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**Teachers' Perspectives on the Main Constraints  
Behind Secondary School Students' Failure in  
Writing Paragraphs**

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## ***Dedication***

*My dearest and loveliest mother*

*My dearest and loveliest father (My Allah bless him)..*

*My lovely little family; my wife, my little son and daughter..*

*My loveliest sisters and brothers..*

*My tender relatives..*

*My honest friends and classmates..*

*allow me please to dedicate you the fruit of my sweet, but this modest work.*

*You really honeyed its being with your great support!*

***Said***

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*I hope he will regard the result as worth the effort.*

*I would, as well, like to thank all the helpful teachers for their guidance along my learning experience.*

*“All whom I am duty, how could ever thank be enough!!”*

*Said*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**L1:** First Language (Mother Tongue)

**L2:** Second Language ( Foreign Language/ Target Language)

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**VLT:** Vocabulary Levels Test

**VST:** Vocabulary Size Test

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## **Abstract**

It has unfortunately become a fact that most secondary school students in Algeria have a remarkable weakness in writing and that they even fail to write short paragraphs. From this premise, this study aims at investigating, from teachers of English perspectives, the main constraints that hinder them from writing paragraphs. So as to explore the hypothesis which states that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs, the quantitative approach is used based on submitting a questionnaire to a sample of (20) teachers of English who work in the secondary schools of Metlili's district, Algeria. The obtained results from the teachers' questionnaire strongly boost the idea that having a large vocabulary size, knowing grammar rules and doing much practice have an important role in enhancing students' level in writing in general and writing paragraphs in particular. Therefore, relying on these results, the research hypothesis is confirmed, that is to say, secondary school students' limited vocabulary register, their ignorance to grammar rules and their lack of practice in writing are the main constraints behind their failure in writing paragraphs. Accordingly, teachers of English in the district of Metlili should do their best to work on overcoming the aforementioned constraints owing to the significant role they have in refining their students' level in writing paragraphs.

**Key words:** writing paragraphs, constraints, vocabulary register, grammar rules, practice

# **General Introduction**

## **1. Background**

Writing has become an irritating and struggling process for most EFL teachers and students. Even though much time and thinking are allocated to its accomplishment and different techniques and methods are used by teachers to simplify it, students still cannot yield and come out with an acceptable let alone a proficient piece of writing. Therefore, this study endeavors to investigate the main constraints which hinder the majority if not all secondary school students from writing paragraphs according to secondary school teachers of English. The case of this study will be on secondary school teachers of English in the district of Metlili, Algeria.

It is, hence, assumed that limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are the main constraints behind students' failure in writing paragraphs. To do so, a questionnaire is going to be administered to a sample of about twenty (20) teachers of English in order to collect the data. After data collection and based on the analysis of the findings, this hypothesis will confirm that the main constrains behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs are the limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice. Furthermore, some solutions and remedies will be suggested to refine their writing skill later.

As a matter of fact, most secondary school students fail to write because of the following; their ignorance to grammar rules, their limited size of vocabulary and lack of practice of the writing skill. Some students sometimes fail to write a paragraph because they encounter difficulties in dealing with the grammatical aspects of the language as when they cannot recognize which tense or voice to be used. Others do not know how to use punctuation marks which in fact are paramount in the writing process and have a major role in conveying meaning.

No writing, it seems, is possible without a large vocabulary register. Most students' vocabulary size is very limited and this is one of the reasons why most of them fail or even don't like to write. Not having the vocabulary necessary for the target topic they will write about leads to boredom and therefore quitting the process of writing altogether.

It is said that practice makes perfect, however, most students do not practice the language especially writing which prevents them from being proficient in this skill. Psychologically speaking, most students do not like tests and exams that require paragraph or essay writing and prefer direct questions instead simply because they cannot perform well in writing as it costs them bad and undesirable scores.

It is quite common that writing is not an easy task and that it entails much time and intellectual effort to do. It is also quite common that this process goes through certain procedures which need jotting down ideas, sequencing them, drafting, reviewing, etc that even competent writers need to follow, however, their works are not perfect and error free. Consequently, students should take the initiative to better their writing skill as it is one of the important competencies that a student is required to possess.

## **2. Significance of the study**

Writing has become a heavy burden for both teachers and students. Therefore, the significance of this study lays on the fact that it seeks to identify the main constraints that prevent secondary school students from writing paragraphs. The investigation in this study will be carried out from teachers' of English perspectives who are aware enough about the deficiencies and difficulties that students encounter while writing paragraphs. Therefore, the process of determining such constraints will be much easier and clearer. Moreover, some solutions and remedies will be proposed in order to facilitate the process of paragraphs writing for students.

### **3. Aims and objectives of the study**

Writing is a paramount skill that students need to master. The purpose of this study, hence, is to uncover the main constraints that cause trouble to most students when writing paragraphs and to suggest some efficient and practical solutions and remedies that may help students refine their paragraph writing.

### **4. Research Questions**

To solve the problem of this study, the following research questions are asked.

**Q1-** What are the main constraints that hinder secondary school students from writing paragraphs in English?

**Q2-** What effective solutions and remedies can help students overcome these constraints?

### **5. Research Hypothesis**

- I hypothesize that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs in English.

### **6. Research approach and Data collection tool**

The quantitative approach of research is to be implemented in order to effectively achieve the theoretical and practical points tackled by this research as it is less time consuming and provides reliable and comprehensible view about the problem. To gather the data needed for my study, a questionnaire is going to be administered to a sample of about 20 secondary school teachers of English in order to conduct the practical part of the study.

### **7. Motivations**

As a secondary school teacher of English, I have noticed that the majority of my students struggle a lot when it comes to writing and that they are in dire need to enhance this important skill. Therefore, this study is motivated by my firm belief that in order for secondary school

students to improve their level in writing paragraphs, they have to enrich their vocabulary size, know the grammar rules and do much practice in writing. Thus, secondary school teachers of English including me should work on bridging the gap between these three elements so as to enable their students ameliorate their writing skill in general and writing paragraphs in particular.

## **8. Structure of the Thesis**

This study consists of two main chapters. The first chapter deals with theoretical part which is mainly about reviewing the related literature of the study. It encompasses two sections. The first section gives a short review about paragraph writing including its definition, form, structure, types as well as its unity and coherence. The second section is allocated to the relationship between writing and vocabulary, writing and grammar and writing and practice.

The second chapter deals with the practical part which gives out a detailed analysis of the data gathered about investigating the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs. The backbone of this chapter is analyzing and interpreting the teachers' questionnaire in order to confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis.

## **9. Limitation of the Study**

Some limitations might have influenced the outcome of the study. The first of which is that the sample consisted of a total number of 20 teachers of English, which is in fact the only available number, and also because it was not possible to haphazardly select the respondents in this study. The second of which is that the study was conducted from teachers' of English perspectives only which might not have given it more credibility and validity.

# Chapter One: Literature Review

## Introduction

Writing is viewed as the most difficult and sophisticated skill compared with the other language skills. Therefore, it is a fundamental skill in language learning; it is also a difficult skill that requires considerable intellectual effort and practice from the student to reach an acceptable level of writing. In this chapter, the focus will be on writing paragraphs, including the different definitions of a paragraph, its layout and structure as well as its different types. It also deals with the relationship between writing and vocabulary, grammar and practice and how the latest help in enhancing paragraph writing among students.

## 1. Paragraph Writing

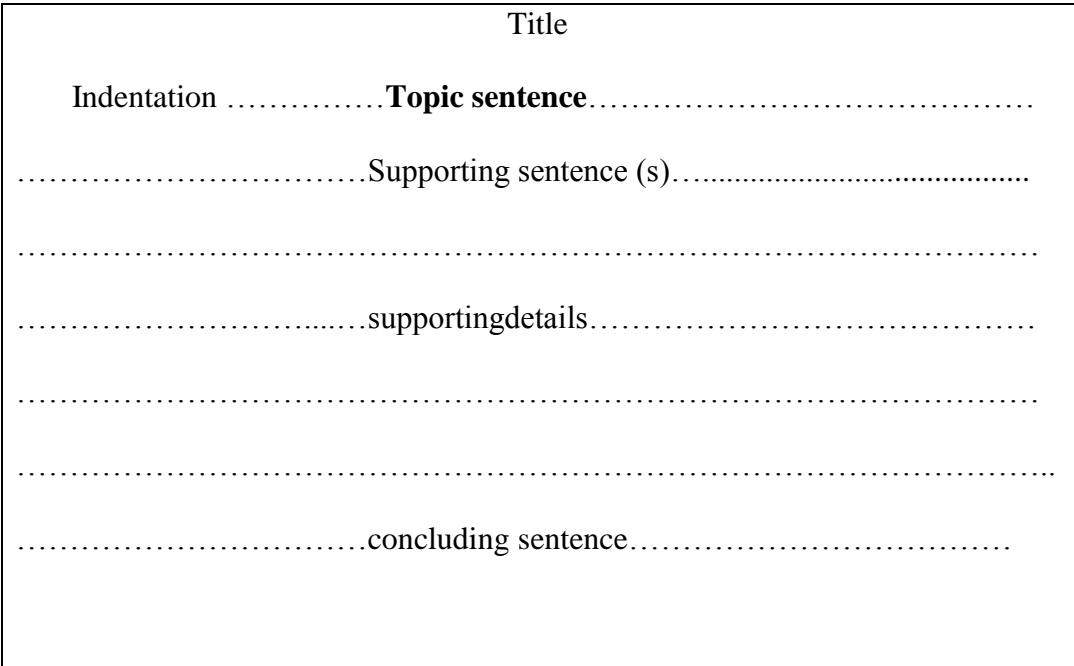
### 1.1. Definition of a paragraph

Writers define a paragraph differently but all of them have agreed on the fact that it develops only one idea. Zemach & Islam (2005) for instance, define a paragraph as “a group of about 6-12 sentences about one topic. Every sentence in a strong paragraph is about the same topic. All the sentences explain the writer’s main idea (most important idea) about that topic. When the writer wants to write about a new idea, he/she begins a new paragraph.” (p. 9). In a similar vein, (Oshima & Hogue, 2007, p. 3) define it as “a group of related statements that a writer develops about a subject. The first sentence states the specific point, or idea, of the topic. The rest of the sentences support that point.” It is also seen by (Hogue, 2008, p. 4) as “a group of related sentences about a single topic. The topic of a paragraph is one, and only one, idea.” Ruetten & Pavlik (2012) stated that a paragraph is “a unit of writing that focuses on and develops one idea.” Therefore, it can be understood from all the above definitions that no matter how long or short the paragraph is, it is all about only one idea. (p. 6)

