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Department of English



**Identifying EFL Students' Difficulties in Writing Cause and Effect
Essays**

The Case of Third Year Licence Students at the University of
Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia-Jijel

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
in Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Identifying EFL Students’ Difficulties in Writing Cause and Effect Essays,” is my own work and all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of references. I also certify that I have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, I shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signature

Date

Dedication

I dedicate this work:

To my dear caring father “Taher” and my precious beloved mother “Nacera”

To my sister “Randa” and her sweet children “Abderrahman, Abdeljabbar, and Khadija”

To my dear brother “Abdel Raouf”

Chahinaz

To my dearest and most special parents, I have put blood, sweat, and tears into this work

just for you

To my siblings, my beloved grandmothers, and family with no exceptions

To my aunts: Fouzia, Khadija, Nadia, and Samira

My allies for life: Aicha, Amina, Nada, Nihad, Soumia, Zahra

My driving force: Fatma, Lina, and Ranya

My support system: Lyna, Manel, Maram, and Rayel

Narimen

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Abstract

The current study is a descriptive research which attempts to identify the difficulties that third year students at the department of English at Jijel University encounter when writing cause and effect essays. When the difficulties faced by third year students in writing cause and effect essays are identified, it would be easier to anticipate solutions to overcome them. In order to answer the research questions, three data collection tools were employed, namely a questionnaire, a document analysis, and an interview. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of (80) out of (262) third year students. It aimed at getting a general idea about students' attitudes towards writing, as well as the difficulties they face when writing cause and effect essays. These difficulties were further examined through the analysis of students' essays submitted by twenty (20) of these students, their essays were evaluated based on a checklist. The third tool was an interview that was conducted with six (6) written expression teachers at the same department. It served to complete the data obtained from the previous tools, in addition to obtaining more reliable information about the issue. The findings of this research indicated that third year students do encounter difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. These difficulties consist principally of the inability to achieve causal relationships, the inappropriate use of transitional signals, and the inability to properly use cause and effect patterns of organisation. Based on the findings, some pedagogical recommendations were suggested to overcome these difficulties.

List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols

1. **FL:** Foreign Language
2. **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
3. **WE:** Written Expression
4. **LMD:** License-Master-Doctorate

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Writing, as one of the main language learning skills, is a productive skill in which learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are required to produce well-formed and comprehensible written compositions. It is commonly acknowledged that mastering the skill of writing implies a mastery of the remaining three language learning skills. This is confirmed by Mandal (2009), who claimed that "writing trains ears and eyes and fixes vocabulary, spelling, and patterns in our mind." (as cited in Chelghoum & Grine, 2018, p. 104). This means that writing is paramount in achieving not only listening and reading, but also enhancing one's vocabulary, spelling, and organisational patterns. Yet, writing is believed to be the most difficult and challenging skill to acquire; this is explained through EFL learners' struggles and difficulties faced in the process of writing since they are required to spend considerable time and effort to master it (Chelghoum & Grine, 2018, p. 104).

Nowadays, the urge to communicate and speak in a foreign language has surpassed that of writing. Khaldoun (2018, p. 12) asserted that people's need to communicate in different languages has made writing a neglected skill. It remains, however, vital to language learning. Academic writing is one type of writing that requires mental cognition and good reflection (Al Fadda, 2012, as cited in Chelghoum & Grine, 2018, p. 104). It provides EFL learners with the ability to cope with high demands of accuracy, appropriateness, and formality (Ankawi, 2015, as cited in Chelghoum & Grine, 2018, p. 104). In academic writing, learners are expected to conduct research and write academic works such as theses and dissertations, along with different types of academic essays. It is worth mentioning that

the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in writing greatly influence the production of these academic documents, namely, essays (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017, p. 80).

The essay, as one type of academic writing, refers to the development of a given topic in a number of paragraphs (Zemach & Rumisek, 2005, p. 56). It is a commonly known and used type of academic writing. The expository essay is known to be a systematic type of writing. It requires different sorts of abilities in exploring, evaluating, and elaborating coherent and reliable ideas (Rozalinda, Razimela, & Anwar, 2020, p. 402). This, in particular, is believed to be quite challenging for EFL learners who are observed to struggle in reaching satisfactory levels in expository essay writing. This implies their inability to write essays in a cause and effect pattern, which is a type of expository writing. Writing about causes and effects is commonly found to be problematic because learners are generally unable to analyse different causes and effects and establish a link between them. The complex structure and organisational patterns that characterise this type of essay should not be denied as well (Rozalinda, Razimela, & Anwar, 2020, p. 403).

A recent study about cause and effect essays was conducted by Aini, Widayanti, and Winarto (2022, p.64). The purpose of the study was to identify learners' abilities and problems when writing cause and effect essays. After analysing the students' essays, it was found that their abilities were fairly good. However, they still had problems with language use, content, and organisation.

2. Statement of the Problem

Written Expression teachers at the department of English (Jijel University) spend considerable amounts of time and efforts teaching the basic rules of cause and effect essay, including its components, patterns of organisation, and use of cohesive devices, to express the relationship between causes and effects. However, and according to informal

discussions with teachers, the majority of the students are indeed unable to produce correct and acceptable cause and effect essays. Some of the major difficulties, according to their teachers, are the inability to link and organize ideas together, the difficulty to come up with the adequate content, the inappropriate use of cohesive devices, and the failure to integrate pre-existing knowledge in the paper properly.

3. Research Aims

As previously stated, EFL students do face difficulties when writing cause and effect essays. The current study is carried out with the absolute aim of identifying precisely the difficulties faced by third year students in the English Department at Jijel University in writing cause and effect essays. There is no doubt that in the process of doing so, the need to shed light on the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of both written expression teachers and third year students about the issue is emphasized. It is believed that through achieving the predetermined aim, solutions and strategies to overcome these problems can be suggested.

4. Research Questions

To achieve the above aims, the following questions must be answered:

1. What are the difficulties that EFL students encounter when writing cause and effect essays?
2. What are the reasons behind students' failure to produce good cause and effect essays?
3. What are the measures that can be taken in order to enhance EFL students' writing of cause and effect essays?

5. Assumptions:

The following assumption has been formulated for this study:

Identifying and uncovering the difficulties faced by students in writing cause and effect essays would make it easier to anticipate solutions in order to overcome them.

6. Research Tools

In the pursuance of reaching the previously mentioned aims and to answer the pre-formulated research questions, three data elicitation tools were used; namely a questionnaire, a document analysis, and an interview. First, the questionnaire is administered to (80) out of (262) third year students in the department of English at Jijel University in order to get an insight into students' perceptions of the difficulties encountered in writing cause and effect essays. The analysis of (20) essays was used as the second tool with the aim of observing and getting a closer look at students' problems in writing this type of essay. An interview is finally conducted with (6) teachers of written expression with the intention of obtaining a more specific insight into students' struggles in writing the cause and effect essay.

7. Structure of the Study

The current study is composed of mainly three chapters. The first two chapters are devoted to the theoretical framework, while the third chapter has to do with the fieldwork of this study. The first chapter, on the one hand, entitled "*Academic Writing*", deals with academic writing definition, its features, the approaches to teaching writing, and the types of academic writing, in addition to the stages of the writing process. The second chapter, on the other hand, emphasises the cause and effect essay. It begins with the definition of

essays and problems in writing essays in general. It then moves to present the definition of the cause and effect essay, its features, and patterns of organization.

The third and last chapter of this work is devoted to the practical part of this study. It is divided into two sections; the first section includes the description of the three tools of research: the questionnaire, document analysis, and interview, as well as the description of the population and sampling involved in this study. The second section focuses on the analysis of data obtained through the research tools, along with the discussion of the results, limitations, and pedagogical recommendations.

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Chapter One: Academic Writing

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language (FL) implies the acquisition of the four main skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The skill of writing in particular is paramount because it ensures achieving a good level in English. It is also regarded by learners as the most challenging skill to master. This chapter's goal is to provide an overview of the writing skill. It first starts with the definition and the importance of writing in general. Second, the definition of academic writing and its features are presented. Finally, different types of academic writing, approaches of teaching writing, as well as stages of writing are provided.

1.1. Definition of Writing

For many years, writing was considered as a secondary skill in comparison to speaking. The spoken form of a language was prioritised as the only focus of language research in the twentieth century. This contributed to making the writing skill a neglected area in language teaching for a long time. Writing is the “use of graphic symbols: that is, letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds we make when we speak” (Byrne, 1988, p.1). This indicates that writing was still recognised as a secondary medium of communication although it was considered as the primary means of recording speech. Moreover, Harmer (2004, p.3) cited two reasons for considering writing as a minor skill: first of all, spoken language is acquired naturally as a consequence of being exposed to it, whereas writing is a skill that is consciously learned. Second of all, in previous centuries, the ability to write was limited to rulers of church and state. In spite of everything, writing has shifted to its new position as a significant means of communication, as a result of the industrial revolution and scientific progress (Harmer 2004, p.3).

Writing is a medium that can be used to inform, express, direct, and communicate. Writing is a productive skill that can be approached from different perspectives. Thus, defining it is a complex task; its functionality develops at different rates and changes over time. According to Linse and Nunan (2005), the process of writing refers to “the act of gathering ideas and working with them until they are presented in a manner that is polished and comprehensible to the readers” (p.98). Writing is, therefore, the ability to express ideas and arrange them into texts that will be clear to the readers. In this regard, Tarigan (1994, as cited in Khasanah, 2015, p.7) added, writing is an activity in which the production of meaningful symbols is done and presented to people who, in their turn, will be able to understand these symbols that are proper to their language. Hence, writing is an interactive process between the writer and the reader through the use of symbols that both parties can recognize. Byrne (1988) pointed out that:

Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences. (p.1)

Consequently, writing is not merely about the random production of symbols; it is related to the application of rules including grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, structure, and organization in order to produce sentences.

As far as the different strategies used in the writing process are concerned, Berninger (2002, as cited in Komariyah, 2015, p.1) reported that writing involves both "*lower-order transcription skills*" represented in handwriting, punctuation, and spelling; and "*higher-order self-regulated thinking processes*", which are planning, sequencing, and content expression. This indicates that writing is a complex skill that demands a great deal of effort to practise and cover all the writing conventions and principles. In the same vein, Hedge

(2000, p.302) stated that “writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process...It involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading and reviewing it, then revising and editing.” This definition refers to the multiple strategies and sub-tasks, such as generating ideas, setting goals, etc., that are involved in the process of composing or writing. Moreover, Oshima and Hogue (1997, p.2) presented writing as an in-progress activity in which, before the writing stage, the content and structure have already been decided.

As a conclusion, writing is an umbrella term used to cover a number of functions. It is the combination of symbols that correspond to the way of speaking and communication. Besides, writing is viewed as a medium that serves many purposes such as expressing ideas and interacting with others. In addition to this, it refers to the process in which strategies and steps are taken into consideration to fulfil a written task.

1.2. Importance of Writing

Harmer (2004) stated that the importance of writing ranges from being a “back up” to teaching different aspects of language such as grammar and vocabulary to being a principal factor to teaching EFL. Writing gives the learners a chance to think deeply about a certain topic, which would encourage them to focus on accurate language use (p.31). In addition to that, if writing is properly integrated with the other skills, it appears to be more effective. According to Harmer (2004, p.31), the reasons for teaching writing to EFL students include the following:

1.2.1. Reinforcement

According to Harmer (2004, p.32), “Writing has always been used as a means of reinforcing language that has been taught. In its simplest form, teachers often ask students to write sentences using recently learnt grammar”. This indicates that EFL learners would benefit from seeing the language written down because the visual perception of language reinforces the learning process. Thus, writing down sentences is an effective aid to boost memory and comprehend new ideas. Moreover, the learners are asked to write paragraphs or essays in order to “practice certain recently focused-on aspects of language” (Harmer, 2004, p.32). That is to say, the aim of writing is to help EFL learners remember the recently learnt aspect of language better and effectively. Thus, the act of writing is an opportunity for learners in order to consider what they have learnt and use it in other situations such as providing spoken examples (Harmer, 2004, p.33).

1.2.2. Learning Style

Harmer (2004) stated that writing can “be used as an integral part of a larger activity where the focus is on something else such as language practice, acting out, or speaking” (p.33). That is to say, teachers usually ask EFL learners to write something as a preparation for activities in which they will later read or act out. For example, dialogues are more beneficial if the learners plan (write) it beforehand; the teacher can also help them prepare it. Since it accompanies other skills such as speaking and reading, writing helps perform better in those skills. Furthermore, it supports learners with lower levels who find it difficult to come up with “instant fluent” ideas (Harmer, 2004, p.33).

1.2.3. Writing as a Skill

Harmer (2004) argued that writing is as important as speaking, listening, and reading; its objective is to help EFL learners improve their general language proficiency. In order to become better writers, EFL learners need to know how to answer assignment questions, and how to inform and persuade readers (p.34). Here, the skill of writing becomes the main focus and the heart of the lesson. In addition, students will be provided with enough competencies and language input in order to perform writing tasks effectively. Writing is also about “helping students to communicate real messages in an appropriate manner” (Harmer, 2004, p.34). As a result, EFL learners are taught different genres of writing, orthography, and punctuation in order to develop their writing skill.

1.3. Definition of Academic Writing

Writing is highly valued in educational settings and formal learning because much of the research related to the field of education agrees that the written form of language is more accurate. Writing demands standard language more than any other skill, and mastering this idealised version of language is important as it influences the quality of students’ texts (Weigle, 2002, p.17).

In order to assess students’ writing, they are required to demonstrate their mastery of disciplinary course content through essays, laboratory reports, or written examinations. Therefore, academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to show intellectuality in their specialised areas of expertise. In other words, they produce pieces of writing to demonstrate their knowledge (Hartley, 2008, p.3). Valdes added, "Students, professors, and researchers in every discipline use academic writing to convey ideas, make arguments, and engage in scholarly conversation." (2019, para.1) Researchers write academically to fulfil the following objectives: to report a piece of research the writer has

conducted; to answer a question the writer has been assigned to; to discuss a debatable subject and give a point of view; or to synthesise research that has been done by others.

