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***INVESTIGATING THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAMMAR RULES IN
STUDENTS' WRITING PRODUCTIONS***

A case study

***First Year LMD Students of English at
Bejaia University***

A dissertation submitted in a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of MASTER
of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Bejaia

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to:

The pillars of my life, my beloved mother and my lovely father who always believed in me and supported me, to whom I wish a longer life.

My brothers and their wives, my sisters and their husbands, to all my nephews and nieces, especially **Ilyas, Wassim and Nassim**.

My twin and beloved friend **Katia** with whom I shared memorable moments.

All my friends especially **Fawzi**, my classmates and teachers who always helped me to go far away.

Miss. Hanane MAKHLOUFI

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work

To My precious and lovely parents who always believed in me and pushed me forward to complete my studies successfully.

To my brothers: **Zahir, Farid** and his wife **Kahina** and **Adel**.

To my sisters and their husbands: **Fadila, Souad, Farida, Meriem** and **feriel**.

To my nephews and nieces: **Adam, Aya, Leticia, Islam** and **Yacine**.

To my twin and beloved **Hanane** who is always right by my side with whom I shared the happiest moments ever.

To my beloved fiance **Hamza** who never stopped encouraging me, and his family member.

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To all my friends and classmates and even those who I met once and shared few moments.

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ABSTRACT

Writing and grammar are two interrelated aspects which need to be mastered in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. The current master dissertation aims at investigating the importance of grammar in the writing skill of first year LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) students at the department of English, University of Bejaia. The selected sample in this research is composed of 64 students chosen randomly from the whole population (226). To carry out the research we opted for the descriptive method. In order to collect necessary data, we used two research tools which are: students' questionnaire and corpus analysis of 40 students' writing productions. The findings collected from the students' questionnaire show that most of the students recognize the importance of grammar in developing their writing skill. However they encounter problems at the level of the application of the grammatical rules mainly tenses. This was confirmed by the corpus analysis of students' writing productions which revealed the existence of many errors particularly in the use of tenses, prepositions, subject-verb agreement and word order. Based on the collected data, our hypothesis is confirmed. Thus, writing with a particular focus on the application of the grammatical rules can help students to enhance their writing abilities.

Key words: Grammatical rules, Writing, EFL classroom, Writing capacities.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **BA:** Bachelor of Art
- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- **ESL:** English as a Second Language
- **GA:** Genre Approach
- **LMD:** Licence/ Master/ Doctorate

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- **Introduction**

Learning a foreign language needs the mastery of both receptive and productive skills (Eric W. Vogt 2013). Writing as a productive one, is important in the learning process, furthermore it is considered as an essential skill for academic success. It is a challenging activity, which focuses on the respect of the grammatical rules, which are essential for a clear communication of meaning.

Through our experience in studying English at the university, we notice that grammar makes writer's content more readable and interesting. Grammar is an essential and important part of writing, because the mastery of grammatical rules helps students write in a good and coherent manner.

Based on previous studies (Fengjuan Wang 2010, Beverly Ann Chin 2000, Saaristo 2015...) about the importance of grammar, the purpose of this work is to shed light on the importance of mastering the grammatical rules in developing the writing skill of first year LMD students at the University of Bejaia.

- **Statement of the problem**

Nowadays, being able to write successfully in English is important either in our society or during the learning process. The process of writing is based on the students' ability to write with coherence, using appropriate grammar structures and right spelling. Teachers claim that, despite of studying English seven years before integrating the university, first year LMD students still neglect the importance of grammar while writing, and produce weak composition in English because they make a lot of mistakes at different levels. Thus, this present research work focuses mainly on the students' grammatical difficulties they may encounter while writing and to highlight the negative effects their errors have on their writing productions.

- **Research questions**

Our research is guided by the following questions:

- Are first year students writing problems due to grammatical difficulties they encounter when producing a piece of writing?
- What are the different grammatical errors, first year students of English often make when writing?

- **Hypothesis**

In the light of the problem stated and the research questions raised, the present research aims at testing the following hypothesis:

- If first year LMD students of English overcome their grammatical difficulties, then their writing productions will be improved.

- **Aim of the study**

The purposes of the current study are to:

- Determine the grammatical difficulties that first year LMD students may encounter when writing in English.
- Shed light on the importance of the grammatical elements in enhancing students' writing abilities.
- Provide some recommendations for this issue so as to help students improve their writing abilities.

- **Research design and Data Collection Tools**

In order to explore the subject under investigation, and test our hypothesis, we have opted for a descriptive method. To achieve the main objectives of this research, the necessary data are collected through two research instruments:

- A questionnaire designed and distributed to a group of first year LMD students. The questions (close and open-ended questions) are asked so as to know the students' attitudes toward the main two variables namely: Writing and Grammar.
- Students' writing production: as a second tool, we opted for the analysis of students' writing production, with a focus on their grammatical errors.

- **Population and Sample**

- **Population**

The population under study is first year LMD students, in the department of English at the University of Bejaia during the academic year 2017/2018. There are (226) students, who are divided into (10) groups.

- **Sample**

The sample of our research is based on (64) students of different ages and gender selected randomly from the whole population.

- **Organization of the work**

The present work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter contains the theoretical part, which deals with the background study concerning the writing skill and grammar. This chapter is composed of two sections; the first one introduces diverse definitions of writing, in addition to its importance, elements, approaches and writing difficulties. The second section is devoted to the definitions, types, elements of grammar, and its importance in writing. In addition, the relationship between the writing skill and grammar.

The second chapter is devoted to the methodological part. It is divided into three sections. Section one deals with the research design and data collection tools. Section two deals with the analysis of the gathered data through the research tools (the questionnaire and students' writing production) and the interpretation of the findings. The third and last section ends with the general conclusion, implications and suggestions for further researches.

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Introduction

When learning English, students deal with writing which is one of the four skills. It is considered as a process of communication that allows us to express our ideas, opinions, feelings using words and conveying meaning through well constructed texts. However writing requires the mastery of various elements, among them the grammatical rules which are an essential component in writing. According to Nunan (2003) writing is an intellectual activity in which we find our ideas and we think about the appropriate way to express and arrange them into meaningful statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the reader.

This chapter, in its first section, presents a review of the writing skill. Besides it explores its importance, the different writing elements and approaches, as well as the writing difficulties. The second section is devoted to the other variable which is grammar. It introduces the English grammar, in addition to the types and elements of grammar and its importance in writing. The last point attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the grammatical rules and the writing skill.

I. SECTION ONE

Introducing the Writing Skill

Writing, because it allows us to represent to ourselves our learning, our ways of making meaning, teaches us the most profound lesson about how we read, write, and use language, about what it means to know. (Zamel, 1992, p. 481)

1.1. Definition of Writing

Writing is a process by which persons express language and meaning using words and symbols. According to Widdowson (1978) writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting them through a visual medium as mark on paper. In this respect, writing is an activity in which words are combined in a correct and organized manner using grammatical rules, sentence structure and vocabulary in order to express thoughts and ideas into coherent texts. This is supported by Pamela (1991- cited in Muhammad. J et al, 2013) who states that the mastery of various elements is needed to use the language to convey meaning, wishes, intentions, feeling and information in a written form.

Besides being a means of expression, writing is also a tool of communication by which we share information and convey messages. This position is supported by Gelb(1963) who declares that writing is “...mode of expressing ideas and became a tool of speech, a vehicle through which exact forms of speech could be recorded in permanent form.”. Moreover, he defined writing as a system of human intercommunication by means of conventional visible marks. In other words writing is a device of expressing linguistics elements (words, phrases, sentences) through visual forms using symbols and signs.

Another definition is expressed by Byrne (1988) who claims that writing is the act of forming graphic symbols and making marks on flat surface. According to him, these graphic symbols should be combined and arranged in a particular order and linked together in a certain way to form a coherent whole in order to be understood by readers. Besides, it was poetically expressed by the French poet Voltaire: ‘‘ L’écriture est la peinture de la voix’’ Gelb (1963.p.13). In fact, writing gives form to the oral language by translating spoken words into written words and symbols.

According to the above definitions, we can notice that writing is a process which allows us to explore one's thoughts, ideas and feelings and makes them visible and concrete on paper. In addition it is a complex activity which requires the knowledge of various components including, grammatical rules, vocabulary and spelling, to arrive at producing well-constructed piece of writing.

1.2. The Importance of Writing

According to Graham (2006-cited in Graham et al 2012, p3) writing is an extremely versatile tool that can be used to accomplish a variety of goals. In fact, writing can improve students' abilities during the learning process, and it allows them to transmit their ideas effectively using the appropriate words and forms. This position is supported by Kellogg (2008-cited in Muhammad. J, 2013) who argues that writing is an essential element for students' academic success; because it helps to reinforce the grammatical structure, enhance the students' vocabulary and assist other language skills namely, reading, listening and speaking. Additionally, according to Gustafson, Tran and Buck (as cited in Getu. S, 2017) the importance of writing stems from the fact that it is a medium of communication which is extremely important in today's society. Since, communication is transmitted mainly through writing.

