T.C.

ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

GRADUATE STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC WRITING

MASTER THESIS

Khaled A. H. ALOSTATH

Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature Program

SEPTEMBER, 2021

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Thesis Advisor: Assit. Prof. Hülya YUMRU

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ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "Graduate Students' Challenges in Academic Writing", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (06/09/2021)

Khaled A. H. ALOSTATH

FOREWORD

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This thesis is dedicated with love to my parents, Alaa Alostath and Tahani Alostath. To my best friend and (host) mother, Cathy Baker. To my teacher, friend, and the sunshine of my life, Brian Barber.

September 2021 Khaled A. H. ALOSTATH

GRADUATE STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC WRITING

ABSTRACT

Graduate students, unlike other learners, are constantly under pressure, with more responsibilities and challenges in their daily lives, let alone their academic life. Many studies have been carried out among ESL/EFL undergraduate students' writing strategies and challenges (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Mustafa, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021), yet there have not been adequate studies addressing master's graduate students scholarly writing strategies and writing challenges (e.g., Hemmings et al., 2007; Gomez, 2014; Molinari, 2019). Also, the number of students who are blamed for lacking the appropriate preparation to write academically at the graduate level is proliferating (Holmes et al., 2018; Collins, 2015). The aim of this mixed-methods study was to 1) investigate EFL graduate students' academic writing strategies in their writing practices, 2) study EFL graduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards academic writing, 3) explore the sources that EFL graduate students' access to attain their writing tasks, 4) investigate the challenges that the EFL graduate students' encounter and struggle with in academic writing, 5) explore the faculty members' perceptions on what is problematic in graduate students academic writing practices, and 6) elicit suggestions from the faculty members to help EFL graduate students in improving their academic writing skills. The study was conducted in the 2020-2021 academic year and the participants were 28 Master's students enrolled in a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the master's graduate students, while an open-ended questionnaire was used with five faculty members. The study findings exhibited various writing strategies that the master's graduate students utilize in their writing (e.g., reading scholarly writing, efficient communication with peers, etc.). As for the master's graduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards academic writing, almost all participants reported positive attitudes towards academic writing at the

master’s level and their desire to attend academic writing courses. Also, they reported that they always rely on journals to attain their writing tasks more than on books because access to the latter is scarce and expensive. Furthermore, the students reported various difficulties that they struggle with in scholarly writing (e.g., written assignments, reflective essays, research proposals, research articles, thesis writing). Four themes (academic writing as a main obstacle, influences on the writing process, supervisors' relationship, and socioeconomic problems) were identified as the primary problems the master’s graduate students encountered in their academic writing. The findings from the open-ended questionnaires with faculty members revealed numerous problems (e.g., incompetence in written English, lack of synthesis in writing, inadequacy in using academic writing style to build arguments and claims in their research), among other problems that the master’s graduate students commit in their academic writing. Faculty members' perceptions of the master’s graduate students' academic writing performance suggest that the former do not meet the rigor and demands of academic writing at the master’s level. However, both the students and the faculty members agreed on reading scholarly work as a working strategy to write academically better. Notwithstanding, this study argues that there might be more effective approaches to deal with graduate students' difficulties in academic writing that provide maximum benefits for students**.** The study supports providing graduate students apt support and guidance to enhance, improve, and advance their academic writing skills.

***Keywords*:** Academic writing, Graduate students, Faculty members, EFL, Mixed methods.

LİSANSÜSTÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİN AKADEMİK YAZMADA KARŞILAŞTIKLARI ZORLUKLAR

ÖZET

Lisansüstü öğrenciler, diğer öğrencilere kıyasla daha sık baskı altında olup, günlük hayatlarının dışında da akademik olarak daha çok sorumluluğa sahiptir. ESL/EFL lisans öğrencilerinin yazma yöntemleri ve sorunları üzerinde yapılmış sayısız çalışma bulunmaktadır (örn: Cheng, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Mustafa, 2018; Zhang ve diğerleri., 2021). Nitekim lisansüstü öğrencilerin akademik yazma yöntemleri ve yazma sorunları üzerine yapılmış yeterli sayıda araştırma bulunmamaktadır (örn: Hemmings ve diğerleri., 2007; Gomez, 2014; Molinari, 2019). Bununla birlikte lisans mezunu seviyesinde olup gerekli akademik yazma becerisi ve hazırlığının eksik olduğu eleştirileri alan öğrenciler artış göstermekte (Holmes ve diğerleri., 2018; Collins, 2015). Karma metotlu bu çalışmanın hedefi 1) EFL lisans mezunu öğrencilerin yazı denemelerinde akademik yazma yöntemlerinin incelenmesi, 2) EFL lisans mezunu öğrencilerin akademik yazmaya karşı görüş ve algıları, 3) EFL lisans mezunu öğrencilerin yazı görevlerini aldıkları kaynakları incelemek, 4) EFL lisan mezunu öğrencilerin akademik yazmada karşılaştığı sorunları incelemek, 5) fakülte eğitim üyelerinin lisans mezunu öğrencilerin akademik yazmada yaşadığı sorunların kaynağı hakkındaki düşüncelerini incelemek, ve 6) fakülte eğitim üyelerinden lisans mezunu öğrencilerin akademik yazmadaki sorunlarını gidermek için öneri oluşturmaya teşvik etmek. Bu araştırma 2020-2021 yılında yapılmış olup, katılımcılar İstanbul, Türkiye'de bulunan bir vakıf üniversitesinin 28 yüksek lisans öğrencisidir. Yüksek lisans öğrencilerine bir anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. 5 fakülte eğitim üyesine de açık uçlu anket yapılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları lisans üstü öğrencilerin yazmada kullandığı çeşitli yöntemler gözlemlemiştir (örn: Akademik yazılar okumak, akranları ile etkili iletişimde bulunmak, vb.). Lisansüstü öğrencilerin akademik yazmaya karşı algı ve görüşlerine gelince, katılımcıların tamamına yakın bir oranı akademik yazmaya karşı olumlu algısı olup, akademik

yazma derslerine katılmaya istek gösterdi. Bunun yanı sıra, lisans üstü öğrencilerin yazma görevlerini yerine getirme becerisi için hem erişilebilirlik hem de maddi olarak daha uygun olmasından dolayı kitaplardan ziyade akademik dergilerden faydalandıkları gözlemlendi. Ayrıca öğrenciler akademik yazma süresince çeşitli zorluklardan bahsedildi (örn: Yazılı görevler, yansıtma kağıtları, araştırma önerisi, araştırma makaleleri, tez yazma). Lisansüstü öğrencilerin akademik yazmada karşılaştığı problemler dört ana temadan oluşturmaktadır (akademik yazmanın ana engel olması, yazmayı etkileyen unsurlar, danışman ile olan ilişki ve sosyoekonomik sorunlar). Fakülte öğretim üyelerine yapılan açık uçlu anketin bulguları çeşitli sorunları açığa çıkardı (örn: İngilizce yazılı dilde yetersiz olmak, yazma bireşim eksikliği, tartışma ve iddia aşamalarını oluşturmak için gerekli akademik yazma stiline hâkim olmamak). Fakülte eğitim üyelerinin lisansüstü öğrencilerin akademik yazma performansları hakkındaki görüşleri, yüksek lisans seviyesinde akademik yazma gereksinimlerinin ve titizliğin olmadığı yönünde. Nitekim öğrenciler ve eğitim üyeleri akademik makale okumayı, akademik yazmayı geliştiren bir yöntem olmasında hemfikir. Buna rağmen bu araştırma lisansüstü öğrencilerin akademik yazmada karşılaştıkları sorunlara karşı azami fayda gösterecek farklı yaklaşımların da olabileceğini tartışır. Bu araştırma lisans mezunu öğrencilerin akademik yazma yeteneğinin gelişmesi için destek ve rehberliğe ihtiyaçları olduğunu savunur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik yazma, Lisans mezunu öğrenciler, Fakülte eğitim üyeleri, EFL, Karma metot.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

L2 **:** Acronym for a Person's Second Language.

L1 **:** Acronym for a Person’s First Language.

EFL **:** Abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language.

ESL **:** Abbreviation for English as a Second Language.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background for the study and a detailed description of the study content. It also includes detailed information about the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definition of terms.

A. Background of the Study

Language as a means of communication has gathered great importance over the decades in cultural and social interactions. Nowadays, the English language is used as the lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2013; Ehrenreich, 2012). The English language became very popular in educational settings and teaching environments (Brutt-Griffler, 2003). With the English language as a de facto universal language of science, many students and learners sought to enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational settings. Following this trend, researchers started to investigate the acculturation of ESL/EFL students' related problems, concerns, and the degree to which they are aware of language use. Issues emerging from the literature are related to students' native language and L2 writing, how ESL/EFL students deal with the new educational shift, and how their culture and previous learning experiences influence their new learning environment.

Scholarly writing is a prime fundamental aspect of graduate school and higher educational settings (Ferguson, 2009; Murry & Newton, 2009). Researchers have different perspectives when defining academic writing. Al-Mubarak (2017), for example, explain it as "scientific writing which is portrayed as organized research practiced and utilized by researchers at higher education level" (p. 176). Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) use the term "graduate writing process," referring to it as a constructive process that students use "to make meaning beyond the sum of words" (p.808). Bartholomae (1985) defines the discourse of the academic writing community as "the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing" (p.134). However, there is a general agreement that it is a formal language that researchers and students use in academic settings to express new ideas, convey

their points of view, and agreed upon previous studies for other scholars and academic writers (Labaree, 2009).

The literature on graduate students in academic writing indicates that a large number of graduate students are far away from being able to compose an academic text, and they lack the primary skills, even among the most experienced ones (Mc. Grail et al., 2006; Hemmings et al., 2007; Casanvave, 2004). In practical terms, the number of graduate students who are blamed for failing to write academically at graduate school is proliferating for varied reasons, such as students lack confidence in their academic writing, students fear that they might receive negative feedback on their writing, inadequate time devoted for writing, lack of access to effective research sources, indecisive on a research topic, and students lack written competence, to name a few reasons (Holmes et al., 2018; Collins, 2015). Therefore, researchers agree that writing is more complex than a language skill that is likely to be studied easily; however, it is a prime milestone in graduate students' academic life (Akçaoğlu, 2011). Leming (1977) points out the importance of supporting graduate students' academic writing and prepare them for professional life, while Struck (1976) calls to design a specific course to assist graduate students and their writing.

Over the last two decades, several studies have been conducted on the writing-composition-process students take on in their writing (Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Shell et al., 1995). For instance, Chemishanova (2010) explored whether ESL engineering students have internalized the process approach to writing and whether they have applied any rhetorical knowledge in students' academic writing. The research, therefore, detected students' understanding of the overall writing process and the variables that impact their composing process (Chemishanova, 2010). The findings of Chemishanova's (2010) study reveal that there is a contradiction between students' "perception" and "articulation" of writing as a process as students considered the writing process as if they are a "set of concrete stages" (p. 133). This conclusion is consistent with Winsor's (1990) longitudinal study on students writing practices.

Given the challenges that graduate school imposes on its students and the expectations of writing demands (academic papers, reflective essays, researcher proposals), students are expected to perform well and produce well-written research papers. Thus, to meet these demands, students need to be well-resourced with the foundation skills and knowledge to attain this purpose. Myles (2002) states that

"academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas" (p. 1). Notwithstanding, most universities do not offer their graduate students any academic writing classes, courses, or professional support. The shortage of academic writing support is causing massive problems to students who graduated and became teachers and professors afterward. Even the ones that offer their students preparatory writing academic training have no practical part and focus on the composition aspects; therefore, they fail in preparation for graduate-level writing settings (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999).

Furthermore, through the last few decades, researchers investigated the problems ESL and EFL students struggle with in their academic writing that correlated with many variables such as diverse cultures, native languages, and educational systems (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Paltridge, 1997; Gay, 2013). The findings of these studies showed numerous obstacles that graduate students face and deal with in their writing. These problems were incorrect punctuation, inaccuracy and inappropriateness of grammar, vocabulary choice, quality of paragraph organization, the overall quality of research paper, the quality of written content, lack of progressive ideas, students' inability to address the research adequately and directly, students' failure to use academic tone, style and attitude while writing, and students' inability to meet the assignment requirements. Furthermore, Silva (1993) argues that there is a distinction between ESL and [EFL] graduate students writing in L1 and English in L2. He states that the similarities that students might share are superficial in terms of "planning, transcribing, and reviewing, and the features of written texts (i.e., fluency, accuracy, quality, and structure" (Silva, 1993, p.657). Several graduate students assert that they find academic writing difficult because they lack linguistic competence (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006). Yet, the notion of academic writing is more complicated than learning linguistic abilities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999).

Self-efficacy and academic writing are strongly tied to the students at the graduate level academic writing performance. The term self-efficacy is widely quoted as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 2010, p. 1). However, in academic writing, *self-efficacy* can be defined as learners' confidence and adaptivity to produce a well-written text under any circumstances (Huerta et al., 2017). The significance of self-efficacy and its relationship with

graduate students and their writing stems from the fact that graduate students' feelings and social encounters might negatively or positively affect their writing practices (Mattern & Shaw, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009; Hemmings & Kay, 2010). Thus, understanding and acknowledging their feelings can help resolve their difficulties in academic settings. For instance, Huerta et al. (2017) affirm the importance of addressing graduate students' problems in academic writing and highlight their challenges to solve them and help students be better writers. That advocates the findings of previous studies correlation between self-efficacy and writing achievement, where learners with high self-efficacy reported higher writing achievement (Pajares, 2003).

Considering the previously mentioned issues, we come to understand that writing in English is a complex activity, and ESL/EFL graduate students need support and assistance with the necessities of academic writing because writing is developed and learned by writing and improved by practice (Grant & Knowles, 2000; Aitchison & Guerin, 2014). Enormous studies were conducted among undergraduate students writing (e.g., Austen, 1999; Pineteh, 2014; Yang, 2018). Nevertheless, there is still inadequate literature on master students' academic writing nature, the strategies they employ in their writing, their challenges in scholarly writing, and their ways to cope (Henderson & Cook, 2020).

B. The Study Purpose

There are several motives to write academically at the graduate level; it enhances students' abilities and leads them to brainstorm and discover their research interests. It also encourages them to think critically, present their ideas, thoughts, points of view, defend their perspectives using particular strategies in a written format. To meet satisfactory results, graduate writers prefer to follow specific strategies or tactics to help them through writing. Some ESL/EFL students rely on their L1 writing strategies to manage their writing assignments (Leki, 1995), other students employ other approaches like freewriting (Li, 2007). Furthermore, writing strategies vary between expert writers and novel ones (Benton et al., 1984). For instance, skilled writers tend to use several writing strategies (Green & Oxford, 1995) compared to unskilled writers (He, 2005), who lack the knowledge and the skills of composing in writing (Bitchener,

J., & Basturkmen, 2006). Furthermore, the writing strategies they might use are likely to fail (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

While graduate students strive to apply different writing strategies when writing academically, they still fail to meet graduate school academic writing demands. Researchers call for a more in-depth analysis of graduate academic writing challenges (Chou, 2011). However, the literature shows the inadequacy of ESL/EEL graduate students writing challenges and possible approaches to help them cope with this dilemma (Chou, 2011).

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate EFL graduate students' academic writing strategies in their writing practices. Also, it aimed to study the master graduate students' perceptions and attitudes towards academic writing, the sources that they access to accomplish their writing tasks. Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate the challenges of master students in academic writing in-depth (e.g., assignments, research proposals, reflective essays), the main variables that trigger these difficulties, and the faculty insights and suggestions to reduce and overcome these difficulties.

C. Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the current Study:

1. What writing strategies do graduate students use in academic writing?
2. What are graduate students' attitudes and behaviors towards academic writing assignments?
3. What sources do graduate students use to complete academic writing tasks?
4. What difficulties do graduate students experience in completing academic writing tasks?
5. What is the faculty members' perspective on what is problematic in graduate students' academic writing practices?
6. What are faculty members' suggestions to improve graduate students' academic writing skills?

D. The Significance of the Study

Learning English as an SL/FL is stressful and requires a broad range of skills that learners should consider. ESL/EFL students might have inadequate academic writing skills than native speakers who have better access to the language. However, the effects of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) writing practices have emphasized focus among researchers. Al- Fadda (2012) believes that writing in L2 requires proficiency in writing in native language. Along the same line, Cumming's (1990) study findings demonstrate that having writing skills in L1 helps learners in their L2 writing tasks and makes the transition easier.

Academic writing has many challenges across disciplines (i.e., management, communication, and understanding). Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) state that graduate students' academic writing demands are increasing, and their writing practices should pay great attention and emphasis on "depth and breadth, demand for genre competence, and often an expectation for publication" (p. 809). Consequently, graduate writers should continually develop and improve their academic writing skills (Thomas, 2013). As evidence from literature, researchers have explored postgraduate students academic writing characteristics (Tran, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009), writing experiences (Lambie et al., 2008), motivation (Can & Walker, 2011), cultural basis (Maguire, 2011), professional experiences (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000), and studying habits (Whitey & Grous, 2009). These characteristics affect graduate students scholarly writing in one way or another.

Students' lack of academic writing approaches, discourse practices, and weak grammatical usage in the English language make academic writing more complicated. Also, graduate students struggle with additional challenges other than the ones previously mentioned above. These problems are not limited to breaking up long sentences, summarizing and understanding extended writing, using accurate synonyms to express the same meaning with a different vocabulary, grammatical errors, capitalization, the lack of using supporting ideas, wrong usage of prefixes and suffixes, tenses, spelling errors, organizing paragraphs, paraphrasing, using appropriate and varied conjunctions and punctuation (Aloglah, 2018; Holmes, 2003; Khan, 2011).

The scholarship on L2 academic writing struggle reveals a wide gap in their writing process and skills (e.g., Al-Shabanah, 2005, Larcombe et al., 2007; Cadman, 2000). In a study by Al-Khairy (2013), the researcher points out that students' problems in scholarly writing could be related to L1 interference, shortage of task guidance, misunderstanding the assignment, and low point of view in writing. Also, Young and Schartner (2014) believe that graduate students' challenges are related to academic literacy, learning specific settings at the host university, L2 language skills, and writing conventions.

In the light of the previously mentioned studies regarding academic writing among graduate students, this research has taken a further step in investigating graduate master students' academic writing strategies and challenges. Also, it studied the causes beyond these problems, the faculty members' perceptions, and suggestions to reduce and minimize these problems. The study results are significant to help graduate students spot, understand and avoid these problems and obstacles in their scholarly writing.