Due to the fact that writing is a distinct mode of communication, Kroll (1990, p.140) viewed writing in English as the production of prose that meets the demands of an academic institution (context). It is shaped for an intended audience in order to accomplish a particular purpose. This indicates that writing in college is a differentiated situation because it has its own rules and conventions that EFL learners must be aware of. It is also different from other types of writing in terms of audience and purpose. In the same token, Oshima and Hogue (2007, p.3) viewed academic writing as “the kind of writing used in high school and college classes...academic writing is formal, so you should not use slang or contradictions. Also, you should take care to write complete sentences and to organise them in a certain way”. Academic writing is characterised by the use of a serious tone, third-person perspective, and the absence of slang and colloquialism. Moreover, Hyland (2004) considered academic writing to be based on thoroughly searched information. The writers are supposed to inform, explain, support, or argue a concept. Thus, emotions, bias, and humour are not tolerated in academic writing. In addition to this, language has to be used in a formal and serious tone. As a form of scholarly writing, the learners are required to have an objective stand, leaving no room for creative or artistic writing (as cited in Pagliawan, 2017, p.36).

From the above definition, it is deduced that academic writing is characterized by an impersonal tone, a formal discourse, evidence-based arguments, logical organization, and precise word choice. It is sometimes thought of as a challenging task by EFL learners; however, it conveys information in a clear manner which enables the reader to engage in a scholarly dialogue.

1.4. Features of Academic Writing

It is commonly believed that in academic writing, writers tend to use a formal tone, the third-person pronoun, and a good selection of specialized vocabulary (Chelghoum & Grine, 2018). It is nevertheless preferable to consider more than these aspects when going through the writing process. A writer, in producing an academic paper, should account for the following features:

1.4.1. Logical Organisation

Organisation is one important aspect of writing that every writer needs to consider; it is through a good organization of ideas that the readers' understanding is guaranteed. Whitaker (2009) affirmed that sticking to a logical structure through using an introduction, body, and conclusion has a positive impact on the quality of the product. According to Davis (2005), "Organization and development are concepts that cannot be separated." This shows the significant relationship between development of ideas and their arrangement, which directly influences the quality of the final product. He added that these ideas need to be free from ambiguity and have to be logically ordered; it means that good academic writing is characterized by clear and interrelated ideas (as cited in Badri, 2016, p. 14).

1.4.2. Conciseness and Precision

According to the article entitled "*How to improve your academic writing*" (2014), academic writing excludes the use of ambiguous and confusing ideas. The writer is supposed to use only accurate and confirmed points, which should be straightforward and direct. This can be achieved through the use of solely appropriate key terms, as well as the avoidance of using extraneous details. In addition to the provision of suitable explanations of different ideas, these explanations are expected to be simple and include only relevant and direct-to-the-point sentences. It is thus understood that conciseness and precision,

rather than ambiguity and wordiness, are preferred features in academic writing (as cited in Badri, 2016, p.15).

1.4.3. Formality

Formality in academic writing has to do with the language used in the composition. The purpose behind writing academic papers, being to affect and attract a particular audience, imposes the necessity to exclude the use of colloquial speech. Tyler (2009) noted three essential elements that need to be avoided in academic writing. He started with the use of personal pronouns like "I" and "we". This is because they give a certain sense of subjectivity to the text. He then added the need to abandon the use of abbreviations; they can only be used occasionally after mentioning the full version initially, accompanied by its abbreviation between parentheses. The final element to avoid in formal and academic writing is the use of contractions such as "couldn't" and "don't" (as cited in Badri, 2016, p. 15).

1.4.4. Clarity and Relevance

Another feature that academic compositions are restricted to is the clarity and the relevance of ideas. Barass (2005) emphasized the fact that there is no room for ambiguity in an academic paper. The achievement of clarity in writing is undeniably a sign of successful writing. He also stresses the importance of the appropriateness of ideas; indeed, it is quite necessary to select or choose only suitable ideas and thoughts for the context and situation in which the language is used. Different ideas are therefore supposed to refer back to the main topic, as much as they should achieve cohesion and coherence by being logically linked and related. This feature of clarity and relevance is a paramount factor that leads to the successful persuasion of the readers (as cited in Badri, 2016, p.16).

1.4.5. Objectivity

The most obvious feature in academic writing is certainly objectivity. Fulwiler (2002) claimed that EFL learners are allowed to express their own points of view only in a limited number of disciplines; they are philosophy, history, and literature. While the remaining ones, like scientific disciplines and social sciences, for example, require only facts that are supported by evidence and documents. Gillet, Hammond, and Martala (2009) stated that the writer is expected to interpret and draw conclusions from the literature. It is, however, tolerable to express one's view or judgement without affecting the text's objectivity after having reinterpreted the literature (Badri, 2016, p.16).

1.4.6. Correct Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are not unique to academic writing; however, they are more emphasized in it. Being regarded as a mark of "*proficiency and expertise*", writers are obliged to master all the rules related to this feature in order to leave the readers with a good impression of one's writings. Murphy (2009) pointed out that the correctness of grammar, punctuation, and spelling plays a significant role in an academic paper, since its value depends highly on it. The audience of an academic text tends, especially in this matter, to be exigent as they expect an impeccable use of these elements. This is why academic writing is so demanding in comparison to other types of writing (as cited in Badri, 2016, p.17).

1.5. Approaches to Teaching Writing

There are three well-known approaches to teaching writing, they are: the product approach, the process approach, and the genre approach. Each approach has its own features, advantages, and disadvantages.

1.5.1. The Product Approach

According to Turuk (2008), the product approach is based on Behaviourism; it claims that language is divided into parts which should be mastered separately (as cited in Eliwanti & Maarof, 2014, p.113). Silva (1990) stated that the product approach to teaching writing skills emphasises form, syntax, and drills. It focuses on the written product (output) rather than the process that a student should follow to compose an accurate written text (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.23). According to Badger and White (2000), the learners are asked to drill models (of texts) provided by the instructor; thus, writing development results from imitation of input (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.23). Likewise, Myles (2002) clarified that EFL learners are more likely to keep making mistakes if they are not exposed to model texts. Moreover, the students examine model texts and try a variety of tasks that allow them to highlight important aspects of a text and then reproduce them in their own words (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.23).

The product approach views writing as “a textual product, a logical and consistent arrangement of elements organized according to a system of rules. Being a textual product, writing can, therefore, be analyzed and described independently irrespective of contexts or writers.”(Samsudin, 2015, p.4) In other words, teachers who are implementing this approach in their instruction, tend to focus on special conventions of grammar, syntax, and mechanics. Meanwhile, little attention is given to writers’ communicative purposes as individuals.

However, there are several drawbacks to using product-oriented writing; Badger and White (2000) argued that this method pays little attention to the audience and the writer's personal intention. Process skills such as prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing are given a small role, and the information and abilities that EFL learners bring to class are

underrated. As a result, the learners may be unmotivated to study and feel under pressure to complete their writing assignments, as their teachers stress on the accuracy of language structures (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.23).

1.5.2. The Process Approach

This approach considers writing as a process in which the writer explores, gathers ideas, and moves back and forth to edit and reconstruct those ideas. The teacher's role is limited to assisting EFL learners in developing workable strategies as he/she guides them through these stages. In prewriting, the learners should brainstorm in groups to generate ideas, in addition to considering the purpose of the writing and the audience for whom it is written. This is followed by the writing process, where learners are encouraged to produce multiple drafts of a work. The last step is rewriting, EFL learners should revise their work and concentrate on the arrangement of ideas and selection of vocabulary. Furthermore, they edit or remove different kinds of inconsistencies in relation to relevance, grammar, and mechanics (Mather and Jaffe, 2002, as cited in Samsudin, 2015, p.5).). As a result, this approach came as a response to the limitations of the product approach.

Silva (1990, p.15) considered the approach to be “a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes” (as cited in Samsudin, 2015, p.6). According to Lantolf (2011), this approach is based on socio-cultural theory proposed by Vygotsky who claimed that a person can perform a lot better through social interaction (as cited in Eliwarti & Maarof, 2014, p.114).

Despite the numerous advantages of using this method to teach the writing skill, the approach has been criticized for a variety of reasons. According to Badger and White (2000), a considerable amount of time is devoted to accomplishing one piece of writing in

the classroom. This would also decrease the learners' motivation and prevent them from learning other types of writing (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.25).

1.5.3. The Genre Approach

The genre approach to writing, according to Nunan (1999), highlights the necessity of learning several types (genres) of writings. Different genres of writing are characterised by a certain "structure" and "grammatical forms" that represent the genre's communicative role. Genre based approach gives importance to different types of writing (such as genres of essays, editorials, business letters...etc) and their social context. As a result, it aims to assist students in mastering the conventions of a certain genre that is meaningful to their specific context in order to produce actual writing outside of the classroom in real life and in similar situations (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.27).

However, the genre approach has also been criticised, Badger and White (2000) argued that it gives minimal role to the writing skills which are necessitated to produce a well-written text. It also limits the writer's creativity to come up with an effective content (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014, p.28).

1.6. Types of Academic Writing

In the process of writing academic papers, whether reports, projects, essays, dissertations, theses, or research papers, the writer is expected to choose a certain manner to present his ideas. This is done by considering the nature of the topic as well as the purpose behind writing. This latter, in particular, plays a major role in the decision of the type of writing to apply. There are four main types: narration, description, exposition, and argumentation (Bowlin, 2022, p.59).

1.6.1. Narrative Writing

Narration as a type of writing is considered to be the least common in academic writing. It is defined by Bowlin (2022, p.60) as the storytelling art; this indicates that the absolute goal of it is to write about the events of a given occurrence or story. The explained story events, according to Jeffrey (2016, p.5), include elements such as characters, conflict or issue, and settings (time and space). Bowlin (2022,p.60) assured that in academic writing, only factual events are included in a narration; this latter is used occasionally when there is a need to report events of a certain study or experiment, for example.

1.6.2. Descriptive Writing

Description is considered by Bowlin (2022, p.70) as a means by which things are revived. In addition, the use of descriptive words (like adjectives) is effective in portraying or providing information about a certain subject. This enables readers to get an insight into it through simple reading. In academic writing, description is found to be quite useful; being the best means of simplification of complex meanings. According to Gillet, Hammond, and Martala (2009), description includes both the description of objects and the sequence of elements. The description of objects is done through explaining the elements, components, and functions of a given item. As for the description of the sequence of elements, it is concerned with the explanation of ideas in accordance with chronological order (as cited in Badri, 2016, p.20).

1.6.3. Expository Writing

Expository writing is believed to be the most common type of academic writing. According to Jeffrey (2016), writers of this type try to “explain concepts, imparting information from themselves to a wider audience.” (p. 3). It indicates that in expository writing, the aim is to clarify complicated concepts through sharing the knowledge and information in one's possession with the audience. According to Bowlin (2022, p.74),

expository writing consists of different writing modes such as comparison and contrast or cause and effect; these modes are selected based on the writers' purpose, as they can be incorporated into one text and to express one idea.

1.6.4. Argumentative Writing

Argumentative or persuasive writing is that type in which the writer is supposed to expose and defend one's own point of view; this might include the need to refute or reject the opposite viewpoint (Badri, 2016, p.19). For Jeffrey (2016, p.4), persuasive writing is the main type of academic writing; writers, being required to express their opinions and biases, followed by logical reasoning and evidence, are expected to reach a certain level of expertise and proficiency in writing. It can be therefore deduced that argumentative writing is the type of academic writing in which strong arguments are presented and supported by factual and reasonable evidence. So as to change the readers' perceptions about a certain topic and make them adopt those of the writer (Bowlin, 2022, p.134).

1.7. Stages of the Writing Process

The process of writing is considered as a complex activity consisting of several sub-tasks. These sub-tasks are basically referred to as the stages of the writing process. They are believed to be non-linear but recursive. This means that writers do not particularly follow a specific order of steps in writing. They do, however, move from one stage to the next, demonstrating that each of these stages is interdependent (Abas & Abd Aziz, 2018, p.2).

According to Harmer (2004, p.4), the stages by which a writer goes through during the writing process remain the same, even if the content, the type of writing, and the medium differ. These stages are as follows:

1.7.1. The Stage of Prewriting

The stage of prewriting, being the initial stage in the writing process, is defined by Starkey (2004) as “the critical first step in creating a successful essay. Whether you are handed a topic, must come up with one on your own, or writing under a time constraint, taking the time to focus and shape your thoughts will result in a better final product.”(p. 2). This indicates that this stage has to do with the generation and gathering of ideas to include in the final product. This step is believed to be important since it permits writers to shape their compositions, whether they choose the topic or it is imposed on them.

Some prewriting strategies are believed to be highly effective for getting a primary idea about what to include in a text. For instance, brainstorming has to do with the creation of a list of ideas and thoughts related to the topic and linked to each other. As well as freewriting, or writing non-stop about a certain topic in full sentences or phrases with no regard to grammar and spelling mistakes (Starkey, 2004, p.3).

1.7.2. The Stage of Planning

For Harmer (2004, p.4), the stage of planning is the first real stage in the writing process; it has to do with the choice of ideas to use in a composition and their arrangement. The writers might conduct this stage by noting the ideas in a detailed manner, as it can all be achieved in their minds. Harmer then asserted that the stage of planning should be done with consideration of the purpose behind writing in the first place, as it is the one factor influencing the type of writing, the language, and the information to be used, as well as the audience that plays a fundamental role in shaping the thoughts and language used. And

finally, the structure has to be selected in accordance with the content and ideas of the composition.

1.7.3. The Stage of Drafting

A draft, in Harmer's view, can be referred to as the first version of a piece of writing. A first draft is then produced after having listed, selected, and organized the ideas and thoughts. Harmer (2004) claimed that "This first 'go' at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later." (p. 5). It means that when writers create their first draft, their goal is simply to put together the generated ideas into one structure; they therefore assume that this draft is just a first try and that changes will be made later.

1.7.4. The Stage of Editing

As mentioned earlier, writers produce their first draft assuming that modifications will follow. This is when the editing stage takes place; at this stage, the main concern is the addition or omission of ideas that might be useful or not. This is done after rereading what was drafted, then through reorganizing the points in a logical way; removing ambiguous ideas; changing key terms; or even writing a new introduction. The treatment of spelling and grammatical problems, reflecting and revising, comes after ensuring that the message is properly conveyed. It is still an important step to produce a good composition (Harmer, 2004, p.5).

