
Exploring Academic Writing Difficulties in EFL Master's Dissertation Writing in the Libyan Context

Nada Aboulqasim Elmarimi

n.elmarimi@zu.edu.ly

Zawia University, Faculty of Arts, Department of English, Zawia, Libya

ARTICLE INFORMATION

RECEIVED: 04/04/2026

ACCEPTED: 07/04/2026

PUBLISHED: 07/04/2026

Abstract

Academic writing is a central requirement in postgraduate study and a major challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Writing a Master's dissertation demands advanced academic literacy skills, which many EFL students struggle to develop. This study investigates the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students while writing their dissertations in the English language, Applied Linguistics. Adopting a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Master's students and their supervisors at Al Zawia University, The Libyan Academy, and Misrutah University. Thematic analysis revealed several recurring academic writing challenges, including grammatical and lexical limitations, difficulties with coherence and cohesion, problems with paraphrasing and summarizing sources, and challenges related to referencing and avoiding plagiarism. Supervisors confirmed that these issues frequently affect the quality of students' dissertations and require continuous guidance and revision. The findings suggest that limited prior training in academic writing and insufficient exposure to research-based writing practices contribute significantly to these challenges. The study highlights the need for enhanced academic writing instruction and targeted support within postgraduate programs. It is hoped that the findings will inform curriculum design, supervisory practices, and academic writing support initiatives in Libyan higher education.

Keywords: Dissertation, Postgraduate, Academic writing, Supervisors, Challenges

1. Introduction

Academic writing is a fundamental component of postgraduate study and a core requirement for successful participation in academic discourse. Writing a Master's dissertation demands a high level of academic literacy, including the ability to construct coherent arguments, employ appropriate academic style, and use language accurately and critically (Hyland, Swales & Feak, 2012). For students writing in EFL, these requirements often present significant challenges, particularly when producing extended academic texts such as dissertations.

Previous research has consistently shown that postgraduate EFL students experience considerable difficulty with various aspects of academic writing. Common challenges include grammatical accuracy, limited academic vocabulary, lack of coherence and cohesion, inappropriate paraphrasing, and problems with referencing and avoiding plagiarism (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006). These difficulties can negatively affect the clarity and quality of students' written work and may lead to frustration, extended completion time, or reduced academic confidence.

In many EFL contexts, including Libya, Master's students are required to write their dissertations in English despite having limited exposure to academic writing conventions and insufficient formal training in research-based writing. Studies conducted by Al-Khasawneh, Arkoudis & Starfield (2007, 2010) in similar contexts indicate that inadequate preparation in academic writing and limited supervisory guidance can further intensify students' writing difficulties. As a result, academic writing becomes one of the most demanding aspects of postgraduate study for EFL learners.

Although a growing body of research has examined the general challenges faced by postgraduate students, fewer studies have focused specifically on academic writing difficulties encountered by Libyan Master's students when writing their dissertations in English. Moreover, research that incorporates both students' and supervisors' perspectives remains limited. Addressing this gap is important, as supervisors play a key role in identifying recurring writing problems and supporting students' academic development.

Therefore, the present study aims to explore the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students during the process of dissertation writing. By focusing on key areas such as language use, organization, paraphrasing, and plagiarism avoidance, and by drawing on both students' and supervisors' views, this study seeks to provide a clearer and more context-sensitive understanding of academic writing difficulties in Libyan postgraduate programs. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature and to inform pedagogical practices and support mechanisms for improving academic writing at the Master's level.

2. Research Problem

Despite the importance of academic writing in postgraduate study, many Master's students in EFL contexts experience persistent difficulties when writing their dissertations. In the Libyan higher education context, Master's students are required to produce their dissertations in English, yet they often lack sufficient training in academic writing conventions and research-based writing practices. As a result, students struggle with key aspects of academic writing such as grammatical accuracy, academic vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, paraphrasing, and appropriate use of sources. Although previous studies have examined general challenges faced by postgraduate students, limited research has specifically investigated academic writing challenges encountered by Libyan Master's students from both students' and supervisors' perspectives. This lack of focused research makes it difficult for universities and supervisors to design effective academic writing support and intervention strategies. Therefore, there is a need to systematically explore the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students during dissertation writing.

3. Research Questions

1. What academic writing challenges do EFL Libyan Master's students face when writing their dissertations?
2. How do supervisors perceive these academic writing challenges?