1.3. Elements of writing

According to Starkey (2004), a successful piece of writing should be well-organized, coherent, with an accurate language and an appropriate choice of words. Thus, to produce a good piece of writing, writers have to consider various elements of the writing skill and among them are the following:

1.3.1. The Content: it refers to the ideas expressed by the writer, and focuses mainly on the clarity and the relevance to the topic and purpose. That is to say, that the writer should be original and express his/her personal ideas using his/her own words. Moreover, the writer should be concise and avoid repetitions and unnecessary details.

1.3.2. Grammar: According to Francis (1954) grammar refers to the set of formal patterns in which the words of language are arranged in order to convey larger meaning. In addition, Wilcox (2004) defines grammar as a system of rules which allows the users of the language to create meaning by building both meaningful words and larger construction of sentences. Hence, for a successful writing, writers need to master the grammatical rules of the language, in order to be understood correctly by readers.

1.3.3. Organization: Kathleen (2005) defines organization as a presentation of ideas, how to link these ideas together in order to make sense, and help to communicate meaningful sentences or texts clearly. Additionally, Starkey (2004) claims that, organization permits to have guidance and direction during the writing process and it lets see how many developing ideas fit within a frame work and clearly maps out the piece of writing. In fact, organization is a process of linking and coordinating ideas so as to guide readers to the correct understanding from the first to the last sentence.

1.3.4. Mechanics: according to Kane (2000, p15) “in a composition *mechanics* refers to the appearances of words, to how they are spelled and arranged together”. He adds that mechanics attempts to make writing consistent and clear. That is to say; the knowledge of the various rules of mechanics is necessary to achieve a correct and well-structured piece of writing. This is strongly supported by Starkey (2004) who argues that with the mastery of mechanics rules, including spelling, punctuation and capitalization, your writing will be greatly improved. In addition it permits to express thoughts clearly and accurately through writing.

1.3.5. Word choice: refers to the use of the appropriate words, and to those which are relevant to the topic being discussed. According to Starkey (2004, p.21) “ one of the best ways to accurately convey your ideas in your essay is to choose the right words. Doing so ensures that your audience understands what you are writing”. Otherwise, Selecting and choosing suitable words when writing, allows producing a clear piece of writing and helps the audience to well-understand the content of the writing.

1.3.6. Purpose: represents the persons’ reasons for writing; why a person composes a particular piece of writing. In other words, it refers to the aim behind writing, and to what the writer wants to accomplish and convey to the audience. For Taylor (2010) purpose is the driving force behind the work, it determines the topic and how ideas are arranged to affect the readers, in addition it drives to the intended result.

1.3.7. Audience: refers to the reader or the readers, who read a particular piece of writing. The audience has some expectations; they expect to be persuaded, informed and have a clear understanding of the topic.

All the elements mentioned above, are considered by many experts as key components for a successful writing. As a result, writers have to take into account these important parameters. The following diagram shows a table of these components, that writers have to deal with as they produce a piece of writing.

Producing a piece of writing

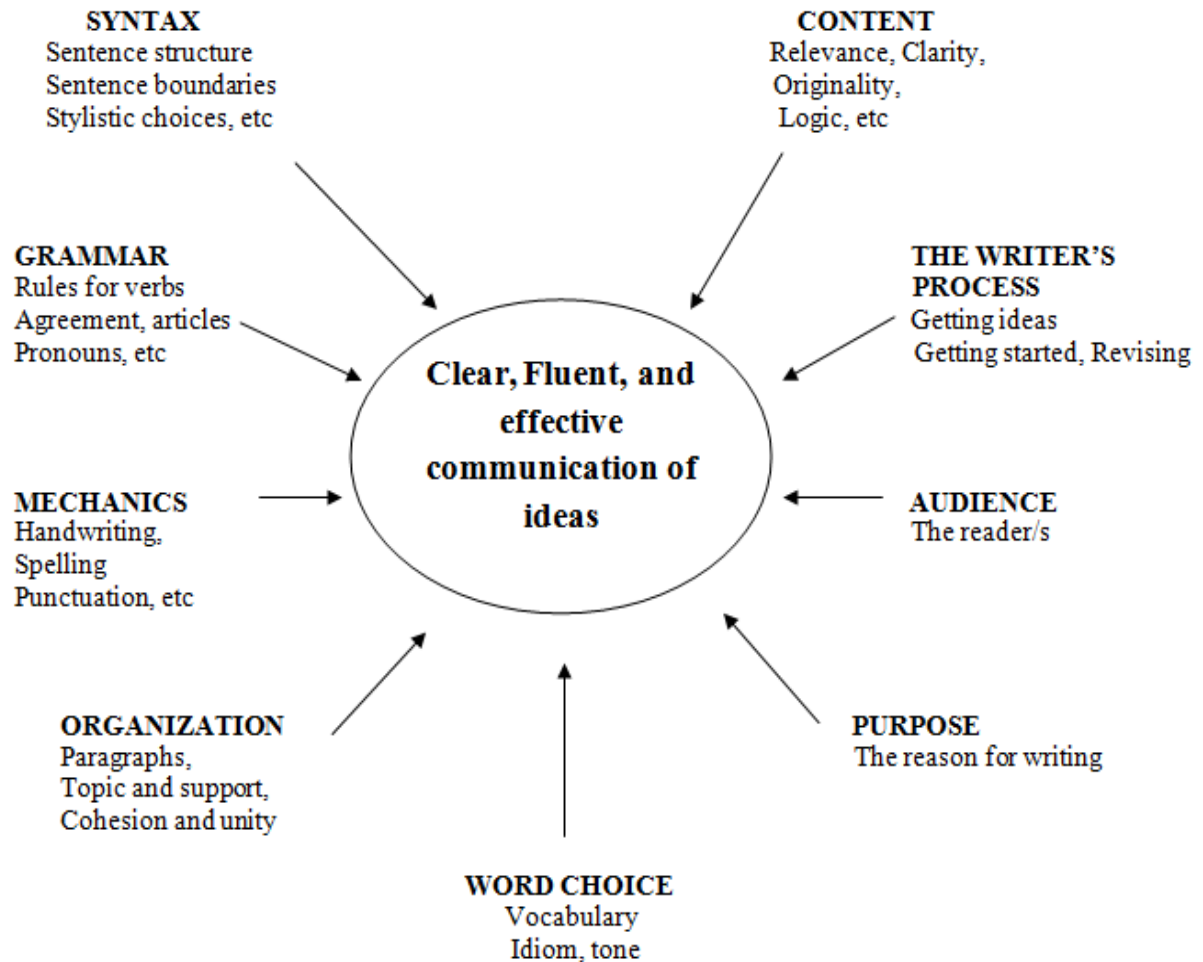


Figure 1: Elements of writing

Source: Raimes (1983, p.6). Techniques in Teaching Writing.

1.4. The Main Approaches to the Teaching of Writing

A variety of approaches were involved in the teaching of writing, however Suriyanti and Yaacob (2016) argue that the Product and Process Approaches are the two most common approaches in teaching writing in EFL classroom. In addition, according to Swales et al (1990- cited in Badger and White, 2000) in the last ten years, Genre approaches have gained adherents and have influenced the teaching of writing.

1.4.1. Product Approach

The product-oriented approach is one of the most practiced approaches in teaching writing around the world (Palpanadam, Salam and Ismail, 2014). One of the most explicit descriptions of product approaches is provided by Pincas (1982a as cited in Badger and White, 2000). For Pincas, writing is primarily concerned with the linguistic knowledge with distinct focus on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. Hence, the product approach is concerned with the final version of the composition and writing is taught by focusing on the correctness of forms and the lexical patterns; accuracy in writing is given greater emphasis than the content itself.

For Sun and Feng (2009), the product approach focuses on writing tasks in which the learner imitates, copies and transforms teachers supplied models. As a matter of fact, dealing with the product approach means that, students have to imitate texts' models provided by the teacher, and then they have to transform the models into new texts by focusing on the correct language structures.

According to Badger and White (2000), a typical product approach comprises four stages: familiarization; controlled writing; guided writing; and free writing.

- **Familiarization:** aims at rising awareness of the students about different features of texts.
- **Controlled writing:** students control fixed patterns, and practice the skills before moving to the next stages.
- **Guided writing:** students imitate the model texts provided by the teacher.
- **Free writing:** students produce their own text, applying the features learnt.

The following diagram represents the stages of the product approach:

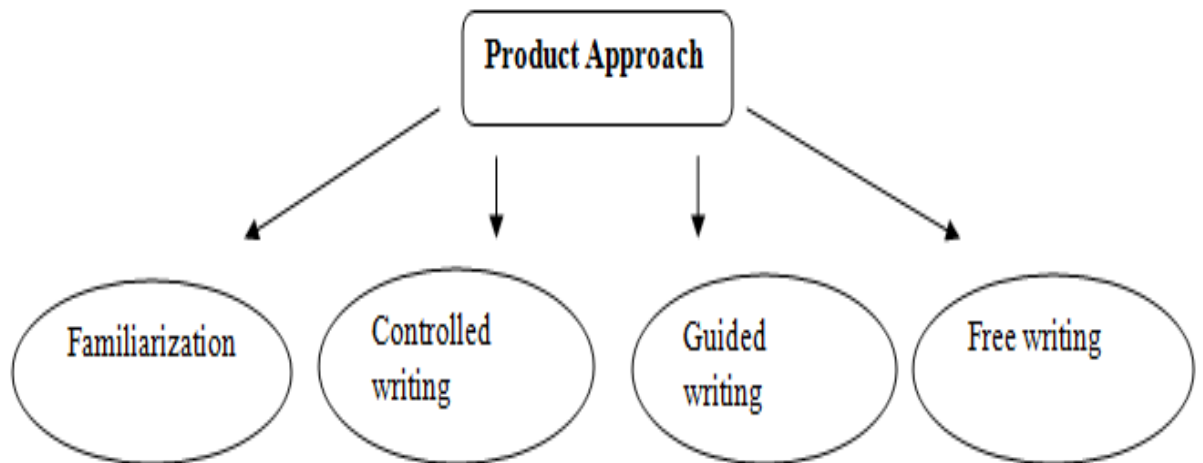


Figure 2: Stages of the product Approach (Badger and White 2000)

1.4.2. Process approach

Recently, the teaching of writing begun to move away from a concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process of writing (Raimes,1983). To point out, the process approach is mainly concerned with how the process of writing occurs and how ideas are developed, expressed and organized in a clear and efficient way. In other terms, the focus is more on the different stages that learners go through to produce a piece of writing.