1.7.5. The Final Version

After rereading the initial draft and editing it, it becomes possible to produce a final version of the composition. This final product might be very different from what has been produced before, since the ideas might not be those generated in the early stages. This is because the final version is believed to be the best one produced by the writer, having

passed through all sorts of ideas and having selected only the most appropriate ones. The composition is then ready to be published and presented to the targeted readers (Harmer, 2004, p.6).

To sum up, passing through stages in the process of writing is a fundamental phase for writers in general, and especially for foreign language writers, to enhance their writing skills and become successful writers. These stages of prewriting, planning, drafting, editing, and final version are considered important to master because they enable writers to be flexible in writing as much as they help them to develop their critical thinking.

Conclusion

Academic writing is one of the writing skills that EFL students must learn in order to improve their language abilities. Mastering academic writing is a difficult task because it requires learning different types of writing, most notably different types of essays. This chapter provided an overview of writing in general and academic writing in particular by first providing some definitions of the writing skill along with that of academic writing, highlighting its importance and features. Approaches to teaching writing and types of academic essays were presented, followed by the different stages of the writing process.

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Chapter Two: Cause and Effect Essay

Introduction

The cause and effect essay, being a type of expository writing, is believed to be a challenging composition to write. This is due to its uniqueness in terms of focus, structure, and characteristics. This chapter is dedicated to the cause and effect essay. First, the chapter starts with the definition as well as the problems encountered by EFL learners when writing essays. Ultimately, the definition, features, and patterns of organisation of the cause and effect essay are provided.

2.1. Definition of the Essay

The term “*essay*” is originally derived from the French word “*essayer*”. It is the equivalent of “*to attempt*” in English (White, 2020, para. 1). Based on this definition, the essay then refers to the act of attempting to convince and deliver a given idea. Like any type of academic writing, it is a piece of writing that enables the author to transmit and communicate ideas. The essay has been employed from early times and in various disciplines for academic purposes, such as to question assumptions, argue insignificant opinions, or initiate global discussions (White, 2020, para. 4).

The essay is defined by Crews (2000) as “a fairly brief piece of nonfiction that tries to make a point in an interesting way.” By this definition, it is understood that the essay is regarded as a written text in which real topics are tackled and explained in a way that catches the audience’s attention (as cited in Tagg, 2000, para. 1).

Another definition of the essay is provided by Zemach and Rumisek (2005), in which it is viewed as “a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and a central main idea. It must have at least three paragraphs, but a five-paragraph essay is a common length for academic writing.”(p. 56). This means that an essay consists of paragraphs, which number

can vary, that tackle a given perspective on a certain topic. It is also made clear in this definition that an essay has to contain at least three paragraphs, and that a five-paragraph essay is the most frequent model.

The definition of an essay can be summarized through Eunson's words (2012):

Essays are documents on specific topics that contain a mix of fact and opinion, laid out in logical sequences and employing appropriate strategies of expression. An essay comprises both content (what is said) and form (the way in which it is said).

These aspects are separate, but not unrelated. (p. 225)

From this definition, it is comprehensible that an essay is a written document in which a single topic is tackled in accordance with facts and opinions. The writer is then expected to express and organise these facts and opinions appropriately, so that they are sequenced logically.

2.2. Problems in Writing Essays

Academic writing is a complex activity that encompasses a variety of steps, components, and conventions; this is why EFL learners consider it very demanding to accomplish. According to Jacobs, the problems that hinder learners from writing elaborate academic essays in general are the following: *organisation, grammar, content, mechanics, and vocabulary* (as cited in Rosalinda, Rozimela, & Anwar, 2019, p.404). Since these difficulties are found in all types of essays, it also applies on the cause and effect essay.

2.2.1. Organisation

The accurate organisation of ideas is a prominent element of writing in general as it is the first thing that a reader notices. It helps the reader to follow and understand easily the points that are made in a piece of writing, as Starkey (2004) explained, "By following (any

organisational method of writing), you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence” (p.2). EFL learners’ problems in organising an essay can be sum up as follows: the lack of specific thesis statement, the absence of supporting details, the absence of an apparent format of the essay, the illogical order of the ideas, and the absence of a conclusion (Apandi & Kusriandi, 2016, p.82).

2.2.2. Grammar

No matter how well organised the essay is and how interesting the writer's ideas are, it would be difficult to understand them if the grammar is not accurate. Brown (1994) defined grammar as “the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence.” (As cited in Deng & Lin, 2016, p.1). These grammatical rules, though being challenging and demanding to learn and master, are very essential to enhance one’s writing abilities. According to Filali (2019, p.22), most learners encounter difficulties in using the correct verb tenses, prepositions, and parts of speech. In addition to this, they fail to structure complex sentences and show subject/ predicate agreement. Moreover, the absence of coordinating conjunctions in a sentence can affect the quality of the essay (run on sentences).

2.2.3. Content

Content is viewed by Bae, Bentler, and Lee (2016) as "the idea or meaning in a piece of writing. It involves other important elements of writing such as vocabulary, coherence, grammar, creativity, and text length " (p.302). It is proposed here that the content reflecting the general idea or topic of a piece of writing is linked to other aspects of writing such as vocabulary and grammar. EFL learners encounter difficulties when they transform their private ideas and thoughts into a comprehensible and understood work to the reader

(Flower, 1979, p.19). That is to say, ambiguous and irrelevant ideas are often found in their essays which lead to the misinterpretation of the reader.

2.2.4. Mechanics

According to Nordquist (2020, para 1), the rules or conventions that govern the technical aspects of writing are called "mechanics", and they include spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Spelling is the act of forming words with the correct letters (Nordquist, 2020, para 3), punctuation is the use of symbols to organise and clarify texts (Nordquist, 2020, para 4), and capitalization, as the name implies, is the act of using capital letters. These mechanics are employed to determine the meaning of the text and to clarify the intention of the writer. In this context, Linder (2005) reported that "It is possible to change the connotation of a sentence by altering punctuation and/or capitalization" (as cited in Nordquist, 2020, para5). EFL learners either capitalize the word wrongly or they do not capitalize when necessary, they omit commas to signal a non-restrictive sentence, as well as misspelling words. To conclude, these are common problems that EFL learners face which can confuse the reader and affect the quality of an essay.

2.2.5. Vocabulary

For Starkey (2004), the selection of good vocabulary contributes to the good understanding and comprehension of one's essay. In order to make a good selection of words, there are two significant things to take into consideration. The first one is *denotation*. It has to do with words that have different meanings but are similar to some extent, such as "*sight*" and "*site*" for instance. EFL learners' confusion of the use of such words is a problem as it affects the meaning of the essay and therefore leads to the failure to convey the message intended. The second thing to take into account is *connotation*. This refers to the meanings which can be interpreted in different ways (meanings can be taken

as having negative or positive connotations). For example, the word "*plagiarize*" is considered a negative connotation of the word "*copy*". This again proves that good word choice is a crucial factor which affects the understanding of one's production (pp. 21-30).

2.3. Definition of the Cause and Effect Essay

The principle of cause and effect is evident in everyday life. According to the universal law of cause and effect, "there is no way that you can do anything without having something come out of it." (Fox, 2021, para.6) To illustrate this, if you take one small action towards your goal every single day, you will inevitably move closer to your end goal. In science, research is conducted by testing hypotheses; researchers then draw different conclusions due to the different choices that were made. This is how causality (or cause and effect) is determined in a research setting.

In academic writing, the cause and effect type is one of the organizational patterns that can be used in developing expository essays. It explains why and how things happen and what the consequences are. Oshima and Hogue (2006) stated that cause and effect is a form of writing that discusses the causes (reasons) for something, the effects (results), or both. It implies that the cause and effect essay is an outstanding opportunity to satisfy the reader's curiosity. By showing them the inter-relationship between the subjects under discussion, there should be no questions left after reading the composition. (p.94)

According to Henry (2016), the term "*cause*" states why a certain event occurs. This cause is then responsible for creating an effect which means that the cause is the reason of a certain condition. The term "*effect*" is considered by Henry (2016) to be the result or outcome of a given cause. He explained that an effect is "a result, condition, consequence brought by something or someone." (p. 346). This means that the effect is brought by the means of a given cause. Thus, it is understood that causes and effects are strongly

connected to each other. Miller (2020) defined a cause and effect essay as “a type of academic writing that explores the causes of a particular issue and its consequences. It includes researching available evidence and developing sensible claims regarding the topic.” (para.1). In other words, this type of essay does not necessarily require a point of view. However, writers should demonstrate causal relations by using appropriate “linguistic expressions” in order to reconstruct and reproduce meaning and to show their understanding of the topic.

According to John S., (2022), cause and effect essay papers are “perfect for developing research and fact checking skills. Also, cause and effect assignments make the writers apply analytical and critical thinking.” (para.1). For instance, to answer the question “*How poor eating habits influence our health?*” the writer should thoroughly research the topic before explaining it to the audience. This could be an indirect way to improve learners’ research skills, as it is a vital part of academic writing. Learners will be able to locate, extract, and interpret data that is relevant to the subject being studied, in addition to evaluating and analysing the quality of a resource. The writers are also responsible for achieving factual accuracy because the truth is presented as it is, no matter how it will be perceived. Writing critically ensures that the text is free of bias or misinformation for the readers.

2.4. Features of Good Cause and Effect Essays

The cause and effect essay, like any other piece of writing, requires some general features to be respected. The first feature is unity; a well-composed text addresses only the essays’ central idea. In other words, all the supporting details should be relevant to and dependent on the thesis statement (Brandon & Brandon, 2011, p.41). Similarly, Oshima and Hogue (2006) affirmed that in order to achieve the unity of the text, only one topic

should be tackled. New ideas should not emerge because they would break the essay's unity (p. 18).

The second feature is cohesion; Halliday and Hasan (1976) affirmed that the correctness of a text is accomplished by the use of cohesive ties (p.4). However, Harmer (2004) claimed that the use of different cohesive devices is not enough. According to him, "for a text to have coherence, it needs to have some kind of internal logic which the reader can follow with or without the use of prominent cohesive devices" (Harmer, 2004, p.24). This means that writing a text of any type requires the use of appropriate cohesive devices along with accurate and logical ideas. In addition and as mentioned previously, good essays are also concerned with the application of significant writing rules; they are the rules related to organisation, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. The following sub-divisions represent important features that are specifically related to the cause and effect essay:

2.4.1. The Introduction

The essay's introduction, or the introductory paragraph, as the initial part is the one in which the topic is presented and the content is specified. It is with the use of general statements that the topic is being introduced in a general but attractive manner. After that, the thesis statement, the most important constituent, is employed to specify and narrow the topic by mentioning the prominent aspects or subdivisions to include together with the suitable pattern of organisation (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p. 59).

A cause and effect essay introduction should commence with using several general statements to attract the attention of the audience as it should indicate the significance of the topic. The writer starts by developing the general idea (the hook) and then moves to background sentences which are about "effects in a cause essay or about causes in an effect essay." (Belkhir-Benmostefa, Adder, and Drici, 2018, p. 42). The writer makes also use of

the thesis statement which states clearly whether the essay will be about causes and/or effects (Rozalinda, Rozimela, & Anwar, 2020, p.404). According to Brandon and Brandon (2011, p. 225), the nature and number of causes and effects is also indicated in the thesis statement, as well as the main points and how they will be developed in the body paragraphs. The nature or types of causes and effects must be considered because they can be primary or secondary (most important to least important), immediate or remote (an immediate cause leads directly to its effect, however, a remote cause is a contributory factor in a causal chain).

According to Chorfi (2019, p.2), the thesis statement of cause and effect essay includes a topic and a controlling idea that states the writer's position or viewpoint on the topic. The thesis statement should indicate the focus of the essay as well. It could be *unidirectional* (causes or effects), or *mixed* focus (cause and effect). Signal words and numbers are also components of a strong thesis statement. In the same vein, McWhorter (2012, p. 479) added that the thesis statement of a cause and effect essay must be clear and precise as it is responsible for the identification of the topic. In other words, the specification of whether the essay is about causes, effects or both is indicated in the thesis statement. Therefore, it is a declaration of the essay's main concern and focus.

2.4.2. The body

The body of essays in general is defined as the part of the essay consisting of several paragraphs, forming a block, and which tackles each of the aspects or subdivisions related to the topic in separate and detailed ways (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). This part is a very important one as it gives the opportunity to explain and illustrate the points or perspectives made by the writer, and so increases the chances of persuading one's readers. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), the body paragraphs need to follow a certain pattern of

organisation, these patterns are usually determined by the nature of the topic, the viewpoint, and the intention of the writer (pp. 64-71).

In a cause essay, the writer begins by writing the first cause paragraph, which has a topic sentence, supporting sentences, quotation, example or statistic sentence, and a concluding sentence that summarises the paragraph's points. The second cause paragraph follows, accompanied by the third cause paragraph, with the same previously listed components. When composing effect assignments, the writer starts with the first effect paragraph, then the second, and finally the third effect paragraph. If the essay requirement is to write on both causes and effects, there are two methods to apply, as it will be explained in the cause and effect essay pattern of organisation (Belkhir-Benmostefa et al, 2018, p.43). Thus, causality (or causal relationship) is expressed further in the body.

2.4.2.1. Expressing Causality

Each cause or effect in the body of the essay is presented in a detailed and understandable way. For most cause and effect essays, to find evidence and claims that support the thesis statement, the writer needs to research the subject matter thoroughly. Hence; quotations, facts, examples, comparisons, and statistics may be used to strengthen the causes and effects (Mcwhorter, 2012, p. 480). The relationship among events or phenomena in this type of essay is based on causality. It teaches EFL learners to create logical causal relationship while conveying their ideas to the reader. The use of transitional signals and importance of sequencing are two elements that help expressing causality in this particular type of essay.