4. Objectives of the Study

1. Identifying the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students during dissertation writing.
2. Exploring supervisors' perceptions of these academic writing challenges.

5. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to benefit multiple stakeholders. For Master's students, the study raises awareness of common academic writing challenges and may help them better understand the expectations of dissertation writing in English. For supervisors, the findings provide insights into recurring writing difficulties that can inform supervisory practices and feedback strategies. Additionally, the study may assist curriculum designers and academic institutions in developing targeted academic writing courses, workshops, and support mechanisms tailored to postgraduate students' needs.

6. Literature Review

The importance of reviewing the existing literature is to obtain a sense of what we already know about a particular question or problem. In other words, literature review leads to more understanding about the topic under investigation (Cohen et al.,2007). Therefore, this study investigates the academic writing challenges that post-graduate students encounter while doing their research. In order to understand the issue under study, all the points related to the process of academic writing challenges are reviewed below.

6.1 Academic writing in Postgraduate Studies

Academic writing is a complex task, according to Oshima and Hogue (2006: 3), who stated that writing, particularly academic writing, is not easy. Serious studying and regular practicing are needed to develop this skill. It is important to note that writing is a process, not a product both for native speakers and learners of English. Abdulkareem (2013:1553) characterizes academic writing as being "The construction and development of techniques taught in universities, such as organizing and generating students' ideas and critical thinking, and developing vocabulary and grammatical syntax".

Writing is "a complex process" as it was described by Al Badi (2015: 65), and according to Al Fadda (2012:123), "Academic writing in English at advanced levels is a challenge even for most native English speakers". Academic Writing has a very important role to play in acquiring a foreign language. It includes a number of essential elements such as critical thinking and self-expression. Also, techniques that involve paraphrasing and summarizing cannot be overlooked in academic writing (Abdulkareem, 2013). Academic writing is the kind of writing that is required in college or university settings (Turmudi, 2017). This kind of writing differs from other kinds of writing, such as personal, literary, journalistic, or business writing (Turmudi, 2014). Academic writing remains one of the main ways of assessing students in university. Therefore, it is an important skill to master.

Dissertations should be written in an academic style, and this makes them different from other kinds of writing. In the form of academic writing, there is a need for a detached and objective approach. An academic argument appeals logically and provides evidence in support of an intellectual position. It is important to present arguments in a logical order and to arrive at conclusions. In writing a dissertation, students feel worried or do not have confidence in their ability. They are afraid of making errors in English. In this case, they may not write more than one paragraph because they have no confidence in their writing ability, and, as a result, students start facing challenges.

6.2 Cognitive Processes in Academic Writing

Academic writing is not only a linguistic activity but also a complex cognitive process that requires students to organize ideas, analyze information, and construct logical arguments. Writing a dissertation involves higher-order thinking skills such as critical analysis, synthesis of sources, and the ability to

express ideas clearly and coherently. For many EFL learners, these cognitive demands can make academic writing particularly challenging. Recent research has also highlighted the role of cognitive stimulation in learning processes. Klella and Mrghem (2024) argue that interactive tools and prompts can provoke deeper cognitive engagement by encouraging learners to reflect, reason, and generate ideas. Such cognitive engagement is essential for developing academic writing skills, as students must actively process information and transform it into structured academic discourse.

6.3 Grammatical and Vocabulary Challenges in Academic Writing

Al-Khasawneh, in his study (2010: 80), states a number of problems that hinder the development of students' writing skills. He confirms that "a reasonable vocabulary size is needed for students to function effectively in their programs". Another difficulty is related to grammar, as Al-Khasawneh describes it to be "extremely important in conveying accurate messages." This is similar to Alfaki's (2015) conclusion in which he regards using correct grammar and appropriate sentence structure to be serious difficulties in addition to word choice. According to Hyland (2015: 175), in academic writing, students are constrained by their limited English language capability e.g., deficiencies in use of tenses, ambiguous or loose sentence construction, unparalleled sentence construction, flaws in the surface and deep structure sentences, poor diction (vocabulary) and expression, errors in the use of pronouns, articles, punctuations, and so on.

Furthermore, Al Fadda (2012) and Alkarkhi and Hmouma (2025) found out that the main challenges ESL students encounter are limited vocabulary, lack of grammar mastery including subject-verb agreement and joining sentences together to make a coherent paragraph.

