involves the effective coordination of many aspects and processes". It means that writing is typically a complex and challenging skill, whether it is mastered in one's native language or in a second one.

There are various difficulties that Arabic students may face while writing in English, since it is not their mother tongue, which prevent them from producing a good piece of writing.

Students face problems with writing mainly with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

1.1.6.1 Grammar

Grammar was frequently the main curricular focus in writing instruction for English as a Second Language (ESL) until the introduction of communicative language in 1980. Instead of paying much attention to the organization of the text the students were writing, courses focused on teaching them how to manipulate and master grammatical forms, (Kroll, 2003). Grammar can be defined as a collection of rules that describe how language functions (Seely, 2013). Tenses, propositions, and word classes are some of these rules. These rules help maintain the language's grammatical structure. The fact that most teachers face is that learners often find it difficult to make flexible use of the rules of grammar taught in the classroom. They may know the rules perfectly, but are incapable of applying them in their own use of the language, (Abdu &Nagaratnam, 2011, p.71). Understanding and applying grammar rules may be challenging for students. They find verbs the most difficult aspect of grammar because verbs change according to the tenses and the context in which they are used. Students should learn how to apply grammar rules, because with limited knowledge of grammar, they will face difficulties writing correct sentences.

1.1.6.2 Vocabulary

Vocabulary is considered one of the biggest challenges students face. EFL learners face difficulties using appropriate words in an appropriate place. In addition, they face problems when generating ideas because of their limited vocabulary. A lack of students' vocabulary makes it difficult for them to express their thoughts. McCarthy (1990) stated that communication in L2 cannot take place if students do not have much vocabulary to express their ideas. Thus, vocabulary is an essential component of writing. Students cannot

communicate in writing without knowing the words that convey the ideas they want to express. Good vocabulary helps students write and express their thoughts fluently and accurately.

1.1.6.3 Spelling

Spelling can be defined as the skill of arranging the letters of a word in the proper order, either orally or in writing. Spelling is an essential aspect in writing because the ability to spell correctly allows writers to get their ideas out on paper without being interrupted. In contrast, poor spellers cannot communicate their ideas freely because it is limited by poor spelling, Graham & Miller, 2018). Having a poor spelling considered a problem that EFL learners face while writing. Harmer (1983, p. 324) said that "one of the reasons that spelling is difficult for English students that the sound of word and the way it is spelt is not always obvious. A single sound may have different spelling and the same spelling may have different". Furthermore, students face difficulties with spelling because of the variety of accents. Furthermore, students face difficulties with spelling because of the variety of accents. English has different American and British accents, which makes them confused while choosing which word to use. Therefore, the teachers should be aware of the importance of teaching correct spelling and help their learners master this aspect to produce better writing.

1.1.6.4 Punctuation

According to Seely (2013), punctuation is a set of conventions that make it easier to read written texts, such as commas (,), full stops (.), question marks (?), capitalization, etc. To be successful as a writer in your own or another language, we need to be aware of punctuation and use and modify it when appropriate to get our message across as clearly as we can (Harmer, p. 325). It means that punctuation is crucial while writing since it provides readers with visual cues by instructing them on how to read the text. In other words, it makes it easier for them to distinguish between connected and unconnected clauses in a sentence. Employing varied punctuation in writing might be challenging for EFL learners because it requires a lot of time

and practice. Students should be familiar with punctuation because using it incorrectly can alter the meaning of a word.

1.1.7 Factors behind Students Poor Writing

Since writing is a difficult skill to master, students face various problems when they try to write. In fact, there are several reasons that students may produce poor work.

1.1.7.1 Lack of Adequate Technique to Teach Writing

Teachers' principle role in a classroom setting is to provide learners with the best teaching techniques. The absence of good and effective techniques for teaching writing and the lack of training by teachers of the English language are considered the main reasons behind students' low writing performance. Raimes (1983, pp.15-30) suggested seven questions that can be a help to teachers in making their daily decision of what to do in the next class.

1. How can writing help students learn their second language better?
2. How can teachers find enough topics?
3. How can teachers help make the subject matter meaningful?
4. Who will read what teachers' students write?
5. How are the students going to work together in the classroom?
6. How much time should the teacher give students for their writing?
7. What does the teacher do about errors?

1.1.7.2 Lack of Reading

Although writing and reading are different skills, they are interconnected. Reading is crucial for the development of writing skills. The more students read, the more they become familiar with vocabulary, idioms, sentence patterns, organizational flow, said Raimes (1983, p.50). Stotsky (1983) agreed that "better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers". It implies

that, reading is crucial for acquiring the extensive vocabulary and grammatical knowledge needed to help students write clearly. Therefore, teachers should make efforts to teach students the importance of reading in order to improve their competence for writing good pieces of writing.

1.1.7.3 Lack of Practice

One of the reasons behind learners' poor writing is a lack of practice. Practice has a great impact on learners' level of writing. According to Hedge's experience, students need to practice writing a lot in order to master the skill (Hedge, p. 13). Similarly, Langan (2009, p. 13) declared that "the more you practice writing, the better you will write". It implies that practice is a significant factor in improving writing skills. For that, in order for students to become good writers and master the writing skill, they need to practice writing a lot.

1.1.7.4 Lack of Motivation

Motivation is considered the most important factor behind learners' poor writing performance. Harmer (1983, p. 98) defined motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something". In other words, motivation is what encourages people to do things to achieve certain goals. Harmer divided motivation into two types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The former arises from within the individual. The latter arises from outside the individual. Students find difficulties because they are not motivated to write. Harmer agreed that without motivation, learners would not succeed. The essential feeling in motivation is interest. When students write about a topic not of their interest, they will produce pieces of writing of low quality, said Byrne (1982, p. 2).

1.1.7.5 The Influence of L1 on Writing in English

The main factor behind learners' poor writing is the influence of L1 on writing in English. Benidir (2015, p. 8, as cited in Beare, 2000) stated that "adult writers use their L1 when

writing in L2 to achieve specific aims such as planning, generating ideas, and content, or for the sake of solving certain linguistic issues like vocabulary problems". It implies that the reason behind learners' poor writing is that they think and retrieve ideas in Arabic while writing in English, which may prevent them from producing better pieces of writing.

1.1.8 Effective Writing

Effective writing is simply described as having good ideas that are expressed effectively and organized in the proper order. Effective writing requires some criteria that EFL learners should follow to produce better writing. Langan (2009, pp. 74–77) pointed out four bases for effective writing, which are unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills.

1.1.8.1 Unity

The first foundation of effective writing is unity. It is an essential aspect of a piece of writing. Unity means keeping details in a piece of writing focused on the central idea. In other words, all the ideas and information in a piece of writing should be related to the main idea or the main topic. To achieve unity, the details in learners' writing should be relevant to the main topic. Whenever they think about writing something down, they should ask themselves whether it relates to the main point or not. If students fail to do so and write irrelevant sentences, they will miss the most essential base of good writing.

1.1.8.2 Support

The second base of effective writing is support. Students provide specific supporting ideas by explaining, illustrating, or providing evidence for the main idea expressed in a piece of writing. Students' piece of writing should include vivid details because much support helps learners communicate more clearly and effectively in their writing.

1.1.8.3 Coherence

The third base of effective writing is coherence. Coherence refers to the connection of sentences and paragraphs with each other. That is to say, the way students sequence information and connect ideas in a consistent way. In order to produce a clear and well-structured piece of writing, students need to connect their ideas in a coherent way.

1.1.8.4 Sentence Skills

The last base for effective writing is sentence skills. Sentence skills require the identification, fixing, and avoidance of errors in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and mechanism. Poor sentence-writing skills can be merely distracting or they can change the meaning of the sentence entirely. For that, students should learn all sentence-writing techniques to write clear and error-free sentences.

Section Two: Concepts of Mother Tongue and Language Transfer

1.2.1 Definition of Language Transfer

Specialists in the field define language transfer in a variety of ways. In The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1988), language transfer is "the impact of a particular language on the process of acquiring another". According to Odlin (1989, p. 27), transfer is "the influence that results from the similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has previously been acquired". Language transfer is thus a phenomenon that occurs during second language acquisition. It does not occur when people are learning their native tongue in childhood since it requires a first language as a point of comparison. Language transfer is not always a terrible thing, but language teachers and second-language learners have to be aware of this transfer because it could negatively influence the language learning process.

1.2.2 The Concept of Transfer

The term "transfer" has been defined in a variety of ways by researchers. Weinrick (1953) was the first who make this argument, by stating that:

> Language transfer refers to the learner seeking to apply rules and forms of the L1 to the target language". So that when the first language habits are helpful and beneficial to acquire the target language habits (positive transfer), this may be facilitated if the mother tongue and the target language are structurally different (negative transfer) (p. 53)

Brand & Brown (1999) stated that, transfer is the ability of students to apply what they have learned in one context to another; which indicates that they apply their L1 learning habits to L2 learning. Alexander and Muphy (1992) claimed that, transfer is the act of applying knowledge or abilities gained in one environment to another. Additionally, Ellis (1994) defined transfer as how a learner's first language affects their acquisition of a second language. Furthermore, Dulay et al. (1982) defined interference or transfer as the spontaneous transfer, due to habit of the first language's surface structure into the surface of the target language. As a result, when trying to utilize the target language, language learners often resort back to the rules of their native tongue. Moreover, transfer from the native language is also regarded as a form of L1 habits influencing L2 learning. On top of that, Fries (1949) stressed the comparison between a learner's native language and the target language as one of the main obstacles for students trying to learn the second language.

It has been noticed that when EFL learners face a problem using a grammatical rule in their writing in English, they choose to use their previous knowledge of Arabic and apply it in their writing style, which causes different problems because of the differences between the Arabic and English grammatical systems. For example, they may say, "the happiness doesn't come from the money" instead of saying, "happiness doesn't come from money", and "he studies the music" instead of "he studies music".

1.2.3   Types of Transfer

Language transfer has different types. Ellis (1994, p. 25) explained that

> Transfer is to be seen as a general overturn for a number of different kinds of influence from languages other than the L2, the study of transfer involves the study of errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance of the target language forms and their over-use. (p. 25)

The quote demonstrates that there are two most typical types of language transfer, which are positive transfer and negative transfer.

1.2.3.1. Positive Transfer

Positive transfer is when L1 has a positive effect on L2. It happens when the mother tongue and the target language possess the same structural qualities. In other words, positive transfer is when the two languages have similar traits and may thus use each other's structures. Due to the rarity of this type of transfer, researchers disregarded it. As Allen & Corder (1975) noted that positive transfer encourages new learning; for instance, it is simple for students to pick up aspirated voiceless stops in a second language if the native language also possesses them. For example, using the word "administration" in an English context by French learners is a positive transfer because the word has the same meaning in French and English and practically the same voice in both languages. Therefore, learners' previous knowledge influences their subsequent learning positively.

1.2.3.2 Negative Transfer

Negative transfer is the negative effect of the first language on learning the target language because of the disparities between the two languages. Negative transfer occurs when a student transfers concepts or structures that are not equivalent in both languages. In addition, it has been observed that learners occasionally purposefully adopt first-language grammatical

conventions. On this account, sentences will sound like those in the mother tongue, which may result in errors if the first and second languages' syntaxes are different. For instance, the word "writer" in English is used for both masculine and feminine singular; however, it has different meanings in Arabic; we use "كاتب" for masculine and "كاتبة" for feminine.

1.2.4 Language Transfer Approaches

1.2.4.1 Contrastive Analysis Approach

1.2.4.1.1 Definition of Contrastive Analysis

CA is described as the comparison of the linguistic systems of the two languages", such as the phonological or grammatical systems, (The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, 1988). CA seeks to forecast and clarify the learner's issues by highlighting the parallels and discrepancies between the source language and the target language. It is a method for teaching second languages that was first established by Fries (1945), and it became a theory of pedagogical importance around teaching second languages after Lado's book "Linguistics across Culture", which was published in 1957. CA is defined by Al-Khresheh (2016) as the way learners' L1 influences their L2 acquisition. Gass and Larry (2001) said that CA is a way of comparing languages in order to determine potential errors for the ultimate purpose of isolating what needs to be learned and what does not need to be learned in a SLA situation. In the 1960s and early 1970s, CA was widely used to explain why some features of a target language were more challenging to learn than others. Lado (1957, as cited in Alam Khan, 2011, p. 107) asserted that "elements similar to the learner's native language will be simpler for him, and those that are different will be difficult".

In the field of comparative linguistics known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis, two or more languages are compared in order to ascertain their differences or similarities, for either theoretical reasons or reasons unrelated to the study itself. It requires a belief in linguistic

universals because there would not be a basis for comparison if there were not any shared characteristics. In broad terms, CA has been used as a tool in typological linguistics to develop language taxonomies, comparative historical linguistics to establish language genealogy, translation theory to look into issues of equivalence, and bilingual dictionaries.

The CAH can exist in two different forms (Wardhaugh, 1970). In the strong version, the author contends that a systematic CA can foresee the learners' challenges and those instructional materials can subsequently be developed to address those challenges. A weaker variant contends that contrastive linguistics has only an explanatory function in situations where learners' blunders demonstrate their problems. They might be explained by drawing comparisons between the learners' mother tongue and their target language.

1.2.4.1.1.1 Strong Form:

The "strong version" of the CA Hypothesis, which was first proposed, asserts a high level of predictive ability. According to Lado (1957, p. 2, as cited in Ellis 1994, p. 306), "the learner who comes into contact with a foreign language will find some parts of it fairly easy and others quite difficult. For him, the components that are remarkably close to those of his mother tongue will be easy, while those that are dissimilar will be challenging. The strong version of the CAH claims that:

1- All L2 errors can be anticipated by determining the differences between the L1 and the L2.
2- The influence of the mother tongue is the primary cause of all L2 errors. This interpretation of the theory supports the idea that first-language interference causes L2 errors. According to Bell (1986), "the learner's deviant behavior is the direct result of the transfer of the L1 habit(s) into the L2".

1.2.4.1.1.2 Weak form:

The weak version was created following criticism of the strong version. This version seeks to pinpoint which errors are the consequence of L1 interference rather than make a

prediction. It downplays the significance of the L1's function in obtaining an L2. The analytical method reflects the difference. All learners' errors are compiled into a corpus. To determine interference errors, a contrastive analysis is used, just like it was for error analysis in the strong version. The weak version of CAH seeks to make a posteriori diagnosis rather than a priori prediction while acknowledging that there may be sources of errors other than the L1.

The weak and strong versions have also received criticism. Wardhaugh (1970) criticized the strong version's reliance on a dubious language theory. The weak version is likewise disappointing because it only detects problems that have already happened rather than making any predictions.

1.2.4.1.2 The Focus of Contrastive Analysis

The description, comparison, and surface forms of L1 and L2 are the main subjects of contrastive analysis. Phonology, morphology, syntax, the lexicon, and discourse set the stage for the distinction between the L1 and L2 languages. Fries (1945) made it plain that he places a high importance on this when he stated that "when learning a new language, the main challenge is not first mastering vocabulary items. First, "the structure of the language is the mastery of the features of arrangement". CA was more successful in phonology than in other aspects of language. Contrastive analysis has recently been used in various linguistic domains, such as discourse systems. Contrastive analysis, though it still paid as little regard to pedagogy as it had in the past, lost its credibility in the 1970s on a number of grounds.

1.2.4.1.3 Contrastive Analysis Objectives

Contrastive analysis has frequently been carried out for utilitarian or educational reasons. The objectives of contrastive analysis can be summed up as follows: to improve the effectiveness of foreign language instruction; it seeks out the similarities and differences between two languages in order to determine the factors that tie them together and separate

them. As stated by Lado (1957), "the comparison of two languages and cultures to discover and describe the problems that language speakers will have in learning the other". It also explains the findings and forecasts that learners may experience when learning a second language. In the preface to his book "Language across Culture", Lado asserted that we might identify patterns that will make learning difficult and those that will not by systematically comparing the language and culture that must be acquired with the students' native language and culture.

It is beneficial for language teaching because it develops the teaching course materials, as Lado (1957) said, the results of such comparisons have proved of fundamental value for the preparation of teaching materials, tests, and language learning experiments. Foreign language teachers who understand this field will acquire insights and tools for evaluating the language and cultural content of textbooks, supplementing materials in use, preparing new materials and tests, and accurately diagnosing students' difficulties. Problems can be anticipated and considered in the curriculum through CA. Not all the issues CA foresees, though, seem to be challenging for the learners. On the other hand, many experts in the field assert that CA does not anticipate many errors that do occur.

1.2.4.1.4 Criticism of Contrastive Analysis

According to Abbas (1995), the criticism of contrastive analysis is that it primarily concentrates on one kind of inaccuracy known as "interference". Many researchers believe that since CA is the only focus, it is reckless to predict other mistakes that students frequently make. Gradman (1973) also made the point that CA cannot foresee all the errors that students may make. If CA were a sound strategy, it would be applied and prevent any predicted errors from occurring. Clearly, this is not the case. Poor teaching is not just a problem because of interference. It is also important to consider false parallels and inadequate materials. Another objection leveled by Hamp (1968) contends that it is unwise to portray CA as a physical science that is fully capable of foreseeing errors that will be made as well as their precise causes. If the

errors are made, it is possible to investigate the causes, but it is impossible to predict with complete certainty, which errors will happen and when.