According to Tribble (1996; as cited in Hasan, 2011) process approach stresses ‘writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data to the ‘publication’ of the finished text’. Additionally, for Suriyanti and Yaccob (2016), the process approach gives priority to how the writing process involved, whereby it guides students on how to write, generate ideas and edit their work.

In the same respect, Badger and white (2000) argue that writing in this approach focuses mainly on the linguistic skills like planning and drafting; and it gives less importance to linguistic knowledge such as grammar and text structure.

1.4.2.1. Stages of the Writing Process

In writing process, the writer goes through four stages in order to produce something in its final written form. These stages are: planning; drafting; editing (reflecting and revising); and final version.

According to Harmer (2004) these stages might be represented in the following way:

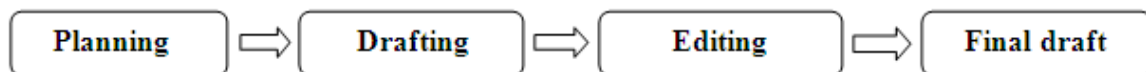


Figure 3: The linear model of the writing process (Harmer 2004, p5)

a. Planning: Kane (2000) stresses that after exploring a subject and looking for a specific topic, the writers have to make a plan by which they will organize the content so as to guide and clarify ideas. Moreover, Flower and Hayes (1981) argue that planning entails setting goals, generating content, and organizing that content in terms of the developing text. That is to say, planning is a kind of brainstorming, and organization of ideas before producing the first draft. For Harmer (2004, Pp.4, 5) “ planning experience writers plan, what they are going to write”. He adds that when planning, writers have to think about three main issues; the purpose, the audience, and the content structure.

b. Drafting: According to Badger and White (2000) at this composing stage, learners would select and structure the result of the generated ideas. Moreover, Kane (2000) defines a draft as the early version of a piece of writing. It is not the end product but just a tentative. The writers must write and rewrite so as to arrive to the final draft. He adds, that the most you draft the better is the result (p.34). In fact, in the drafting stage we can include the free-writing, where writers keep going without paying attention to mechanics’ mistakes, grammar mistakes and others.

c. Editing: during this third phase, writers revise the first draft by highlighting mistakes, correcting them, and rewrite that draft in a coherent, clear and understandable manner. Jozsef (2001) claims that, when editing, the writer reflects by checking text, eliminating errors found, and by rewriting to incorporate elements that enhance purpose and readership awareness. Additionally, Harmer (2004) suggests that, reflecting and revising are often helped by other readers, who comment and make suggestions. Another reader's reaction will help the author to make appropriate revisions. This means that the writers can put themselves in the place of readers to reformulate text correctly, or they can ask other readers for judgment.

d. Final version: after the first draft, the writers rewrite the whole text with all the corrections and arrangements made from the editing stage, and produce the final version of the text which is now ready to be published for the intended audience. This is supported by Harmer (2004) who states that, after writers have edited their draft, making the changes they consider to be necessary, they produce their final version.

These different stages are presented by Harmer (2004) in following process wheel:



Figure 4: Stages of the writing process by Harmer (2004, p6)

1.4.3. Genre Approach

The genre approach is the last approach in the teaching of writing, and it has some similarities with the product approach. This approach can be considered as an extension of the product approach (Badger and White, 2000.). Like the product approach, the genre approach is solely about linguistic knowledge and it emphasizes on the fact that writing differs through the social context in which it is produced. In fact, Tuan (2011) stresses that the genre approach focuses on the importance of exploring the social and cultural context of the language use in the piece of writing. Moreover, according to this approach, a successful composition is produced only if we take into accounts both, the social context and the reader's expectations in terms of grammar, organization and content. Furthermore, Badger and White (2000) argue that the genre approach was influenced by other features, such as the subject matter, the relationships between the writer and the audience, and the pattern of organization.

Martin (1993- cited in Badger and White 2000, p155) presents a diagram in which he demonstrates the wheel model of genre approach:

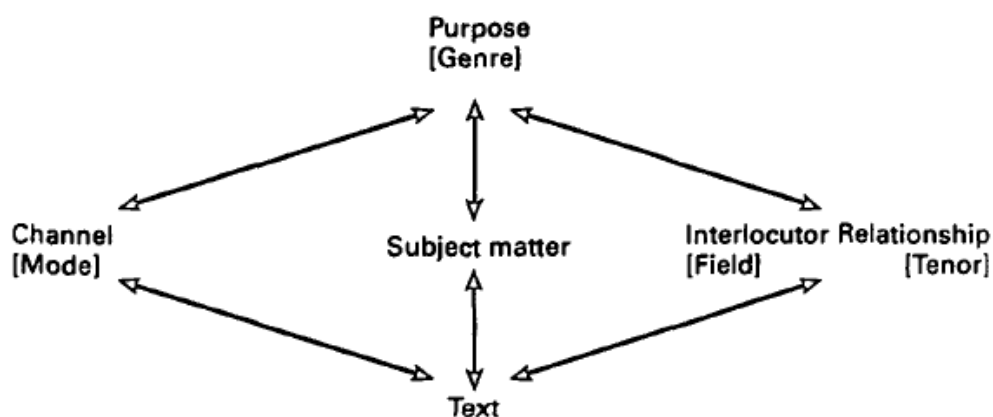


Figure5: Martin's model of the genre approach to teaching writing (1993)

1.5. Students' writing difficulties

Good writing involves the mastery of various elements and stages, what makes it a very complex and challenging activity. Indeed, Tinagero and Koutsoftas (2015) claim that, writing is a complex task in which factors must be combined to create a structured quality piece of writing. Alfaki (2015) presents the linguistics problems that hamper student's effective writing; this may include problems in grammar, mechanical problems, and sentence structure problems. However, Raimes (1983) declares that, in EFL/ESL classrooms, when students complain about how difficult it is to write, they are not talking only about the use of correct grammar and the appropriate vocabulary, but also about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language. That is to say, in addition to the problems of grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary, students encounter difficulties in exploring and expressing their ideas when using the target language.

In this regard, Byrne (1988) provides three factors that make writing a difficult and challenging task for most people in both native and second language:

- **Psychological problems:** means that, the writers write by themselves without possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback as people do in speech.
- **Linguistic problems:** refers to problems of grammar, words choice, sentence structure, and cohesive devices.
- **Cognitive problems:** includes problems of punctuation, capitalization, spelling, content and organization.

II. SECTION TWO

Grammar in EFL context

*The principal design of a grammar of any language
is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety,
to enable us to judge of every phrase and form of
construction, whether it be right or not.*

(Lowth, in Rayevska 1976, p12)

2.1. Definition of Grammar

English language has principles on how words must be arranged to construct a sentence, this refers to the grammatical rules which are a fundamental part of any language. Thus, the field of grammar has been discussed by many linguists and has been defined in several ways. Francis (1954) described this field as a branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and formulization of formal language patterns. For Greenbaun and Nelson (2009) grammar is the central component of the English language, which refers to the set of rules that allows us to combine words into large units. Therefore, grammar refers to a collection of principles which determine how to put words together to build meaningful sentences.

Another definition is claimed by Crystal (2004) as the study of how sentences are constructed and used, and how we manipulate its parts in order to give satisfactory expressions. This view is shared by Krapp (1908) who argues that grammar is the study of the functions or parts of speech, the inflections, and the construction of words in the sentence. That is to say that, grammar is the study of the various elements and patterns which govern the form and meaning of the language.

Moreover, Khamesian (2016) declares that in writing, the grammatical aspect of language is regarded as a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relation of words in a sentence, it comprises morphology and syntax. This was sustained by Thorbury (1999) who argues that grammar is conventionally seen as the study of syntax and morphology of sentences. That is, the study of the way words are formed and how they are combined in a particular order to convey meaningful sentences. For instance, grammar encompasses both the study of word formation (morphology), and the study of how words are ordered to construct sentences (syntax).

To sum up, grammar is a linguistics field; it is a system of rules, principles and patterns in which words are chained together to form well-constructed sentences and meaningful whole. In this field, grammarians focus more on form and structure rather than on content and context. For instance, the mastery of these rules helps to express language with correctness and develop one's accuracy in writing.