2.4.2.1.1. Transitional Signals

In writing a cause and effect essay, the writer has to correlate between the two variables by using cohesive devices. Transitional signals are a sub-unit of adding cohesion to the written text. They are linking words or phrases that connect the ideas and show the

relationship between sentences and paragraphs (Chorfi, 2019, p.10). According to Henry (2016), “To ensure that readers grasp their focus and point, master writers often use cause and effect transitions and signal words in order to state the central point and introduce supporting details.”(p.346) some common transitional words used in cause and effect essays are listed below:

Table2.1. Cause and Effect Transitional Signals (Henry, 2016, p.346)

Transitions that Signal Cause and Effect				
<i>accordingly</i>	<i>consequently</i>	<i>hence</i>	<i>on account of</i>	<i>so</i>
<i>as a result</i>	<i>due to</i>	<i>if...then</i>	<i>results in</i>	<i>therefore</i>
<i>because of</i>	<i>for that reason</i>	<i>leads to</i>	<i>since</i>	<i>thus</i>

Table2.2. Verbs that Signal Causality, adapted from Henry (2016, p.346)

Verbs That Signal Cause and Effect				
<i>affect</i>	<i>constitute</i>	<i>create</i>	<i>force</i>	<i>initiate</i>
<i>benefit</i>	<i>construct</i>	<i>damage</i>	<i>harm</i>	<i>institute</i>
<i>cause</i>	<i>contribute</i>	<i>determine</i>	<i>induce</i>	<i>preclude</i>
<i>compose</i>	<i>control</i>	<i>facilitate</i>	<i>influence</i>	<i>prevent</i>

Table2.3. Nouns that Signal Causality, adapted from Henry (2016, p.346)

Nouns That Signal Cause and Effect				
<i>actor</i>	<i>condition</i>	<i>damage</i>	<i>factor</i>	<i>outcome</i>
<i>agent</i>	<i>consequence</i>	<i>effect</i>	<i>impact</i>	<i>product</i>
<i>author</i>	<i>creation</i>	<i>end</i>	<i>influence</i>	<i>result</i>
<i>benefit</i>	<i>creator</i>	<i>event</i>	<i>issue</i>	<i>source</i>

2.4.2.1.2. Importance of Sequencing

The order in which events occur may or may not be significant. However, when dealing with a series of sequential events, the writer must determine whether the sequence has causal connections; that is, does one event cause another? The causal connections must be examined in each case, which means that evidence of causality must be achieved. Assuming that one event is caused by another simply because it occurs after the other is a logical error known as a *post hoc* ("after this") fallacy (Brandon & Brandon, 2011, pp.225-226).

The order of the causes and/or effects may be determined by time, space, emphasis, or a combination of these factors. Chronological order (time) discusses the causes and effects in the order that they occur from first to last. Spatial order (space) takes the reader from one spot to the next. Emphatic order reserves the strongest or most significant cause and/or effect until the end, that is to say, progressing from least to most influential (major to minor) or vice versa. In some cases, two or more factors may be combined (Brandon & Brandon, 2011, p.226).

Table 2.4. *Transitions of Chronological Order and Order of Importance (Langan & Winstanley, 2014, p.188).*

Transitions Used for Chronological Order and Order of Importance			
<i>first</i>	<i>then</i>	<i>another</i>	<i>better (worse)</i>
<i>second</i>	<i>after</i>	<i>more than</i>	<i>particularly</i>
<i>next</i>	<i>in addition</i>	<i>even more</i>	<i>significantly</i>

2.4.3. The Conclusion

According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), the conclusion, or the concluding paragraph, is the final part of an essay. This is why it should be initiated by an expression that marks the end word of the integrity of the essay; these expressions can be *to conclude, to sum up, etc.* It is referred to by Oshima and Hogue (2006) as a summary or paraphrase of what has been said previously in the body paragraphs and introduction. It is said to be useful as it serves to remind the readers of the main idea of the composition. (p.72)

Similarly, Belkhir-Benmostefa et al. (2018, p.43) viewed that the closing paragraph of a cause and effect essay should leave the viewer with a sense of completion. One way to craft a conclusion is to give an overview or summary of the essay highlighting the main points of the content (causes, effects, or both). Another way to conclude the essay is to restate the thesis statement which will demonstrate how it contributed to the essay's primary points. It is also beneficial to describe the significance of the essay's arguments.

2.5. The Cause and Effect Essay Patterns of Organisation

According to Bhasin (2020), the organisational pattern is a process that helps writers to structure and organise their ideas and thoughts, it shows the relationship between the supporting details in essays. The pattern of organisation helps to “make sense of the information so that the stated purpose is fulfilled” (para.2). This indicates that a clear organisation guides the reader to focus on the direction of the essay. According to McWhorter (2017), different topics and ideas can be approached in different manners; these manners are called “*organisational patterns*” which are very important in any piece of academic writing because they contribute to the production of clear and comprehensible ideas. In addition, they are useful for readers to anticipate the way a writer thinks as well as to recall the elements developed by the writer (pp. 134-135).

In academics, a cause and effect essay requires EFL learners to understand the subject matter before presenting it to the audience. However, the content will be more effective if the writer has enough knowledge about the essay structure. A cause or effect essay structure is typically composed of five paragraphs (introduction, three body paragraphs, and conclusion). The number of body paragraphs, however, may vary depending on the topic and scope of the essay. An essay that contains both causes and effects can be organised in two ways: “*block organisation*” and “*chain organisation*” (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p. 95).

2.5.1. The Block Organisation

In block organisation, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006, p.95), the writer first addresses all the reasons as a block, then all the consequences as a block. The number of paragraphs in one block varies according to the number of causes or effects, i.e., a block can contain one or more paragraphs. Writers typically arrange causes before effects; however, it is possible to present effects first in order to create a sense of suspense and surprise. A short paragraph is frequently used to separate one major section from another, which is referred to as a “*transition paragraph*”.

The goal of a “*transition paragraph*” is to end one unit and begin another. It signals the readers that the focus of the essay is shifting; the writer concludes the section (block) that explains the reasons and introduces the other section which deals with the consequences. Some events or phenomenon can be complex; this means several types of causes may produce a single effect. In this case, a transition paragraph is used to separate those multiple causes that fall into different categories. The same thing applies with effects. The transition paragraph is not always necessary, but it is advantageous when the topic is lengthy and complex (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.95).

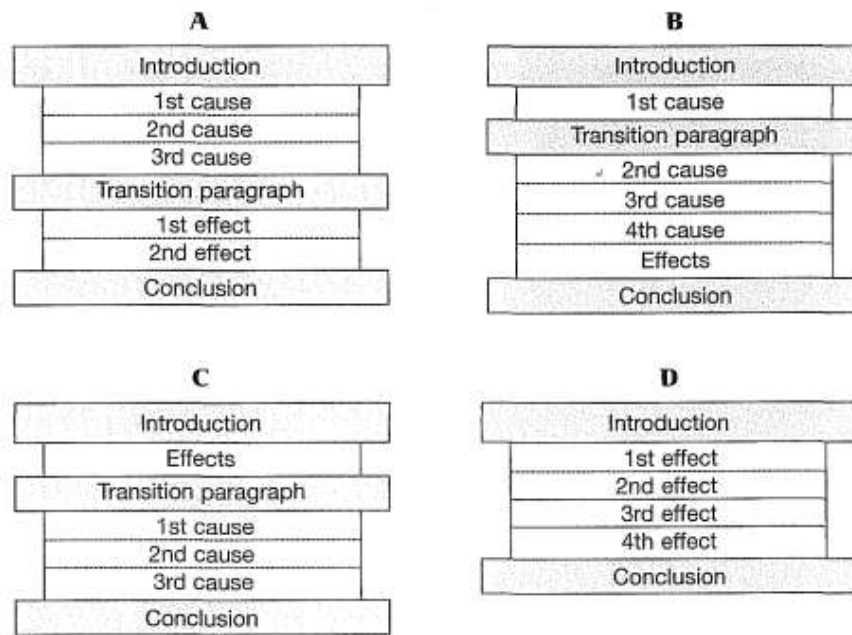


Figure 2.1. Block-Style Organisation of Cause/Effect Essay (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p. 95)

2.5.2. The Chain Organisation

The chain organisation is another pattern of organisation that can be used to discuss causes and effects. In this pattern, causes and effects are connected together in a chain. One event triggers a second event, which in turn triggers a third, which in turn triggers a fourth, and so on. Each new cause and its consequence form a chain. The writer can dedicate an entire paragraph to one link, include numerous links in one paragraph, or discuss the complete chain in one paragraph according to the complexity of the ideas (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.98). When the reasons and consequences are firmly related to be separate, the chain organization works best. In this context, Rosa and Eschholz (1998) reported that:

Determining causes and effects is usually thought-provoking and quite complex. One reason for this is that there are two types of causes, *immediate causes*, which are readily apparent because they are closest to the effect, and *ultimate causes*, which being somewhat are not apparent and may perhaps even be hidden.

Furthermore, ultimate causes may bring about effects which themselves become immediate causes, thus creating a *causal chain*. (as cited in Nordquist, 2020)

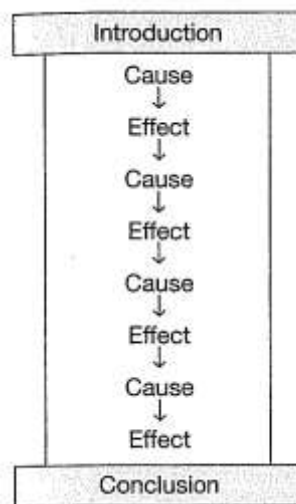


Figure 2.2. Chain Pattern of cause/effect essay adapted from (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.99).

Conclusion

The cause and effect essay, as a type of academic writing, is of high importance and usefulness for EFL learners. This is why the mastery of this kind of essay is vital for them to improve their level in English. Yet, they find it very difficult to learn and master because of its different aspects in comparison to essays in general. In this chapter, the definition of the essay and problems faced in writing it were first presented. It then concentrated on the definition, features and patterns of organising the cause and effect essay.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Data Analysis

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Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

This study is descriptive in nature; it aims to investigate EFL students' difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. This chapter is concerned with the practical part of the study in order to answer the research questions and to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. In this study both qualitative and quantitative data are emphasized. It is divided into two sections. On the one hand, the first section provides the description of the research methodology; it includes the population and sampling of the study; as well as the description of the three data elicitation techniques employed: the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interview, and the document analysis. On the other hand, the second section deals with the analysis of the obtained data and the discussion of the results. Finally, this chapter ends with some pedagogical recommendations that contribute to improving the students' performance in writing a cause and effect essay.

Section One: Research Methodology

3.1.1. Population and Sampling

According to Dörnyei (2007, p.96), the population is the "group of people whom the study is about", whereas the sample refers to "choosing a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in their (the researchers') research" (Dawson, 2002, p.47). A sample is the number of participants that are actually examined to generalise the results to the whole target population. In this respect, the population selected for this study is third-year LMD students of English, with a total number of (262) students. Among the reasons behind this selection is that they have been taught the cause-and-effect essay pattern in their second year; they are supposed to be familiar with its basics.

A sample of eighty (80) students was randomly selected to answer the questionnaire to get a glimpse of the nature of the difficulties they face when writing a cause and effect essay. Twenty (20) essays were collected as a concrete source to be analysed in order to uncover the real difficulties that hinder them from writing accurate pieces of writing. In addition to this, a sample of six (6) teachers of the Written Expression module were chosen to conduct an interview with, so as to investigate in-depth the reasons behind the failure to compose well-written essays and make recommendations to enhance students' writings.

3.1.2. Description of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a data elicitation technique widely used among educational researchers to reach a large number of respondents. It consists of a set of questions which enables the researchers to gather information that reflects the respondents' attitudes and perceptions of the subject under study. Brown (2001) defined questionnaires as "written instruments that represent respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they have to react either by writing their answers or selecting from among existing answers." (As cited in Dörnyei, 2002, p.4). Moreover, Wilson and McLean (1994) stated that the questionnaire is an effective data collection instrument because it allows gathering survey information and providing often numerical data, thus, it is easy to analyse (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 317).

The students' questionnaire was administered to (80) out of (262) third year LMD students at the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. These questionnaires were distributed to the students during a session at 14:00 pm in the amphitheatre number three. The questionnaire is composed of sixteen (16) close-ended questions. Occasionally they are asked to provide explanations or other options, the respondents could also tick one or more answers. The questionnaire is divided into two

sections. The first section, entitled "*Academic Writing*," contains seven (7) questions that aim to obtain information about students' attitudes and perceptions about the writing skill. The second section is about "*Challenges in writing a cause and effect essay*". It has nine (9) questions and aims at investigating the students' challenges in writing cause and effect essays.

3.1.3. Description of Document Analysis

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), document analysis refers to "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material (computer-based and Internet-transmitted). Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires data to be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (as cited in Bowen, 2009, p. 27). It is understood through this definition that analyzing a document, as a tool used in qualitative research, has to do with the procedure of evaluation and interpretation of a given document so as to gather and collect data useful to uncover new knowledge and strengthen one's understanding.

The document under study consists of twenty (20) students' cause and effect essays. These essays were assigned to third year students at the department of English at Jijel University; they were required to write about "*The Reasons behind Divorce and its Effects on Children*". The time allocated was one hour in the classroom. The analysis of students' essays was used mainly as a way to uncover the problems of students in writing this type of essay, as well as to obtain more valid and reliable data. Some cause and effect essay criteria, taken from a cause and effect checklist, were emphasised in order to locate students' difficulties.

3.1.4. Description of Teachers' Interview

The interview is a qualitative tool conducted with Written Expression teachers to obtain in-depth information concerning the nature of the problems encountered by their students and the core reasons behind their failure to compose accurate cause and effect essays. Labov and Fanshel (1977) viewed the interview as “a speech event in which one person, A, extracts from another person, B, information which was contained in B’s biography.” (p. 30). This means that an interview involves two individuals “A” as the interviewer, who is supposed to ask questions; and “B” as the interviewee, who has to answer these questions from his own experience. For Anderson and Arsenault (1998), the interview is “a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter... a highly purposeful task which goes beyond mere conversation.” (p. 202). That is to say, the interaction which occurs between the two interlocutors is directed in accordance with a subject matter and purpose.