**1.2. Paragraph form**

**1.2.1. Form**

The form of a paragraph in English is typical and any writer, whoever is, should comply with it. The reason is that all writers’ views about the form of a paragraph are alike. They all agreed that a paragraph, hand written or keyed in a computer, should follow this form. First, the title should be centered at the top of the page. Second, the first line of the paragraph should be indented (about five spaces in the computer). Next, a margin of about one inch on the left and right of the paper should be left and then the paragraph should be double-spaced. Ruetten & Pavlik (2012) and Oshima & Hogue (2007) follow and recommend the same aforementioned guidelines for paragraph form. Therefore a paragraph should look like this.



**Figure 1.2.1: Paragraph form**

**1.2.2. Unity**

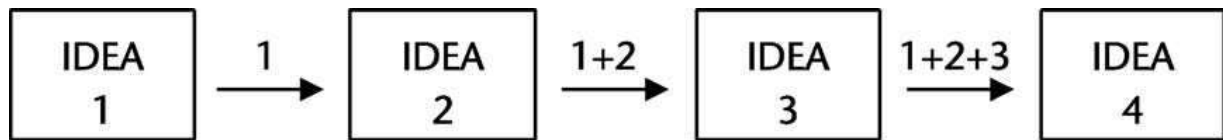
According to Ruetten & Pavlik, (2012), unity is one of the most important characteristics of a good paragraph. They say that all the sentences are related to the topic and develop the controlling idea in a unified paragraph. Similarly, (Hogue, 2008, p. 46) states that “a



paragraph must follow the rule of unity. All the sentences in a paragraph are about one main idea.” She also says that the relevance of the supporting sentences in a paragraph is a different way of expressing the rule of unity and it means that they are directly related to the main idea. Oshima & Hogue (2007) have seen that “unity means that you discuss only one main idea in a paragraph. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence, and then each and every supporting sentence develops that idea. If, for example, you announce in your topic sentence that you are going to discuss two important characteristics of gold, discuss only those. Do not discuss any other ideas, such as the price of gold or gold mining.” (p. 18). In another view concerning the same matter, Oshima & Hogue (2007) stated that “an important element of a good paragraph is unity. When a paragraph has unity, all the supporting sentences discuss only one idea. From beginning to end, each sentence is directly related to the topic. In some languages, it is acceptable to wander away from the topic to make little side trips to ideas that are somewhat, but not directly, related to the main topic. In English, doing so is not acceptable because it breaks the unity of the paragraph.” (p. 67)

### **1.2.3. Coherence**

Coherence is a very important element in any type of writing. It is paramount in academic writing particularly, where failure or success may depend on how clearly the learner has managed to transmit his ideas to the reader. No matter how original those ideas may be, if he is not able to present them in a clear and logical way, their meaning and value is lost. Kane (2000) and Creme and Lea (2008) among others, agree on the fact that coherence has a great role in making a good piece of writing. For them, coherence has to do with sequencing and linking one’s ideas in a way that makes them most easily understood by the reader. Murray and Hughes (2008) notice that a good writer is the one “who sticks his ideas together as links in a chain, each link connecting the one before it with the one after. If any links are missing, the connections become unclear and the argument structure breaks down.” (p. 45)



**Figure 1.2.3: A Sequence of Ideas. (Murray and Hughes, 2008, p 46)**

A piece of writing, as shown in figure.1.1, has a history in the sequence of building up its structure. The reader is only able to make sense of what he is reading at any point because it connects clearly with what has gone before, that is why the learner/writer should make that connection clear.

Oshima & Hogue (2007) believe that coherence must occur in every good paragraph. A coherent paragraph flows smoothly from beginning to end. Ideas can be followed easily by the reader as one sentence leads naturally to the next one without any sudden jumps. Three main ways can make a paragraph coherent:

1. The use of nouns and pronouns consistently throughout a paragraph.
2. The use of transition signals to show relationships between ideas.
3. Putting ideas into some kind of logical order, such as logical division of ideas.

Ruetten & Pavlik, (2012) confirm that coherence is an essential characteristic of a well written paragraph. They see that as long as the paragraph is coherent, its ideas are logically arranged and therefore they will help the reader understand the main idea and follow how the writer thinks. Oshima & Hogue (1998) print out that “another element of a good paragraph is coherence. The Latin verb “cohere” means "hold together." In order to have coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jumps. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one.” (p. 40).

There are four ways to achieve coherence. The first two ways involve repeating key nouns and using pronouns that refer back to key nouns. The third way is to use transition signals to

show how one idea is related to the next. The fourth way to achieve coherence is to arrange your sentences in logical order. You will practice the first three ways to achieve coherence.

### **1.3. Paragraph structure**

A well written paragraph contains three main structural parts: a topic sentence which tells the main idea, supporting sentences which explain, describe or develop it and a concluding sentence that summarizes or comments on the main idea. Similar views about the paragraph structure are held by the majority of writers. However, Brandon L. & Brandon K. (2011) suggest two effective patterns for a conventional paragraph structure. The first one states the controlling idea, the topic sentence, and develops it and the second one includes a concluding sentence following the development. Oshima & Hogue (2007) liken the paragraph to a sandwich where the topic sentence and the concluding sentence are the two pieces of bread that enclose the meat, the supporting sentences. Field (2009) states that the length of a paragraph varies from one to another but it still deals with one topic. He emphasizes the importance of the topic sentence among the group of sentences in a paragraph as it holds the main idea and the content expansion is to be in the other sentences of the paragraph. Lunsford (2010) believes that a paragraph starts and finishes with essential information. The paragraph opening sentence will let the reader know what it is about, the middle of the paragraph will expand and develop what it is about and its end may sum up the content discussed in it.

#### **1.3.1. The Topic Sentence**

As stated above, the topic sentence holds the main idea that is why it is paramount in a paragraph. It is also stated by (Oshima & Hogue, 2007, p. 39) that “The topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It has two parts: a topic and a controlling idea. The topic names the subject of the paragraph. The controlling idea tells what the paragraph will say about the topic. It is called the controlling idea because it controls or limits the topic to a very specific point or points.” Ruetten & Pavlik, (2012) share the same view about the

concept of the topic sentence. They also reckon that it is the main idea sentence and that it is the most important and the most general sentence of the paragraph. They perceive that what the paragraph is about is expressed in the topic and the writer's attitude or idea about the topic is expressed in the controlling idea. Raimes & Jerskey (2011) explained "a topic sentence in a body paragraph lets readers know explicitly what the main idea of the paragraph is. Readers should notice a logical flow of ideas as they read through a paragraph and as they move from one paragraph to another through an essay." (p. 28)

**Example of a topic and controlling idea:**

    ,--TOPIC ---, CONTROLLING IDEA -,  
    . Some weddings are very simple.

**1.3.2. Position of the Topic Sentence**

It is usually the topic sentence that occurs at the beginning of a paragraph. Some experienced writers, however, sometimes place it in the end, but the beginning of the paragraph is the right and the best place for it. Putting the topic sentence at the beginning provides readers with an idea about what they will read and helps them understand the paragraph easily, (Oshima & Hogue 2007). In another view, Ruetten & Pavlik (2012) and Lunsford (2010) propose other positions for a topic sentence. They say that it can occur in a number of different places in a paragraph. Mostly, it is the first sentence of the paragraph which makes readers focus rapidly on its main idea. Nevertheless, the topic sentence can also appear in both middle and final positions in a paragraph. Moreover, it can only be implied and therefore it is possible that it does not appear at all in the paragraph.

It is also worth mentioning that a topic sentence should not be too general or broad which may entail too much to write about the topic. It should not as well be too specific or narrow as

it not enough to write about. A good topic sentence narrates something about the contents of the paragraph without diving in the details.

### **1.3.3. Supporting Sentence(s)**

As the name implies, supporting sentences provide a kind of support and reinforcement to the idea expressed in the topic sentence. Scarry S. & Scarry J. (2010) put into words that a supporting detail is a piece of evidence used by a writer to make the controlling idea of the topic sentence convincing and interesting to the reader. A piece of evidence might be a descriptive image, an example taken from history or personal experience, a reason, a fact (such as a statistic), a quotation from an expert, or an anecdote used to illustrate a point. (p. 337). According to Oshima & Hogue (2007), more information about the topic is given and the main points are listed by supporting sentences. They present the reason that makes the topic sentence true and they can be narrative details, examples, facts, explanation, quotations, and/or statistics (Ruetten & Pavlik, 2012). It is also believed that supporting sentences maintain the unity of the paragraph and it can only be determined to the reader that the ideas discussed in the paragraph are directly related to the main topic or not through them. (Feng-Checkett & Checkett 2010, p. 139) see that support sentences follow the topic sentence and develop the subject using specific examples, details, and facts. These support ideas must be consistent with the controlling idea. In other words, the controlling idea unifies the paragraph by determining the kind of support ideas you can use in the support sentences. To better develop a paragraph, many details must support the main idea. When choosing supporting sentences, one should keep in mind that it is not necessarily that the readers should share or agree with the same point of view expressed in your paragraph, yet, the supporting details have to be good enough in order to get the readers at least value your attitude. Your objective is to edify them so try to provide some understanding to your topic without taking for granted that they are acquainted with your subject or interested in it. If there are enough specific

details, your readers will feel that they learn something new about the subject which can be a satisfying experience for all.

