Advancing EFL Writing Proficiency in Jordan: Addressing Challenges and Embedding Progressive Strategies

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Abstract: Considering the critical role of writing in EFL contexts, this study sets out to examine the writing skills of Jordanian EFL students, addressing both the challenges they encounter and the potential strategies for enhancing their capabilities. To achieve this, the researchers implemented two distinct methods of data collection: a survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey data were analysed utilizing basic descriptive statistics, while the interview data were examined based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The participants in this study included 150 Jordanian EFL students majoring in English language across three public universities, alongside eight experienced EFL writing instructors. The results revealed a set of writing challenges confronted by the students, such as the struggle to compose grammatically accurate and coherent text. These difficulties originated from a variety of factors, notably a deficiency in linguistic knowledge and a lack of motivation. Moreover, the study emphasized the crucial influence of the teaching process, which holds the potential to impact the students' writing proficiency either positively or adversely. To address the challenges in EFL writing, this study has outlined potential strategies, encompassing effective instruction, the enrichment of students' linguistic knowledge, the integration of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the encouragement of student motivation. Notably, the integration of AI tools emerges as a novel strategy with the potential to revolutionize teaching practices by offering personalized feedback and enhancing the learning experience. This research substantially contributes to the existing body of literature on EFL writing, revealing the specific challenges among Jordanian EFL students, and providing a comprehensive set of practical and innovative solutions for EFL writing instructors.

Keywords: AI in EFL writing, EFL writing difficulties, EFL writing instruction, EFL writing proficiency, grammatical competence, lexical knowledge, textual Coherence

1. Introduction

Writing is a pivotal communication skill for English learners, essential for communicating messages with clarity and coherence. It stands as a core competence in academia, where creating well-structured text is integral to success. This skill goes beyond mere composition; it cultivates linguistic precision, reinforces grammatical and lexical proficiency, and stimulates critical thinking. Thus, its mastery is importance for students in EFL settings, aiding in the development of a broad range of academic and cognitive abilities which can be done through consistent practice and structured learning (Rao 2007; Godwin-Jones 2018; Anh

2019). It requires regular engagement with varied writing tasks and feedback on performance.

Mastering English writing is essential for Jordanian EFL students, significantly contributing to their academic language proficiency. In detail, English is a core subject in Jordan, taught from kindergarten through higher education, highlighting its importance across all educational levels. As students progress, they are expected to handle more complex writing tasks, demonstrating a clear understanding and application of English writing conventions. This skill is not just vital for academic success; it also opens doors to international opportunities and enhances employability, as English is a global language.

EFL learners at Jordanian universities often face significant difficulties in mastering writing skills, with even simple paragraph construction proving arduous. Studies have consistently identified a range of writing issues among these students, including limited vocabulary and weak coherence, which affects their ability to produce well-structured texts (Ibnian 2017; AL-Widyan and Abu Darwish 2019). Moreover, an apparent disregard for the importance of writing further hampers their quest for mastery.

Nevertheless, despite these insights, previous studies have not provided an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon nor practical strategies to enhance students' skills. Consequently, the current study endeavours to systematically fill this gap, aiming to acquire a profound understanding of the existing issue by exploring the types of writing challenges faced by the students, identifying the causes, and proposing practical solutions to address these challenges, all while considering the role of technological advancements in enhancing the students' writing skills, in particular AI-driven tools in EFL writing settings. To this end, the study aims at answering the following questions:

RQ.1: What are the most common writing difficulties encountered by EFL Jordanian students?

RQ.2: Which factors contribute to the emergence of writing difficulties encountered by EFL Jordanian students?

RQ.3: What strategies can be effectively implemented to address the writing challenges encountered by EFL Jordanian students?

2. General background

2.1 Writing

Writing is a complex skill involving both physical and intellectual activities, such as word composition and idea organization, which are crucial for English Language learners and recognized as challenging, particularly in an EFL context (Anh 2019). Additionally, much research indicates that writing is complex, and students often struggle to learn and write effectively. For instance, cognitive process models, specifically, highlight the writer's role in managing cognitive challenges throughout the writing process, including stages such as planning, translating, and reviewing (Olive Alves and Castro 2009). Subsequently, the writing process involves pre-writing for idea organization, drafting focused on the flow of ideas, editing for coherence and lexical choice, and ultimately, publishing the completed text.

Moreover, writing is also seen as a problem-solving activity, necessitating significant cognitive effort to produce cohesive texts (White and Arndt 1991). Additionally, textuality is another key area of focus. This aspect involves the structure, coherence, and the relationship between writer and reader, with the overarching goal of creating unified, meaningful work that effectively communicates with the audience (Halliday and Hasan 1976, 1989; Hoey 1991).

In the context of Jordan, acquiring English writing proficiency is a pivotal element of language competence for EFL students in Jordan, particularly in academic settings. English is a central subject across educational levels, starting from kindergarten through to higher education, underscoring its significance. As learners advance, they face more sophisticated writing tasks, necessitating a thorough comprehension and application of English writing norms. Mastery of writing is not only essential for scholarly achievements; it also paves the way for global interactions and boosts career prospects since English is the lingua franca of the global community.