E. Definitions of Terms

Academic Writing: It is a style of expression used by scholars and researchers to express and share "the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and specific areas of expertise" (USC, 2020). Also, it is known that it has a formal tone and style, but at the same time, it does not use complex language and does not require complex vocabulary or long sentences. Academic writing aims to convey new knowledge and agreed on previous studies about philosophical ideas or concepts for a group of scholarly experts (Labaree, 2009).

Writing Strategies: It is a compensatory system in which learners or educators intentionally exploit the effectiveness of their performance or overcome a situation or a problem in their writing (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

- L2: Acronym for a Person's Second Language.
- L1: Acronym for a Person’s First Language.
- EFL: Abbreviation for English as a Foreign Language.
- ESL: Abbreviation for English as a Second Language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Overview

This chapter explores literature related to the intersection between ESL/EFL graduate academic writing, graduate students writing challenges, and academic writing expectations. The researcher divided this chapter into six categories. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of the nature of writing as a communication-based skill, the demands that writing presents on the writer, and what makes our writing academic. Then, it is followed with a definition of academic writing, the requirements of academic writing that graduate students need to attain, and the importance of academic writing at the graduate level. The third part focuses on the interaction between graduate students' L1 and English and how that influences their academic writing. It also addresses the interconnection between graduate students' scholarly writing and their performance, the similarities and differences that revolve around L1 and L2, and the interaction between graduate students' L2 writing and socio-cultural context. The fourth part presents a broad range of pedagogical shifts in academic writing strategies that have been of significant interest among scholars. The interconnection between the process approach and the writing strategies, the several writing strategies, and the shortage of effective academic writing strategies among graduate students. The fourth part draws attention to the graduate students' academic writing challenges regarding discourse-level problems, sentence-level problems, and other obstacles that graduate students struggle with in their writing. The researcher concludes with faculty perception of graduate students' academic writing problems, practices, and expectations.

B. The Nature of Writing

On the nature of writing, Goody and Watt (1968) argue that writing promotes high cognitive development among students; however, this perspective has been essentially contested. The writing experts would agree that the mastery of writing skills

would lead to individual and social benefits. However, researchers contend with the role of writing as a discipline of distraction. We, as humans, are easily distracted when we are engaged in over one activity. However, in writing, when one concentrates on both motor and cognitive skills, it generally minimizes distraction. It also helps us recognize the known and the unknown. For example, every so often, when we think about something in our heads, we think we know it very well until we write it down. We rarely write it as satisfactory as it was in our minds. However, regardless of the agreed-upon attributes, the lack of agreement on writing-related issues suggested by Goody and Watt's (1968) agreement perseveres.

Another problem reflecting the complex and perplexing of writing as a skill is the various definitions or the meanings we could illustrate from the term "writing." The act of writing or the ability to write means forming letters of the alphabets, writing one's name, writing a list, writing a letter, following stylistic shifts, writing an essay, writing a journal, writing a diary, writing a novel, writing a book, etc. (Petraglia, 1995).

At the cognitive level, writing presents different demands on the writer. Vahapassi (1988) classified writing on the cognitive level into three major categories. Firstly, it might include rudimentary reproduction of ideas (copying, dictation); secondly, organization of events, ideas, opinions, or thoughts (report, summary); thirdly, creating or generating ideas or views (defining, reflective essay). In other words, the above classification sums up that accurate writing is "instrumental, transactional, and rhetorical" (Petraglia, 2013, p. 80).

Moreover, writing poses different demands on the individual writer. First, writing is a monologue that the writer presents with no audience feedback expectations (Vahapassi, 1988). Casanave, however, argues, "reader expectations and audience analysis are where we need to begin in many L2 writing classes" (2004, p. 50). That draws more demands on the writers where they are expected to consider the readers' reactions, misunderstandings, interests, etc. Second, the writer is anticipated to be fully aware of the spoken and written language as a whole (Chafe & Tannen, 1987). The writer should know the former concept, for, in its absence, it would affect the performance of the writer. Third, writing is gleaned from observations, thoughts, ideas, and experiences, which Vahpassi (1988) confirms by stating that we cannot separate cognitive skills from learning and our thoughts. However, before writing, we should, as writers, retrieve these ideas and observations from our memory and support them

with examples and related details. Berquist (1983) states that there are other demands that writing imposes on writers. They are linguistical demands (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and organization).

Nevertheless, what makes writing academic? What are the conceptions that make what we write academic? To answer these questions, we have to understand the various writing purposes and practices that shape the forms of writing tasks. So, what makes 'academic' is similarly diverse, then what makes writing academic is likely to be diverse too (Molinari, 2019). Academic writing requires more than following the lexical and grammatical conventions, but it also expands to include and engage with the world. Silva and Matsuda (2002) point out that academic writing is a complex web between the writer, the text, the reality, and the reader. The scholars argue on the task of the writer for not being as simple as representing the factual reality, but "also has to negotiate, through the construction of the text, his or her own view these elements of writing with the views held by the readers" (Silva & Matsuda, 2002, p. 253). Regardless of the complexity that evolves around the notion of academic writing, there is consensus about what differentiates academic writing from any other type of writing. It has to present an argument (Fish, 2017), and sometimes it might go 'beyond argument' and be about exploring and understanding (Allen, 2015). Zhu's (2004a) findings on the nature of academic writing suggest that it is about transferring general writing skills into different contexts. The writing skills students should present are "audience awareness, logical organization, paragraph development (e.g., a paragraph should have one main idea only), clarity, sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics" (Zhu, 2004a, p. 37). However, general writing skills serve as a foundation for academic writing practices (Zhu, 2004a). In other words, the nature of academic writing requires not only the transfer of those general writing aspects but also requires learners to have specific-discipline knowledge and thoughts and communication skills.

To sum up, the complex nature of writing, the context of writing, whether at school or higher education, and the demands individual posed must not be ignored when writing and while examining writers. The previously mentioned demands hold a great insight into the problems and setbacks that writers often face in writing.

C. The Importance of Academic Writing

The importance of academic writing has attracted the attention of many scholars (e.g., Hyland, 2006; Liu, 2013; Singh, 2018; among many others). Many researchers provide various purposes for academic writing. For example, Torrance et al. (1994) believe that producing well-written academic text requires the writer to combine complex ideas with new knowledge. Also, writing as a skill plays a distinct part in academic settings as it is a skill that draws significant strategies like planning, editing, revising, and publishing (Duffy, 2012). The literature reveals several reasons for the role and importance of writing among students at university. For example, it develops students learning process (Qian & Alvermann, 2002). Also, for many scholars, excellent writing skills are significant within the social and educational settings where textual and written activities production serves as the foundation of institutions (Flaherty & Choi, 2013).

On discussing the process of academic writing, Barton (2017) contends that writing is more than orthographic stages that students can draw or print on a screen. However, it includes a meaningful and organizational of selected thoughts where the writer shares and presents their ideas, perspectives, opinions, experiences, and facts to the worldview (Barton, 2017). Consequently, academic writing strongly correlates with student success in higher education (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007). Thus, students need to master academic writing; to give themselves the chance to express their opinions, contribute to the analysis and context that supports their ideas within an intellectual community. Kellogg (2001), on the other hand, believes that writing is a cognitive process that explores students thinking abilities and verbal proficiency to express ideas successfully. Al-Fadda (2012) believes that graduate students' achievement in academic writing requires the ability to "access, evaluate, and synthesize the words, ideas, and opinions of others" so students would find their academic voice easily (p. 124). Students [at the graduate level] need to be aware of core issues when writing, for example,

> The types of questions that can be asked, the ways in which information is collected and analyzed, the purpose and form of common genres, the ways in which writers create a voice for themselves, and the appropriate forms of language (Brick, 2012, p.171).

Yağız (2009) states that students at the graduate level are conscious of the demands they must meet to write scholarly alike that determine their success academically. Many scholars have examined the tasks that students need to go through in university and classroom settings concerning scholarly writing (West & Byrd, 1982; Zhu, 2004a; Hale et al., 1995). Graduate students write various types of academic written texts such as academic essays (e.g., narrative, descriptive, expository, or persuasive), research papers (Berhens, 1978), journal articles, and conference papers (Cameron et al., 2009). Roongrattanakool (1999) states that students are required to write several complicated academic writing tasks (e.g., reports, theses, dissertations, and research papers), writing consciously, logically presenting ideas, and being able to communicate their ideas and clarifying them when needed. Zhu (2004a) stated that academic graduate writers should be aware of certain aspects of their writing. Those aspects are awareness of the target audience, unity, logical organization, sentence structure, paragraph development, and grammatical accuracy (Zhu, 2004a). However, academic writing is a more complex and constrained activity on cognitive, textual, communicative, linguistics, and contextual level (Daoud, 1998) that calls for numerous sub-skills to take part in the process (Benton et al., 1984).

D. Studies on First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2)

Writing in a second language (SL) or a foreign language (FL) is far more complex than writing in one's mother tongue. Educational institutions must understand variations that determine learners' L1 and L2 (Brown, 2001). Kern (2000) explains that L2 writing imposes complex conventions, resources, and norms that students must meet and understand. If they fail in meeting these conventions, their L2 academic writing might not be satisfactory (Kern, 2000).

However, to what extent is there a correlation between graduate students' scholarly writing and their performance at the graduate level? Studies on L2 graduate students have found that students cannot write effectively in English (Odlin, 1989; Cooley & Lewkwicz, 1995; Cai, 2013). For example, Cai (2013) acknowledges the gap between L2 English academic literacy and EFL language graduate students' first language. The survey findings of Cooley and Lewkowicz (1995) support the previous claim. The study findings showed that 76% of respondents had difficulties using English (Cooley & Lewkwicz, 1995). These differences influence the transition

between writing strategies and create obstacles in students' native language and target language. As evidence from the literature, Shaw's (1991) study findings revealed that graduate students feel worried due to the lack of written academic skills in L2.

In a paper by Stapleton (2002) on the pedagogical tools that L2 students employ, the researcher express similarities between students' academic writing in L1 and L2. On the contrary, the existing literature on academic writing among L1 and L2 suggests otherwise (Silva, 1993). Silva (1993) point out three main variations between L1 and L2 graduate students' scholarly writing. These differences were strategy, rhetoric, and linguistics. Noor (2011) further discusses extensive variations in terms of word choice, sentence subject, and the difference in choosing writing topic where students' native culture plays a significant role in influencing their decision. Also, there are differences in terms of organization (e.g., Clyne, 1987; Noor, 2011) and differences based on a community discourse basis (e.g., Flowerdew, 2000; Spack, 1997).

Furthermore, writing is a highly specialized discipline and is not only about the linguistic system. There is also an interaction between the writer's L2 and the socio-cultural context (Mahn, 2008) where the writing takes place and how the writer uses it meaningfully. Mastuda (2003) suggests that the progressive interaction between L2 learners and academic writing leads to "qualitative transformation" among ESL and [EFL] writers and the writing process. Several studies have addressed how teaching and learning writing has gained considerable attention over the last few years due to many reasons. Mainly due to the rapid increase of research carried out among L2 graduate students (Dar & Khan, 2015). Stapleton (2002), for example, expresses worries over mispresented and overstated variations of academic writing in L1 and L2. Years later, however, Wang (2012) was one of the leading researchers to oppose Stapleton's perspective because it neglects L1 and L2 diversity. Wang's expressed differences were mainly in the lexicon, sentence, and passage levels (2012).

There are many differences at the passage level that show the complex and diverse nature of L1 and L2 academic writing, suggests (Wang, 2012). These differences are in “the choice of writing topic, differences in voice, differences in organization, differences in reader’s and writer’s responsibility, differences in the attitude toward quotation, differences in the attitudes on good writing” (Wang, 2012, p. 638). However, literature shows a need for collaboration between discipline and

socio-cultural factors regarding academic writing since it holds a paramount role in educational settings.

E. Graduate Students' Academic Writing Strategies

During the last decade, writing pedagogy has shifted the product approach into the process approach. In other words, teachers stopped asking their students to focus on the writing task itself but in the process of writing. Before this pedagogy shift, teachers and educators believed that the writing stages were pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Graham & Harris, 2000), regardless of an earlier study by Susser (1994) that found categorization debatable.

Among the many definitions of the process approach, Flower and Hayes's (1980) definition stands to be the most applicable. The researchers define the process approach in writing as "a strategic action where writers use strategies to juggle the constraints of composing, and that these strategies are the writer's decisions taken to cope with both perceived linguistic and rhetorical problems" (Flower & Hayes, 1980, as cited in Ou, 2013, p.7).

Over the last few decades, researchers and studies in the L1 composition level called for replacing linguistic as the dominant influence in L2 writing (Ou, 2013). One of the first few calls for writing pedagogical shifts was from Arapoff (1976), who believes that grammar hinders the writing process. This point of view has been followed and promoted by Zamel (1976) that emphasizes the importance of using the creative writing process. However, other researchers support different writing strategies like pre-writing strategies (McKay, 1981), the usage of journals (Spack & Sadow, 1983), and providing feedback on the writing between drafts (Keh, 1990).

The process approach became more popular throughout the years, and students' writing has been freer and more creative to discover ideas, planning, revising, editing, and publishing. Scholars examine the possibility of having common writing strategies among students based on their language proficiency and task-based writing strategies (Ramies, 1987). Other scholars try to find new writing strategies categorizations. For example, Riazi (1997) classifies writing strategies into four categories: cognitive, metacognitive, social, and search.

In writing strategies among L2 learners, the literature is rich with related studies to specific writing strategies. For example, meditating strategies advocating peer revision (Villamil & Guerrero, 1996), allocating time strategy (Roca et al., 2008; Reader & Payne, 2007), L1 translation strategy (Liao, 2006), writing from resources (Kennedy, 1985; Li & Casanave, 2012; Segev-Miller, 2004), revision (Sommers, 1980; Achen, 2018; Kim, 2016), rewriting and paraphrasing (Shi, 2012; Sun, 2009), planning (Saddler et al., 2004), and using models (Macbeth, 2010). Despite the growing research on L2 writing, preliminary studies have been done on L2 learners' strategies in their writing (Raoofi et al., 2017).

The studies that the researcher discussed in this section so far or those explored in general in this field are learning-related strategies. However, the literature shows a scarcity in addressing ESL/EFL graduate students' writing strategies to advocate their writing skills (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Beare, 2000; Rababah & Melhem, 2015; Asmari, 2013; Matsumoto, 1995). The reasons beyond the inadequacy of ESL/EFL writing strategies are varied. For example, there are some expectations from L2 writers in using specific strategies for specific tasks, which depends on the writing type and context (Ou, 2013). Mu (2005, p. 10) synthesizes 30 writing strategies into five categories: rhetorical strategies (e.g., organization, L1 usage, formatting), metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, evaluating), cognitive strategies (e.g., revising, elaborating, summarizing), communicative strategies (e.g., reduction and sense or readers), and social/affective strategies (e.g., receiving feedback). Nevertheless, despite researchers' difficulties in identifying good writing strategies, the previous classification is helpful even though each researcher classifies writing strategies differently based on their various standards (Ou, 2013).

F. Graduate Students Academic Writing Challenges

Academic writing is the predominant skill of graduate school and a future career in academia. From the master's degree thesis to research proposals, conference articles, essays, abstracts, literature reviews, journal articles, academic writing proficiency is a requirement to meet the demands and the expectations of graduate school writing. However, academic writing is not a craft covered merely in a course or explicitly taught (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). A graduate student would be equipped and given the tools to have a solid grasp of the required academic writing skills in an ideal world.

In many graduate programs worldwide, academic writing courses are considered a hermit-like activity (Mullen, 2006). They assume that students are ready to tackle whereas, this is rarely the case. The literature on graduate students' academic problems postulates strongly that scholarly writing is a challenging skill because most, if not all, are not well-equipped to undertake it without a solid infrastructure.

Graduate students have difficulties understanding the nature of scholarly writing at the graduate level (Cadman, 1997; Dong, 1998). Scholarly writing at the graduate level is different than writing at the undergraduate level or general writing aspects. Graduate students' academic writing should express the writers' perspective, add information and knowledge to the research problem, synthesize related theories and previous studies to the research study, and present all this information in a well-written academic manner (Gomez, 2013).

The literature on international graduate students postulates the diverse difficulties they face in their academic writing (e.g., Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Paltridge, 2002; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Shaw, 1991; Holmes et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2017; Alsaedi, 2017; Zeiger, 2021). Researchers investigate the various challenges graduate students are struggling with and then sought to put them into categories. Researchers identified two main themes/groups: discourse-level problems (e.g., content quality, ideas development, paragraph organization, overall writing ability) and sentence-level problems (e.g., using accurate grammar rules, academic vocabulary usage, spelling, punctuation).

Ferris (2012) put up a summary of the obstacles that international graduate writers encounter writing academically. The study findings show that graduate students struggle with lexical, rhetorical, and syntactical issues. Thus, these problems block their ability to produce well-written academic texts. The researcher further concludes that students have no adequate writing skills to produce extended academic written papers (Ferris, 2012). While Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) proclaim three main trending problems among L2 learners. These problems are students' inadequate scholarly writing skills, lack of understanding of correctness of punctuation and spelling, and low quality of sentence structure.

The majority of challenges and difficulties graduate students experience in academic writing are related to their linguistics (i.e., vocabulary, grammar) and sentence structure (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Al-Badi, 2015; Dong, 1998). Dong (1998) probed 169 non-native graduate thesis and dissertation writers from two U.S.-based institutions. The study findings showed that students struggled with lexical issues; however, only a few non-native students reported having difficulties in vocabulary. The majority of L2 English participants stated that vocabulary is significant in academic writing; however, a low percentage of native students reported vocabulary as a vital aspect of academic writing, despite some students' struggle in vocabulary (Dong, 1998).

Along the same lines, Qian and Krugly-Smolska (2008) examined the perceptions of four Chinese ESL graduate students from several departments in Canada. The study aimed at exploring their experiences with writing the literature review using interviews. The study results suggested that the participants struggled with linguistical problems. The results showed that all participants had limited vocabulary, and three students out of four had difficulty finding accurate words that fit in their writing context. The last participant struggled with finding synonyms. Due to the limited vocabulary, they failed to paraphrase their writing accurately, and therefore, this affected their writing negatively (Qian & Krugly-Smolska, 2008).

Other researchers investigated other aspects of graduate students writing problems. A study by Wang and Bakken (2004) concluded that international students at the graduate level grapple with syntactic obstacles. The study explored ESL graduate students academic writing research skills based on their culture, L1, previous English learning, and other variables. Wang and Bakken's (2004) study findings reported that "Six of seven" ESL researchers in L2 have shaky confidence in their academic writing skills and abilities (p. 184). Among the shared problems in L2 writing were word usage, grammar accuracy, and sentence structure.