#### **1.3.4. Concluding sentence**

A concluding sentence is usually the last sentence in a paragraph. It logically concludes the ideas discussed in the paragraph. Oshima & Hogue (1998) agree on the fact that it is necessary to know how to write a good concluding sentence the same way writing a good topic sentence is learnt. They believe that a concluding sentence is not utterly important for each paragraph in a multiparagraph essay. However, it helps the readers in single paragraphs especially the long ones because it indicates the end of the paragraph and reminds them of the main points.

Oshima & Hogue (1998) also perceive that a concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and reminds the reader of the main idea. They suggest three tips to help in writing a good concluding sentence (p. 47):

- a. Begin with a conclusion signal. Most conclusion signals have commas after them; others do not.
- b. Remind your reader of the main idea by one of the following methods.
  - Repeat the idea in the topic sentence in different words. Do not just copy the topic sentence.
  - Summarize the main point or points of the paragraph.
- c. Never end a paragraph by introducing a new idea.

Ruetten & Pavlik (2012) state that the main idea of a paragraph is summarized or commented in the conclusion. They also say that the conclusion in a short paragraph composition is mostly one sentence which by means goes back to the main idea of the paragraph. Besides, a key word or phrase is repeated in the concluding sentence in order to keep a unified paragraph. They add on that the exact words from the opening sentence are

sometimes not used by the writer but they are paraphrased using different words that have the same meaning. That will provide a kind of variety to the paragraph.

## **1.4. Paragraph Types**

Paragraphs may be grouped into four main categories: Descriptive, argumentative, expository and narrative. In other words, paragraphs may be used to describe something or someone, tell stories or sequence of events, explain something, give information or instructions and to convince or persuade the reader about a given idea or point of view.

### **1.4.1. Descriptive paragraphs**

Descriptive paragraphs are used to describe features or characteristics of something. Writing such paragraphs appeals to the five senses. This may include how something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels. Specific details of the most important features should be used and appropriate adjectives to describe attributes and qualities are used in order to present a vivid image about the thing being described. Lunsford (2010) holds the same idea that description paragraphs should use specific details to create a clear impression. In such type of paragraphs, the topic sentence introduces the item, the thing or the person to be described. Specific and detailed information about the characteristics of the item is provided in the supporting sentences. The concluding sentence in descriptive paragraphs is not always necessary and it can make a smooth transition to the next paragraph if it is related to the described item or thing. Feng-Checkett & Checkett (2010) stated that effective description creates images in the reader's mind by using specific details. Like a painter using color on a canvas, the writer uses words (the color) to create pictures in the reader's mind (the canvas). (p. 159)

### **1.4.2. Argumentative paragraphs**

Argumentative paragraphs present a point of view and provide evidence for the point of view taken. It is believed by (Feng-Checkett & Checkett, 2010, p 261) that when writers use

persuasion, they are trying to convince someone else that their point of view or belief is correct. Arguments are opinions which are supported by facts. Opinions are also referred to as 'claims', and 'facts' are also referred to as 'evidence'. The claim clearly states an attitude on a topic or issue. To prove this claim; reasons, statistics, borne out facts, expert research, and, in some special cases, personal experience may be included. For the claim to be convincing, the writer must support his/her arguments with the most effective evidence that comes from different credible sources. The topic sentence in argumentative paragraphs pinpoints what is being argued for or against. The supporting sentences therefore include facts, examples, appeals to authority, or counter-argument to back up the point of view. Reasons are presented in order according to their importance: from the most important to the least important. Restating what is being argued for or against and why is expressed in the concluding sentence.

### **1.4.3. Expository paragraphs**

Generally speaking, expository paragraphs (also called illustration or exemplification paragraphs) show how things work. Exposition or illustration is a way that is used to develop an idea through setting one or more instances of that idea. Illustrations or examples help in clarifying the idea, making it more persuading and even more tangible (Scarry S. & Scarry J., 2010). The latest argue that using illustration is one of the best ways to support the main idea. Lunsford (2010) states that illustration makes a point with concrete examples or good reasons. (p. 117). Raimes & Jerskey (2011) reckon that examples which develop a point or an idea make writing interesting and informative. Accordingly, expository paragraphs aim at helping the reader understand and follow a process or a method. This kind of paragraphs provides information either by explaining it or giving instructions. Expository paragraphs often require research, usually include techniques such as examples or illustrations to support a statement and use ordinal sequence such as chronological or numerical. The topic sentence in such



paragraphs introduces what will be explained and states the general idea. Examples and illustrations for the elaboration and expansion of the idea are introduced in the supporting details. The concluding sentence, however, bridges the gap between the examples and the idea expressed in the paragraph.

#### **1.4.4. Narrative paragraphs**

According to (Scarry & Scarry, 2010, p. 369), narration is the oldest and best-known form of verbal communication. It is, quite simply, the telling of a story. Every culture in the world, past and present, has used narration to provide entertainment as well as information for the people of that culture. Because everyone likes a good story, the many forms of narration, such as novels, short stories, soap operas, and full-length movies, are always popular. Similarly, Feng-Checkett & Checkett (2010) say that narration is one of the ways writers use to express or develop a main idea. Narrative paragraphs simply tell a story in order to entertain or inform the reader and they can be fictional or nonfictional. The story develops the topic of the paragraph and that is the most important thing, however. A narrative paragraph has the same elements like those in any other type of paragraph i.e. it has a topic sentence stating the subject and the controlling idea, supporting sentences that use specific details to expand the subject and a variety of sentences to connect related idea and add rhythm. To grab the reader's interest, a story should have a clear point or purpose. Therefore, the best way to get to the point of the story is examining the topic sentence and making it more interesting to the reader and that will be the focal point of the story. For the sake of looking at things from different perspectives, Harvey (2003) believes that narration describes actions unfolding over time. For him, clear narration usually follows chronological order where the writer narrates a series of events and then draws a general conclusion (p. 76). The same view point is held by lunsford (2010) and Oshima & Hogue (2007) concerning the aforementioned ideas about narration.

## **2. The Relationship between Writing and Vocabulary, Grammar and Practice**

Writing can be a delightful or painful experience for students. Regrettably, writing calls for anxiety and self doubt more than confidence. It is a “process that requires extensive self-regulation and intentional control...writers must change ideas into text, repair organization and mechanics, and monitor their success- all while trying to formulate a coherent message” (Ransdell & Levy, 1996, p. 93). It is easy to know the reason behind making such a task tiring and exhausting. However, in spite of the fearful nature of writing, being able to effectively communicate in writing is an appreciated skill in our society. “One of the central aims of education is teaching students to communicate with the written word” (Hayes & Flower, 1986, p. 1106). Writing is asserted, evaluated and expected through all students’ learning stages. Teachers spend much time teaching students how to write and invest many resources to make suitable writing courses to their skill level.

### **2.1. Writing and Vocabulary**

One of the reasons that prevent most students from writing is the lack of vocabulary. Therefore, they struggle a lot even in writing short paragraphs. Their lack of vocabulary can be attributed mainly to their ignorance to the reading skill which is highly needed in building up their vocabulary register. Most students do not read that’s why their vocabulary size is so limited and cannot get them engaged in writing. Al- Hammad, N. M. (2009) stated in her Master thesis that vocabulary is the key element for communication and plays a vital role in English language learning. In Cambridge Papers in ELT series, Day & Bamford (2002) claimed that establishing an extensive reading program is highly needed in the learning process and has surprising effects on the students’ vocabulary knowledge. On his side, Barra, C. (1995) stated in an article that the knowledge of word meanings and the ability to access that knowledge efficiently are recognized as important factors in reading and listening comprehension, speaking and writing fluency. Thus, vocabulary knowledge helps students

with language comprehension. Bejo Sutrisno, M.Pd (2013) stated that written English requires a greater variety of lexical items than spoken English and that our everyday vocabulary in our give and take with family, friends and colleagues is limited. Since writing permits the writer more processing time, due to the desire of being precise in writing, and simply owing to the formal conventions of writing, lower frequency words often occur.

## **2.2. Vocabulary and Good Writing**

A good piece of writing necessitates sufficient vocabulary. It is claimed that second language (L2) vocabulary is one of the best foretellers in evaluating students' L2 proficiency and writing quality. Llach and Gallego (2009) referred to the receptive vocabulary size and its association with the quality of Spanish students' writings and their reading comprehension. The participants in their study were 6th graders and treated English as their foreign language (EFL). Therefore, the measure used in this study was the 1000 Word Test and the 2000 frequency-band of the VLT. The findings displayed that the students' receptive vocabulary size does not denote a very high correlation, yet significant to their paragraph and essay quality and a significant positive correlation towards reading comprehension.

In Denmark, a study conducted by Stæhr (2008) with 88 EFL students from lower secondary determined the vocabulary size's impact on the students' listening, reading, and writing abilities. The study results showed that receptive vocabulary size, assessed using Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT), greatly influenced the participants' reading and writing abilities, but with little influence on their listening ability (Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham, 2001). This was assumed because most of the participants in their ninth grade of lower secondary did not master the most frequent 2000 words in English.