Yet, despite the commitment of various educational institutions to enhance students' writing abilities, a gap persists in the implementation of modern and advanced English language teaching strategies, especially regarding writing pedagogy (Ibnian 2017). Additionally, EFL instructors often consider compositions simply as end-products, directing their attention to evaluating and grading students' writings, rather than improving the efficacy of their writing methods.

2.2 EFL writing difficulties

Attaining writing proficiency in EFL settings is notably difficult, necessitating organized, impactful, and all-encompassing teaching and exercises (Alsariera and Yunus 2023). Students worldwide struggle with this skill, often unable to craft well-constructed texts. Acknowledging this, researchers have sought to pinpoint the core difficulties EFL learners face, classifying them into four key areas: grammar, mechanics, spelling, and vocabulary (Ariyanti and Fitriana 2017; Ginting 2018).

Grammar mastery is crucial for EFL/ESL learners to improve their writing, as Halliday (1985) underscored, with the accurate use of grammatical rules being key. However, EFL learners often struggle with forming grammatically correct sentences, especially in verb usage. Challenges include confusion over irregular verbs, subject-verb agreement errors, and auxiliary verb omissions, as noted by Alahmadi (2019) and Alshalan (2019). These verb issues are exacerbated by article misuse—stemming from the linguistic differences between Arabic and English—leading to frequent errors (Yassin and Hamed 2023). Furthermore, Arab learners commonly struggle with prepositions, often misusing them due to the contrast in prepositional application between Arabic and English (Aziz 2022). Hence, it can be deduced that EFL learners face considerable challenges when attempting to write complete sentences with accurate grammar, pointing to their learning process that require focused effort and thoughtful support. This challenging situation not only reveals the nature of English grammar but also acts as a critical factor in evaluating the learners' overall language proficiency across various contexts.

Besides the previously mentioned difficulties, EFL learners also grapple with the correct application of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling when writing in English. In this regard, studies suggest that first language (L1) interference is a significant cause (Olimat and Al-jamal 2022). Furthermore, research indicates EFL students' lack of necessary linguistic knowledge and skills, including the use of commas, periods, capital letters, semicolons, and adherence to spelling conventions (Bani Younes and Albalawi 2015; Hussain 2019; Abdulrahman 2022). Additionally, these studies reveal that insufficient instruction significantly contributes to these issues. Indeed, the deficiency in linguistic knowledge and skills in the areas of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling intensifies these issues. EFL learners may find it challenging to determine when to use a comma to denote a pause or separate items in a list, when a period is required to end a sentence, or when a capital letter must be used at the beginning of a sentence or for proper nouns. Additionally, the complexities of English spelling present further difficulties, leading to frequent errors that detract from the professionalism and overall quality of their writing.

Vocabulary mastery is a crucial difficulty, often emphasized by researchers. It involves both understanding and using words, a key facet of language acquisition (Williams 2003). Despite recognition of its importance, EFL/ESL students frequently struggle to apply the right lexical items in writing (Karima, Hellalet, and Breeze 2022; Nhung 2023). Studies show these learners often memorize words in isolation, hampering effective communication. Furthermore, research by Bani Younes and Albalawi (2015), Alharthi (2018), and Khatter (2019) identifies the lack of suitable vocabulary learning strategies as a major obstacle affecting the range and utility of students' vocabulary. However, learners are encouraged to enhance their lexical knowledge and learn how to use the appropriate lexical items in context. By doing so, they not only reinforce their vocabulary reservoir but also develop a better understanding of when and how to employ these lexical items effectively.

Writing coherently represents another challenging aspect of EFL/ESL writing. In this regard, many researchers and linguists, including Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Hoey (1991), have revealed the pivotal role that grammatical and lexical cohesion play in organizing written text and ensuring its unity. Nevertheless, a range of recent studies have revealed that many EFL learners consistently struggle to produce coherent and connected written texts (Naser and Almoisheer 2018; Alsariera and Yunus 2021, 2023). Nevertheless, the learners' inability to write coherently and effectively organize texts is attributed to their limited knowledge of various grammatical and lexical items. More importantly, the roots of these difficulties are complex, stemming from inadequate educational practices, a lack of awareness among EFL/ESL instructors regarding the importance of grammatical and lexical devices in academic writing, and the learners' own unawareness of these critical elements.

Beyond structural and lexical issues, research indicates that the learning methods and strategies in writing profoundly affect EFL students' success in handling writing challenges (Bakry and Alsamadani 2015). Such strategies guide

writers in text creation (Witte and Faigley 1981). Studies have also explored writing operations like pre-writing, drafting, and reviewing before publishing the final text. Specifically, writing involves prewriting, drafting, editing, and publishing stages (Hyland and Hyland 2006). Annab (2016) found that writing includes various sub-processes such as planning, translating, and reviewing. Accordingly, the impact of learning processes and the strategies utilized by students plays a vital role in improving EFL writing skills. Therefore, EFL instructors need to provide strategies that are practical, and grounded in theory to address the various stages and detailed sub-processes involved in writing.