A similar study by Imani and Habil (2012) investigated non-native students' problem-solving strategies towards scholarly writing and grammar complexity. The study participants were from three different departments: Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Construction Contract Management (CCM), and Chemical Engineering (CE). Based on mixed-methods research, the researchers reported that

almost all (CCM) and (CE) writers committed grammatical errors, unlike the (TESL) that had the most grammatical complexity.

Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) investigated the obstacles in academic essay writing among EFL student writers and their need to improve their academic writing. The study findings reported that students struggled with grammar, coherence and cohesion, paragraph, and vocabulary. The researchers highlighted common grammatical problems in the students' writing, among many fragment tenses, subject and verb related problems, misuse of word order, misuse in pronouns, and fragmented sentence structure (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017).

Another common problem among graduate students is the role of feedback on their written assignments (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). Caffarella and Barnett (2000) study explored the importance of giving and receiving feedback on scholarly writing among postgraduate students. The findings showed that participants tended to have feelings of apprehension when receiving negative feedback on their academic writing tasks and be more suspicious about their scholarly writing abilities. While Can and Walker's (2011) study on graduate students' perceptions of feedback and their academic writing tasks revealed that students share similar feelings towards receiving negative feedback. The findings reported that students felt embarrassed, lack of self-confidence, being under pressure, other students lost their motivation to write, some experienced emotional setbacks, and others feared negative feedback, which affected their writing performance negatively (Can & Walker, 2011). Speaking of feedback in improving graduate students' writing, Shaw's (1991) findings that Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) support emphasized the significant role of feedback and students' performance. The study participants reported receiving no formative feedback on the structure or the content of their writing (Shaw, 1991).

Many graduate students use the APA writing style to write their academic papers. Nevertheless, many of them face challenges and commit multiple errors (Kokaliari et al., 2012; Howard et al., 2010). Some students' writing lacks agreement between in-text citation and references (Lambie et al., 2008), whereas other students fail to present the sources in their writing (Howard et al., 2010). However, few studies addressed citation and empirical studies among graduate students considering the gap of their knowledge in this aspect (Petrić, 2007; Lambia et al., 2008; Mansourizadeh &

Ahmad, 2011). Lambia et al. (2008) reported four main mistakes in students writing practices. They include lack of continuity, lack of organization, inadequate empirical studies citation to build an argument, synthesis of information, particularly in the literature review. Lambia et al.'s (2008) findings are similar to Lunsford and Lunsford's (2008), wherein both studies students' writing included inadequate empirical citations.

Another problem among graduate students is anxiety. Research studies suggest that anxiety affects graduate students writing abilities and performance negatively (e.g., Rezaei & Jafari, 2014; Huerta et al., 2017; Shang, 2013; Faigley et al., 1981; Lee, 2005). Many researchers came through a varied range of definitions for language anxiety. Second Language Anxiety (SLA) is defined as a feeling of tension that learners feel in the second language context while speaking, writing, and listening (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). McLeod (1987) explains that writing anxiety is a status where writers feel anxious and caught negative feelings that derange the writing process and causes delay or problems in ones' writing.

The literature on the correlation between students writing anxiety and their performance is quite rich. For example, many L1/L2 researchers investigated the interrelationship between students' anxiety in writing and the factors linked to this phenomenon (e.g., essay type, self-confidence while writing, writing competence, writer's block, writing process, teachers' perspective on grammar usage, fear of being judged, quantitative measures restrictions, etc.). Therefore, studies suggest a correlation between students writing anxiety and poor performance (e.g., Rabadi & Rabadi, 2020; Demirçivi, 2020; Aripin & Rahmat, 2021).

Writing anxiety is a problem that can intervene with students’ writing and bring about severe academic challenges. Lambie et al. (2008) believe that academic writing generates anxiety among graduate students due to inadequate writing preparation skills. In Bloom's (1981) study, graduate participants reported feelings of anxiety towards their academic writing. Onwuegbuzi's (1997) qualitative study where students enrolled in research methodology courses. The study findings revealed that anxious students were concerned about the quality of the overall of their wiring. Other challenges can be poor writing skills or poor work quality (Kilgore et al., 2013; Stewart et al., 2015) and lower grades (Martinez et al., 2011).

Many factors influence the struggle among graduate students and academic practices. These factors are personal, institutional, and circumstantial. First of all, the personal factors include writing self-efficacy (Mattern & Shaw, 2010), inadequate proficiency in the English language (Whitley & Grous, 2009), and misunderstanding writing concepts (Irvin, 2010). In the same spirit, Merriam et al. (2007) added that learners' age, memory, and lack of self-direction influence students writing learning practices. The researchers suggested that themes like race, gender, and class might have affected the students' academic writing practices (Merriam et al., 2007). Second, the institutional factors sought to affect graduate students' academic writing skills. Plakhotnik and Rocco (2012) reported that graduate students poor writing skills made them fall behind and not being prepared for the twists of graduate school and its demands. Finally, students' background culture and educational settings affect students writing skills (Whitley & Grous, 2009).

G. Faculty Perception on Graduate Students' Writing Practices and Problems

It is significant to explore educators' perspectives and perceptions of graduate students' academic and the challenges that academia imposes on them. Also, it is important to explore suggestions and recommendations that educators might provide that can enhance and minimize graduate students' academic writing obstacles.

With the demands that academia imposes on graduate students, it is expected from educators to go beyond teaching the textbook. That is due to the demands that academia imposes on students and their lives. Therefore, professors and instructors are expected to address academic writing in more conventional methods and not only focus on teaching textbooks. Montgomery and Baker (2007) believe that teachers are expected to highlight the process of scholarly writing and encourage their students to establish a functional system on the basics of academic writing like strategies and difficulties.

In a study by Behrens (1978), the researcher affirms that many faculty members declared that they are not concerned about their students' sentence-level problems (e.g., incorrect vocabulary usage, punctuation, and spelling). However, they are more concerned about their discourse-level obstacles (e.g., organization of written text) (Behrens, 1978). In the same context, a study by Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) explored faculty members' perceptions of non-native graduates' academic writing

abilities. The study conclusion revealed that the participants suffer from considerable to moderate problems in terms of paper organization quality (e.g., paragraph organization), vocabulary (e.g., using the accurate word in the proper context), moderate quality content, and inadequately addressing the topic.

In Angelova and Riazantseva's study (1999), the professors applied the same criteria in grading both L1 and L2 academic writers' writing. However, researchers were more "lenient about non-native writers' grammar mistakes when these errors did not disrupt the overall coherence" (p. 509). Nevertheless, some professors reported that they offered feedback for their students on the organization of their writing and grammatical aspects as notes or direct corrections; however, students were not given a chance to go through the corrections to revise and improve their writing (Zhu, 2004b). Hyland (2001) reports that ESL/EFL educators are reluctant to share feedback on, for example, plagiarism just because it is a western value. Similarly, many faculty members and lecturers try to avoid talking about plagiarism because of the issues that it will arise with it (Björklund & Wenestam, 1999).

The literature of action research suggests that faculty members faced challenges in providing adequate support (Sidman-Taveau et al., 2015). Sidman-Taveau et al (2015) concluded with extensive obstacles that faculty members experience when providing feedback and support of their graduate students' scholarly writing. For example, faculty members lack inadequate effective feedback models to comment on students writing whereas, and other educators have limited time to provide students with feedback on the individual level (Sidman-Taveau et al., 2015).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Overview

After the introduction and the literature review were presented in the previous chapters, this chapter focuses on the research methodology, the data collection instruments, the data collection procedures, and the methods used for data analysis in this study.

B. The Study Participants

The current study involved two main groups of participants. The first group is EFL master's graduate students who are still enrolled in school or graduated from a foundation university in Istanbul no more than a year and specialized in the English Language and Literature (ELL) program. The second group is the faculty members' (e.g., supervisors, professors) who are involved in the supervision of students' academic writing at the master's level at the foundation university.

1. EFL Master's Graduate Students

In Table 1, the biodata collected from the graduate students in the questionnaire are presented.

Table 1. Biodata Profile of Graduate Students in the Questionnaire

Variable	F	%
Gender		
Male	10	35.7%
Female	18	64.3%
Age		
20 -25	12	42.9%
26-30	9	32.1%
31-35	6	21.4%
36-40	1	3.6%

Table 1 (Cont.). Biodata Profile of Graduate Students in the Questionnaire

Variable	F	%
Level of English		
Upper-intermediate	4	14.3%
Advanced	23	82.1%
Native speaker	1	3.6%
First language		
Arabic	11	39.3%
Turkish	9	32.1%
Urdu	1	3.6%
Persian	2	7.1%
French	1	3.6%
English	1	3.6%
Kazakh	1	3.6%
Russian	2	7.1%

As seen in Table 1, females were the great majority of the study with 18 participants (64.3%) while male participants were 10 with 35.7%. In terms of age, 12 students (42.9%) aged between 20-25, nine students (32.1%) aged between 26-30, six students' (21.4%) age ranged between 31-35, and finally, one student (3.6%) aged between 36-40. While the findings of the English language proficiency level of graduate students show that four students (14.3%) reported that they are upper-intermediate, 23 students (82.1%) reported that they are advanced, whereas one native speaker of English was among the population of the study (3.6%).

As seen in Table 1, 11 students (39.3%) were native speakers of Arabic, while nine students (32.1%) were native Turkish. One student (3.6%) was a native of Urdu, two students (7.1%) were native of Persian, one student's (3.6%) native language was French, one student (3.6%) was a native speaker of English, one student (3.6%) identified their first language as Kazakh, and finally, two students (7.1%) were Russian.

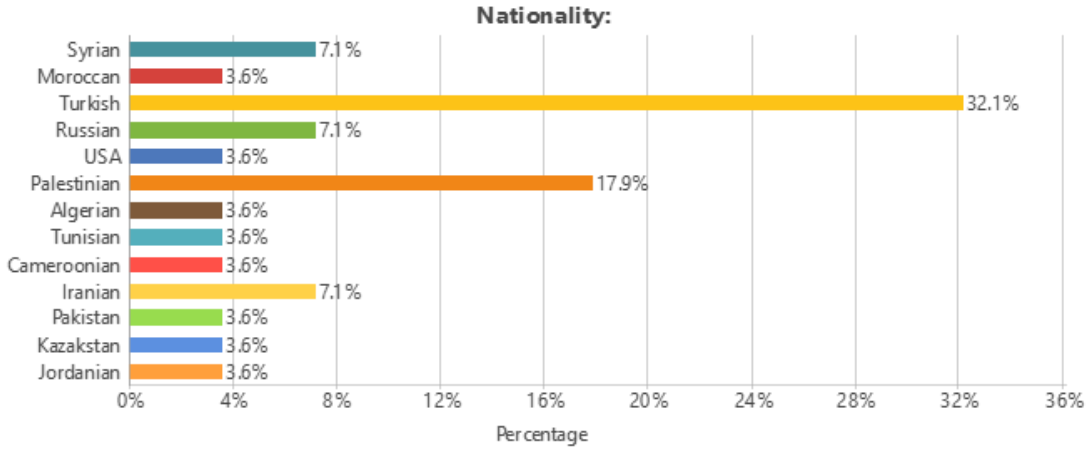

Figure 1. Participants Distribution of Nationality

Figure 1 presents the diverse nationalities of students who participated in the study. Two students (7.1%) were Syrians, nine students (32.1%) were Turkish, two students (7.1%) were Russian, Palestinian participants were five (17.9%), and two Iranian students (7.1%). However, only one participant (3.6%) joined the study for each of the following nationalities: Algerian, Tunisian, Cameroonian, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Moroccan, Jordanian, and American.

In Table 2, the biodata collected from the master's graduate students in the semi-structured interviews are presented.

Table 2. Biodata Profile of Master's Graduate Students in the Semi-Structured Interviews

Variable	**F**	**%**
Gender		
Male	5	35.7%
Female	9	64.3%
Age		
20 -25	**1**	**7.1%**
26-30	8	57.1%
31-35	3	21.4%
36-40	1	7.1%
41 and above	1	7.1%
Nationality		
Turkish	6	42.9%
Syrian	2	14.3%
Palestinian	1	7.1%
Uzbek	1	7.1%
Kazakhstan	1	7.1%
Iraqi	1	7.1%
Iranian	1	7.1%
Jordanian	1	7.1%

Table 2 above illustrates the total number of semi-structured interview participants, their ages, and their nationalities. There were 14 master's graduate students in the semi-structured interviews: five males (35.7%) and nine females (64.3%). The main age of participants was 26-30 (57.1%). While participants between 31-35 came in second with (21.4%), and one student (7.1%) for each of the other group ages. The students in the interview came from diverse cultural backgrounds. Six students (42.9%) were Turkish, two students (14.3%) were Syrians, and one student (7.1%) from each of the following nationalities: Palestinian, Uzbek, Kazakhstan, Iraqi, Iranian, and Jordanian.

2. Faculty Members

The second group of participants was five faculty members who teach and supervise graduate students at the mater's level. Table 3 presents faculty members' biodata profile.

Table 3. Biodata Profile of Faculty Members

Variable	**F**	**%**
Gender		
Male	4	80%
Female	1	20%
Age		
36-40	2	40%
41 and above	3	60%
Teaching experience		
10-15 years	1	20%
16-20 years	1	20%
20 and above years	3	60%
First language		
Turkish	4	80%
Persian	1	20%

Table 3 shows a male majority (80%) and one female (20%) among faculty members. Two faculty members (40%) aged between 36 and 40, while the other three (60%) were between 41 and above. The majority of faculty members (60%) have +20 years of teaching experience, one member (20%) has teaching experience between 10-15 years, and another one (20%) has 16-20 years of teaching experience. All faculty members came from Turkey (80%), except one member (20%) came from Iran.

C. Research Design

As per the objectives, a mixed-methods design was used in this study. Mixed methods design allows the incorporation of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to analyze the outcomes of a one-single study (Greene et al., 1989). The rationale beyond using mixed methods instead of using qualitative or quantitative on their own is growing in popularity among social and health sciences researchers (Ivankova et al., 2006). This rapid growth is due to the publication of several studies that supported, endorsed, and promoted using mixed methodologies as a significant advancement in research (Creswell, 2009). Researchers tend to do a mix of qualitative and quantitative data since each approach alone is not sufficient. However, when combined in mixed methods design, it allows for more detailed and in-depth analysis (Greene et al., 1989).

This research study depended on a mixed-methods approach for two main reasons. Firstly, there was a need to gather information from participants out of the physical reach through a questionnaire. On the other hand, a mixed-methods offer an in-depth analysis and understanding of the master's graduate students' problems and perspectives on the strategies, challenges, and coping techniques the master's students face in their academic writing practices.

The type of mixed methods used in this study was QUAL+ quan or, in other words, qualitatively driven mixed methods design (Morse & Cheek, 2014). The point of junction in the data from both components took place in the analytical stage when the data from the questionnaire was transformed into a narrative and then integrated into the qualitative analysis. The collected data from quantitative and qualitative resources were analyzed separately. Then the results were combined, identifying areas that converged and diverged across the data.

D. Data Collection Instruments

The data in this research were gathered using three instruments: a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was the primary source for the quantitative component, while the semi-structured interview and open-ended questionnaire were the primary sources of the qualitative data in the study.

The questionnaire that Al-Badi (2015) developed was used in this study (Appendix A). The questionnaire included four sections: students' demographic information such as gender, nationality, and age (section one), students' writing strategies and behaviors (section two), students' attitudes towards writing assignments in English, and the sources they like to use (section three), and finally the difficulties they face when writing (section four). The second section of the questionnaire is based on a 6-point Likert-type rating scale. There are 12 writing strategies with the response options always (100%), usually (80%), often (60%), sometimes (40%), rarely (10%), and never (0%), respectively. Correspondingly, section 3 contained two questions. In the first question, the students were asked to state their attitude towards English assignments from Easy to Neither difficult nor easy. The structure of the second question offered the students four academic sources that the graduate students use to attain their writing practices, and they are "Books," "Journals," "Both," "other (specify)," respectively. The fourth and final section suggested eight options that the researcher believes are problematic in students' writing. These options are "paraphrasing", "language use", "expressing their own voice", "finding relevant references", "referencing and citation", "coherence, and cohesion", "choosing a significant topic", and "others (specify)".

The researcher used Google Forms to collect the data from the participants due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, and the lack of movement. Thus, Google forms are widely known for facilitating data collection and analysis (Hsu & Wang, 2017). The collection of the questionnaires lasted for three weeks. Once the data collection finished in late September 2020, the questionnaire form stopped accepting responses, and the researcher downloaded the results.

In the second phase of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 master's graduate students. The researcher implemented semi-structured interviews to highlight the master's graduate student's academic writing experiences, challenges, and strategies to cope and overcome those obstacles (Appendix B). The rationale behind using semi-structured interviews is to "ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced" (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 1). One-to-one (also known as face-to-face) interviews allow the researcher to interact and observe non-verbal and verbal cues during an interview (Goundar, 2012; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Therefore, the interviews

granted the researcher the chance to probe in-depth questions of the problems' that the master's students struggled with and share their experiences and problems in a detailed manner. Leech (2002) agrees on the importance of using semi-structured interviews in research settings because it provides respondents the opportunity to be informative and share ideas like experts in the research.

In the third-final stage, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the faculty members' perspectives on master's graduate students' academic writing deficits (Appendix C). The rationale beyond using the open-ended questionnaire with faculty members is that it provides the participants with a chance to express themselves, their perspectives, and experiences more freely and with a sense of individuality (Albudaiwi, 2017). The researcher developed an open-ended questionnaire with two major sections: demographical data such as gender, age, teaching experience, and first language in the first section. The second section aimed to understand the faculty members' perceptions and suggestions on master's students' problems. The second section consisted of three main questions: the first question aimed at understanding the faculty members' perception of the master's graduate students' deficits in academic writing. The second question provided a list of the most problematics aspects of academic writing among the master's students. Faculty members were asked to put these problems in order from the most problematic to the least and report any other obstacles that they might have detected in their supervisees' academic writing practices. The last question called on faculty members to suggest schemes or approaches to minimize master's students' academic writing obstacles and produce better academic writing skills.

E. Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving the approval letter from the foundation university (Appendix D), the researcher got in touch with the master's students and sent them the URL of the questionnaire. The researcher provided the participants with the instructions on filling the questionnaire and asked them to answer the questions faithfully.