In this study, the teachers’ interview was conducted with the purpose of receiving more reliable answers about the difficulties of students in writing cause and effect essays. The structured interview consisted of seven (7) questions and was addressed to six (6) teachers of written expression at the department of English at Jijel University, who have experience in teaching this kind of essay. They were asked about their experiences in teaching this type of essay, the different aspects that are believed to be challenging to learn, and the factors that may cause students’ struggles with it.

Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

1. Data Analysis

3.2.1. Analysis of Students’ Questionnaire

Section One: Academic Writing

Q1: Do you like writing in English?

Table3.1. Students' Attitudes towards Writing in English

Options	N	%
Yes	66	82.5
No	14	17.5

Discovering students' attitudes towards writing can be helpful to explain their failure in writing in general. The students' attitudes towards writing in English could be described as positive. On the one hand, it is revealed that most students (82.5%) enjoy writing in English. On the other hand, (17.5%) answered "no". The main reason behind their negative perception is not clear, but it could be influenced by the fact that writing is regarded as a secondary skill in comparison to speaking.

Q2: How would you evaluate your writing skill in English?

Table3.2. Students' Estimation of their Writing Skills

Options	N	%
Good	17	21.25
Average	59	73.75
Poor	4	5
Total	80	100%

This question was addressed to diagnose the students' level of writing in English. A large number of students (73.75%) evaluated their writing ability as average. Despite reaching an adequate level, they still face problems. (21.25%) of the students, however,

qualified their writing skills as good. It is assumed that their high grades might have given them the impression that their writing skills were accurate. Finally, only (5%) of the respondents consider their writing skills as poor. Students in this case should enhance their writing abilities before they pass to Master Two Level, where they will be required to prepare their dissertations.

Q3: How do you regard the class of written expression? Justify your answer.

Table3.3. Students' Views on the Writing Class

Options	N	%
Important	53	66.25
Interesting	24	30
Boring	3	3.75
Total	80	100%

Students' view of the writing class is important as it can affect their performance in writing. The students were asked to put a tick in the appropriate box and to justify their answer. Most of the students (66.25%) regarded the course of written expression as important. Depending on their justifications, they emphasised the importance of writing skills and academic integrity in the other modules, where they are asked to demonstrate their knowledge in an accurate language and structure. They are eager to become proficient writers; therefore, exposing them to the writing process is a way to achieve their goals. Students who self-evaluated their writing skills as "average" and "poor" as shown in the second question, are willing to engage in writing tasks and expand extra additional effort to enhance their writing skills as their justifications indicate.

Twenty four respondents (30%) regarded the course of written expression as interesting, and that is because they seize the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas freely. They justified that written expression is not taken for granted as they make the most of it to reflect on their personal writings outside the classroom. Only three students (3.75%) regarded the writing session as boring. This is mainly because they view it as too detailed, as well as they do not like writing in general, as they explained.

Q4: For which purposes do you write in English? (tick one or more options)

- a. To perform your classroom assignments
- b. To improve your writing skill level
- c. For pleasure (chatting, diaries, short stories...)

Table 3.4. Students' Purposes of Writing in English

Options	N	%
a	32	28.57
b	58	51.79
c	22	19.64
Total	112	100%

According to the above table, the majority of third-year students (51.79%) write in English in order to improve their writing skills. (28.57%) of students chose the first option, to perform their classroom assignments, in which writing is the central activity or an integrated skill to perform different tasks. As for the remaining students (19.64%), they write in English for pleasure such as personal diaries, short stories, blogs...etc. This indicates that writing offers a deep sense of satisfaction for them.

Q5: Does your teacher encourage you to write in English? If yes, explain how?

Table3.5. Teachers' Role in Encouraging Students to Write in English

Options	N	%
Yes	54	67.5
No	26	32.5
Total	80	100%

According to the table above, the findings clearly show a difference in the numbers. The majority of respondents (67.5%) answered yes, whereas (32.5%) denied their teachers' role in encouraging them to write. This indicates that they manage their writing tasks independently. The respondents who answered "yes" reported that they were always seeking the teacher's assistance. They felt assured and encouraged whenever the teacher provided feedback; they expressed their eagerness to be corrected by the teacher. A big number of students commonly acknowledge in their comments that a way to assist their fluency and stamina is when the teacher monitors their ongoing progress during in-class assignments. Furthermore, the teacher demonstrates models of an ideal piece of writing in order for the students to follow.

Q6: In your Opinion, what are the most Important features of academic writing to consider? (tick one or more options)

- a. The degree of complexity of ideas
- b. The clarity and accuracy of ideas
- c. The appropriate use of language
- d. The good organization of the written text

Table3.6. Features of Academic Writing According to EFL Students

Options	N	%
a	12	7.05
b	50	29.41
c	57	33.52
d	51	30
Total	170	100%

The purpose of this question is to check whether the various characteristics of academic writing are given equal importance. On the one hand, a few students (7.05%) considered the degree of complexity of ideas as the most important feature of academic writing. The ideas that are written in complex sentences tend to be more formal. On the other hand, complexity in writing could be avoided to convey a clear and readable work, for this reason, a larger number of students (29.41%) opted for the second option. Most students (33.52%) viewed the appropriate use of language as an equally important characteristic. Closely similar, (30%) of the respondents regarded organization as an important feature that characterises an accurate piece of writing. Other suggestions included having sufficient vocabulary, appropriate punctuation, and effective writing style. Finally, we can deduce that options “c, b, &d” were given equal importance as opposed to the first option “a”.

Q7: What are in your view the most challenging features in academic writing? (tick one or more options)

Table3.7. Students' Challenges in Academic Writing

Options	N	%
Vocabulary	51	31.28
Grammar	54	31.95
Content	13	7.69
Punctuation	28	16.56
Organization	23	13.60
Total	169	100%

According to the above table, we can deduce that the majority of students (31.95%) struggle with grammar. Similarly, the lack of having sufficient vocabulary hinders the quality of their written product (31.28%). A small number of students (7.69%) face difficulties when writing an effective content; coming up with ideas and thoughts that reflect a certain topic. Some respondents (16.56%) consider punctuation a challenging part which eventually could mislead the readers if not used properly. Finally, (13.60%) of them consider organization as the most challenging feature in academic writing.

Section Two: Challenges in Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

Q8: Do you enjoy writing a cause and effect essay?

Table3.8 .Students' Attitudes towards Writing a Cause and Effect Essay

Options	N	%
Yes	53	66.25
No	27	33.75
Total	80	100%

From the table above, it is shown that students do not feel disinterested when writing a cause and effect essay; indeed, the majority of them (66.25%) have responded positively to the question. Few of the students (33.75%) however, have responded negatively; probably because of the difficulties they may encounter.

Q9: Which aspects do you prefer to write about?

Table3.9. Students' Preferred Aspects in Writing Cause and Effect Essays

Options	N	%
Causes	36	45
Effects	15	18.75
Both	29	36.25
Total	80	100%

Writing about causes, effects, or both generally depends on the nature of the topic tackled; this is commonly found to be problematic to students. Most students (45%) would prefer to write about causes on the expense of effects; this is probably because most causes are found to be evident and clear to them. On the contrary, effects are more demanding in terms of reflexion and thinking. Some students though (18.75%) favoured writing about effects. This can be a proof to their abilities in reflexion about effects. A larger number of students (36.25%) have chosen the third option, which is to write about both causes and effects.

Q10: What type of organization do you prefer to use in writing a cause and effect essay? Justify your answer.

Table3.10. Students' Preferences for Cause and Effect Essays Organization

Options	N	%
Block organization	61	76.25
Chain organization	19	23.75
Total	80	100%

As observed, most students (76.25%), when writing cause and effect essays, tend to use the block organization method; their preference of this method is then justified in different sort of ways. While a great deal of them explains their choice by regarding the block organization as the easiest and simplest method; since it does not require a large number of paragraphs to include, it takes less vocabulary and background knowledge. Others, however, do prefer this method as they consider it to be an advantageous one, it helps achieving the unity of the essay and creating less confusion of ideas. They additionally assume that when using it, they feel free to organize different ideas. It is nevertheless agreeable that the achievement of a strong link between causes and effects, being separate in different blocks, is not quite guaranteed when using a block method. This is why a minority of students (23.75%) chose instead to apply a chain organization, which promotes the direct attachment of causes and effects. They find it more appropriate and easier when it comes to explaining the relationship between specific causes and effects; as they claim it to be better in providing cleaner reading and better understanding of ideas for their audience.

Q11: In your opinion, what are the most significant features of a cause and effect essay? Suggest others.

a. A clear statement of what the essay is about: cause, effect or both.

- b. An obvious reference of the relationship between the factors and their effects.
- c. An appropriate use of transition signals/expressions and verbs related to causes and effects.
- d. The relevance of supporting details in establishing a cause and effect relationship.
- e. The provision of accurate and reliable points to support the general idea.

Table3.11. The Most Important Features of Cause and Effect Essays According to Students

Options	N	%
a	55	34.16
b	26	16.15
c	44	27.33
d	21	13.04
e	15	9.32
Total	161	100

In an attempt to discover what aspect or feature of the cause and effect essay mattered the most for student, a large number of students (34.16%) selected option (a). Students have also stressed the importance of the appropriate use of transition signals related to causes and effects, since this option represented (27.33%) of the answers provided by the students. In addition, (16.15%) of the students, have emphasized the ability to draw obvious relationship between causes and effects, whereas (13.04%) have considered the relevance of the supporting sentences provided to back up the topic sentence. The answer with less frequency, however, was then the provision of reliable points to strengthen one's idea with a percentage of (9.32%). This reveals that the students in writing cause and effect essays pay more attention to make the topic clear at the level of the thesis statement, as well as achieving coherence and cohesion in the text.

Q12: Do you face difficulties in writing cause and effect essays? Explain why?

Table3.12. Students' Awareness of their Difficulties in Writing Cause and Effect Essays

Options	N	%
Yes	55	68.75
No	25	31.25
Total	80	100%

The results of this question have shown that the majority of the students (68.75%) really face difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. It is assumed generally that these difficulties might be due the particularity of this essay pattern; mainly in terms of organization and causal relationship using appropriate transition signals. Some students (31.25%), however, have responded negatively to this question by choosing option (b).

Q13: What part of a cause and effect essay writing is the most challenging for you? Explain why?

Table3.13. Students' Most Challenging Parts of Cause and Effect Essays

Options	N	%
The introduction	22	27.5
The body	39	48.75
The conclusion	9	11.25
All of the above	10	12.5
Total	80	100%

As in any other essay, the cause and effect type consists of three main parts. It is in the way of writing these different parts that its particularity appears. The majority of third year students (48.75%) affirm to struggle with writing the body paragraphs of the essay; they explain being in such difficulties is because of the important nature of the part itself. According to their justifications, the body is the most difficult part to write because it requires many details, limitless vocabulary, varied and related causes and effects, good organization of ideas and structure, and the use of appropriate transitional signals. The introductory part as well is found difficult by (27.5%) of the students. Depending on their comments, they struggle to present the main points related to the topic, to indicate the pattern of organization used, to organize the main ideas in an interesting way, and to identify whether the essay is about causes, effects or both. Only (11.25%) of them face difficulties when writing a conclusion, they justified this answer by their inability to summarize the main points of the essay explained in the body paragraphs into a shorter version. The percentage of (12.5%) represents the students who declared to struggle with all of the parts of a cause and effect essay. They reported that they encounter such difficulties because of the lack of reading, therefore the lack of background information and vocabulary, as well as the unawareness of the suitable structure.

Q14: What struggles do you usually face when writing a cause and effect essay? (tick one or more options)

- a. The confusion of whether to focus on causes, effects, or both.
- b. The inability to draw a relation between the causes and effects.
- c. The confusion of whether to use a chain or block organization.
- d. The inability to come up with details to support the relationship between causes and effects.
- e. The inability to distinguish between transitional signals of causes and effects.

Table 3.14. Students' Difficulties in Writing Cause and Effect Essays

Options	N	%
a	30	25.64
b	25	21.37
c	40	34.19
d	12	10.25
e	10	8.55
Total	117	100%

In an attempt to determine the difficulties EFL students bump into when writing cause and effect essays, it has been noticed that the most common answer was whether to use a block or chain organization (34.19%). It is indeed not always easy to determine which one works best with the topic given, especially since most students prefer the block method for its easiness. The second frequent answer noted (25.64%) is the uncertainty about whether to write about causes, effects, or both; this commonly happens at the level of the thesis statement. Students frequently fail to determine which one they should emphasize. The third difficulty has to do with the inability to relate causes to effects (21.37%). This problem in particular is important because the essay itself depends on this relationship. The inability to support this relationship with suitable details is also a problem to account for, since (10.25%) of students admit to struggle with it. Finally, the inappropriate use of transitional signals, which eventually leads to the failure of achieving coherence and cohesion, is found to be the least frequent problem (8.55%) that students encounter in their writings.

Q15: What do you think the reasons behind those difficulties are? (tick one or more options)

- a. Poor reading proficiency.
- b. Limited practice time.
- c. Lack of teachers' feedback.
- d. Students specific writing conditions (setting, time pressure...etc).

Table3.15. Reasons behind Students' Difficulties in Writing Cause and Effect Essay

Options	N	%
a	33	41.25
b	23	28.75
c	11	13.75
d	13	16.25
Total	80	100%

The aim behind this question was to determine whether students were aware of the reasons behind their difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. The majority (41.25%) have considered that it was due to poor reading proficiency; the thing that might have led to the limitation of their background knowledge and vocabulary. Others (28.75%) have justified their difficulties by the lack of practice time. Some of them (16.25%) included the conditions of inappropriate setting and time pressure in causing their struggles. The factor of teachers' lack of feedback has also been taken into consideration by a minority of (13.75%). Some students have added the factor of insufficient exposure to cause and effect essay models before having to write one by their own. This reveals that students are fully aware of their difficulties in writing cause and effect essays and the reasons behind them

Q16: Do your teachers help you to improve the writing of cause and effect essay? If yes, explain how?