In Turkey, Kiliç (2019) measured three areas of EFL Turkish students' vocabulary variables; productive vocabulary size, receptive vocabulary size, and depth of vocabulary knowledge and their correlations to students' writing and speaking as productive languages

kills. Applying multiple regression analysis, it was found that the three vocabulary variables provide 26% of variance to students' writing performance and 17% to their speaking performance.

The importance of picking up correct vocabulary in a particular writing task was admitted by the students with English. They also claimed that they are aware of the importance of knowing their audience, such as academic members, in writing their work. They selectively choose academic and technical words to fit their writings to have professional impressions (Coxhead, 2012). This current study used the Vocabulary Size Test (VST) to determine if receptive vocabulary knowledge is a good predictor of students' writing quality, as evidenced in the previous studies.

### **2.3. Vocabulary Learning**

Students fail to write appropriately because most of them lack appropriate words to express their ideas. Thus, reading is the key solution to the problem of writing. Integrating reading as a base to writing, students, according to what has been synthesized through their writings are poor in vocabulary, consequently lots of extensive reading is recommended. In this respect, students need more texts where they are exposed to authentic material of varied topics. It is important for students to acquire the most frequently used words. Class-reading of theme based units will give them a better chance of learning the reappearing vocabulary. Vocabulary learning strategies like word association, parts of speech analysis, affixes and suffixes, collocation activities, guess from textual content can be applied whenever appropriate to simplify their learning process. It is evident that class teaching of grammar and vocabulary is necessary but insufficient to bridge the gap due to the limited class time devoted for writing. Free voluntary reading should be emphasized as a part of enhancing the writing ability. There is a strong link that reading is at the service of writing. Krashen (1982) has investigated this issue and came out with the remark that reading is necessary to acquire the

language. It enhances both the spelling and writing skills, makes reading comprehension higher and helps in acquiring more advanced vocabulary.

## **2.4. Writing and Reading**

Historically speaking, reading was more emphasized than writing in education. In Britain, for instance, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reading granted the primary attention in education before writing. In an industrialized society, reading is a required skill which enables you to react to a range of social demands (reading is a pervasive requirement: looking at an alarm clock, glancing at the news paper, or checking the departures board). By contrast, the writing skill has less importance but it can lead to more proactive roles. When looking at the nature of writing and reading, it seems that the two skills are separate in that reading is a passive activity and that writing is a productive one; still, these two language skills are complementary and can be closely developed. As it is viewed by (Johnson, 2008, p. 7), the clear relationship between the preceding skills is that reading helps students become better writers. Through reading, students have occasional contact with the rules of grammar, so they develop a sense for their vocabulary. Therefore, reading in the writing classroom is understood as the appropriate input for acquisition of writing skills because it is generally believed that “reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skills can be learned, or at least inferred” (Eisterhold, 1990, p. 88). The nature of this reading-writing link, though not well-defined is often thought to be like Krashen’s notion. It is also argued by (Krashen 1984. in Eisterhold, 1990, p. 88) that the development of writing ability occurs via comprehensible input with a low affective filter. He theorizes that writing competence is derived from large amounts of self-motivated reading for interest and/or pleasure. The evidence that there is an existing relationship between reading and writing is the results of the correlational study carried by Stotsky (1983) that came out with the following results:

1- There are correlations between reading achievement and writing ability. Better writers tend to be better readers.

2- There are correlations between writing quality and reading experience. Better writers read more than poorer writers.

3- There seem to be correlations between reading ability and measures of syntactic complexity in writing. Better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers.

#### **2.4.1. The Relationship between Writing and Reading**

Writing is defined as the student's "Ability to write with clarity of thought, organization, and good sentence structure" (Reynolds et al., 2007, p. 357). They point out that reading and writing go hand in hand. They maintain that, "Without question, reading and writing go hand in hand, and for good reason they are "the basic elements of proficiency." Reading on the other hand is the "ability to decode the symbols automatically in order to derive linguistic meaning, and writing is the automatic production of symbols to express linguistic meaning."

Additionally, reading and writing can be seen as being "highly interrelated components of the same fundamental construct" (Reynolds et al., 2007, p. 357). The term literacy is used as an umbrella covering, hence, both language skills of reading and writing. Reynolds et al. (2007) claim further that reading and writing are interchangeable as measures of literacy.

#### **2.4.2. Teaching Writing through Reading**

Reading and writing enrich the EFL students' language and thinking capacities when they are taught together. They are the main traits that differentiate between a literate and an illiterate person. It can only make good sense, then, that they are integrated in teaching for students to get the most of each. What is also important is how these two skills are taught. For instruction to be efficient, students need to have some choice about what to read and the topic of their writing. When students know what they are reading, they are more likely to be able to

develop a full understanding of the text, and so work hard to comprehend what they are reading. In a similar vein, when writers have the possibility to choose what to write about, they will probably do their best to communicate simply because the topic is meaningful to them.

To clarify the connection between reading and writing to EFL students, the two skills should be taught together. There needs to be a sense of process; both reading and writing are, after all, to be an initial understanding of the text that may hold up or may need to be revised as the text unfolds. Writers, too, revise their works. They produce early drafts that may need only a little tinkering with or more typically may need intrinsic revision to communicate adequately. The teacher also needs to make an effort to make the reading/writing relationship explicit, through genre knowledge and understanding of language structure and reading strategies as well as to establish expected behaviours “habits of good readers and good writers” that guide what students do (Cole, 2008, p. 153).

In short, the relationship between reading and writing is fundamental for the learning process of students. The two skills are almost two sides of the same coin, and knowledge of one boosts the learning and enhancement of the other. Relying on their understanding of sound/letter correspondence, readers decode messages. Also, relying on the same skills to form the words that tell their stories, writers encode messages. In addition, sounding out a word helps students to read and to spell it; knowledge of signal words and phrases allows writers to join ideas in a correct way, and permits readers to link up ideas and comprehend the relationship between those ideas.

## **2.5. Writing and Grammar**

Grammar is the structure of our writing. Without correct grammar usage, our ideas and thoughts cannot be communicated effectively or efficiently. Therefore, some general components should be taken into account by teachers when teaching writing. One of the most

important components of writing according to Harris (1974) is the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns. Writing involves constructing grammatical sentences. In a similar vein, Nunan (1989) says that successful writing requires the use of the grammatical system to convey one's intended meaning to reflect given new information and topic as well as comment structures.

### **2.5.1. The Impact of Grammar on Writing**

It is admitted by (Al-Akeeli, 2013, p. 66) that " Grammar is an important aspect in expressing thoughts by writing, it is the most important element of written language, when the learner is well mastered with grammar , he can easily communicate with others through writing. Good writing indicates good learning". Likewise, (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012, p. 160) state that "students can advance their level of English by producing written work that employs the grammatical structures they have learned. Although it is unrealistic for nonnative students to expect to reach 100% accuracy (and many native English speakers may have similar difficulty), they should aim to continuously improve their writing accuracy, in order to make their work as readable and efficient as possible." Hillocks (1986) argues that grammar instruction that is separate from writing instruction is unable to enhance students' writing competence. Chin (2000) also stated that:

As students revise and edit their writing, teachers can provide grammar instruction that guides students in their attempts to identify and correct problems in sentence structure and usage. For example, a teacher who sees that many students are writing sentences containing misplaced modifiers can present a mini- lesson on this concept, using examples from student writing. The teacher can have students edit their own and one another's drafts for this problem. Integrating grammar instruction into the revising and editing process helps students make immediate applications, thus allowing them to see the relevance of grammar to their own writing (p, 1).



In addition, Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) state that "in academic writing one should always follow rules of grammatical accuracy since the end-user or consumer of the writing is likely to be an expert in particular fields. Hence, it is vital that writing is clear through compliance with rules of punctuation and the conventions of grammar to maintain clarity and avoid ambiguity in expression" (p, 161).

It is believed by Harmer (2004) that writing is a 'backup' for teaching grammar. In other words, the more students practice writing, the more grammatical rules can be mastered. Writing plays a major role in the curriculum. Also, grammar is useful to face the difficulties that students face in the writing process which means that just few errors may occur in a piece of writing when grammar rules are used correctly.

Hillocks (1986) says that "sentence-combining practice provides writers with systematic knowledge of syntactic possibilities, the access to which allows them to sort through alternatives in their heads as well as on paper and to choose those which are most apt". Similarly, Hillocks & Smith (1991) reveal that systematic practice can raise students' knowledge of syntactic structures through sentence combining as well as enhancing the quality of their sentences, especially when stylistic impacts are discussed as well. Structured sentence-combining exercises guide the students more concerning how to produce new sentences, however, unstructured sentence-combining exercises allow for more change, but creating logical and meaningful sentences is still needed by students. (Cited in chin, 2000). Besides, grammar choices affect the style of writing. Sentence-combination is an effective method for helping students' achieve fluency and variety in their writing style. The students understand better the ways in which sentence structure, usage and punctuation influence meaning through participation in oral and written sentence-combining tasks.

Conversely, some researchers bear out that there is no relation between grammar and writing. Krashen (1982), for instance, says that evaluating writing abilities does not indicate

any link between performance and formal grammar instruction. In the same line, (Clark, 2012, p. 278) says that Braddock, Lloyd -Jones, et al stated:

In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displace some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing.