2.2. Types of Grammar

Grammar refers to a set of instructions about how language should be written and spoken in a correct manner, and it occupies a central position in language. Grammar has three main types namely: descriptive perspective, and pedagogical grammar.

2.2.1. Descriptive Grammar

According to Hinkel (2018) descriptive grammar refers to the description of the language, its structure and its rules as they are used by its native speakers. In addition, Yule (2006) states that it attempts to describe the regular structures of the native language as it was used by its speakers. Thus, this type of grammar is concerned with the examination and description of the grammatical rules and how people use their language.

2.2.2. Prescriptive Grammar

For Bourke (2005) prescriptive grammar lays down the norms of correct usage and makes clear distinctions between good and bad grammar. That is to say, it refers to the proper use of language and how and when grammar rules should be applied. Moreover, Greenbaun and Nelson (2009) argue that, the prescriptive rules represent the rules that specify which usages should be adopted or avoided. In fact, prescriptive grammar is concerned with the correct usage of language and it includes decisions about which grammatical rules should be followed.

2.2.3. Pedagogical Grammar

According to Burner (2005) when grammar is adopted for the purpose of teaching (didactics), it is referred to as a pedagogical grammar, and it is defined by Newby (2015, p14) as grammatical descriptions, materials and activities developed to facilitate the learning of the language through appropriate methodology in which both teachers and learners participate. Thus, the term pedagogical grammar is used to refer to the description of the language system using diverse grammatical rules, sources and references with the aim of promoting learners' language development.

2.3. Elements of Grammar

Grammar refers to a set of rules that structures the language; in addition it has a series of elements that guide the formation of sentences. Among these elements: subject, verb, noun, pronoun, adjectives, adverb, articles, preposition, interjection, and conjunctions.

2.3.1. Subject: is one of the basic components of a sentence, and it refers to the person, place or the object the sentence is about. In other words, it is who or what does the action or being described. It is defined in the English Oxford dictionary as the person or thing that performs the action of the verb and refers usually to the noun or pronoun. **For example:** The teacher is the major source of providing information to students.

2.3.2 Verb: According to Krapp (1908) the verb may express action with respect to the noun or pronoun, or it may express the state of being of a person or object. That is to say, the verb is a word used to refer to the action or state of being in the sentence with respect to the subject, and can change the form with the various tenses (present, past, future...). **For example:** Motivation plays an important role in the students' learning process.

2.3.3. Noun: Nouns are words used to refer to people, objects, places, qualities, phenomena, and abstract ideas (Yule, 2006). **For example:** women, book, Algeria, kindness, earthquake, motivation.

2.3.4. Pronoun: For Evans (1921) pronouns are words that stand for or are used in place of nouns, usually referring to people or things already known. Eastwood (1994, p233) classifies the pronouns as following:

- Personal pronouns (i, you, he...etc)
- Interrogative pronouns (who, what...etc)
- Possessive pronouns (mine, your...etc)
- Demonstrative pronouns (this, that...etc)
- Relative pronouns (who, which...etc)
- Reflexive pronouns (myself, yourself...etc)

2.3.5. Adjectives: An adjective is a word that modifies the meaning of noun or pronoun to provide more information about the things referred to (Yule, 2006). **For example:** competent teacher; vast classroom, good experience.

2.3.6. Adverbs: According to Sherman et al (2010) adverbs describe verbs and modify adjectives and other adverbs, in addition to clauses, phrases, and sentences. Adverbs answer one of the following questions: when? Where? Why? and How?. There are several kinds of adverbs: Adverbs of manner, time, place, degree, frequency. **For example:** fluently, later, here, extremely, often.

2.3.7. Articles: An article is a word which we put before nouns or pronouns to limit their signification (Brown,1851). There are three articles in English: *a*, *an*, and *the*. These latter are classified into: Definite and Indefinite articles.

- **Definite articles:** ‘the’, they are used to identify particular nouns or things. **For example:** The English student.
- **Indefinite articles:** ‘a’, ‘an’, they are used to describe someone or something unfamiliar. **For example:** A book. An element.

2.3.8. Prepositions: According to Louis (2016), a preposition shows a relationship between a noun or a pronoun and other words in a sentence. In the English language there are many prepositions including: of, on, in, for, to, above, behind, under, through, into, across...etc. **For example:** The teacher explains the lesson for students.

2.3.9. Interjections: They are link words, uniting one word or group of words to another. They express a sudden emotion or feeling with respect to the whole idea of the sentence and they are usually followed by an exclamation point (Krapp 1908). **For example:** oh!, Ah!, Hum!, Wow!... etc.

2.3.10. Conjunctions: Troyka (1993) defines a conjunction as a word used to connect words or sentences in construction, and join the main clauses. There are four types of conjunctions which are: coordinate conjunctions (for, or, yet, so...etc), subordinate conjunctions (before, while, although, since...etc), adverbial conjunctions (therefore, thus...etc) and correlative conjunctions (either...or, both...and, neither...nor...etc).

2.4. Grammatical Competence

The grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of the linguistic codes of the language and the ability to manipulate correctly its patterns and structures.

Grammar is a set of principles governing a language, and the grammatical competence is the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognizing well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles (Council of Europe 2001- cited in Cuellar Marco, 2013).

In addition it is defined by Binoy (2014) as a linguistic skill that is necessary for producing distinctive grammatical structures of the language and to use them effectively in communication. In other words, the grammatical competence is the capacity to master the different grammatical instructions, and it is considered as an aspect that any writer should have.

2.5.Importance of Grammar in Writing

Grammar refers to the rules that structure the language, and we cannot deny its importance because it is an essential aspect in promoting the writing skill. This was expressed by Emery et al (as cited in Mart 2013) “... the more you know about the form and function of the parts that make up the large unit, the better equipped you are to recognize and to construct well-formed sentences”. That is to say that, the mastery of the different grammatical rules, enables writers to enhance their writing competences. In this regard, Mart (2013) claims that: ‘‘language acquisition without grammar structure will be confusing, writers will fail to use the language correctly without grammar skills’’. In fact, without a focus on the grammatical structure, it will be difficult to make comprehensible and precise sentences.

During the writing process grammar is considered as a key part because, it increases learners’ comprehension of the language and enable them to be aware of its various parts.

According to Greenbaun and Nelson (1999, p6) “the study of the grammatical resources of English is useful in writing composition in particular, it can help you to evaluate the choices available to you come to revise an earlier written draft”. In the same respect, Mart (2013) asserts that: “to create fully-developed sentences, grammar knowledge is indispensable; it gives learners the competence to be creative writers”.

To sum up, grammar has a crucial importance in writing that is why both of teachers and learners have to take it into account.

2.6. The relationship between grammar and writing

Writing is one of the ways of expressing thoughts that involves many aspects, among them grammar. Writing and grammar are taught separately, however, researches conducted in this field show that there is a close relationship between these two fields. In this respect, Istiqomah, Raja and Kadaryanto (2014) attest that grammar is one of the fundamental aspects that affect one’s writing; without good grammar mastery, one may have difficulties in conveying their ideas in writing.

Many researchers agree on the fact that, one of the most beneficial manner of improving the writing skill is to focus on the grammatical rules. In this regard, Fearn and Farnan (2007), claim that, grammar knowledge is the elemental foundation for writing; certainly we should teach grammar in writing, in order to permit the learners to understand better how the language works. That is to say, that in writing, the focus should be on the grammatical concepts because they are of great importance for clear communication of meaning.

Additionally, Frodesen and Eyring (cited in Ali Fatimi 2008) believe that, a focus on Form of (grammar) in writing can help writers develop rich linguistic resources needed to express ideas effectively.

Grammar and writing are two interrelated components, since we cannot use the language in writing without knowing how it works. In this context, Septiani (2014) states that ‘‘grammar and writing are dependent each others’’ (p, 21). Thus, writers assume that, grammar is one of the language components which takes an important role in writing ability, because it allows writers to deliver their messages to their readers in understandable manner and add credibility to their writing. He also mentions that, by connecting the mastery of the grammatical concepts and the writing strategy, we can raise awareness about the effects it can have on the ability to write effectively (p, 21).

In her study, Donovan (2016) attests that, developing good grammar habits while writing, enriches the experience of everyone involved-from the writer to the editor to the reader. In addition, she sustains that there are many things that lead to better writing and few things that raise a flag to signal poor writing and bad grammar is one of them. For instance, any writer should acquire the grammatical competence, so as to convey satisfactory pieces of writing, both for him/her and for the readers.

Following the above discussions, we can notice that, credible and successful writing is based on the knowledge of the grammar rules. That is, grammatically correct texts are easier to read and comprehend by readers. Furthermore, we cannot deny the fact that there is a close relationship between grammar and writing, considering grammar as a part of writing.

Conclusion

This chapter includes a review of literature of the two main variables of this study; writing and grammar. It is divided into two sections; the first one highlights some definitions of the writing skill, its importance and its key elements. That is, writing is defined by researchers as a very complex activity by which we express thoughts; in addition it is a very important skill which permits us to achieve academic or personal goals. The second section is devoted to the definition of grammar in EFL context, its types, its elements and its importance in writing and the relationship existing between them. In fact, grammar is a part of writing and successful writing depends on a correct use of grammar.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL PART

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Introduction

The topic under research sheds light on the importance of the grammatical rules in developing the students' writing skill. The first chapter deals with the theoretical background of the two main variables of our study namely: Grammar and Writing.