1.2.4.2 Error Analysis Approach

1.2.4.2.1 Definition of Error Analysis Approach

Error analysis is a technique that examines and characterizes the mistakes made by language learners because it depicts what they really do rather than what they may do. Unlike contrastive analysis, which aims at anticipating and identifying faults, error analysis is linked to Corder (1967), who is regarded as the father of this branch of error analysis. He argued that error analysis is a technique that examines and characterizes the mistakes made by language learners because it depicts what they really do rather than what they may do. Thus, it shows that errors made by second language learners are not only due to interference from their mother tongue, but also to the reflection of some common learning techniques, such as simplification. Brown (1980) provided a different definition, describing it as the process of observing, analyzing, and categorizing departures from the second language's rules in order to identify the learner's operating systems.

1.2.4.2.2 The Emergence of Error Analysis

Error analysis is a methodology that was developed as a response to CA, which concentrated primarily on the native language and the target language of the learners. Stephen Pit Corder and his associates established EA in the 1960s as a substitute for contrastive analysis. The fact that CA could not forecast a significant portion of errors exposed its flaws, despite the fact that its emphasis on language interference has proven to be one of its more useful features. One of the primary findings of error analysis is that many mistakes made by learners are caused by intervention. It emphasized the importance of mistakes in students' influence systems, which can be done intentionally for pedagogical goals. However, error analysis emerged as a theory

and method of significance to both language pedagogy and the study of language learning with the release of Corder's influential paper, "The Significance of the Learner's Errors," in 1967. According to Richards (1971, p. 12), "the field of error analysis may be defined as dealing with the distinctions between the speech patterns of language learners and the language use of adult native speakers".

1.2.4.2.3 Error Analysis Objectives

According to Corder (1973), there are two main objectives of EA: theoretical and applied objectives.

1.2.4.2.3.1 The Theoretical Objective

The theoretical Objective examines the veracity of theories, such as the so-called "psycholinguistic theory of transfer" of the theory of transfer. This goal can aid inidentifying the method and technique that language learners use when learning a foreign language.

1.2.4.2.3.2The Applied Objective

The applied objective assists students in learning their mother tongue in an appropriate, effective, and efficient manner based on their prior understanding of their dialects.

1.2.4.2.4 The Difference between Mistakes and Errors

A linguist has to distinguish between the different forms of errors and then identify the errors of learners. In 1967, Corder distinguished between mistakes and errors.

1.2.4.2.4.1 Mistakes

According to Corder, mistakes are accidental errors in performance that can be made by both native speakers and foreign language learners since they are unsystematic in nature and can happen for a variety of reasons, including speaker fatigue, stress, and lack of concentration. According to Corder (1967), mistakes can be found and fixed instantly and directly by their

producers. For instance, a tired or a distracted learner can say, "you is", and then he will correct him/herself directly by saying "you are". In this situation, the learner has committed such a mistake out of fatigue or distraction, not out of rule ignorance. Additionally, Corder (1967, p. 25) stated that "since the conditions in the learner's mother tongue and the target language may occasionally be similar, we shouldn't expect the foreign language learner to avoid such instances of slip-ups".

1.2.4.2.4.2Errors

Errors are systematic in nature and are made by learners at a particular or given learning level because of insufficient learning. Contrary to mistakes, errors are similar to gaps in a learner's knowledge; learners who ignore the rules cannot perceive them as inappropriate. Errors, according to researchers, are an important component of the learning process. Since an error can affect even the tiniest portion of a word; it can be difficult to spot. As a result, a learner can write "taked" rather than "he took" since they are oblivious to the proper English usage of the past tense with irregular verbs. In other words, errors are a result of learners' ignorance of the proper usage guidelines for the target language they are learning.

Richards and Schmidt (2002), who mentioned that a learner produces mistakes when writing or speaking due to inattention, exhaustion, carelessness, or other performance-related factors, have established another distinction between "error" and "mistake". Thus, mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is called. On the other hand, the definition of an error is the use of a linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as "indicating flawed or incomplete learning". In other words, it happens because the learner is unable to self-correct since they do not know what is right. Therefore, the study's emphasis will be on learner errors rather than actual mistakes.

1.2.4.2.5 Types of Errors

- **Addition**

  Example 1. They went to the home: As Arabic speakers, we refer to nouns by having the **"ال"**, so when EFL learners try to transfer the sentence "ذهبوا الى المنزل" into English, they unconsciously produce "the home" instead of just "home", thinking that the equivalence of "ال" in English is "the".

  Example 2. Does can he eat the vegetables? In this example, the EFL learner does not know how to form auxiliary questions; he also ignores the way to use models like "can". He should simply use either "does" or "can" not both.

- **Omission/Deletion:**

  Example 1. She went to # university (the)

  Example 2. My sister is # doctor (a)

- **Ordering/Reordering:**

  Example 1. I no car have (I have no car)

  Example 2. We last night had an accident (Last night, we had an accident)

- **Substitution:**

  Example 1. I lost my road(way)

  Example 2. I taked your phone (took)

1.2.4.2.6 Causes and Sources of Errors

Students make errors while writing for many reasons. According to Corder (1967), there are two major sources of errors in second language learning: interlingual errors and intralingualerrors.

1.2.4.2.6.1 Interlingual Errors

The two terms "interlingual" or "transfer errors "are usually used interchangeably to identify the errors that are resulted from the negative transfer. Selinker (1972) first introduced the term "interlingual", he used this term to refer to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner's L1 and the target language, (Abi Samara, 2003, p. 5). Errors in interlanguage transfer are mistakes that are attributed to the native tongue. These types of mistakes happen when a learner's habits hinder or prohibit him or her from learning the patterns and rules of the second language to some degree (Corder, 1971). There are two types of transfer; positive transfer and negative transfer. Positive transfer occurs when both the first language and the second language have a similar structure, while negative transfer occurs when the two languages are different in the structure. The term "interlingual" is also defined by the dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics (1992) as being the result of language transfer due to the learner's first language interference. Furthermore, interlingual errors have different levels, which are suggested by Keshavarz's taxonomy as following, which are: transfer of phonology, morphology, grammar, lexico-semantic, and stylistic.

The mother tongue interference is then regarded as a very important element that plays a great role and seen as an important factor in second language learning (Jordens, 1977, Kellerman, 1979, Touchie,1983)

1.2.4.2.6.2 Intralingual Errors

According to Erdogan (2005, p. 266), "intralingual errors occur because of learners' attempts to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it". In the 1970s, Richards exposed four types and causes of intralingual errors:

● **Over-generalization:** It is related to redundancy reduction. It covers instances where the learner generates a deviant structure based on his experience of other structures in the target language. It may lead to reducing the learners' linguistic burden. Ellis (1997, p. 19) claimed that learners overgeneralize forms that they find easy to learn, cover and process. For instance, the use of "ed" in past tense forms even with irregular verbs such as "taked" instead of "took". Another example of this is when second language learners use the same rule of their language structure in the target language, like in "He can dances" instead of "He dances" or "He can dance"

● **Ignorance of rule restriction:** It means applying rules to contexts to which they do not apply. For example, "the kids who I saw them" and "I made him to do it" violates the restriction on subjects in sentence structure with "who" and ignores restrictions on the distribution "make". This is a type of generalization of transfer since the learner is trying to make use of the previously acquired knowledge concerning the rule in a new situation. (Richard, 1974, p.175). Another example of this is when second language learners use the correct rule in an inappropriate context; for example: "He made me to sleep" instead of "He asked me to sleep" or "He wanted me to sleep".

● **Incomplete application of rules:** It is related to semantic errors such as creating false concepts/systems i.e., faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language. It occurs when the FL learners use incomplete structure of language, for instance, "You like to swim?" instead of "Do you like to swim?". Another example of this case is as follows:

- Teacher's question: What does he want to eat?

- Student's response: He have to do eat the apple

- **False Hypothesis:** It was stated by Richards (1974) that this type of intralingual errors is concerned with learners who do not make a clear distinction between the items of the target language. For instance, learners may wrongly use the auxiliary "was" as a marker for the past tense like in "one day it was happened".

1.2.4.2.7 Error Correction

L2 learners are surely expected to make errors in their linguistic productions during their attempts to learn and acquire a new language in addition to their mother tongue (Van Lier, 2006 & Livingstone, 2011). The interest of error analysis is in the way teachers deal with learners' errors and the importance of error correction for both language teachers and second language learners in order to improve their linguistic and communicative competence. Corder (1967) claimed that "students' errors have an important function during the second language acquisition process", since the knowledge of learners' errors is a bridge to properly designed and developed pedagogic materials that lead to a successful error correction operation, which is one of the main concerns of language teachers.

Teachers typically correct students' errors automatically as they are discovered, and they view students' hesitation to try as an indication that they need assistance immediately (Maicusi et al. 2000, p. 172). However, if they did not correct them at the moment, students would be able to correct their errors by themselves (self-correction). So that the teachers' purpose of making students self-correctors will be met, as well as, reinforce their awareness of their weaknesses and needs. Furthermore, learners should be aware of the reasons behind committing a given type of error, which may help them avoid repeating it. On the other hand, when teachers correct the students, they become more dependent on others to correct their mistakes. Therefore, they would not develop themselves into autonomous learners. Erdogan (2005) claimed that

error correction technique involves the teacher's consciousness of the reasons behind his or her learners' errors and then providing the appropriate solution, and not only showing them the correct form. Errors must be corrected based on their impact on students' productions. Thus, some errors should be corrected more than others. Errors must be corrected based on their impact on students' productions. Thus, some errors should be corrected more than others. "Global errors", which affect communication, need to be corrected more than "local errors," which do not. In the wiring process, teachers should provide students with written feedback, like marks that indicate the error, and let the students try to guess the correct form instead of giving them the right form directly. The teacher has several ways to show the type of error, such as "SP" which tends to mean "a spelling mistake", "SW," which tends to mean sentences that should be rewritten, etc. (Erdogan, 2005).

1.2.5 Categories of L1 Interference

There are three primary forms of L1 interference. These kinds of L1 interference were located using contrast analysis and error analysis.

1.2.5.1 L1 Lexical Interference

This type of error occurs when the first language and the target language have different levels of vocabulary due to a lack of lexical competence. Lexical interference occurs when a word from the vocabulary of L1 is used in the context of L2 culture, (Nwazuoke, 1978). It means that lexical interference is the intervention of L1 vocabulary into L2 vocabulary. For instance, in the idiom "it is raining cats and dogs", students may say, "إنها تمطر ققطا و كلابا" instead of "إنها تمطر بغزارة".

1.2.5.2 L2 Syntactic Interference

Syntactic interference is related to the grammatical errors that students commit in their writing; it occurs when generating sentences in a language while integrating another language's

grammatical structural system. For example, saying "I saw a dream last night" instead of saying "I had a dream last night". There are seven main sub-categories of this interference, which are: word order, subject-verb agreement, tense, the infinitive, the verb "have", prepositions, and noun determiners.

1.2.5.3 L1 Discourse Interference

This type of error occurs when the two languages have different writing styles. It is usually occurs in speaking. For instance, in the word "vey", French students may pronounce it /'veghi/ instead of /'veri/.

Conclusion

Language transfer has always been a key element in teaching and learning languages. Since it is thought that language transfer results from similarities and differences between L1 and L2, it has a positive and negative effect on language learning skills, especially writing skills. The difference between Arabic and English leads students to make many errors while writing and, as a result, produce poor pieces of writing. This chapter dealt with the theoretical part of our research work, which is divided into two sections. Each section dealt with a research variable for producing general issues on the influence of the mother tongue on learners' writing skills. The first section presented a set of viewpoints from different experts on writing skills in learning EFL and its basic aspects. This section focuses on the importance of writing skills and the approach used to teach them. In addition, it discusses the main difficulties students encountered in their process of learning to write as well as the factors behind these difficulties. The second section dealt with mother tongue and language transfer. It provided definitions of both language transfer and the concept of transfer itself. In addition, it illustrates each approach and its associated areas. It explored language transfer errors, their resources, and how to correct them. In short, since writing is an important skill in learning English, EFL learners and teachers should be conscious of its significance, which requires hard work and much effort.

Chapter Two: The Practical Chapter

Introduction

This chapter aims at investigating teachers' and learners perceptions towards the influence that EFL learners' mother tongue might have on learners' writing. This chapter, then, is devoted to tackle the problem, answer the questions, and achieve the aims of our research. To achieve our aim, the students' and the teachers' questionnaires are used. The questionnaires are addressed to both teachers and second-year LMD students in the department of Foreign Languages at Mila University Center. The present chapter is divided into two sections. The first one deals with the students' questionnaire, and the second one is devoted to the teachers' questionnaire. Each section deals with the explanation of the research methods and the sample selected for our research work as well as providing a description of teachers and students' questionnaires. In addition, this chapter gives a detailed analysis of the data obtained from both questionnaires, followed by discussion of the results. The chapter ends up with presenting the main findings of the study.

Section One: Students' Questionnaire

2.1.1 Population and Sample

The current study is conducted in the Foreign Languages Department at Mila University Center. The population of our study is second year students in the academic year 2022/2023. The whole population consists of 200 students. Among these, we have randomly selected a sample that consists of 55 students. The reason behind selecting 2nd year students of English is that students so have some experience in writing and in learning the language in general ,simultaneously learners at this level seem to be more affected by the use of mother tongue while learning English since they are not advanced learners. An online questionnaire was

designed on a Google form survey, and the link was shared with students via email and different social media platforms. **2.1.2 Description of the Students' Questionnaire**

In this study, the questionnaire was administered to 55 second-year EFL students at Mila University Center. The questionnaire is made up of twenty-one questions. It is divided into four sections that include mixture of closed-ended questions that require the participants to choose one option, and open-ended question that requires them to give answers in a form of short paragraphs. The first section entitled "General Information". It consists of two questions (**Q1-Q2**) aims at gathering information about students feeling about the Written Expression Module and their proficiency in writing. The second section is entitled "Writing Skill" and consists of seven different questions (**Q3–Q7**). It aims at collecting data about students' perspectives towards this skill, the common challenges they may find while composing, and the reasons they think they are behind their poor writing. The third section is entitled "The Mother Tongue". It includes six questions (**Q10–Q15**). It is designed to explore the reasons behind students' use of their mother tongue while learning and the errors they usually commit when writing in English. The last section is entitled "Learners' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on Their Writing Performance". It also consists of six questions (**Q16–Q21**). It explores the impact of L1 interference on students' writing performance, in addition to suggestions they recommend to reduce L1 interference.
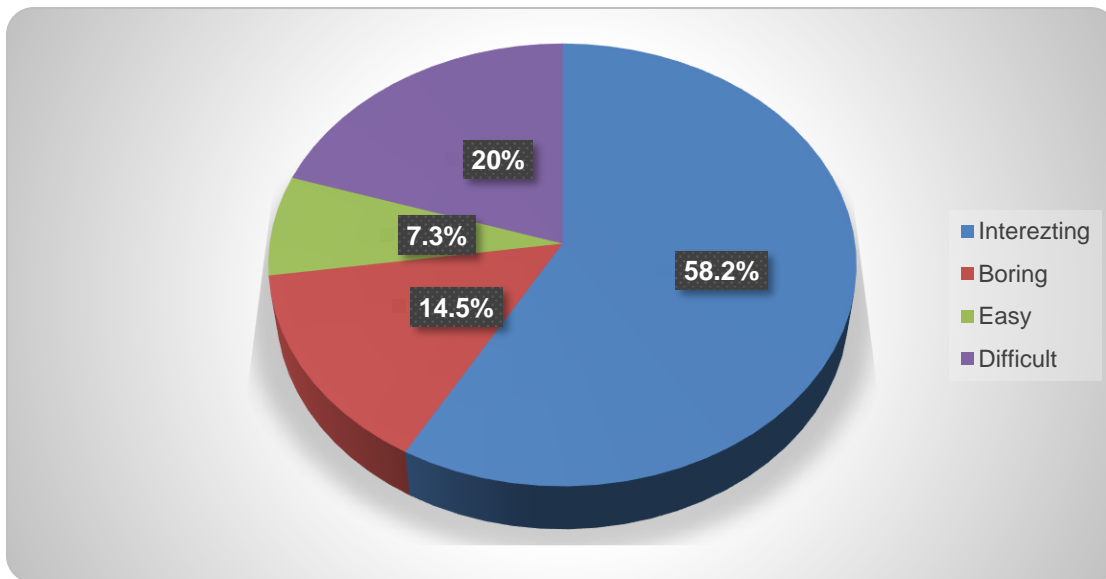
2.1.3 Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Q1. How do you find the Written Expression module?

Graph 01

Students' Perceptions about the Written Expression Module

The graph 01 represents students' perception about the Written Expression module. It shows that thirty-two (58.2%) of the students find the Written Expression Module interesting, which means that they like writing skills, and they are aware of its importance. Whereas ten (14.5%) of students stated that they find the Written Expression module boring. This implies that students are not interested in learning writing skills. On the other hand, just four (7.3%) students declared they find writing easy task to learn. However, twelve (20%) of the respondents said they see writing as a difficult task to learn. The last result shows that students perceive writing as a difficult skill due to some challenges they face while writing such as linguistic problems.

