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Faculty of Letters and Languages Department of
Foreign Languages
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**Exploring Master's Dissertation Writing Common
Problems: Students' Perceptions and Internal Examiners'
Reviews**

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

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Dedication

First and foremost, my gratitude is owed to Allah, Lord of the world, for giving me health and energy to accomplish this humble work, and to whom I should owe everything.

My deepest hearty gratitude goes to my parents - my precious mother may Allah keep her safe and my dear father Allah bless his soul - for educating me and for their unconditional support during all the stages of my life.

My heartfelt thanks are addressed to my dear sisters, my lonely brother, my lovely daughter and precious wife who supported me along the past two years of my master journey.

To all those mentioned, I would say a hearty "Thank you"

Safou Abdelkader

Dedication

I pray and thank God almightily for granting us the gifts of knowledge and blessing us with his mercy.

I dedicate this work

To my dear parents, my mother Zohra and my father Ahmed

To my sisters Ahlem, Djamila and Brothers Abd Elkader, Abed and Youssef

I will not forget my dear cousins Hind and Rachida.

To my nephew Ishak Nassime, to my best friend Ramdani Nouria for staying besides me all the time

To my aunts, Yamina, Saadia, Habiba, Freiha and Djardjara

To my uncles: Ali, Khaled, Miloud and Mouhamed.

Thank you so much, I really appreciate that.

Naceur Souad

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I would like in my turn to acknowledge warmly all the many people near and far who contributed to our work; teachers, colleagues, participants of our research, my colleagues at workplace and my English inspector whom I should be thankful for his training and support.

Abstract

The fact that English master students are facing challenges in their thesis and dissertation writing process has taken a large proportion in the researchers' studies over the past few decades. The existing study attempts to provide an insight into both students' challenges writing and supervisors' perceptions of the difficulties encountered by master two students during the course of this academic process. Furthermore, it explores their needs to enhance their writing skills in thesis writing process and investigates the major challenges in order to provide suggestions for improvements. To meet this significant issue, the researcher used a mixed method for data collection to get both quantitative and qualitative data for our research. A total number of eighty five master two students from the English department or Tiaret University have been questioned using the questionnaire tool and other eight English teachers have been interviewed in order to have a vision into their experience within the examination and review of master theses. The findings revealed that the majority of candidates are having challenges with almost all the chapters. These challenges include inappropriateness in presenting the chapters, lack of academic writing skills and lack of supervisor support. Based on the findings, it is recommended that the methodology courses should be reviewed and much more practice must be focused rather than the theoretical form.

Key words: difficulties, challenges, thesis and dissertation writing, master students, skills, academic writing

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General Introduction

By the end of the second year of the Master's degree, Algerian EFL students are asked to write a dissertation to a deadline and they are assessed on that. Assessment is made by examiners who usually prepare a written report to say whether the dissertation meets the required standards, and provide feedback on the day of the viva to help the candidates improve their end product. A good dissertation may be the outcome of well conducted research and careful writing, its assessment therefore starts right from the preliminary sections which have to be written in an acceptable format, followed by a brief abstract, a general introduction, relevance of literature review, consistency of the methodology, clarity of the data analysis and interpretation to the reference works that must be rich and pertinent. But writing an effective dissertation can be one of the most challenging tasks that non-native language learners may have problem with. Though EFL students are expected to be familiar with these methodological sections, they may find themselves struggling to cope and in need of clear straightforward guidance when it comes to writing such kind of effective academic research. Consequently, the present research work attempts to explore the common problems that EFL students may encounter before, while and after writing their dissertations.

Various challenges are faced by EFL master students before, while and after writing their final dissertations. So, since we, as student researchers, are embarking on the writing of such kind of research work; we felt the need to respond to the sense of students' expectation to have a well written dissertation, and this in fact has raised our interest to undertake this study.

This study aims at exploring EFL Master's dissertation common writing problems, and identifying the reasons behind the existing ones in order to provide recommendations to enhance the quality of students' dissertations.

The key outcomes of this research work may help students make an effective writing dissertation and contribute to the improvement of the quality of EFL Master's dissertation writing at Algerian universities. To reach the aims stated for this study, three research questions are addressed:

- 1- What are the common problems encountered by master students before, while and after writing their dissertation? I said here before because it may be the choice of the topic, while: methodological design and application and after: proof reading)
- 2- What are the reasons behind these common writing problems?
- 3- What recommendations can be suggested to address these common writing problems?

The following hypotheses have been put forth as anticipated answers to the research questions:

- 1- EFL master students may encounter problems of choosing a good topic, inadequacy of academic writing style and lack of proofreading.
- 2- Students have acquired knowledge about research methodology but they lack transforming knowledge into performance.
- 3- Giving more importance to practice rather than theory.

In order to examine the subject being studied, this study opts for a mixed method that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For the quantitative approach, a structured questionnaire is distributed to a sample containing one hundred EFL Master two students majoring in both specialties 'Linguistics and Didactics' at Ibn Khaldoun university of Tiaret. For the qualitative approach, a semi structured interview is directed to ten teachers at the same research setting. The interviewees selected for this study have experiences with both the examination process and supervisory expertise.

This dissertation is divided into three inseparable chapters. The first chapter starts with a review of literature in which the main theories related to the topic of 'academic writing' are critically cited. The second chapter is dedicated to previous and recent research on the examination process of dissertation and theses. The third chapter presents the characteristics of the target population and the data collection including questionnaire and interviews. This chapter is also devoted to the data analysis and the discussion of the findings.

Chapter One

Academic Writing

Chapter One: Academic Writing

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1.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the definition of the term writing and what is meant by academic writing as well as its various types: descriptive, analytical, persuasive, and critical one. It includes also the basic steps of writing process. It is therefore aimed to highlight the most important concepts like: preparing to write, brainstorming, listing, questioning, drafting, and revising. At the end of this chapter, we attempt to show the difference between speaking and writing and the role of reading to improve writing ability. By this, we aim to outline the main characteristics that constitute effective professional academic writing and depict a clear picture of the major elements shaping academic writing. As we feel concern towards the urgent needs of Master students for such kinds of works that serve as a guide for various university projects writing, this research was carried for better thesis and dissertation improvements.

1.2. Definition of writing

“Writing is an act that takes place within a content, that accomplishes a particular purpose and that is appropriately its intended audience.” (Hamp-Lyons and Kroll, 1987:8)

According to Tarigan (1994:3) writing is defined as a language skill. He said that it is one of the language skills that are used to communicate indirectly without contacting other people.

Nunan offered another definition for writing (2003:38). Writing can be characterized by a series of contrasts: it is both physical and mental act, it is both physical a process and a result, and it is both a process and a product. The following is an explanation of the definition: writing is a physical process of pouring words or thoughts into a medium, while the mind is busy on generating ideas, figuring out how to represent them in words, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that may be comprehended by the readers.

Process and product refer to the fact that a writer must go through a series of stages in order to produce a finished product in the form of writing. The writer must visualize, plan, draft, edit, read and reread his or her work. Writing has been described as a form of written thought. Students should be encouraged to communicate their ideas, feelings and thought. Writing according the preceding description is the final product of student’s thinking as well as experience which is depicted in written form.

1.3. Writing as social and cultural phenomena

1.3.1. Social aspect of writing

According to Vein Perling (1995:55) writing like language in general is a meaning-making activity that is socially, and culturally shaped individually, and socially purposeful.

Hayes (1996) states that writing is also social because it is a social artifact which is carried out in social setting. What we write, and who we write to is shaped by social convention and by our history of social interaction...the genres in which we write were invited by other writers, and the phrases we write often reflect phrases earlier writers have written (Hayes, 1996:5).

Academic writing in foreign language especially in English language focuses on the social elements of writing including the way of learning how to write in an academic setting as a means of integrating ESL (English as a second language) students into academic discourse community. (Spack, 1988).

Learn how to write entails much more than mastering the language grammar, vocabulary or even the rhetorical styles used in academic writing.

1.4. What is academic writing?

Academic writing is the kind of writing used in high school, and college setting. Academic writing is different from creative writing when writing stories. It also differs from personal writing. Academic writing is formal, thus, you should avoid slang language, and contractions, it involves a complete sentence in organizational way.

Academic writing in English is somehow different from academic writing in first language; grammatical rules and vocabulary are different as well.

Another definition for academic writing that is distinct in that is clear, brief, focused, systematic, and evidence based. Its goal is to improve the reader's comprehension. It has a formal tone, and style, but it does not need to use complicated terms or long sentences.

Alf Nilsen defines academic writing as the major medium which the knowledge generated via research. It is communicated, discussed and written in monograph, journal articles or book chapters. Academic writing is also an important aspect of the social research analytical process.

Academic writing has common points with other forms of writing such as its purpose is to communicate with a larger public which necessitates form and style. It can be improved by reading skill.

He also states, the core elements in academic writing as follow:

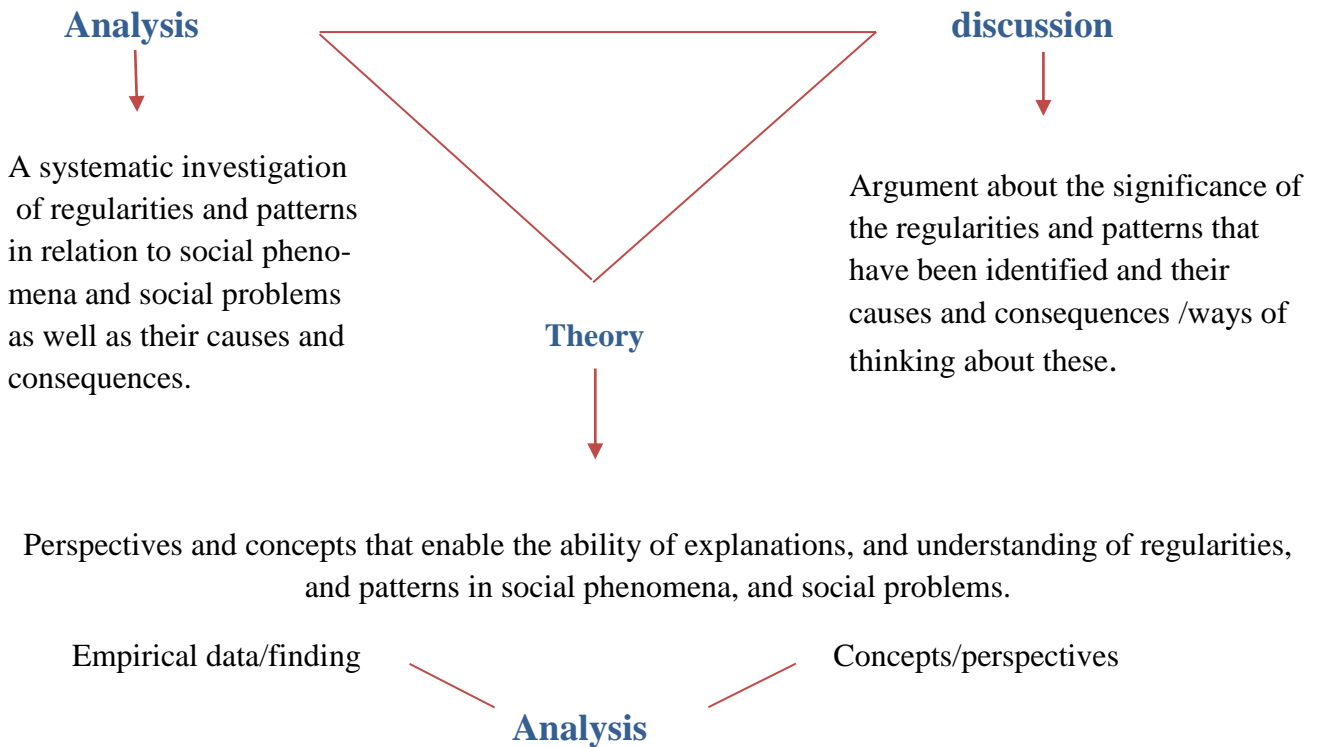


Figure 1.4: the core elements of academic writing

1.5. Styles of academic writing

1.5.1. Descriptive

The easiest type of academic writing is descriptive which at providing facts or information. Type of instructions for purely academic task include” identify”,” record”,” summarize”, and “define”.

1.5.2. Analytical

It is unusual for university context to be purely descriptive: the majority of academic writing also requires organizing the facts and information you explain or describe into kinds, types groups or relationships.

1.5.3. Persuasive

Persuasive writing combines all the characteristics of analytical writing (that is knowledge plus reorganization) with the point of view. Most of essays are persuasive. Point of view in academic writing might include arguments, suggestions, and interpretation of result, on an assessment of other's work. Each assertion which is made in persuasive writing must be backed up by evidence.

1.5.4. Critical

For research, postgraduate and advanced undergraduate writing, critical writing is widespread. It contains all the characteristics of persuasive writing and at least one additional point of view. While persuasive writing necessitates having the writer's opinion on a subject or problem, critical writing entails considering at least two opinions of which must be of the writer.

