

Investigating challenges in thesis writing for non-native MA students of English: The case of second-year MA students of English in Algeria

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The present study aims at investigating the challenges that non-native English-Speaking students face when writing a thesis. In order to explore this issue, a quantitative research method was used, by means of a survey questionnaire, which addresses MA students of English in three universities in Algeria. Consequently, in order to find out the challenges they face when writing a thesis, a questionnaire was designed and administrated as the main instrument of the study. The total number of participants was 120 second-year MA students. The data was analysed statistically using the SPSS programme. The findings show that second-year MA students face challenges in writing a thesis, such as citing references and following the academic guidelines while the discussion section of a thesis is considered the most difficult part to write during this process.

Keywords: *second-year MA students, academic writing challenges, thesis*

1. Introduction

Students, all over the world, dream to gain advanced studies and education. So, they join different universities in which English is used as the language of instruction, and they need to write assignments, academic papers and thesis/dissertation in English, but they face many difficulties when preparing these papers and projects in English, in their field of study (Dawoud 2012). This is also considered one of the biggest challenges that students who are studying English as their major may face. Writing a thesis is a challenging activity to undergraduate students due to the several steps that students have to follow in order to complete the academic requirements of the BA and MA programmes. Therefore, the process of writing a thesis needs focus and concentration starting from reading the literature, collecting data and analysing it, which is the heart of the work, to

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drawing a conclusion. Because of so many reasons, students may face difficulty in writing not only their theses, in particular, but also writing academically, in general, and some deviations may occur due to the 'effects of native language in academic writing and the effect of feedback provided' (Gürel Cennetkuşu 2017, 320). Students, scholars or writers in the academic fields may encounter some difficulties, and these difficulties mainly refer to the standards that must be taken into consideration when writing for a specific community (Nasiri 2012, 68). According to Song (2014), some common difficulties that non-natives encounter when writing academic papers, or theses/dissertations and publications are related to language problems, in the first place. In addition, she adds that the deviations from the rules of academic writing can be considered one of the obstacles that students, writers, and scholars may face in writing academic papers. Other issues, according to her, which are classified among the difficulties, are 'non-discursive difficulties and editors' and reviewers' potential bias against NNES scholars' submissions' (Song 2014, 42). Last, but not least, the very requirements of producing a text in the English language produce a considerable amount of tension among the authors of these papers, as, according to Nechifor (2016), the rules that must be observed in the process of discourse production in English are different, even in general terms, than those belonging to the native language of the text creators.

In this paper, I start with a brief introduction to the points that I am going to tackle. Then, I summarize some previous works that have been done on the same area of my study in the literature review. In the second section, I highlight the methodology that I follow in this study including research design, data collection procedures, the participants of this study, a description of my research instrument and data analysis, which is analysed using SPSS. Next, I provide a discussion concerning the analysis of the data and findings. In addition, I highlight the answers of the research questions of my study.

2. Literature review

In recent years, most theses/dissertations and academic publications have been written in English, which represents great challenge for both students and researchers who are not native speakers of English (Komba 2016; Paltridge and Starfield 2007; Gohar *et al.* 2022).

According to previous studies, academic writing is challenging to university students and researchers due to the steps they have to follow when they write a piece of research. What makes the thesis/dissertation, paper/article or publication

more challenging is the methodology that the student or researcher follows and, more precisely, it is the language used, not in the rules of academic language, but rather the language used for academic purposes. This issue has been investigated through a huge number of studies that have been conducted on the challenges that students face when writing their thesis/dissertations and academic papers (Gürel Cennetkuşu 2011; Gürel Cennetkuşu 2017; Dong 1998; Shaw 1991; Song 2014). Some other studies have been conducted by scholars on the process of academic writing regarding students and their thesis/dissertation advisors/supervisors (Buckingham 2008; Dong 1998). Recent works have demonstrated that academic writing has particular features and principles that students and researchers must observe.

The following parts of the literature review provide some previous studies that focus on academic writing and the challenges that students, researchers and scholars face when writing academically.

Buckingham (2008) conducted interviews with 13 Turkish scholars to examine the development of their writing skills. The data indicate that the acquisition strategies occur in a long period of exploration of genre conventions with the norms of self-directed analysis. Buckingham took into account the strategies that students can follow when they write academically. This study is relevant to the area of my study in the sense that the researcher focused on the ways that help scholars be self-directed in writing their publications by taking into account the characteristics of academic writing, especially the writing characteristics related to their field of study.