Q2. How do you rate your level in writing?

Graph 02

Students' Level in Writing
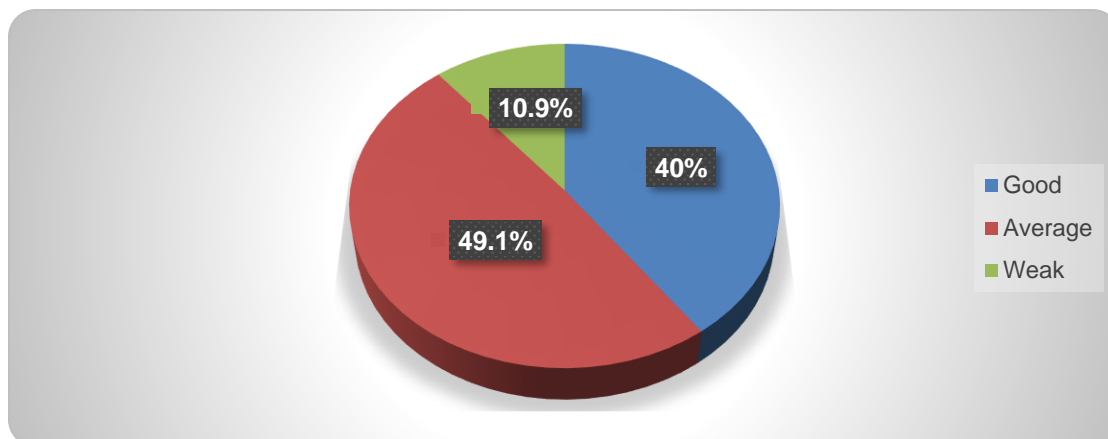
The graph 02 clarifies how students rate their level in writing. About half (49.1%) of the students said that they consider themselves average writers while twenty-two (40%) of the students affirmed that they have a good writing level. The remaining percentage (10.9%) is for students who consider themselves weak writers. The results show that students' low level of writing is probably due to some reasons, such as a lack of adequate techniques in teaching writing, reading, practice, motivation, and the influence of L1 on L2 writing.

Section Two: The Writing Skill

Q1. Is writing a very important skill in teaching and learning English?

Graph 03

The Importance of Writing Skills for Learners
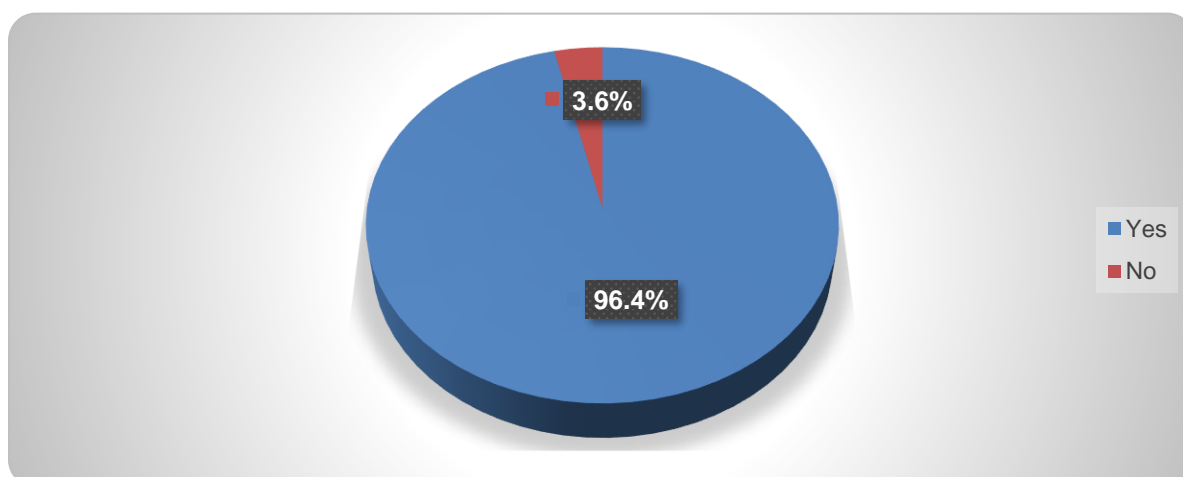
The graph 03 represents the importance of writing skills for learners. According to the graph above, the majority (96.4%) of respondents agreed that writing is an important skill in teaching and learning English whereas 3.6% goes for those who did not consider writing an important skill. The respondents who considered writing an unavailable skill are not aware of its importance in learning the English language.

Q4. How often do you write in class?

Graph 04

Frequency of Practicing Writing in Class
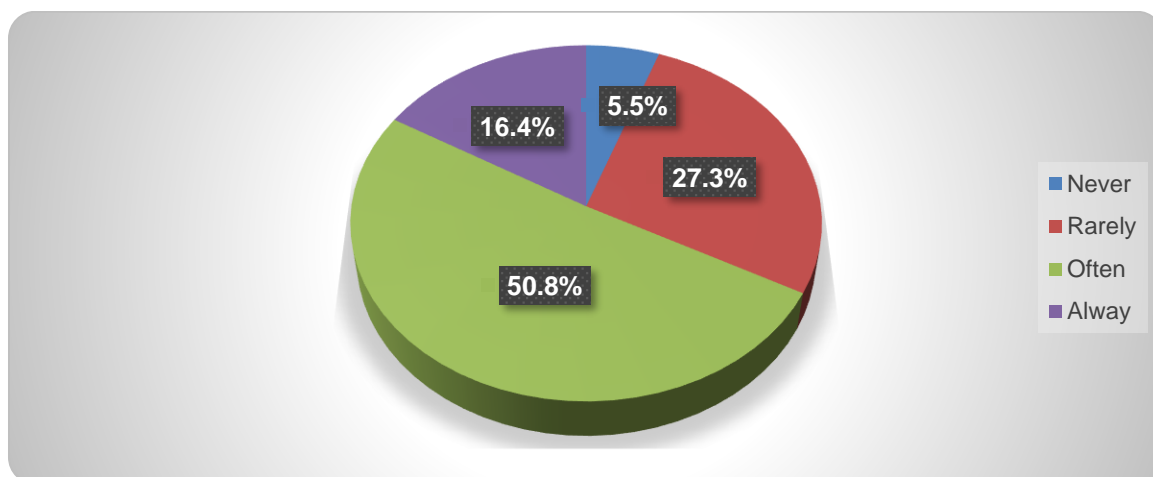
The graph 04 demonstrates the frequency of practicing writing in class. The findings of the above graph show that twenty-eight (50.8%) of students asserted that they often write in class. In contrast, some of students (5.5%) chose the option "never". On the other hand, fifteen (27.3%) of the students declared that they rarely write in class. Further, the rest of the respondents affirmed that they always write in class. The results reveal that students lack practice when learning writing skills, and only a few teachers pay more attention to them.

Q5. Do you face difficulties when writing?

Graph 05

Students' Perceptions on whether they Face Difficulties while Writing
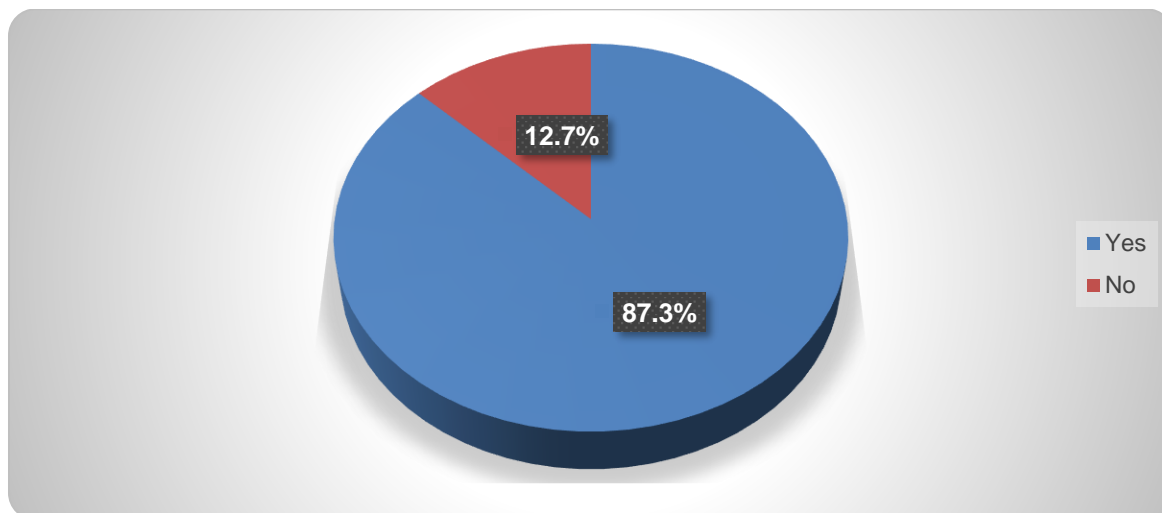
The graph 05 clarifies students' perceptions on whether they face difficulties while writing. The majority (87.3%) of the students chose the option "yes", which implies that the majority of EFL learners face difficulties while writing whereas, seven (12.7%) mentioned that they do not face any difficulties while writing their pieces, which means that writing is not a challenging task for them.

Q6. What kind of difficulties do you usually face while writing?

Graph 06

Students' Major Difficulties in Writing

   a. *Applying grammar rules*

   b. *Poor vocabulary*

   c. *Spelling*

   d. *Punctuation*
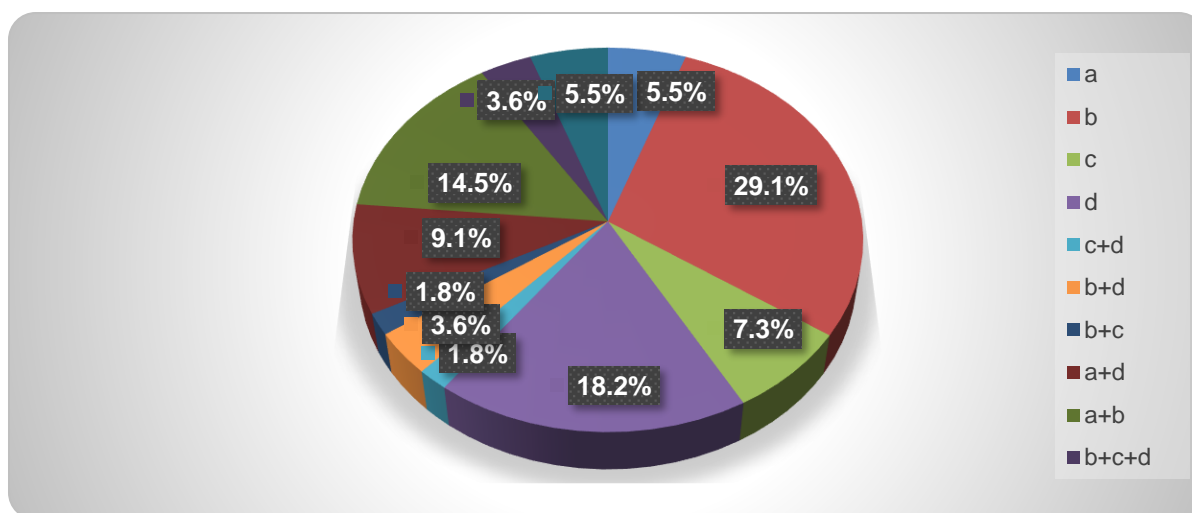
The graph 06 demonstrates students' major difficulties in writing. The data collected in graph 06 shows that students were given the choice of picking more than one option. The (29.1%) of the students said that they faced challenges with writing, mainly with vocabulary, which means that a lack of vocabulary prevents them from freely expressing their thoughts and ideas. On the other hand, three (5.5%) students declared that they had problems in terms of grammar since they did not know how to apply grammar rules. Moreover, ten (18.2%) respondents asserted that they had difficulties in terms of punctuation, it means that they did not know how to put punctuation in the appropriate place, whereas four (7.3%) learners chose that they had spelling problems; they did not know how to write words correctly.

Among those who selected more than one option, 14.5% represent those who had problems with grammar and vocabulary, whereas a low (1.8%) percentage defined just one student who selected spelling and punctuation, with the same percentage for one student who chose vocabulary and spelling. On the other hand, five (9.1%) students shared that they faced difficulties with grammar and punctuation. Furthermore, 3.6% goes to those respondents who selected vocabulary and punctuation. Similarly, 3.6% of the students asserted that they had problems with vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. Finally, the rest of the percentage (5.5%) represents learners who picked all the options; they had problems with applying grammar rules,

poor vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. As a result, it can be said that second-year EFL learners have different difficulties when it comes to producing a piece of writing.

Q7. Which of these steps do you follow while writing?

  a. *Pre-writing*

  b. *. Drafting*

  c. *Revising*

  d. *Editing*

  e. *Publishing*

  f. *Do not follow any step*

Graph 07

Presenting the Students' Steps that they Follow in Writing Process
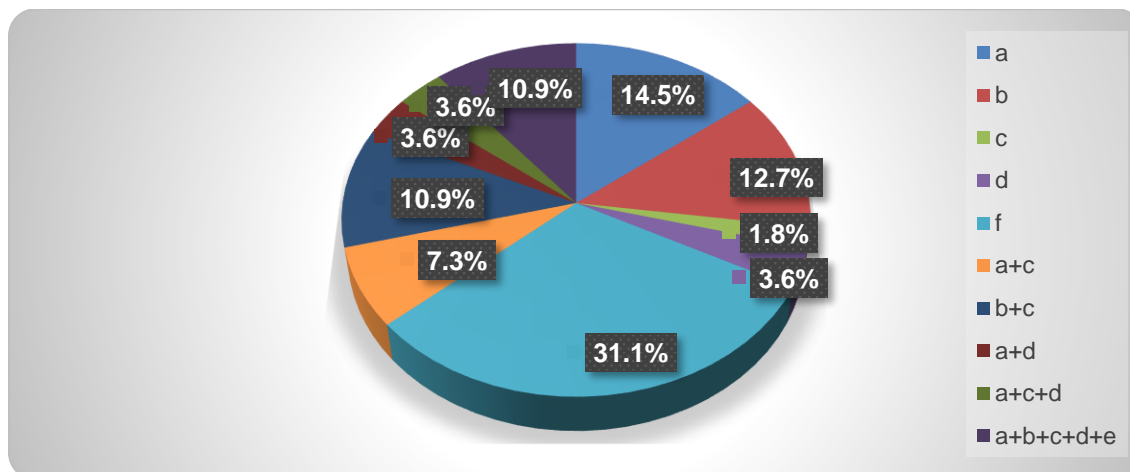
The graph above presents steps that the students follow in the writing process. Thirty one point one percent of the students asserted that they do not follow any step, which implies that they are not aware of the writing process and the importance of these stages in writing their piece. The graph 07 shows that pre-writing (14.5%) and drafting (12.7%) are the most essential steps that the students follow in the writing process. This means that they generate their ideas, and they put their thoughts on the draft. In addition, just a little percentage (1.8%) chose to

follow the revising step. Moreover, two (3.6%) students declared that they followed the editing step. There are students, however, who said that they follow more than one stage in the process of their writing. Six (10.9%) of the students chose all the steps of the writing process. This implies that these steps are important in writing their pieces, and 7.3% of respondents represented those who follow both pre-writing and revising. Furthermore, two students (3.6%) stated they follow both pre-writing and editing. The same percentage represents those who follow pre-writing, revising, and editing.

Q8. Which feature do you focus more on while writing?

Graph 08

Aspects that Students Focus on while Writing their Pieces
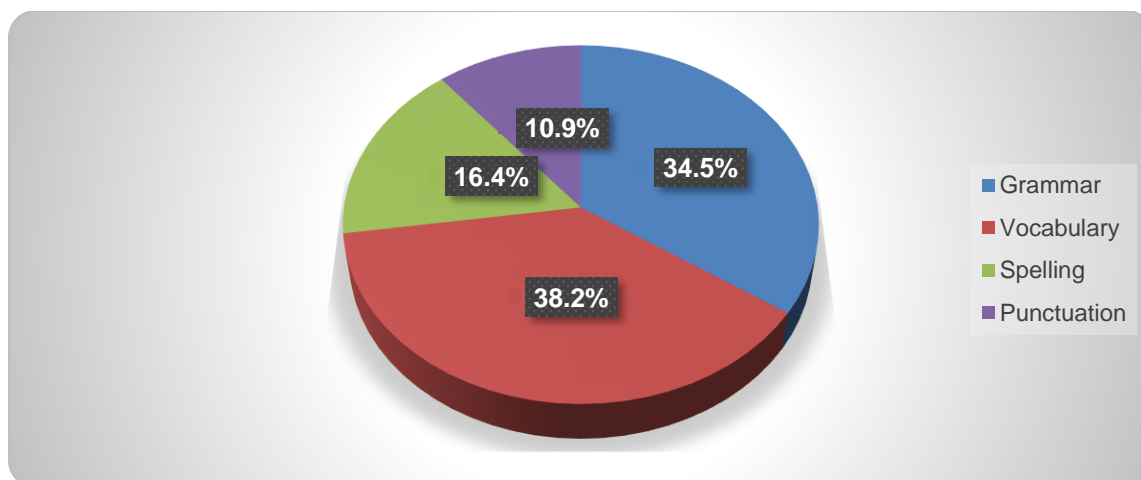
The graph 08 clarifies the aspects that students focus on while writing their pieces. The results show that vocabulary (38.2%) and grammar (34.5%) are the most important aspects that learners focus on when writing their pieces. It implies that they focus more on writing pieces with intensive vocabulary and applying correct grammar rules. In addition, 10.9% of students declared that they focus on punctuation when writing because they probably think that wrong spelling will reduce their marks. The remaining percentage (16.4%) refers to those who focus on spelling because wrong spelling affects the meaning of students' pieces of writing.