6.4 Coherence and Cohesion in Academic Writing

Based on students' responses in the study conducted by Al Badi (2015), it was indicated that a considerable number of them are aware of the importance of coherence and cohesion in academic writing, yet they find achieving them quite difficult and challenging.

6.5 Paraphrasing, Referencing, and Plagiarism Challenges

Paraphrasing can be another source of difficulties in writing because students read and then write in their own way depending on their understanding. Thus, grammar mistakes can be expected as a result (Al Badi, 2015). In her study, Al Badi (2015) also investigated the possible factors that might result in poor academic writing by students who do library research projects. In this study, paraphrasing, referencing, and citations were reported to be the least problematic, as about 44% of the participants considered citations and referencing as a dilemma. Moreover, Dong (2010:23) listed a number of causes that make paraphrasing difficult. They are: (a) Mistakes in Changing Words; (b) Mistakes in Changing Word Order; (c) Mistakes in Changing Grammar or Structure; (d) Mistakes in Changing the Order of Ideas.

In addition, post-graduate students also find difficulties in paraphrasing the sentences, so they copy-paste others' work without referencing their sentences, which may result in. However, it is forbidden in academic areas (Lestari, 2020). The respondents of the study about the academic writing difficulties that was conducted by Singh (2016), highlighted that they faced challenges in avoiding plagiarism as they did not understand the exact meaning of plagiarism and did not learn how to avoid it. According to them, they were only told that plagiarism is forbidden. They further explained that the host institution did not actively educate the students on the issue of plagiarism.

6.6 Academic Writing Challenges Faced by Libyan Postgraduate Students

A study by Al-Khairy (2013) and Hmouma and Benarose (2026) concluded that the participants of the study declared that their major problems comprise grammatical errors, the inappropriate choice of vocabulary, irregular verbs, and incorrect punctuation and spelling, L1 interference, inadequacy of ideas, and unclear instructions of the task. Furthermore, Libyan post-graduate students also face difficulties in academic writing, and many of them find it difficult to express themselves in their own words due to the limited vocabularies. Thus, they copy from other works and represent it as their own writing without acknowledging the sources (Alsied and Ibrahim, 2017). Moreover, they suffer from interference from their native language (Arabic language) or they write the ideas in their mother language and then translate them into the target language. This definitely leads to committing grammatical mistakes and first-language interference

7. Methodology

The purpose of this research is to investigate the academic writing challenges and difficulties encountered by Libyan English language students while writing their MA dissertations in English. This chapter provides a description of how the research is designed to address the research questions. It demonstrates the design of research and describes the data collection methods, discusses the sampling process, the method of data analysis as well as the ethical issue.

7.1 Research Design

This study was purely qualitative, and semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect the data required. Both students and their supervisors from different universities were interviewed in a semi-structured way. This particular tool was used in order to understand the challenges and difficulties encountered by Libyan EFL students while writing their MA dissertations in English academically, and to explore the factors behind these challenges.

This study adopts an interpretative approach, which fits the selection of interviews as the main method of data collection. According to Creswell (2011), this approach views realities as multiple instructions or interpretations that enable the researcher to enhance the understanding of the human experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of the study participants. Using this approach leads to addressing the current understanding of the academic writing challenges that Libyan English language post-graduate students face while writing their dissertations. Therefore, the researcher utilized only a qualitative method.

To obtain trustworthy answers to the research questions and successfully achieve the research aims, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable data collection instrument. The interview is a dialogue between the interviewer who used open-ended questions to ask the interviewees about their difficulties in academic writing and the challenges they encountered while writing their MA dissertations.

7.2 Sampling and Population

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who had direct experience with dissertation writing (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). The sample consisted of eight recent Master's graduates and four English language supervisors from Libyan universities (Alzawia, Janzour, and Misratah Academy). Recent graduates were selected because they had successfully completed the dissertation process and were able to provide relevant insights into academic writing challenges. Bryman

(2004) stated that although the findings are not generalizable, they may contribute to further research in the field.

7.3 Methods of Data Collection

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they allow researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions in depth while maintaining some structure through predetermined questions (Creswell, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018). This method was considered appropriate for the current study as it enabled the researcher to obtain detailed insights into the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students during the dissertation writing process.