Table3.16. Students' Attitudes towards Teachers' Feedback about Cause and Effect Essays

Options	N	%
Yes	42	52.5
No	38	47.5
Total	80	100%

The students' attitudes towards teachers' feedback in writing cause and effect essays were varied. Most of the students (52.5%) have responded positively to this question. They have confirmed that their teachers play essential parts in enhancing their capacities by providing clear and simplified explanation of the different components of the cause and effect essay and steps to write it. In addition to providing them with examples and models for illustration, suggesting interesting topics to work on, promoting practice inside and outside the classroom, encouraging them to do extensive reading, and correcting mistakes whenever necessary. The rest of the students (47.5%), however, have denied any intervention of their teachers in the attempt to overcome their struggles. This can be justified by the urge to complete the syllabus, and the lack of time to provide necessary help and instruction to improve students' level in writing cause and effect essays.

3.2.2. Analysis of Students' Essays

The following data reflect the results obtained from the analysis of students' cause and effect essays based on the criteria provided through a cause and effect essay checklist.

1. The Introductory Paragraphs

2. Table3.17. Features of Students' Introductory Paragraphs

Total of Introductions	Introduction							
	Lead				Thesis Statement			
20	Yes		No		About both cause and effect		About causes or effects	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	17	85%	3	15%	13	65%	7	35%

The above table represents the performance of students in writing their introductory paragraphs, which normally contain a lead and general statements about the topic as well as a thesis statement. It was shown in the above table that the majority of essays (85%) contained a lead about the topic tackled i.e. they introduced the topic with sentences such as: *"The divorce is a social phenomena that can happen between couples who are suffering from some problem"* (Essay n.1). Another example was *"Nowadays there is a common social phenomenon which is divorce"* (Essay n.3). Three essays (15%), however, lacked this element. They directly started their essays with the topic sentence. One example of that: *"Nowadays, the divorce between married people became an issue, due to a lot of reasons"* (Essay n.5). As for the use of the thesis statement, it was found that a great number of the essays (65%) had precise thesis statements about causes and effects. For example, *"This instable situation has many causes which make couples think about divorce, but this decision may have bad effects on children"* (Essay n.9). Yet, a smaller number of essays (35%) focused on either causes or effects; for instance one student wrote: *"It has been a lot in the last period and there are too many reasons for this"* (Essay n.10).

while another formulated it as follows: *"This phenomenon is very widespread and greatly affected children."* This is considered incorrect because it does not fit the question of the assignment.

3. The Cause and Effect Organisational Pattern

Table 3.18. Students' Choice of Organisational Patterns

Total of essays	Block Organisation	Format				Chain	Format			
		correct		incorrect			correct		incorrect	
20	16	N	%	N	%	4	N	%	N	%
		7	43.75%	9	56.25%		2	50%	2	50%

The majority of students (16) used the "block organisational pattern", whereas (4) used the "chain organisational pattern". Due to the essay's topic nature, which has a mixed focus (i.e., cause and effect), the students were left free to choose the suitable developmental pattern. The majority of the students (16) have applied the block pattern. One of the possible reasons behind their choice is that it might be easier for them to develop their ideas following this pattern. However, nine (9) students failed to structure the correct format in their attempt to use the block pattern. They misinterpreted the "block" to be one paragraph; as a result, only one paragraph was dedicated to explain the reasons and one paragraph to discuss the effects. In addition to this, they directly sequenced the causes and their supporting details in one paragraph, ignoring the fact that an effective paragraph focuses on one main idea completely and fully. As far as the use of the chain pattern, a minority (4) of students used it. Two (2) students, however, failed to structure the essay in

its correct format. Although they succeeded in establishing a causal relationship between causes and effects in the beginning, they failed to use the chain pattern appropriately because they shifted the focus on the effects.

4. Students' Use of Cause and Effect Cohesive Devices

Table 3.19. Students' Use of Causal Connectors

The total of cohesive devices used	Cause		Effect	
	N	%	N	%
36	30	83.33%	6	16.67%

As demonstrated in the above table, most of the used transitional signals (83.33%) expressed causes; whereas (16.67%) expressed results. The aim of using these signals is to connect the ideas and enable the readers to understand the relationship between causes and effects. There are three options for placing cohesive devices in a sentence; either in the beginning, the middle, or the end. However, students often misplaced them which made sentences confusing and nonessential. To illustrate this, a student wrote *“Since both don’t take their relationship seriously and importantly”* (Essay n. 16). Another student wrote *“First, because of the problems that occurred with the husband and his wife”* (Essay n.3). *Since* and *because* are conjunctions used to link the subordinate clause with the main clause; however, the students used them at the beginning of the subordinate clause which cannot stand alone. Thus, these sentences are incomplete and seem nonessential which means they are fragments. In addition to this, students stick on the use of the same cohesive devices mainly: *due to, in order to, because (of), since, as a result, therefore, and consequently*. To sum up, transitions that signal causes and effects are one of the elements

that the writer uses to maintain the essay’s coherence; the accurate use of those signals enables the reader to follow smoothly the flow and connection of ideas.

5. Students’ Use of Verbs and Nouns Expressing Cause and Effect

Table3.20. Students’ Use of Causal Verbs and Nouns

The number of causal transitions used	Verbs		Nouns	
	N	%	N	%
117	47	40.17%	70	59.83%

Cause and effect language refers to particular verbs and nouns which can be used to make it clear to the reader whether it is the cause or effect being discussed. Moreover, it is important to effectively demonstrate the causative relationships between events. As the above table shows, the percentage of verbs expressing cause and effect used by students is (40.17%), whereas the percentage of nouns was (59.83%). As noticed in essays, there is a limited use of verbs and nouns that signal causality, this clearly affected the quality of the students’ writings. The causal transition verbs that were used in the essays are listed as follows: *lead(s) to, cause(s), do not cause, affect, do not affect, get affected, impact, contribute to and attribute to (used only once)*, whereas the following nouns were used: *reason(s), cause (s), effect(s), consequence(s)*. As observed, the list contains basic terms which show that the majority of students were not able to vary the use of verbs and nouns expressing cause and effect.

6. Students' Confusion between "Effect" and "Affect"

Table3.21. Students' Misuse of "Effect" and "Affect"

Effect				Affect			
Correctly used		Incorrectly used		Correctly used		Incorrectly Used	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
14	41.17%	20	58.83%	7	58.33%	5	41.67%

"Effect" is generally used as a noun which means the result, while "affect" is used as a verb which means to influence or change. First of all, (41.17%) refers to the percentage of the times students used the noun "effect" correctly; whereas, (58.83%) showed confusion in using it due to spelling mistakes or their unawareness of how it should be used. Second of all, (58.33%) refers to the percentage of the times the verb "to affect" was used correctly; however, (41.67%) refers to the percentage of the times it was misused. To exemplify this, a student wrote, *"Divorce effect the mental, a lot of problems effect our mind"* (Essay n. 12). Another student wrote, *"Children who don't show these feelings will get effected the most"* (Essay n.2). A third example is *"Divorce can effect children's life psychologically"* (Essay n.16). In addition, someone wrote *"Divorce effects children badly"* (Essay n.17). These students confused "effect" to be a verb which is grammatically incorrect. The correct way to spell it is "affect". Moreover, there are students who confused "affect" to be a noun; for instance, *"...of course those couples with negative affects..."* (Essay n.1). A second example is, *"...and it has the major affect on their children"* (Essay n.6). This indicates that either they do not differentiate between "effect" and "affect" or they use them interchangeably.

7. The Generation of Topic Sentences in the Body Paragraphs

Table3.22. Students' Production of Topic Sentences in the Body Paragraphs

Number of body paragraphs	Topic sentences in body paragraphs					
	Yes				No	
	Correct		Incorrect		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
31	15	48.39%	4	12.90%	12	38.71%

From the above table, students' production of topic sentences to express causes and effects can be observed. It is noticed that from nineteen body paragraphs which contain topic sentences, fifteen of them were correctly formulated. For instance, *"There are many causes which push couples take the decision of divorce"* (Essay n.9). It was also expressed, *"Divorce has many effects on children"* (Essay n.9). While only four topic sentences weren't well written; they started their paragraphs as follows: *"due to all the reasons children can have a psychological problem and they will be scared from creating such these relationships and they will hate it at all"* (Essay n.1). Another student introduced the body paragraph as follows: *"that effects on children, the kids will start to live in an endless depression and have psychological problems cause of the absence of one of their parents"* (Essay n.3). An additional example is, *"however, the absence of one part of parent such as mother or father, the child will always be on a zone of lack"* (Essay n.7). It is, however, important to note that a considerable number of the body paragraphs (38.71%) lacked topic sentences; therefore, paragraphs were not clear whether they tackled causes, effects, or both. This indicates that students encounter serious problems in introducing the cause and effect pattern.

8. Students' Employment of Supporting Details in Body Paragraphs

Table 3.23. Students' Use of Supporting Details in the Body

Number of essays	Supporting details in the body					
	Yes		No			
20	Well developed	Not well developed	N	%		
	N	%	N	%		
	10	50%	9	45%	1	5%

According to the results in the above table, the majority (19) of the essays analysed were found to involve supporting details in their bodies. (50%) of these essays' supporting details were well developed and correctly formulated like: *"First of all, children will leave their seats at school. The repeated problems at home make children depressed and don't focus on their study. The second effect of divorce on children is the fail of the faith of family life. The separated family make children think that they can never make a happy family"* (Essay n.9). However, a number of the supporting details (45%) contained poor and weak information, which barely contributed to achieving the causal relationship or reflecting and strengthening the main ideas. As an example of that: *"The first main reason is the lack of commitment and communication, infidelity, domestic violence, and substance use. and more partners blamed their partners than blamed themselves for the divorce, also conflict, arguing and lack of physical intimacy"* (Essay n.4). In another paragraph, the following was written: *"children will lose interest in social activity, become emotionally sensitive, feelings of guilt increase in health problems and difficulty adapting to change"* (Essay n.4). Only one essay lacked the use of the supporting sentences, this means that

claims about the causes and effects were made, but were not supported with some facts to be strengthened.

9. Students' Use of General Transitional signals

Table 3.24. Students' Use of Transitional Signals

Total of general transitional signals used	Number of essays containing general transitional signals			
	Yes		No	
63	N	%	N	%
	18	90%	2	10%

It is shown that out of twenty essays collected, eighteen (90%) of them contained general transitional signals, whereas the two remaining essays (10%) did not include any of them. The total number of transitional signals used in the eighteen essays is sixty-three (63). Some examples of their use of these words are: *"in addition treason is the worst thing that hurt the human"* (Essay n.8). As well as *"To summarize, divorce is not always the solution that people should do when they are falling in a problem"* (Essay n.1). It has also been noticed that they have misused some of these words, like *"however the absence of one part of parent such as mother or father, the child will always be on a zone of lack"* (Essay n.7). The word *however* was used to introduce a body paragraph, which is incorrect since the clause is dependent. Yet the use of a considerable number of these transitional words does not indicate a variation in using them. As in almost all of the 18 essays, the following general transitional signals that were repeatedly used are: *first, second, also, finally, however, in addition, in the end, to sum up, while, and moreover.*

10. The Concluding Paragraphs

Table 3.25. Students' Appropriateness in Writing Conclusions

Conclusions used				Conclusions			
Yes		No		Well formed		Ill formed	
N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
16	80%	4	20%	6	37.5%	10	62.5%

It is observed that sixteen of the cause and effect essays (80%) contained conclusions while the remaining (20%) did not include any. Not all sixteen conclusions, though, were well-written and correct. Some of them did not even include transitional signals to mark the end of the essay. Some examples of that are: *"For many people divorce, is the final and the only solution...it is time to call it quit"* (Essay n.5). Another example of that: *"When a couple decides to get married... effects on children"* (Essay n.9). It was also noticed that a considerable number of these conclusions (62.5%) were incorrect. In the sense that they did not include neither a restatement of the thesis statement nor a summary of the essay's main points, such as: *"To conclude, divorce is a way of finding a solution for a problem... still a solution for a problem"* (Essay n.2). And also *"To conclude, parents should avoid divorce and should solve problems in a peaceful way...children will grow up in a good family"* (Essay n.10). As a result, only six conclusions (37.5%) were considered correct.

3.2.3. Analysis of Teachers' Interview

Q1: According to you, why do most students find writing cause and effect essays difficult?

Students face difficulties in writing in general and writing essays in specific. The aim of the first question is to find out their difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. The most prominent answer that was agreed on by all the six teachers is that students usually

fail to establish a causal relationship between causes and effects. The first teacher claimed that the students struggle to find a logical explanation related to causes and effects, whereas the second teacher reported that students write in a separate manner as if the cause belongs to an event and its effect belongs to another event. Another teacher explained that when the cause is related to the effect, students fail to view this effect as the possible cause of something else.

Moreover, three teachers affirmed that the structure and organisation of the cause and effect essay is the most problematic issue for the students. The first teacher reported that they don't know how to start and what to speak about (whether about causes or effects). Another difficulty, according to her, is the students' inability to tell clearly the final message in the conclusion because they do not consider that the reader must understand the phenomenon, and predict the future effects. In addition, the second and third teacher stated that even though students know how to write cause and effect paragraphs, they do not know what the topic covers in essays; whether causes, effects, or both. They also do not know how to organise their patterns.

Q2: Which part(s) of the essay do most students struggle with? (Introduction, body, or conclusion) Explain them further if possible?

This question was addressed in order to find out the parts of the cause and effect essay students struggle with the most. On the one hand, all of the teachers agreed that the body is the most challenging part when writing cause and effect essays; however, only four of them provided explanations. The first teacher acknowledged that the pattern of organisation is often violated. In addition, coherence and unity is not achieved by most students because they tend to misuse the ways to achieve them (transition signals). The second teacher explained that the body is the most difficult part because of the

organisation, the techniques, the ability to link the cause to its effect, and to tell clearly what the exact relationship is, which should not be just a combination of causes and effects. Another teacher noted that students have to develop the ideas rather than just mentioning them without further explanation. The fourth teacher claimed that students fail to link ideas together because they forget that it should be written in a paragraph format; that is to say, they do not write topic sentences.