Q9. In your opinion, what are the causes behind your low writing performance?

Graph 09

Students' Opinions about the Causes behind their Low Writing Performance
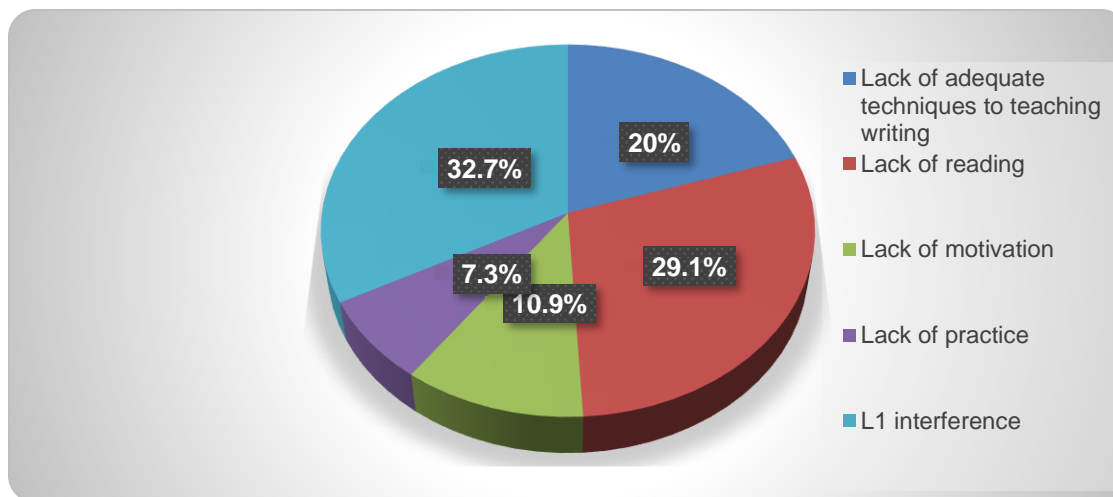
The graph 09 reveals the students' opinions about the causes behind their low writing performance. The data obtained show that a less than half (32.7%) of the learners agreed that the main reason behind their low writing performance was L1 interference. This is maybe because they refer back to their native language while writing. A little percentage (7.3%) goes to respondents who shared that lack of practice is the reason behind their low writing performance. In addition, 20% of the whole sample declared that they have low writing levels because teachers lack adequate techniques to teach them writing. In addition, 29.1% stated that lack of reading was the reason behind their low writing performance. Lastly, 10.9% of learners affirmed that the reason behind their low writing performance is lack of motivation. This is maybe due to their teachers forcing them to write about topics that are not of their interest and, as a result, their motivation to write decreases.

Section Three: The Mother Tongue

Q10.What do you do when you do not understand a word or an expression in English?

Graph 10

Presenting the Actions that Students Take when they Do not Understand a Word or an Expression in English
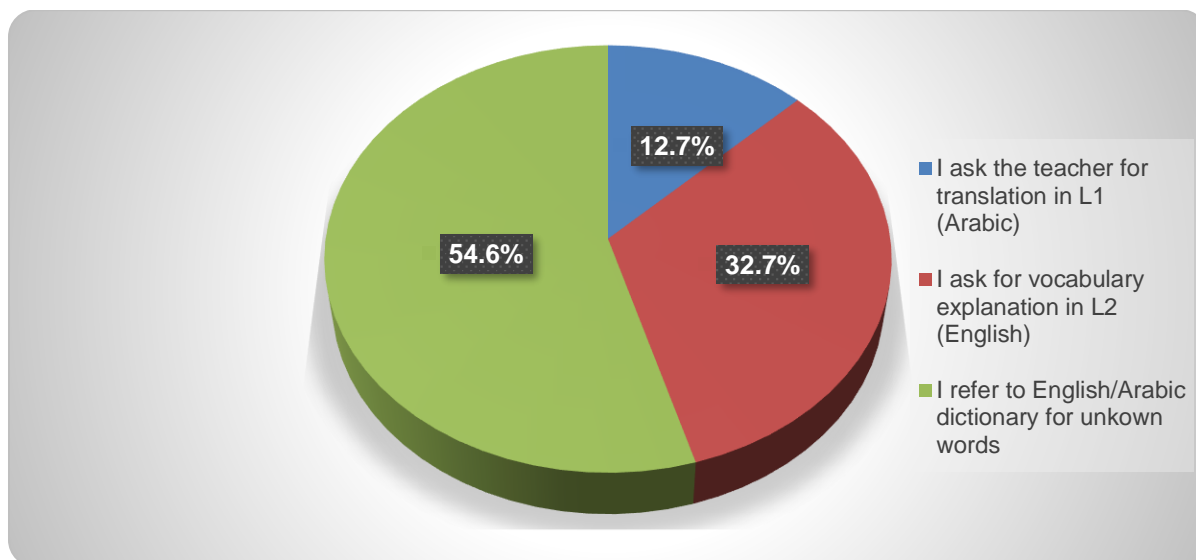
The graph above clarifies the actions that students take when they do not understand a word or an expression in English. Fifty-four point six percent of the students who answered the questionnaire asserted that they use bilingual dictionaries for Arabic and English. While 33% declared that when they do not understand a word or a phrase in English, they ask their teachers for an explanation in English. The remaining percentage defines claimed that they ask their teachers for the translation in Arabic. The results obtained from this question show that a lot of the students use their first language while learning English.

Q11. When do you think it is necessary to use Arabic in an English classroom?

In this question, students were provided with four statements; each statement requires them to answer "agree" or "disagree".

   a. **To define new vocabulary items**

      Graph 11

Students' Need for Using Arabic to Define New Vocabulary Items
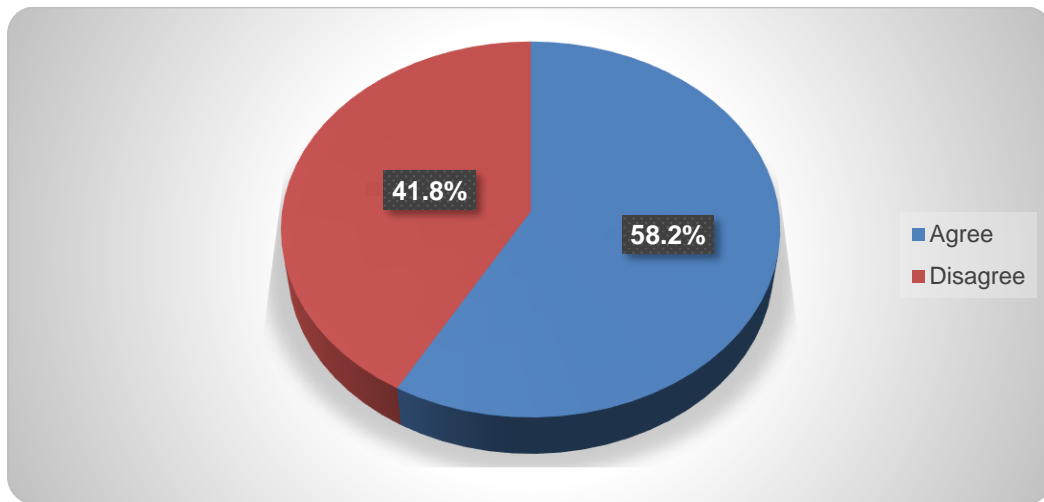
The graph 11 presents students' need for using Arabic to define new vocabulary items. The use of Arabic in the English classroom to define new vocabulary words was supported by 58.2% of students. Perhaps they think that learning the word in Arabic will help them remember it better. On the other hand, 41.8% of the studenrs disagreed with the idea; they prefer to have the meaning of the word in English..

b. To Practice the Use of Some Phrases and Expressions

Graph 12

Students' Need for Using Arabic to Practice the Use of Some Phrases and Expressions
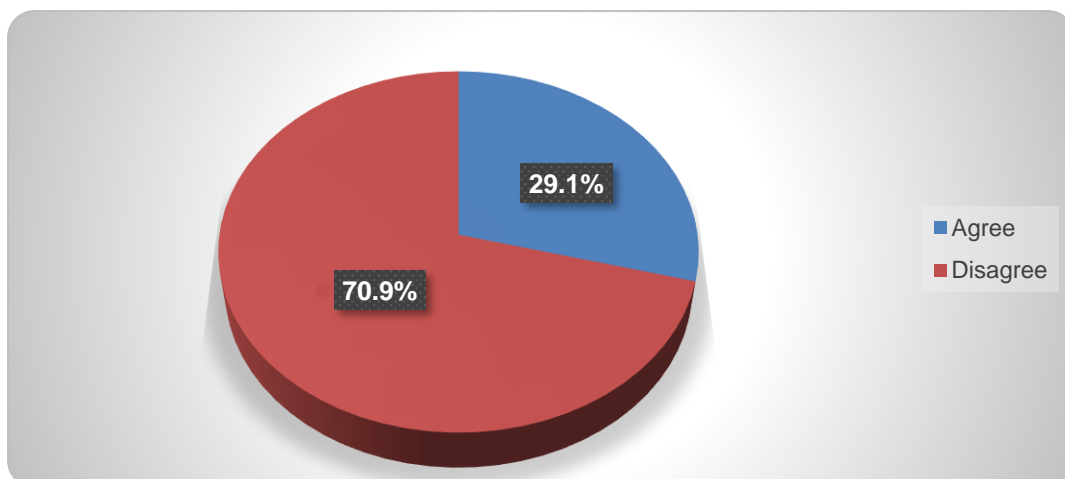
The graph 12 reveals the students' necessity for using Arabic to practice the use of some phrases and expressions. Seventy point nine percent of the 70.9% of students said that they could practice using English expressions in the classroom without using Arabic because they are conscious of how Arabic influences their writing quality. In contrast, 29.1% agreed that it is a necessity to use Arabic to practice English expression in the classroom.

c. **To explain complex grammar points**

Graph 13

Students' Necessity of Using Arabic to Explain Grammar Points
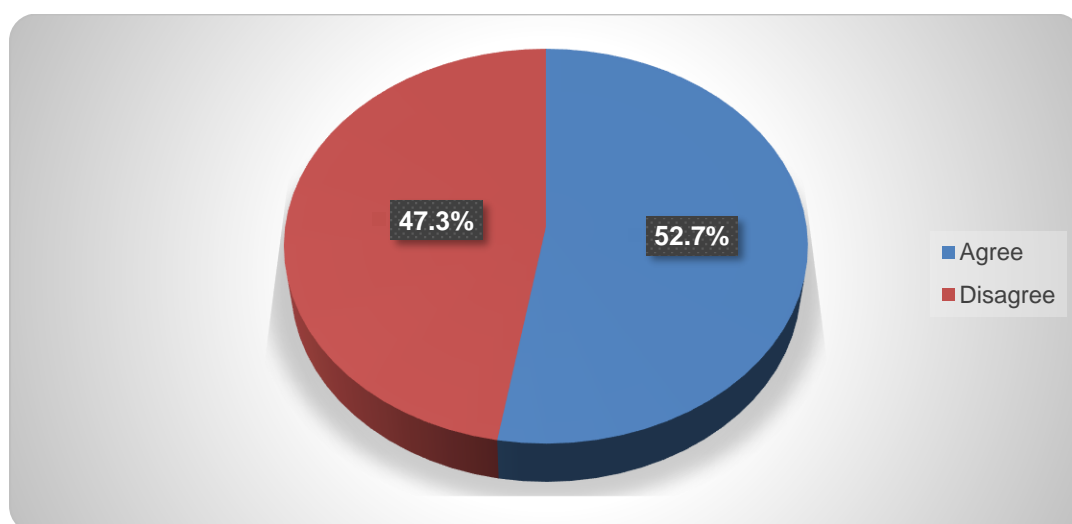
The graph 13 represents students' need for using Arabic to explain grammar points. It shows that 52.7% of learners agreed that Arabic is necessary when explaining complex grammar points since grammar rules are difficult to learn. On the other hand , 47.3 of them said that using Arabic to explain grammar points is not necessary in the classroom.

d. **To give instructions**

Graph 14

Students' Need of Using Arabic to Give Instructions
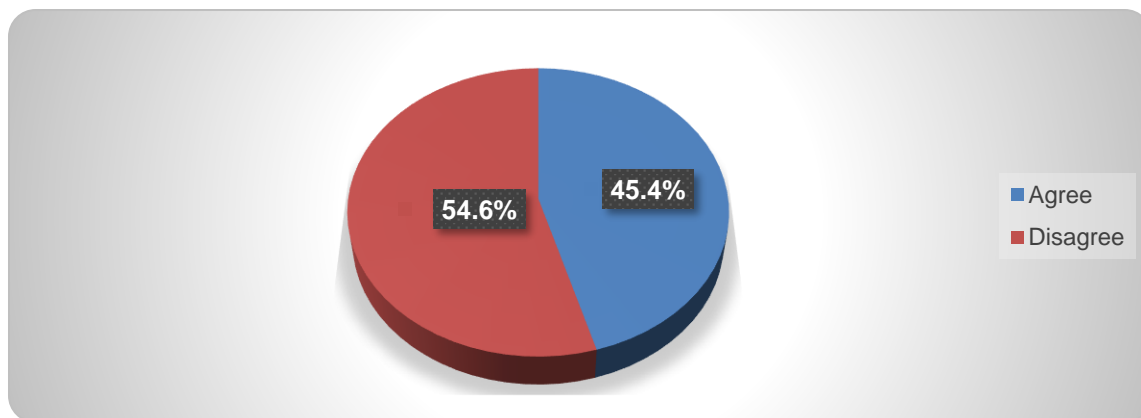
The graph 14 shows students' need of using Arabic to give instructions. Forty-five point four percent of the respondents agreed on the fact that Arabic is necessary when the teacher gives instructions during their sessions because sometimes we cannot get the message without Arabic translation. However, 54.6% of them declared that there is no need to use Arabic in the classroom when the teacher gave instructions.

Q12. In which level do you often make mistakes/errors?

Graph 15

Levels in which Students often Make Mistakes/Error

    a. Lexical level (vocabulary)

    b. Semantic level (translation)

    c. Syntactic level (grammar)
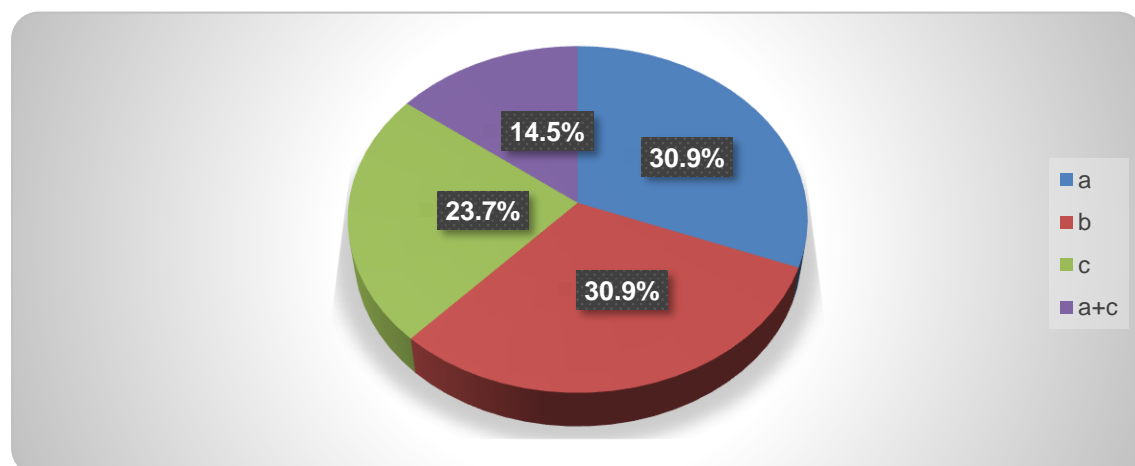
The graph 15 illustrates the levels at which students often make mistakes or errors. The findings show that 30.9% of the students reported that they often make errors in the lexical level that make their piece of writing very poor. The same percentage applies to those who make mistakes or errors at the semantic level; students translate some words and proverbs incorrectly, which makes their writing lose coherence. Whereas, 23.7% of them stated that they make mistakes or errors at the syntactic level; they feel that grammar is hard to learn. Moreover, 14.5% is the percentage of learners who make mistakes or errors in both the lexical and the syntactic levels since they are learning a new language and new rules and find vocabulary and grammar hard to learn.