The interviews were conducted with both recent Master's graduates and their supervisors from Libyan universities. The inclusion of both groups allowed the researcher to gain multiple perspectives on the academic writing difficulties encountered during dissertation writing. According to Bryman (2016), interviewing different stakeholders can enhance the richness and credibility of qualitative data. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was developed to ensure that all relevant topics were covered while allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences. Cohen et al. (2018) provided that open-ended questions encourage participants to provide detailed explanations and allow the researcher to probe for clarification when necessary.

Each interview lasted approximately 15–25 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or online depending on the availability of the participants. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy during the analysis stage. Bryman (2016) stated that recording interviews helps researchers capture complete data and minimizes the risk of losing important information during the conversation.

7.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were ensured through obtaining permission, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, using voluntary participation, and avoiding biased questions (Bryman, 2001; Cohen et al., 2000). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and all collected data were kept securely and used only for research purposes.

7.5 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data by identifying key themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The analysis followed a theoretical approach, meaning that themes were mainly guided by the research questions.

8. Results

The results presented below were obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted with Master's students and their supervisors. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis in order to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan postgraduate students during dissertation writing.

8.1 Students' Interview Results

The analysis of the data gained indicated different challenges related to writing academically. The interviewees argued that they did not have enough past experience about how to write academically. Five themes are identified and presented in Table 1 below.

N	Themes obtained
1	Lack of academic writing vocabularies
2	Difficulties in writing grammatical structures accurately and precisely
3	The impact of L1 on writing in English
4	Problems with coherence and cohesion in writing
5	Using paraphrasing and direct quotations is a challenge

Table 1: Challenges Related to Writing Academically

Theme 1: Lack of academic writing vocabularies

Students ‘A’, ‘C’, ‘D’, and ‘G’ confirmed that academic writing vocabularies were the big challenge for them when writing their MA dissertations. For example, student ‘A’ said, *"I have a problem with distinguishing between using formal and informal language, since it is an academic research the language used should be formal. Furthermore, using different words instead of using the same words or expressions every time makes it terrible for me"*.

This extract can indicate that students suffer from a lack of academic English vocabulary that can be used when writing a research paper.

Theme 2: Difficulties in writing grammatical structures accurately and precisely

Looking closely into the analysed data indicates that only one student, E’ mentioned that she had serious grammatical difficulties while writing her dissertation. She argued that it was not easy to recognize how to utilize accurate grammatical structures to express herself in different situations in her writing. This implies that this student has a limited grammatical competence.

Theme 3: The impact of L1 on writing in English

Analysing the data showed that only two students, namely ‘E’ and ‘F’ stated that they suffered from first language interference. For example, student ‘E’ said *"I have difficulties with changing the structure from Arabic into English"*. Student ‘F’ added, *"as Libyan students, we think in Arabic and then convert our ideas into English"*. This can be interpreted as first language interference which might cause serious problems in EFL learning.

Theme 4: Problems with coherence and cohesion in writing

The analysis of the data obtained showed that only three students, namely ‘C’ ‘E’ and ‘G’ stated that they faced difficulties with coherence and cohesion in their writing. For instance, student ‘G’ said, *"I have a*

difficulty in avoiding redundancy and some difficulties regarding text structure and punctuation. The coherence and cohesion were very challenging”. Moreover, student ‘C’ added “the big challenge is to connect all the chapters together by using the same style of writing, linking the findings with previous research studies and achieving the study aims”. This indicates limited knowledge and experience about the principles of academic writing.

Theme 5: Using paraphrasing and direct quotations is a challenge

The findings gained showed that most of the participants had significant problems with paraphrasing while writing. They all agreed that writing MA dissertation is a very tough journey, and their major difficulty was paraphrasing. Most of the students expressed the same reasons that stand behind the difficulty of paraphrasing. For example, student ‘D’ said “I faced a challenge of limited academic vocabulary”. Student ‘H’ stated that she encountered a problem about defining the meaning of sentences, whereas students ‘E’ and ‘F’ faced difficulties in using accurate grammar which led to committing grammatical errors. The existence of such difficulties can be attributed to the limited linguistic competence that the students have.

7.6 Supervisors’ Interview Results

The students interviewed reported several challenges with writing academically. These challenges were further investigated with supervisors. The following themes were identified from the supervisors' semi-structured interviews and presented in Table 2 below.