After the foundation university approved the semi-structured interview (Appendix D), the researcher emailed 28 master's graduate students' (the questionnaire participants) a consent form to sign (Appendix E). Out of 28 participants, 14 master's graduate students agreed to participate in the study. The researcher conducted the

interviews in a private and a proper place and during a suitable time for participants to feel comfortable to participate. The structure of the semi-structured interview questions allowed the interviewer to ask the interviewee to elaborate and frequently explain with more detailed information based on their answers. The majority of the interviews were held online using the Zoom software, while some of the interviews were held face-to-face.

The study participants were the master's students from the English Language and Literature department at a foundation university in Istanbul. The interviews began with some general questions, such as "Can you tell me a little about yourself, please?" "Can you share your (research proposal, reflective essay, or assignment paper, etc.) writing experience, please?". Then, it probed deeply to understand the conditions and the significant aspects that contributed to the participants' experiences. The interviews lasted from 25 minutes to 1 hour and were audio-recorded using Sony PX240 Mono Digital Voice Recorder PX Series and transcribed by the researcher using MAXQDA software transcription mode. In direct quoting of the students, the research occasionally re-structured the text by deleting parts of it to ease the reading without altering the meaning. When the annotation […] appears within a direct quote, it means that large chunks of text have been removed because they were irrelevant.

In the final stage of the research, the foundation university approved using the open-ended questionnaire with faculty members (Appendix F). The researcher emailed ten faculty members from the English Language and Literature department the URL of the questionnaire; however, only five filled the questionnaire anonymously. The data from the faculty members were collected between December 2020 and February 2021. The researcher included a summary of the preliminary findings from the questionnaire and interviews with master's students (Appendix G).

F. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected via the questionnaire from the students were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mainly to detect the frequency distribution of the master's graduate students' writing problems and their strategies when they write academically. The aim of using descriptive statistics when collecting quantitative data is to summarize, organize, and give an analysis for a significant number of observations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The researcher analyzed the collected

data using MAXQDA software that is designed for mixed-methods data MAXQDA Analytics Pro.

Upon receiving approval from the foundation university ethical committee, the researcher contacted the participants to participate in the semi-structured interviews, collaboratively arranged times, and located suitable places to conduct the interviews. The qualitative data collected via the semi-structured interview were analyzed using thematic analysis (TA). This approach focuses on "identifying and describing prominent themes in the data" and explore the relationships between these themes (Andes, n.d.). To be more specific, the researcher used a form of theoretical thematic analysis with a focus on the latent level (Braun & Clarke, 2021; 2019) that goes beyond the semantic content of the data. The 'theoretical' thematic analysis at the latent level aims to "identify the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88; 2019; 2021). The researcher analyzed the data using TA phases as a guideline (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first phase was transcribing the data, reading them three times, and taking notes. The second phase was to generate initial codes where the researcher called attention to interesting information of the data and grouped the information to their pertinent code. The third phase aimed at looking for themes included collating codes into potential themes reviewed to ensure they were in relation with codes in the fourth phase and generating a thematic map of the analysis. In the fifth phase, the researcher defined and named the themes, and in the sixth and final phase, the researcher produced the final scholarly report of analysis relating to the research questions. The TA approach was used because it offers a rich landscape and flexibility to address the research problems (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2020). Analysis-wise, the MAXQDA Analytics Pro software that is designed for mixed-methods research supports thematic coding analysis. It simplifies and speeds up the work process through its four critical tools of thematic analysis: memos, codes, segments, and variables.

Lastly, after the researcher studied coherently the initial results collected in phases one and two, and in light of understanding the master's graduate students' problems and challenges in the study, the researcher developed the open-ended questionnaire. Upon obtaining the ethical committee approval, the researcher emailed the faculty members the open-ended questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed

using the TA approach similarly to the semi-structured interviews with the master's graduate students.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Overview

This study aimed at investigating the master's graduate students challenges and obstacles in academic writing (e.g., assignments, research proposals, reflective essays, thesis writing practices) at the graduate level. Specifically, this mixed-methods study explored the main variables that trigger these difficulties, the students' approaches to cope and manage these obstacles, and the faculty members' perceptions of graduate students academic writing performances and their suggestions to reduce these difficulties.

During the first phase of the study, the researcher implemented the ESL Graduate Students Academic Writing Difficulties questionnaire (Appendix A). In the questionnaire, demographic information was collected from master's graduate students. Then they were asked to gauge their academic writing strategies and behaviors and share their attitudes towards writing assignments in English, the sources they like to use, and in the final section of the questionnaire, they shared the difficulties they encounter in their writing.

In the second phase of the study, the researcher emailed 28 potential interview candidates (who participated in the questionnaire during phase one); however, only 14 candidates approved to participate in the study. The researcher interviewed the master's graduate students a) to highlight their academic writing experiences and challenges and b) to understand the various strategies they use in coping with those obstacles. The findings from the first phase and the second phase helped in structuring and understanding the third phase.

In the third and the final phase, the researcher investigated a convenience sample of faculty members via an open-ended questionnaire. The purpose of the open-ended questionnaire was to explore the faculty members' perspectives of what they think is problematic in their students' academic writing at the master's level. Also, it aimed to understand to which degree they were content with their students' academic writing

and their suggestions to reduce the difficulties that the master's graduate students experience in academic writing.

Results from the study are presented in two sections: quantitative findings and qualitative findings. The quantitative data included the results from the ESL Graduate Students Academic Writing Difficulties Questionnaire (Section 4.2). The qualitative data included the results from the EFL Graduate Students Semi-Structured Interviews (Section 4.3) and the qualitative data from the Open-Ended Questionnaire with faculty members (Section 4.4).

B. Quantitative Findings

This section aimed at discussing quantitative data collected during the study through the ESL Graduate Students Academic Writing Difficulties questionnaire with the master's graduate students. The researcher aimed to present and discuss the findings based on the order of the sections and the subsections of the questionnaire.

1. Findings of Students' Writing Strategies and Behaviors

Table 4 presents the findings of 12 writing strategies and behaviors that the master's graduate students used in their academic writing.

Table 4. Graduate Students' Writing Strategies and Behaviors

Items	Always		Usually		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. I write for pleasure in English in my free time.	3	10.7	3	10.7	6	21.4	8	28.6	5	17.9	3	10.7
2. I go back to check carefully the assignment requirements and instructions.	14	50.0	5	17.9	3	10.7	5	17.9	1	3.6	0	00.0
3. I ask my teacher about the points I am not sure about, or I need help with.	9	32.1	9	32.1	4	14.3	3	10.7	3	10.7	0	00.0
4. I discuss what I am going to write with other students.	5	17.9	7	25.0	7	25.0	7	25.0	0	00.0	2	7.1
5. I brainstorm and write down ideas about the topic.	15	53.6	11	39.3	2	7.1	0	00.0	0	00.0	0	00.0
6. I make an outline including the main points of my assignment.	12	42.9	12	42.9	3	10.7	1	3.6	0	00.0	0	00.0
7. I go back to my writing to revise the content and make my ideas clearer.	14	50.0	11	39.9	2	7.1	0	00.0	1	3.6	0	00.0
8. I go back to my writing to edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.	18	64.3	5	17.9	2	7.1	2	7.1	0	00.0	1	3.6

Table 4 (Cont.). Graduate Students' Writing Strategies and Behaviors

Items	Always		Usually		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
9. In my assignments, in general, I pay more attention to the language (e.g., spelling, grammar, vocabulary) than to the content (e.g. ideas, organization).	0	00.0	4	14.3	7	25.0	10	35.7	6	21.4	1	3.6
10. I pay more attention to the content (e.g., ideas, organization) than the language (e.g. spelling, grammar, vocabulary).	7	25.0	11	39.3	4	14.3	2	7.1	3	10.7	1	3.6
11. I give almost equal attention to both the language (e.g. spelling, grammar, vocabulary) and the content (e.g. ideas, organization).	12	42.9	6	21.4	4	4.3	3	10.7	3	10.7	0	00.0
12. I discuss my work with other students to get feedback on how I can improve it.	3	10.7	9	32.1	2	7.1	5	17.9	8	28.6	1	3.6

A= Always U= Usually O= Often S= Sometimes R = Rarely N = Never F = frequency % = percentage

Item 1 in Table 4 shows that three students (10.7%) stated they always write for pleasure in their free time, another three participants (10.7%) said they usually write during their free time whereas, six students (21.4%) mentioned they often write during their free time. Eight participants (28.6%) said they sometimes write for pleasure during their free time. Five participants (17.9%) reported they rarely write whereas, three participants (10.7%) never liked to write for pleasure during their free time. In total, 89.3% of participants study stated that they write for pleasure in their free time. This finding indicates that the students are practitioners of writing skills, aware of the essential nature of writing and the challenges that might impose.

In Item 2, half of the students (50%) declared that they always check the requirements and instructions of their assignment; five students (17.9%) stated that they usually check back the requirements and assignment instructions; whereas, three other students (10.7%) often check back the assignments' instructions and requirements. While five students (17.9%) declared that they sometimes check their task instructions carefully, only one student (3.6%) rarely checks the assignment requirement. The second item showed that 14 of the students (50%) are attentive to assignment requirements. This shows that the participants pay attention to the assignment requirements and instructions to attain their writing tasks.

The responses given for Item 3 showed that nine participants (32.1%) always rely on teachers for assistance and guidance whereas, nine participants (32.1%) usually reach out to teachers and ask for help and guidance. However, four students (14.3%)

often sought teachers' help, three students (10.7%) sometimes asked their teachers for help, and finally, three students (10.7%) rarely did ask for help and guidance from teachers. The findings showed that all participants seem to depend on their supervisors for help and directions on their writing.

In Item 4, five students (17.9%) assured they always share with their peers their writing plans, seven students (25%) usually discussed their writing plans with other students, and seven students (25%) often talked about their writing plans with other students. Another seven students (25%) stated that they sometimes tend to discuss what they are about to write altogether. However, only two participants (7.1%) showed no interest and never discussed their writing with other students. That suggests that (42.9%) of the graduate students feel the significant influence of their peers on their writing. Thus, they share their writing plans with their peers to improve their writing.

Item 5 showed that 15 students, the majority of the participants (53.6%), affirmed that they always brainstorm ideas before writing, and 11 students (39.3%) stated that they usually brainstorm ideas about their writing topic. Finally, two students (7.1%) said they often brainstorm ideas related to their writing topic of interest. This explains the essential role of brainstorming in developing writing among students and how planning ahead of time makes the writing process easier to follow for the study participants.

The responses from Item 6 yielded that 12 participants (42.9%) always outline their assignments' main points, and an equal number of the participants to the latter (42.9%) stated that they usually plan their writing. Only three participants (10.7%) said they often outline the main points of their assignment. This explains the significant role of drawing an outline pre-writing, for it helps the study participants brainstorm, construct, and organize their ideas before writing.

The results from Item 7 indicated that 14 students (50%), half the study population, said they constantly revise their assignments and clarify their ideas, while 11 students (39.9%) declared that they usually do so. However, two students (7.1%) shared that they often revise the content of their writing tasks to make it more coherent, and only one student (3.6%) rarely revised the content of their writing. These findings indicate that the students pay attention to editing and revising their academic writing

products. Thus, they recognize the significant role that proofreading contributes to their writing improvement.

While the responses from Item 8 showed that the majority of the participants (64.3%) always edit their grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation in their writing tasks, five students (17.9%) said they revise their writing from grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation errors. Two students (7.1%) shared that they often refine their writing assignments from grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation errors. However, two students (7.1%) declared that they sometimes go back to their writing assignments and check their grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, and only one student (3.6%) never did. This strategy was the most frequently used among graduate students where they showed a tendency towards editing problems on the language level. This particular finding indicates the participants' awareness of the importance of one of the leading writing foundations.

In Item 9, four participants (14.3%) shared they usually pay more attention to written assignments' language over the content; however, seven students (25%) stated they often prefer to focus on language. Another ten students (35.7%) said that they sometimes pay more attention to the language of their writing than to the content, six students (21.4%) rarely paid attention to the language, and only one student (3.6%) never did pay attention to the language of their assignment over the content. This strategy was the least frequently used in the study. The graduate students preferred paying attention to the assignment content over the language.

However, for Item 10, seven respondents (25%) stated that they consider the content of their writing assignments over the language, 11 students (39.3%) usually chose content over language, and four students (14.3%) more often took into consideration the assignment content over the language. Also, two students (7.1%) said they sometimes consider the assignment content over the language, whereas three participants (10.7%) rarely paid attention to the content of the assignment, and one student (3.6%) only paid attention to assignment content over language. The findings suggest that the participants in the study pay more attention to the assignment content of their writing than they pay attention to the errors in the written language.

In Item 11, 12 students (42.9%) stated they always give almost equal consideration to language and content, six students (21.4%) said they usually pay balanced attention to language and content in writing tasks. Four students (14.3%) stated they often pay equal attention to language and content, while three students (10.7%) declared that they sometimes give almost equal attention to both language and content. Three students (10.7%) said they rarely do keep a balance between language and content. This shows that the graduate students understand the significance of communicating their voice to the readers; by using accurate language (i.e., spelling, grammar, vocabulary) and clear and organized ideas (i.e., content). In other words, to attain writing tasks, the students believe that both the language and the content of the writing task are equally important.

In Item 12, three students (10.7%) always discussed their writing with their peers to elicit feedback, nine students (32.1%) usually discussed their academic writing with other students to improve their writing via peer feedback. Two students (7.1%) stated they often reach out for feedback from their peers, five students (17.9%) said they sometimes discussed their writing with other students for feedback to improve their writing, and eight students (28.6%) rarely did discuss their writing tasks with students. However, one student (3.6%) never did discuss their work with other students. The strategy findings suggest the predominant role peers play in providing feedback to each other to develop and improve their academic writing.

Table 5. The Most and the Least Frequent Writing Strategies and Behaviors

Items	***F***	***%***
8. I go back to my writing to edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.	18	64.3
5. I brainstorm and write down ideas about the topic.	15	53.6
2. I go back to check carefully the assignment requirements and instructions.	14	50.0
7. I go back to my writing to revise the content and make my ideas clearer.	14	50.0
9. In my assignments, in general, I pay more attention to the language (e.g., spelling, grammar, vocabulary) than to the content (e.g., ideas, organization).	0	00.0

Table 5 presents a list of the most and the least frequent writing strategies and behaviors the graduate students stated they depend on in academic writing. Items 8, 5, 2, and 7 present the most frequently used strategies among the study participants. Item 9 was the least strategy the graduate students used in their writing with zero (0.00%). More than half of the participants (n=18) showed an aptness to edit errors on the

sentence level, as shown in the responses given to Item 8 (64.3%). Brainstorming is significant in preparing students to write; therefore, it was the primary strategy among the graduate students in this study to prepare themselves for writing, as shown in the responses given to Item 5 (n=15, or 53.6%). Item 2 illustrated that half of the study participants (n=14, or 50%) carefully check the instructions and requirements of their assignments; whereas, Item 7 (n=14, or 50%) of the study participants pay attention to the study content and make the required corrections as needed. However, the least strategy that students used was Item 9 (none), where the participants stated that they are not in favor of paying attention to the language but alternately pay more attention to the content of assignments.

2. Findings of Graduate Students' Attitudes Towards Writing Assignments and Sources Used in Academic Writing

This subsection presents two main questions on the graduate students' attitudes towards academic writing assignments and the sources that they use in academic writing, as shown in Table 6 The first question aimed at exploring the students' perceptions towards writing assignments in the English language, whereas the second question aimed at examining which resources (i.e., books, journals) the students use in their assignments.

Table 6. Participants Attitudes Towards Writing Assignments and Sources Used in Academic Writing

Variable	F	%
1. In general, you find writing assignments in English:		
Easy	15	53.6%
Difficult	2	7.1%
Neither difficult nor easy	11	39.3%
2. The reference(s) you mostly use:		
Books	0	00.0%
Journals	6	21.4%
Both	24	85.7%

Table 6 presents the participants' attitudes towards the writing assignments in English and the sources they like to use when writing academically. In the first question, 15 students (53.6%) stated that they find writing assignments in English easy, two students (7.1%) declared that they find academic writing difficult, whereas 11 students (39.3%) said they find academic writing assignments neither difficult nor

easy. While in the second question, the graduate students were asked to report the references they use in academic writing. Six students (21.4%) stated that they prefer using journals, while 24 students (85.7%) stated that they favor combining books and journals. That indicates that most study participants (53.6%) find writing assignments in English easy to accomplish. Also, it became clear that most students (85.7%) use a combination of journals and books to support their academic writing.

3. Findings of Students' Writing Weaknesses and Difficulties in Academic Writing

This subsection presents the graduate students' weaknesses and difficulties in academic writing assignments. There are six difficulties and weaknesses that graduate students faced in academic writing. Table 7 illustrates the weaknesses and the difficulties that the graduate students reported struggle with when writing academically at the graduate level.

Table 7. Participants Weaknesses and Difficulties in Academic Writing Assignments

Variable	F	%
Paraphrasing	8	28.6%
Language use	4	14.3%
Expressing own voice	8	28.6%
Referencing & citation	12	42.9%
Coherence & cohesion	7	25.0%
Other	2	7.1%

Table 7 presents the difficulties and the weaknesses that graduate students face in their academic writing. Table 4.5. shows that eight participants (28.6%) struggled with paraphrasing, four students (14.3%) face difficulties in putting the language into use whereas, eight students (28.6%) declared that they have trouble expressing their voice in writing. However, 12 students (42.9%) find referencing and citation problematic, seven students (25%) struggle with coherence and cohesion, and finally, two students (7.1%) stated that they face other problems such as anxiety and vocabulary. As seen in Table 7, we can classify graduate students' difficulties and weaknesses in academic writing from the most problematic to the least, namely: referencing & citation, expressing their voice, paraphrasing, coherence & cohesion, language use, and vocabulary.

C. Qualitative Findings from The Semi-Structured Interviews

The data analysis collected from the semi-structured interviews followed theoretical thematic analysis at the latent level in which the research questions drove by the analysis, the focus of the analysts, and the analysis of the data goes beyond the semantic surface content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The rationale beyond using this form of theoretical TA is that the researcher is concerned with addressing specific research questions and analyzed the collected data with this in mind. Therefore, the researcher used open coding. That meant that the research has not previously arranged a set of codes but developed and modified the codes as the study advanced.

1. Analysis of Qualitative Findings

The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim after uploading them to MAXQDA software. Then the researcher read the written transcriptions three times to gain familiarity with the data. The researcher returned the transcribed data to some participants (upon their requests) to review them and ensure validity (Saldana, 2015) or correct any factual errors. Upon receiving the transcriptions' validity approval from the participants, the researcher began the coding process.