Finally, writing engages complex cognitive processes involving the communication of intentions, the synthesis and structuring of ideas, the discovery of solutions, and the deployment of critical thinking (Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal 2016; Ginting 2018). Moreover, writing is a purpose-driven exercise where the writer employs a systematic method to extract and refine their thoughts into a coherent and articulate presentation aimed at the reader. In this regard, Cumming (1989) argues that writing extends well beyond the mere conversion of language into written symbols; it also involves the mental processes of idea generation, textual composition, and the conversion of these ideas into tangible text. Consequently, it is essential for writers to master a diverse range of skills as they engage in the written composition.

In conclusion, EFL learners encounter critical obstacles in writing accurately and meaningfully, mainly due to limited grammar and vocabulary proficiency. Clearly, without solid grammatical knowledge and lexical variety, EFL students often struggle to articulate their thoughts, leading to ineffective writing. Hence, it is apparent that they need effective support to enhance their writing skills. This study aims to carefully outline the range of challenges Jordanian students face, uncover the root causes of these issues, and offer potential strategies for improvement.

3. Methodology

A mixed method framework was followed to attain the objectives of the research. Accordingly, this design was implemented to achieve a holistic understanding of the current issue through complementary qualitative and quantitative data.

3.1 Sample

The target population of the study was the English language and literature students at three public universities in Jordan due to their strategic locations across different regions of Jordan, and their significant role in delivering quality programs and standing as influential pillars in the academic community. More importantly, one of the selected universities has notably secured a high international rank, showcasing excellence in delivering higher education and training, further creating the credibility and validity of the research findings.

Regarding the participants of the current study, they were all selected using the purposive sampling approach due to its appropriateness for the study objectives. The sample included fourth-year undergraduates from English Language programs

at three universities. Additionally, they had completed at least one writing course. They were also enrolled in an advanced writing course. Finally, they were all EFL Jordanian students, sharing common cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, 150 students were recruited to participate in the study. On the other side, 8 writing instructors from the same universities were chosen to participate in the interview. These instructors were specifically selected based on their extensive experience in teaching EFL writing, ranging from 5 to 10 years within higher education institutions. Significantly, this selection criterion was vital to guarantee obtaining of a profound and informed set of qualitative data.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the study, a survey questionnaire was adapted to answer RQ1 and RQ2. Specifically, the questionnaire was used to explore the areas and causes of writing challenges that the EFL students face. This type of quantitative data was collected to enable the researchers to gain descriptive information from the respondents (Bryman 2004). Accordingly, the researchers developed a 45-item questionnaire, divided into two sections. Specifically, it comprised two main sections: writing challenges and contributing factors. The first section included 25 close-ended questions, targeting to capture the EFL students' perceptions of the issues they face in writing. As such, it addressed a variety of writing skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, sentence structures, vocabulary, coherence and unity, spelling, and punctuation. Conversely, the second section incorporated 20 close-ended questions related to potential contributing factors to writing difficulties, including aspects like grammatical and lexical knowledge, motivation, feedback, practice, the interference of L1, and so on.

More importantly, it is worth mentioning that the study incorporated Likert scale, a renowned and widely utilized instrument in evaluating the responses of individuals. In addition to that, the scale typically ranges from 1 to 5 or 7, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5/7 signifies strongly agree. It, also, allows researchers to quantitatively collect comprehensive data and assess patterns within a population. Additionally, the Likert scale offers a balance between qualitative and quantitative research methods as it captures subjective information while enabling statistical analysis based on collective responses. It is worth noting that in this study, the scale of the questionnaire was chosen to range from 1 to 5, ensuring a comprehensive and precise understanding of the participants' viewpoints. Importantly, the questionnaires were distributed by the researchers on July 9, 2023, to ensure that students could complete them autonomously and free from any external influence. Finally, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the main trends and patterns. In a more detailed examination, responses were methodically compared across different questions to pinpoint any inconsistencies or deviations, ensuring a thorough and accurate representation of the collected data.

Following the distribution of the survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to answer RQ.3 between the 11th and 25th of July 2023. Remarkably, this particular data collection method is favored for its flexibility,

enabling a thorough examination of existing challenges and the identification of possible strategies to overcome them. To this end, interviews were conducted online via Webex with a total of eight instructors, comprising six males and two females who were presented with a specific set of pre-established questions. Additionally, it is crucial to state that the average of the interviews was about 15 minutes.

The interview questions focused on the identification of writing challenges students face, the methods instructors employ to address and manage these difficulties, and the discussion of viable strategies to alleviate such problems. Furthermore, the following are some of the semi-structured interview questions.