The second chapter presents to the readers the methodological part of the current research. It is divided into three sections; the first one deals with the description of the selected sample and population. In addition, it includes the adopted method and the data collection tools. The second section covers in one hand, the aim, description and analysis of the students' questionnaire and the students' writing production; and in the other hand, the discussion and interpretation of the findings. The last section will provide the reader with some pedagogical implications for both teachers and students, in addition to some recommendations for further research. In conclusion this chapter aims at answering our research questions and testing our hypothesis.

SECTION ONE: Research design

1.1. Description of the participants

1.1.1. Population

The population of this study is first year LMD students of the department of English at the University of Bejaia. This population consists of (10) groups, the equivalent of (226) students.

1.1.2. Sample

The sample of this research consists of (64) students selected randomly from the general population (226). At this level, i.e. first year B.A, students do not have enough experience in writing; that is why this study will be beneficial for them for the coming years, since it will raise their awareness about the importance of mastering the grammatical rules in improving their writing competence.

1.2. Research method and data collection tools

In order to achieve our aim, we opted for the descriptive method. The tools used to collect the needed data are, students' questionnaire and students' writing productions. The first tool is a questionnaire, which was distributed on a sample of (64) first years LMD students, and a quantitative method (frequencies, percentages) was used to analyze the collected data. The second tool consists of a number of students' writing productions of a sample of (40) students of the same population and a qualitative method (classification of errors) was used to analyze the gathered data. The data was gathered during the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018.

SECTION TWO: Data analysis and interpretation of the findings

2.1. Aim of the questionnaire

The aim of the questionnaire is to know the students' point of views about the writing skill and grammar, and shed lights on the main grammatical difficulties first year LMD students encounter when writing. Besides, it allows us to gather data concerning the importance of both writing and grammar; in addition it provides the research with useful information as the students' level in English in general and in writing and grammar in particular. Furthermore, it reveals students' perception concerning the importance of the grammatical rules in improving their writing ability.

2.1.1. Description of the students' questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into four sections. The sections (1, 2 and 3) contains (19) questions (open-ended, close ended and multiple choice questions). And the last section is provided to students as a free space to add their comments/ suggestions.

- **SECTION ONE: General information (Q1-Q4)**

The first section is about the background information of the students. The first and second questions (Q1,Q2) are concerned with the students' age and gender, and the third question (Q3) seeks about the students' experience in studying English before integrating University. The fourth question (Q4) is about the students' evaluation of their level in English.

- **SECTION TWO: The students' perception about the writing skill (Q5-Q10)**

In this section we have asked five multiple choice questions and one open-ended question. The goal behind these questions (Q5, Q6, Q7 and Q8) is to shed light on the students' perception about the importance of writing and their level in writing expression, in addition to the main difficulties they face when writing in English. Finally, the last question (Q9 and Q10) attempts to determine whether the students try to develop their writing and how.

- **SECTION THREE: Students' attitude about grammar (Q11, Q18)**

This section contains eight questions (multiple choice questions and open-ended questions). It is designed to determine the students' attitude about the importance of grammar, especially in writing, and whether the mastery of the grammatical rules develops their competences in writing (Q11, Q12, and Q16). Moreover, the questions (Q13, Q14 and Q15) are designed to gather information about the students' level in grammar, and to know if they encounter grammatical difficulties in writing, and at which level (tenses, different rules...etc). The two last questions (Q17, Q18) attempt to demonstrate the students' opinion toward the grammar program and the scheduled sessions.

- **SECTION FOUR: Further suggestions / comments**

In this last section, a space is provided to the participants to share their opinions about the topic under discussion, and add any comments or suggestions.

2.1.2. Analysis and discussion of the students' questionnaire

SECTION ONE: General information

Question 1: Students' age

Table 1:Students' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	23	35.9%
19	25	39%
20	11	17.1%
Over 20	05	7.8%
Total	64	100%

The table 1 refers to the age of the students who answered the questionnaire (64). We can deduce from this table that, the age of first year LMD students at the department of English varies between 18 to 19 years old, the equivalent of 35.9% for the 18 years old and 39% for the 19 years old. Then, 17.1% of them have 20 years old and only 7.8% have more than 20 years old.

Question 2: Students' gender

Table 2: Students' gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	43	67.1%
Male	21	32.8%
Total	64	100%

From table 2 we can notice that the majority of the participants are female 67.1%. The remaining percentage 32.8% represents male.

Question 3: How long have you been studying English?

Table 3: Students' experience in learning English

Years	Frequency	Percentage
Six years	2	3.12%
Seven years	20	31.25%
More than seven years	42	66%
Total	64	100%

According to the collected data from table N°3, the majority of the students 66% have studied English more than seven years before their first year at the university. The others 31.25% have studied English during seven years, which means four years in the college and three years in the middle school. Then, only two of the participants 3.1% have studied English during six years.

Question 4: How do you evaluate your level in English?

Table 4: Students' evaluation of their level in English

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Good	24	37.5%
Average	31	48.43%
Low	2	3.12%
No opinion	7	10.9%
Total	64	100%

The majority of the participants 48.43% claim to have an average level in English, while 37.5% declare to be good and master the English language. However two of the participants, the equivalent of only 3.12% considered themselves to have a low level in English, and the remaining percentage 10.9% refers to the students who declare to have no opinion concerning this question.

SECTION TWO: Students' perception of the writing skill

Question 5: Do you think that writing is?

Table 5: Importance of Writing

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	60	93.7%
Important	3	4.6%
Not important	0	0%
No opinion	1	1.5%
Total	64	100%

As it is noticed in the table 5, the highest percentage 93.7% refers to the students who consider writing as a very important skill, whereas (3) participants considered it as being important, one of them has no opinion, representing a very low percentage 1.5%. An important observation is that no participant thinks that writing is not an important skill. According to these results, we can deduce that students of first year are aware of the importance of writing in English.

Question 6: Do you face difficulties when you write in English?

Table 6: Students' perception of the writing skill difficulty.

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	46	67.1%
No	21	32.8%
Total	64	100%

The results tabulated above show that the highest rate 67. 1% of the students face difficulties when they produce a piece of writing. However, the remaining percentage 32. 8% declare that they could write easily without any difficulties. From this result, we may understand that first year students of English encounter difficulties when writing.

Question 7: If yes, which kind of difficulties do you encounter?

Table 7: Kind of difficulties encounter by students' in writing

Kind of difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
Grammatical rules	18	41.8%
Limited vocabulary	14	32.5%
Punctuation	1	2.32%
Coherence	0	0%
Other (s)	10	23.2%
Total	43	100%

As we have mentioned above, a majority of the participants recognize to face difficulties in the writing skill; consequently the results obtained from table N°7 display that 41. 8% of the students encounter difficulties at the level of the grammatical rules, and 32. 5% have problems in vocabulary, since they have limited vocabulary knowledge and poor lexis in English language. While, only one student claims to have trouble in punctuation (2. 32%). Concerning the remaining rate (23. 2%), the participants declare to face other kind of problems in writing such as spelling. Students encounter many problems in writing, at different levels including the miss mastery of the various grammatical rules, limitation of their vocabulary, in punctuation and spelling; that is what makes their writing poor and sometimes even meaningless.

Question 8: How do you evaluate your level in writing?

Table 8: Students' evaluation of their writing skill

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Good	23	35.9%
Average	39	60.9%
Low	1	1.5%
Very poor	0	0%
No opinion	1	1.5%
Total	64	100%

According to table 8, most of the respondents 60.9% attest to have an average level in writing, and 35.9% of them claim to be good and write without any difficulties. Whereas the remaining respondents state that they have a low level and others have no opinion.

Good writing refers to the ability of students to write correctly and with coherence, in addition to their ability to master the different elements of writing including the grammatical rules, punctuation, spelling and others.

Question 9: Do you try to develop your writing skill?

Table 9: Students' motivation to develop their writing skill

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	49	76.5%
No	15	23.4%
Total	64	100%

The results collected above revealed that the majority of students acknowledge their difficulties in writing, and the question (9) aims at knowing if the students try to develop their writing competence so as to reduce these difficulties. The data displayed in table 9 show that 76.5% of the participants are motivated to ameliorate their capacities in writing. However 23.4% of them declare that they do not try to develop it.

Question 10: If yes, please explain how

- By reading a lot of book, novels, articles... etc, because it improves the writing skill and help learn new vocabulary.
- By trying to learn the different grammatical rules, and try to apply them when writing.
- By using dictionaries to learn the correct spelling of new words and correct the previous mistakes.
- By practicing writing; for example, writing short stories, expressing thoughts and feeling, doing activities and rewriting the lessons.
- By imitating the writers' and teachers' style in order to be a good writer.

From the analysis of the students' answers to this question, we may deduce that most of respondents try to develop their writing through reading. In fact, by reading a lot of books, novels they learn new words and expressions which could be a positive aspect for their writing. Moreover, others promote their writing competence by learning the different grammatical rules so as to write correct and meaningful pieces of writing. In addition, others students try to develop their writing by practicing; which means, writing a lot and about different topics and trying to recognize their mistakes and correcting them at the same time.

SECTION THREE: Students' attitude toward grammar

Question 11: How important is it to study English grammar?