1.6. Structure of academic writing

I. Introduction
General background
Outline of aims
II. Main body
1-topic sentence a-support b-support c-support
2-topic sentence a-support b-support c-support
III. Conclusion
Summary of the main points Final comment

Figure 1.5: structure of academic writing

Academic writing should be well structured. There must be a beginning, middle and final part. These sections appear in essays, reports, dissertations and presentations these parts are:

A-Introduction

B-Main body

C-Conclusion

1.6.1. Introduction

An academic paper beginning should always include the following criteria: providing background about the subject matter and outlines the study substance and goal. It also includes a powerful relevant quotation and defining important words.

1.6.2. Main body

The work is done in the major body of the article, it is where making arguments present proof or explaining the study and its result. Each point is made in the introduction and brings all of the materials which have learned from different sources one place during conducting investigation.

1.6.3. Conclusion

An academic paper conclusion should always include the following elements: brief summary of the key elements in the essay, bring the concepts together to show how they are related and connected and show how responding to the question as well as suggesting for further research or study.

1.7. The writing process

When writers begin to transmit or write down their thoughts and ideas on paper, this is known as the writing process. According to Bell and Burney in Nunan (1986:47) the process is an extraordinary complicated cognitive activity that needs authors to exhibit control of several factors simultaneously including sentence ,vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling and letter formation. As a result, writing proficiency necessitates a lengthy procedure .Competent authors do not generate final text according to Nunan as stated by Arafat (1991:87). Despite of their efforts, writing is a long and often painful process in which harmonious thoughts are developed.

1.7.1. The three main stages of writing process



Figure 1.7.1: the three main stages of writing process

But in practice the process is more often like this:

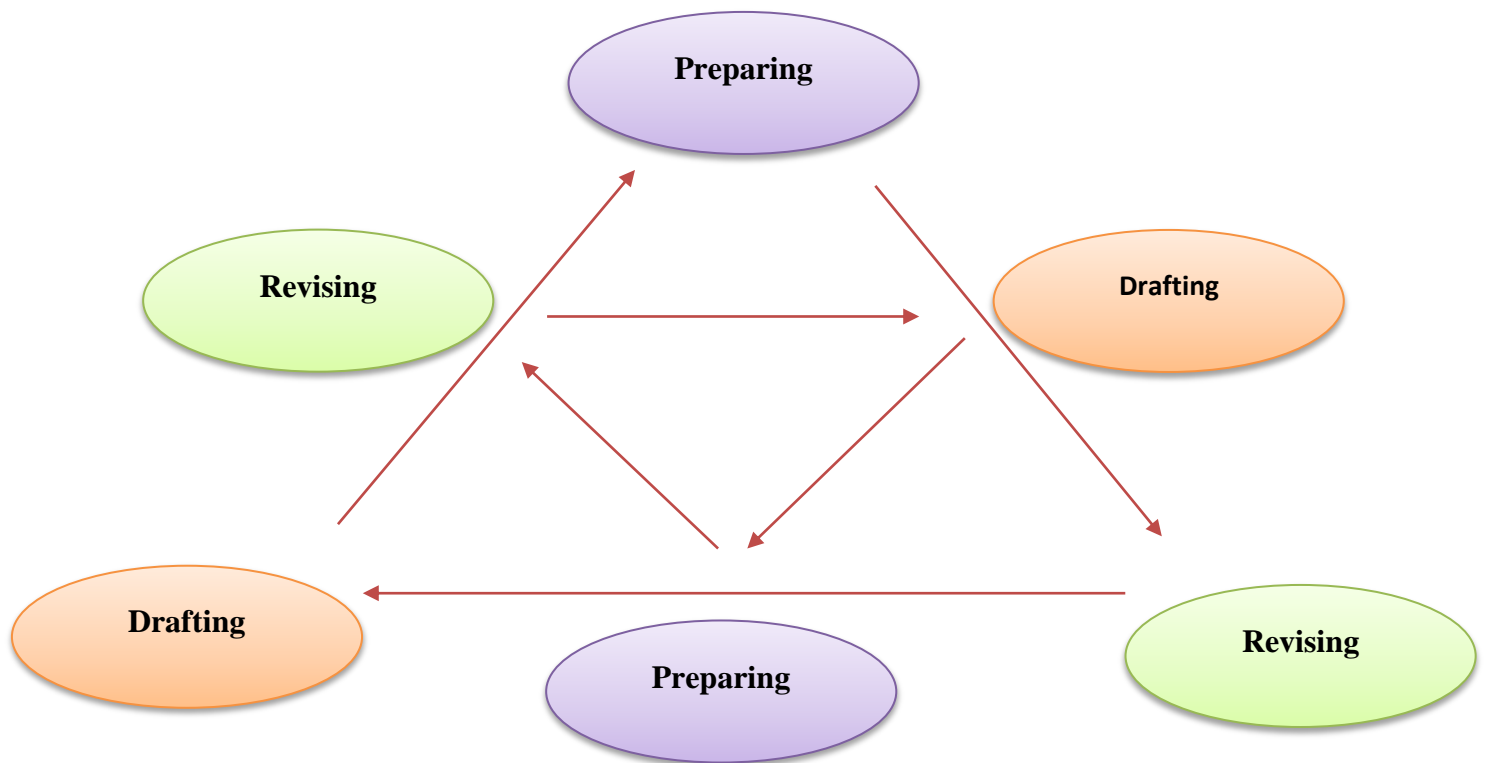


Figure 1.7.1: the three main stages of writing process

Writing is a continuous creative act. When starting, writing is already thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. As soon as you have completed your writing, you should go over what you have written and make any necessary changes.

1.7.1. Prepare to write

1.7.1.1. Free writing

It is a technique which means you write freely for a specific time without stopping on certain topic. You simply write as much you can, write whatever comes to your mind without worrying about whether are correct or not. In free writing, the essential goal is to keep your pencil moving across the paper.

1.7.1.2. Brainstorming

Brainstorming means searching in your mind for ideas and writing them down rapidly. They do not need to be written in English. For more explanation of this concept, brainstorming is to

some extent similar to free writing. Anything can be written without regard for whether it is correct, excellent or useful. The distinction between brainstorming and free writing is that free writing generally results in a paragraph –like style whereas brainstorming usually occurs in a list of ideas and phrases.

1.7.1.3. Listing

The term “listing” refers to a prewriting approach in which you write the topic at the top of a piece of paper and then swiftly put down your ideas. Make a mental list of any words or phrases that come to mind. You should not care about whether they are good or not. Keep writing ongoing until the flow of ideas stopped. First, the writer made a list of topics which are different from each other then he decides which topic he is going to write about. Next, the writer makes a new list in which he writes his chosen topic and started writing about it.

1.7.1.4. Clustering

It is a technique for generating writing ideas. When clustering, you begin with writing your topic in the middle of your paper in a circle. As you consider similar concepts around the first circles, you write these concepts in smaller circles. Each little circle’s notion may generate new ideas and hence bigger circles surrounding it.

1.7.1.5. Questioning

For longer works of writing, this idea of asking your self-questions is useful. It is a formal prewriting that allows doing the following:

In order to build a view point on a subject that you believe in to write about: ask questions, narrow a topic that previously decided on and determine whether the selected subject is possible to explore especially while writing a research paper. Asking questions about topic and using answers to prompt to asking more questions until finding one that is a good stopping point.

1.7.1.6. Drafting

At the drafting stage you have truly started to write. The most important thing is to get words on paper. It is not the time to be concerned with spelling, grammar, punctuation or the most appropriate phrasing. At this level it is impossible to be able to see what you have written and what adjustment you have made at this point.

1.7.1.7. Revising

It is the most important part in writing process. Revising means checking whether you have spoken everything you wanted to say in adequate way. As Neil Gaiman says: “The process of doing your second draft is a process of making it look like you knew what you were doing all along”.

1.8. Elements of writing process

Crème and Lea claim that: “various techniques are required for different sorts of writing. In addition, Harris believes that writing may be classified into elements: purpose, form, audience and readership”. There are three parts in writing process which are described as follows:

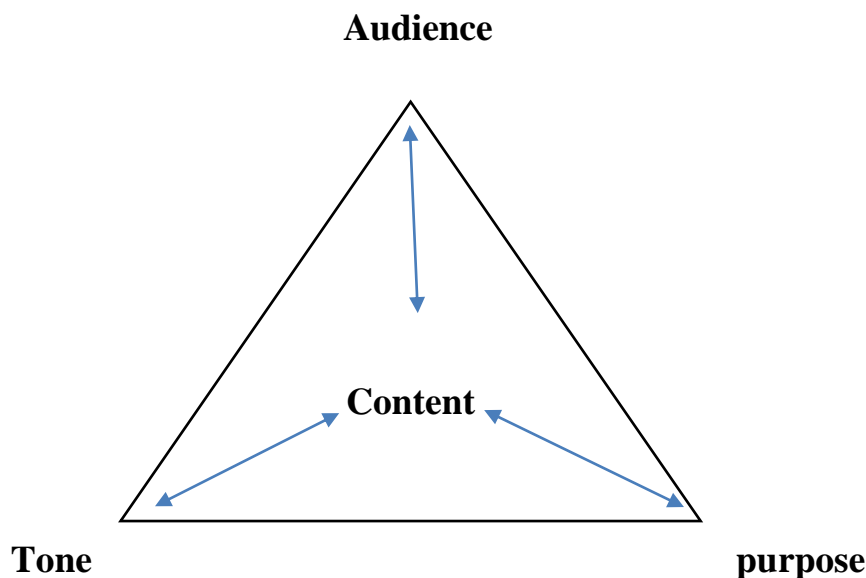


Figure 1.8: Elements of writing process

1.8.1. Content

The term “content” refers to all of the textual material of a document. After describing an audience and a goal, it is needed to describe what information will be then included on the page. Forms, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies and observation are all examples of content nevertheless the kind of the material must be relevant and entertaining for the audience and aim.

1.8.2. Audience

Knowing who the intended audience is for a certain essay is crucial since it dictates the information that will be included in the writing. Depending on the target audience, the material of an

essay with a certain topic will differ. In other words, having a particular audience is just as crucial as having a concentrated issue.

The reader or audience according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996, 207) is “essential to the creation of the text and the generation of the meaning.”

1.8.3. Purpose

The purpose of a writing piece is to express one self, to convince information or to create a literary work. There are four reasons why authors write: to inform, to persuade, express and to entertain.

- a. Expressive writing is used to express our opinions such as E-mail ,facebook ,twitter ,blogs other social network sites. It’s main purpose is to make connections to contribute to human thought and culture and to establish a deepen human contact.
- b. Informative writing is used to educate or explain something to the audience like: essays, research paper and presentations. This type of writing is clear, accurate, organized and above all fair.
- c. Persuasive writing a more serious form of writing on a debatable topic essays, research paper and presentations. The writer’s goal is to change the minds of the readers or at least to get the readers to question their position on a debate and consider the writer’s point of view.
- d. Literacy work is a form of crative writing as in finction or non ffunction novels, plays and poems. A form of writing that is composition style writing ,but with the purpose to entertain more than inform.

1.9. Characteristics of academic writing

1.9.1. Clear and limited focus

The thesis statement establishes the arguments or research topic of an academic work, early on while the document may incorporate or contextual information, every paragraph and phrase of the paper links back to the core subject. The purpose of all content is to support the thesis statement.

Starkey (2004, P09-12) explains clarity as following:

- a. eliminate ambiguity: avoid using any words, phrases that might mislead or confuse readers.
- b. use adverbs and adjectives that are strong and precise.
- c. Being precise indicates that authors should avoid duplication of words or needless.

1.9.2. Logical structure

Every piece of academic writing has a rational straight forward format. Academic writing consists of an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs and a conclusion in its most basic form. The introduction gives background information and establishes the essay's scope and purpose and states the thesis. The thesis statement is supported by the body paragraphs which each elaborate one supporting point. The conclusion relates back to the thesis and summarizes the key points as well as the implications of the findings of the research.

1.9.3. Evidence-based arguments

Academic writing entails well informed arguments that must be backed up by evidence. Whether it comes from scholarly sources, study or experiment finding, or a citation from main literature an argument's credibility is to be enhanced by the introduction of evidence.

1.9.4. Impersonal tone

Academic writing purpose is to communicate a logical argument from a neutral perspective. Emotional, provocative or otherwise prejudiced language is avoided in academic writing. Whether you agree or disagree with a concept, it must be expressed in the work correctly and objectively.

1.9.5. Coherence

Coherence is an important component of academic writing. Excellent style entails connecting the little pieces of sentences and paragraphs into a linked chain that will appeal to a large number of readers in comprehensible and accessible manner only if the content is cohesive. According to Harmer (2004:p25) can readers grasp the writer's objective and stream of thinking "coherence is frequently created. Therefore, by the method in which a writer sequences material he continues and this gets us straight back to the question of the genre and text structure.