1. In detail, can you describe the specific types of writing problems that your students encounter most frequently?
2. From your perspective, what are the underlying causes of the recurrent writing problems?
3. Reflecting on your experience, what strategies or resources would you recommend for EFL learners to independently diagnose and improve their writing weaknesses?
4. Regarding the rapid advancements in language learning technologies, how do you envision the future of writing instruction in an EFL setting?
5. How do you assess the role of writing instruction in the writing classes?

After conducting the interviews, the obtained collected data were analyzed utilizing thematic analysis, as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is noteworthy to mention that their analytical approach comprises six phases: starting with familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally, writing the report.

3.3 Ethical standards

The researchers emphasized the importance of anticipating ethical concerns, which include safeguarding participants, maintaining trust, ensuring research integrity, and addressing unexpected issues (Creswell 2014). To adhere to these ethical standards, the researcher personally conducted all written tasks and interviews, providing a comfortable setting for participants. They also made sure that all information would be kept anonymous, confidential, and used solely for the study. In addition, the participants' data were coded to maintain anonymity.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Major types of writing difficulties

In relation to RQ 1, the collected data revealed insightful results about the challenges EFL students face in their writing. The most important challenge, as indicated by 73.1% of the students, was lexical knowledge, highlighting a significant need for enhanced vocabulary training and support. Closely followed by their inability to maintain coherence and unity in their writing, as indicated by 68.13% of the participants, pointing towards a need for training in writing coherently and connecting ideas cohesively. Conversely, spelling was also among the less challenging aspects, with 35.1% of students expressing difficulty in this

area. Similarly, punctuation was deemed the least challenging, with only 21.7% of students finding it difficult, suggesting a relative comfort with applying punctuation rules. Figure 1 presents the types of writing difficulties among the students.
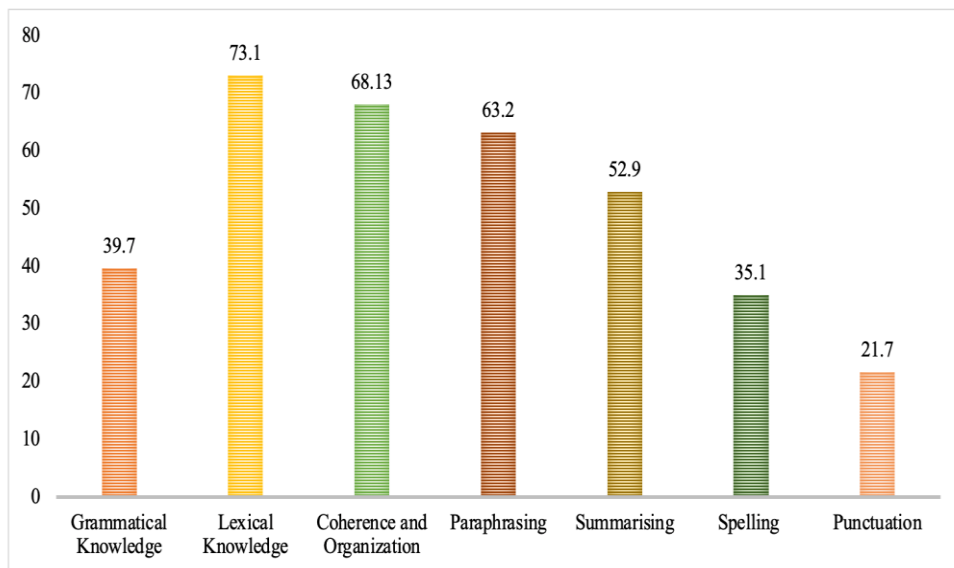

Figure 1. Types of EFL Jordanian students' writing difficulties

An examination of Figure 1 revealed that 39.7% of the students indicated experiencing significant difficulties with grammar. More specifically, the principal aspects of these grammatical challenges include complex verb forms (64%), use of passive voice (58%), indefinite articles (51%), confusing prepositions (53.6%), nouns and pronouns (50.8%), adjective clauses (69.4%), prepositional clauses (71%), and modals (60%). However, Table 1 that presents the grammatical obstacles faced by EFL students in their writing. Consequently, the results clearly highlight that a predominant issue is the lack of grammatical knowledge among Jordanian EFL students, resulting in grammatical errors in their English writing (Alghazo and Alshraideh 2020).

Table 1. Grammatical difficulties in EFL Jordanian students' writing

Area of Difficulty	Percentage
Verb Forms	64
Passive Voice	58
Indefinite Articles	51
Prepositions	53.6
Nouns and Pronouns	50.8
Adjective Clauses	69.4
Propositional Clauses	71
Modals	60