Table 10: Degree of the importance of studying English grammar

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	48	75%
Important	16	25%
Not very important	0	0%
Not important at all	0	0%
No opinion	0	0%
Total	64	100%

On the basis of the highest percentage 75% we can notice that the majority of the students declare that it is very important to study English grammar, and others 25% think that it is important. To sum up, from the respondents' answers, we can deduce that all the participants recognize the importance of studying English grammar.

Question 12: Do you think that grammar is important in writing?

Table 11: Importance of grammar in writing

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	96.8%
No	2	3.1%
Total	64	100%

Most of the students 96. 8% who have answered the question (10) confirm that grammar plays an important role in promoting students' writing skill. While, only two participants 3. 1% do not think that their writing can be affected by the mastery of grammar.

-Please justify your answer

- Grammar is the heart and the key of the writing skill; good writing depends on the correct use of the grammatical rules.
- Grammar helps in building correct sentences and in constructing meaningful text so as to be well understood by the readers.
- The mastery of grammar helps to improve the English level in general and the writing skill in particular.
- Paying attention to grammatical rules helps to express opinions in adequate manner, referring to time and coordination.
- We cannot write without using grammatical rules, it is the basis in writing, because it helps to avoid any kind of mistake.
- Grammar helps to understand the content of any piece of writing and make sense of sentences.

The explanations above illustrate the reasons behind students' answers to question 12. Most of them declare that grammar helps them to build correct sentences and write with accuracy, thus convey meaningful messages. Moreover, some of them claim that grammar is the heart and the key for successful writing. Additionally, they state that, they cannot write without using the grammar rules because this helps them improve their level in English writing.

Question 13: How do you evaluate your knowledge of the English grammar rules?

Table 12: Students' evaluation of their knowledge of the English grammatical rules

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Good	25	39%
Average	34	53.1%
Low	5	7.8%
Very low	0	0%
No opinion	0	0%
Total	64	100%

The knowledge of the English grammar means to be able to master the different grammatical rules, to manipulate correctly punctuation and spelling. Through the data illustrated in table 13, 53. 1% of the respondents evaluate their level as average. Whereas, 36% consider to have a good level in grammar. However only 7. 8% of them viewed their level as being low.

Question 14: Do you encounter grammatical difficulties when writing?

Table 13: Students' grammatical difficulties

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	84.3%
No	10	15.6%
Total	64	100%

The results collected from table 14 indicate that the highest percentage 84.3% of the participants encounter grammatical problems when producing a piece of writing. Yet, 15.6% of the respondents declare that they do not face any difficulties related to grammar.

Question 16: If yes, are these difficulties due to

Table 14: Kind of difficulties encountered by students' in grammar

Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
Different rules	20	37%
Tenses	19	35.1%
'S' of plural	0	0%
Punctuation	10	18.5%
Other (s)	4	7.4%
Total	64	100%

When inquiring about the various difficulties, we notice that 37% of the respondents attest to face difficulties in grammar because of the different rules. And 35. 1% of the participants seem to have problems because of the miss mastery of the English tenses. While 18. 5% of them state that their difficulties are due to the element of punctuation.

Question 16: Does the mastery of the grammatical rules help you improve your writing skill?
Table 15: Students' attitude toward the role of grammar in improving their writing skill

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	92.1%
No	5	7.85
Total	64	100%

We observe from table 16 that, 92.1% of the participants affirm that the mastery of grammar rules is an important aspect in improving the writing skill. However, a low percentage 7.85% represents students who think that their writing could be improved without the mastery of grammar.

-Please, justify your answer

- Because when you master grammatical rules, you write well structured and coherent texts.
- Knowing the grammatical rules help to avoid mistakes and difficulties in writing.
- Grammar rules help to write and express thoughts easily and correctly.
- Because by mastering the grammatical rules, the writing skill will be improve.
- To be specific and logic when writing and transmit ideas for the reader correctly.
- The knowledge of the grammatical rules is the most important aspect to develop and facilitate the writing skill.

The precedent points illustrate the students' explanations about the importance of grammar in writing. The majority of them attest that, writing can be coherent and well structured only with the use of correct grammar. Moreover, according to them, mastering the grammatical rules is needed to avoid any kind of mistakes, and facilitate their writing at different stages.

Question17: Does the grammar program seem to you?

Table16: Students' perception about the grammar program.

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Overloaded	6	9.3%
Affordable	34	53.1%
Insufficient	14	21%
No opinion	10	15.6%
Total	64	100%

According to the answer of the majority of the participants 53. 1%, the grammar program is affordable, and at the level of all the students of first year. However, for 21% of the participants, the program is insufficient, and for others 9. 3% the program seems to be overloaded. The remaining respondents 15. 6% have no opinion concerning the program.

Question18: Doyou think that the scheduled grammar sessions are:

Table17: Students' point of view about the scheduled grammar sessions.

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Enough	23	35.9%
Insufficient	33	51.5%
No opinion	8	12.5%
Total	64	100%

Knowing that the scheduled grammar sessions for all students of first year in the English department is two sessions per week; we can understand the position of the majority of the students 51. 5% who think that, the grammar sessions scheduled are not sufficient for them. That is to say, first year LMD students need more practice in grammar in order to improve their writing level. However, 35.9% of the participants found the sessions enough. The remaining percentage 12.5% are students who do not have any opinion about this question.

SECTION THREE: This space is provided to the participants to add any suggestion or comment concerning the topic under research.

The following statements represent some of the students' suggestions and comments concerning our research topic:

- Very interesting topic, grammar and writing are necessary for the learning of any language.
- Grammar rules are very important and can be considered as a crucial element for the development of the writing skill.
- Writing and grammar work together, we cannot use writing without grammar.
- Grammar is a fundamental aspect because it helps to write correctly and to master any language without difficulties.
- Both grammar and writing are very important and useful for student to develop their level in any language.
- Grammar is one of the most important parts in English; it is the basic and the heart of English language.
- Grammar is very necessary to improve our level in English language generally, and especially in writing in order to develop our performance and capacities to write very well.

In this last question students are asked to add their point of view concerning this topic. Most of the participants answer the question, and most of them think that grammar and writing are interrelated and are necessary for the learning of any language. In addition, they consider grammar as a crucial element in writing, and plays an important role in developing it.

2.2. Aim of the students' writing productions

The goal behind the analysis of the students' writing productions is to determine the students' level in English writing, and shed light on the common mistakes they make when writing. Moreover, it will allow us to show the effect of a correct use of grammar in producing a successful piece of writing.

2.2.1. Description of the students' writing productions

The students' writing productions are used as a second tool in our research; (40) copies were randomly selected from the general sample (64) in order to be analyzed and gather the necessary data. The participants were asked to write a short paragraph of 12 to 15 lines about one of the following topics:

- “The most memorable experience in your life”.
- “Life in our society in the past and present”.

After collecting data, we have noticed that majority of the respondents (22) have chosen to write about the second topic (Life in our society in the past and present), and the other (18) about the first one (The most memorable experience in your life). The time allotted for completing the task was one hour and half.

2.2.2. Analysis and discussion of the students' writing productions

The analysis of the students' writing productions reveals the existence of a lot of mistakes at different levels; the following table classifies those mistakes found in the writing productions of the first year LMD student:

Table 18: Classification of the common mistakes of first year LMD students in writing

Types of errors	Frequency of errors	Percentage
Spelling	62	20.7%
Tenses	71	23.7%
Punctuation	58	19.3%
Lack of agreement between the subject and the verb	17	5.6%
Prepositions	10	3.3%
Word order	18	6.02%
Capitalization	63	21.07%
Total	299	100%

From the results obtained, the four main common errors are: first, Tenses with the highest percentage 23.7%, second, Capitalization 21.07%, third, Spelling 20.7% and the fourth one is Punctuation 19.3%. Whereby the remaining frequency of errors refers to Word order 6.02%, lack of agreement between the subject and the verb 5.6%, and Prepositions 3.3%.

- **A detailed classification of students' grammatical errors:**

From the collected data we observe that first year students face difficulties in writing at different levels: spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary. However, in the current study the focus is on the grammatical mistakes, including:

- Tenses
- Lack of agreement between Subject and Verb
- Word order
- Prepositions

Inappropriate use of the different tenses

Table 19: Mistakes at the level of Tenses

Mistakes	Correction
1-The next day my brother <u>leaved</u> the hospital.	1-The next day my brother <u>left</u> the hospital.
2-All what I planned during the year <u>did not realize.</u>	2-All what I planned during the year <u>was not realized.</u>
3-She <u>tooks</u> her phone and called hospital.	3-She <u>took</u> her phone and called hospital.
4-According to my research, this situation <u>have not been</u> as it is today.	4-According to my research, this situation <u>has not been</u> as it is today.
5-Nowdays technology <u>play</u> an important role and <u>facilitate</u> our life.	5-Nowadays technology <u>plays</u> an important role and <u>facilitates</u> our life.
6-A women did not have a place in the society, they <u>cannot</u> live as they <u>want.</u>	6-A women did not have a place in the society, they <u>could not</u> live as they <u>wanted.</u>

According to the examples cited in the table above, we remarked that first year students have a lot of problems in the use of the different English tenses; for example the use of the present tense instead of the past tense example 6, the cancellation of the ‘S’ of the third person in the present examples 4.5, and the use of the past form of the regular verbs ‘ed’ to irregular verbs example 1.