1.10. Writing in first and second language

Writing ability is not an easy assignment because, as a researcher, both first and second language writing have pointed out the uses to which people use writing in various settings that no description can cover all situation. Purves (1992 one camp, 1993; white 1995)

For instance, writing down exactly what someone else says (a necessary ability for a stenographer) is not the same as writing a persuasive argument. Instead of adopting an all-encompassing description, learning to write for second language learners can imply anything from

attempting to master the most regularly used Chinese characters to being able to write a dissertation for Ph.D. Therefore, it could be more beneficial to start by defining the settings in which people acquire and use second languages in general and second languages writing in particular as well as the sorts of writing that are likely to be relevant for second language writers.

Perhaps the best approach to understand the complexities of second language writing (L2) is to compare it to first language writing (L1). (Vahapassi 1982, Leki 1992 and others.). First language writing is inextricably linked to formal education. When children start school, almost all of them are able to speak their native languages it is compulsory to explicitly teach writing.

Furthermore, in comparison to others skills speaking, listening and reading Outside of school, extensive publish writing (that is writing beyond the sentence or paragraph level and intended for an audience other one's close associates) is reserved for those working in specialized fields such as education, law or journalism. The ability to write successfully in a first language situation has a strong links to academic and professional achievement. Grabowski (1996)

“Compared to speaking, writing can be seen as a more standard system that must be acquired through special instruction. Mastery of this standard system is an important prerequisite of cultural and educational participation and the maintenance of one's rights and duties ...

The fact that writing is more standardized than speaking allows for a higher degree of sanctions when people deviate from that standard”.

(Grabowski, 1996:7)

Consequently, learning to write in first language education includes studying a specific version of a language that pupils are already familiar with. This specialized language is distinct from spoken language in both form and function but it builds on student's existing linguistic skills.

As students go through compulsory schooling and to higher education, the importance of being able to write well grows. Writing is seen not just as a standardized system of communication, but also as an important tool for learning at the university level. One of the fundamental functions of higher education, at least in English speaking world, is to develop one's own knowledge through reflection rather than simply to communicate information. (Breiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Purves et al ;1984)

Writing and critical thinking are closely related to each other, and writing ability is considered as a sign that students have mastered the cognitive skills required for university work. And the lack of writing ability is usually interpreted as a sign that learners lack the critical thinking and reasoning skills required to succeed

In first language writing instruction especially in higher education the focus is on originality of thoughts, the development of ideas and the soundness of the writer's reasoning. Language conventions (voice, tone style) are crucial as well, but they are typically viewed as after thoughts to be handled after matters of content and organization

1.11. The relationship between writing and speaking

The relationship between writing and speaking is important for language testing for a variety of reasons including the question whether writing can be considered a special case in L2 language use, drawing on many of the same linguistics resources but relying on distinctly different mental processes than speaking. Many researches in both first and second language studies have looked at the difference between speaking and writing from a variety of angles. As Grade and Kaplan (1996) point out that linguists and educational researchers have historically held contradictory positions about relationship between writing and speaking. Traditional linguistic inquiry has held that speech is primary and written language is merely a reflection of spoken language while educational research has taken the stance that the written form of the language is more "correct" and therefore should be more highly evaluated than oral language.

Brown (1994) provides some differences between on these two concepts by listing some characteristics as following:

1. permanence

Oral language is temporary and must be processed in real time. Whereas written one is permanent and can be read and read again for many times.

2. Production time

Writers have enough time to prepare, review and rewrite their words before they are finalized but speakers must plan, compose and deliver their utterance in matter of seconds if they want to keep discussion going.

3. Distance

Because of the time and space distance between the writer and the reader, much of the shared context that is present between speaker and listener typical face to face communication is lost.

4. Complexity:

Longer sentences and more subordinators are more common in written language. However, shorter sentences and more redundancy are more useful in spoken language.

5. Formality:

Writing is more formal rather than speaking because of the social and cultural setting to which it is commonly put.

6. Vocabulary:

Comparing to oral texts, written texts have a larger range of terms and words. Growboski (1996) states some conditions under which writing is chosen rather than speaking. For example it is less expensive to send a message via E-Mail rather than making a conversation by mobile it saves time.

Sperling (1996) states, “To talk of written and spoken language differences is to consider the range of communicative purposes to which either writing or speaking is put. In this sense, broader characteristics such as what gets said and what remains implicit, what is foregrounded and what is background and what is stated by whom, and under what circumstances implicate the norms and expectations of the range of contexts in which both writing and speaking are produced.

(Sperling, 1996:56)

Another point that makes a difference between the two terms of writing and speaking is the wider social and cultural context in which they are used writing skill is so important in educational system. This means that, respecting rules in writing is so essential rather than accuracy when talking.

1.12. The relationship between reading and writing

1.12.1. Definition of reading skill

Reading is the more unjoyful skill which can do with other skills. According to Patel and Jain (2008:113-114), “Reading is an important activity in life with which one can update his/her knowledge. Reading skill is an important tool for academic success”.

Reading is the most important activity in any language class. Reading is not only a source of information and a pleasurable activity but also as a means of consolidating and extending one’s knowledge of the language. Reading is very necessary to widen the mind again and understanding of the foreign culture.

Furthermore, according to Kenneth Goodman, reading is both a perceptual and cognitive process; once reading, the cognitive and affective processes are activated based on what have read; reading can be take person anywhere and allow him to travel around the world. Skilled reader must be able to use sensory, syntactic, and pragmatic information to complete reading task, multi-sources of information may interact in a variety of complicated ways throughout the reading process.

1.12.2. The importance of reading in improving writing skill

Reading is a mental process that involves what others have spoken in written form. Nowadays, delivering information for diverse purpose is something that should not be ignored. (Nurgiyantoro, 2010:368). Reading improves students' writing by exposing them to new grammatical rules that will aid them later acquiring a sense of language, structures and expanding their vocabulary.

Numerous studies have indicated that intensive reading has a significant influence on language learners in a number of ways, according to Nation (1997, P15). These studies suggest that frequent reader enhance their reading skill habits, fluency and vocabulary retention .Day and Bumford (1998, P.33-38) say that: «student who participate in substantial reading increase their reading speed, vocabulary, and positive attitude.»

Hill and Holden (1990,P.92) highlighted that if learners are permitted to read whatever they choose in 'self-selected reading 'they may make more progress in reading comprehension and vocabulary, development than they would in typical instructional reading.

As the proverb says «a good writer is a good reader” there is a strong relationship between reading and writing .Johnson (2008,P07) believes that the relationship between these two skills is that breading helps learners become better writer by making them in contact with the rules of grammar. Consequently, they develop the language structure, grammar and increase their vocabulary. Reading in the classroom is understood as the appropriate input for the acquisition of writing skill since it is believed that.

1.13. The structure of a paragraph

1.13.1. Definition of a paragraph

A paragraph is a collection of sentences on a single topic that collectively explain the writer's main idea about the issue .Paragraph in academic writing is typically five or ten sentences long, however, it can be longer or shorter depending on the topic.

1.13.2. Organization of paragraph

a. Topic sentence

Is the most general sentence in the paragraph and expresses the main idea of the first phrase.

b. The supporting sentences

These are sentences that discuss or explain the topic sentences; they are more in-depth points that come after the main sentences.

c. Concluding sentences

They are examples of closing sentences. They can end a paragraph by restating the main idea or just making a last comment on the subject. Concluding sentence should not introduce a new point.

1.14. The structure of an essay**1.14.1. Definition of an essay**

An essay is a collection of paragraphs written on a particular topic in which three paragraphs are required at least. However, a five-paragraph essay is a standard length for academic writing.

1.14.2. Organization of an essay

There are three main elements in essay explained as follows:

a. The introduction

This is the opening paragraph of an essay and it introduces the issue by outlining the main points. It also includes a thesis statement which is a single line that summarizes the main idea. It generally appears towards the conclusion of the paragraph or near the end.

b. The main body

Between the introduction and the conclusion, there are paragraphs that explain and support the thesis statement.

c. The conclusion

The concluding paragraph of an essay it summarizes the supporting ideas of the content.

1.15 Conclusion

This chapter has shown an overview for academic writing and focused on the fact that writing for academic context has some conditions that should be involved in the paper. It attempts to give an idea about the characteristics of writing skill. Furthermore, the first chapter leads to explain some concepts and terms which are related to writing ability. To a certain limit, it is hoped that the current chapter would be beneficial for master students in their thesis and dissertation fulfillment since it provides the core knowledge and basic constituents that guide writing for academic settings. In short, we attempted to build up a clear understanding about the writing process and familiarize students with this crucial task that necessitates the combination of all other skills and integration of linguistic and comprehensible skills.

Chapter two

Dissertation Writing

Chapter two: Dissertation Writing

Content

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2.1. Introduction

For most graduate and post-graduate students, writing is regarded as the most challenging task since it requires a variety of language skills including: the use of correct grammatical structures, the choice of appropriate lexicon, the ability to plan the process and the use of appropriate linking. Moreover, the process of writing becomes more difficult when students are supposed to write in foreign language and here, English is the case.

According to Odena and Burgess (2017), academic writing can be seen as an important language skill to obtain an academic degree. Accordingly, one of the types of academic written papers are theses and dissertations which value is evaluate comprehensive students' capacities (Liu, 2015). Students may find it difficult to deal with the process of thesis and dissertation writing as they face bulk of challenges including language-related problems, the difficulty to find a topic, supervisor-related problems, cultural issues, research design and methodology and data analysis techniques.

University and college students are required to produce a good research report as a requirement for completing their degree programmes. In this process, a variety of skills such as: writing skills, language skills, cultural and comprehensive background knowledge are needed.

This chapter explores the process of thesis and dissertation writing step by step, along with common features that characterize well-written scholar documents. It is worth eliciting and analysing the challenges that our students confront in the course of thesis and dissertation writing so that we could provide solutions and recommendations to guide both students and supervisors in this challenging journey.

2.2. Making a good start

2.2.1. Meaning of dissertation and thesis

Terminology should be given great deal of attention in higher education, dissertation is derived from the Latin word "*dissertare*" which means to "discuss". According to English Oxford Dictionary, it is defined as a long essay on particular subject or topic especially written for university degree or diploma. While in Merriam Webster Dictionary, dissertation is "an extended usually written treatment of a subject specifically one submitted for a doctorate". What can be extracted from the definitions provided, is the dissertation focuses on a review and write up on a subject rather than the novelty of the research (Parija & Kate,2018).

The word thesis comes from the Greek word “*tithenai*” that means “*to put forth something*” like a proposal. In English Oxford Dictionary, the word refers to a long essay or dissertation involving personal research written by a candidate for a university degree. In Merriam Webster dictionary, thesis is a dissertation embodying results of original research substantiating a specific view.

2.2.2. Distinction between thesis and dissertation

The definitions above clearly state the major differences between both terms. For more illustrations, Thesis and dissertation are distinctively defined here though the notions are referred to as written documents made by scholars in most cases. Mauch and Park, (2003) defined thesis as the product of scholarly and professional study at the honors or the master degree level. It is a document with specific format and style ordered by the particular university. Whereas, dissertation is the product of student work at the doctoral level, distinguished from thesis study chiefly by its deeper, more comprehensive and more mature professional and scholarly treatment of the subject (Mauch & Park 2003. p10).

The words thesis and dissertation are used interchangeably and there is no clear distinction between them. In some cases thesis is carried out for master students’ level, while dissertation is carried for the doctoral level (Blair, 2016). As mentioned by Mauch and Park (2003), master thesis is supposed to show the student’s ability to carry out appropriate research procedures, arrange information into a meaningful piece of writing, present the results in acceptable prose regardless the length of the thesis. They also expect the doctoral dissertation to introduce an independent and original research in the field of the candidate’s graduate study.

However, thesis is sometimes considered as synonymous for the word dissertation with slight distinction that thesis is frequently referred to honors or master degree students and dissertation with doctoral level. At this level, it should be noted that students are expected to provide a proficient and up-to-date knowledge of their field of study. Their thesis should be clear and mistake free (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Examiners, at doctoral level, often put into account whether the thesis contains knowledge that is worthy of publication. The criterion of a ‘distinct contribution to knowledge’ is an important consideration at that level.

2.2.3. Writing a research proposal

Paltridge and Starfield (2007) stated that the research proposal stage is an important step in the thesis and dissertation writing process. The written proposal will eventually develop into a thesis or dissertation. Madson (1992) asserted that the research proposal process plays a key role for successful thesis and dissertation accomplishment; it is therefore a crucial stage in the whole process.

A quite similar view is given by Meloy (1994), he claimed that the student's proposal does not emerge in a natural manner and what we learn is not by example but also comes through reactions and suggestions of supervisors and committee members.

Simply defined, a research proposal is a written plan for conducting a research study. It identifies the problem, state questions and hypotheses, identifies variables and defines terms. This phase, then, is a written plan of study that defines clearly the candidate's intentions of his study. It is helpful for the audience to draw an idea about the research and accordingly provide views and recommendations for improvements and adjustments.

“Such a written plan is highly desirable since it allows interested others to evaluate the worth of the proposed study and make suggestions for improvements”

(Fraenkel et al., 2012).