Cusen (2018) reports on an investigation of the use of vague language (VL) and IMRaD moves (Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion), showing the degree of informativeness of academic journal abstracts published in the Bulletin of Transilvania University of Braşov between 2010 and 2017. In this paper, the author reviews various definitions of vague language and provides a taxonomy of its various types. She also discusses the functions of VL which include providing textual cohesion and showing membership of a community of practice. Finally, she reviews the IMRaD structure of academic journal article abstracts which is considered to be a norm for the structure of such a text. Cusen (2019) also conducted a study that shows the degree of informativeness in terms of referential explicitness of academic texts and of use of vague language in academic journal abstracts published in 2010 and 2011. Cusen (2019) first reviewed literature on Vague Language from a both theoretical and research perspective, and then described what Cutting (2012, 283) calls 'the distribution of IMRaD moves (Introduction, Method, Results and Discussion)', which the abstracts in the corpus may or may not contain.

Gürel Cennetkuşu (2011) investigated the challenges that the students may face when writing a dissertation in a foreign language. She used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The former is realized through conducting a comprehensive survey and the latter through face-to-face interviews with the students' advisors/supervisors. After collecting and analysing the data, Gürel Cennetkuşu (2011) found that among the challenges that students may face when writing a dissertation there are: writing practices, the writing ability, expressing ideas and thoughts and having a poor English language background. The analysis of the face-to-face interviews showed that dissertation advisors/supervisors suggested some strategies to help students overcome such challenges. These strategies are: reading and correcting, teaching, making suggestions/advising, directing to sources, and reading but not correcting. This study provided ways that may guide teachers of academic writing to use better strategies to develop English language pedagogy.

Dong (1998) conducted a study on 169 graduate students and their supervisors to investigate writing theses and dissertations in sciences. The participants of this study were from two research institutions (Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia University) in the U.S. She compared the academic format of the articles to the chapters of theses and dissertations and how non-native students of English can use the resources of writing in order to help them in their writings, as well as some suggestions to improve supervision. Dong (1998) also highlighted the cultural and linguistic differences of the students and how they are considered important in the writing process of a thesis and dissertation. The results showed that there is a need to discover how to develop the transformation of knowledge in 'English for academic purposes' classes to help non-native graduate students be aware of the steps of writing theses and dissertations starting from collecting the data, developing thought, citing resources, avoiding plagiarism till writing the thesis/dissertation properly. This study focuses on the production of English for non-native learners during their theses writing. It can be said that the current study has the same direction as Dong's (1998) because both focus on non-native graduate students of English who have to write academic pieces of research during their last year at university. This study provided insights into other studies concentrated on teaching pedagogy to raise the education level for both ESP and EAP.

Structured interviews were conducted by Shaw (1991) with 22 non-native students in order to investigate the practices of writing a dissertation regarding the student work and his/her supervisor's guidance. In this paper, the researcher highlights the importance of the supervisor in the process of writing a dissertation. The findings of Shaw's (1991) study try to account for the impact of some factors rather than the native language and the students' cultural background. The factors

that affect the students' writing are: the nature of the field of their study, genre, and the language for a specific purpose that is used in their field.

Gürel Cennetkuşu (2017), in her study, aimed at investigating the challenges that international students may face in the process of writing academic papers, such as dissertations and articles. Through a comprehensive survey, in-depth interviews and samples of academic writing, she examined the means, needs and the real practice of academic writing in English. She focused on how academic writing in English can be successful when both students and instructors are aware enough of the norms of the practices of writing academically.

As mentioned above, previous research showed that there are challenges that students face when writing a thesis/dissertation or other publications, as well. The focus of these studies is to investigate the challenges that occur when writing academically and to explore strategies to develop the English teaching pedagogy. This may help students to be aware of the essential features and the rules of academic writing. From the works reviewed and the conclusions drawn by the researchers, it is crucial to direct attention to such issues which can be considered as a central point of the pedagogy. Thus, this study is an attempt to find out the challenges that non-native Master students of English who complete or are about to complete their Master thesis in Algeria face and which part of the thesis is the most difficult for them to write.