Lack of agreement between subject and verb

Table 20: Mistakes at the level of Subject-Verb agreement

Mistakes	Correction
1-There <u>is</u> many things that differ from the past.	1-There <u>are</u> many things that differ from the past.
2-people decide how they want to live, there <u>are</u> more freedom.	2-People decide how they want to live, there <u>is</u> more freedom.
3-The majority of people <u>is</u> like this.	3-The majority of people <u>are</u> like this.
4-In our society many <u>thing</u> , traditions or even principles are changed.	4-In our society many <u>things</u> , traditions or even principles are changed.
5-There <u>was</u> no machines and no reboots to help them.	5-There <u>were</u> no machines and no reboots to help them.
6-Life in our society <u>are</u> very different in the past and present.	6-Life in our society <u>is</u> different in the past and present.

Subject- verb agreement is one of the most important rules in grammar, in which the subject and the verb should agree in number and gender. In other words, if the subject is singular the verb must be singular, and the same thing for the plural form. For instance, table 20 shows that the participants do not apply this rule; this is why their writing is incorrect and not coherent.

Word order mistakes

Table 21: Errors at the level of word order

Mistakes	Correction
1-Nowadays, our life <u>always</u> has a relation with technology.	1-Nowadays, our life has <u>always</u> a relation with technology.
2-It was an event <u>terrible</u> in my life.	2-It was a <u>terrible</u> event in my life.
3-I will lose <u>never</u> the hope.	3-I will <u>never</u> lose the hope.
4-Families weretogether <u>always</u> .	4-Familes were <u>always</u> together.

From the examples retrieved from the students' compositions, we notice that the participants face problems at the level of word order, since they do not put the words in the appropriate place in the sentence. The examples 1, 3, and 4 show that the students use the adverb of frequency in the wrong place. That is to say, adverbs of frequency are always put before the main verb. Moreover, the second example 2 represents the inappropriate use of the adjective. In this sentence, the adjective "terrible" describes the noun "event", so it should be written before the noun instead after the noun.

- **Errors at the level of the use of prepositions**

In the English language there are a lot of prepositions which are used to link between the noun or pronoun and other words in the sentence. The correct use of prepositions can be considered as a fundamental element in writing, but the majority of the students encounter problems at this level and the following table will provide us with some examples:

Table 22: Mistakes at the level of the use of prepositions

Mistakes	Correction
1-The doctor did us a justification and we went at school to study.	1-The doctor did us a justification and we went to school to study.
2-It was a good experience to me and bad in the same time.	2-It was a good experience to me and bad at the same time.
3-The memorable experience in my life was when I went to study in the university.	3-The memorable experience in my life was when I went to study at the university.
4-The journey began, and we went in bus and the trip was very long and far.	4-The journey began, and we went by bus and the trip was very long and far.
5-I remember I said to him look to the walk and stop talking.	5-I remember I said to him look at the walk and stop talking.
6-In the past people used to go by foot but now everything is changed.	6-In the past people used to go on foot but now everything is changed.
7-Life changes to generation to another.	7-Life changes from generation to another.

Based on the precedent examples, we deduce that first year students do not have enough knowledge about the prepositions rules, since they do not make difference between the various prepositions and they are confuse in the use of these prepositions. We observe in the following examples 2, 3 and 4 that students use the preposition “in” instead of the preposition “at” and “by”. And, they do not distinguish between the preposition “at” and the preposition “to” as it is mentioned in the examples 1 and 5. Moreover, we observe in the example 6 the participants use the preposition “by” instead of the preposition “on”, the same matter is observed in the example 7 where there is a mixture between the prepositions “to” and “from”.

2.3. Interpretation of the findings

The following section is devoted to the discussion and the interpretation of the results collected from the two data collection tools namely: the students' questionnaire and the students writing productions.

2.3.1. The students' questionnaire

The analysis of students' questionnaire revealed that the majority of first year LMD students who answered to the questionnaire consider that writing and grammar are two main important variables.

The first section of the questionnaire aims at collecting the necessary data about the selected sample. For instance, the results reveal that the majority of the participants are aged between 18 to 19 years old, and most of them are female and they have studied English more than seven years before integrating the university. In addition, according to the percentage (48. 43%) of them attested to have an average level in English language.

In the second section, the answers indicate that writing is considered by the students as a very important skill that they need to master. Harmer (as, cited in CheikoOnozawa 2010) points out; the writing skill has finally been recognized as an important skill of language learning. However, in the EFL context, where the students are asked to express themselves in target language, the majority 84. 3% declare to face difficulties when producing a piece of writing. Dealing with the aspect of difficulties, the findings show that 41. 8% of the participants encounter grammatical problems, whereas 32. 5% of them have a limited vocabulary and 23. 2% face other problems such as spelling. Moreover, 60. 9% of the respondents have an average level in writing but they are motivated to develop it and try to ameliorate their writing abilities. In the same respect, the explanations provided by the participants indicate that most of them try to develop their writing skill through reading

(books, novels and articles etc...), and the others through practicing writing activities, writing their thoughts and feelings. In addition, for some respondents learning the different grammatical rules is a crucial element in promoting their writing abilities.

The results recorded from this section are concerned with the students' attitude toward grammar, and it reveals that 75% of the respondents recognize the importance of studying the English grammar in the EFL classroom. Additionally, most of them 96.8% find grammar important and necessary in writing. Since, it helps them to construct meaningful and coherent texts. Moreover, for the students the mastery of the English grammatical rules helps them to improve their English level as well as their writing capacities.

Furthermore, the gathered data demonstrate that half of the participants recognize to have an average level concerning the knowledge of the English grammatical rules that is why they encounter difficulties when writing mainly in the use of the various tenses, the use of the different grammatical rules, and punctuation. As a matter of fact, most of the participants 92.1% admit the importance of mastering the grammatical rules in improving the writing skill, because it helps them to avoid many mistakes of different types, and it permits them to be coherent when writing and be well understood by their readers.

Concerning the grammar program, the students claim that the lessons are affordable and understandable, but the scheduled sessions are insufficient, knowing that all the students of first year have two grammar sessions per week. For the respondents grammar should be taught at least three times per week so as to help them acquire the needed knowledge and have a solid basis in grammar which will improve their writing abilities.

In the last section, we gave freedom to the selected sample to add any suggestions concerning the topic under research. The results demonstrate that the majority of the students share the same view concerning the positive effects grammar could have on writing and the fact that they are two fundamental aspects in the learning of any language.

2.3.2. Students' writing productions:

According to the corpus analysis of the students' writing productions, it seems that most of the participants have made mistakes in: spelling 20.7%, tenses 23.7%, punctuation 19.3%, subject- verb agreement 5.6%, prepositions 3.3%, word order 6.02% and capitalization 21.07%. Our subject is concerned only with the grammatical rules; that is why we have selected from these mistakes those which are related to grammar and they include: tenses, lack of agreement between subject and verb, word order and the use of prepositions.

The English language has many different tenses which are applied according to some conditions. The results reveal that the participants do not master these tenses and are confused in applying them in their writing. According to some examples cited in table 19, we deduce that the respondents use inappropriate tenses such as the use of the present form instead of the past form examples 2, 6; in addition, they do not make difference between regular and irregular verbs (examples 1, 3), and in some cases they write the verb in a wrong manner, for example "took".

Additionally, the collected data show that in many cases the participants do not apply the rules of subject- verb agreement, and they use the auxiliary "are" for the singular and the auxiliary "is" for the plural. Moreover, the same results reveal the existence of disordered sentences and this is due to the problem of "word order" where the participants seem to be confusing in the organization of their words. Such problems are related to the misunderstanding of the rules of syntax, for example adjectives and adverbs go before the main verb but some students put the adjective or the adverb after the main verb.

The examples displayed in table 22 refer to the incorrect use of the different prepositions by the students. According to the collected data, it seems that the majority of the respondents are confused in the use of these prepositions; since they use the inappropriate preposition

instead of the appropriate one, this may affect their writing. Hence, these problems are attributed to the insufficient knowledge of the correct grammatical usage of the prepositions.

SECTION THREE: implications and recommendations for further

Researches

The current study discusses the importance of the grammatical rules in the writing skill of first year LMD students at university of Bejaia. The following section includes pedagogical implications for both teachers and students, the limitations of this study and the suggestions for further research.

3.1. Pedagogical implications for both teachers and students

Based on the results of the present work, we can deduce that the mastery of the grammatical rules plays an important role in promoting the students' writing abilities. Therefore, implications for teachers and students are provided.

3.1.1. Teachers

Teachers are the major source of information in the classroom; hence they should find solutions to develop the students' writing capacities, in addition, provide their learners with a positive feedback to raise their consciousness about the importance of grammar in enhancing the writing skill. In this respect, there are some elements that teachers should take into account in the classroom and these are:

- It is recommended for teachers to focus on the teaching of grammar in the classroom since it is considered as a remedy to overcome their students' writing difficulties and this by including additional sessions of grammar.