### **2.5.2. Writing Mechanics**

The word mechanics refers to how words appear, spelled and arranged on paper. The fact that the first word of a paragraph is usually indented, for instance, is a matter of mechanics (Kane, 2000). Mechanics are very important in putting together a good piece of writing because no matter how original are the students' ideas, if they cannot express them in a clear and accurate manner. For Starkey (2004), the student should express himself/herself through the written word in a clear and accurate way which enables him/her to succeed in his/her writing. He addresses the importance of written mechanics in terms of grammar spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. It has been stated by (Brooks & Penn, 1970, p. 20) that "For one thing, in writing, we must understand the structure of the language, what the parts of speech do, how the words relate to one another, what individual words mean, the rules of grammar and punctuation".

✓Grammar is an essential element in writing .The student must be acquainted with the rules of grammar and how to manipulate them in order to be skillful in the writing process, such as: pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions.

✓Spelling is one of the aspects which need to be taken into consideration by students when dealing with writing, because it is a factor that many teachers in an EFL context focus on when assessing students work. Correct spelling makes one's work credible. Not only will the reader know that one is educated, but also that he/she cares about his work.

✓Capitalization is essential both for specific words and to start sentences and quotes (Starkey, 2004). Capitalization must be used in academic writing and the student ought to follow the rules of using capitalization and be careful of using it in the right way.

✓Punctuation is a necessary part in English academic writing. Proper punctuation will make one's writing more polished and technically correct, and his/her voice will be conveyed more directly (Starkey, 2004). They help writers direct their readers about which way a sentence is going.

Capitalization and punctuation marks are important parts of writing according to (Murray & Hughes, 2008, p. 185):

They indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. A well punctuated and capitalized piece of writing should make your work easier to read and understand and will therefore help it make a more favorable impression on your readers.

Capitalization and punctuation are not just rules that must be memorized and followed, but rather they are specific signals that are used to determine meaning and to clarify intent to the reader.

### **2.5.3. Usefulness of Direct Grammar Lessons in Writing**

Good writing is definitely beyond grammar manipulation. However, it will be very difficult to write clear, logical and fluent paragraphs if a writer is not able to write reasonably acceptable simple, short sentences and cannot master some complex sentence structures. Therefore, an urgent need in upgrading students' basic linguistic competencies is required. Explicit teaching lessons on important grammar points like types of sentences, sentence structures parts of speech structures Syntax, word order and verb forms of some commonly used tenses are highly needed. Grammar teachers and written expression teachers should collaborate together in order to solve students' writing problems.

#### **2.5.4. Components of the Writing Skills**

Harmer (2004) states that writing has its mechanical parts like the other skills. They encompass handwriting, spelling, punctuation and the construction of well- formed sentence and paragraphs. (p. 44)

##### **a. Handwriting**

Handwriting is an essential skill whether in exam writing, postcards, forms (such as application forms). Handwriting can be hard for some students like Chinese or Japanese, or those who are using distinct scripts such as Arabic or Indonesian, writing in Roman cursive or ‘joined up’ lettering presents many problems. Students, who are adapted to write in their L1 from right to left, can face problems not only of perception but also of angle and position for the writing arm. In teaching handwriting, there are two-stage approaches which are the recognition and production of letters when the students encounter some problems concerning this skill and which the teacher can follow them.(Harmer , 2004, p. 44 - 45).

##### **b. Spelling**

The second skill is spelling. English spelling is sophisticated but it is not random. There are specific rules about when certain spellings are acceptable and others are not .Also, these rules often have exceptions but they are related to a small number of individual words. Learners of English need to be aware of the different spellings to differentiate between homophones which refer to words that sound the same but spelt differently like threw and through. The best way to help students to learn how to spell is to have them read as much as possible and to give them exercises, getting them to work out their spelling rules. (Harmer, 2004).

##### **c. Punctuation**

The third skill of writing is punctuation. Using punctuation in a correct way is an important skill. For many people, the quality of what is written depends not only on the

content and language but also on the use of punctuation. If students use some punctuation marks like capital letters, commas and full stops inappropriately, the text they produce will be difficult to comprehend and this gives a negative impression. The need for accurate punctuation does not look very important where writers use e-mail communication. Teachers need to teach the students how to use punctuation correctly if they want them to be good writers in English. (Harmer, 2004).

## **2.6. Writing and Practice**

Students have often said that English has never been their subject. They have struggled in their writing classes because it has so many rules that are hard to remember. Admittedly, in order to write well, students must learn a lot of rules, but the more they practice the rules in their everyday lives, at home and work, in their text messages and social media posts, as well as in conversations with family and friends, the easier it will be to learn them. They will even begin to see how they can use these rules when writing a resume, a report on a patient or project, and a letter to a teacher or a company about a product or service with which they are not satisfied.

Harmer (1991) says that it is hard to give more chances to written communication in the classroom than it is for the spoken one. This is simply because writing is mostly designed as homework. However, it, especially communicative writing, can have a worthy role in classrooms. Therefore it can be understood from the aforementioned statement above that writing is not practiced enough in the classroom. Good writing should have some basic skills, a good deal of practice and some specific training. Good writing skills often develop from extensive reading, some specific training, and a good deal of practice.

### **2.6.1. More Writing Practice**

Writing can be acquired only through practice, it is like sport, an activity that could be improved through practice and through “the exposure to written texts in a natural process of

communication rather than grammatical and rhetorical rules on writing” (Leki, 1992, p. 17). Therefore, our students do not need more work with language but rather with writing. It may be asserted that students’ poor achievement in writing is attributed to the lack of sufficient training and practice. Writing is mainly regulated to a homework activity. It is perhaps not surprise in best devoted to oral work and homework is writing which can then be alone at the students own expense and effort. To be honest, the majority of students do not practise writing either in the class or at home through the whole academic year. What students just do is to copy down identical compositions from the best students or rely on their relatives to write their homework. Students say that they believe that the teacher should give them more practice of writing in the class. Being familiar with the techniques of writing and being informed with the rules of grammar are not g that writing often tends to be an out of class activity: many teachers feel that class time, often scarce, is enough, what is needed is to put this knowledge into practice under the close supervision of the teacher. In order to improve students’ written performance, teachers should try to find the problems that their students encounter in writing in order to remedy them as quickly as possible. The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Students’ writing can be enhanced through writing instruction, practice and teacher’s feedback. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. Indeed, academic writing requires conscious effort and practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. Compared to students writing in their native language (L1), however, students writing in their L2 have to also acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques and skills. It should be noticed that the benefits of effective use of writing strategies has been highlighted many times as conducive to writing competence.

Monaghan (2007) noted that teaching writing would include writing strategies, defined as methods of imparting necessary knowledge of the conventions of written discourse and the basis of grammar, syntax through various pedagogical methods. Ultimately, teaching writing means guiding students toward achieving the highest ability in communicating in words. (p. 4)

Learning to write by writing is the best way that encourages students to improve their writing skill. To become practiced writers is to have them often and experience first the phases of the writing process by preparing for composing; revising etc...The gains of the process approach to writing can only be realized if students have an understanding of the various phases.

## **Conclusion**

By the end this chapter, it is deduced that writing a paragraph is a set of elements that complete each other. The absence of one of these elements may well affect its form and meaning. Therefore and as it has been demonstrated in this chapter, a paragraph and no matter what type it is, should be well formed that it must comply to the form designed for a paragraph. It also needs to be unified and deals only with one idea that all its sentences refer to it. Besides, a paragraph has to be coherent that the ideas expressed in it must be well sequenced and related to each other in order to be easily understood by the reader. It is also highlighted in this chapter that in order to write good paragraphs, the right vocabulary and grammar are required in addition to doing enough practice. For that, the relationship between writing and vocabulary, grammar and practice is indispensable.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is allocated to the practical part of the study. It deals with the teachers' questionnaire analysis that attempts at investigating the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs.

### **1. Method**

A descriptive analytical method is used to analyse the results of the questionnaire.

### **2. Sample**

20 secondary school teachers of English in the province of Metlili, Ghardaia represent the sample of the study.

### **3. Description of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is composed of a short paragraph to identify the topic tackled and 16 carefully selected questions. Some of the questions are closed-ended where teachers have to answer with dichotomies (yes/no questions) or put a cross (X) in the appropriate box. The other questions are open-ended; teachers are asked to provide explanations or a full statement if necessary.

The questions are divided into two main sections. In the first section, teachers are asked to indicate their gender, their degree or qualification, their teaching career experience and the level (s) and stream (s) they have taught so far. The questions in the second section mainly seek to report whether the relationship between writing and vocabulary, writing and grammar and writing and practice really hinder students from writing paragraphs.

### **4. Administration of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was distributed to 20 teachers of English in all the secondary schools of Metlili, Ghardaia. The twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were all handed back. It is also worth mentioning that all teachers were helpful and interested to answer all the questions.



## Analysis of the Results

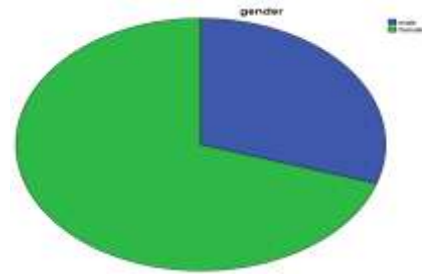
### Section One: General Information

#### Q1: Gender

Male  Female

	Number	Percentage
Male	06	30 %
Female	14	70 %
Total	20	100 %

**Table 01:** Teachers' Gender



**Figure 01:** Teachers' Gender

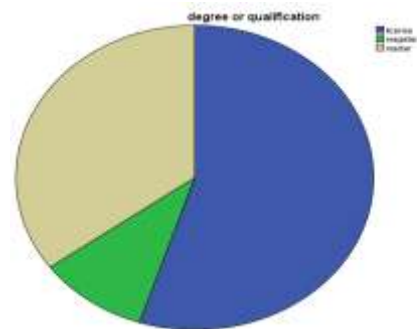
The sample under study consists of twenty (20) teachers of English. Six of which i.e., (30 %) are males and the rest i.e., (70 %) are females which means that there is an over representation of female teachers of English in secondary schools in Metlili.