2.3. Conducting a good research

2.3.1 Dissertation writing objectives:

As well as most writing, the dissertation is usually written to achieve certain objectives with specific audience. Joyner, Rouse and Glatthron (2013) defined three perspectives needed to be analysed for better understanding of the purpose behind writing a dissertation: institutional purpose, personal purpose and communication purpose. The institutional purpose is to make sure that the candidate has contributed to the field of his study and provided new knowledge. For personal purpose criterion, there must be several purposes and the first obvious is to hold a degree. However, the process of dissertation writing is a way to gain knowledge and shape thinking. i.e. some will improve his personal and professional qualities. The communicative objective is clear and simple: the candidate is writing to report findings of the research and inform the audience not to convince, entertain, or express personal feelings.

The students should consider the research perspective and topic of their project and how much influence it would have on the way they write their thesis or dissertation. Students are also required to consider the main purpose of their writing whether to answer a question, solve a problem or prove something. The purpose may be also to represent knowledge and understanding about specific topic, show specific skills, persuade the audience, as well as, gaining a degree in a particular area of study (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007).

2.3.2 Characteristics of a good research

Choosing a suitable research topic is of a great importance in writing thesis and dissertation. For most students, this step is regarded as a challenging task and most of them tend more to avoid developing “completely original” topics since it might seem adventurous to them. However, for very few others finding a research topic may not be seen a harassing task as they have already set their hearts on such topics from the time they started higher education or perhaps even before that stage.

Lunenburg and Irby (2018) consider that it is a wrong idea to think that a dissertation and thesis topic must be completely original and has not been tackled previously, all research are built upon previous works of other scholars. The most successful thesis and dissertation simply provides extensive knowledge through the examination of new variables, gathering data of different sample, adopting a new methodology and presenting new statistical techniques of the same topic.

“Three main elements must be present in all acceptable professional and academic disciplines: originality, individuality and rigor” (Mauch & Park, 2007). So, originality does not refer to completely new research questions and hypotheses, it can be achieved when the student seeks problem- solving of previous studies using different approaches and new methods. Individuality requires the candidates to conduct their studies, take decisions and make reports of their own. This criterion does not necessarily mean that the suggestions of advisories are entirely rejected. The third element is being rigorous, dissertation and thesis in academic and professional disciplines must be characterised by accuracy honesty and preciseness.

Blair(2016) stated that the way examiners judge theses and dissertations differs from one another, some read the introductory part, others would rather check referencing, some other examiners focus on a particular chapters than other such as the methodology or data analysis chapter, while others prefer to draw an overall impression about the topic.

Examiners agree on two major problematic factors to judge whether the candidate's thesis or dissertation is good enough or not: sloppiness and inconsistency. The first is defined as "Typographical errors, or mistakes, in calculations, referencing and footnotes" (Kiley & Mullins, 2002, P.378). The latter, is all about thesis coherence, respect of the planned work, answering the research problem and whether the literature inform the findings or not. In short, high-quality research should be characterized by publication. Meloy (2002), suggests that the first concern of thesis and dissertation writing should be publication.

2.4. Writing the body of the research

2.4.1 Writing the introductory chapter

"You have to take the reader firmly by the hand and guide them step by step through your experimentation the reasoning that brought you to your conclusion. The first step in that process is introducing them to your project, which is what your Introduction does." (Holtom & Fisher, 1999. P64)

Despite all the differences in the structuring of the thesis, it was found that all the examined theses include an introductory chapter. (Bunton & Paltridge as cited in Paltridge and Starfield, 2002). The introductory chapter is of strategic importance for the success and the significance of the study. This opening part of dissertation serves to get the reader step by step into the chapter rather than direct orientation.

Holtom and Fishers (1999) further illustrated that the student should lay out the background of his research topic, and set a link between the own work and the wider field. Whatever the type of introduction was, whether presented in one or series of small sections, the student should always move from broader to narrower scope.

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) noted that chapter one always guides to the core subject of the research where the candidate is supposed to start with a back ground of the study, describe the problem, state the purpose of the research and define the significance of the study. Then, provide definitions of the key words and end up with research questions or research hypotheses.

Perhaps the most challenging in writing this key chapter is the fear of making a wrong start and the main question to be asked here are: what should the introductory chapter include? And in what order these elements should be put?

To sum up “The best way to learn how to write the first chapter of your dissertation is to read other dissertations similar to yours. You should also discuss the matter with your chair” (Joyner, et al.2013).

2.4.2. Writing a methodology Chapter

Students are highly recommended to select the appropriate methodology to answer their research question. In fact, it is not only a matter of choosing a method and collecting data but more importantly to have a deeper knowledge and understanding of the essence and the various procedures that constitute the chosen research methodology. (Blair, 2007). For Wheeldon and Ahlberg (2007) as cited in (Blair, 2012) described a methodology as “The design, the strategy, or a plan of actions required to gather and analyse data”

The terms method and methodology are frequently used as synonymous. Yet, there is a quite difference between the two; the method describes the way the methodology is carried out. (Carter & Lillte, 2007, P1318). The method is, then, the techniques and the strategies used by the researcher to gather facts.

Undisputedly, the methodology chapter must be given much interest as students do not differentiate between the terms method and methodology. This ambiguity may eventually result in inadequate description of the approach and framework as well as unjustifiable choice of approach. (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, P114). The methodology chapter traditionally comes after the introduction and the literature review. This section should detail how the research was conducted, how the data was collected and how particular methods were used. According to mark and Smith (2019), research methodology describes the study sample, the procedures and research instruments used for gathering data in both scientific and social disciplines whereas research design describes the choices for data collection from sample and it may be quantitative, qualitative or combination of both. (See chapter 03)

Similarly, all research works necessitate interaction between the dependent and independent variables. Felix & Smith (2019) further explained this relation as follows: “Briefly, the dependent variable is the outcome that you want to measure. The independent variable, on the other hand, is the

factor you want to manipulate in order to test whether it has an effect on the outcome or dependent variable”.

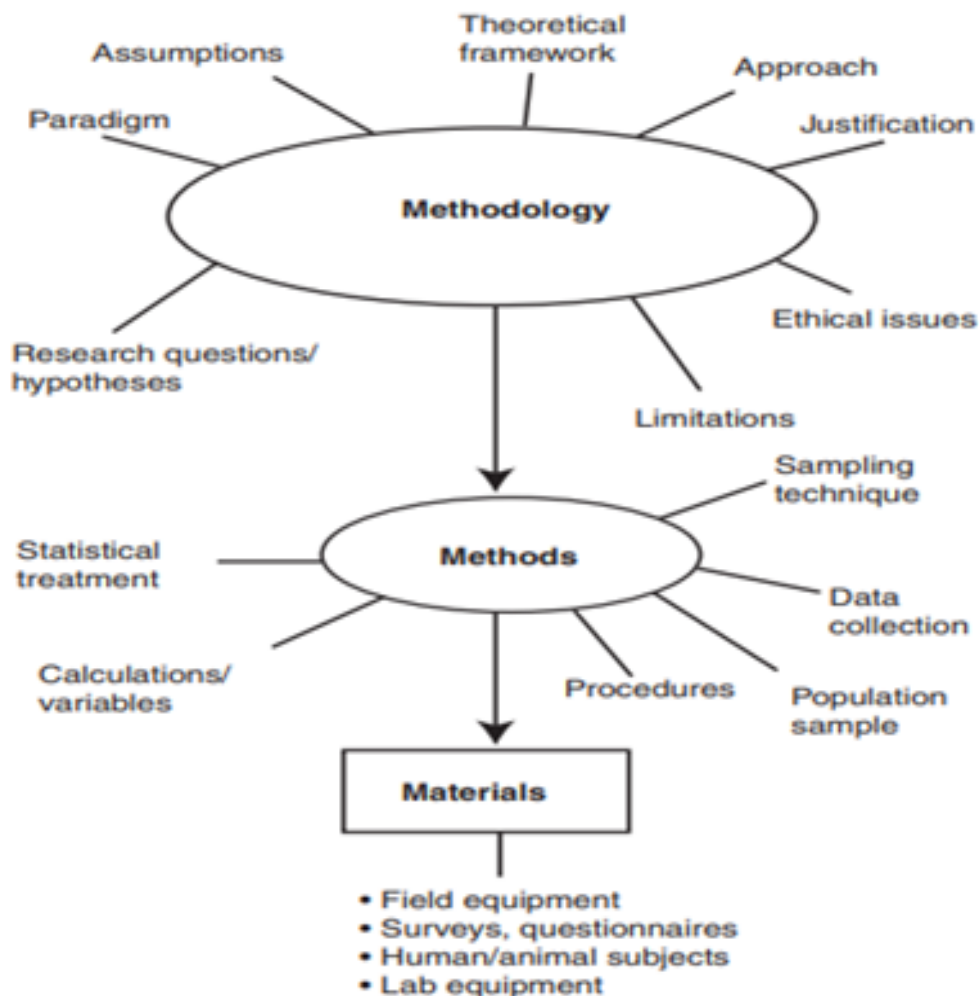


Figure 2.4.1: a visual map of typical components of the methodology chapter

2.4.3 Writing a literature review

The review of literature also referred to as the background chapter of the thesis or dissertation is a lengthy prose section requiring both summarizing and criticizing language skills. Commonly agreed, it should provide a theoretical framework of the study by reporting relevant, original and up-to-date knowledge in relation to the research topic. The review establishes a link between the student’s project and what has been said and done by other researchers in the same field of study. It is, therefore,

an indispensable chapter that supports the research with evidence, approaches the study and gives authority to the thesis and dissertation. “One important purpose of a literature review is to contextualize the student’s research” Paltridge & Starfield (2007)

According to Feat and Swales (2009) as cited in Felix and Smith (2019), a literature review is defined as the synthesis of evidence that you present to the examiner and the reader to support the validity and significance of your research.

In turn, Felix and Smith (2019) noted that the review of literature does not mean collecting facts, figures and findings in an incoherent way. Moreover, it is not about bringing up series of literatures with no coherence among them. In contrast, the literature review is a well-written section that supports with arguments your research. To sum up, literature review process requires sharp thoughts, edition skills, draft revision and referencing the sources.

Students supposed to a dissertation or theses are required to read a lot. However, this does not mean accumulating information with no relevance or just reporting facts. The review of literature need to include the combination of personal critical comments on the reviewed knowledge showing the audience the reasons why regarding such studies better than others and more importantly giving the reader the opportunity to evaluate works. These two requirements for well-documented thesis or dissertation made it challenging for students to realize successful and strong literature review they have access to a wide range of or sources for getting information about previous studies including: encyclopaedias, journals, articles, handbooks, annual reviews...etc

In this context, Lunenburg and Irby (2008) stated that by using all these together, you will ensure a reasonably comprehensive review of the literature. “The strength of the literature review rests on the amount and quality of up-to-date and relevant information you have at your fingertips” Felix and Smith (2019).

Students are expected in their literature review to criticize what they read, this mean not being entirely negative because a good literature review, according to (Blair, 2012) identifies strengths and weaknesses of the research. Blair (2016) strongly agreed that the researcher should ensure objectivity and balance in his views. Being critical never means focusing on what supports your approach and rejecting what oppose your views.

2.4.4. Writing a result chapter

The result chapter systematically includes three main sections: data collection section,

presentation and description of the result or findings and finally the discussion and analysis section. As soon as the supervisor or committee members approve the students' proposal, this means that the real and tough work has already begun and several challenges may well encounter the researcher including: time constraint and financial disabilities.

Lunenburg and Irby (2019) described the data collection section in a thesis or dissertation as a step that provides accurate action and steps that the researcher did to obtain data from the participants; it states the steps taken before, after and during the process of collection. Before starting the data collection process, it is good having enormous stock of data available at hand. However, it should be noted that three necessary criteria should be made here: the selection of relevant and accurate data, the collection of sufficient amount of evidence for your study whether quantitative or qualitative and making sure that all questions and hypothesis are answered. (Felix & Smith, 2019, P146)

Perhaps the most challenging component for the student is that of data analysis. Blair (2012) quoted "If data collection is the play, data analysis is the work". This is quite accurate when dealing with quantitative data. The student may get into chaos while confronted with large amount of data collected. Therefore, s/he should categorize and filter the data so as to make selection of the relevant, accurate and

credible knowledge for the purpose of the study. The data analysis section represents the statistical and numerical data gathered for a quantitative study and non-numerical data collected for a qualitative study. Introducing these facts should comprise the name of the techniques, the independent and dependent variables, the level of significance and the research questions or hypotheses. (Lunenburg & Irby, 2019)

As far as the result chapter is concerned, it is represented by giving facts not opinions to tell the reader which experiment the researcher did and what happened. "When writing the results, state the method you use and refer to the specific section of materials and methods which describe the protocol" Holtom and Fisher (2009).

Within the final stage in this chapter that is the discussion of the findings. It is reported by Paltridge and Starfield (2007) that many students do not really understand the functions of this section of the dissertation or thesis. In sum, this section is aimed to explain the connection the result of their study and that of previous similar studies. i.e. need to show attitude toward previous knowledge and the outcomes of their own study.

2.5. Drafting and reviewing thesis and dissertation

2.5.1 Writing an abstract

One more important part for the completion of thesis and dissertation writing is what referred to as the abstract. An abstract is a brief summary intended to describe the whole study. It should be preferably left till the very end as students need to have all the necessary information about their research from the background to the recommendations in their hands so that to achieve a well-written abstract. The challenge that might arise in writing this part is the limited number of words ordered by universities to be used here.