Q13. What kind(s) of mistakes do you usually make in the process of writing in English?

Graph 16

Types of Mistakes the Students Make in the Writing Process
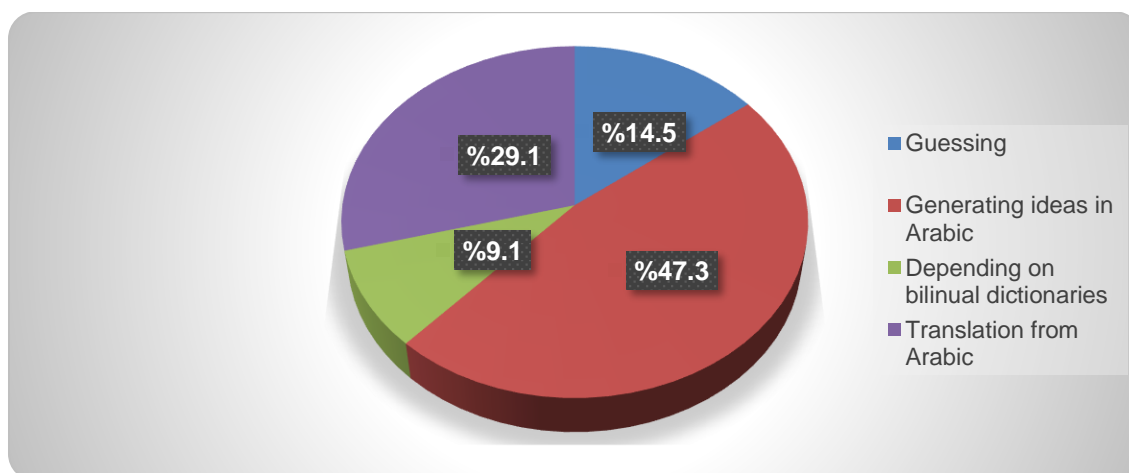
The graph 16 displays the types of mistakes the students make in the writing process. The result shows that the majority (47.3%) of the learners make errors in the writing process because they generate their ideas in Arabic. This implies that students tend to think in Arabic while writing. In addition, 29.1% of participants tend to translate the generated ideas in Arabic and translate them into English. Moreover, 9.1% of them depend on bilingual dictionaries,

which come up with them making mistakes during the writing process. Finally, the rest percentage (14.5%) makes errors because they waste time in guessing the appropriate ideas to express.

Q14. In your opinion, why do you make mistakes/ errors while writing?

In this question, students are supposed to express their opinions about the reasons for making mistakes. The most repeated answers are summarized in the following points:

- Generating ideas in Arabic and L1 reference

- Lack of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge

- Lack of reading, practice, and interest in writing

- Literal translation from Arabic

- Students make mistakes or errors while writing for a variety of reasons, such as lack of understanding of the topic, poor grammar and spelling skills, lack of attention to detail, and a lack of practice and experience in writing.

Section Four: Learners' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on their Writing Performance

Q15. When writing a composition, essay, or paragraph in English, do you think in your mother tongue?

Graph 17

Students' Thinking in their Mother Tongue while Writing
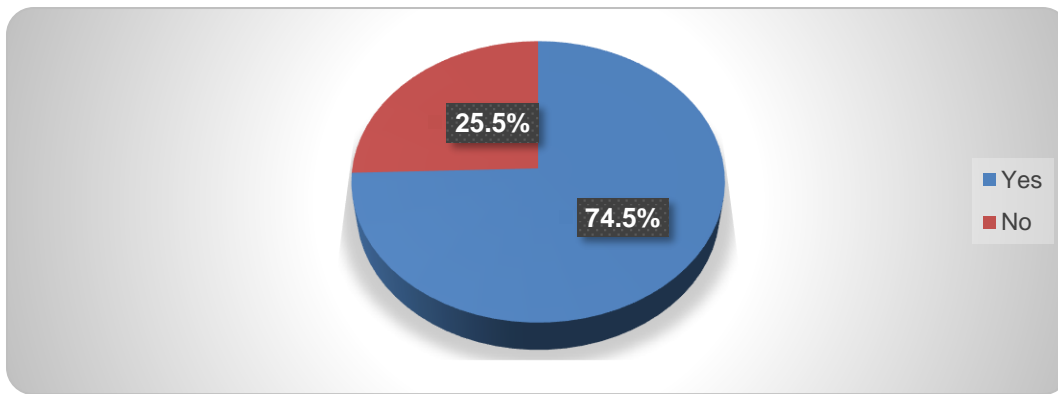
The graph 17 demonstrates students' thinking in their mother tongue while writing. The majority (74.5%) of respondents think in their mother tongue when they tend to write in English. They use their mother tongue as a reference because they find writing a difficult task. However, they often fail because they are not aware of the differences between the systems, mechanisms, and cultural backgrounds of their mother tongue and the foreign language they are learning. On the other hand, 25.5% said that they could express their ideas when writing in English without referring back to their mother tongue.

Q16. When your teachers use Arabic while explaining, does it help you to understand and learn well?

Graph 18

Students' Opinions on the Teacher's Use of Arabic during Lessons to Help them Understand and Learn more Effectively
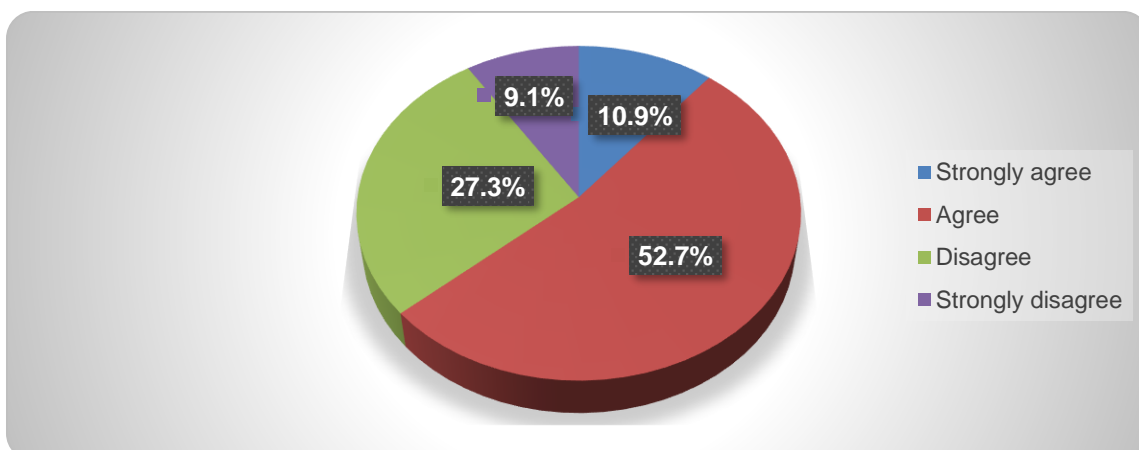
The graph 18 represents students' opinions on the teacher's use of Arabic during lessons to help them understand and learn more effectively. It demonstrates that 52.7% of the learners agreed that explaining lessons in Arabic by the teachers in a classroom environment was very helpful for them to understand and learn better. Additionally, 9.1% of them find it difficult to study when the teacher explains the lesson in Arabic because it hinders their ability to learn English. Moreover, 10.9% of the respondents claimed that when teachers explain lessons in Arabic, they understand and learn better. The remaining percentage (27.3%) declared that the teachers' use of Arabic in the classroom improved their knowledge and learning.

Q17. Do you think that L1 transfer causes the errors you make?

Graph 19

Students' Opinions on whether L1 Transfer Causes their Errors
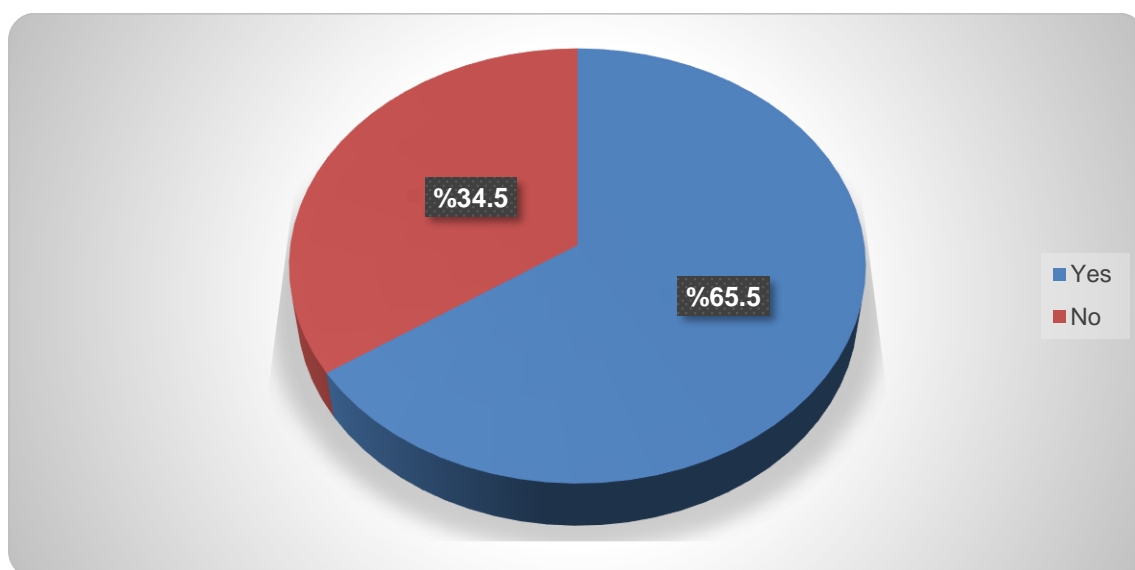
The graph above displays students' opinions on whether L1 transfer causes their errors. It shows that 65.5% of the respondents believed that L1 transfer caused the errors they made while writing. This confirms that they surely refer back to their mother tongue when they write. They generate their ideas in Arabic, and they apply grammar rules according to the Arabic

system. On the other hand, 34.5% reacted negatively , i.e., the mistakes they make in writing are due to other reasons such as spelling mistakes, punctuation issues, etc.

Q18. Does the use of mother tongue (Arabic) influence the quality of your writing?

Graph 20

The Influence of the Mother Tongue on the Quality of Students' Writing
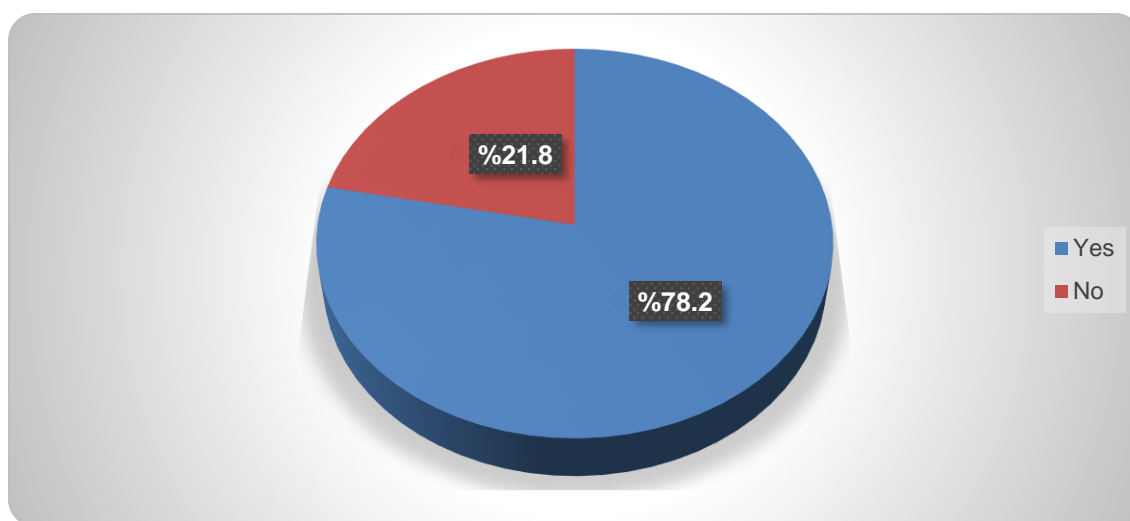
The graph 20 clarifies the influence of the mother tongue on the quality of students' writing. The above results show that the majority (78.2%) of the participants declared that Arabic influences their quality of writing. In contrast, twelve (21.8%) students believed that their mother tongue did not influence their writing in English.

Q19. Do you feel that your L1 improves your writing in L2?

Graph 21

Students' Feelings about the L1 Improvement in their L2 Writing
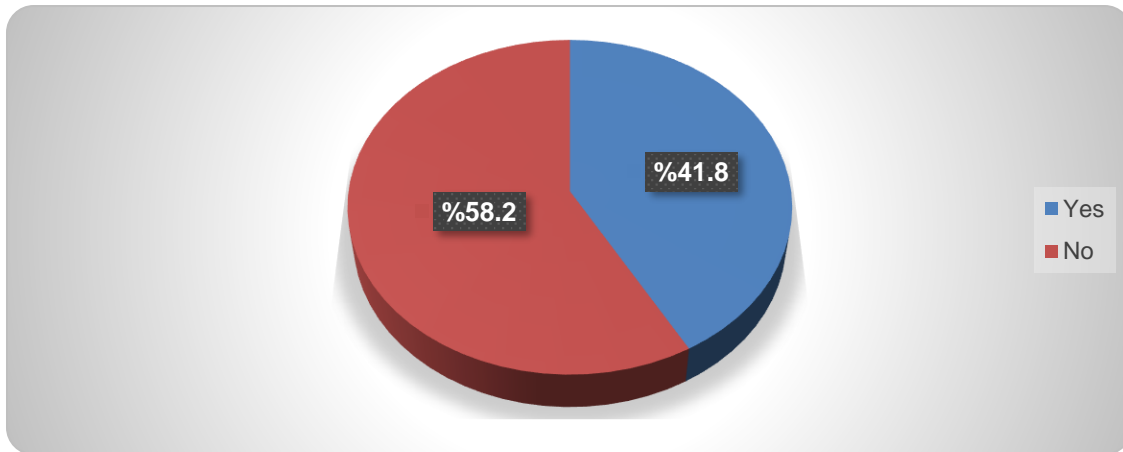
The graph 21 demonstrates students' feelings about the L1 improvement in their L2 writing. More than half of the sample (58.2%) selected "yes" option as their choice; that is, they believe that L1 improves their writing and are not aware of language transfer and its impacts on their writing skill. However, 41.8% declared that L1 does not improve their writing.

Q20. How much do you think the use of Arabic in an English classroom helps you to write effectively?

Graph 22

Students' Opinions of the Benefits of Utilizing Arabic in the English Classroom for Enhancing Writing Effectiveness
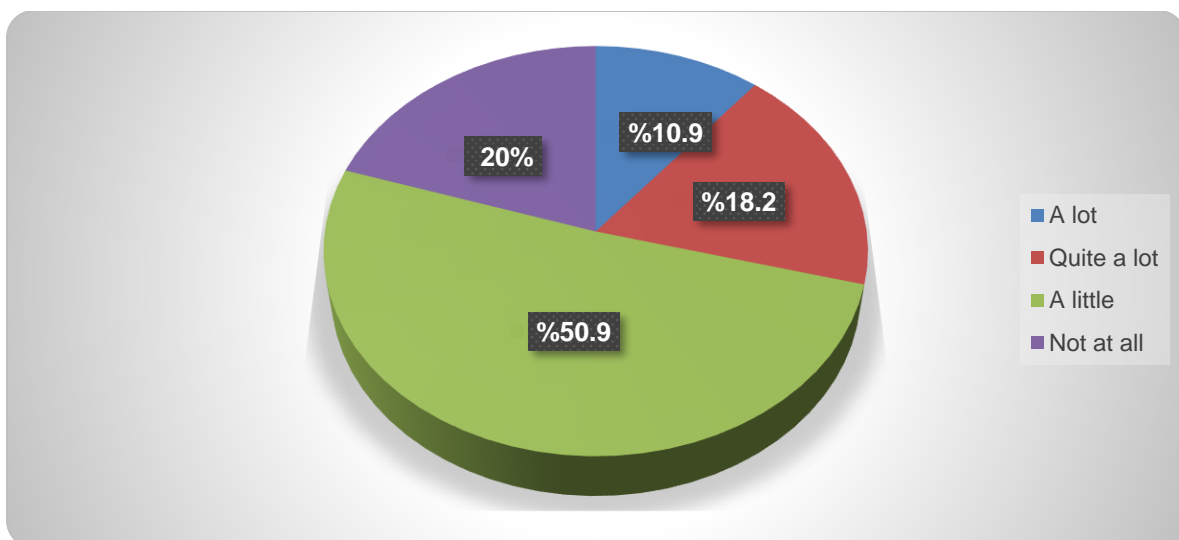
The graph 22 represents students' opinions of the benefits of utilizing Arabic in the English classroom for enhancing writing effectiveness. Only 10.9% of the students indicated that utilizing Arabic in the English setting greatly enhances the ability to write effectively, while 50.9% of them stated that using Arabic in the English classroom helps them a bit in writing effectively. Additionally, 18.2% of the respondents claimed that using Arabic in English setting significantly enhances their capacity to write effectively. Finally, 20% of students claimed that using Arabic in the English classroom has no effect on their ability to write effectively.