#### Q2: Degree or qualification

License  Magister   
 Master  Doctorate

	Number	Percentage
License	11	55.0%
Magister	2	10.0%
Master	7	35.0%
TOTAL	20	100.0%

**Table 02:** Teachers' Degree or Qualification



**Figure 02:** Teachers' Degree or Qualification

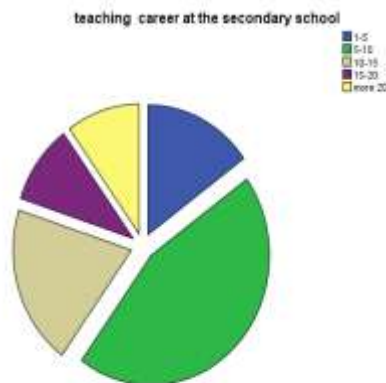
As shown in the table above, (55.0%) teachers have the License degree, just (10.0%) of them have the Magister degree and (35.0%) of them hold the Master degree. None of the teachers have a doctorate degree.

**Q3: Teaching career at the secondary school**

	Number	Percentage
1-5 years	3	15.0%
5-10 years	9	45.0%
10-15 years	4	20.0%
15-20 years	2	10.0%
more 20 years	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 03:** Teachers' Experience

(15.0%) of the teachers have a teaching career that ranges between one and five years. (45.0%) of them i.e., the majority have worked from five to ten years. (20.0%) of them have a teaching experience ranging between ten and fifteen years. (10.0%) stands for those who have worked more than fifteen years and less than twenty years and the last (10.0%) represents the teachers whose teaching career is more than twenty years.

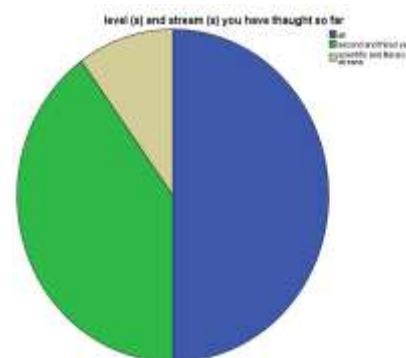


**Figure 03:** Teachers' Experience

**Q4: Level (s) and stream (s) you have taught so far**

	Number	Percentage
All levels and streams	10	50.0%
Second and third year streams only	8	40.0%
First year scientific and literary streams only	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 04:** Levels and Streams Taught by Teachers



**Figure 04:** Levels and Streams Taught by Teachers

Table (04) shows that (50.0%) of the teachers have taught all the levels and streams. (40.0%) of them have taught only streams belonging to second and third year levels while (10.0%) of them have taught only first year level in both streams scientific and literary.

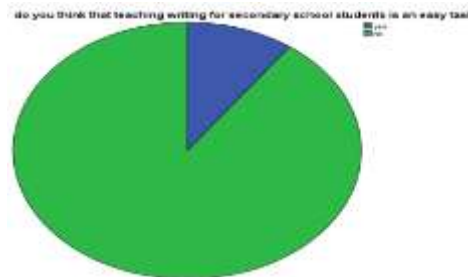
**Section Two: Writing and vocabulary, writing and grammar, writing and practice**

**Q5:** Do you think that teaching writing for secondary school students is an easy task?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	10.0%
No	18	90.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 05:** The Easiness of Teaching Writing



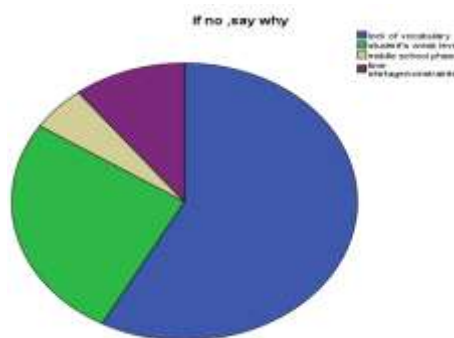
**Figure 05:** The Easiness of Teaching Writing

(90.0%) of the teachers have all agreed on the fact that teaching writing for secondary school students is not an easy task. Just (10.0%) of them said that it is easy to teach writing for secondary school students.

- If no, say why?

	Number	Percentage
Lack of vocabulary	11	55.0%
Students' weak level	5	25.0%
Middle school phase	2	10.0%
Time shortage constraints	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 06:** Reasons behind the Difficulty of Teaching Writing



**Figure 06:** Reasons behind the Difficulty of Teaching Writing

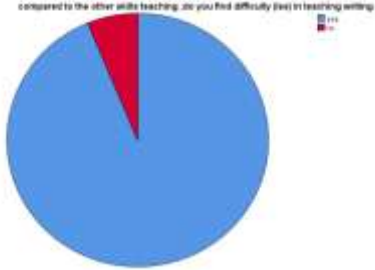
Through their answers (55.0%) of the teachers attributed the difficulty of teaching writing to secondary school students to their lack of vocabulary. (25.0%) of them claimed that students' weak level makes it difficult for them to teach the writing skill to them easily. But (10.0%) of the whole number of teachers linked this difficulty in teaching writing at secondary schools to the middle school phase as students were not well trained to write in this stage which logically makes them struggle with this skill in secondary schools later. Another (10.0%) of teachers stated that the time allocated for teaching the writing skill is not enough which leads to difficulty in teaching such a skill.

**Q6.** Compared to the other skills teaching, do you find difficulty (ies) in teaching writing?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	95.0%
No	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 07:** Teaching Writing vs. Other Skills Teaching



**Figure 07:** Teaching writing vs. Other Skills Teaching

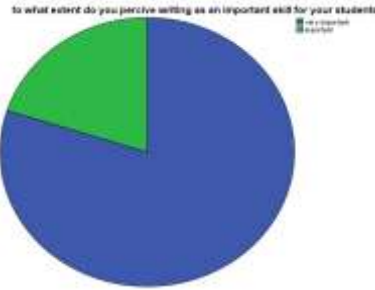
This question attempts to highlight teachers’ views concerning the difficulty (ies) that teachers find in teaching writing in comparison to the teaching of the other skills. The majority of teachers (95 %) admitted that they do find difficulties in teaching writing unlike the teaching of the other skills.

**Q7.** To what extent do you perceive writing as an important skill for your students?

a. Very important  b. Important  c. Not important

	Number	Percentage
Very important	16	80.0%
Important	4	20.0%
Not important	0	00.0 %
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 08:** The Importance of the Writing Skill



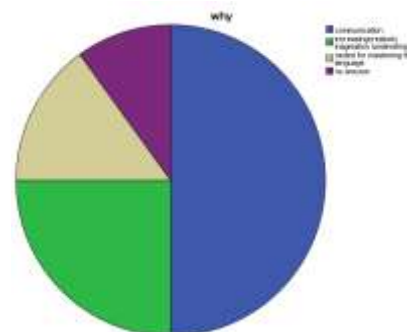
**Figure 08:** The Importance of the Writing Skill

Table 08 illustrates that (80.0%) of the teachers ascertained that writing is a very important skill while (20.0%) of them considered it as an important skill for their students.

- Why?

	Number	Percentage
Communication	10	50.0%
Increasing creativity, imagination and understanding	5	25.0%
Needed skill for mastering the language	3	15.0%
No answer	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0

**Table 09:** Reasons that Make the Writing Skill Important



**Figure 09:** Reasons that Make the Writing Skill Important

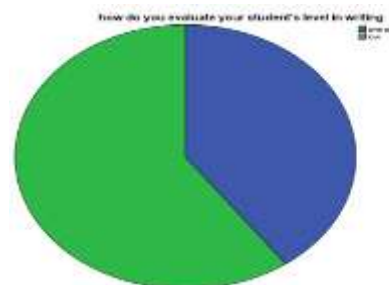
Half of the teachers (50.0%) suggested that the writing skill will help their students communicate properly. A quarter of them .i.e., (25.0%) stated that writing increases students' creativity, imagination and understanding. But (15.0%) of the teachers demonstrated that writing is a needed skill to master the language.

**Q8.** How do you evaluate your students' level in writing?

a. High  b. Average  c. Low

	Number	Percentage
High	0	00.0 %
Average	8	40.0%
Low	12	60.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 10:** Teachers' Estimation of the Students' Level in Writing



**Figure 10:** Teachers' Estimation of the Students' Level in Writing

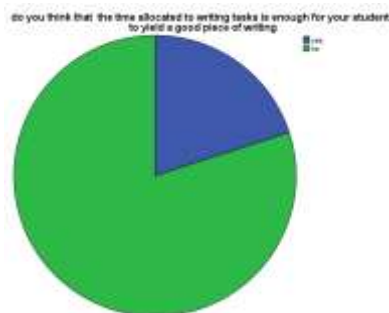
Table (10) reveals that (60.0%) of teachers viewed that the level of their students in writing in English is low while (40.0%) of them said that their students have an average level in writing. This means that students do not have a good background in writing which needs betterment and a lot of remedial work to enhance this skill.

**Q9.** Do you think that the time allocated to writing tasks is enough for your students to yield a good piece of writing?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	20.0%
No	16	80.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 11:** Sufficiency of the Time Devoted to Writing



**Figure 11:** Sufficiency of the Time Devoted to Writing

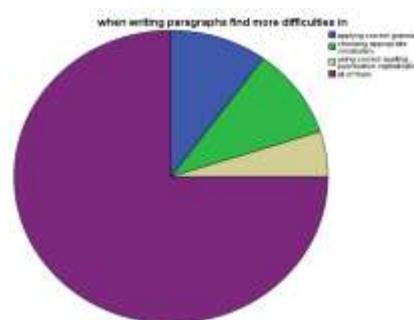
The table above shows that (20.0%) of the teachers claimed that the time set for writing tasks is enough for their students to come out with a good piece of writing. However, (80.0%) of them agreed on the insufficiency of the time allocated for the writing tasks and perceived that this task entails much time to fulfill.