- According to our findings, the majority of students think that reading is an important factor to develop their writing abilities. In this respect, teachers should encourage their students to read in order to enrich their vocabulary and their knowledge of the grammatical rules, since they will be confronted to different situations where the grammatical rules are used and this will reinforce their writing ability.
- During the writing sessions, teachers should raise the students' motivation to write and encourage them to practice more writing with a particular focus on the correct grammar. They should provide them with some model texts so that the students could have a prior linguistic knowledge to imitate in their writing (Sun, 2010). In addition, teacher should give students' freedom to write about different topics either in the classroom or outside. Furthermore, encourage them to use one of the various websites where they can publish short stories or self experiences (For example: [www. Booksie.com](http://www.Booksie.com)). (Roberts, 2015).
- Teachers of written expression have to increase the students' awareness about the importance of writing skill in the EFL context, because when learning a target language we need to master both of the oral and the written form of that language. Moreover, the mastery of the written form of a language refers to the mastery of its grammatical rules.
- Besides, teachers of syntax have to shed light on the importance of grammar and raise the students' awareness about the positive effects it can have on their writing.

Because, grammar includes rules for correct writing, and is considered as a set of instructions for how language should be used. (Saaristo). That is why they have to include more grammar activities in the classroom, and advice them to focus on the correct grammatical structure of their writing.

- Teachers of writing should encourage students to apply the grammatical rules learnt in the grammar session instead of only memorise them and this by providing them with several activities where they can apply these rules. For example to write different types of texts (narrative, descriptive, explanatory...etc) which give them the opportunity to use the multiple kind of tenses; such as the use of the past tense in the narrative texts.

3.1.2. Students

Although teachers are the major providers of input in the classroom, students also have a part of responsibility during the learning process. Hence, they should be aware of the different elements included in writing, such as the grammatical rules.

- Students should regularly apply the grammatical rules in their writing. Besides, they have to focus on the structure of the text rather than the product itself. Because a majority of the students focus on the ideas they want to convey to the readers and neglect the way it is produced which makes their writing incomprehensible.
- EFL students should be aware of the importance of the application of the grammatical rules in their writing and they have to pay a particular attention to their errors and the factors behind these errors and try to correct them.
- Practice is the major factor behind the successful mastery of the grammatical rules that is why students have to exercise themselves in grammar by doing a lot of activities where they can apply the several rules.
- When producing a piece of writing students ought to practice all what they have learnt in the grammar session without being afraid of making mistakes. In case of errors they can correct or ask their teacher for explanations.

- Students do not have to only settle for the teachers' input; they should be active and do research by themselves, for example exercising on grammar guides and practicing online activities.
- Reading is closely related to writing so students have to read as much as they can and try to imitate the writers' styles in order to learn new expressions and right application of the grammatical rules.

3.2. Limitation of the study

The present research investigates the importance of the grammatical rules in the writing skill of first year LMD students. However, there are some limitations which are necessary to be mentioned.

The number of the participants was limited to (64) out of (226) students. That is why the findings cannot be generalized to all first year students and large population is needed to know whether the results are valid or invalid. In addition for more generalization and validity of the findings diverse universities should take part in the research, since our study is conducted at Bejaia University so the results cannot be generalized to other universities.

Another area of concern that may limit the strength of our findings is the period of time devoted to gather the needed data. The data of this study were collected during a limited period of time (in the second semester of the academic year). Therefore the research should be conducted in a longer period of time in order to demonstrate the effect of grammar in writing.

3.3. Recommendation for further research

Based on the results of the present study some suggestions are proposed for further research:

The current study is concerned with the importance of the grammatical rules in promoting the writing skill. Hence, the future researchers have to deal with other important elements of writing such as vocabulary.

Since this study focuses only on the importance of grammar in writing, further studies are required to investigate the effects can incorrect grammar has on the writing skill.

In addition, our study is limited to (64) participants at Bejaia university, whereas the coming researches can deal with larger population at different areas.

Furthermore, this study is concerned with the positive effects of grammar on the writing skill. Hence, future researchers might deal with others skills (reading, listening, and speaking) such as the effect of grammar on the speaking skill.

Finally, as data collection tools, we used the students' questionnaire and the students' written productions; hence future researches could add a teachers' questionnaire for more clarification concerning the topic under research. In addition it will permit us to shed light on the teachers' view about grammar in writing and whether it is considered as a key component in writing.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Most language learners recognize that learning to write accurately and expressively is difficult, because writing skill needs the mastery of different aspects including grammatical rules. The present work focuses on identifying the importance of grammatical rules in the writing skill of first year students at the department of English, University of Bejaia. Hence, 64 are selected out of 226 students as a sample to conduct our research.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of the right application of the grammatical rules in writing. In addition, it tries to increase the students' motivation and interest toward the positive effects it can have on their writing abilities.

This research is based on a descriptive method, through the analysis of the students' written productions we have answered the first research question (**what are the different grammatical errors, first year students of English often make when writing?**). The results revealed that the main writing problems encountered by the students are: tenses, lack of agreement between subject and verb, prepositions and word order. To answer to the second research question (**are first year students' writing problems due to grammatical difficulties they encounter when producing a piece of writing?**) a students' questionnaire is used as a second research instrument. The findings indicate that students declare to face mainly grammatical difficulties when writing.

According to the obtained results, we deduce that the research hypothesis (**If first year LMD students of English overcome their grammatical difficulties, then their writing productions will be improved**) is confirmed, since the majority of the participants claim to have grammatical problems when writing. This state of fact is reflected in their writings; consequently teachers should motivate students and expose them to more practice, in both grammar and writing in order to help them apply these rules regularly and in a natural

manner in their writing. Whereas, students have to reinforce their grammatical competence with more practice in order to develop their writing proficiency.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear students

The present questionnaire deals with the importance of Grammar in improving the students' writing skill. We would be grateful if you could answer these questions. Please put a cross in the appropriate box, and justify your answer if necessary.

Thank you for cooperating

Section 1: General information

1-How old are you?

a- 18

b- 19

c- 20

d- Over 20

2- Gender

a- Male

b- Female

3- How long have you been studying English?

a- Six years

b- Seven years

c- More than seven years

4- How do you evaluate your English level?

a- Good

b- Average

c- Low

d- No opinion

Section 2: Students' perception of the Writing Skill

5- Do you think that writing is?

a- A very important skill

b- Less important

c- Not important

d- No opinion

6- Do you face difficulties when you writing in English?

a- Yes

b-No

7- If yes, which kind of difficulties do you encounter?

a-Grammatical rules

b- Limited vocabulary

c- Punctuation

d- Coherence

e- Other(s)

8- How do you evaluate your level in writing expression?

a- Good

b- Average

c- Low

d- Very poor

e-No opinion

9-Do you try to develop your writing skill?

a- Yes b- No

10- If yes, please explain how

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Section 3: Students' attitude about Grammar

11-According to you, how important is to study English grammar?

a- Very important

b- Important

c- Not very important

d- Not important at all

e- No opinion

12- Do you think that grammar is important in writing?

a- Yes

b- No

-Please justify your answer

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13- How do you evaluate your knowledge of the English grammatical rules?

a- Good

b- Average

c- Low

d- Very low

e- No opinion

14- Do you encounter grammatical difficulties when writing?

a- Yes

b- No

15- If yes are these difficulties due to:

a- Different rules

b- Tenses

c- 's' of the plural

d- Punctuation

e- Other(s)

16- Does the mastery of the grammatical rules help you to improve your writing skill?

a- Yes

b- No

-Please justify your answer:

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17- Does the grammar program seem to you:

a- Overloaded

b- Affordable

c- Insufficient

e. No opinion

18- Do you think that the scheduled grammar sessions are:

a- Enough

b- Insufficient

c- No opinion

Section 3: This space is provided to the participants to add any suggestion or comment concerning the topic under research:

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APPENDIX B

STUDENTS' WRITING PRODUCTION

Dear students

Please, write a paragraph (12 to 15 lines) about one of the following topics:

1- 'The most memorable experience in your life'.

2- 'life in our society in the past and present'.

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Thankyou

Résumé

L'écrit et la grammaire sont deux aspects indissociables voire nécessaires qui doivent être maîtrisés dans les classes d'Anglais Langue Etrangère. Néanmoins, la présente thèse de master a pour objet d'étudier l'importance des règles grammaticales afin d'améliorer les compétences écrites des étudiants en première année système LMD du département d'Anglais à l'Université de Bejaia. L'échantillon sélectionné dans cette recherche s'agit de (64) étudiants qui ont été choisis aléatoirement parmi (226) de l'entière population. Afin d'effectuer notre recherche, nous avons opté pour la méthode descriptive en vue de recueillir les données nécessaires à l'aide de deux outils savoir : un questionnaire (64) et un corpus constitué de productions écrites (40). Les résultats obtenus via le questionnaire montrent que la majorité des étudiants ont reconnu l'importance de la grammaire dans le perfectionnement de leurs compétences d'écriture. Cependant, ils rencontrent des difficultés dans l'usage des règles grammaticales notamment : la concordance des temps, tel qu'il a été confirmé par les productions écrites des étudiants qui révèlent l'existence de nombreuses erreurs, en particulier dans la concordance des temps, prépositions, l'accord du sujet avec le verbe et l'ordre des mots. À la lumière des données recueillies, notre hypothèse a été confirmée. En conséquence, porter un intérêt particulier à l'usage des règles grammaticales peut contribuer à améliorer les capacités de rédaction chez l'étudiant.

Mots clés: règles grammaticales, l'écrit, classe d'Anglais Langue Etrangère, compétences d'écriture.