N	Categories obtained
1	Limited research background knowledge
2	Limited grammatical competence
3	Difficulties of summarizing and paraphrasing
4	Language interference
5	Plagiarism

Table 2: Students’ Academic Challenges from Supervisors’ Points of View

Theme 1: Limited research background knowledge

The findings gained confirmed that MA students were not well prepared to do their dissertations in English. The supervisors interviewed thought that MA students did not receive sufficient academic writing courses. In this respect, supervisor ‘A’ said “undeveloped research skills are one of the main challenges, most of the students did not develop their research skills, so they faced challenges even in understanding the terminology of research”. Moreover, supervisors ‘B’ and ‘C’ stated that some students do not know how to choose a topic and design their research. More to the point, supervisor ‘D’ argued,

“the main issues students face is selecting the sample and trying to narrow down the topic”. This implies that these students are not up to the level of conducting research efficiently and successfully.

Theme 2: Limited grammatical competence

Looking closely at the supervisors' contributions revealed that MA students have difficulties in writing accurate grammatical structures, in addition to difficulties in spelling and punctuation. For example, supervisor 'B' said, *“students' work always includes errors. Therefore, instead of focusing on the idea of the topic, the supervisor keeps trying to correct such errors which takes much time and effort”*. Supervisor 'D' added, *“the problem that faces students is writing academically, in addition to accuracy, clarity, precision and brevity.”* This can be interpreted as a weak linguistic competence on the students' side.

Theme 3: Difficulties of summarizing and paraphrasing

Supervisors 'B' and 'D' mentioned that some students do not possess the ability of summarizing and paraphrasing; they just copy and paste, which is considered plagiarism. The supervisors attributed that to the students' lack of academic writing skills. MA students are supposed to be introduced to more than one practical academic writing course. Moreover, students usually take such courses only theoretically. However, when they put theory into practice, they fail and start facing challenges.

Theme 4: First Language interference

Analysing the data obtained showed that supervisors 'B' and 'D' were aware of the influence of language interference when students write their MA dissertations. They thought that was due to students' misunderstanding of the English language context or culture. For instance, supervisor 'B' said *“some students when they try to paraphrase, you can see the language interference; they just translate from Arabic to English”*. Supervisor 'D' added, *“certain students use English words and they use their L1 context to express themselves in writing. In other words, they think in Arabic and write in English”*. These two extracts reflect the fact that students suffer from mother tongue interference.

Theme 5: Plagiarism

Throughout their contributions, supervisors B', 'C' and 'D' expressed a notable awareness of the influence of plagiarism on students' work. They thought that students do not have enough knowledge about plagiarism and that they are not aware of its consequences. For example, supervisor 'C' said: *“One of the most important and dangerous issues is when they don't know how to cite or acknowledge the reference, the thing which puts them in danger of plagiarism, the thing which may lead them to lose everything. And honestly, in doing research, it is important to know how to support your argument by citation from different sources, a technique that most of the students don't know how to do it.*

This reflects students' lack of awareness of how plagiarism can be avoided which is risky and dangerous and might lead to undesired consequences.

8. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Libyan Master's students experience considerable difficulties with several core components of academic writing while completing their dissertations in English. The most frequently reported challenges relate to grammatical accuracy, limited academic vocabulary, coherence and cohesion, paraphrasing of sources, and the appropriate use of referencing conventions. These

difficulties suggest that many students struggle not only with language proficiency but also with mastering the conventions of academic discourse required in postgraduate research writing.

One prominent issue identified in the data is students' difficulty in producing grammatically accurate and stylistically appropriate academic texts. Many participants reported uncertainty about sentence structure, verb tense consistency, and the use of formal academic expressions. These findings support previous research indicating that EFL postgraduate students often encounter linguistic challenges when required to express complex academic ideas in English (Hyland, 2004; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Such linguistic limitations may restrict students' ability to present arguments clearly and may affect the overall quality of their dissertations.

Another key challenge concerns coherence and cohesion in academic writing. Participants indicated difficulty in organizing ideas logically and linking arguments effectively across sections of their dissertations. This suggests that students may have limited awareness of how to structure extended academic texts in a way that meets disciplinary expectations. Similar findings have been reported in studies highlighting that EFL postgraduate students frequently struggle to achieve clarity and logical flow in academic writing (Swales & Feak, 2012). Weak coherence may lead to fragmented arguments and reduced readability of academic texts.