3. Research questions

From the previous studies, it is clear that students face difficulties and challenges in writing academic papers such as thesis/dissertation, or other publications. Thus, this study aims to investigate the challenges that non-native Master students of English in Algeria face in writing papers (theses). This study takes a large number of second-year Master students of English in Algeria who are non-native speakers of English to investigate the challenges they have during their theses writing. In order to investigate the challenges that these ones face when writing a thesis, I formulated the following research questions:

1. What are the academic and linguistic challenges that non-native Master students of English in Algeria face when writing a thesis?
2. Which part of the thesis is the most difficult to write for non-native Master students of English in Algeria?

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

The present study aims at investigating the challenges that non-native Master student of English in Algeria face when writing a thesis starting from reading the relevant materials to writing the thesis appropriately. It also seeks to know which part of the academic thesis students find the most difficult. In order to achieve this aim, a quantitative research method was adopted. One of the most essential features of doing a quantitative study is that it is mainly based on statistics and numbers. This one is considered the central point in such kind of research (Dörnyei, 2007), which leads to more accurate findings and focused results.

Consequently, to achieve the objectives of this study, the quantitative method is adopted. According to Biggam (2008, 86), quantitative refers to the 'research that is concerned with quantitative measurements.' Quantitative data, in this study, is collected by distributing a comprehensive survey to non-native Master students of English in Algeria in order to identify the challenges they face in the process of writing a thesis. The survey was adopted from Dong's (1998) dissertation (see section 2) which addresses non-native English-speaking doctoral students concerning writing publications in English. I have adopted Dong's (1998) questionnaire by omitting some of the questions because they are not useful for my study, and which are related to other types of publications writing, whereas my study addresses non-native Master students of English concerning writing a thesis. And the third section of the questionnaire is from Song's (2014) dissertation which was modified according to the context of the current study according to the 5 Likert Scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). In the analysis of the data collected, I applied a descriptive statistical analysis for the answers of the questions of the survey.

4.2. Data collection procedures

After selecting the most appropriate research method, I used one instrument which enabled me to collect the data, which was afterwards quantitatively analysed using the SPSS programme.

Thus, the participants were requested to answer the online survey questionnaire concerning writing an academic thesis during the spring semester when they are required to write their theses. The survey was posted on a number of Facebook pages of second-year Master students of English in Algeria who completed or were about to complete their theses.

4.3. Participants

The total number of the participants in the present study is 120, consisting of Master students of English who are studying English as a foreign language in the following universities in Algeria: Ouargla, Biskra and Gualma. They are of both genders, male and female, aged 22 to 25 and above. They were in their year of graduation, and they were supposed to submit their theses at the end of this semester in the academic year 2019/2020.

4.4. The description of the survey questionnaire

To investigate the challenges that non-native Master students of English in Algeria face, I adopted the survey from Dong's (1998) dissertation, which consists of three sections. The first section is designed to elicit general information about the participants such as gender, age, the university and specialty and questions about whether they wrote a thesis before for their BA programme or not, as well as questions concerning their current MA thesis. The second part includes some academic issues that students may face in the preparation of their thesis. It presents 15 issues about their experience in writing academic papers such as the thesis they are working on in their second-year of the Master's programme. To mention just a few questions, reading of the relevant studies that are related to the thesis' topic, the way ideas should be presented and organised, grammar focus and plagiarism avoidance are among the problematic areas that the adopted questionnaire highlights. The last section aims to find out which part of the thesis students think is the most difficult to write of all the parts of the thesis: abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussions, implications and conclusions. The second and the third sections of Song's survey are the essential parts that were used for the analysis.

5. Results and discussion

Before moving to the analysis of the second and the third part of the adopted survey, the following table shows the general information about the participants which was not subjected to the analysis. It is mainly about the gender of the participants, to know how many males and females participated in the investigation, their age and in which university they were are taking their Master studies.