Q21. What can you suggest as a way to reduce the L1 interference?

In the last question of the students' questionnaire, students were asked to offer some suggestions to reduce L1 interference in the writing class. Most of them said that in order to reduce L1 interference, they should think in English instead of Arabic, and the teacher should not use it in the classroom at all; instead, he or she should explain complex words with simple words. Others believed that reading books and practicing writing would reduce first language interference. Moreover, some students suggested that to reduce L1 interference, students could practice using English in various contexts, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Additionally, they can concentrate on learning English grammar and vocabulary and ask their classmates or teachers for feedback to help them find and rectify their faults.

2.1.4 Discussion of the Main Findings of the Students' Questionnaire

The main purpose behind conducting this questionnaire is to investigate students' perceptions about the influence of their mother tongue on their writing skills. It consists of 21 questions divided into four sections, and was shared online via different platforms with 55 second-year English students out of 200 students.

After the analysis of the students' questionnaire results, it is revealed that second-year students are aware of the importance of the writing skill since the majority of the students are

interested in learning the Module of Written Expression because it helps them express their thoughts freely as well as helps them improve their writing. Concerning how student rate themselves as writers, the results show that most of them consider themselves as average writers which means they need more effort to reach a good level. Additionally, the results obtained from the survey show that most of the students face difficulties when writing, mainly with vocabulary, grammar, and spelling; thus, the mother tongue has a great effect on EFL students because students translate from their mother tongue into English in their English production. On top of that, they declared that the main reason behind their low writing performance was L1 interference. The results illustrated demonstrate that students refer back to their mother tongue when they tend to write in English, which might be the reason why most of them find difficulties when writing. Moreover, the last section of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of the students believe that their native language influences the way they write, which means that most of their errors are due to the impact of L1.

From what has been explained and analyzed, it is clear that students' mother tongue (Arabic) interference is one of the cause of their errors as well as their low achievement in writing. Eventually, the results confirm that L1 interference has a negative effect on EFL learners' writing skills. Therefore, in order to reduce L1 interference, students need to focus more on practice and reading as well as avoid thinking in Arabic.

Section Two: Teachers' Questionnaire

2.2.1 Administration of the Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire was administered to 2nd year Written Expression teachers of English at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila. The questionnaire is created using Google form and shared with fifteen teachers via emails, but only 13 of the teachers responded to our questionnaire. The aim behind selecting teachers of Written Expression is to ensure that they have enough experience in teaching writing skills.

2.2.2 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 17 different questions divided into four sections. The first section consists of two questions (Q1-Q2). It attempts to gather general information about teachers' professional degrees and their experience in teaching the Written Expression Module at university. The second section is entitled "The Writing Skill". It is made up of four questions (Q3–Q6) that explore teachers' beliefs regarding the importance of writing skills for EFL learners as well as how they assess their learners' level of writing, besides which approach they use to teach writing skills. The third section is entitled "Mother Tongue", which contains five questions (Q7–Q11). It deals with teachers' perceptions of whether their students refer back to their mother tongue, as well as the reasons behind using the native language (Arabic) in a classroom setting. The last section of the questionnaire is entitled "Teachers' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on Learners' Writing Performance". It includes six questions (Q12–Q17). It attempts to investigate teachers' views on whether the mother tongue influences learners' writing skills and the reasons behind their errors as well as their low writing performance.

2.2.3 Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Q1. What is your degree?

Graph 23

Teachers' Degree
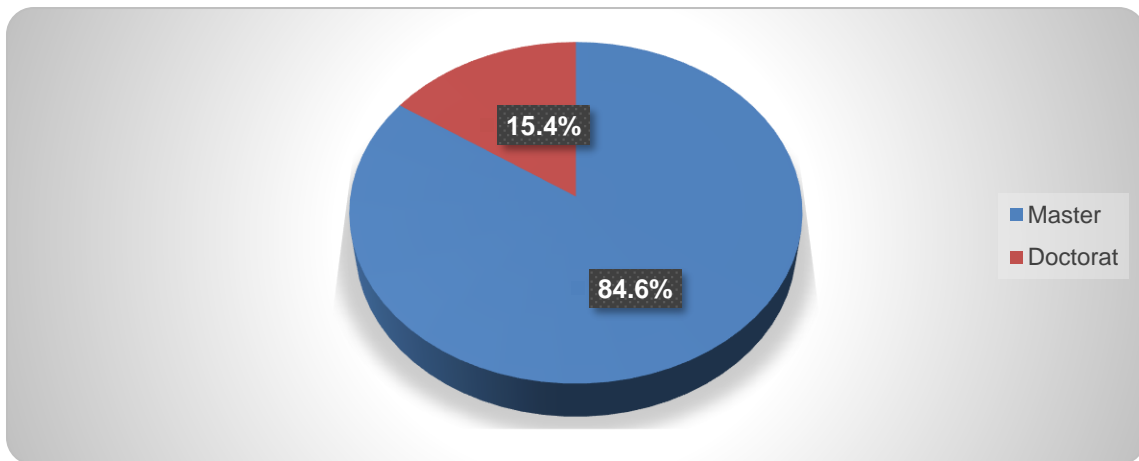
The graph 23 represents the teachers' degrees they hold. It shows that most (84.6%) of the teachers hold a Master degree, while only 15.4% hold a Doctorate degree. In contrast, none of the participants holds a license. The diversity of teachers' qualifications means that each teacher has different abilities and knowledge.

Q2. How long have you been teaching Written Expression Module?

Graph 24

Teachers' Experiences in Teaching Written Expression Module
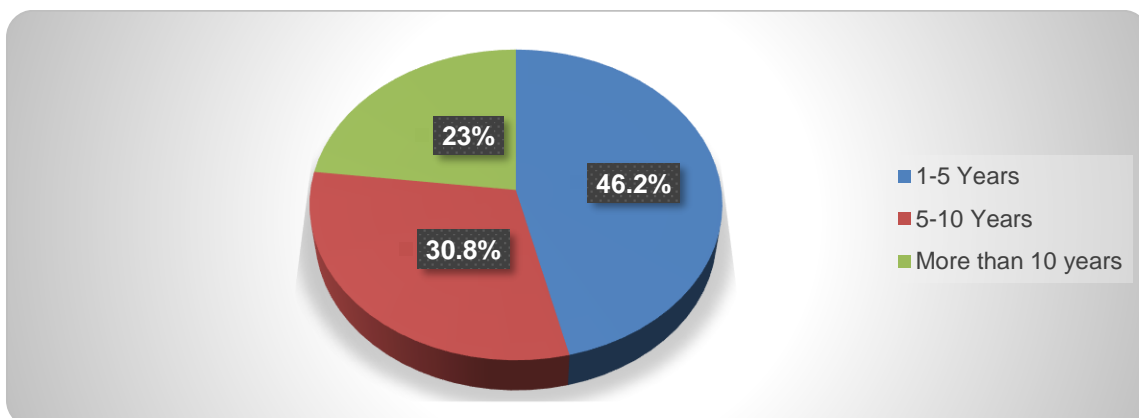
The graph 24 clarifies teachers' experiences in teaching the Written Expression Module. The results demonstrated that less than half (46.2%) of the participants have been teaching Written Expression for less than six years, and four teachers (30.8%) said that they have been

teaching Written Expression for five to ten years. The remaining percentage (23%) represents two teachers who have a long history of teaching written expression at the university.

Section Two: The Writing Skill

Q3. Is writing wan important skill for EFL learners?

Graph 25

Teachers' Perceptions about the Importance of Writing Skills for EFL Learners
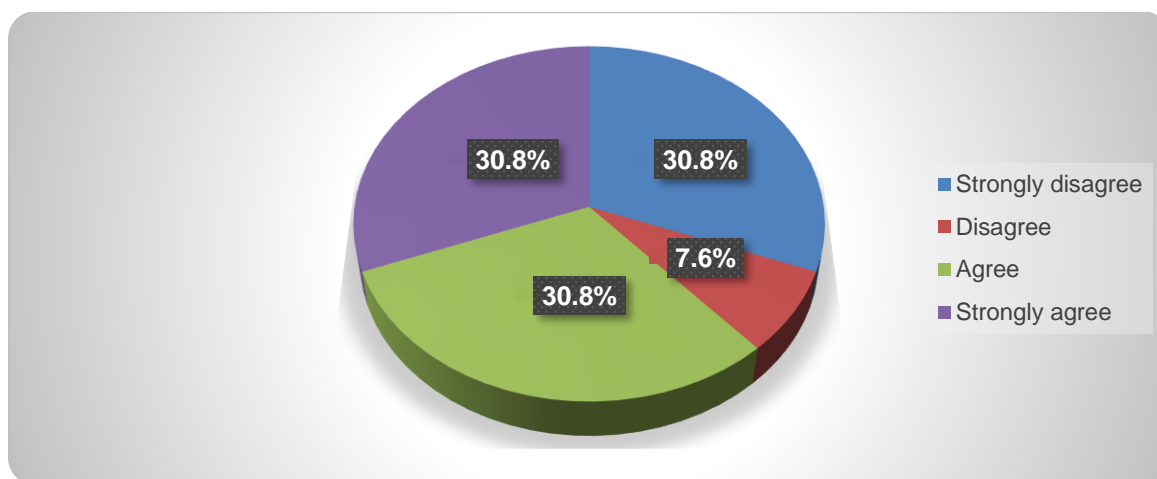
The graph 25 demonstrates teachers' perceptions about the importance of writing skills for EFL learners. The findings show that four teachers (30.8%) disagreed with the idea that writing skills are important for EFL learners. In contrast, the same parentage strongly agreed, since writing helps learners produce new languages as well as improve the English they are learning. On top of that, 30.8% of teachers said that they agree, while just one teacher (7.6%) declared that he or she disagrees with the idea.

Q4. How do you rate teaching Written Expression Module?

Graph 26

Teachers' Perceptions about the Written Expression Module
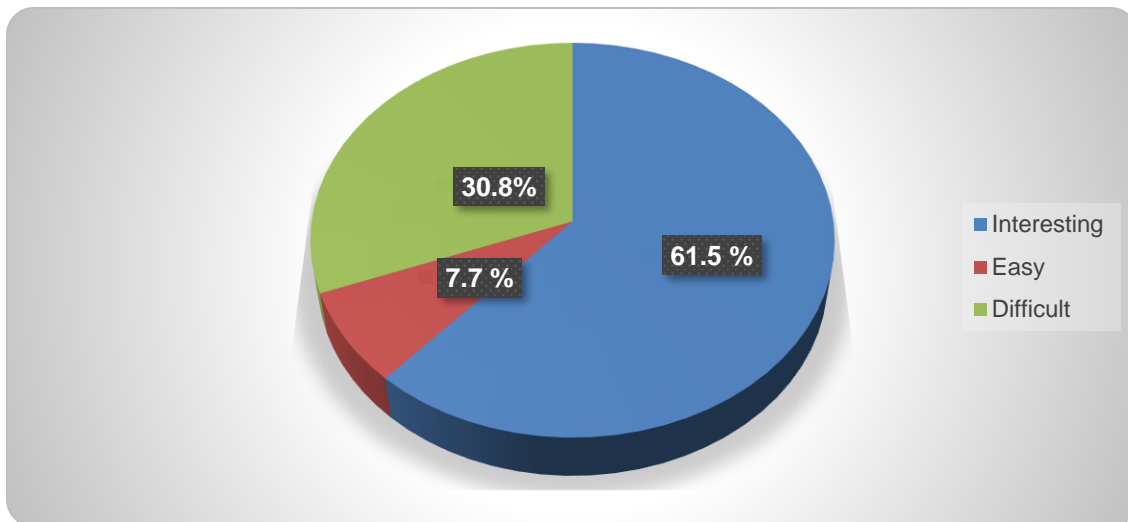
The graph 26 offers teachers' perceptions about the Written Expression Module. It shows that more than half (61.5%) of the teachers said that they find teaching Written_Expression interesting. It means that they like teaching writing skills whereas 30.8% of them declared that they find it difficult when teaching writing skills. On the other hand, just one teacher (7.7%) said that teaching writing skills is easy.

Q5. How do you rate your students' level in writing?

Graph 27

Teachers' Evaluations for Their Learners' Level in Writing
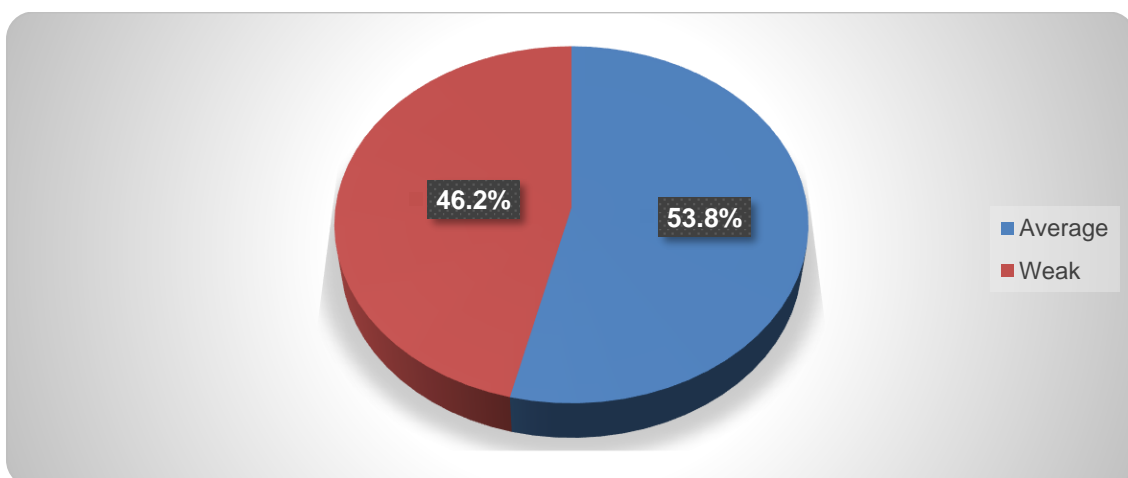
The graph 27 represents teachers' evaluations of their learners' levels of writing. The results show that more than half (53.8%) of participants consider their students average writers while the rest (46.2%) consider their learners weak writers. Further, none of the participants chose the option "good", which means that students need to make more efforts to improve their level of writing and that their teachers should motivate them to practice writing.

Q6. Which approach do you follow to teach Writing?

Graph 28

Approaches Used by Teachers in Teaching Writing
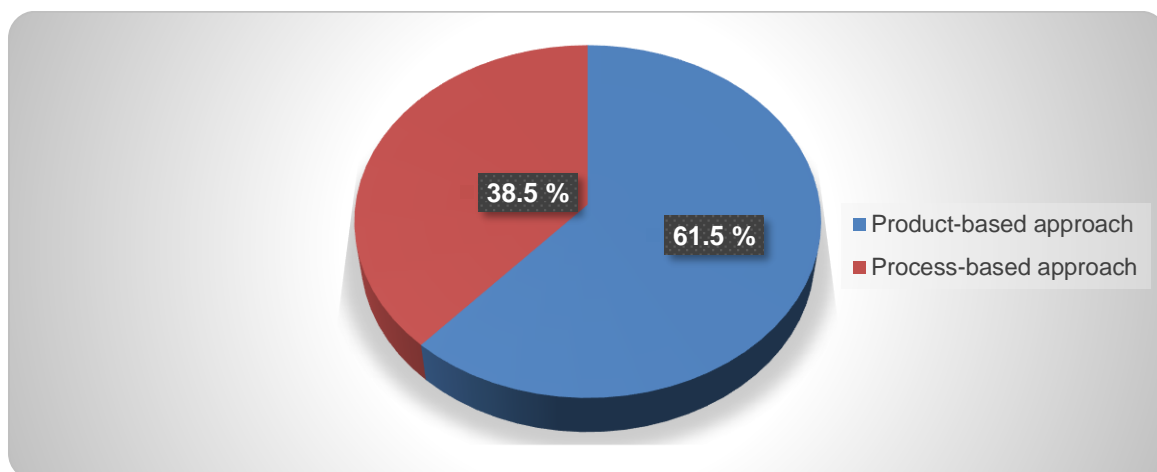
The graph 28 displays the approaches that teachers use to teach writing. It shows that 61.5% of the participants declared that they use the product-based approach in teaching writing, which means that they focus more on the final product of the piece of writing. On the other hand, 38.5% said that they teach writing through a process-based approach, which implies that they believe that writing is a process that involves certain stages that students should follow to produce better pieces of writing. Whereas, none of the teachers use the genre-based approach, which means that they never relate writing to social contexts.

Section Three: Mother Tongue

Q7. Do you think that your students use their mother tongue while writing in English?