Regarding the students' lexical knowledge, the findings revealed that only 26.9% of EFL students were able to utilize complex types of lexical items, such as antonyms and hyponyms, in their writing. Conversely, 73.1 percent of the respondents tended to apply lexical repetition in their writing. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that many studies have revealed that EFL Arab learners commit lexical errors in their writing (Akki and Larouz 2021; Mukhlif and Challob 2021; Abu Rumman and Rabab'ah 2023). The obtained results thus highlighted that EFL learners often resort to using simple lexical items, avoiding more complex options due to their limited knowledge in this area. As for difficulties in coherence and organization, 68.13% of the respondents disclosed to facing such challenges in their writing. Table 2 reveals the main issues students encounter in creating organized paragraphs. The results display significant deficits in areas such as coherence and unity (72.9%), paragraph organization (68.13%), forming authentic topic sentences (60.4%), providing relevant supporting sentences (81.9%), concluding sentences (67.82%), and utilizing appropriate cohesive devices (59%). Evidently, these findings suggest that maintaining coherence and organization in writing is a significant difficulty for many students (Elkhayma 2020; Alsariera and Yunus 2023). More importantly, these insights not only validate the presence of lexical challenges highlighted in previous research but also specify the nature of these challenges, emphasizing the learners' reliance on simpler lexical items and their avoidance of more complex ones.

Table 2. Coherence and organization difficulties in EFL Jordanian students' writing

Area of Difficulty	Percentage
Maintaining coherence and unity	72.9
Paragraph organization	68.13
Crafting topic sentences	60.4
Presenting supporting sentences	81.9
Creating concluding sentences	67.82
The use of appropriate cohesive devices	59

Additionally, the results showed that 63.2 percent of the participants acknowledged their inability to paraphrase complex sentences effectively. Moreover, 52.9 percent of the respondents were reported to be incompetent in summarizing complex sentences efficiently. In the same vein, these findings align with those of several recent studies conducted by Naser and Almoisheer (2018), and Mustafa, Arbab and El Sayed, (2022). Thus, it can be inferred that the students face difficulties in producing coherent texts, primarily due to insufficient command over cohesive devices and inadequate exposure to authentic texts. These devices, crucial for linking sentences and structuring ideas, are often ignored, resulting in disjointed writing. Moreover, the lack of interaction with authentic texts denies students the

model examples they need to adopt the flow of the language. Indeed, these deficiencies are evident in writings that lack clear and logical progression, pointing to an urgent requirement for educational measures that concentrate on these essential elements of language learning.

4.2 Contributing factors

In addressing RQ2, the researchers administered the second part of the survey questionnaire to shed light on the potential causes of students' difficulties in writing. This section consisted of 20 close-ended questions. As depicted in Figure 2, the predominant cause of the observed phenomenon was the students' insufficient linguistic knowledge, reporting 77.4 percent of the responses. It is also apparent that inadequate educational practices significantly contributed to this issue. The subsequent sections will provide a comprehensive analysis of these findings.
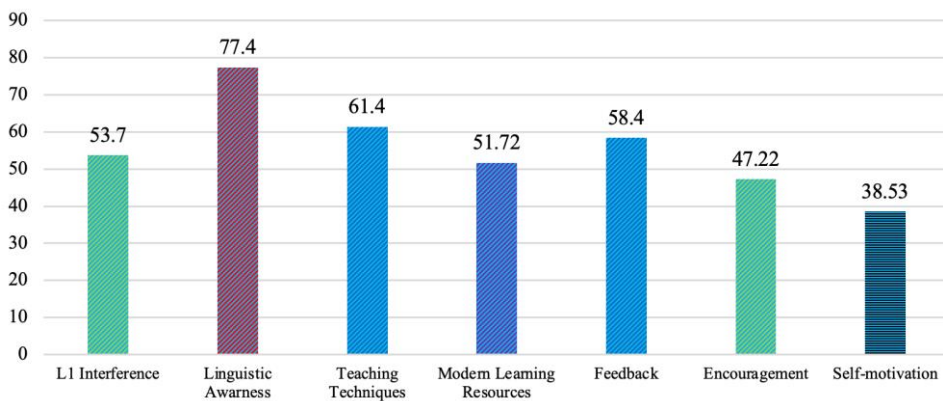

Figure 2. Key factors contributing to EFL students' writing difficulties

4.2.1 Students' linguistic knowledge

Initially, the students' inadequate linguistic awareness significantly impeded their writing capabilities, preventing them from fully comprehending the different aspects of language that include grammatical, lexical, and discourse elements. The findings highlight that the principal obstacle was a lack of linguistic knowledge (77.4%), which manifested prominently in the writing of the students.

Undoubtedly, without a solid foundation in grammatical knowledge, EFL students may find it difficult to distinguish between appropriate uses of verb tenses, prepositions, articles, and other grammatical structures. Since it is a common challenge among the students (Hawari, Al-Shboul and Huwari 2022; Mustafa et al. 2022). Moreover, the English language encompasses ambiguous grammar rules and exceptions, challenging even native speakers to consistently apply them correctly (Al-widyan and Abu Darwish 2019). Consequently, the findings indicate that students may feel discouraged when they make mistakes in their writing, potentially leading them to avoid practicing or seeking feedback on grammar. In fact, students' difficulties with grammar stem from their limited exposure and practice with the

English language, resulting in a weak understanding and use of its complex grammatical structures. Moreover, the complexities of English grammar, along with its numerous exceptions intensify these challenges, making it difficult for EFL students to attain proficiency and confidence in their writing skills.