Table 1. Information about the participants

<i>The First section of the Survey</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	48	40%
	Female	72	60%
<i>Age</i>	22-25	96	80%
	25 and above	24	20%
<i>University</i>	Ouargla University	60	60%
	Biskra University	36	30%
	Gualma University	24	20%
<i>Wrote a thesis in their BA</i>	Yes	24	15%
	No	102	85%
<i>Completed their MA thesis</i>	Yes	102	85%
	No	18	15%
<i>Total</i>		120 students	100%

The participants' information data clearly showed that there were nearly twice as many female participants as male participants. Concerning their age, 80% of the participants were between 22 and 25, which indicated that the majority of the students were young - 80%, while 20% were above 25. This is related to the criteria regarding the registration and acceptance of the students when registering for a Master programme at the level of the faculty in which the priority is given to the freshly BA graduated students, while the acceptance of others is limited to a particular number according to the number remained. Besides that, the participants were mainly students at the English programme, specifically linguistics, in the three universities mentioned above with 60%, 30%, and 20%, respectively. It was clear that the majority of the participants - 85% had not written a thesis in their Bachelor Programme, simply because of the regulations of the new system (LMD) which does not necessarily require students to write a BA project in order for them to be granted the degree. Those who responded 'Yes' for the same question were the oldest, who took their studies before the higher education system got changed, system which was named 'the classic system.' 85% of the participants seemed to have finished their MA theses, since they had to submit their theses at the end of this semester, whereas 15% of them had not completed theirs, yet. Since the majority of the participants had completed or were about to complete working on their theses, it was worth mentioning that they had experienced some kind of academic research. Their answer would reflect what they thought of the process of

academic writing, which helped me find out the common challenges that the students may face when writing their theses.

5.1. Challenges of writing a thesis

In this section, the results obtained were analysed using the SPSS program under the form of tables and figures. The analysis included the frequencies of the students' answers and their percentages. Some other analysis showed the standard deviation (SD) and the mean scores of the students' answers. Thus, the description of the answers of the two sections of the survey questionnaire, which were extracted for the analysis, was done in as much detail as possible. This would help in the interpretation of the results which will be presented next.

All the participants were second-year Master students of English. For the majority of them, this was the first time they had experienced writing an academic paper (thesis). In order to show the difficulties that second-year Master students of English face, Figure 1 and Table 2 demonstrate the frequencies of students' answers as follows:

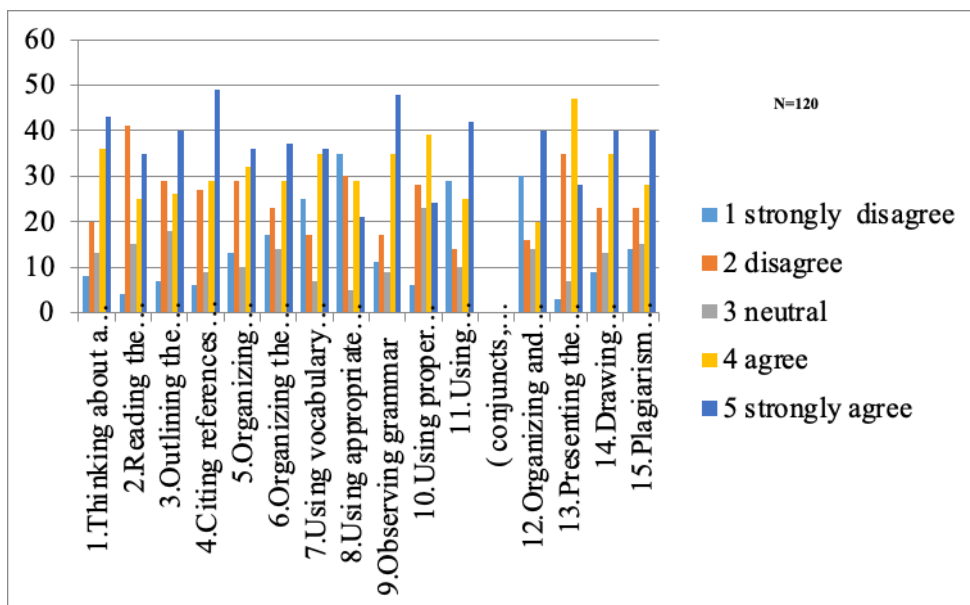


Figure 1. The frequencies of students' answers of the second section of the questionnaire

Since the majority of the participants shared the same situation regarding the fact that that had been their first time writing an academic paper, it was clear that their answers were generally the same to some extent, as it can be more clearly seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Information about the participants