**Q10.** When writing paragraphs, do your students find more difficulties in?

- a. Applying correct grammar  d. Expressing good ideas
- b. Choosing appropriate vocabulary  e. All of them
- c. Using correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization

	Number	Percentage
Applying correct grammar	2	10.0%
Choosing appropriate vocabulary	2	10.0%
Using correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization	1	5.0%
All of them	15	75.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 12:** Difficulties Encountered by Students



**Figure 12:** Difficulties Encountered by Students

This question aims at highlighting teachers' views about the difficulties that students find when writing paragraphs. The majority of teachers (75.0%) believed that students lack applying correct grammar, do not know how to choose appropriate vocabulary and cannot use

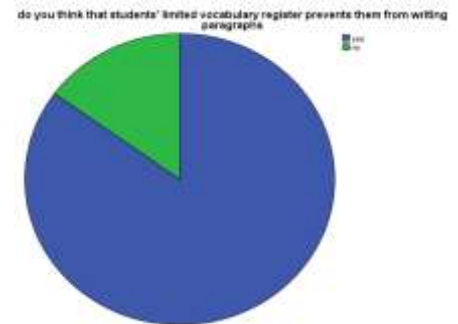
correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Therefore, students need more interest, focus and practice to solve these problems.

**Q11.** Do you think that students' limited vocabulary register prevents them from writing paragraphs?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	17	85.0%
No	3	15.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 13:** Limited Vocabulary Register Constraint



**Figure 13:** Limited Vocabulary Register Constraint

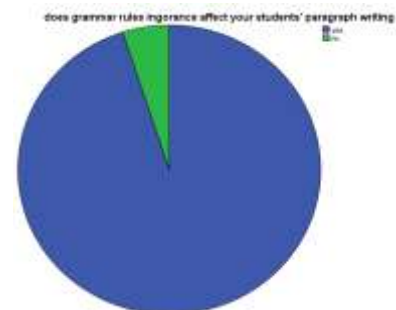
It can be clearly understood from the above table that the majority of teachers (85.0%) have agreed unanimously on the fact that students' limited vocabulary register hinders them from writing paragraphs.

**Q12.** Does grammar rules ignorance affect your students' paragraph writing?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	95.0%
No	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 14:** Grammar Rules Ignorance Constraint



**Figure 14:** Grammar Rules Ignorance Constraint

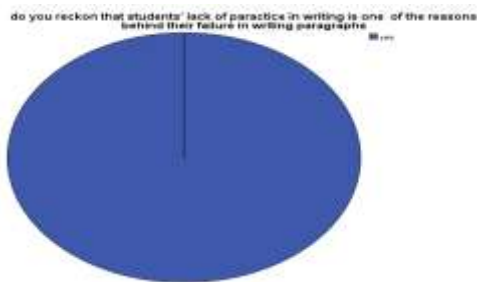
(95.0%) of teachers have borne out that ignoring grammar rules also influences their students' paragraph writing. Just one teacher (5.0%) pretended that grammar rules have no impact on students' paragraph writing.

**Q13.** Do you reckon that students' lack of practice in writing is one of the reasons behind their failure in writing paragraphs?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	20	100.0%
No	0	0%
Total	20	100%

**Table 15:** Lack of Practice Constraint



**Figure 15:** Lack of Practice Constraint

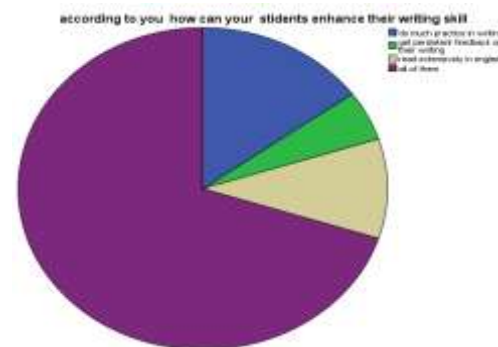
All teachers (100.0%) said yes to the fact that lack of practice in writing is one of the reasons behind their failure in writing paragraphs and that students should do more practice in writing in order to overcome this problem.

**Q14.** According to you, how can your students enhance their writing skill?

- a. Do much practice in writing  c. Read extensively in English   
 b. Get persistent feedback on their writing  d. All of them

	Number	Percentage
Do much practice in writing	3	15.0%
Get persistent feedback on their writing	1	5.0%
Read extensively in English	2	10.0%
All of them	14	70.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 16:** How to Enhance the Writing Skill



**Figure 16:** How to Enhance the Writing Skill

Generally, (70.0%) of the teachers stated that students can enhance their writing skill through doing much practice in writing, getting persistent feedback on their writing and reading extensively in English. (15.0%) of them claimed that students' writing skill can be improved by doing much practice only while the remaining (5.0%) of teachers thought that the writing skill of their students can be ameliorated through giving them persistent feedback



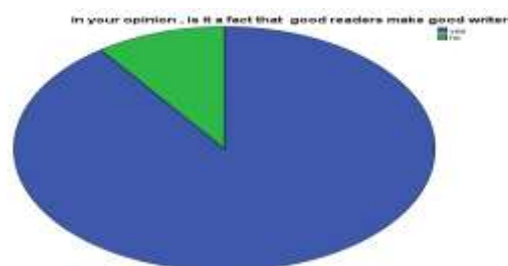
on their writing. Nevertheless, all teachers thought that students still need more efforts to accomplish a good level in writing.

**Q15.** In your opinion, is it a fact that good readers make good writers?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	90.0%
No	2	10.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 17:** Reading-Writing Relationship



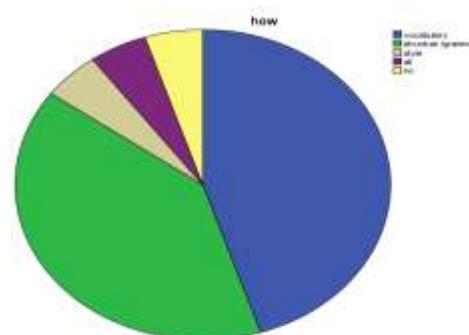
**Figure 17:** Reading-Writing Relationship

In table (17), (90.0%) of the teachers shared the same view on the fact that reading makes good writers and just (10.0%) of them answered "no" and ignored the existence of a relationship between reading and writing. Teachers who said "yes" explained that these two skills complete each other claiming that reading equips students with a suitable input through new vocabularies, constructions, structures and expressions. Furthermore, students can possibly imitate and reflect upon what they read. Accordingly, good readers are good writers.

- How?

	Number	Percentage
Vocabulary enrichment	9	45.0%
Acquaintance with different structures and grammar rules	8	40.0%
Style imitation	1	5.0%
All	1	5.0%
No	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 18:** The Impact of Reading on Students' Writing



**Figure 18:** The Impact of Reading on Students' Writing

This question attempts to figure out how reading can benefit students' in writing. Of all teachers, (45.0%) said that reading enriches students' vocabulary which may get them more engaged in writing. (40.0%) of them stated that reading gets students' acquainted with different structures and grammar rules. This can make their writing encompass a variety of

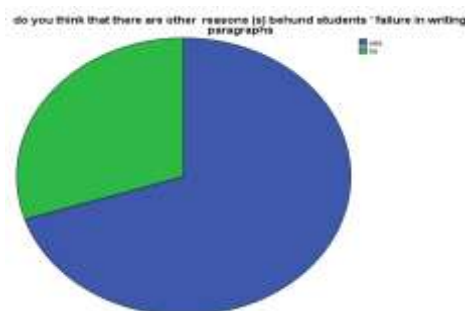
structure and forms which something recommended in writing. One teacher (5.0%) claimed that reading may lead students to imitate any writer's style they perceive as good for them. Only one teacher (5.0%) also viewed that all the aforementioned benefits of reading can be used to enhance students' writing.

**Q16.** Do you think that there are other reason(s) behind students' failure in writing paragraphs?

Yes  No

	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	95.0%
No	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 19:** Other Reasons of Students' Failure in Paragraphs Writing



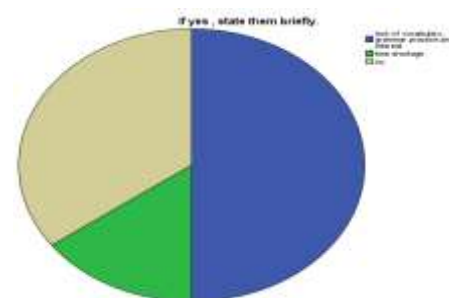
**Figure 19:** Other Reasons of Students' Failure in Paragraphs Writing

As it is shown in table (19), almost all teachers (95.0%) admitted that there are of course other reasons which make students fail to write. However, only one teacher (5.0%) sufficed with the above mentioned reasons.