“The abstract serves as a calling card and a marketing tool for other scholars, academic journal editors and conference organizers to take notice of your work” Felix and Smith (2019). The abstract, then, gives an overview on the entire work done by the student. Commonly known abstract format has five main parts: introduction, research design/methodology, findings/results, recommendations and conclusion. Each part of these serves for a specific purpose.

According to Felix and Smith (2019), a good abstract is necessary for both dissertation and thesis writing and future scholarly articles. It is advised for an abstract being short and clear as possible, attractive, concise and helps the reader quickly understand all the necessary details or the research.

2.5.2. Supervision

The process of dissertation writing should begin long before someone starts collecting theoretical and empirical data for his research. It should primarily focus on the choice of the topic, the setting where to carry out the research and more importantly the supervisor choice. Students’ regular appointment and interaction with the supervisor are of such great impact on the success or failure during the students’ academic career.

Fanghanel (2009) as cited in Blair (2016) noted that close working relationship should be built between the student and his supervisor who serves as a mentor, guides the research and helps the students understand and adopt the discipline’s values, methods and ways of constructing knowledge. Supervision provides tools that serve for good writing skills, organize the students’ work and presentation and guide them to writing and submitting their papers. In sum, a good supervisor according to Blair should acquire a certain amount of knowledge about either the researched topic or

methodological competence so that he could match between the student's needs and the supervisor's ability.

“You are an active partner in a two-way relationship. If you contribute little or nothing, your supervisor will have little or nothing to supervise”.

Holtom and Fishers (1999)

2.5.3. Paper format and layout

Once the thesis or dissertation has been approved by your advisor and faculty committee, the student should be prepared for writing his draft from title page to appendices and bibliography. Perhaps the student's first concern is to know in what form his thesis or dissertation should be presented.

Holtom and Fisher (1999) mentioned that many universities require particular rules and format to their students to obey regarding overall format of the document, the size, the margins, headers and footers, line space, etc. However, standard thesis is mostly written in a book-like form that comprises interrelated chapters, usually an introduction, literature review, methodology, a research findings and a conclusion. Blair (2017).

As stated in Mauch and Park (2003), a good manuscript presentation means that much importance has been devoted by the researcher to all the aspects of the project. This will make it easier for the audience to read it and for the researcher himself to correct any mistake. The thesis or dissertation format is, then, as necessary as the organization of ideas.

2.5.4. Proofreading and submission

Unlike Ph.D. students, master students will certainly have a deadline for submitting their thesis or dissertation. Before doing so, the final draft should be revised and handed in its proper form as it is a kind of professional academic work. Whether having a deadline or not, the student should leave enough time at the end.

Holtom and Fisher (2009) defined proofreading as checking for mistakes from stupid careless grammatical to typographical errors before thesis or dissertation submission. It is possible for the student to proofread his thesis himself however it is advisable that someone else with good English mastery proofreads it as he may discover mistakes that the student missed.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter is aimed to serve as a guide to good thesis and dissertation writing through which we attempted to provide theoretical knowledge and practical advice how to plan, write, edit, present and submit a successful thesis or dissertation. This section of our study emphasises the theoretical frame work how the students would properly organise and outline their paper. It explores the fundamental strategies about the academic content of the thesis or dissertation for the sake of making an original contribution to knowledge. As well, the chapter highlights the basic features of planning and structure that characterises well-written thesis.

We addressed this chapter to primarily fellow colleagues expected to write their academic projects with the hope that it would be beneficial and provide theoretical understanding and accordingly familiarise them with such kind of professional academic writing.

Chapter three

Research Methodology; Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter Three

Research Methodology; Data Analysis and Interpretation

Content

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3.1. Introduction

This study is for investigating writing dissertation difficulties among Master two students, especially the common problem they share in writing.

This chapter is tending to investigate Master two students challenges facing in writing their dissertation. Especially, it describes the research protocol, tools, materials, techniques, setting and sample. It also includes data analysis and interpretation.

3.2. Research process

The current research is a case study which purpose is to find out among the major challenges facing students on the verge of graduation in writing their dissertation. It involves the use of a mixed method encompassing both quantitative and qualitative measurements.

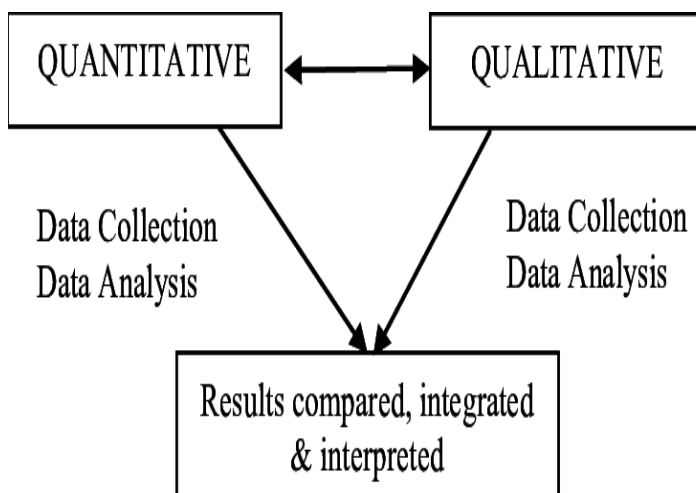
This rubric illustrates the framework of the research methods and techniques selected by the researcher for effective addressing of our research question through the collection, interpretation, analysis and the discussion of the data.

3.2.1. Triangulation

It is a kind of checking that we use in educational research in order to establish validity and check the credibility of our research tools. Using a number of different instruments for data collection helps enhance the quality of data collection and the accuracy of our interpretations.

Tauri Choko says: *“one method cannot effectively reveal everything on every phenomenon rather than seeing triangulation as the method for validation or verification”*.

For checking the validity of the research tools, a variety of tools are employed here including a questionnaire and interview.



A Visual Diagram of the Mixed-Methods Concurrent Triangulation Strategy. The researchers will use this approach because of the following reasons (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007; Johnson and Christensen 2004; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004)

Figure 3.2.1: A Visual Diagram of the Mixed-Methods Triangulation Strategy

3.2.2. Mixed method: qualitative and quantitative approach

Johnson and Ownegbuzie (2004) as cited in Creswell (2003:20) defined mixed method research as using different ways to collect data at the same time or sequentially in order to make the research problem clear.

As the name implies, quantitative research is dealt with the collection of numbers where the quantity of data and mathematical calculations are focused according to Creswell (2009), quantitative research allows testing objective theories through the examination of the relation among variables which are then measured for the purpose of analyzing the numbered data using statistical procedures. While qualitative research means collecting the type of data which are not in numerical form via our questionnaires and interviews. Seliger and Shahomy (1989; 205) described it as to be usually in the form of words in oral or written words. The qualitative data helps move from collected data into some kind of explanation and interpretation.

3.3.1. Setting:

Simply defined, the setting or site of research refers to the physical, social and cultural area where the study has taken place. Our study was conducted at the level of Ibn Khaldoune University in Tiaret. This agriculture based city is located in the western part of the country counting more than 800,000 inhabitants in 2008. The institution which was founded in 1980-1981 comprises eight faculties and two institutes more than 30.000 students.

3.3.2. Population

Our target population consists of Master two students at the level of the English language section in Ibn Khaldoune University. Dornyei (2007) states: ‘the population is the group whom the study is about.’ The English section was created in 2014 offering a variety of modules related to the main specialties English didactics and linguistics studies.

3.3.3. Sampling

Sampling has much importance in mixed research similar to any other type of study (fraenkel.et al., 2011). Accordingly, a sample group of 85 students and 8 English teachers have been addressed from the total population. The representing sample ensures the generalization of our findings on the whole population.

3.3.3.1. Students

The targeted students who are regarded as a source of data for our research consists of 85 students belonging to both section of English department: didactics and linguistics. The sample has been chosen randomly this type of sampling gives all the members of the population equal opportunity to be selected for the research (Mackey and crass, 2005).

3.3.3.2. Teachers

As far as teachers are concerned with our study a sample group of 5 teachers from our English department have been interviewed by the researcher so as to make our study more informative and reinforce research validity, the teacher are the most accurate source of data who will provide a clear view about the quality of student's dissertations as well as the deficiencies facing them to achieve adequate academic writing.

3.4. Data collection instruments

Two main tools are employed in the collection of the data of our research: a semi –structured type of interview dedicated to English department teachers and a questionnaire submitted to fellow master two students in the same department where the respondents are requested to respond anonymously.

3.4.1. Description of the interview

The first tool used in our study is that of the interview, which has been addressed to 8 of the English department teachers. It is a type of semi-structured interview with less strict format. The interview includes six previously determined questions with the ability to deviate from the guide whenever necessary to obtain more information about the topic (Dornyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Schuh, 2009). This kind of semi-guided interview has been chosen rather than the guided once as it allows deviating from the written format whenever the researcher feels necessary to ask additional questions, the need for clarification or comment but more importantly dealing unexpected responses. Interviewing provided us with qualitative data about the quality of dissertations the students are writing, the common errors committed by students and suggestions for proper academic writing.

3.4.2. Description of the questionnaire

Regarded as one of the necessary tools commonly used for data collection about particular topics and interests, the questionnaire is the most used data collection tool in social sciences that researchers used in statistical work (Dornyei, 2003). The questionnaire adopted in our study included both close-ended questions that guide the respondent to choose one or more items among the determined options provided, and open-ended questions giving the participant freedom in expression and illustration. The reason behind choosing such tool is that it serves for gathering authentic data indirectly for the present work. Moreover, it is faster, easier and less time-consuming.

Concerning the questionnaire design, it is made up of four distinct sections: the first represents informants' background information, where in the second section we sought to elicit students' attitudes towards the topic. The third section is devoted for the detection of students' dissertation writing common problems. The last section provides us with respondents' suggestions to overcome these challenge.

3.5. The pilot study:

The pilot study, also referred to as feasibility study, can be defined as a small-scale test of the purposed procedures which purpose is to detect much hindering problems so that remedial action can be taken before caring out the proper study (Fraenkel, Hyun & Wallen.2012).

Our preliminary study was employed on 10 of our population sample representing 85 students of didactics family. The study sought to test the effectiveness of the chosen research instruments and effectiveness whether it provides valid, feasible and reliable data.

3.6. The analysis of the questionnaire:

The purpose of the questionnaire is to know student's perception towards writing dissertation and the common problem for them during doing this task.

3.6.1 Section one: General information

1- Gender

Gender	frequency	percentage
Females	71	16%
Males	14	84%

Table 3.6.1.1: Respondents'' gender

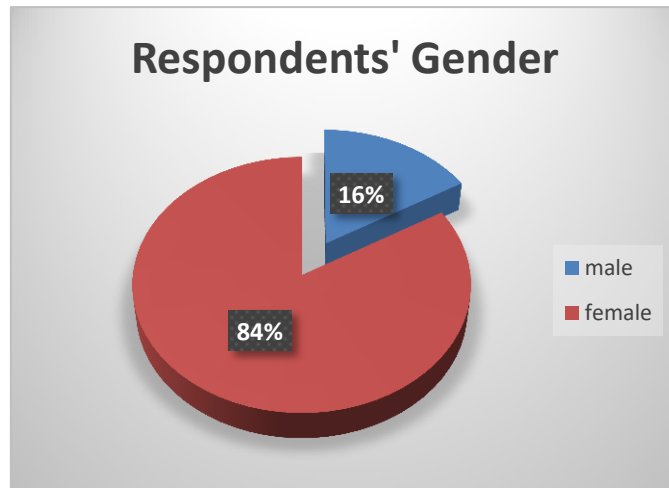


Figure 3.6.1.1: Respondents' gender

We deduce from this chart that the majority of the participants are females 83% and just 14% males.

2-Specialty: didactics and linguistics

Specialty	gender	Frequency	percentage
didactics	<i>Females</i>	35	90%
	<i>males</i>	4	10%
linguistics	<i>Females</i>	35	76%
	<i>Males</i>	24	11%

Table 3.6.1.2: Respondents' gender per specialty



Figure 3.6.1.2: specialty

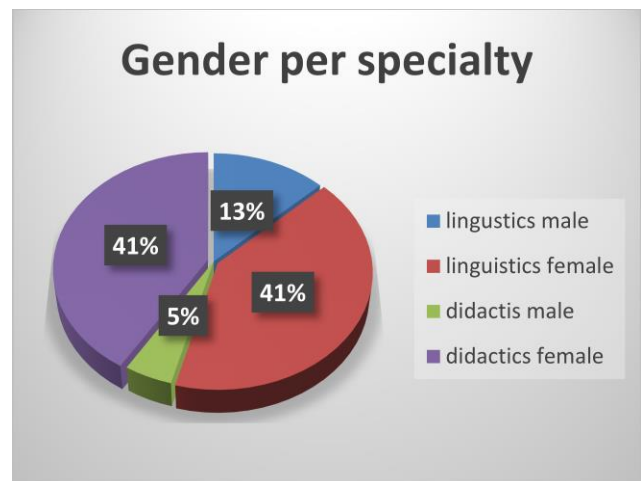


Figure 3.6.1.3: gender per specialty

As it is noticed, the highest rate of informants is females in didactics. Only 10 % males also for the other branch linguistics 76% females and only 11% males.