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Thinking about a topic	8	20	13	36	43
2. Reading the previous studies that are related to your topic	4	41	15	25	35
3. Outlining the sections of the thesis	7	29	18	26	40
4. Citing references and articles	6	27	9	29	49
5. Organizing a paragraph (structure)	13	29	10	32	36
6. Organizing the whole text	17	23	14	29	37
7. Using vocabulary appropriately (word choice)	25	17	7	35	36
8. Using appropriate expressions	35	30	5	29	21
9. Observing grammar	11	17	9	35	48
10. Using proper mechanics by observing punctuation, and other elements.	6	28	23	39	24
11. Using appropriate connectors and transitions (conjuncts, subordinate conjunctions)	29	14	10	25	42
12. Organizing and presenting ideas in a logical way	30	16	14	20	40
13. Presenting the problems clearly	3	35	7	47	28
14. Drawing a conclusion	9	23	13	35	40
15. Avoiding plagiarism	14	23	15	28	40

As shown in Figure 1 and Table 2, there were some common problematic issues that second-year Master students of English in Algeria face, and those difficulties were considered among the challenges they faced.

Concerning the first point which is 'thinking about a topic', 43 and 36 students of the total responded 'strongly agree' and 'agree', respectively, which indicated that students find it difficult to narrow their focus and to specify a topic for their study. This shows that it is important to focus on fixing a topic for their study as the first step whenever starting working on their theses/dissertations because looking for a very specific area of research is time consuming, and it is also very challenging, especially after reading the literature. For the second point in the second section of the questionnaire, 'reading the previous studies', 41 students responded 'disagree', 35 responded 'strongly agree' and 25 of them chose 'agree',

as they thought that the issue of reading and looking for previous studies was considered a challenge for them.

The participants' responses concerning 'outlining the sections of the thesis' and 'citing references and articles' were 40 and 49 for 'strongly agree' for each one of them. The responses of the participants regarding the next points: 'organizing a paragraph', 'organizing the whole text', 'using vocabulary appropriately', 'using appropriate expressions', 'observing grammar', 'using proper mechanics', 'using appropriate connectors', 'organizing ideas in a logical way', 'presenting the problems clearly', 'drawing a conclusion', 'avoiding plagiarism', there were mainly 'agree' and 'strongly agree' as answers chosen. However, there were some cases in which there were some responses to which the students answered with 'disagree' in a high percentage, such as for point 2, which refers to 'reading previous studies that are related to their topic of study' and for point 13, which refers to 'presenting the problems'. The statistics regarding students' answers were slightly similar in all the 15 points mentioned since the variables 'agree' and 'strongly agree' were classified as the most frequent answers. Participants who have experienced writing their BA projects showed that they did not have difficulties in 'presenting the problem clearly' and in 'avoiding plagiarism'.

In other words, when the students were asked about particular points in academic writing and writing a thesis, the majority of them agreed that those points were challenging for them. One reason is that second-year Master students of English were non-native speakers of English, so they were studying English as a foreign language, and the main objective of this study is to see how non-native speakers approach writing. Another reason is that they did not have courses in which they could practice on writing academic papers.

Responses revealed that the majority of the participants had not experienced academic writing before. The thesis they were working on could be considered their first attempt to produce and practice academic writing. It is crucial to mention that the 15 points included in the second section of the questionnaire mostly tackled the challenges that students may face when writing the conclusion of their studies.

In Table 3, the mean scores and standard deviation are presented, based on the calculation of the participants' responses.

Table 3. Mean scores and standard deviation of the students' answers

	1.Thinking about a topic	2. Reading the previous studies	3.Outlining the sections of the thesis	4. Citing references and articles	5.Organizing paragraph	6.Organizing the whole text	7.Using vocabulary appropriately	
Mean	3.66	3.43	3.60	3.74	3.29	3.21	3.19	
SD	1.28	1.31	1.27	1.28	1.41	1.48	1.53	
	8.Using appropriate expressions	9.Observing grammar	10.Using proper mechanics	11.Using appropriate connectors	12.Organizing ideas in a logical way	13. Presenting the problems clearly	14.Drawing conclusion	15.Plagiarism avoidance
	2.96	3.69	3.37	3.22	3.15	3.52	3.54	3.35
	1.52	1.39	1.28	1.59	1.59	1.23	1.32	1.43