- If yes, state them briefly

	Number	Percentage
Lack of vocabulary, grammar, practice and interest	10	50.0%
Time shortage and language transfer	3	15.0%
No	7	35.0%
Total	20	100.0%

**Table 20:** Other Reasons



**Figure 20:** Other Reasons

Table (20) summarizes some other reasons that cause most students to fail in writing paragraphs. In addition to lack of vocabulary, grammar and practice, (50.0%) of teachers suggested that lack of interest is another main reason behind their students' inability to write paragraphs. But (15.0%) of them attributed this failure in writing to time shortage i.e., the insufficiency of the time allotted to the writing skill inside the classroom as well as the

interference of students' mother tongue in both teaching and learning writing in the target language, English, in our case.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

It is revealed after the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire that there is a unanimous view about the main constraints that hinder most students from writing paragraphs in English, in addition to the fact that the writing skill is not easy to teach and learn. It also shows the difficulties that both teachers and students face in the teaching-learning process of this skill and how to overcome these difficulties so as to enhance students' paragraphs writing. After analyzing the results obtained from the collected data in both sections of the questionnaire, a careful interpretation of the results will be given.

### **Section One: General Information**

In this section, the findings show that the sample under study consists of six male teachers and fourteen female teachers who have different qualifications and experiences in teaching English at secondary school. Through the results, the respondents show a great deal of consciousness about the topic as they revealed the real level of their students and the difficulties they encounter in the teaching-learning process of the writing skill in general.

### **Section Two: Writing and vocabulary, writing and grammar, writing and practice**

The results in the second section show a consensus among teachers about the difficulty of teaching writing for secondary school students and attribute it to different reasons. This includes students' lack of vocabulary, students' weak level, time shortage constraint and even middle school stage effect. Moreover, most teachers believe strongly that the writing skill is a very important skill that students need to communicate and master the language. Therefore, they insisted on improving this skill among students as most of them have a low level in writing. Concerning writing paragraphs, it is found through the analysis of the results that in addition to the insufficiency of the time allotted to writing paragraphs, most students find a

difficulty in applying correct grammar, choosing the right words and using spelling and punctuation properly. More importantly, the great majority of teachers confirmed that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are all main reasons behind students' failure in writing paragraphs. The analysis of the results also show that teachers are so mindful of the reading-writing relationship and the idea that good readers make good writers is well supported by them. Therefore, they recommend their students to read extensively and do much practice in order to enhance their writing skill.

The teachers' questionnaire analysis has provided to a great extent clear insights on both the difficulty of the writing teaching-learning process and the main reasons that lead most secondary school students not to succeed in writing paragraphs in English. Hence, the findings of this study seem to adequately and positively answer the research questions and affirm strongly the previously stated hypothesis that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs in English.

## **Conclusion**

It almost becomes a common truth that secondary school students regard the writing skill as a source of anxiety and boredom rather than a skill that brings joy and excitement because of the various difficulties and constraints they face while writing. This study attempts at investigating the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs from teachers of English perspectives. The reported results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire uncover the main constraints that make secondary school students' fail to write paragraphs. Having a good vocabulary register, which students may acquire through extensive reading, being acquainted with grammar rules and doing enough practice will undoubtedly help students ameliorate their paragraphs writing. Thus, the positive results that I have got in relation of the main constraints which prevent secondary school students

from writing paragraphs have borne out my hypothesis which states that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are the main constraints behind their failure in writing paragraphs.

### **Some Effective Solutions and Remedies in Writing**

Writing is one of the most important skills that secondary school students should learn and master. However, most of them neglect this skill because they perceive that it is more difficult and entails much effort from them in comparison to the other language skills. Therefore and based on the findings of this study, some practical solutions and remedies are to be proposed for both teachers and students:

- Teachers should do their utmost to facilitate the writing skill to their students through setting simple writing tasks in order to get them rid of the idea that writing is always difficult.
- Teachers ought to establish in their students' minds the notion of the reading-writing relationship and how it will help them enhance their level in writing.
- Teachers must consider the improvement of their students' writing as their own responsibility as well as they should make their students feel that their teachers value good writing.
- Students should be urged to read motivating materials which may help them acquire new vocabularies, styles and even ideas to improve their level in writing.
- Students must be motivated to write and this can be achieved through creating an atmosphere of competition and challenge among students to boost the idea of practicing writing which may trigger their awareness towards the importance of the writing skill.

- It is highly recommended to put students in the know that even skilled writers commit mistakes when writing and they frequently revise their works; thus, committing mistakes is something very likely in writing and it should not prevent them from doing this process.
- Students should be persuaded that the more they read the more their vocabulary size is bigger and the more they will be able to express themselves in writing.
- It is said that “practice makes perfect”; therefore, students should do much practice in writing in order to ameliorate their level in this skill.
- Students must be reminded that grammar rules and mechanics (correct spelling and punctuation) are paramount in writing in addition to the form.
- Remedial activities should frequently be done in order to fill in students’ gap of knowledge in the writing skill depending on their needs and lacks.

## **General Conclusion**

Writing paragraphs has become a common pedagogical problem for the majority of secondary school students which affects negatively their learning process. This is simply because they generally perceive writing as a difficult skill that they cannot accomplish with ease. Consequently, most of them ignore this crucial skill even in official exams and at the expense of their scores. However, students should know that writing is an essential skill that plays an important role for them in order to communicate and succeed in different field in their life. For that, it attains much interest in language teaching and learning.

My firm conviction that writing is an essential skill that requires being improved and mastered among secondary school students is what urged me to conduct this study which sheds the light mainly on the main constraints which prevent most secondary school students in Metlili's district from writing paragraphs from their teachers' perspectives.

The obtained results from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire confirm the hypothesis that students' limited vocabulary register, ignorance of grammar rules and lack of practice are amongst the main constraints behind their failure in writing paragraphs. Therefore and based on the aforementioned outcomes, secondary school students will certainly have significant enhancements in their level in writing paragraphs through enriching their vocabulary register by applying the extensive reading strategy, their knowledge of grammar rules and their persistent practice to the writing skill in general.

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# Appendices



**University of Ghardaia**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of English**



**Teachers' Questionnaire**

**Dear Teachers,**

The following questionnaire is designed as a data collection tool in this piece of research for the accomplishment of a Master Thesis in Didactics. My endeavor in this study is to investigate the main constraints behind secondary school students' failure in writing paragraphs. Your honest answers of the following questions would be of great help to me.

Would you please put a cross (X) in the appropriate box or give a full statement whenever it is necessary.

**Section One: General Information**

**Q1. Gender:**

Male

Female

**Q2. Degree or qualification**

License       Magister

Master       Doctorate

**Q3. Teaching career at the secondary school: .....year(s).**

**Q4. Level (s) and stream (s) you have taught so far:**

.....

.....

**Section Two: Writing and vocabulary, writing and grammar, writing and practice**

**Q5. Do you think that teaching writing for secondary school students is an easy task?**

Yes       No

- If no, say why?

.....  
.....

**Q6.** Compared to the other skills teaching, do you find difficulty (ies) in teaching writing?

Yes  No

**Q7.** To what extent do you perceive writing as an important skill for your students?

a. Very important

b. Important

c. Not important

- Why?

.....  
.....

**Q8.** How do you evaluate your students' level in writing?

a. High

b. Average

c. Low

**Q9.** Do you think that the time allocated to writing tasks is enough for your students to yield a good piece of writing?

Yes  No

**Q10.** When writing paragraphs, do your students find more difficulties in?

a. Applying correct grammar

b. Choosing appropriate vocabulary

c. Expressing good ideas

d. Using correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization

e. All of them

**Q11.** Do you think that students' limited vocabulary register prevents them from writing paragraphs?

Yes

No

**Q12.** Does grammar rules ignorance affect your students' paragraph writing?

Yes

No

**Q13.** Do you reckon that students' lack of practice in writing is one of the reasons behind their failure in writing paragraphs?

Yes

No

**Q14.** According to you, how can your students enhance their writing skill?

a. Do much practice in writing

b. Get persistent feedback on their writing

c. Read extensively in English

d. All of them

**Q15.** In your opinion, is it a fact that good readers make good writers?

Yes

No

- How?

.....  
.....

**Q16.** Do you think that there are other reason(s) behind students' failure in writing paragraphs?

Yes

No

- If yes, state them briefly.

.....  
.....



## الملخص

لقد أصبحت و للأسف حقيقة أن معظم تلاميذ المدارس الثانوية في الجزائر يعانون من ضعف ملحوظ في الكتابة وأنهم يفشلون حتى في كتابة فقرات قصيرة. من هذا المنطلق تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق ومن منظور أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في القيود الرئيسية التي تمنعهم من كتابة الفقرات. من أجل استكشاف الفرضية التي تنص على أن الرصيد اللغوي المحدود والجهل بقواعد النحو وقلة الممارسة هم أهم القيود وراء فشل تلاميذ المدارس الثانوية في كتابة الفقرات تم استخدام المنهج الكمي بناءً على إرسال استبيان إلى عينة من 20 أستاذًا للغة الإنجليزية يعملون في المدارس الثانوية في مقاطعة متليلي، الجزائر. حيث عززت النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من استبيان الاساتذة بقوة فكرة أن وجود رصيد لغوي كبير ومعرفة القواعد النحوية وكثرة الممارسة لهم دور مهم في تحسين مستوى التلاميذ في الكتابة بشكل عام وكتابة الفقرات بشكل خاص. لذلك و بالاعتماد على هذه النتائج تم تأكيد فرضية البحث و هي ان الرصيد اللغوي المحدود للتلاميذ و جهلهم بقواعد النحو وقلة ممارستهم للكتابة هي القيود الرئيسية وراء فشلهم في كتابة الفقرات. وفقًا لذلك يجب على أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية في مقاطعة متليلي بذل قصارى جهدهم للعمل على التغلب على القيود المذكورة أعلاه نظرًا للدور المهم الذي يقومون به في تحسين مستوى طلابهم في كتابة الفقرات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** كتابة الفقرات ، القيود ، الرصيد اللغوي ، قواعد النحو ، الممارسة