On the other hand, five teachers considered the introduction to be challenging for students when writing a cause and effect essay. They agreed that most students do not know how to properly introduce the topic, provide background information, and move from the hook to the background information. According to them students fail to write correct thesis statements as well, mainly because they do not precise whether the focus of the essay is about causes, effects or both.

Q3: Which type of organisation (block or chain) do most students use commonly and why? And which one do they struggle with? Do they use these organisational patterns appropriately to fulfil the essay requirements?

Five teachers agreed that most students tend to use the block organisational pattern. According to the teachers, it sounds easier for the students to apply this type of pattern because they write the reasons in one block, and the effects in another block. However, they avoid using the chain pattern because they do not know how to make an effect suddenly turn into a cause for another effect. On the contrary, one teacher reported that students commonly use the chain pattern in order not to separate the subtopics which are tackled in the essay. The students feel confused when they move from one idea to another; hence, they avoid using the block pattern.

Regarding the appropriate use of these organisational patterns, four teachers asserted that most of their students failed to use them adequately. One of the teachers supported her claim by explaining that this is due to the lack of exposure to model essays and the lack of practice. Another teacher declared that students are able to apply the organisational patterns correctly when doing small activities, but they fail doing so in the exams especially. However, in some cases students use a mixture of both methods; like for example, they use the block pattern in the first paragraph and the chain pattern in the second paragraph. The two remaining teachers, on the opposite, noted that most of the students are able to use the organisation patterns appropriately. They claim that the direct instructions they provide for their students when writing cause and effect essays are very helpful.

Q4: Do students have sufficient background knowledge to answer cause and effect assignments?

This question was addressed to figure out whether students adequately integrate the knowledge they learn inside and outside the classroom to answer the cause and effect assignments. All of the teachers claimed that most of their students do not have enough background knowledge. According to them, students' unfamiliarity with the topic and inability to come up with effective content is due to their lack of autonomy. Even though the exam questions are feasible, yet students fail to come up with interesting ideas. When it comes to classroom activities, teachers allow their students to research the topic so that the content does not hinder their writing abilities.

One teacher specifically argued that students somehow have sufficient information concerning the form and structure of the essay because they receive enough instruction. Concerning the content, most students write similar ideas because they do not read. Thus,

students find it challenging to come up and reflect on new and distinct ideas. However, their ideas are generally considered acceptable because they are relevant to the topic. Another teacher reported that they do not have sufficient knowledge mainly because they do not practice; whereas writing is about practicing as she reported: “You have to practice essay writing. It is not about just learning what does a cause and effect essay means, how to write it, and what are the steps. You need to practice them whether in the classroom or at home.”

Q5: Are students aware of the following characteristics of the cause and effect essay? And are they able to fulfill them:

- Types of causes and effects (major and minor, immediate and remote)

All of the teachers agreed that their students are aware of those characteristics. Three teachers, however, do not teach their students explicitly the types of causes and effects. A teacher claimed that her students are aware of cause and effect types. They are mentioned in her explanation without including them in the dictation because not so much time is allocated for explaining the types of causes and effects. Unfortunately, because of their poor note taking abilities, the students mostly do not recall those types in their writing, which affect the quality of their writing. The same teacher added that they (teachers) encounter different essay qualities because the majority of the students do not depend on what they receive inside the classroom or what they do as further practice. According to the second teacher, the students are taught how to order the causes and effects based on their importance. They tend to order them from the least to the most important. The third teacher focuses on teaching the structure generally; she teaches them how to apply the block and the chain pattern. Because of the lack of time, she does not tackle these types of causes and effects.

Q6: Do students vary their use of transitional signals or do they use them limitedly? Which ones are commonly used?

The aim of the above question was to find out whether students were aware of the different transitional words used to achieve causality as well as coherence. All the six teachers answered by “No”; they all stated that most students used transitional words limitedly, although they were provided with a wide range of these words. One of the teachers went further explaining that in addition to providing them with these words, she usually advises them to look for new and original cohesive devices. Through the responses of all the teachers, it was shown that the most commonly used general transitional signals were: “*first, second, then, furthermore, in addition, however, but*”. As for the transitional words expressing cause and effect, the most commonly used appeared to be: “*because, as a result, due to, as a result*” They also claimed that a considerable number of the students used these words without being aware of their use.

Q7: What are the reasons behind students’ writing cause and effect problems? And what can you suggest to enhance their writing skills?

The above question was addressed in the purpose to get an insight about the reasons behind students’ problems in writing a cause and effect essay. It was discovered that all the teachers considered the lack of practice to be the most prominent cause. The first teacher reported that students are not given sufficient time in writing; yet students have enough time to practice outside the classroom, but still do not practice. Others maintained that most of their students write only for the assignment given by the teacher himself in the sense that they are noticed that they do not follow their instruction at home. Homework, for example, is done in a rush in the last minute; in the time when they are supposed to depend on their own and do some extra practice apart from the ones assigned by the

teachers. One teacher mentioned another factor which is the lack of interest. This is due to the nature of this type of essay which requires some intelligence in analysing situations. This teacher claimed that not all students are ready to think and deduce causes and effects of a given phenomenon. The lack of autonomous learning or writing, which was suggested by the three teachers, is also acknowledged to affect students' writing performance. Having very limited time, providing all the necessary information about the cause and effect essay, as well as practice and feedback to the students became challenging. Thus teachers stated that they frequently advised their students to search for further explanations and model essays to read and to imitate them at home in order to develop their writing styles, but this advice was unfortunately not followed according to the teachers.

As a follow up to this question, the teachers were also asked to provide the best solutions for students to overcome their difficulties in writing cause and effect essays. All the teachers agreed that more time has to be dedicated to put what has been learnt into practice. They focused on the necessity to practice writing cause and effect essays inside classrooms and under teachers' supervision, as well as outside of the classroom. Some of the teachers also suggested the autonomous learning to be an essential and beneficial solution for this problem. They affirmed that the students needed to depend more on themselves and write for self improvement rather than to fulfil assignments given by the teachers. One teacher also added that writing required a sort of scaffolding in which students are supposed to read as much as they can of model essays, and then try to apply what they've learnt to produce better cause and effect essays.

3.2.4. Discussion of the Results

The data collected from the three research tools were analysed quantitatively (students' questionnaire) and qualitatively (teachers' interview, and students' essays) to reach the

ultimate goal of the research. In addition, implementing these tools has been of worthy significance to confirm the hypothesis that was stated in the preliminary part of our study. In order to have accurate and reliable findings, the questionnaire was addressed to third year LMD students alongside an interview for teachers of the WE module. One of the reasons behind this decision is mainly because the questionnaire as a tool of study does not yield precise and detailed information. In addition to this, we relied on the students' essays as a triangulation tool to enhance validity and credibility of the research.

The first section of the questionnaire "*Academic Writing*" provided an overview of students' attitudes, perceptions, and preferences towards academic writing in general. It was revealed that most students had positive perceptions of writing in English and the WE module. They highlighted the importance of the writing skill and academic integrity in the other modules. Moreover, the majority of students expressed their intentions and willingness to improve their writing abilities. A large number of students self-evaluated their abilities in writing as average. However, the questionnaire has also shown that the majority of students did not consider the degree of complexity of ideas as important as the other features of academic writing. Although this factor plays a prominent role into making the written piece seem more formal and professional, it is not harmful if the students do not consider it. Finally, it was deduced that the students struggle with different aspect of writing mainly grammar and vocabulary.

In the second section entitled "*Challenges in Writing Cause and Effect Essays*", the data revealed that the majority of students preferred to use the block pattern over the chain pattern for a number of reasons; mainly because it is easier to be applied as they feel free to organize different ideas. In addition, using the block pattern helps in achieving the unity of the essay. However, they do not use the chain pattern because it is hard for them to directly link causes and their effects. The interview's data coincide with students' answer to this

question. Five teachers revealed that students indeed preferred to use the block pattern because it sounds easier for them to apply, and because they write the reasons in one block, and the effects in another block. Students, however, avoid using the chain pattern because they do not know how to make an effect suddenly turn into a cause for another effect.

Moreover, the questionnaires' data showed that the students mostly face difficulties when writing the introduction and the body of a cause and effect essay. Firstly, the body paragraph is difficult for students since it requires many details, related causes and effects, good organization of ideas, and the proper use of transition signals. Secondly, they struggle with the introduction because it is difficult to present the main points related to the topic, to indicate the pattern of organization used, and to identify whether the essay is about causes, effects or both. The teachers' answers complement perfectly the students' answers. According to them, when writing the body, the pattern of organisation is often violated; moreover, coherence and unity are not achieved by most students because they tend to misuse the tools to achieve them (transition signals). In addition, the ability to link the cause to its effect and to indicate the exact relationship based on causality is challenging to do. When writing the introduction, the teachers revealed that most students do not know how to properly introduce the topic, provide background information, and write correct thesis statements as well, mainly because they do not precise whether the focus of the essay is about causes, effects or both.

From the teachers' personal experiences, they argued that their students struggled to find a logical explanation related to causes and effects. Besides the structure and organisation being the most problematic issue for the students. The students' responses showed similar results as they reported the following difficulties: the confusion of whether to focus on causes, effects, or both; the inability to draw a relation between causes and effects, and the confusion of whether to use a chain or block organization. Both teachers

and students agree on the reasons that might hinder students' abilities in writing accurate cause and effect essays which are the lack of practice and reading.

The data obtained from the previous tools were confirmed through the conduct of a document analysis. This last tool served to illustrate the answers provided by the third year LMD students and the WE teachers. It was found that most students tended to use the block organisation over the chain pattern. However, they did not structure the correct format of the block pattern in the sense that they confused the word "*block*" to refer to a single paragraph. It was also noticed that they faced difficulties in writing the parts of the essay. Regarding the body paragraphs, it was observed that many of them did not include topic sentences in their paragraphs. This idea proves the teachers' claim that students fail to link ideas together because they forget that it should be written in a paragraph format; that is to say, they do not write topic sentences. The supporting details of the body paragraphs were found to be problematic as well. Students barely could reflect and back up their ideas through the provision of facts, examples, and statistics. The most prominent issue in the body paragraphs remains the inappropriate use of transitional signal and the inability to link causes and effects (achieving causality) which was particularly emphasised by the teachers. It was also revealed that students struggled to write precise and adequate thesis statements in the introductory paragraph. This means that they were confused whether to write about causes, effects, or both.

3.2.5. Limitations of the Study

As in any research, this study faced some limitations which are summed up as follows:

The time constraint is the major obstacle in this study. Because of the university's legislations during the pandemic and its attempt to follow safety protocols, the students had to attend classes only for a limited period. This has raised challenges for the researchers as

they struggled to assemble a sufficient number of students' cause of effect essays. Regarding the questionnaire, the respondents answered all of the questions. However, some of them had contradicted answers which indicated that they did not always show their real perspectives and preferences. In addition to this, some students refused to provide other suggestions and to justify their answers. Therefore, the students' carelessness in answering the questions might affect the questionnaire's results. The lack of previous studies in the research area hindered the researchers from establishing a solid theoretical framework. Because much of the academic documents about writing are instructional materials that are used for learning and teaching purposes, they convey simplified content. This is understandable considering the nature of the topic being too narrow. When it comes to cause and effect essays particularly, there was little prior research that is relevant to the dissertation.

3.2.6. Pedagogical Recommendations

The aim of this study is to identify the difficulties encountered by third year students at the department of English, Jijel University. Based on the obtained results, the following pedagogical recommendations are suggested:

- Favouring autonomous learning rather than depending only on the teachers' instruction means that students are recommended to be responsible for their own learning. Through the guidance of their teachers and after instruction, students should try to search new background knowledge and to strengthen their understanding of the cause and effect essay.
- Students usually perform better when they collaborate on a given assignment. This is useful in the sense that weak students with poor writing proficiency will benefit

from their peers and would make extra efforts to improve themselves (collaborative writing).

- Teachers should expose their students to an unlimited number of cause and effect essay models and encourage them to practise inside and outside the classroom based on these models. Exposure to model essays along with extensive practice from the part of the student is important to achieve high-quality writing.
- The provision of a detailed feedback is also necessary. In fact, teachers are supposed to correct their students' mistakes in order to make them aware of the problems to be solved.
- The audience can sometimes misidentify the causal relationship because it is unclear whether something causes another or the opposite. Thus, students must make sure to have evidence that a causal relationship does not only exist, but also should work in the direction that is chosen and intended by them.
- Students tend to mistake two events occurring at the same time to be causally related. The fact that these two events happened at the same time, does not indicate that the first event caused the second event. Students must confirm that there is causal relationship.
- Students have to use appropriate transitional signals to move from one cause or effect to another in a chain organisation, or from a cause paragraph to an effect paragraph in block organisation.
- The noun “effect” and the verb “affect” are used to write an effective cause and effect essay. Because of their similarities in sound and spelling, they are commonly misused by students. Therefore, the teacher should point out to the difference between them so that the confusion is clarified.

Conclusion

This chapter is devoted to the practical part of this study. It basically included the analysis and interpretation of the three data collection tools namely the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interview, and the document analysis. The research results revealed that third year LMD students did encounter difficulties in writing the cause and effect essay. Pedagogical recommendations to overcome the difficulties were suggested on this basis.

General Conclusion

The skill of writing is a complex process consisting of different sub-tasks to consider. It is nevertheless an essential element to be mastered by EFL students in order to improve their ability to express their ideas in a FL. The type of writing that is done in scholarly settings is academic writing. One of the activities that they have to perform is writing essays in general and cause and effect essays in particular. The latter is characterised by its special features and ways of organising the causes and effects.

The present study is principally concerned with the attempt to identify and determine the difficulties faced by third year LMD students, in the department of English/ Jijel University, when writing cause and effect essays. It aims to uncover these particular difficulties which hinder largely students' writing performance. It is thus assumed that when these difficulties in writing cause and effect essays were identified, the necessary measures could be taken in order to overcome them.

In an attempt to confirm this hypothesis, three chapters were devoted to addressing the issue. The two initial chapters reflect the study's theoretical framework. In the first chapter, the element of academic writing as the basic foundation of any type of writing are addressed. The cause and effect essay, as the central concern of this study, is tackled in the second chapter through the provision of its definition, organisation patterns, components, and major features. Accordingly, the third chapter is concerned with the fieldwork of this study. It includes the description of the data elicitation techniques used in this study, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interview, and the document analysis.