Paraphrasing and summarizing academic sources also emerged as major difficulties among the students. Many participants reported uncertainty about how to express ideas from sources in their own words while maintaining the original meaning. In some cases, this challenge was associated with concerns about plagiarism and improper citation practices. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that paraphrasing requires advanced linguistic competence and critical engagement with source material (Flowerdew, 2015). Difficulty in paraphrasing may limit students' ability to integrate literature effectively into their dissertations.

Supervisors' perspectives further confirm that academic writing difficulties represent a persistent issue among Master's students. Supervisors noted that students often require extensive feedback and multiple revisions in order to meet academic writing standards. This highlights the important role of supervision in supporting students' development of academic writing skills. It also suggests that students may benefit from additional institutional support, such as academic writing workshops or specialized writing courses designed for postgraduate students.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic writing challenges experienced by Libyan Master's students stem from a combination of linguistic limitations, insufficient prior training in academic writing, and limited exposure to research-based writing practices. These challenges may affect both the writing process and the quality of the final dissertation. Addressing these issues requires a more systematic integration of academic writing instruction into postgraduate programs in order to better prepare students for the demands of dissertation writing.

9. Conclusion

This study set out to explore the academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students while writing their dissertations in English. The findings reveal that students encounter multiple difficulties related to language use, organization of ideas, paraphrasing, and referencing academic sources. These challenges indicate that academic writing remains one of the most demanding aspects of postgraduate study in EFL contexts.

By incorporating both students' and supervisors' perspectives, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of academic writing difficulties in the Libyan context. The results highlight the need for greater attention to academic writing instruction within postgraduate programs, particularly in relation to developing students' ability to produce coherent, accurate, and appropriately referenced academic texts.

The study suggests that universities may need to strengthen academic writing support through specialized courses, writing workshops, and closer collaboration between students and supervisors during the dissertation writing process. Providing structured guidance in academic writing may help reduce students' difficulties and improve the overall quality of postgraduate research output.

Although this study focuses specifically on Libyan Master's students, the findings may also be relevant to other EFL contexts where students are required to write extended academic texts in English. Future research may build on this study by examining the effectiveness of targeted academic writing interventions or by exploring disciplinary differences in postgraduate writing challenges.

In conclusion, improving academic writing competence among postgraduate students is essential for enhancing research quality and supporting students' successful completion of their degrees. Addressing academic writing challenges can contribute to strengthening postgraduate education and promoting more effective participation in academic discourse.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be given to help reduce academic writing challenges faced by Libyan Master's students and improve the quality of postgraduate dissertation writing.

First, Libyan universities should consider introducing specialized academic writing courses designed specifically for postgraduate students. These courses should focus on key academic writing skills such as coherence and cohesion, academic vocabulary, paraphrasing, summarizing, referencing conventions, and avoiding plagiarism. Providing structured academic writing instruction may help students develop the necessary skills required for successful dissertation writing.

Second, postgraduate programs should offer regular academic writing workshops and training sessions that address common writing difficulties experienced by Master's students. Such workshops can provide practical guidance on organizing academic texts, improving grammatical accuracy, and integrating sources effectively. Continuous writing support can help students gain confidence and improve their academic writing performance.

Third, supervisors should provide focused and consistent feedback on students' academic writing throughout the dissertation process. Constructive feedback can help students identify weaknesses in their writing and improve their ability to express ideas clearly and appropriately in academic English. Encouraging regular meetings between supervisors and students may also help address writing problems at an early stage.

Fourth, universities may consider establishing academic writing support centers or consultation services where postgraduate students can receive individual assistance with their writing. Such support services can provide guidance on language use, organization of ideas, and proper citation practices.

Finally, future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of targeted academic writing interventions in improving postgraduate students' writing skills. Further studies may also explore differences in academic writing challenges across disciplines or investigate the role of digital writing tools in supporting academic writing development.