3.6.2 Section two: attitudes towards dissertation writing

1- Level of writing competence

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	47	55%
No	38	45%

Table 3.6.1.3: Level of writing competence

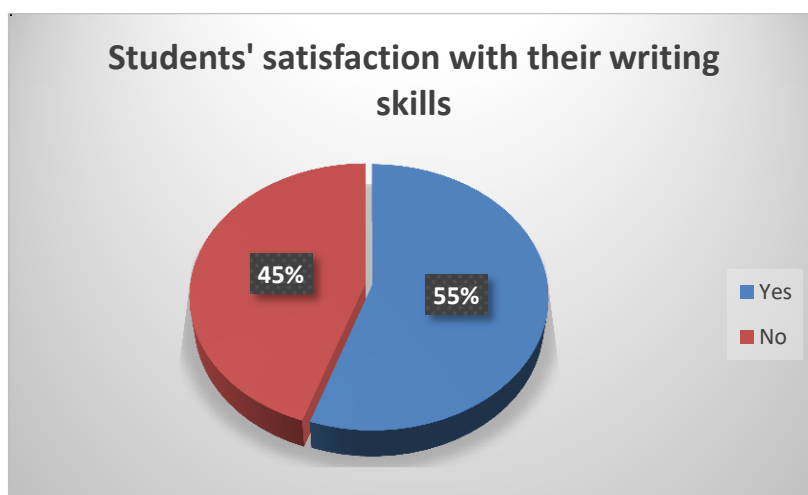


Figure 3.6.1.4: Level of writing competence

The result obtained show the following: 55% of the students are satisfied about their proficiency in writing whereas 4%5 of the students are not satisfied with their abilities in writing skill.

2-Writing dissertation

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
yes	70	82%
No	15	18%

Table 3.6.1.4: dissertation writing frequency

Justification why

- a- Lack of practical side
- b- Lack of knowledge or no mastery of a academic writing techniques

- c- Never experienced writing dissertation
- d- Procrastination
- e- Time factor (time insufficiency)



Figure 3.6.1.5: dissertation writing frequency

The facts reveal that 82 % of our students consider that writing dissertation is a challenging task. However, for 18% of them is not.

3-Familiarity with dissertation writing techniques

Insufficient	sufficient	good
18	49	18
21%	58%	21%

Table 3.6.1.5: Familiarity with dissertation writing technique

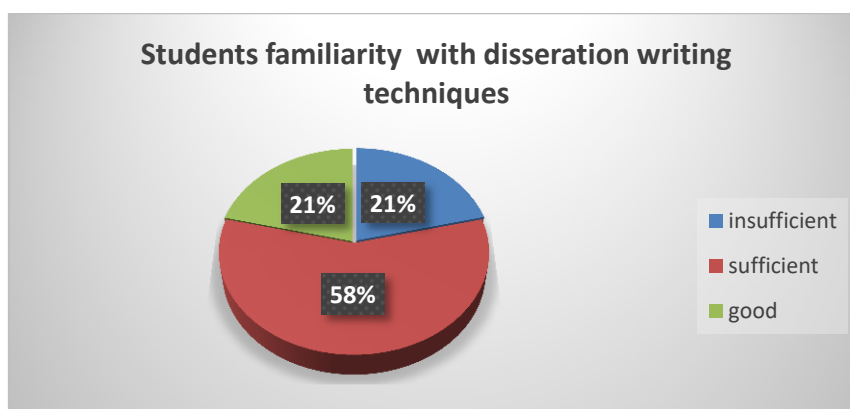


Figure 3.6.1.6: Familiarity with dissertation writing techniques

As the table describes, 58% of students are sufficiently familiar with writing dissertation task we also notice that the same result for insufficient and good.

3.6.3 Part three: dissertation writing common problem

1-difficulties before writing dissertation

Options	Frequency	percentage
a- the choice of the topic	37	43%
b- the formulation of the research aims ,questions and hypothesis	26	30%
c- the selection of the sample and methodological techniques	35	41%
d- the organization(process)of the research	36	42%

Table 3.6.1.6: difficulties before writing dissertation

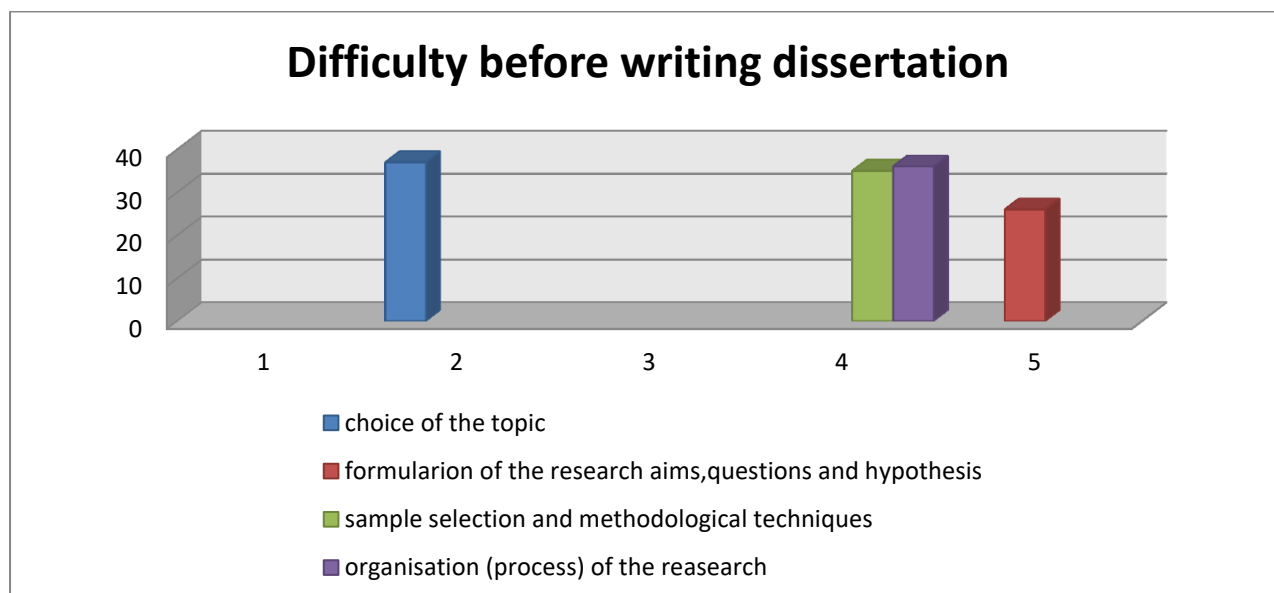


Figure 3.6.1.6: difficulties before writing dissertation

The table above shows that when students sit down to write their dissertation, many will encounter a similar set of problems. The result 43%, 30%, 41% and 42% are very closer to each other.

2- Difficulties while writing a dissertation

options	frequency	percentage
a-the introductory section	15	18%
b-the literature to be reviewed	33	39%
c-data analysis and interpretation	59	69%
d-conclusion	03	0.3%

Table 3.6.1.7: difficulties while writing dissertation

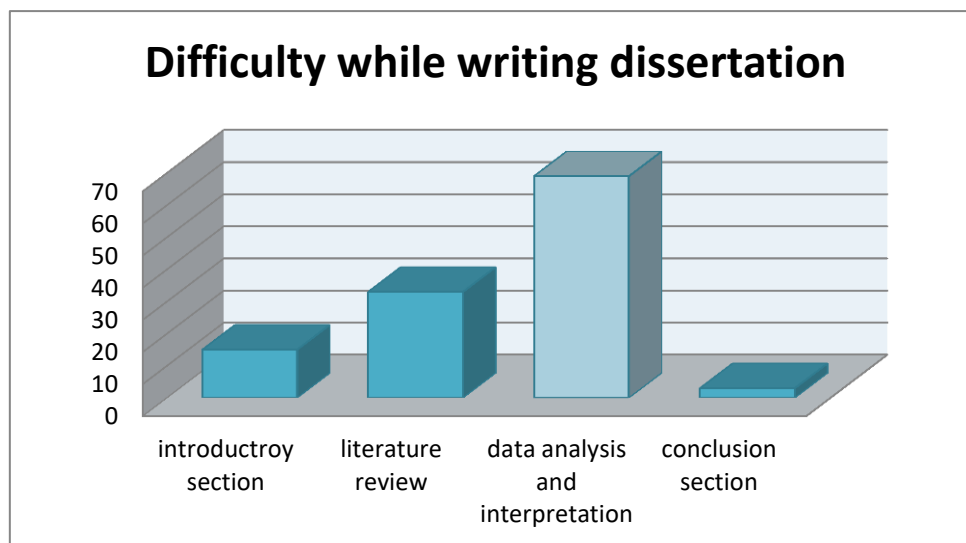


Figure 3.6.1.8: difficulties while writing dissertation

As the bar graphs shows, 59% students face the biggest problem in data analysis and interpretation, whereas 15% students have difficulty in the introductory section. The easiest part for them is conclusion.

3-difficulties after finishing writing a dissertation

options	frequency	percentage
a-paper format	19	22%
b-writing the abstract	41	48%
c-correction and proofreading	60	70%

Table 3.6.1.8: difficulties after writing dissertation

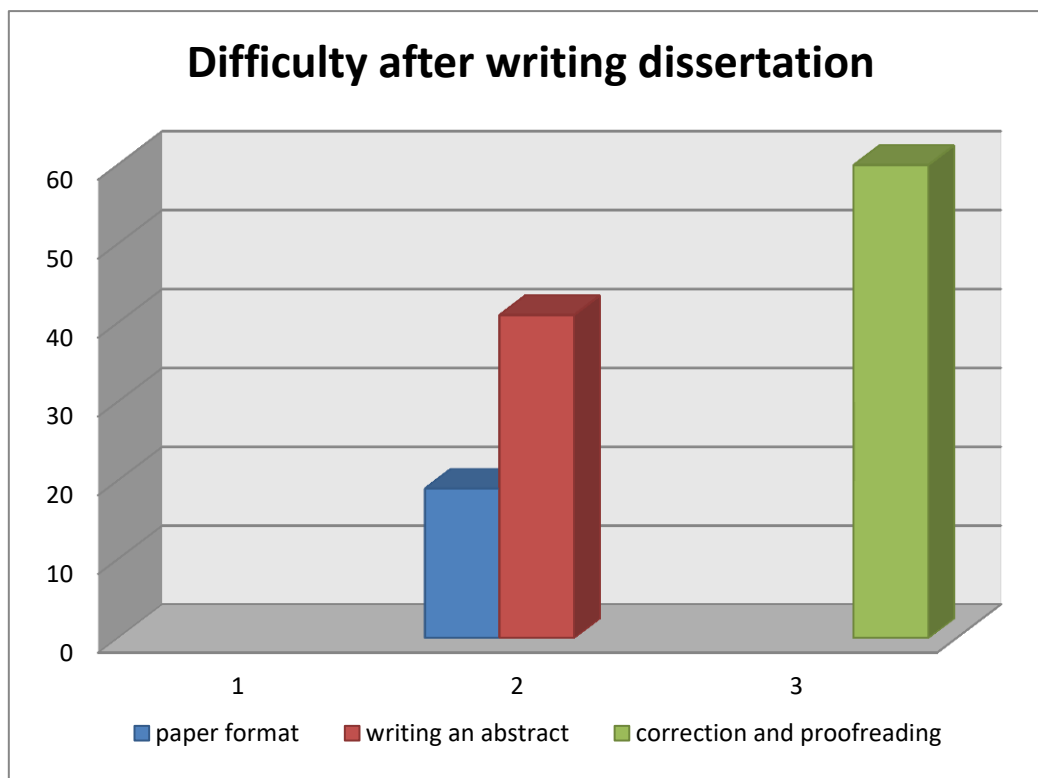


Figure 3.6.1.9: difficulties after writing dissertation

The results reveal that, student even after writing their dissertation they face such problems 60 students have a several difficulties in proofreading and correction.41 students have a problem in writing the abstract.