According to statistics, the analysis of the results using the SPSS programme showed that the students faced some challenges in their academic writing since the majority of them had not experienced writing a thesis in their BA programme (102 participants), as represented by a mean of 3.19, of all responses. In addition, the responses of the participants who had experience in writing theses showed that they did not have difficulties in citing the references and articles, using appropriate connectors, presenting and organising their ideas properly, and avoiding plagiarism. The higher mean score in the table above was registered as 3.74 and was related to 'citing references and articles.' Other points with high responses were: 'drawing a conclusion' and 'outlining the sections of the thesis', to which 40 of the participants responded with 'strongly agree'. The same can be said about 'citing references and articles' (40 participants responded with 'strongly agree').

For the standard deviation scores, the results were mostly around 1, the points with a high standard deviation being 'using appropriate connectors' and 'organizing ideas in a logical way', with a score of SD = 1.59. Some other high scores of standard deviations were: 'plagiarism avoidance' – SD = 1.34, 'organizing the whole text' – SD = 1.48 'using appropriate expressions' – SD = 1.52 and 'using vocabulary appropriately' – SD = 1.53.

In general, the participants reported to have had challenges in academic writing, which was an aspect also investigated by other researchers (Dong 1998; Song 2014; Buckingham 2008, and Gürel Cennetkuşu 2017). However, they roughly found the same results as mine, which demonstrates that students have difficulties and challenges when writing a thesis and any academic paper. When it comes to writing a thesis/dissertation, it is not about knowing how to use language, but rather students need to go beyond the basic use of English, and learn the requirements of academic writing.

5.2. Students' perceptions of the sections of the academic thesis

Knowing the difficulties and challenges that second-year students of English face when dealing with academic writing is not enough to make them aware of what they have to do in the process of writing such academic papers. But it is vital for the instructors and course designers of academic writing courses to know which part in a thesis is more difficult than another in order to highlight it and give students instructions and practice on how to approach it.

The third part of the survey questionnaire was dedicated to identifying which part of a thesis is more difficult to write. The results of this part are presented in Figure 2 below. The students were asked to choose one of the five descriptors on the Likert scale to show which part of writing a thesis is the most difficult. The first aspect tackled was 'writing the abstract of the study conducted' and the majority of students chose 'agree' (30 students) and 'strongly agree' (31 students), which indicated that summarizing the study under the form of an abstract is difficult according to the participants.

Thirty-five of the participants chose 'disagree' for the second aspect regarding 'writing the introduction of the thesis', whereas some others thought that it was a bit challenging to write it. For the first group, the introduction can be challenging as they need to establish the scope of their research and its purpose by highlighting the general information and main points. Some students might find it difficult to articulate their research area and objectives, as they need to highlight the essential points that their study centers around. Regarding the point concerned with 'writing the literature review' and whether they considered it difficult or not, the most common answer among the participants was 'agree'. Based on the participants' programme, they were not asked to write a BA project at the end of their undergraduate programme, and they did not receive detailed information about how exactly they should write academic papers. They did not have enough information about how to find previous studies and how to summarize them in a way that is related to the topic of the researcher's study. For the other aspects included in the third section of the survey questionnaire: 'methodology', 'findings', 'discussions', 'implications' and 'conclusions', the majority of the answers were: 'agree', 'strongly agree' and in some cases 'disagree'. It is clear that 'agree' was the highest descriptor chosen for the part regarding the 'discussion' section of a thesis. In this regard, participants' responses concerning the 'discussion' item was the highest in terms of percentages, based on Figure 2. Therefore, participants found the 'discussion' part challenging to write about in a thesis by all second-year Master students of English in all three universities in Algeria which participated in the survey.