The researcher depended on the semi-structured questions as the basis of the coding and analysis of the data. On the notion of what makes a theme, Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) state that there are no rules for a theme. However, a theme is characterized by its significance. The first step of the analysis was to read the transcripts, and the researcher took notes during this stage. In the second step, the researcher generated initial codes. The researcher read each transcript on its own, and then new codes have emerged. Throughout this stage, new codes were added, and the researcher modified the existing codes. The researcher included an extract of codes in the margins (Appendix H). By the time the researcher finished this stage, a total number of 720 codes were allocated. The third stage of thematic analysis was to search for preliminary themes. In this stage, the researcher examined any overlapping issues between the codes and the initial themes. At the end of the stage, the researcher organized the codes into broader themes that answered the research questions. In the fourth step, the researcher reviewed and modified the preliminary themes and the subthemes, keeping the research questions in mind. In the fifth step, the refinement of

the themes took place, and the subthemes were completed. The final step was to write up the last report that is presented below.

2. Presentation of the Qualitative Findings

This section describes the qualitative data findings collected throughout the semi-structured interviews with the master's graduate students (Appendix B). All the transcribed interviews were presented verbatim to ensure the authenticity of the data. When referring to the information gained from the semi-structured interviews, pseudonyms of the interview participants were used. Six themes were identified, with a total of 28 sub-themes, as presented in Table 4. 6. The six main themes were "academic writing as the main obstacle," "influences on the writing process," "socioeconomic problems," "supervisors' relationship," "coping with academic writing problems," and "attitudes and recommendations."

Table 8. Summary of Themes and Subthemes from Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes	**Subthemes**
Academic writing as the main obstacle	Lack of academic writing practices Misunderstanding the nature of academic writing Lack of academic writing guidance Choosing a topic Citation styles Difficulties writing-up research Difficulties in data analysis
Influences on the writing process	Academic vocabulary Grammar concerns Language use Expressing own voice Paraphrasing
Socioeconomic problems	Stress and anxiety Time consumption Frustration Busy life Lack of mobility Lack of motivation
Supervisors' relationship	Lack of communication with supervisors Lack of formative feedback Meeting expectations
Coping with academic writing problems	Reading Efficient communication with peers/supervisors Social platforms Time management Writing drafts
Attitudes and recommendations	Attitudes towards academic writing Recommendations and suggestions

In this section, the researcher aims at presenting and defining each theme and subsequent theme as in Table 8.

a. Academic writing as the main obstacle

The findings showed that the master's graduate students face several types of challenges in their academic writing. The great majority of these problems are related to the complexity that evolves the demands and fundamentals structure of academic writing, due to, mainly, the lack of scholarly writing practices, either in terms of academic courses or practical writing (e.g., essays, research proposals, research grants, literature review, abstracts, term papers, prospectus). Overall, the researcher identified seven subthemes counted as the difficulties the students struggle with during their academic writing. These difficulties include "lack of academic writing practices," "misunderstanding the nature of academic writing," "lack of academic writing guidance," "citation styles," "choosing a topic," "difficulty writing-up research," and "difficulties in data analysis." Each of these difficulties is discussed below.

*Lack of academic writing practices***.** One of the prime challenges at the master's graduate level is the lack of scholarly writing practices at English-medium university (Morrison & Evans, 2018). There are many purposes for academic writing at the master's graduate level. To mention some, it should help students be good academic writers and to indulge them in the academic community after graduation. The writing phase is challenging and unfolds many painful challenges to students, especially with the lack of academic writing practices that hinder students' writing process (Murray, 2001). In this study, 11 master's students out of 14 stated feeling unprepared for academic writing. Among the students' problems is the lack of guidelines on what they are expected to write due to the lack of application and practices during their study. A student that is at the stage of preparing their thesis supported this finding as stated in the following:

"So, if [the school/institution of graduate studies] are lacking in giving us the courses and the academic training that we need, we will be unable to give, [submit] a good academic paper" (Interview with Student 1).

While few students (3/14) frustratingly criticized the emphasis on exams and the courses, leaving them with no adequate practical academic writing skills:

"[…] to expect from [a] student to write a thesis and [the institution] give him only theoretical information without any application in real life on about how to write an academic writing" (Interview with Student 2).

The students feel that there is no adequate emphasis on academic writing training, and their program focus is mostly based on courses and exams. Thus, the students struggle in their academic writing with the lack of academic writing practices in their study.

Misunderstanding the nature of academic writing. The master's graduate students were asked a set of questions to understand their perceptions of the nature of academic writing. Some of these questions were *Do you like writing? How do you feel about your academic writing? If you were to choose, would you like to take academic writing courses? An ideal academic writing course, what would it be about?*

[Graduate] students' abilities to present their ideas and thoughts in academic writing have an indispensable role in succeeding academically (Applebee, 1994). When the researcher asked the students about their writing practices, their difficulties, and whether they find academic writing intricate, almost half of the participants (8/14) misunderstood the nature of academic writing at the master's level. The misunderstandings varied; for instance, a student was convinced that without a "load" of vocabulary, their academic writing would not be as good as when they do. An example as in the following:

"[If] you are a good writer, you are supposed to have... to be loaded with lots of vocabs because vocabs can work fine" (Interview with Student 3).

Another common problem among the participants was their undifferentiation between the nature of academic writing and general or business writing. This student felt that academic writing was similar to business writing (e.g., real estate advertisements, email); he stated:

"I have been working in [the] English content creation for two years, so I do not have to take any course because it was part of my … the experience of my job. I created few articles for my company in terms of economy, and real estate things in Turkey" (Interview with Student 2).

Another student misunderstood academic writing at the master's level as in her ability to write nonacademic work, "It was my dream when I was young to write some novels" (Interview with Student 4).

Academic writers at the graduate level are expected to follow a specific set of demands in their writing. However, some students hold a false perception of academic writing at the master's level. Misunderstanding the nature of academic writing can be attributed to various factors, such as the lack of practice, lack of English proficiency, or lack of consciousness at the time of the interview. Also, it shows the students' lack of knowledge in research writing since some confused it with business writing (e.g., email, real estate articles) or non-academical writing (e.g., fictional novels).

Lack of academic writing guidance. Boice (1987) believes that unproductive writers should be guided and supported to improve and advance their academic writing skills and become productive writers. However, the shortage of direction and guidance in scholastic writing practices drives students to frequently rely solely on their supervisors and advisors to support and guide them in their writing process and development (Tremblay-Wragg et al., 2021). Nevertheless, some students in this study stressed feelings of inadequacy of guidance while writing during their program of study or their writing practices (e.g., thesis writing, research article). In the current study, half of the study participants (7/14) shared feelings of lack of practical guidance. For instance, some of those students explained the shortage of guidance that they experienced or thought that it should aid them to write a well academic article that is mandatory for graduation defense, saying:

"What should I do to publish [the research article]? I do not know how to write an article. For example, they [supervisors and professors] should tell us what an article consist[s] of. What is an article? There is no such a thing, that is the problem [I] face" (Interview with Student 2).

"Most of [the problems are] related to the structures that I need to follow. Like I have no idea, really, like what structure I need to follow I need to write in any paper, Ummm, I am asked to do. How many parts? How many paragraphs? What ideas should I contain in the paper? Like what should I, like, proceed in this paper? " (Interview with Student 5).

Another student who is still trying to figure out his thesis topic and feels he is falling behind with no actual support and guidance said:

"We [students] do not know how to start [writing], they do not know how to find the topic, they do not know whatever they are going to write is related, they do not find the necessary help, they do not find the necessary assistance, they do not get the correct feedback, they do not [receive] elaborated assistance" (Interview with Student 6).

From the responses above, we can understand that the master's students relied, for the most part, on their supervisors for guidance on their academic writing, the editing of their academic writing, the feedback, and the publishing process instructions of their research writing. However, the guidance they received, as students claimed, was not enough of help. Such obstacles hinder students' academic writing and cause a delay in their writing and motivate them less to write.

Citation styles. The term citation refers to showing the source of a specific text in the body of the research (Neville, 2012). The term referencing refers to the practice of "acknowledging in an academic text the intellectual work of others" (Neville, 2012, p. 1). Understanding the differences between referencing and citation is significant. That is because they can help us separate one's thoughts and ideas from other scholars. Therefore, it would save students' from falling into plagiarism. Also, graduate students are expected to present a critical approach when writing academically. That includes an academic presentation of their ideas, analysis to support their argument, and referencing other studies that support their claims. In this study, (9/14) of the students shared various problems that they face linked to 1) citation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago), 2) getting access to references. In the former case, the students shared obstacles in-text citation, direct and in-direct quoting. However, the majority of the students (10/14) reported feelings of anxiety and frustration towards the lack of access to materials online. In the words of one of the students describing her experience in finding related materials that support her writing:

"It was very hard for me to find references and still till now, I feel that my references are way less than it should be, but I just cannot find [adequate references]" (Interview with Student 1).

Another student who was writing a research proposal encountered many challenges in getting access to references:

"Out of 20 research prints or texts or [research] papers, I was able to access to only 8 of them. The rest of that which is 8 to 9 papers out of my 20 research papers, I could not access them at all" (Interview with Student 6).

Regardless of the numerous online resources available for students, they still commit frequent and repetitive errors in citation styles. In the era of technological advances, students can access myriad online sources like citation generators, web open access resources, and various tools that available online for students. However, instructors more often take for granted that students can put citation styles into use (Mandernach et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this seemingly straightforward task for some students turns into a very frustrating process with no end (Van Note Chism & Weerakoon, 2012).

Choosing a topic. An extensive review of the literature indicated a dearth in investigating the nature of difficulties students encounter in formulating a topic to research and write about (Ameen et al., 2018). Therefore, the formulation of a research topic is one of the foundations of the graduate level where students should choose an appropriate research topic with "immense" importance not only to the researcher but also to the field of their study (Ameen et al., 2018, p. 592). In the current study, half of the students (7/14) struggled with choosing a topic in their writing and found it troublesome. For instance, a student chose a random topic without thinking about the consequences and the responsibilities that he must undertake into account; he said:

"I was oblig[ated] to change my thesis [topic] because I found myself, I cannot get on because I-I-I from the very beginning, I just chose a topic like that in order just to... I want to finish, that is all" (Interview with Student 3).

Another student struggled in finding a topic for her thesis because of her inadequacy of ideas and knowledge about scholarly writing:

"The main problem was the lack of ideas. For example, I could not understand what it is about [the thesis]? What do they want me to write [about]? And maybe I do not have any information about that [topic]" (Interview with Student 7).

Another student struggled in choosing a topic that is original that is up-to-date, and innovative. He shared three main factors that frame the "originality" of the research topic, they are:

"Number one; something that I think I would be interested in, number two: something that I think has future, that people will look up in the future and use it as an academic source, or number three: is it related to the world we are currently living in" (Interview with Student 6).

Based on the students' responses, we understood that choosing a research topic in general and particularly a thesis topic is one of the most significant decisions that the students need to make. All the interviewed students (14/14) agreed that having an interest in the research topic area is the most significant aspect of attaining the writing goal. Despite the difficulties that the students faced in choosing a topic for their research writing tasks, they stated that the more they read, the better they think about related research topics.

Difficulty writing up research. In this study, the students shared various obstacles related to the writing sections of their academic assignments, namely: introduction, literature review, and methods section.

The introduction of any research is necessary because it aspires, stimulates the reader, catches their attention, and indulges them in what to come (Wcg, 2008). However, there is an ambiguity that involves what students should write in the introduction section. Therefore, students intermittently find this section frustrating to write since almost half of the interviewed students (8/14) expressed difficulties in writing up the introduction of their academic papers. The interviewed students shared various problems interconnected to this section. For example, some of those students struggled in introducing their arguments; they were not aware of the elements of the introduction chapter, how to structure it, and what to avoid. A student in the study shared his experience writing the introduction section in his dissertation:

"I had a problem with what kind of paragraphs I have to write as an introduction. […] [Writing] the introductory chapter… because I did not know how to start, where to start I mean. It was so hard" (Interview with Student 2).

The literature review is of great significance in research writing that is the first impression of the literature review reflects the quality of the written work (Akindele, 2008, as cited in Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020). However, writing the literature review is twisting, and students always struggle in writing an excellent literature review (Randolph, 2009) that reflects and raises awareness and understanding of the proposed topic and the previous theories and methodologies addressed in the research problem (Mallett, 2004). In this study, six students out of 14 found writing the literature review very complicated and confusing. In the words of one of the students who struggled in the review of literature structure writing:

"[…] the literature review, the most I mean... I mean the chapter that is very... how can I say... there is a word... exhausting" (Interview with Student 2).

Some students felt that writing the literature review was overwhelming because they "have" to include all the previous theories carried out in their research area. For instance:

"Because [I] have to cover *all* the theories and the previous researches done in [my]— in the area [I am] writing [about], it is not about what [I am] going to talk about, it is everything in previous researches and the theories, and why [I] chose these theories, that is it" (Interview with Student 2).

The methods section, (5/14) of the master's students expressed obstacles in writing up this section throughout their academic writing practices. The challenges in this section were miscellaneous: from difficulties in writing the content, forming the structure of the chapter to data collection, sampling, data analysis via SPSS, and the adaption and replication of previous research studies. For instance, when a student was asked whether she finds writing any section hard to manage or whether it proposes difficulties, she said:

"Because I have not decided yet, um… because I have to collect the data… then decide to how to write my methodology" (Interview with Student 7).

Another student felt that writing a mixed-methods study is hard to process:

"I can easily say that I am clueless, especially in regard of writing quantitative research or mixed research. I can only answer them what it is, but how [to] do [I] put that on word, how do [I] even begin to think about whether [my] paper is going to be

mixed or not, quantitative or qualitative or not, and if it belongs to one of them, which is will?" (Interview with Student 6).

Difficulties in data analysis. There were two fundamental problems that eight students out of 14 shared related to data analysis throughout the study: 1) running analysis and 2) using appropriate software analysis. In the first case, the students felt that they received less guidance or no practical knowledge to collect the data and interpret it. That includes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods data. For instance, on the use of qualitative analysis, two students expressed concerns:

"I had to use content-based... analysis and I could not [use it]. I am not very skilled in doing that, and it takes time" (Interview with Student 2).

"I know I am going to write [a] portion of qualitative data. I have no idea how to write it" (Interview with Student 6).

While the second problem was related to using appropriate data analysis software. The technological advances in research have resulted in a broad spectrum of tools and software to support the researchers and the research lifecycle (Duca & Metzler, 2019). However, students face many obstacles that leave them restless when writing academically. Metzler et al. (2016) believe that the rapid changes of these software and tools are barriers to teaching students and keeping them up to date. In the light of the previous study, we can understand some of the difficulties of using such tools. Furthermore, the students believe not receiving practical training during their program of study is yet another factor that plays a role in their poor skills of using such software. For example, two students commented on how complicated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (henceforth, SPSS), he said:

"I used SPSS to analyze [my data]. No, I do not know [how to use it]. I… I… I got help from someone. It is hard actually. They did not teach us about it" (Interview with Student 2).

"To use programs as SPSS and such … how to use them, how to enter the raw data, to process data, how to implement that on word, how to put out the graphs, how are they going to be read, and that is [a] problem that I can easily say that we did not receive any sort of education or course on this" (Interview with Student 6).

- Summary of the First Theme

In the first theme, the researcher projected the main seven academic writing obstacles that master's graduate students encountered as they are asked and started to write academically. Despite the students' attempts to attain their writing tasks, they fail in understanding the nature of writing at the master's level. However, their writing swings not further away from the undergraduate students' writing. In other words, it lacks synthesis of sources, merely summarizing instead of analyzing the data and adding nothing to the literature of their topic of study. Also, the students struggled with finding appropriate research topics for their writing tasks. The other mentioned problems are tied firmly to the theme of writing the introduction, literature review, and method sections. Thus, other difficulties emerged among the students as the lack of understanding analysis in research methods and ambiguity in data analysis.

b. Influences on the writing process

The second theme focused on the emerging difficulties that the students struggled with within their writing process. The researcher reported five subthemes from the students' answers: vocabulary, grammar usage, language use, expressing their own voice, and paraphrasing.

Vocabulary. Bush et al. (1996) believe that the utilization of accurately appropriate academic vocabulary in graduate-level writing is compelling. Most graduate students consistently encounter problems in academic vocabulary (Casanave & Hubbard, 1992). In this study, almost half of the interviewed students (6/14) mentioned difficulties with academic vocabulary. The students shared various problems they face with academic vocabulary. For instance, a participant complained about using repetitive words in his writing and consequently looked for synonyms, which were not always available:

"Choosing vocabs, synonyms [are] not that easy one. Learning vocabulary is a very good thing and supporter, helper thing when you try to write about something actually. Vocabs can save you, by the way, because without vocabs, just like... let us say... a-a-a boat without ropes. You cannot keep on" (Interview with Student 3).

While another student struggled not only with the type of vocabulary he wanted to include in his writing but also on the aptness of the chosen vocabulary, using third-person narrator, he said:

"So, [one] cannot use too complex words, … cannot use too easy understandable words because the things [one] … trying to explain are not that easy … use pinpoint vocabulary for that" (Interview with Student 6).

This particular finding suggests that the students hold a misconception of academic writing nature, where one of the students believes that knowing vocabulary is the ultimate goal to write academically. Nevertheless, this is quite common among L2 English learners. The findings of Dong (1998) suggest a similar misunderstanding where the students thought that vocabulary choice was essential to express their views and ideas in writing.

Grammar concerns. Producing an academic writing text requires a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy, suggest Celce-Murcia, (1991, as cited in Hinkel, 2013). Therefore, the construction of well grammar competence in academic writing is essential (Hinkel, 2013). In the current study, five students out of 14 grappled with grammar, for instance:

"And [another] problem [is] grammatical mistake. I have [a] grammatical mistake at writing" (Interview with Student 7).

Language use. Students are expected to use formal language that is coherent and cohesive when they write academically at the graduate level. They are expected to pay great attention to the structure and the language they use. In this study, half of the interviewed students (7/14) reported having problems in language use and their awareness of its significance. The two main obstacles that the students shared were related to a) using formal language and b) building a good structure. For instance, some students reported having difficulties in outlining their writing; therefore, that hindered their writing and made it more complicated. In the words of one of the students, she stated, “I mean the most challenging thing in my writing career is putting the ideas in order. I could not decide on which one should be first and which one should be second, and I could never decide on the things to put them in a[n] order” (Interview with Student 8).