4-difficulty with writing techniques

options	frequency	percentage
a-paraphrasing	37	43%
b-translating	15	18%
c-referencing	40	47%
d-rewording	20	23%

Table 3.6.1.9: difficulty with writing techniques

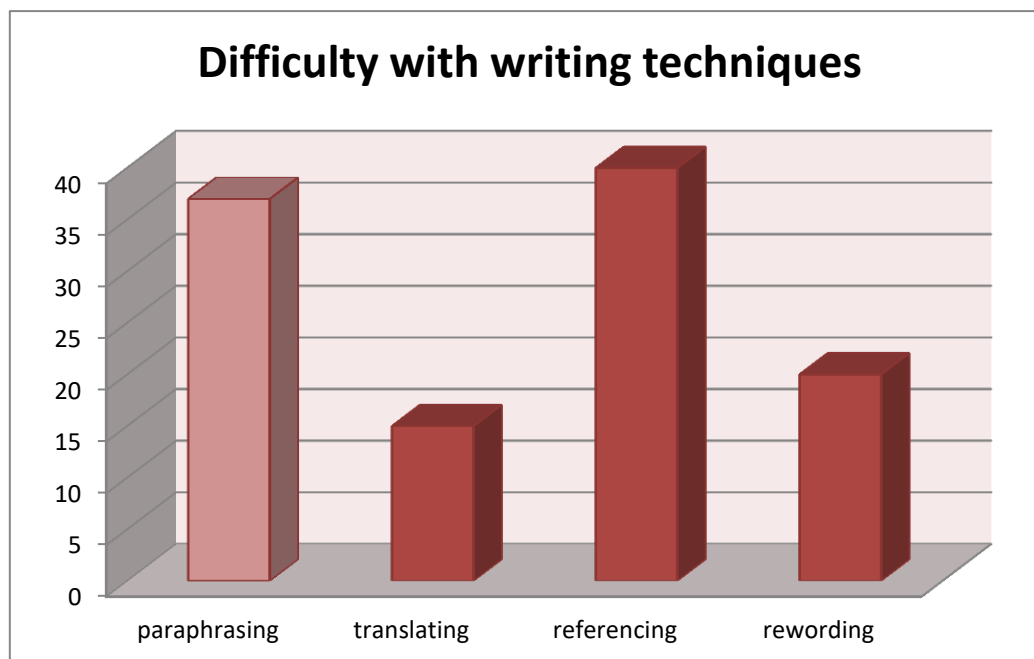


Figure 3.6.1.10: difficulty with writing techniques

From the result the difficulties can be ranked as follows: 40 student encounter difficulties in referencing, 37 students face problem with paraphrasing, 20 students have problem with rewording and 15 students have problem with translating word and sentences.

3.6.4 Part four: Reasons behind dissertation writing common problem

1-Sources of dissertation writing difficulties

options	frequency	percentage
a-insufficient English language proficiency	15	18%
b-lack of lexico-grammatical competence	23	27%
c-lack of interest and motivation	31	36%
d-insufficient instruction(writing techniques)	37	43%

Table 3.6.1.10: Sources of dissertation writing difficulties

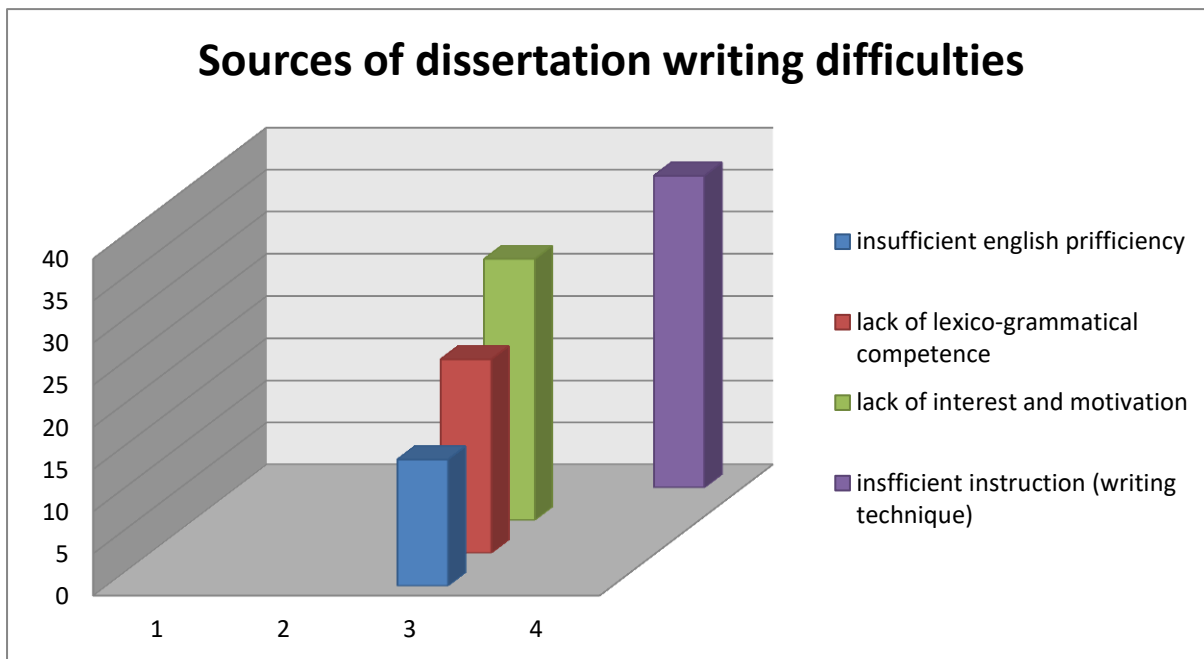


Figure 3.6.1.11: Sources of dissertation writing difficulties

2- Time factor

answer	frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	65%
No	55	35%

Table 3.6.1.11: Time factor

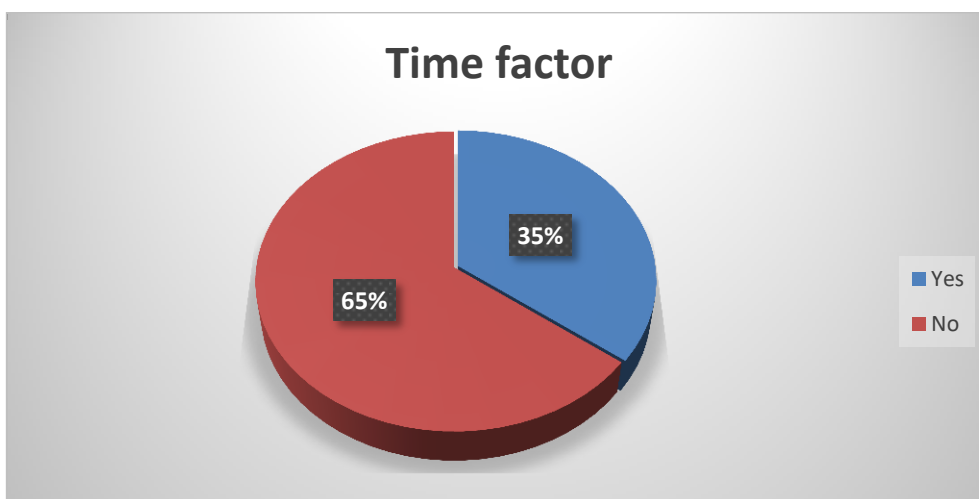


Figure 3.6.1.12: Time factor

Depending on the result above, the great majority of students representing 65 % confirm that the time allotted is not sufficient for writing their dissertation whereas 35% of them regard that time devoted by the administration helps to work on their dissertation comfortably.

3- Supervisor impact on dissertation writing:

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	68	77%
No	17	23%

Table 3.6.1.12: Supervisor impact

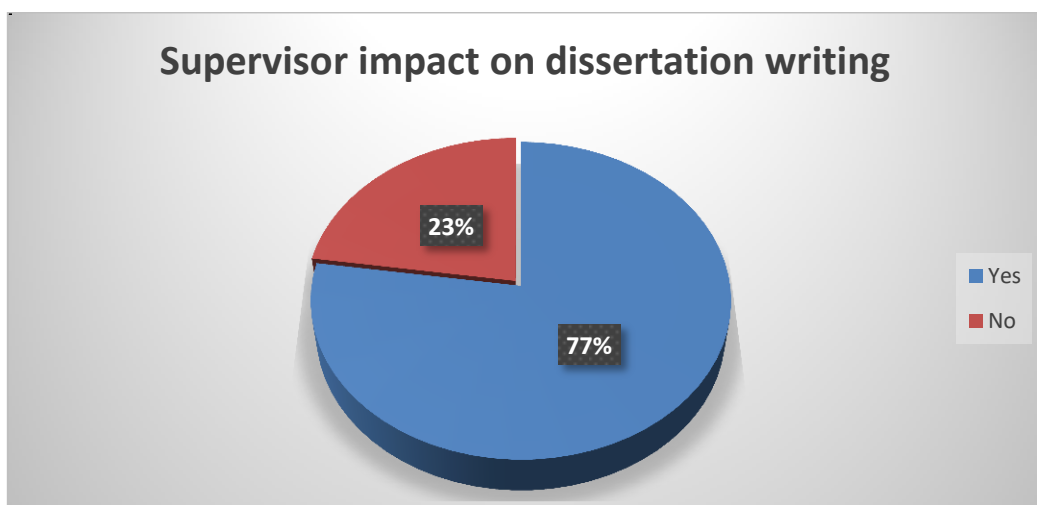


Figure 3.6.1.13: Supervisor impact

From the result obtained, we notice that 77% of students agree with the great impact the supervisor's role has on dissertation writing. However, 23% of them do not.

3.7. Discussion of the questionnaire result

From the analysis of student's questionnaire has revealed, when master two students sit down to write their dissertation, many will encounter a similar set of problems. In the first section of the questionnaire we notice that 83% of females were present when collecting data, however, only 17% males. Girls are interested to learn foreign languages more than boys.

In the second part of student's questionnaire 55% of students are satisfied for their writing skills whereas 45% are not. When it comes to writing dissertation 82% of students they consider writing a thesis is a challenging task for them it because they do this task for the first time, lack of practical side, lack of knowledge or no mastery of academic writing techniques, procrastination and

time factor to overcome the limited time they have to know how to balance their time so they can accomplish everything that needs to be done is a challenge and one that not every student is equipped to overcome. In the first place, writing a dissertation is always going to be a time consuming process.

However, many students become intimidated and start to procrastinate in order to put off dealing with some of the challenges in writing the dissertation. Whereas 18% of them do not consider it as a difficult activity. For those who said yes, they are not ready to start creating their own extremely important academic documents or the lack of background information about doing a research. For the familiarity with dissertation writing techniques the result shows that 21% of the students they are not familiar with dissertation writing techniques as well as for those who are good familiar so for them writing a dissertation will be stressful because students are not familiar with requirements and formatting functions or when they have not planned ahead of the kind management that they need to achieve the best result. However, most of master students have a sufficient familiarity with dissertation writing.

In the third part of student's questionnaire dissertation writing common problems. the most important issue that students face when writing a dissertation 37 students have difficulties in choosing a topic ,36 students in the selection of the sample and methodological techniques, the organization of the research 35 students select the selection of the sample and methodological techniques majority of the students run into trouble when selecting a topic for their dissertation it can be easy on too much or more bite off more than they can chew by selecting a topic that is either too broad or that will require too much time, effort and energy to cover thoroughly these students are advised to work to craft a topic that is narrow enough to allow for through investigation without overwhelming. furthermore, 55 students they do not see that time an effect on writing dissertation whereas 30 students they said no the time given is not enough to write a dissertation for them is better to make a time management plan and sticking to a calendar to work steadily and consistently help to make the process go much more smoothly .

Finally, 80% of students see that the insufficient contact with the supervisor as a reason behind these deficiencies for them the supervisor has a great importance to reduce these difficulties

3.8. Interview result

Question 1: *How can you describe your supervisory expertise and Master dissertation examination experience?*

T1 -I consider it as a constant enriching experience since I am in a situation to guide my students towards the realization of their dissertation and at the same time, the examination experience empowers my curiosity as a teacher and a researcher.

T2 -it is quite fruitful; it makes us improve at different levels.

T3 -it was pleasant so far, student are mostly responsive long rights of correction except few students who caused some missed deadlines but it was good.

T4 -it is a tiring job because students have many problems when they write

T5 -constructive and beneficial.

Comment:

For most teachers, thesis and dissertation supervision gives opportunity to update their knowledge and broaden it thanks to the multiple topics suggested for research. It is a kind of a lifelong learning that helps to maintain in the high level of knowledge. Though somehow tiring, supervision remains beneficial and enjoyable.

Question 2: *According to you what characterizes effective academic writing?*

T1- a deep understanding of the significance of critical reading, mainly in the domain of research / Awareness of the component of the academic style (language and the character of the researcher) / A command over English in one's specialty responsibility of the researcher when it comes to avoiding plagiarism.

T2- the usage of formal vocabulary / terminology / the usage of structured methodology.

T3- sophisticated vocabulary, correct structures, correct tenses, punctuation and lacking up argument with illustrations.

T4- effective academic writing should contain all necessary steps and components.

T5- cohesion and coherence / Language style / Spelling and punctuation mistakes.

Comment:

Some common key components must be present in proficient academic writing. Students should have an adequate mastery of the language skills such as grammar, vocabulary...etc. Good structure and cohesion is of such great impact that decides the quality of a research paper.

Question3: *Will you feel annoyed and get distracted by dissertation errors (not a good read)?*

T1- No, not at all. Quite the opposite. I find them a start to raise student's awareness of the need to correct them and polish their work to get the final draft to be submitted to the jury. Errors are a reliable source for continuous learning and growth.

T2- for sure, errors are as a handicap to correction, the more I find errors, the more I feel distracted.

T3- if there are many of course, it will interrupt the flow of ideas and eventually the reading.