Graph 29

Teachers' Opinions about the Students' Consciousness of L1 while Writing in English
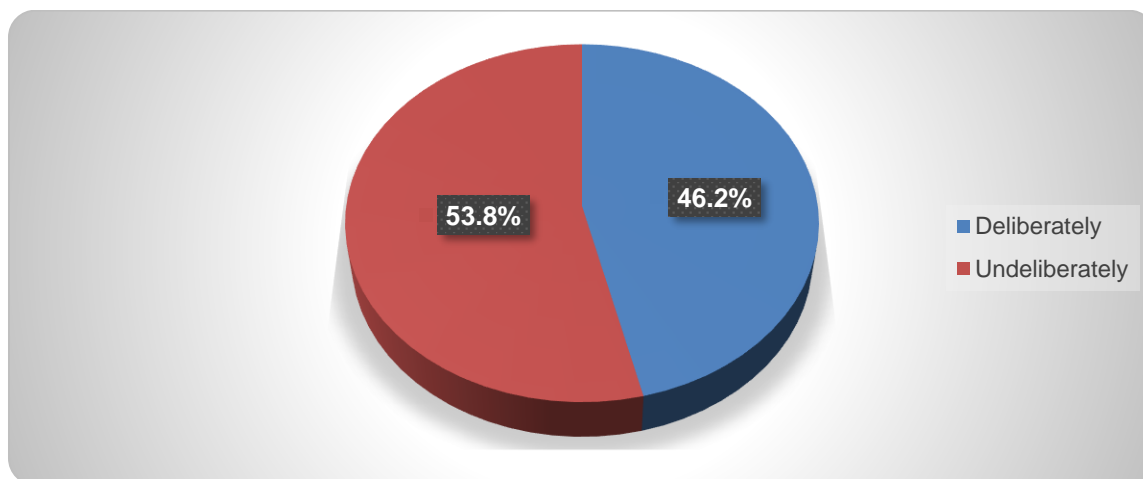
The graph above illustrates teachers' opinions about the students' consciousness of L1 use while writing in English. The results show that 53.8% of the respondents chose the option "non-deliberate3, which means that their learners use some Arabic items without being aware of them while 46.2% declared that their students use L1 in their writing consciously.

Q8. For what reason do you find yourself in need to use the mother language?

Graph 30

Teachers' Need for Using L1 in the EFL Classes
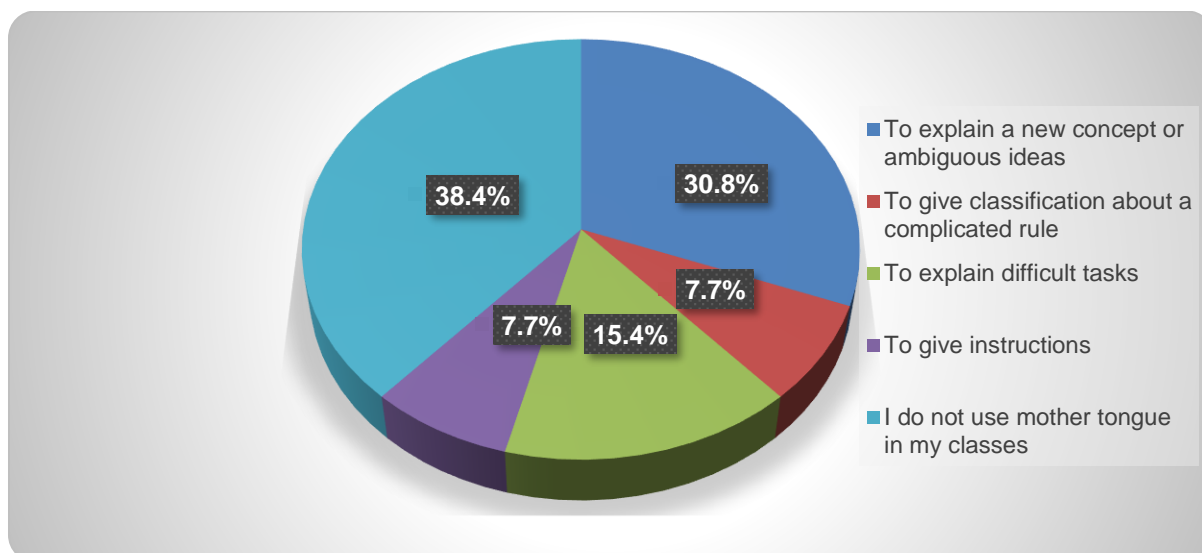
The graph above clarifies the teachers' need for using L1 in the EFL classes. Thirty-eight point four of the respondents asserted that they do not use Arabic while teaching English, and 30.8% of them declared that they use L1 to explain a new concept or ambiguous ideas since learners cannot understand the new concepts without knowing their meanings in Arabic. On the other hand, just one teacher, representing 7.7% of the sample, affirmed that he uses Arabic to give clarifications about a complicated rule. Similarly, one participant declared that he or she uses L1 in EFL classes to give instructions. Finally, 15.4% represents teachers who use Arabic while teaching English to explain difficult tasks. The results reveal that most teachers use Arabic in FFL classes.

Q9.What do your students do when facing obstacles to understand a word or an expression in English?

Graph 31

Presenting Teachers' views about the Actions that Students Take when they Do not Understand a Word or an Expression in English.
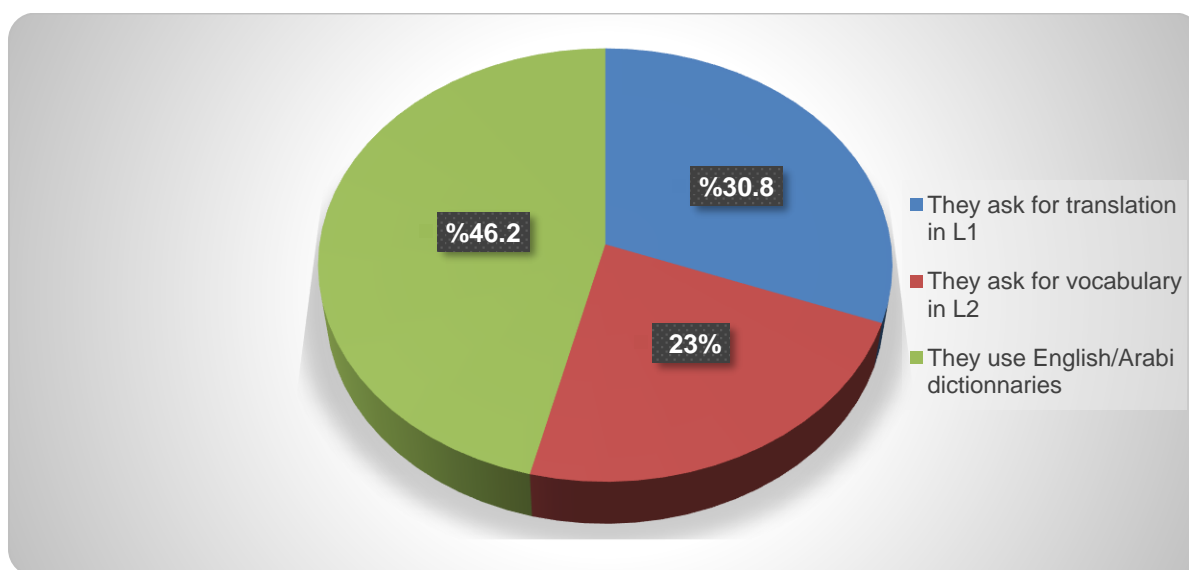
The graph 31 presents teachers' views about the actions that students take when they do not understand a word or an expression in English. It shows that 46.2% of teachers declared

that their students use bilingual dictionaries when they do not know a word in English. Additionally, 30.8% of them shared that when their students do not know an expression in English, they ask for a translation in Arabic. Moreover, 23% asserted that when their learners do not understand a term in English, they ask for a simple explanation of it in English.

Q10.The translated expressions from Arabic to English are useful for students' vocabulary enrichment.

Graph 32

Teachers' Opinions about the Help of Students' Mother Tongue in their Vocabulary Enrichment
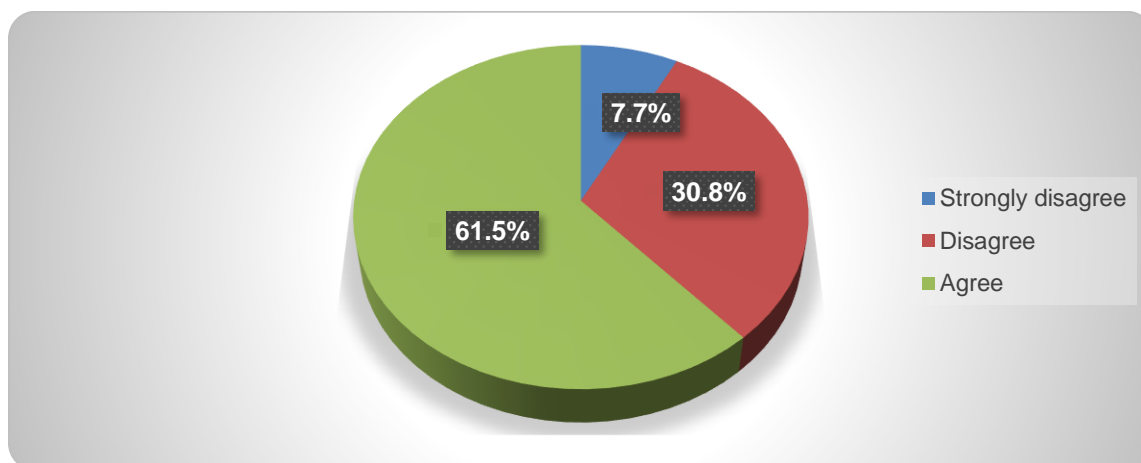
The graph above displays teachers' opinions about the use of students' mother tongue in their vocabulary enrichment. The findings show that more than half (61.5%) of the teachers agreed that when their learners use their native language while learning English, it helps them improve their vocabulary. In contrast, just 7.6% said that learners' use of their native language does not help them boost their vocabulary in English. Furthermore, 30.8% of participants disagreed with the idea. While none of them chose the option "strongly agrees". It reveals that most teachers think that learners' use of Arabic improves their vocabulary.

Q11. According to your experience, what is the accepted amount of using Arabic that could keep the balance in the process of both learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

In this open-ended question, teachers are required to give the accepted amount, according to them, of using Arabic in the process of teaching and learning English. Most of them said that Arabic should be only used in specific cases, such as giving instructions or explaining new concepts. Additionally, some of them said that since learners are not native speakers of the foreign language, every ambiguous or unfathomable word in English should be translated into Arabic, whether during learning or teaching the language. Therefore, they should translate what is difficult to understand in their mother tongue to fathom and master the target language. Finally, some of them agreed that using Arabic in the process of teaching and learning English is not acceptable at all. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent using the mother tongue in an EFL setting. However, due to the necessity of rulings, sometimes teachers are forced to use some words because of the lack of comprehension of the students, especially children, but they should not rely on it and reduce its use as much as possible.

Section Four: Teachers' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on Learners' Writing Performance

Q12. Does the interference of learners' mother tongue influence their development in writing?

Graph 33

Teachers' Perceptions about the Influence of the Mother Tongue on the Quality of Their Students' Writing
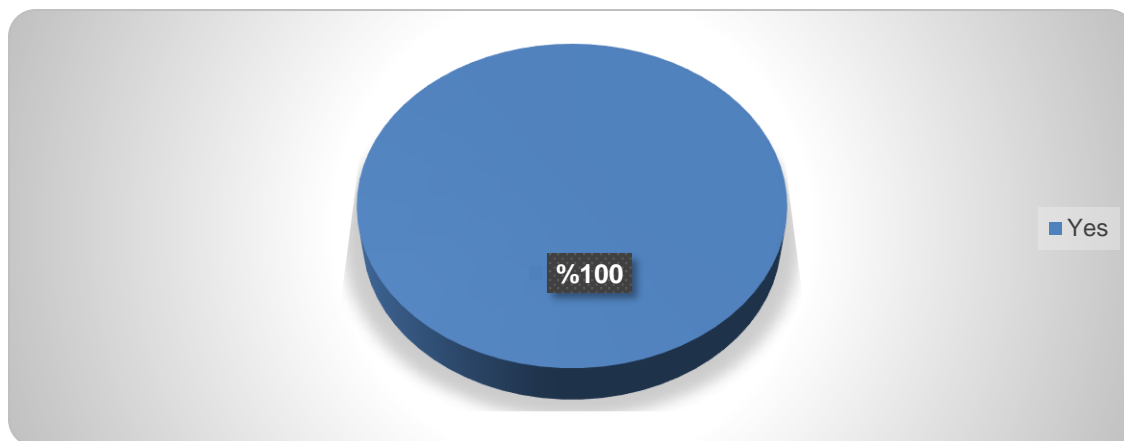
The graph 33 clarifies the teachers' perceptions about the influence of the mother tongue on the quality of their students' writing. The results reveal that all teachers (100%) believed that their students' mother tongue influenced their writing performance. It implies that they are aware of language transfer and its impact on students' writing skills since their learners' level of writing is not good.

Q13. To what extent does the use of the mother tongue in the classroom affect the achievements of EFL learners?

This question investigates teachers' opinions about how much the use of the mother tongue in the classroom affects EFL learners' achievements. The majority of them declared that the use of the mother tongue in the classroom influences negatively students' writing achievements. As a result, they end up making errors in their pieces of writing, which leads to poor writing performance. On the other hand, some of the participants said that the use of their mother tongue influences their writing very much because it reduces their ability to learn new English vocabulary. Moreover, some of them said that the use of the mother tongue in the classroom makes learners highly dependent on the mother tongue, and as a result, they translate Arabic words to English, which drives them to use vocabulary in the wrong place. Finally, one participant asserted that the excessive use of the mother tongue during learning a foreign language produces a broken language given the cultural differences and ways of expression.

Q14. What are the main factors that make students refer back to Arabic while writing in English?

Graph 34

The main factors that make students refer back to Arabic while Writing in English
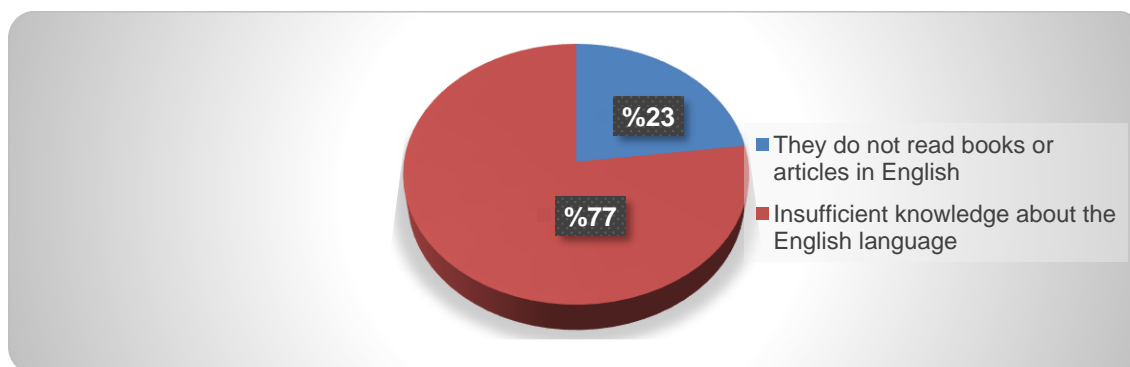
The graph 34 represents the main factors that make students refer back to Arabic while writing in English. The majority of teachers (77%) said that insufficient knowledge about the English language is the main reason behind learners' use of Arabic while writing in English which implies that the lack of English knowledge leads learners to rely on their mother tongue while writing, and as a result, they end up facing the phenomenon of language transfer. On the other hand, the remaining percentage (23%) represents those who declared that a lack of reading is the main reason that students refer back to their native language while writing in English. It means that reading is important for improving learners' writing skills.

Q15. Do you think that the source of errors that are committed by learners in writing is due to the mother tongue interference?

Graph 35

Teachers' Opinions on whether the Mother Tongue Interference is the Main Source of Learners' Errors in Writing
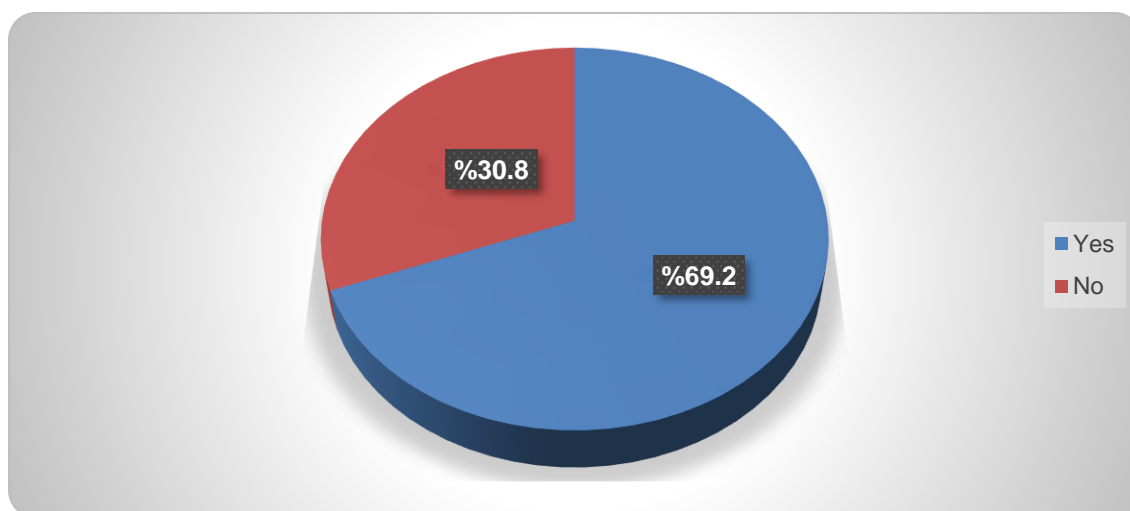
The graph 35 demonstrates teachers' opinions on whether mother-tongue interference is the main source of learners' errors in writing. It shows that the majority of participants (69.2%) reacted positively to the idea, i.e., the majority of the teachers believed that the main source of their learners' errors in writing their pieces is the mother tongue interference. Thirty point eight percent of the respondents disagree with the saying that the mother tongue interference is the reason for learners' low achievement in writing arguing that that there are many other reasons which have an equally degree of on influence the process of learning how to communicate in writing effectively. The results confirmed the previous results in questions 13 and 14, which implies that the mother tongue interference is the main reason behind students' low writing performance.