Regarding lexical competence, the study also revealed a prevalent lack of lexical knowledge among the students when it comes to writing. In fact, this issue stems from the students' limited vocabulary, often causing them to resort to using basic, familiar words (Naser and Almoisheer 2018). In addition to that, this limitation hinders their ability to express their ideas clearly, potentially leading to confusion and misunderstandings. Notably, students tend to rely on their limited vocabulary, compensating for their deficiencies by repetitively using simple lexical items in their writing. Evidently, this is a crucial factor to address, given the paramount importance of written communication in academic and professional settings (Alsariera and Yunus 2023).

Hence, the study highlights the challenges EFL students encounter due to their insufficient linguistic knowledge, including essential areas such as grammar and lexicon. Furthermore, these difficulties can impede students' skills, subsequently discouraging them from engaging in proactive practice and constructive writing.

4.2.2 Interference of L1 (Arabic)

Beyond the students' linguistic knowledge, the findings revealed that the interference of Arabic as their first language (L1), affecting 53.7 percent of the students, had negative impacts on their EFL writing. Admittedly, many studies have shown that L1 interference is apparent in all language skills, including writing, and is caused by various factors such as the grammatical rules and lexicons embedded in the first language (Sabbah 2015). In the Jordanian context, however, students encounter predictable writing issues due to influence of Arabic, leading to errors in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary when writing in English. Such difficulties not only introduce grammatical inconsistencies but also compromise the clarity and coherence of their English written expression, presenting a significant barrier to effective communication (Darwish 2016; Abu Rumman and Rabab'ah 2023; Ibnian 2017). For example, the tendency to start sentences with "And" due to its frequent use in Arabic can lead to a series of run-on sentences in English. Similarly, students may have difficulty with ensuring subjects and verbs agree in number and person due to differences in verb conjugation rules between Arabic and English. In the same vein, certain Arabic words may look or sound similar to English words but have different meanings. This can cause confusion and lead to incorrect word choice in writing. Clearly, there is a crucial need to understand the role of L1 interference among the EFL Jordanian students to develop strategies to overcome its negative effects during the writing process.

4.2.3 Educational barriers to EFL writing mastery
The following subsections explore the educational barriers that obstruct progress in EFL writing proficiency. They highlight the breadth of instructional obstacles and external factors that stall student progress.

1. Insufficient educational practices
The third contributing factor is insufficient educational practices inside the classroom, with specific deficits identified in teaching techniques (61.4%), availability of learning resources (51.72%), feedback provision (58.4%), and support and encouragement (47.22%). Indeed, instruction plays a paramount role in empowering students to enhance their communication skills, which are crucial for academic and professional success. Moreover, the teaching methodologies implemented in EFL writing classes profoundly influence students' capacity to improve their writing skills and promote the development of crucial language competencies, including grammar, vocabulary, and structure, necessary for proficient written communication (Derbas 2021). In contrast, the findings of the study indicated that ineffective teaching strategies hinder student progress, reduce enthusiasm for writing, and lead to frustration and disengagement in class activities (Hawari, Al-Shboul, and Huwari 2022). Undesirably, this suggests that EFL writing classes had unproductive educational practices, obstructing effective writing instruction and leaving students struggling to develop the necessary skills to excel, which leads to weak student outcomes and limited progress.

2. Insufficient feedback
The issue of inadequate and inefficient feedback in EFL writing classes, affecting 58.4% of students, represents a critical challenge in the educational process, with profound implications on students' language skill development. In fact, when feedback is limited or lacks depth, it can severely affect EFL learners' motivation, engagement, and overall progress. Additionally, students may find themselves unable to elevate their writing proficiency (Hawari, Al-Shboul, and Huwari 2022). Moreover, the lack of feedback directly obstructs learners' ability to identify and rectify grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors in their writing (Al-Sawalha 2016). In the absence of instructor-led correction and direction, these errors risk becoming impressed in students' writing habits, creating a negative set of repeated mistakes and missed learning opportunities (Yu, Jiang and Zhou 2020). Accordingly, the insufficiency of insightful and transformative feedback within EFL writing classes has negative consequences. It can demotivate students in their pursuit of writing excellence. Thus, addressing this issue is paramount, as it stands as a difficulty to students' gaining of adequate writing skills and their overall academic and linguistic advancement.

3. Insufficient utilization of modern learning resources
Another contributing factor identified in the study is the insufficient utilization of authentic and modern learning resources, which affects 51.72 percent of the

students. Notably, these results are consistent with the results of previous studies such as Rababah (2020), and Jaradat and Ajlouni (2021).