The study results have permitted to confirm the existence of difficulties faced by third year LMD students in writing cause and effect essays. These difficulties consisted mainly

of the lack of proficiency in writing the essay components, the inability to achieve causal relationships, the inappropriate use of transitional signals, and the misuse of the patterns of organisation of a cause and effect essay. It was also revealed that these difficulties resulted from the students' lack of practice and interest, alongside with the lack of teachers' detailed feedback concerning the cause and effect essay writing problems. Some pedagogical recommendations are addressed namely: encouraging collaborative writing and students' autonomy, inciting teachers to provide detailed feedback on their students' writing performances, exposing students to an unlimited number of model cause and effect essays, and most importantly, allocating more time in order to explain carefully the appropriate ways to express causality like the use of adequate transitional signals and cause and effect specific language.

In accordance with the obtained results, it can be concluded that the conduct of this study has permitted to answer the pre-formulated research questions. It served to identify EFL students' difficulties in writing cause and effect essays, along with the suggestion of some reasons for these difficulties and the measures to take in order to overcome them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

Appendix B: Teachers' Interview

Appendix C: Cause and Effect Essays Checklist

Appendix D: A Sample of Students' Essays

Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students, this questionnaire is designed as a part of a research work, which aims at investigating and identifying the problems encountered by third year students in writing a cause and effect essay. For this it would be much appreciable if you devote some of your precious time to fill it, as it would contribute to gather valuable and necessary data to complete this work. We reassure that any information collected will remain confidential, and that they will only be used anonymously to fulfill this work.

Please put a cross in the box corresponding to your answer, and justify the answers, explain or add your own whenever needed to.

Section one: Academic Writing

1. Do you like writing in English?

Yes

No

2. How would you evaluate your writing skill in English?

a. Good

b. Average

c. Poor

3. How do you regard the class of writing expression?

a. Important

b. Interesting

c. Boring

Justify.....

4. For which purposes do you write in English? (tick one or more options)

a. To perform your classroom assignments

b. To improve your writing skill level

c. For pleasure (chatting, diaries, short stories...)

Others.....

5. Does your teacher encourage you to write in English?

Yes

No

If yes, explain how

.....

6. In your opinion, what are the most important features of academic writing to consider? (tick one or more options)

a. The degree of complexity of ideas

b. The Clarity and accuracy of the ideas

c. The appropriate use of language

d. The good organization of the writing product

Others.....

7. What are in your view the most challenging features in academic writing? (tick one or more options)

- a. vocabulary
- b. Grammar
- c. Content
- d. Punctuation
- e. Organization of ideas

Others.....

Section two: Challenges in Writing Cause and Effect Essay

8. Do you enjoy writing cause and effect essays?

Yes No

9. Which aspects do you prefer to write about?

- a. Causes
- b. Effects
- c. Both

10. What type of organization do you prefer to use in writing a cause and effect essay?

- a. Block organization
- b. Chain organization

Justify your answer.....

11. In your opinion, what are the most significant features of a cause and effect essay?

- a. A clear statement of what the essay is about: cause, effect or both
- b. An obvious reference of the relationship between the factors and their effects
- c. An appropriate use of transition signals/expressions and verbs related to causes and effects
- d. The relevance of supporting details in establishing a cause and effect relationship
- e. The provision of accurate and reliable points to support the general idea

Others.....

12. Do you face difficulties in writing cause and effect essays?

Yes No

13. What part in cause and effect essay writing is the most challenging for you?

- a. The introduction
- b. The body
- c. The conclusion
- d. All of the above

Explain why

.....

14. What struggles do you usually face when writing a cause and effect essay? (tick one or more options)

- a. The confusion of whether to focus on causes, effects, or both
- b. The inability to draw a relation between the causes and effects
- c. The confusion of whether to use a chain or block organization

d. The inability to come up with details to support the relationship between causes and effects

e. The inability to distinguish between transition signals of causes and effects

Others.....
.....

15. What do you think the reasons behind those difficulties are? (tick one or more options)

a. Poor reading proficiency

b. Limited practice time

c. Lack of teachers feedback

d. Students specific writing conditions (setting, time pressure...etc)

Others.....
.....

16. Do your teachers help you to improve the writing of cause and effect essays?

Yes

No

If yes, explain how

.....
.....

Appendix B

Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers, it will be much appreciable if you accept to answer our interview, which is conducted for the purpose to help us investigate the issue, of third year students' problems in writing cause and effect essays, under study. The answers you provide us will only be used in this study, and will remain confidential.

Questions of the Interview

1. According to you, why do most students find writing cause and effect essays difficult?
2. Which part(s) of the essay do most students struggle with? (Introduction, body, or conclusion). Explain them further if possible?
3. Which type of organization (block or chain) do most students use commonly and why? And which one do they struggle with? Do they use these organizational patterns appropriately to fulfill the essay requirements?
4. Do students have sufficient background knowledge to answer cause and effect assignments?
5. Are students aware of the following characteristics of the cause and effect essay? and are they able to fulfill them:
 - Types of causes and effects (major and minor, immediate and remote)
6. Do students vary their use of transitional signals or do they use them limitedly? Which ones are commonly used?
7. What are the reasons behind students' writing cause and effect problems? and what can you suggest to enhance their writing skills?

Appendix C

Cause / Effect Essay Checklist Adapted from Belkhir-Benmostefa et al. (2018, p.48)

Cause and effect essay criteria	Yes	No
The essay is a cause and effect essay		
The essay's introduction contains an interesting lead		
The essay's thesis statement emphasises causes and effects		
The essay is organised either in a block or chain method		
The essay's paragraphs have a clear topic sentence		
The essays format is composed adequately with the pattern of organisation		
The causal relationship is established adequately (in a chain organisation essay)		
The essay's ideas are strongly supported using examples and facts		
Appropriate cause and effect verbs are employed		
The use of varied transitional signals		
The conclusion restates the thesis statement and summarises the essay's main points		

Appendix D

A Sample of Students' Essays

Essay n. 1

Topic: The divorce rate has increased nowadays, what are the reasons in your opinion and what could be the major effects on children.

The divorce is a social phenomena that can happen between couples who are suffering from some problems that can be helpful for their relationship and lead them to a hard decision and this may turn back to many reasons such as: lack of responsibility and treason, by affecting of course those couples with negative affects or in some other positive ways.

It is important to mention that the couples should respect each other and make their possibility to keep the relationship in a good situation in order to facilitate their living together and the absence of all of these will be further lead to big or a huge problems, as we can not forget how treason may play a strong role in destroying the couples' relationship.

Due to all these reasons children can have a psychological problems and they will be scared from creating such these relationships and they will hate it at all since they have a negative or bad perspective about it since that their parents have treated each other in a bad way.

To summarise, divorce is not always the solution that people should do when they (fully) are falling in a problem, it is better to (discuss) discuss the reason of it and understand it and step by step it will easy to solve. It is important to be a patient person and a strong one in order to avoid trouble.

Essay n.3

Topic: The divorce rate has increased nowadays, what are the reasons in your opinion and what could be the major effects on children.

Nowadays there is a common social phenomenon which is divorce, it has been a lot in the last period and there are two many reasons for this

First, because of the problems that occurred with the husband and his wife for many things

Second, there are some changes in one of them's mentality that the other part can't bear.

The problems that the couple may have are: the lack of responsibility from one of them, the lack of the communication between them, so no one of them can know what are the ideas of the 2nd part. The changing of some of them's mood and thinking of the marriage can be a big problem.

That affects on children, the kids will start to live in an endless depression and have psychological problems cause of the absence of one of their parents.

Essay n. 9

Topic: The divorce rate has increased nowadays, what are the reasons in your opinion and what could be the major effects on children.

As the number of couple married raises, the number of couple divorced raises too. This instable situation has many causes which make couples think about divorce, but this decision may has a bad effects on children.

There are may causes which push couples take the decision of divorce. First of all, The lack of inter understanding, when the couple don't understand each other, this raises communication problems between the partners. Second reason of divorce is the distance in relationship. The lack of physical intimacy can be large the distance between the couple so that the love will decrease. Finally, The domestic violence can be the most important reason that makes couples thinking about divorce. The verbal, physical and emotional violence abuse by a partner makes life with the other partner very difficult to conchud, lack of understanding, the distance in relationship and the domestic violence are the main causes why divorce is raised nowadays.

Divorce has many effects on children. First of all, children will leave their seats at school. The repited problems at home make children dipressed and don't focus on their study. The second effect of divorce on children is the fail of the faith of family life.

The separated family make children think that they can never make a happy family. Finally, divorce of the couple make the child in bad health, they neglect their child and his healthy food which make him ill.

When a couple decide to married, he should think more about their decision to avoid divorce and it's effects on children.

10 Essay no. 10

Topic: The divorce rate has increased nowadays, what are the reasons in your opinion and what could be the major effects on children.

Divorce is the termination of the marriage union which dissolves the bond of matrimony between married couple. This phenomenon is very widespread and greatly affected on children.

In this cases of divorce there are many effects comes best effects on children. To start in a court of a divorce children are tremendously affected and in most cases attention is not given to them the way it should. However, Divorce and separation has become a tradition in the contemporary world. Spouses barely finish 10 years in marriage before they start having misunderstandings. This divorce makes the children suffer from a lack of family, attention and neglect, and this has children to become homeless and they turn into social pests that lower their educational and moral level.

To conclude, Parent should avoid divorce and solve problems in a peaceful way or from the first it's good to choose the right partner and in this way the family will be cohesive and the children will grow up in good family.

[]

Essay n. 17

Topic: The divorce rate has increased nowadays, what are the reasons in your opinion and what could be the major effects on children.

The causes of divorce and its consequences:

Nowadays, the court is full of divorce cases. Parents are looking to divorce as the best solution for their problems. However, divorce is not a good solution. Thus, what are the major reasons of divorce and its effects on children?

Firstly, the most noticeable reason for divorce is the father's irresponsibility towards his family. A woman can't take all the responsibilities by her own; especially the ones that the father is supposed to do. Secondly, arranged marriage, in most cases, leads to divorce because the couples don't know each other, fights always occur. Thirdly, the social and economical differences between the couples may also lead to divorce. Divorce affects children badly. Children may get neglected in the absence of the father. In addition, divorce may cause serious psychological problems to the children; it is not easy to separate a child from one of his parents.

To sum up, the irresponsibility of the father, arranged marriage and the differences between parents are the main reasons ~~of~~ that lead to divorce. The father ~~can~~ affects children badly.

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Résumé

Cette étude est une recherche descriptive qui tente d'identifier les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants de troisième année du département d'anglais à l'Université de Jijel lors de la rédaction d'essais de cause à effet. Lorsque les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants de troisième année dans la rédaction d'essais de cause à effet sont identifiées, il serait plus facile d'anticiper des solutions pour améliorer les productions des étudiants. Afin de répondre aux questions de recherche, trois outils de collecte de données ont été utilisés, à savoir un questionnaire, une analyse de document et une interview. Le questionnaire a été administré à un échantillon de (80) sur (262) étudiants de troisième année du département d'anglais à l'Université de Jijel. Il a comme but de recevoir une idée générale à propos des attitudes des étudiants à l'égard de l'écriture, ainsi que les difficultés auxquelles ils sont confrontés lors de la rédaction d'essais de cause à effet. Ces difficultés ont été examinées d'avantage à travers l'analyse des essais d'étudiants soumises par vingt (20) d'entre eux, leurs essais ont été évalués à l'aide d'une liste de contrôle. Le troisième outil était une interview qui a été menée auprès de six (6) enseignants d'expression écrite du même département. Elle a servi à compléter les données obtenues à partir des outils précédents, en plus d'obtenir des informations plus fiables sur le problème posé dans cette recherche. Les résultats de cette recherche ont indiqué que les étudiants de troisième année rencontrent des difficultés lors de la rédaction des essais de cause à effet. Ces difficultés consistent principalement en l'incapacité d'établir des relations causales, l'utilisation inappropriée des signaux de transition et l'incapacité d'utiliser correctement les schémas d'organisation de cause à effet. En se basant sur les résultats obtenus, quelques recommandations pédagogiques ont été suggérées pour surmonter ces difficultés.

ملخص

الدراسة الحالية هي عبارة عن بحث وصفي لمحاولة تحديد الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة جيجل عند كتابة المقالات المتعلقة بالسبب والنتيجة. عند ما يتم تحديد الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الثالثة في كتابة مقالات السبب والنتيجة، فسيكون من الأسهل توقع الحلول للتغلب عليها. للإجابة على أسئلة البحث، تم اعتماد ثلاث وسائل لجمع البيانات، وهي الاستبيان وتحليل الوثيقة والمقابلة. تم تنفيذ الاستبيان على عينة من (80) طالباً من (262) في السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة جيجل. يهدف إلى الحصول على نظرة عامة عن مواقف الطلبة تجاه الكتابة، بالإضافة إلى الصعوبات التي يواجهونها عند كتابة مقالات السبب والنتيجة. تم فحص هذه الصعوبات بشكل أكبر من خلال تحليل المقالات المقدمة من طرف عشرين (20) من هؤلاء الطلبة، و تم تقييم مقالاتهم بناء على قائمة مرجعية. الوسيلة الثالثة عبارة عن مقابلة أجريت مع ستة (6) مدرسين للتعبير الكتابي في نفس القسم. ساعدت في استكمال البيانات المحصل عليها عن طريق الأدوات السابقة، بالإضافة إلى الحصول على معلومات أكثر موثوقية حول المشكلة. أشارت نتائج هذا البحث إلى أن طلبة السنة الثالثة يواجهون صعوبات في كتابة مقالات السبب والنتيجة. تكمن هذه الصعوبات بشكل أساسي في عدم القدرة على تحقيق العلاقات السببية، والاستخدام غير المناسب للإشارات الانتقالية، وعدم القدرة على الاستخدام الصحيح لأنماط الترتيب الخاصة بالسبب والنتيجة. بناءً على النتائج، تم تقديم بعض الاقتراحات البيداغوجية للتغلب على هذه الصعوبات.