Q16. What are the most frequent errors students make?

Graph 36

Types of Errors the Students Make in Writing
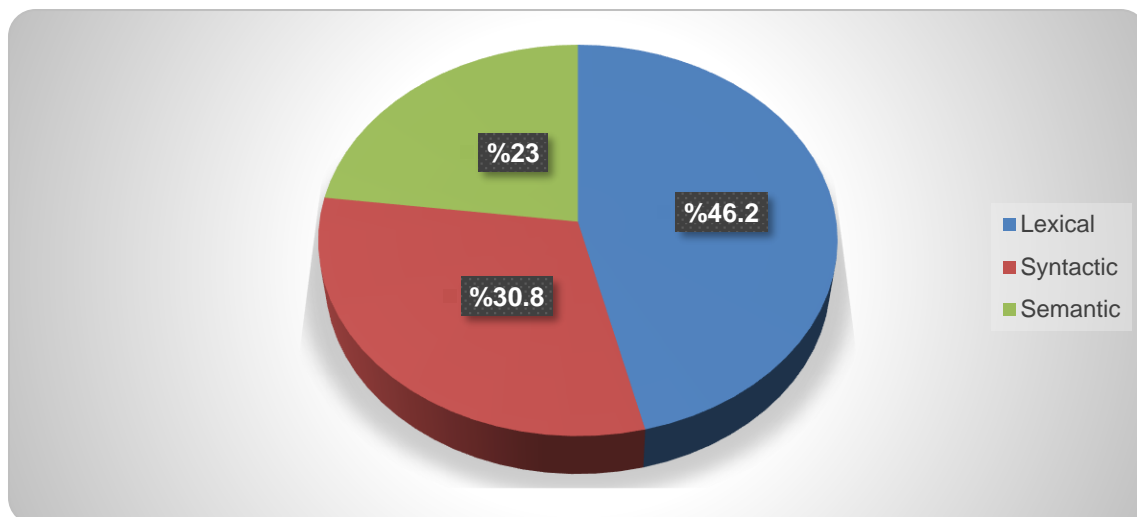
The graph 36 illustrates the types of errors that students make in writing. 46.2% of the teachers said that their students make lexical errors. While 23% of them declared that, their learners make semantic errors, which mean that their students translate Arabic words into English in the wrong way, which makes their writing performance poor. Furthermore, 30.8% of the respondents stated that they make syntactic errors, which means that applying grammar rules correctly is hard for them.

Q17. According to you, what are the solutions to reduce the interference of the mother tongue when writing?

This question requires providing teachers with solutions to reduce mother-tongue interference while writing. The majority of teachers believe that reading in English is the best solution to reduce mother-tongue interference. On the other hand, some teachers argued that practicing writing is better for decreasing mother-tongue interference. While one teacher said that to reduce mother tongue interference, learners should learn how to write academically. Finally, a few teachers asserted that students should use monolingual dictionaries, which help them rely on English rather than their native language.

2.2.4 Discussion of the Main findings of the Teachers' Questionnaire

From the analysis of the first section of the questionnaire, we noticed that teachers of Written Expression have different educational degrees and have different English teaching experiences. However, they agree on the same opinions and perspectives and on different questions in the questionnaire. Concerning students' levels in writing, the majority of teachers agreed that their learners have average levels in writing. Therefore, they assume that reading and practice make them produce better pieces of writing. Additionally, the majority of them used a product-based approach to teaching writing, which means that they focus more on form than content. Furthermore, when the participants were asked about the main source of errors made by students, they agreed that it was due to L1 interference.

Finally, from what has been analyzed, we conclude that the main reason behind learners' low writing performance is the negative effect of L1 interference. Therefore, learners can minimize L1 interference by practicing writing and developing their reading skills.

2.2.5 Recommendations

After exploring teachers' perceptions about the influence of mother tongue on learners' writing skills, we suggest some recommendations for them to enhance students' writing skills and reduce L1 interference.

- Teachers should use effective techniques and good strategies to teach writing skills.
- Teachers should provide students with feedback to prevent them from making many errors.
- Since learners need more practice, teaching writing skills should not be limited to the Written Expression module but should involve teaching writing through all the modules.
- Thinking in English is better for students' written production. Therefore, they should be encouraged to think in English rather than in their native language (Arabic), and they should avoid thinking in it as much as possible.

- In order for students to improve their writing skills, they must practice writing as much as they can because practice makes them better writers.

- Students must be aware of L1 and L2 differences and similarities.

- Students are recommended to read a lot: books, novels, articles, etc. Students should just use monolingual dictionaries (English-English dictionaries

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the fieldwork of our research work; it was devoted to investigating both students' and teachers' perceptions toward the influence of mother tongue on EFL learners' writing skills. The analysis of the students' questionnaire shows that students face many difficulties while writing such as grammar, lack of vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. In addition, the results reveal that the students refer back to their mother tongue while writing and the errors they commit are due to the negative interference of Arabic language. In order to reduce L1 interference, students suggested reading and practice writing in L2 to avoid making mistakes/errors. Concerning the teachers' questionnaire analysis, the results demonstrate that teachers also use Arabic in the English classroom to give instructions and explain complex grammar rules. Therefore, the teachers' use of Arabic in the classroom is one of the reasons for students' L1 interference.

General Conclusion

Language transfer is regarded as the most common phenomenon that EFL learners suffer from when they come to learn writing skills. They tend to transfer all their previous knowledge in L1 and use it to learn the target language, and similarly, their old habits transfer too, as a way to facilitate their writing process in English. The main objectives of this research are to explore EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions toward the influence of the mother tongue on EFL learners' writing skills. As well as to make them aware of the effect of L1 on L2 writing in order to achieve a better teaching and learning process. Taking into consideration the previous questions, which were posed in an attempt to obtain a reliable answer:

- Is L1 interference the main reason behind learners' low writing performance?

- What are the common errors that second-year students encounter when writing in English?

In this research work, we used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting the necessary data. It was addressed to both teachers of Written Expression and second-year students in the Department of Foreign Languages at MUC. Within this study, the dissertation was made up of two main chapters.

The theoretical chapter was divided into two main sections. The major concern of the first section was to provide an overview of the concept of language transfer and its main approaches. In addition, this section identified the main errors that students make while writing, providing a classification of them as well as their resources. At the end, the section provided a correction for those errors. In the second section, it is about writing skills. It began with the history and origins of writing, and then it moved to define it and present its importance. The section also explains the main approaches that teachers use to teach writing. Further, this section dealt with the difficulties that students face while writing and the factors behind their low writing performance. The section ended with some criteria for producing effective writing.

The second chapter was divided into two sections. Each section was devoted to analyzing teachers' and students' questionnaires. The result of this study revealed that the majority of learners refer back to their mother tongue while learning English, as well as that the teachers use it in the English classroom. In addition, the results obtained from the questionnaires showed that most errors that students made in their pieces were due to L1 interference.

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Appendices

Appendix 01: Students' Questionnaire

> Dear students, this questionnaire is part of research work. It aims at investigating students' attitudes towards the Influence of Mother Tongue on EFL learners written productions. It would be grateful if you fill this questionnaire. Please, put a tick (√) in the appropriate box. Thank you for your cooperation.

Section One: General Information

Q1. How do you find the Written Expression Module?

    a. Interesting   ☐ c

    b. Boring   ☐

    c. Easy   ☐

    d. Difficult   ☐

Q2. How do you rate your level in writing?

    a. Good   ☐

    b. Average   ☐

    c. Weak   ☐

Section Two: The Writing Skill

Q3. Is writing a very important skill in teaching and learning English:

    a. Yes   ☐

    b. No   ☐

Q4. How often do you write in class?

a. Never ☐

b. Rarely ☐

c. Often ☐

d. Always ☐

Q5. Do you face difficulties when writing?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Q6. What kind of difficulties do you usually face while writing?

a. Applying grammar rules ☐

b. Poor vocabulary ☐

c. Spelling ☐

d. Punctuation ☐

Q7. Which of these steps you follow while writing?

a. Pre-writing ☐

b. Drafting ☐

c. Revising ☐

d. Editing ☐

e. Publishing ☐

f. Do not follow any step ☐

Q8. Which feature do you more focus on while writing?

a. Grammar ☐

b. Vocabulary ☐

c. Spelling ☐

d. Punctuation ☐

Q9. In your opinion, what are the causes behind your low writing performance?

    a. Lack of adequate techniques to teaching writing ☐

    b. Lack of reading ☐

    c. Lack of motivation ☐

    d. Lack of practice ☐

    e. L1 interference ☐

Section Three: The Mother Tongue

Q10. What do you do when you do not understand a word or an expression in English?

    a. I ask the teacher for translation in L1 (Arabic) ☐

    b. I ask for vocabulary explanations in L2(English) ☐

    c. I refer to the English/Arabic dictionary for unknown word) ☐

Q11. When do you think it is necessary to use Arabic in an English classroom?

  a. To define new vocabulary items

• Agree ☐

• Disagree ☐

  b. To Practice the use of some phrases and expressions

• Agree ☐

• Disagree ☐

c. To explain complex grammar points

•Agree ☐

• Disagree ☐

d. To give instructions

• Agree ☐

• Disagree ☐

Q12. In which level do you often make mistakes/errors?

a. Lexical level (vocabulary) ☐

b. Semantic level (translation) ☐

c. Syntactic level (grammar) ☐

Q13. What kind(s) of mistakes do you usually make in the process of writing in English?

a. Guessing ☐

b. Generating ideas in Arabic ☐

c. Limited knowledge of English vocabulary ☐

d. Depending on bilingual dictionaries ☐

e. Translating from Arabic ☐

Q14. In your opinion, why do you make mistakes/ errors while writing?

…..

....

....

....

Section Four: Learners' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on their Writing Performance

Q15. When writing a composition, essay, or paragraph in English, do you think in your mother tongue?

    a. Yes   ☐

    b. No   ☐

Q16. When your teachers use Arabic while explaining, does it help you to understand and learn well?

    a. Strongly agree   ☐

    b. Agree   ☐

    c. Disagree   ☐

    d. Strongly disagree   ☐

Q17. Do you think that L1 transfer causes the errors you make?

    a. Yes   ☐

    b. No   ☐

Q18. Does the use of mother tongue (Arabic) influence the quality of your writing?

    a. Yes   ☐

    b. No   ☐

Q19. Do you feel that your L1 improves your writing in L2?

    a. Yes   ☐

    b. No   ☐

Q20. How much do you think the use of Arabic in an English classroom helps you to write effectively?

a. A lot

b. Quite a lot

c. A little

d. Not at all

Q21. What can you suggest as a way to reduce the L1 interference?

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Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 02: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is part of a research work. It aims at exploring teachers' attitudes towards the influence of mother tongue on EFL learners' written production.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire. Please, tick (√) the appropriate box and make full statements whenever necessary.

Section One: General Information

Q1. What is your degree?

    a. License ☐

    b. Master ☐

    c. Doctorate ☐

Q2. How long have you been teaching Written Expression Module?

…..........year(s)

Section Two: The Writing Skill

Q3. Is writing an important skill for EFL learners?

    a. Strongly disagree ☐

    b. Disagree ☐

    c. Agree ☐

    d. Strongly agree ☐

Q4. How do you rate teaching Written Expression Module?

    a. Interesting ☐

b. Boring ☐

c. Easy ☐

d. Difficult ☐

Q5. How do you rate your students' level on writing?

a. Good ☐

b. Average ☐

c. Weak ☐

Q6. Which approach do you follow to teach Writing?

a. Product-based approach ☐

b. Genre-based approach ☐

c. Process- based approach ☐

Section Three: The Mother Tongue

Q7. Do you think that your students use their mother tongue?

a. Deliberately ☐

b. Undeliberate ☐

Q8. For what reason do you find yourself in need to use the mother language?

a. To explain a new concept or ambiguous ideas ☐

b. To give clarifications about a complicated rule ☐

c. To explain difficult tasks ☐

d. To give instructions ☐

e. I don't use the mother tongue in my class ☐

Q9. What do your students do when facing obstacles to understand a word or an expression in English?

a. They ask for translation in L1(Arabic) ☐

b. They ask for vocabulary in L2(English) ☐

c. They use English/Arabic dictionaries ☐

Q10. The translated expressions from Arabic to English are useful for students' vocabulary enrichment.

a. Strongly disagree ☐

b. Disagree ☐

c. Agree ☐

d. Strongly agree ☐

Q11. According to your experience, what is the accepted amount of using Arabic that could keep the balance in the process of both learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

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Section Four: Teachers' Perceptions towards the Influence of the Mother Tongue on Learners' Writing Performance

Q12. Does the interference of learners' mother tongue influence their development in writing?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Q13. To what extent does the use of the mother tongue in the classroom affect the achievements of EFL learners?

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Q14. What are the main factors that make students refer back to Arabic while writing in English?

a. They do not read books or articles in English ☐

b. Insufficient knowledge about the English language ☐

c. Others ☐

Q15. Do you think that the source of errors that are committed by learners is due to the mother tongue interference?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Q16. What are the most frequent errors students make?

a. Lexical ☐

b. Syntactic ☐

c. Semantic ☐

Q17. According to you, what are the solutions to reduce the interference of the mother tongue when writing?

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الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقيق من تأثير اللغة الأم (اللغة العربية) على مهارات الكتابة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حيث يهدف هذا التحقيق إلى زيادة وعي المعلمين والطلاب حول تأثير تدخل اللغة العربية على مهارات الكتابة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يسعى هذا البحث إلى إيجاد الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب عندما يأتون للكتابة باللغة الاجنبية وكذلك تحديد الأخطاء التي يرتكبونها أثناء الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية. تم الإعتماد على استبيانين للحصول على النتائج اللازمة لهذه الدراسة. تم تقديم الاستبيان الأول إلى 55 طالبًا في السنة الثانية من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية، بينما تم تصميم الاستبيان الثاني لـ 13 معلمًا لمقياس التعبير الكتابي من قسم اللغات الأجنبية في المركز الجامعي ميلة. تشير النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبيانين إلى أن طلاب السنة الثانية من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يرتكبون أنواعًا مختلفة من الأخطاء، والتي ترجع أساسًا إلى تداخل لغتهم الأم (التداخل بين اللغة العربية والانجليزية).

الكلمات المفتاحية: متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مهارة الكتابة، الصعوبات، تداخل اللغة الأولى والأخطاء.

Résumé

La présente étude tente d'étudier l'influence de la langue maternelle sur les compétences en écriture des étudiants EFL au département de langue anglaise du MUC. L'enquête vise à sensibiliser les enseignants et les élèves à l'impact de l'interférence de la langue maternelle sur les compétences en écriture des apprenants EFL. De plus, cette recherche cherche à trouver les difficultés que rencontrent les élèves lorsqu'ils arrivent à écrire en FL, ainsi qu'à identifier les erreurs les plus courantes qu'ils commettent. Afin de rejeter ou de confirmer l'hypothèse de recherche, qui indiquait que l'interférence de la langue première affecte les compositions d'écriture des étudiants de deuxième année et qu'ils commettent de nombreux types d'erreurs lors de l'écriture en raison de l'interférence de la L1, deux questionnaires ont été adoptés pour cette étude. Le premier questionnaire a été adressé à 55 étudiants en langue anglaise de deuxième année, et le second a été conçu pour 13 enseignants du module d'expression écrite du Département des langues étrangères de la MUC. Les résultats obtenus à partir des questionnaires indiquent que les étudiants EFL de deuxième année commettent différents types d'erreurs, qui sont dues à l'interférence de leur langue maternelle. Sur cette base, certaines recommandations sont fournies aux étudiants et aux enseignants pour réduire les interférences L1 comme facteur clé pour améliorer les compétences en écriture des étudiants.

Mots-clés: apprenants EFL, compétences en écriture, les difficultés, interférence de la première langue et erreurs.