Certainly, the limited access to up-to-date blended learning materials, competitive learning platforms, writing software, and other indispensable tools is a critical component for cultivating comprehensive writing skills, as highlighted by Rababah (2020). This lack of resources not only reduces students' motivation and engagement but also impacts educational outcomes negatively. For instance, instructors with limited technological access find it challenging to integrate multimedia resources and interactive teaching methods. Meanwhile, students may struggle to find relevant materials for practice, impeding their progression in language proficiency. Additionally, the lack of resources can limit the development of critical thinking skills and lead to inadequate evaluation mechanisms, preventing students from receiving the necessary constructive feedback. Hence, these factors collectively constrain EFL writing students' abilities to fully realize their potential in written English, necessitating a systematic approach to overcome these challenges in EFL writing classes.

4. Lack of encouragement
The lack of encouragement was identified as another significant barrier, with 47.22of respondents feeling overlooked by their instructors in class. Specifically, this situation poses a considerable challenge for both students and teachers; learners frequently hesitate to engage in writing activities, stemming from a lack of confidence, or understanding (Hawari, Al-Shboul and Huwari 2022). However, this problem arises due to certain factors. Primarily, the lack of peer support can leave students feeling isolated, disheartened, and anxious when writing in English. Additionally, the supportive role of writing instructors is critical. Yet, without adequate guidance, EFL students might find themselves struggling to meet the academic writing standards, impeding their chances of success in higher education and professional settings. Moreover, the lack of encouragement and support not only hinders their ability to improve their writing skills but also negatively impacts their overall academic achievements.

5. Lack of self-motivation
Finally, lack of self-motivation (38.53%) could be the least hindrance to EFL writing proficiency. However, unmotivated EFL students may not put forth genuine effort in their writing, lacking the perseverance needed to overcome writing difficulties (Gatcho and Ramos 2020). Writing efficiently is a skill, and like all other skills, it requires effort and perseverance, such as devoting enough time to learning and reading (Gatcho and Ramos 2020; Alharbi 2022). Notably, writing, characterized as a skill that necessitates continual effort and dedication, is not something that can be mastered through random or half-hearted attempts. Rather, it requires a sustained commitment, which is operated by motivation. Thus, this suggests that the key to writing mastery lies not only in the act of writing itself but also in the motivational forces that drive consistent and hardworking practice.

4.3 Prospective strategies

In response to RQ.3, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with eight proficient EFL writing instructors. The purpose of these interviews was to identify potential strategies for addressing students' difficulties in their EFL writing. Subsequently, the following subsections present the findings and discussions of the qualitative data.

1. Enhancing EFL students' linguistic awareness and mastery

With regard to the modest linguistic knowledge (77.6%) among the students, the respondents expressed two strategies to enhance the linguistic awareness of EFL students. The first strategy is to inspire students to build a strong grammatical knowledge. Initially, one of the instructors emphasized that "EFL instructors may need to incorporate more explicit instruction on grammar rules and give students ample opportunities to practice, revise, and receive feedback on their writing." Accordingly, to implement this strategy, instructors should consider the following practical steps in the context of structured grammar instruction: first, they should adapt a logically structured curriculum that covers essential grammar rules, common errors, and exceptions, starting with foundational concepts and progressing to more advanced topics. Secondly, instructors should design engaging exercises and interactive exercises and activities, like grammar quizzes, sentence analysis, and error correction tasks, integrating real-life examples and contexts to enhance engagement. Lastly, instructors should integrate digital grammar tools and resources into their teaching approach, utilizing software and online exercises to aid in grammar learning and provide instant feedback (Anh 2019). In conclusion, emphasizing the importance of strong grammatical knowledge in EFL writing and implementing this strategy through a structured curriculum, engaging exercises, feedback mechanisms, and digital grammar tools can significantly benefit students' language skills.

Secondly, enhancing students' lexical knowledge is an essential prerequisite to EFL writing proficiency as indicated by the findings of the study, since the mastery of vocabulary not only provides students with a broader range of linguistic tools to convey their thoughts and ideas but also enables them to utilize language more effectively (Al-Sharah, Dudeen, Ab Yajid, Khatibi and Ariffin 2021; Taha and Al Sukhon 2023). Accordingly, the following practical remedies could be utilized by the instructors. First, vocabulary expansion is highly recommended. Thus, instructors could include a variety of classroom exercises designed to introduce and strengthen new vocabulary (Alamri 2023). Specifically, these exercises may involve silent reading, vocabulary games, and group discussions, all while ensuring that the vocabulary lists assigned are relevant to the subject matter being studied. Secondly, contextual learning is encouraged. Instructors should teach students how to employ context clues and word families as tools for vocabulary expansion. In fact, this involves providing concrete examples from authentic texts to illustrate the valuable use of words in different contexts. Additionally, instructors should encourage students to thoroughly explore the meanings of words within the specific context of their reading materials. Indeed, this would help students become

familiar with using newly acquired lexical items in different contexts efficiently. Thirdly, instructors should provide practical guidance by showing students how to select the right vocabulary and utilize the appropriate cohesive devices, such as transitional words and phrases, effectively to maintain a coherent and consistent flow in their writing.