References

- AbdulKareem, M. N. (2013). An Investigation Study of Academic Writing Problems Faced by Arab Postgraduate Students at University Tekndogi Malaysia (UTM), *Articles of Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3,9, pp: 1552-1557.
- Al Badi, I. (2015). Academic writing difficulties of ESL learners. *In the 2015 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings*. Spain, Barcelona
- Al Fadda, H. (2012). Difficulties in academic writing: From the perspective of King Saud University postgraduate students. *English Language Teaching*, 5, 3, pp: 123-130.
- Alfaki, I. (2015). University students' English writing problems: diagnosis and remedy. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 3, 2, pp: 40-52.
- Alkarkhi, S. I., & Hmouma, M. A. A. (2025). The effects of well-being, resilience, work environment and job satisfaction on foreign language teaching enjoyment in Libyan context. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 30(11), 49–68. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-3011034968>
- Alkhairy, M. H (2013). English as A Foreign Language Learning demotivational factors as perceived by Saudi Undergraduates. *European Scientific Journal*, 9, 3, 2, pp. 365-382.
- Al.Khasawneh, F.(2010) Writing for Academic Purposes: Problems faced by Arab Postgraduate students of business, *UUM.ESL World Issue 2*, (28) vol.g from <http://www.espworld.info>.
- Alsiede, S, M. & Ibrahim, N, W. (2017). Exploring Challenges Encountered by EFL Libyan Learners in Research Teaching and Writing. *Journal of language Learning*, 3,2, pp: 14.
- Arkoudis, S., & Starfield, S. (2007). In-between spaces: Supervising international PhD candidates. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 44(1), 5162.
- Bitchener, J. & Baskurkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis student writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, pp: 4-18.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 3, 2, pp: 77-101. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*, (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education*. 5th ed. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

- Creswell, J. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dong, Y, R. (1998). Non-native Graduate Students Thesis/dissertation writing in Science: self-reports by Students and their Advisors from Two U.S Institution. PhD Thesis. City University of New York. Available at [http:// www. Research gate, Net/publication/263445068](http://www.Researchgate.net/publication/263445068).
- Flowerdew, J. (2015). Some thoughts on English for research publication purposes (ERPP) and related issues. *Language Teaching*, 48(2), 250–262.
- Hmouma, M., & Benarose, A. (2026). The Effectiveness of Using Artificial Intelligence on Learning Vocabulary among Libyan EFL University Undergraduates at Zawia University. *International Journal of Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(1), 12-18. <https://ijprmr.com/index.php/ijprmr/article/view/10>
- Hyland, k. (2016). *Teaching and Researching Writing*, (3rd ed.) e-book Available at routledge. Com/ Teaching- and-Researching.Writing-Third Edition/Hyland/plbook/9781138859463. Accessed on 22nd May 2021.
- Klella, A. S. A., & Mrghem, Z. M. O. (2024). Artificial Intelligence and Human Cognition: A Systematic Review of Thought Provocation through AI ChatGPT Prompts. *ATRAS journal*, 5(3), 432-444. <https://doi.org/10.70091/atras/AI.27>
- Lestari (2020). An Analysis of Students Difficulties in Writing Undergraduate Thesis AT English Education Program of MUHA MADIYAH, University of BENGKULU. *Journal of English Education and Applied Linguistics*, 9, 1, pp: 17-29.
- Maguire, M. & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars. *AISHE-J*, 9, 3351.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-bass.
- Oshima, A. And Hogue, A (2006). *Writing Academic English* (4th ed.). The Longman Academic Writing Series.
- Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and Dissertation writing in a second language*. USA: Routledge.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Singh, M. K. M. (2016). An Emic Perspective on Academic Writing Difficulties among International Graduate Students in Malaysia. *School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, University Sains Malaysia*, 16, 3, pp: 83-97.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Turmudi, D. (2017). Rethinking Academic Essay Writing: Selected Genres in Comparison. *Premise: Journal of English Education*, 6, 2, pp:119-137.

Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-structured interview questions for students

1. What were the main academic writing difficulties you faced while writing your dissertation?
2. Did you face difficulties in using appropriate academic vocabulary? Please explain.
3. What kinds of grammatical problems did you experience while writing your dissertation?
4. Did your first language (Arabic) affect your academic writing in English? How?
5. Were coherence and cohesion difficult to achieve in your academic writing? Why?
6. Did you experience difficulties in paraphrasing information from academic sources?

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions for the supervisors

1. Based on your experience, what are the most common academic writing challenges faced by Master's students?
2. Do you think students receive sufficient academic writing preparation before starting their dissertations?
3. Do students experience difficulties in using correct grammar when writing their dissertations? Please explain.
4. Do students show difficulties in paraphrasing information from academic sources?
5. Does the first language (Arabic) influence students' academic writing in English? In what way?
6. Do students demonstrate awareness of plagiarism and how to avoid it?