T4- Yes, because they commit beginner's mistakes.

T5- Sometimes, yes.

Comment:

In spite of the fact that some mistakes can be a bit embarrassing and are not permitted at such level, they are an inevitable part of learning. Committing errors shows your supervisor the disabilities and the needs that should be addressed.

Question4: *Do you follow certain guidelines when examining EFL master dissertation?*

T1- yes, I do follow the guidelines of quality criteria such as the components of the abstract. academic English, respecting the norms of research and dissertation writing in didactics and the use of referencing style such as the APA.

T2- I follow the instructions of the APA style and the methodological structures.

T3- of course, structure needed to be respected, I need to see consistency in methodology and content components. Balance between sections is also needed.

T4- yes, the form, the content and the style.

T5- yes, of course.

Comment:

There is an agreement among supervisors on the criteria that are considered during assessing students' contributions. Citing sources, structure of the research and following the norms of research and academic writing are primarily focused.

Question5: *What are the sections (areas) you focus on and assess when examining dissertations?*

T1- I focus on the originality of the topic – how the research questions were addressed through rework – a sound methodology – the structure of the review of literature – the ability of the researcher to engage in debate and have a voice-proper referencing and use of writing techniques (paraphrasing, quoting, summarizing).

T2- All sections.

T3- first the outline of the work, the sections pages (balanced or not) then I move to abstract, general introduction. I do focus on the practical section and the referencing as well.

T4- the practical part is the most important one I focus on.

T5- referencing, plagiarism, length of paragraphs, methodology, spelling and punctuation.

Comment:

Generally speaking, you cannot favour a section over another since every section in the research serves for its specific purpose. A good research then should create a balance between all the parts of the paper.

Question6: *which section(s) of the dissertation you think master degree students have problems with?*

T1- the methodology chapter (interpretation/discussion) - highlighting the gap in the review of literature - list of references.

T2- chapter two, data analysis and chapter three.

T3- the writing of the abstract first, the general conclusion is second and may face problems with the analysis of the qualitative tools (interview) they also struggle with referencing and biography.

T4- all sections with different degrees.

T5- the practical side.

Comment:

Nearly all the sections seem challenging for students but at different degrees. However, the methodology chapter and more precisely its practical side: description of the findings, data analysis, discussion and synthesis are the major issues that master students are struggling with.

Question 7: *Do you think supervisors can help students to overcome these problems?*

T1- of course, they can do through mentioning them on regular basis

Meeting deadlines and providing them with prospective feedback as well.

T2- yes, they are the true guide.

T3- of course, supervisors over the years of experience know what could be the obstacles for his supervisees and must provide guidance for them.

T4- yes, they can show them and correct their mistakes.

T5- yes, of course.

Comment:

The role of the supervisor is indispensable and cannot be denied in dissertation process. Choosing a good supervisor who devotes enough time for your research and provides you with adequate monitoring is the key to successful thesis and dissertation writing.

Question8: *What do you suggest to address dissertation writing problems/challenges/deficiencies?*

T1- increasing time allotted to the module of writing dissertation, dealing with study days and workshop and developing the student autonomy.

T2- students need to improve their writing skills too and teachers guide them through references and instructions.

T3- more practical activities and workshop for both teachers who are also researchers and students as well.

T4- we should make a manual (guide) for all master two students to follow it in order to avoid mistakes.

T5- advising learners about writing good dissertation focusing on methodology.

Comment:

To overcome these challenges, fellow teachers urge to reconsider the way methodology is taught and time allotted to the module. In their turn, students are invited to improve their writing skills by encouraging autonomous learning.

3.7. Synthesis of the findings

Analysis and synthesis of the study results go in parallel with the theoretical work we collected from previous researches on the main topic. It was found that academic writing for dissertation and thesis seems challenging for most students and most of their contributions lack of the required academic style. Despite processing certain about the basic writing techniques and methodological process during the university course of study, master two students are still struggling with the process of dissertation writing.

According to the obtained results that greatly match to previous studies on the topic, there is a great difficulty in deciding about the topic, methodology and the processing of the research before start writing the research paper. Review of literature and data analysis pose another significant difficulty as these two parts of research require the student's personal effort and both comprehensive-analytical skill in addition to restriction to certain academic regulations.

The students' deficiencies may vary from linguistic skills that related to the language command, knowledge based skills concerned with the that the candidate acquires in specific subjects, procedures and information needed to perform such work and finally, the methodological skills that guide the research protocol and ensures the consistency of the research sections.

3.8. Suggestions to overcome dissertation writing common difficulty

- a-** Students should be exposed to such writing stuff at earlier level (third year) before writing their master dissertation. For example they can be taught how to write reports and research papers.
- b-** A good supervisor makes things easier (the good choice of supervisor has a crucial role).
- c-** Reinforce and devote much more time for methodology and writing techniques modules notably the practical side.
- d-** Choosing the right and good topic helps getting motivation.
- e-** Getting familiar with the basic writing skills and academic writing techniques through extensive reading of books, articles and attending lectures.
- f-** Spending much more time and having much contact with your supervisor for proper guidance.
- g-** Organizing university open days and seminars for master two students to familiarize them with dissertation writing as well as academic writing.
- h-** Research methods discipline that our university offers whether in terms of content or approaches should be reconsidered.

3.9. Limitations:

During conducting this research, there exist several difficulties. The first limitation is limited time. Time factor played a crucial role to reach as many informants as we desired and to tackle the various aspects of the studied topic.

Another limitation is that most of master two students were absent because the presence was not obligatory during the pandemic Covid19 while some of them are workers. Consequently, the distribution of the questionnaire was interrupted. Here, it should be necessarily noted that we could not get the all the questionnaires back while several questions have been left unanswered.

Moreover, the use of the questionnaire itself as a research instrument may fail to real attitudes of the participants as the honesty and seriousness of participants' answers cannot be guaranteed.

More importantly, the strike for both teachers and students and most of teachers refused to make an interview only few of them.

Finally, we would have liked to access to teachers' reviews on previous dissertations. Such reports are an essential study source that might provide us with an insight for deeper and more accurate understanding of the topic in hand.

3.10. Suggestions for further research:

As for future studies, it is recommended to duplicate this research in order for us to investigate and understand the topic more broadly and more precisely. This work should submerge into the background of the previously mentioned problems. A part of this research should be devoted to students of other levels and generalized to a broader scope so that it comprises the other departments of the college. It is also recommended to carry out a parallel research within the current study among professors and supervisors to find out the extent of their readiness and effectiveness of their performance in teaching the methodology module. In this regard, teachers have their share, according to students, of poor quality dissertations.

3.11. Conclusion:

This chapter shows the field work of the research, in which we provided the main elements of the methodology chapter like research design, tools that we used, results and data collection. Furthermore, recommendation for better theses and dissertation production, recommendations for further studies and difficulties we confronted during collecting data for the preset study.

General Conclusion

It is commonly agreed among students and teachers that writing is regarded as a crucial task that requires the combinations of various skills to achieve it. This pedagogical skill would become more challenging when it comes to writing in second language as students may face additional difficulties while using second language in its written form. These problems include: linguistic skills, translation abilities, background knowledge, transferable skills and contextualization of the concepts.

This study outlines the major problems hindering graduate students completing their thesis dissertation seeking to find effective solutions to overcome such challenges. Therefore, the quality of students' academic writing could be enhanced. By referring to earlier studies, it was found that the finding obtained by our research correspond to a certain extent to the previous studies reviewed in the theoretical part of our study. The spotted challenges include: lack of writing skills, language proficiency, chapter structure and organization, lack of adequate supervision and noticeable incompetence in methodological process.

Finally, the target of our study is to identify the possible challenges confronted by most students and attempt to find ways to address them in order to promote the students' performance of thesis writing. What has been revealed by our study is quite expected from our participants. Master students are really having difficulties related to language, writing style, the choice of the topic and methodology section both design and application. Based on these results, a series of recommendations could be provided to both students and supervisors to achieve well written academic contributions.

Accordingly, English departments are urgently advised to revise the methods and contents of teaching methodology and writing techniques modules so that they match with the students' needs to write successful thesis or dissertation. The students should be trained and prepared for thesis writing at an earlier stage of the university course by assigning mini projects, writing reports, organizing workshops and training days to get familiar with the various steps of master thesis writing. In their turn, supervisors with their proper guidance and assistance would play a key role to enhance thesis and dissertation writing considerably.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Dear students,

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire to express your opinions and attitudes about Master's dissertations common problems. Your cooperation and contribution are highly appreciated and strongly needed to investigate our research topic.

Section One: General Information

2. Gender Female Male

3. Specialty Linguistics Didactics

Section Two: Attitudes towards dissertation writing

4. Are you satisfied with your level of writing skill?

Yes

5. Do you consider writing a dissertation a challenging task?

Yes No

If 'yes' , say why please?.....

6. How do you rate your familiarity with dissertation writing techniques?

a. Insufficient

b. Sufficient

c. Good

Section Three: Dissertation Writing Common Problems

7. Which aspect does cause you the greatest difficulty **before** writing your dissertation?
(You may choose up more than one)

a. The choice of the topic

b. The formulation of research aims, questions and hypotheses

c. The selection of the sample and methodological techniques

d. The organization (process) of the research

Others; please specify?

.....

8. Which aspect does cause you the greatest difficulty **while** writing your dissertation?
(You may choose up more than one)

- a. The introductory section
- b. The literature to be reviewed
- c. Data Analysis and interpretation
- d. Conclusion section

Others; please specify?
.....

9. Which aspect does cause you the greatest difficulty **after** writing your dissertation?
(You may choose up more than one)

- a. Paper format
- b. Writing the abstract
- c. Correction and Proofreading

Others; please specify?
.....

10. Which of these writing techniques you struggle with most when writing your dissertation?

- a. Paraphrasing
- b. Translating
- c. Referencing
- d. Rewording

Section Three: Reasons behind Dissertation Writing Common Problems

11. What are the sources of Dissertation writing difficulties?

- a. Insufficient English language proficiency
- b. Lack of Lexico-grammatical competence
- c. Lack of interest and motivation
- d. Insufficient instruction (writing techniques)

Others?.....

12. Do you think that the allotted time to write a dissertation is enough?

Yes No

13. Is the insufficient contact with the supervisor a reason behind dissertation writing difficulties?

Yes No

Section Four: Suggestions to overcome dissertation Writing Common Problems

14. What do you suggest to overcome dissertation writing problems?
.....

Appendix B

Interview addressed to Teachers

Dear teachers,

We will be extremely grateful if you take a part to this interview that is served as data collection tool pertaining to Master's dissertation on 'Master's dissertation writing common problems'. Your collaboration and contribution can be reliable data for our research. Please answer these questions taking into consideration your supervisory expertise and examination experience in order to ensure the credibility of this investigation.

1. How can you describe your supervisory expertise and Masters' dissertation examination experience?
2. According to you what characterizes effective academic writing?
3. Will you feel annoyed and get distracted by dissertation errors (not a good read)?
4. Do you follow certain guidelines when examining EFL Masters' dissertations?
5. What are the sections (areas) you focus on and assess when examining dissertations?
6. Which section(s) of the dissertation you think Master degree students have problems with?
7. Do you think supervisors can help students overcome these problems?
8. What do you suggest to address dissertation writing problems/challenges/deficiencies?

Appendix C

ترجمة الملخص

الملخص

حقيقة يواجه طلاب الماستر في اللغة الإنجليزية صعوبات في عملية كتابة أطروحاتهم ومذكراتهم وهذا ما شغل حيزا كبيرا في دراسات الباحثين على مدى العقود القليلة الماضية. تحاول الدراسة الحالية تقديم نظرة ثاقبة لكل من تحديات الطلاب في الكتابة وتصورات المشرفين للصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الثانية ماستر خلال هذه العملية الأكاديمية. علاوة على ذلك ، تحاول استكشاف احتياجاتهم لتعزيز مهاراتهم الكتابية في كتابة الأطروحة ومعرفة التحديات الرئيسية من أجل تقديم اقتراحات للتحسن. لمواجهة هذه المشكلة الهامة ، استخدم الباحث طريقة مختلطة لجمع البيانات بغرض الحصول على البيانات الكمية والنوعية. للقيام بالبحث تم استجواب خمسة وثمانين طالب ماستر من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة تيارت عن طريق الاستبيان واجراء مقابلات مع ثمان أساتذة في نفس القسم من أجل الحصول على رؤية حول تجربتهم أثناء فحص ومراجعة مذكرات طلبة الماستر. كشفت النتائج أن غالبية المرشحين يواجهون تحديات في جميع الفصول تقريباً. وتشمل هذه التحديات عدم تنظيم الفصول وعرضها ، نقص مهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية ونقص دعم المشرف. بناءً على النتائج ، يوصى بمراجعة كيفية تقديم دروس المنهجية وتقنيات الكتابة و كذا المزيد من التركيز على الجانب التطبيقي بدلاً من الشكل النظري .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصعوبات ، التحديات ، كتابة الأطروحة ، طلبة الماستر ، المهارات ، الكتابة الأكاديمية