In conclusion, to elevate students' linguistic knowledge, a focused strategy on grammar and vocabulary is vital. A well-organized curriculum with dynamic activities boosts grammar, while digital tools further enhance learning. Vocabulary development, essential for language mastery, is cultivated through various activities and contextual learning. These strategies effectively bridge linguistic gaps in EFL students.

2. Transforming EFL writing: Innovative and collaborative approaches

To improve writing instructors' teaching practices, participants suggested several promising strategies for EFL writing instruction. Firstly, the findings highlighted the transformative potential of innovative teaching techniques, such as collaborative writing, peer editing, and portfolio assessment since these strategies emerge as dynamic tools for promoting critical thinking, inspiring creative expression, and furthering a sense of community engagement among learners (Altakhaineh and Aljallad 2018). To attain the desired results, writing instructors should adapt and diversify their approaches. By doing so, student-centered, and experience-based methods, instructors can better meet the unique needs of their learners. In this context, the incorporation of technology-based approaches, such as online writing platforms and electronic dictionaries, stands out as an effective means to support and enhance the writing process. These innovations not only facilitate collaborative and engaging learning experiences but also empower students to actively refine their writing skills, thus reinforcing the pivotal role of dynamic and innovative teaching techniques in enhancing EFL writing classes.

In the context of this study, the findings highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) in EFL writing instruction (Zhao 2022; Al Mahmud 2023). More specifically, the transformative potential of AI is evident through practical tools like Grammarly and Turnitin, providing indispensable support to both students and instructors. For instance, Grammarly, functioning as a real-time writing companion, identifies and corrects mistakes, enriches vocabulary, and offers style recommendations. These AI-driven tools not only promote continuous writing proficiency but also automate assessment and grading, as in platforms like ETS's Criterion. Additionally, Turnitin's Feedback Studio, blending AI and human expertise, ensures comprehensive feedback on assignments, enhancing the overall learning experience. In the EFL context in Jordan, AI-driven tools effectively address linguistic challenges, offering instant feedback on grammar and vocabulary to bridge language gaps and enhance linguistic competence among Jordanian EFL learners. Evidently, this empowers instructors to adapt instruction to individual students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses, fostering effective teaching practices and meeting unique learner needs. Yet, the potential drawbacks of excessive reliance on AI must be acknowledged, as it could hinder linguistic progress and

critical writing skills (Ningrum 2023). Therefore, instructors ensure AI is an adjunct to active learning and skill development. In summary, AI integration implies a shift towards efficient, engaging, and linguistically adjusted EFL learning environments, equipping Jordanian students with language skills and confidence for academic and professional success.

Another noteworthy aspect highlighted in the study is the value of peer review and feedback in EFL writing instruction. Indeed, Peer review and feedback offer students opportunities to identify and rectify weaknesses in their writing while receiving constructive input from their peers (Kerman, Banihashem, Noroozi, Biemans 2022; Hawari, Al-Shboul and Huwari 2022). Providing guidelines for effective peer review, encompassing aspects such as grammar, clarity of ideas, and coherence, becomes essential. The collaborative approach advocated in the study fosters a mutually beneficial learning environment where students learn from one another, thereby improving their writing skills collectively.

Lastly, the findings emphasized the importance of creating safe and supportive EFL classrooms where students feel encouraged to share their work, correct one another, and actively engage in the writing process (Mashoor and Ahmad 2020). Such an environment not only promotes learning but also imparts a sense of belonging to the learners. The instructor's assertion that motivated students are more likely to produce high-quality work and enjoy the writing experience underscores the pivotal role of motivation and a positive learning atmosphere in EFL writing.

In conclusion, these strategies create a comprehensive approach to advancing EFL writing instruction, combining innovative methods, AI tools, and peer collaboration to elevate writing classes and increase student linguistic competence. They also provide guidance for students, educators, and institutions seeking to improve EFL writing skills.

5. Limitations

Notably, the data predominantly relies on self-reporting, which may not accurately reflect actual linguistic behavior. Additionally, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations unless a similar approach is used.

6. Conclusion

The study shed light on the difficulties students face, including fundamental issues such as grammar, vocabulary, coherence, punctuation, and the ability to express themselves clearly and cohesively in writing. Significantly, these challenges are influenced by various factors, including students' limited linguistic proficiency, insufficient motivation, and inadequate teaching practices.

In addressing these challenges, a comprehensive approach is paramount. Writing instructors need to recognize the necessity of improving their students' writing skills. Encouraging extensive reading and writing, providing constructive guidance on various types of written assignments, and exposing students to well-crafted written samples are vital steps. Furthermore, instructors should retain the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) like Grammarly and ETS Criterion to address

these challenges because it offers immediate feedback and support, particularly in areas like grammar, vocabulary, and coherence, serving as a transformative tool in the EFL writing settings.

Moreover, instructor training should include diverse teaching styles to effectively tackle students' difficulties. Ultimately, the findings and implications of the study hold immense value for stakeholders and practitioners in Jordan, offering a road map to enhance EFL writing instruction through AI-driven solutions and holistic teaching practices.

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