Expressing own voice. Academic writing helps students find their own voice and share their ideas and thoughts like experts in their fields of study. The findings of the interviews with the master’s students indicated that five students out of 14 have problems expressing their own voice when they write academically during their

master's program. For instance, one of the students reported that she finds it hard to write up research, using a third-person narrator rather than I as in the first-person narrator, she stated:

"We cannot say I, and even though you wanna say I and my experience tells me like my experience in the classroom is difficult to limit yourself, as I said. I hate that part. Thesis [is a] personal thing when we think about it. Like we should be able to share our experiences, we know this, we are new in the area, but we have a voice too. Everyone [has] different experiences" (Interview with Student 9).

Another student reported feelings of fear to express her own voice that the reader might not understand her perspectives, she said, "It is very difficult for me to write something because I am afraid of the second person or the other people can't understand me, or what I am saying because it's not my native language English" (Interview with Student 4).

Paraphrasing. Unlike the previous subtheme where students needed to transfer their thoughts into words, this subtheme addresses the problems that the interviewed students faced with paraphrasing. Paraphrasing, in the simplest terms, refers to expressing the words of other writers and scholars in ones' own words; to achieve better clarity. In the current study, only four students out of the 14 interviewed students reported obstacles in paraphrasing the work of other scholars. As one of the students stated:

"Sometimes I do [face problems with paraphrasing] especially when someone paraphrases someone, someone paraphrases someone, and someone paraphrases someone. That is kinda difficult. Because you do not wanna be similar, you do not wanna go so far. You don't wanna lose the meaning" (Interview with Student 9).

- Summary of Theme Two

Theme two described the influences of academic writing on students' writing process and the problems that emerged within it. The five subthemes of this theme showed that lack of academic vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracy, problems in language use, obstacles in expressing own voice, and paraphrasing were the primary reasons that ten students out of 14 reported struggling with during their writing. The problems shared are linked to the size and type of vocabulary, where words synonyms were the main issues that the students grappled with within their academic writing.

The lack of grammar competence has been a problem for few students who struggled in producing a well-written text that meets the requirements of graduate-level academic writing. The other challenges were related to using formal academic language, expressing their own voice in a sense where students struggled to put their own thoughts into scholarly voice and words, and paraphrasing.

c. Socioeconomic problems

Socioeconomic factors contribute negatively to students' learning and in their academic writing performance in particular (Chokwe, 2013). In this theme, the students' responses showed five subthemes that affected their writing severely. These subthemes are stress and anxiety, time consumption, busy life, frustration, lack of mobility, and lack of motivation.

Stress and anxiety. The term writing anxiety is explained as a "situational aspect, which is concerned with feelings of stress along with reactions as excessive perspiration, palpitation, and negative impressions" (Rabadi & Rabadi, 2020, p.885). That might include a lack of writing confidence or avoidance of writing (Rabadi & Rabadi, 2020).

Writing anxiety might correlate positively with some students (Boice & Johnson, 1984; Martinez et al., 2011) or negatively (Bloom, 1981; Onwuegbuzie, 1997; Martinez et al., 2011). In this study, all the interviewed students (14/14) reported feelings of anxiety when assigned a writing task, and they intermittently struggled to write, decided to drop out of the program or delayed their writing. The students shared various reasons and situations that caused them feelings of anxiety. For instance, one student shared her feelings of anxiety about the lack of access to references:

“[…] what gives me anxiety actually is the idea that I am… will be unable to find enough references or how am I supposed to use the article I found online? or how I am gonna incorporate them in my thesis" (Interview with Student 1).

Another student shared a broader perspective of the problems that make him feel anxious. Those problems were how to begin writing, choosing a topic, the fear of inadequacy in writing up research, and whether the content is relative to the research area or not. Using third-person narrator, he explains these obstacles:

"I feel anxious on first of all, how to start my writing as the beginning, choosing a topic may be difficult or not, that is another thing, but after you set to your idea, you have your thoughts, starting the very first line and carrying that on and then seeing may be that you have written less or maybe you have written too much, is making me anxious. I do not know whether or not the things I am writing are related or relative or it is just things that I am giving as an extra unimportant information" (Interview with Student 6).

Another student anxiety stems from the fact that English is their L2; therefore, writing in English makes him feel anxious:

"If I am tired and exhausted from [some]thing I am thinking of or... because it is a second language, it is not my mother tongue. So, if I speak, I would be anxious, even though I speak the language fluently, I would be anxious because it is not my-my-my mother tongue, like Arabic. […] So, it is the same in writing, you will not... you cannot express your ideas freely and write if you are anxious or thinking about something or tired or whatever" (Interview with Student 2).

The causes of stress and anxiety among the students are varied. Based on their responses, the causes of stress and anxiety can be grouped into two main categories. First, students' anxiety and stress are a result of social encounters and economic obstacles. That, in a way, caused the students problems in following with their writing or prevented them from writing. Other students' anxiety and stress are language-based. As stated above, some students felt that L2 writing is, at times, complex, whereas other students endured that it was the writing itself that causes them stress, globally known as writing anxiety.

Time consumption. In the current study, ten students out of the 14 interviewed master's students reported obstacles related to timing. The students' difficulties were divided into two major categories: time consumption and time management. In terms of time consumption, some students time has been consumed while striving to think about an appropriate thesis topic:

"It took me about two to three months in order to decide on what I am gonna to write [about]" (Interview with Student 3).

While another student found that most of her time is spent on reading:

"It is just to understand one page, [I] need to spend two hours on it. It is written in a difficult language, like the construction, the word construction, and the sentence construction [are] really hard to understand. I was spending hours, and even months just trying to understand this paragraph mean[ing] or this sentence mean[ing] or this chapter" (Interview with Student 1).

One student struggled with managing his time. The main problems he faced were related to spending many hours researching for materials, he said:

"When I am researching for related material online or offline, this costs me time, and when [I] find that [I] 've found the paper, [I] need time again to read through that paper to comprehend that which is another way to waste your time… spend your time. Then, [I] might find out that a minor portion of that paper is related …, or if [I am] very unlucky, it is totally unrelated […] There is nothing that [I] can take out from that research paper that [I] have already wasted three days, maybe one week to get through [a] quote on [a] quote to understand the paper completely" (Interview with Student 6).

As the students stated above, writing scholarly takes time and effort. It takes time to read, find related materials, think about a research topic, and write up research. All these stages take time, and the students felt trapped with short periods, as they stated. That has resulted in obstacles in time management where some students failed to manage their time wisely. Failure in time management caused difficulties in writing and slowing of the process. As we can see, time consumption and time management are interchangeable among master's graduate students and research writing.

Frustration. The term frustration, per se, is rarely defined in the literature of higher education studies, and if any, it was mentioned briefly (Sword et al., 2018). However, we can understand that frustration is a psychological response to an obstacle between a person and their own goal or task (Eysenck & Keane, 2015). In this research, half of the interviewed students (7/14) shared several reasons for their frustration. The frustration stems from the lack of academic writing training, lack of time management, inadequate formative feedback, among many other problems. For instance, a student who, at the time of the interview, was still preparing to write his research proposal, stated:

"What am I going to write about? How am I going to write about [it]? If I am not going to write about something that I am not interested in, what am I proposed? And the person who proposes that to me, is he or she proficient in that, to begin with? So, before we begin and finish the paper, there are a lot of major problems that lays the start off the paper which takes a psychological, mental, and toll on students" (Interview with Student 6).

While another student felt frustrated due to the lack of feedback given by her professor on her academic writing:

"If she [my professor] keeps giving me negative feedback, then it will demolish my morals and my spirit. Like I do not want to write anymore, this is not my thing, I cannot do it anymore" (Interview with Student 1).

Frustration among the students in the study was predominant. Some students' frustration was explicit in expressing themselves and their research concerns and difficulties whereas, other students shared it with behavior rather than words.

Busy life. Having a busy life is quite common among graduate students worldwide. The demands that life imposes on students are represented in Offstein et al., (2004) findings where students were competing time, significant responsibilities, research writing, and conflicting roles in their lives. Also, students are most likely to be worrying about their families and earning money to support them and their being. In this study, almost half of the interviewed students (8/14) had busy lives, and they had something that kept them away from their writing. This caused setbacks in the students' academic life and affects their writing negatively. For example, one of the students said:

"Because I... my time... is a little bit busy, you know. I told you, I work. Sometimes I just go home about 11[pm] or 12 [am]. Also, I have private teaching after my job. So, [I] do not have that much time" (Interview with Student 3).

"Sometimes, let us say, maybe... financial issues [were] one of the difficulties, by the way. Maybe I can give about 10-15% of this, but this also is one of the difficulties that faced me at that time" (Interview with Student 3).

The graduate students in the study, as their peers all over the world, had a busy lifestyle. That made them, whether by choice or not, delay their writing or not write at all.

Lack of mobility. Despite the technological advances, the need to gather data from the field is persisting. However, due to the covid-19 health risk and repetitive curfews imposed, educational institutions were closed. Therefore, six out of the 14 interviewed students struggled in collecting data from participants and getting access to references through the university library. That caused limited data resources and delays in the students' progress. In the words of some students:

"I had to-to-to-to- to spread my questionnaire for students in a school and schools were closed" (Interview with Student 2).

"Because I am in quarantine. I could not collect data for my thesis" (Interview with Student 7).

Besides, the lack of mobility made communication between the students and their academic supervisors and advisors confusing and occasionally frustrating. The students' only way to reach out to their academic supervisors and faculty members is through email, which is not convenient, students complained.

"[…] in [the] covid-19 period right now which is much *much* more difficult to get in contact with people, to get in contact with your friends even let alone your advisors… your academic advisors because they are too busy getting replies and questions from all sort of places" (Interview with Student 6).

The lack of mobility caused by the COVID-19 has caused tremendous setbacks in the students writing. The delay in the writing, the lack of collected data, and the lack of communication channels between the students and their educational mentors and advisors come at a cost. These setbacks might be recent and new, yet they exhaust students and make their academic writing experience troublesome.

Lack of motivation. Motivation in language learning settings is significant in the likelihood of promoting a prosperous learning environment. Rahayu (2021) defines motivation as “a sense of agency, feelings of control, students' control over learning activities and their interests in it” (p. 89). Therefore, motivation helps and aspires students’ goals and directions to write better. In the current study, half of the study participants (7/14) felt discouraged and lacked the motivation to begin writing or resume their writing. The lack of motivation stems from social and financial factors that affected students' lives; however, in two cases, it was both social and academic

(e.g., fear of failure or making mistakes, lack of communication, inadequate feedback) factors. For instance, one of the students stated:

"I almost quit [from the program the] last august. I just wanted to quit. I felt I could not do it. I felt like, what the hell are you doing? Why would you put yourself in such a situation? You are not strong enough. You are not qualified enough. Yes, I questioned myself so hard" (Interview with Student 5).

- Summary of Theme Three

The third theme outlined the social and economic problems that affected the master's students writing negatively. The most frequent obstacle among the interviewed students was the students' feelings of anxiety because their lives were stressful and socioeconomic status imposed stressful pressure on their lives that made them anxious, among many other reasons. The second problem was the time spent on reading and writing. Students with time management problems, long periods of reading and writing have had some sense of frustration. Thus, the students abandoned their writing or delayed it because they failed to keep pace with scholarly writing demands. Also, the busy lifestyle and the daily encounters and problems that the master's graduate students faced led to difficulties in their writing. Also, the pandemic, closure, and curfews imposed more pressure on the students where most educational institutions were closed. This problem affected the students in two key ways: first, the students struggled with the scarcity of the accessed data required for their academic writing. Second, the students encountered difficulties in communication with their academic supervisors and advisors, which resulted in problems that affected their writing. Finally, the students' lack of motivation to write was frequently problematic among many of them.

d. Supervisors' relationship

Three subthemes, lack of communication with faculty members, lack of formative feedback, and fear of not meeting faculty members' expectations, are the obstacles that the students reported during the interviews. Nine students out of the 14 interviewed students in the study stated a lack of sufficient communication with faculty members' and supervisors, a lack of formative and corrective feedback, and fear of not meeting educator's expectations writing-wise.

Lack of communication with faculty members. A well-built supervisory relationship is paramount in the likelihood of students' success academically (Halbert, 2015). However, the lack of frequent communication between the students and their professors and supervisors causes serious trouble for students. In the current study, almost half of the interviewed students (6/14) described the haphazard nature of their communication with their supervisors, professors, and advisors. For example, the students complained:

"She [my supervisor] takes [a] long time to answer. I do not guess she is as ready as I would like her to be. Like if I send an email regarding my thesis, and I get [an answer] one month later, I will not be doing any progress on my thesis. So, I am the one who is getting delayed" (Interview with Student 1).

While another student experienced a broader problem, from his perspective, this is due to two main factors: 1) teacher educators' lack of encouragement and 2) lack of evaluation and assessment in the writing process. He explained:

"Number one: easing the process of getting the students to start their academic writing, to get them a first push … [but] they fail at that. Number two, their assistant throughout the academic paper [is] little to none. That is the simplest I can put it: *Little to none*" (Interview with Student 6).

The lack of communication channels between the faculty members and their students might cause significant problems in students writing. Academic writers are expected to be in frequent communication with their writing and their supervisors and faculty members to develop their research writing; however, the lack of communication generates problems in students' writing that the students might not be able to solve on their own.

Lack of formative feedback. The faculty members feedback is significant to improve and promote students' writing. Also, it helps students develop a voice of their own. Therefore, the lack of formative feedback on students' writing comes at a cost. The cost is more problems in students writing, more challenges to face, and less writing to do. In this study, half of the interviewed students (7/14) experienced obstacles with the lack of formative feedback. Some of the feedback that the students received was insufficient or not formative, students complained. In other words, as students declared, it had no foundation in helping them improve their writing or rewrite and

edit their work. Those students shared various problems that were associated with the lack of formative feedback. For example, a student who claimed to receive merely almost no feedback stated:

"[…] it is unfair to say yes or no because usually now she did not give me any feedback [on] my thesis, but usually her answers or her replies would be just like 'one word'" (Interview with Student 1).

"I did not get positive feedback or negative feedback. The only thing I got was [that] it was good. So, for me now, I am in the middle. I do not know which side I need to work on. Somehow, I feel that I need to work on some aspects of my writing, but I do not know what they are. Nobody explained to me" (Interview with Student 1).

Another student struggled with the usage of analysis software, and when he sought help from his supervisor, he has been given an unprofessional response and no feedback:

"But, whenever [I] go to [my] supervisor, he does not explain anything about how to use the [SPSS] program. He tells [me] to '*pay money and do[es] it'*" (Interview with Student 2).

While another student experienced ineffective evaluation of her written work, leaving the student in limbo:

"Last semester or the one before it, I led a research paper where we had to write like mini-thesis, and every time I would go just to ask… like the professor like '*Am I doing a good job? Is this what you want?'* or '*Can you give me any feedback?'* the answer that I would get is like '*no, it is fine, just write*.' Like, we all write, but it should be academic" (Interview with Student 1).

We can understand that the role of feedback in improving students' writing for it is lack; students tend to write less or not at all. In some cases, the students expressed that negative feedback causes them stress and anxiety. These feelings challenge their desire to write or decide to quit and drop from the program. In either case, the writing process becomes more complex. A few other students expressed that the type of feedback they received was summative; however, they expected formative and corrective feedback that helps them locate their mistakes, correct them, and avoid them in the future.

Meeting faculty members expectations. In the interviews with the students, six students out of 14 reported mixed feelings of fear and anxiety that their writing might not meet their supervisors' and professors' expectations. That, in a way, hindered the students writing and prevented them from moving forward or making noteworthy progress in their writing. One of the students said, "I am feeling anxious and afraid [of] making mistakes and whether the other teacher would like my work or not" (Interview with Student 8).

- Summary of Theme Four

Theme four addressed the challenges that the master's students encounter with their faculty members and supervisors, the lack of formative feedback, and fear of not meeting faculty members' expectations. Some of the interviewed master's students (6/14) had problems with the lack of communication channels between them and their supervisors, the type of feedback given on their assignments, and their expectations writing-wise. Therefore, due to the previously discussed challenges, the students' writings were affected negatively, leaving them in a labyrinth.

e. Coping with academic writing challenges

This theme concentrated on the students' coping strategies to minimize the difficulties they face in academic writing. The subthemes are reading, usage of social platforms, efficient communication with someone (e.g., peers, family members, supervisors), time management, and writing drafts.

Reading. The influence of reading on writing is broad, and it has a substantial impact on students' writing because it develops learners' abilities to write (Brown, 1981). It also inspires them to discover topics related to their research problems. All the interview participants (14/14) shared that reading is a dominant strategy for successful writing. For example:

"You [as a student] have to read in order to-to write something, or to write about something; you have to read about that thing, by the way. Because in order to get an idea about that topic, this subject, what are you gonna to write about something. Okay, so I try to collect some other sources related to my subject in order to get an idea, to give an idea about this subject" (Interview with Student 3).

"[Another] thing that I do is look for papers but short and comprehensible papers because the first paper you look at should give you the idea on how to write it. Look at the materials inside, not what it said in the paper, how it is written, to get you through the first best instruction, then I seek papers that close to my topic, then I read some of it" (Interview with Student 6).

Academic reading is the most used strategy among the participants in the study. Critical reading of research helps students in many ways. First of all, it guides them to write better assignments and research papers. Second, it helps them understand better the academic writing style and inspires them to write about topics they are interested in and contribute to the literature of their research area. Third, it helps students understand the writing process. Also, it aids them in communicating their voices better when they read materials that fit their research area.

Efficient communication with someone. According to the participants' experiences, they had followed several strategies for coping with their writing difficulties. A persuasive approach for dealing with writing challenges is to set these problems aside and negative mood by efficient communication with friends, family members, or someone with whom they have something in common or can listen to them and eventually give a piece of advice. All the interviewed students (14/14) followed this strategy to reduce the problems they faced in their writing, for example:

"I personally look for… first of all for friends or relatives or people that I know who seemed to be having [a] much smoother process in writing, or they seem good at writing itself" (Interview with Student 6).

Another interesting point that half of the interviewed students (7/14) shared was that they built strong communication channels with their supervisors or faculty members, who gave support, guidance, guidelines, and formative feedback on students writing and research topics, For instance:

“In [the] research methods course, I did receive some feedback, and it was very helpful. She [the professor] was so good about it, and she motivated me about my topic" (Interview with Student 10).

“When I first start[ed] writing my thesis, some of my teachers refused my topic, but my supervisor told me it is a good topic. [...] If you want to write about this topic, you will. You do not have. no one can stop you. He encouraged me, and he gave me

very -- he motivated me. I was going to change my topic, but he encouraged [me], and his advice was not to change the topic" (Interview with Student 8).