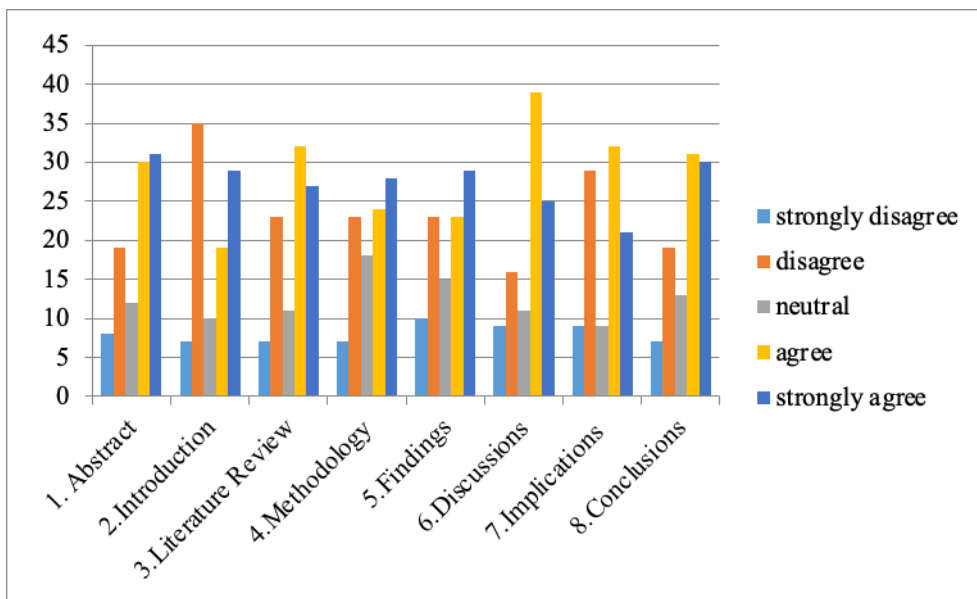


Figure 2. Students' responses on the most difficult part of writing an academic thesis

By measuring the statistics of the collected data, Table 3 shows the mean scores, standard deviation and the variance in each point. Regarding the last aspect which is about 'conclusion', the mean score was the highest, $M = 3.58$, in comparison to the mean scores related to the other aspects. By representing the score of standard deviation (SD) and the degree of variance (V), the highest scores were related to 'writing the introduction', as follows: SD was registered varying from 1.27 to 1.38, whereas the degree of variance was from 1.62 to 1.92, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean scores, standard deviation, variance, and Median of the students' answers in the third section of the questionnaire

	Ab- stract	Intro- duction	Lit Review	Meth- odology	Findings	Discus- sions	Implica- tions	Conclu- sions
Mean	3.57	3.28	3.49	3.43	3.38	3.55	3.27	3.58
SD	1.32	1.38	1.29	1.30	1.37	1.27	1.32	1.28

Overall, this study investigated the challenges in writing academic papers (theses) for second-year Master students of English in Algeria. The group of the participants

was homogeneous. The majority of them were freshly BA graduate students who did not have experience in writing a thesis before. This was their first time to do so, thus the study demonstrating that there are some difficulties and challenges that second-year Master students face while working on their theses. In other words, the difficulties they were faced with were obvious for the participants, and so they must be taken into consideration.

The findings of this study contribute to spotlighting a crucial issue in English teaching. Teaching academic writing is vital in the sense that students need to be educated; this would be more useful for students especially for those who are willing to continue their post-graduate studies.

6. Conclusion

This study considered a large number of second-year Master students of English in Algeria who are non-native speakers of English and thus the results can lead to significant findings on this issue and can be generalized to a larger group. This study investigated the challenges that second-year Master students of English in Algeria face when writing their theses. The process of conducting a study and writing an academic paper might not be easy for everyone since the researcher may face some challenges in one of the steps of doing so. In this study, second-year Master students of English in Algeria reported some common difficulties when conducting studies, as a result of not having had courses on writing academic papers such as theses/dissertations or any other academic papers. The findings illustrated that the difficulties in writing an academic paper do exist and that the challenges that non-native students of English face are in the same area of difficulties when writing their theses. Some students may face challenges at the very beginning of the work, others when reading the previous studies, while some others encounter difficulties when writing the parts of the academic paper (thesis). Interestingly, all of these mean scores are slightly above 'neutral'. I think it would be a good idea to use inferential statistics for the second part of this study to see if there are any differences between these means to see if there any significant differences occur. The present research ends with some recommendations, which may affect the students positively when they conduct their studies for academic writing, by looking, on the part of the instructors, for effective ways to teach students academic writing techniques in order to make them aware of the steps they need to follow to produce a quality academic research paper.

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