Human relationships in research are very significant. In this study, all the students used them wisely. Having somebody to talk to about their research to brainstorm ideas and thoughts to solve, inspire, ease the writing process. After all, academic writing is an emotional process, and being able to communicate feelings to someone they trust, the students could minimize the difficulties they face in their research writing, even temporarily.

Social platforms. Social activities are great to take the stress off from our lives. Some students depend on them whether to release their stress to avoid writing. In either case, students believe they are good strategies. In the interviews with the students, some of them (6/14) shared diverse strategies to cope with their writing difficulties like watching movies, listening to music, taking a break from writing, and staying alone. Others (11/14) looked for online platforms that help explain the academic writing aspects to overcome their writing difficulties and shortcomings, although its effectiveness is temporary, as the students claimed. For example, a student who struggled with writing relied on taking a break, and social context for overcoming the struggle in academic writing said:

"So, usually, I will just like leave the books aside, put everything away, so I do not see it, maybe give myself one day or two days away from the books and everything, go out with friends maybe, or maybe go out, have a cup of coffee alone. So, I can regroup myself and rethink about the last point I reached in my writing so that I can follow from there" (Interview with Student 1).

While another student relied on watching educational videos on social platforms to educate himself on what he lacks in writing academically, he stated:

"I am actually looking and watching some videos which are debatable on how useful th[ey] are that teaches students in short how to get over their anxiety or how to get over their… umm… the problems they face [in writing] or which sites, websites, and tools that they [students] could use and could benefit them in writing their academic papers" (Interview with Student 6).

Time management. Time management is finding a balance between life responsibilities and routine activities (Tremblay-Wragg et al., 2021). Half of the

interviewed students (7/14) stated that they seek to manage their time. That strategy helped them keep up with their writing and make progress and avoiding the racing deadlines.

Writing drafts. Four students out of the 14 interviewed master's students reported that they depended on writing "many" drafts to attain their writing tasks. For instance:

"I don't have [a] specific writing style, but the first thing is writing a draft because I just need to write everything in my mind, and then I write, and I see that this idea is related to my topic and this idea is not related to my topic" (Interview with Student 8).

- Summary of Theme Five

The fifth theme explored the various strategies that the master's students followed to overcome their academic writing difficulties. These strategies were reading, effective communication with someone, social platforms usage, time management, and writing drafts. All the participants (14/14) in the study agreed on the significant role of reading in developing their writing skills and widen their horizons to write academically. The interviewed students reported that building communication channels with someone they trust and believe in them, where they feel good to talk to someone who can listen to them or give them a piece of advice, is significant in making their writing better. Many students depended on social activities like watching movies, listening to music to overcome their writing setbacks. Other students reported depending on social platforms to look up some research-related materials and websites to bridge the shortcomings of their writing. Some other students tried to manage their time; to find a balance between their daily life and their academic life to get their writing done. Finally, few students (4/14) reported that they prefer to write as many drafts as possible to attain their academic writing tasks.

f. Students' attitudes and recommendations

The sixth and the final theme addressed the master's graduate students' attitudes towards writing academically and their recommendations to minimize these difficulties.

Attitudes towards academic writing. Many researchers and studies (e.g., Johns, 1999; Victoria, 1999) focused on students' attitudes towards L2 writing and their

writing experiences. It exhibited a complex interconnection between students' attitudes, writing experiences, and writing development. In the study, all participants (14/14) seemed interested in sharing their experiences and perspectives towards writing in English; however, some drifted away from the original questions, sometimes because of the lack of awareness and other times for the lack of spoken English competence. However, ten students out of the 14 interviewed students experienced strong ties to writing in English, and they expressed their positive attitudes towards academic wiring in English. For instance:

"I love writing. It really gives like a way of expressing yourself or some kind of things. Academic writing… actually, I did not think I was good at it, but it came to be I am good at it, in some way" (Interview with Student 1).

Students' recommendations and suggestions. Out of the 14 interviewed students, 12 students expressed various views and suggestions on what can happen to minimize and improve academic writing among master's graduate students' whereas, other participants lacked any knowledge or perspective on what can be done to improve their academic writing. The latter participants seemed to be less focused on the notion of academic writing itself and occasionally drifted away from the topic and addressed minor aspects of scholarly writing rather than thinking about the bigger picture and the main struggle. Those who shared their perspectives and recommendations called for a practical application of academic writing in their studies, and in specific, they suggested having an in-depth academic writing course that takes into account the previously stated problems, helps students be better writers, and prepare them to be academicians and post-graduate students.

- Summary of Theme Six

The aim of this theme was twofold. First, it focused on exploring the attitudes of the participants towards writing academically at the master's graduate level. Second, it sought to understand the participants' recommendations to minimize and overcome academic writing difficulties. Most of the study participants (10/14) affirmed that they have no negative feelings towards academic writing, except four participants who disliked academic writing. Therefore, students in the study shared their perspectives on implications that should help students overcome academic writing setbacks and others that require fundamental pedagogical implications.

D. Qualitative Findings from the Open-Ended Questionnaires

The analysis of the data collected from the open-ended questionnaire with the faculty members (Appendix C) followed theoretical thematic analysis in which the research questions drove by the analysis and the analysts' focus (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1. Presentation of Findings from the Open-Ended Questionnaires

This section describes the qualitative data findings collected through the open-ended questionnaire from the faculty members. Two themes were identified, with a total of 12 sub-themes, as presented in Table 9. The two main themes were “academic writing-related obstacles” and “perceptions and recommendations.”

Table 9. Summary of Themes and Subthemes from Open-Ended Questionnaire

Themes	**Subthemes**
Academic writing related obstacles	Level of English proficiency
	Synthesis of information
	Building arguments and claims
	Control of academic writing style
	Use of source material
	Cohesive devices
	Vocabulary
	Punctuation
	Lack of reading
	Difficulty writing-up research
Perceptions and Recommendations	Perceptions towards students writing
	Recommendations and suggestions

In this section, the researcher aimed at presenting and defining each theme and subsequent theme as in Table 9.

a. Academic writing related obstacles

The findings showed that all the faculty members (5/5) in the study believe that the master’s graduate students have many writing problems in their academic writing. All these problems are related to the nature of the students' scholarly writing conventions, with no explanation of the factors that contributed to these weak skills. Overall, the researcher identified ten subthemes from the university faculty members' perspectives as problems in the master’s graduate students’ academic writing. These

problems include "lack of using source materials," "building arguments and claims," "difficulties writing-up research," "punctuation," "vocabulary," "cohesive devices," "control of academic writing style," "synthesis of information," "level of English proficiency" and "lack of reading." Figure 4.2. presents the frequency of these themes.

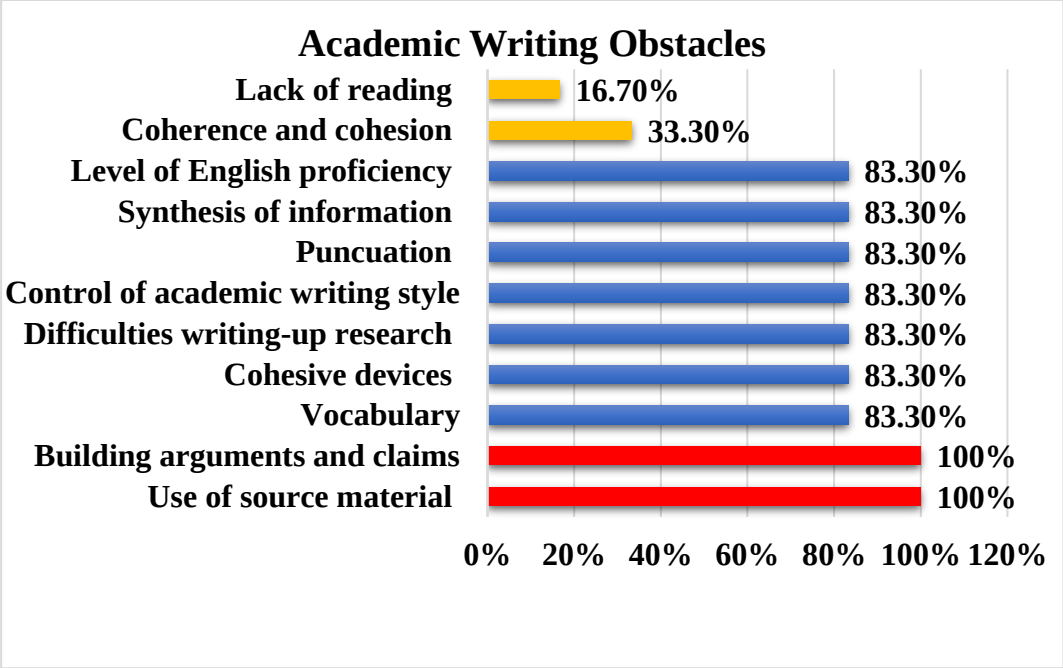

Figure 2. Academic Writing Related Obstacles from The Perspective of Faculty Members

The findings from the open-ended questionnaire with the faculty members suggest that the problems presented in Figure 4.2. are the most common among the master's graduate students. All faculty members agreed that writing up research, source materials usage, and building arguments and claims are the most prominent problems in students writing. Although the faculty members were asked to provide examples and explanations on the factors that promote these problems, they occasionally ignored the questions or left them with no answer. However, in few cases (2/5), they provided brief answers. For example, all faculty members (5/5) agreed that students struggled with writing up their research, specifically, writing the literature review. In the words of one of the faculty members on his students' thesis writing, he said, "[…] thesis students have difficulties writing a good literature review where they have to show the gap and prove that what they are going to do is not a silly thing" (FM01). However, they have not included any further details or explanations on the causes of this gap in the master's graduate students' literature review writing.

b. Faculty members perceptions and recommendations

This subsection presents the faculty and supervision members' perspectives on the graduate students' academic writing practices. It also highlights their views on the possible ways to improve students' scholarly writing at the graduate level.

Perceptions towards students writing. The perceptions of the faculty members and supervisors on the problems that the master's graduate students face in their writing are very significant to address and to understand. This necessity stems from the very idea that if we know what the problems are and what factors play a role in these problems, faculty members could help students bridge these problems.

The respondents were asked to share their perceptions of their supervisees' academic writing deficits in the first question. All faculty members (5/5) reported poor and inadequate writing skills; to meet the rigor of the graduate school and the master program. However, there is no evidence from the provided answers on the causes of these inadequate academic writing skills. Only one faculty member shared her perception on why graduate students' academic writing is not satisfying, saying: "I believe they do not spend enough time to read literature about the relevant topic. I[t] influences academic writing negatively. [B]ecause they are not familiar with the writing rhetoric and the terminology" (FM05). Another faculty member gave a better-detailed answer, saying:

"Their paragraphs do not flow logically. They have redundancy problems. They repeat the same words and ideas. Their interpretations of the tables and figures are weak. They keep repeating the same structure under every table, and they do not discuss their finding while referring to the findings of other researchers (FM04)"

Recommendations and suggestions. The faculty members recommended three ways that the master's graduate students can do to write academically better. The faculty members suggested that the master's graduate students should do more reading, "Students should read the relevant literature and read as many [theses] as possible about the relevant topic. [I]t assists to write the thesis in terms of writing style and content" (FM05). Another faculty member advised that the students need to proofread their writing before turning it in and plan their writing step by step. A faculty member

said, "The rule is being constant and consistent, they must take every step under control rather than using momentum, they have to have it proofread finally" (FM01). As shown in the word cloud visualization (Figure 4.3.), the most recommended strategy was "reading," but also, they suggested "self-edit[ing]" and "proofreading" (the size of each word indicates its frequency).

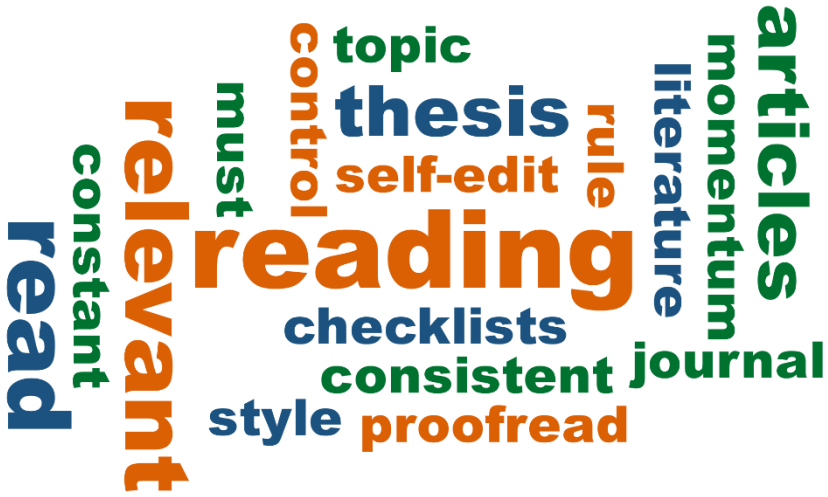

Figure 3. Word Cloud of the Faculty Members' Recommendations to Overcome Academic Writing Problems

- Summary of Theme One and Two

The findings from the open-ended questionnaire with the faculty members revealed that graduate students face prime problems in their academic writing. These problems include lack in using source materials," "building arguments and claims," "difficulties writing-up research," "punctuation," "vocabulary," "cohesive devices," "control of academic writing style," "synthesis of information," "level of English proficiency," "lack of reading," and "coherence and cohesion." However, no adequate explanations were shared on the causes of these problems or any possible practical solutions to overcome, eliminate, or minimize these problems.

2. Chapter Summary

This mixed-methods study explored the master's graduate students' attitudes towards academic writing, the challenges, and difficulties that they encounter when they write or are asked to write academically, and the solutions and recommendations to minimize these obstacles.

The quantitative data were collected from the master's graduate students via a questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed at exploring students' attitudes, beliefs, the strategies they utilize when writing academically, the sources they use in writing, and the most frequent problems they face in academic writing.

The qualitative data from the master's students were collected via semi-structured interviews with the master's graduate students and an open-ended questionnaire with the faculty members. In the semi-structured interviews, the master's graduate students shared detailed information about the problems they faced and encountered in their academic writing tasks, the reasons beyond these problems, how they overcome them, and their recommendations to minimize and overcome these difficulties. Open coding of interviews was used, and *theoretical* thematic analysis was applied, too. The data revealed six persistent themes: 1) academic writing as the main obstacle, 2) influences on the writing process, 3) socioeconomic problems, 4) supervisor's relationship, 5) coping with academic writing problems, and 6) attitudes and recommendations.

In the open-ended questionnaire, the faculty members shared their perspectives on the graduate students' scholarly writing. The data revealed two main themes: academic writing-related obstacles and perceptions on and recommendations for students writing. Overall, the faculty members were not satisfied with their students writing, and they thought it was inadequate. They also shared the most common problems they noticed in their students' writing. Finally, they provided some suggestions on the possible ways graduate students can minimize their academic writing problems.

V. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

A. Overview

This chapter presents four sections, each highlighting a specific area in the research. First, the researcher presents the study findings within the existing literature on the challenges and difficulties in academic writing at the master's graduate level based on the data collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with master's graduate students and an open-ended questionnaire with the faculty members. Second, the researcher discusses and sheds light on the study implications; to offer insight into the study interpreted data and understand why the findings were the way they were. The third section presents the study limitations, while the fourth section offers future research suggestions.

B. Conclusion

1. Research Question 1: What writing strategies do graduate students use in academic writing?

Writing academically at the graduate level has many requirements and demands that students must meet to write well-written scholarly work. To attain this goal, students follow many strategies that can help them achieve a satisfactory writing level. As part of their process to accommodate themselves with academic writing, the participants in the study found ways to fill the gaps in their writing problems and difficulties. In the questionnaire, 18 out of 28 master's students stated that when they write, they always go back to their assignments to edit their mistakes that they might have committed in terms of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. This suggests that the students are aware of one of the leading writing foundations in academic writing on the language level. The second most used strategy was brainstorming. Fifteen master's students' out of 28 stated that they brainstorm and write ideas down before writing about their assignments. This particular finding might indicate the students' attentivity to the significant role of brainstorming in improving

their academic writing skills. Another writing strategy that half of the master's graduate students (14/28) used in their writing was to revise their writing assignments to make their ideas look more genuine and straightforward. That shows the students' keen attention to the content of their writing and their understanding of the importance of proofreading for a better writing product. Moreover, the same number of the participants (14/28) stated that they always carefully check their assignment instructions to attain their writing goals. To read and check the assignment instructions regularly and carefully, we can understand that the students are trying to engross themselves in the task and develop strong connection and communication with the writing task. Among the other writing strategies that 12 master's students out of 28 reported are to outline the main points of their writing assignments before writing. Therefore, this strategy helps the students effectively communicate their voice to the reader, brainstorm ideas related to the task, and organize their ideas to attain the writing task. Lastly, nine of the master's students reported that they usually tend to discuss their assignments and writing tasks with other students to elicit feedback and scaffolding to enhance their writing. On that account, peer feedback allows the students to clarify their ideas and provide feedback that they might consider relevant to their writing tasks. In seeing relevant feedback, the students work harder and better; to improve their writing and share their academic voices.

In the qualitative findings, all the interviewed participants (14/14) shared that reading is a strategy of great significance to learn about their research problem and to improve their academic writing skills to learn and understand more about their research writing. Eschholz (1980) assures that when students read texts with similar characteristics to what they expect to imitate, they feel it is easier to identify text features that they did not have a good idea to articulate. Another strategy that all the interviewed master's students (14/14) recommended was building communication channels with their peers to find support and guidance and with faculty members and supervisors for support and encouragement. Among the other strategies that the master's students (11/14) shared were the usage of social platforms to bridge the gaps and the shortcomings of their research and knowledge, finding a balance between life responsibilities and academic life (7/14), and writing research drafts (4/14) to train themselves and process their writing.

These are all the examples of the strategies that the master's graduate students used in their academic writing to overcome the insufficiency of their academic writing skills and the gaps they faced in writing. Studies (e.g., Hayes & Flower, 1986; Kieft et al., 2006; Abas & Aziz, 2017) on students writing strategies found differences between novice and expert writers when using strategies like planning, composing, and revising their writing assignments. Hayes and Flower (1986) suggest that adept writers invest adequate time in the pre-writing phase, where preparation comes like "daydreaming, sketching, doodling, making lists of words, reading, conversing, and writing" (Graves, 1983, p. 76). To conclude, regardless of the diverse strategies that the students use in their writing practices, writing is a complex skill that requires hard work, practice, and skill development that takes long periods.

2. Research Question 2: What are the graduate students' attitudes and behaviors towards academic writing assignments?

During the last few years, scholars pointed out the importance of students' attitudes in academic writing; for example, Johns (1997) asserted the significance of "personal theories" that influence students and teachers in learning and teaching academic literacies (p.3). Nevertheless, studies addressing students' attitudes towards L2 academic writing from students' perceptions "that is, with students' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards various aspects of writing" remain scarce (Petric, 2002, p. 11).

In the questionnaire with the master's graduate students, Item 1 sought to understand the master's graduate students' attitudes towards writing for pleasure in their free time. The answers were varied; nevertheless, eight master's students out of 28 stated that they sometimes write for pleasure in English during their free time. The students' attitudes towards writing show their tendency to communicate their voices and their desire to write. Therefore, we can assume that they are aware of the challenges they might face in writing. While investigating the master's graduate students' attitudes towards academic writing assignments in English, almost half of the master's students (15/28) stated that they find writing in English is easy, whereas eleven of them stayed neutral, stating that they find writing assignments in English neither difficult nor easy.

In the semi-structured interviews with the master's graduate students, ten out of the 14 students stated they like academic writing. Yet, with the lack of scholarly writing practices, the complexity of writing tasks at the graduate level, and their lack of academic skills, their academic writing might not be as satisfying to them as they wished it to be. The other master's students (4/14) expressed no tendency to write academically. Two of them stated that they do not feel academic writing is as essential to them as English teachers compared to others interested in becoming scholars and educators in higher education. The other two students said they do not like academic writing, for its complicated nature that they cannot understand or keep up with it.

Overall, the interviewed master's students seem interested in sharing their attitudes towards L2 academic writing; however, they differed in how they articulated their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors towards academic writing. We can ascribe these differences in expressing attitudes towards academic writing in L2 to the participants' awareness of these issues.

The previously mentioned different perspectives of master's graduate students towards academic writing can be understood via Bandura's (1993) self-efficacy theory, overviewed in Dörnyei (1998). In a nutshell, the theory asserts individuals' abilities to perform specific actions that will determine whether they can stand for their actions, act upon them, and to what extent apply them. So, the theory suggests that an individual with solid confidence approaches a task with a high sense of self-efficacy, unlike an individual with low confidence who approaches a writing task with a low sense of self-efficacy, and therefore, avoid it, or delay it, or not adequately do it.

3. Research Question 3: What sources do graduate students' use to complete academic writing tasks?

Graduate students utilized many tools and sources to attain their writing tasks. They depended on digital writing tools that helped them write academically better. Digital writing tools are defined as online-based resources used in a social context to bring people together, motivate them and help them engage in the writing classroom settings (McKee-Waddell, 2015).

In the questionnaire, the participants were inquired about the resources that they use in their academic writing. Most of the participants (24/28) stated that they use a combination of journals and books as prime sources tools to achieve their writing tasks, whereas only six of them said they depend solely on journals.

The interviews with the master's graduate students were not any different from the findings of the questionnaire. Out of the 14 master's interviewed students, eight students focused on journals as their sole and free source to use. The rest of the master's students (6/14) used a combination of books and journals to write up their research and academic research articles. However, some students (5/14) reported many difficulties in getting access to books. These difficulties were mainly, but not limited to, the costly prices of books, and scarcity in access to books, even via the university library.

To sum up, the collected data from the master's graduate students via the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews denotes positive attitudes towards using digital writing tools and research engines.

4. Research Question 4: What difficulties do graduate students' experience in completing academic writing tasks?

This question serves as the foundation of the research, as the master's graduate students shared various challenges that they are struggling with in academic writing. It is hard to make clean-cut profiles of the challenges that the master's graduate students face or are facing in their writing; however, the participants shared the most problematic areas and aspects of their academic writing. In this section, the researcher presents each problem and difficulty in the light of the master's students' answers in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, respectively.

Referencing & Citation. In the questionnaire with the master's graduate students, almost half of the participants (12/28) stated they struggle with referencing and citation in their writing whereas, in the interviews with the master's students, nine master's students out of the 14 interviewed students reported having problems in citation styles. The two main problems that the master's students struggled with and shared concerns about were related to a) understanding and staying up to date with citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) and b) getting access to an adequate number of citation and references to support their research. These challenges that the master's students shared

are in line with previous studies' findings (e.g., Neville, 2012; Azizah & Budiman, 2018; Mahmood, 2020; Sampsel & Taft, 2021).

Expressing Own Voice. Academic writing is a way to express an identity that builds bridges between the writer and the reader. The message of academic writing is content-based, and a writer's ideas and thoughts and what they represent. EFL students have very little knowledge about utilizing the English they have learned at school (Iida, 2010). However, at the graduate level, they are expected to write scholarly as native speakers do. EFL graduate students may and are expected to produce well-written grammatical sentences and use high-frequency vocabulary; nevertheless, they often struggle in expressing their thoughts and ideas in writing. In educational settings, most of the emphasis is on accuracy and content, not to help students develop a voice of their own to express their thoughts and ideas. Iida (2010) defined the term voice as "the articulation of their personal needs, interests, and ideas—in a social context that presumes an audience—the teachers, classmates, and even the community at large" (p. 28).

In the questionnaire with the master's graduate students, eight students out of 28 stated that they face problems expressing their voices whereas, a few participants (4/28) pointed out that they struggle with using the language in their academic writing tasks. However, in the interviews with the master's graduate students, five out of 14 declared that they grapple with expressing their thoughts at some stage of their writing because they lack an academic writing foundation and English is not their native language.

In a nutshell, students' voice in writing is tied strongly to their own identity, and without one, they will not be able to express their perspectives. How a writer communicates their ideas depends on a large part of social and psychological factors that inspires the writer to write and communicate their voice (Hyland, 2002).

Paraphrasing. According to the Longman dictionary, the definition of the term paraphrasing is "to express in a shorter, clearer, or different way what someone has said or written." The importance of paraphrasing lay in the fact that it halts students from falling into plagiarism, and it shows the degree to which a student can understand written texts in English (Keck, 2014). Also, it inspires writers to develop "knowledge

transformation" where they can share their ideas and express their voices (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

In the questionnaire, eight master's graduate students out of 28 stated that they struggle with paraphrasing. In the interviews with the master's graduate students, four students out of the 14 interviewed reported problems with paraphrasing. However, some students might have misunderstood the concept of paraphrasing and confused it with summarizing, which Hirvela and Du defined as "a significantly condensed version of a longer source text that requires the use of various devices in the process of achieving that reduction in length" (2013, P. 88).

Coherence & Cohesion. Eight master's students out of 28 participants in the questionnaire stated that they have problems in coherence and cohesion of their academic written texts. In the interviews, seven master's students out of 14 reported challenges using formal and scholarly language that is coherent and cohesive during their writing practices. The two main problems that the master's students shared were related to using the academic formal English language and building good structure. We might ascribe these problems to the students' lack of academic writing and reading skills or their poor level of English.

Vocabulary. Graduate writing requires having a balance between connectedness and fluency in a written text. However, this is quite a challenge for the EFL graduate students for several problems they face with vocabulary.

Nevertheless, in the questionnaire two students reported having problems with vocabulary choice. While among the interviewed participants, six students out of the 14 interviewed master's students reported lexicon problems. These problems were: lack of sufficient academic vocabulary and aptness of chosen vocabulary.

That suggests several reasons play a significant role in the problems that the students face with vocabulary. To clarify, the students might struggle with vocabulary for their poor reading habits and strategies. In other words, the study participants tend to read less, and if they read, it is just to achieve a specific task assigned to them. As a result, they fail to be lexically versatile, and their verbal command becomes paralyzed over time. Moreover, a lack of English command might have resulted in problems in vocabulary.

Academic writing as the main obstacle. The results from the semi-structured interviews with the master's graduate students revealed seven subthemes and counted as difficulties that the master's students in this study struggle with during their scholarly writing practices. These problems were "lack of academic writing practices," "misunderstanding the nature of academic writing," "lack of academic writing guidance," "citation styles," "choosing a topic," "difficulty writing up research," and "difficulties in data analysis."

Lack of academic writing practices. EFL graduate students strive to produce scholarly written texts to meet the "rigors of discipline-based writing" (Bronson, 2004); however, academic writing is a complicated task that students intermittently fail to attain. The inadequacy in academic writing training might result in many painful challenges for graduate students who have to deal with these problems. In this study, 11 master's students out of the 14 interviewed graduate students reported feelings of anxiety and being "stuck" due to the lack of academic writing practices and training that they sought to help them prepare, understand academic writing better, and bridge the gap in their writing. The students expected that a course or practice during their program of study might help them absorb academic writing better if not prepare them to be academic writers.

Misunderstanding the nature of academic writing. The diversity in the population of [graduate] students at universities brought many perspectives on how and what and for what a language can be used (Lillis & Turner, 2001). This diversity comes at a cost. It brings many challenges in academia, for instance, the deficiency of understanding academic writing requirements. Unlike writing at the undergraduate level or general writing, writing in graduate school has demands that students must meet. Students at the graduate level are expected to review, analyze, and discuss pedagogical literature, synthesize reading sources and theories, present analytical analysis in an objective manner, using a scholarly voice, and following [academic] writing styles (APA, MLA, Chicago, Harvard, among many others) (Davenport, n.d.).

In the interviews with the master's students, it became clear that eight maser's students out of 14, almost half of the population, misunderstood the nature of academic writing at the graduate level. One student said that academic writing is no different from any other kind of writing, even though the interviewer kept reminding the student that the topic is academic writing, not general or business writing. Other students

misunderstood academic writing at the graduate level and compared it to the writing skills taught in school or during their undergraduate study, which is not akin to scholarly writing. Another student stated that academic writing and creative writing (i.e., fiction novels) are similar to the former.

In a nutshell, we find the study participants hold a false perspective towards scholarly writing at the graduate level. Four master's students out of 14 stated that they believe that academic writing is all about using good grammar rules, vocabulary, logical and flawless paragraphs, and how to write a paragraph. These statements above support the findings from Itua et al. (2014), where the research participants focused their attention on academic writing on two main concepts: "structure and grammar" and "grammar and vocabulary," and nothing else beyond that.

Lack of academic writing guidance. The new technological advances and open access publications assist students in finding appropriate solutions to the challenges they encounter in academic writing. Nevertheless, these resources are no help, sometimes, in complex situations and writing tasks. There remains a gap between students writing content and the written sources that requisite further help and guidance.

In the interviews with the master's graduate students, they releveled the various problems they might be facing as a result of the lack of adequate guidance and training. Half of the interviewed master's students (7/14) claimed that they received no adequate guidance during their writing practices and affected their mental health (i.e., stress and anxiety). Consequently, they failed to use their time wisely and failed to attain their writing tasks on time.

In a nutshell, with the lack of adequate assessment, the master's students rely solely on their supervisors and advisors for aid and guidance and feedback which might take long, for various reasons (e.g., supervisors' busy life, lack of communication channels, lack of mobility), to name a few.

Choosing a topic. Seven master's students out of the 14 interviewed students reported two principal problems related to choosing a thesis or research topic. First, on what basis they should select a topic, and second, the research originality. In the former case, due to the participants' lack of knowledge, they had no idea how to select a topic to research. As the students communicated their concerns to their supervisors for

guidance, two students out of 14 claimed to receive no answer to their requests, the rest of the students depended on reading to figure out a topic to write about or consulted their peers, supervisors, or someone knowledgeable about academic settings. In the latter case, three out of the 14 interviewed master's students stated that they experienced a problem choosing an "original" topic for their research. In other words, the students meant that the research that they are going to carry out is up-to-date, addresses a newly emerging issue, and is not an old-dated topic, as they claimed.

It is indisputable that the students are responsible for determining a topic for their thesis and academic papers; however, some master's students (5/14) expected more guidance and communication channels with their supervisors and faculty members to help facilitate their writing process. The master's graduate students' problems in selecting a research topic for their research and having no clue what they should write about align with Daniati and Nugroho's (2016) findings and literature review. However, the results of being indecisive on a research topic are that the students give up and drift away from writing for months. Furthermore, as they come back to writing and reach out to their supervisors again, they come empty-handed, with racing deadlines and no idea what they want to write.

Difficulty writing up research. Three prime barriers arose among the master's students while writing up their research papers: introduction, literature review, and methods sections. The students reported several reasons that resulted in these difficulties. For example, the students who struggled with writing up the introduction section (8/14) had problems understanding the purpose of the introduction, the content, the structure, and what kind of information shall they include. The main reason beyond the students' confusion in writing up the introduction and the study background might be due to the lack of academic writing practices, their lack of reading research in their field of research, or their poor English language skills. Notwithstanding, the master's students relied on online platforms and scholarly journals to fill the gap in their understanding. By and large, the students were not 100% successful because of the variety of methods in writing the introduction section.

Furthermore, six out of the 14 interviewed students stated that they had problems writing the literature review and found it very confusing to write. The causes are similar to those mentioned in writing the introduction section; however, four students out of the 14 misunderstood the literature review's intention. A student in the study

stated that writing the literature review made him "overwhelmed" and "confused" because he thought he had to write up and include all and every theory and study related to his research topic. We can assume that the students' confusion in writing the literature review might is due to 1) the lack of academic reading 2) the difficulties in writing the literature review (Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020).

Lastly, we found out that (5/14) of the interviewed students face problems in writing the methods section, and the obstacles they struggled with vary. These challenges are related to writing up the section content, data collection, sampling process, selecting research instruments, and research methods, precisely the mixed-methods approach. The causes beyond these difficulties are no different from the causes of problems stated above regarding writing the introduction and the literature review sections of academic research.

Difficulties in data analysis. The study participants pointed out two main problems regarding analysis, a) adopting a methodological analysis approach and b) using analysis software. In the first case, the students failed to determine the appropriate methodological approach to their research. That resulted from several problems strongly tied to insufficient knowledge and their lack of practice or training.

In the interviews with the master's students, eight students out of 14 stated having problems with data analysis and no adequate knowledge or training concerning the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approach. Also, the students mentioned that they did not have enough background knowledge on research methodological analysis (e.g., thematic analysis, content analysis, grounded theory, etc.). Therefore, those students depended on their readings from the internet and via scholarly journals. However, these resources might be faulty or not a good fit for their studies at times. These shortcomings might create new problems in their research and delay in their writing.

In the second case, the students struggled in using data analysis software. That has resulted from the lack of practical application on using such software (e.g., SPSS), and the students lack the awareness to be autonomous learners. Therefore, the students failed to put such software into use since they require practice and training, and no one can learn them overnight.

However, the students followed many strategies and methods to overcome this setback. For example, seven master's students out of the 14 interviewed relied on online platforms like YouTube to understand the usage of SPSS software or sought professional help.

Grammar concerns. There has been extensive research on the grammar features and problems that graduate students face in their spoken and written discourse. Graduate students should master the knowledge of grammar and manage to produce well-written academic texts. In the current study, five students from the 14 interviewed students expressed concerns about their grammar abilities. For the most part, those students were afraid to make fatal mistakes in their academic writing assignments, especially in complex writing tasks like a thesis. The prime reason that the students fear committing problems in grammar is their inadequate grammatical knowledge. Another factor that caused the students' grammar problems is what Richards (1973) suggests as "overgeneralization and ignorance of rule restriction" (p. 25).

Supervisors' relationship. Three problems emerged from the interviews with the students that affected their writing negatively. These problems were lack of communication with teacher educators, lack of formative feedback, and fear of not meeting educators' expectations.

Lack of communication with faculty members. Adequate supervision plays a significant role in the academic contribution to academia. Also, effective, and clear communication with a supervisor is essential to sustain a productive and healthy research environment (Moses, 1992).

In the interviews with the master's students, six students out of 14 shared their frustration and concerns regarding the infrequent communication channels they have with their supervisors and academic advisors. Several factors might attribute to the lack of communication among the students and faculty members. For instance, the lack of mobility might be relatively new but strongly affects higher education at many levels. Other problems are the faculty members' lack of time or social problems that limit their communication. The only channel of communication the students have with the teacher educator was via email. However, those students who claimed to have infrequent communication with their faculty members stated that they sometimes take a very long time to answer; therefore, that causes delays in the writing and motivates

them less to write. To conclude, Kandlbinder and Peseta (2001) proposed to have a good relationship between supervisor and supervisee, regular meetings, and [effective communication] are predominant keys for successful supervision (Bruns, 2020).

Lack of formative feedback. The feedback that supervisors provide on and to the students writing is crucial to improve their writing quality and refinement in their academic writing skills. Half of the interviewed students (7/14) reported that the feedback that they received from their supervisors and faculty members varied in quality and effectiveness. The problems with given feedback include, but are not limited to, the focus on the structure or linguistical errors in the content. Some of the participants (4/14) stated that the feedback they received from their supervisors was inefficient because they can find the given feedback online on any academic platform that provides information for students on academic writing.

Inquiring the students about the expected feedback from their supervisors, the students called for positive feedback or written and oral corrective feedback on their writing. Eyres et al. (2001) suggest that students mean by "positive feedback" that they are looking for critical comments on the content of their writing, and they want to know what is expected of them to write academically better.

In practical terms, the master's graduate students, on the large part, rely on their supervisors for feedback and consultation on their writing (Tremblay-Wragg et al., 2021). Here, the master's graduate students were not aware of the aspects of being autonomous learners as half of the interviewed students (7/14) relied solely on their supervisors for feedback. In a nutshell, the students' lack of knowledge on how faculty members' might evaluate and assesses their writing can lead to many challenges and setbacks in their academic writing.

*Meeting faculty members expectations***.** This was the third problem that six master's students out of the 14 interviewed declared a challenge during their academic writing practices. The students feared that their writing might not meet their supervisors' expectations. Therefore, that hindered their writing process and added a toll on them. From the findings, it is clear that if the students know what their supervisors expect from their writing and on which basis they would evaluate the students writing, the students might be able to write more effectively with less anxiety.

Socioeconomic challenges. Socioeconomic factors affect students learning and their academic writing negatively (Chokwe, 2013). The findings from the interviewed students revealed five main problems, and they were: stress and anxiety, time consumption, busy life, frustration, lack of mobility, and lack of motivation.

Stress and anxiety. Feelings of stress and anxiety among students in general and graduate students, in particular, have occupied a significant body of literature (Huerta et al., 2017). The literature on graduate students shows how anxiety can affect students negatively and paralyze their academic performance.

During the interviews, all the participants (14/14) expressed what triggers their anxiety and stress that affect and delay their academic writing. The interviews with the master's students showed several reasons and challenges that the students deal with writing academically. These problems were related to finding an adequate number of references, choosing a research and thesis topic, writing process, writing in L2, lack of academic writing practice, insufficient writing skills, lack of formative feedback, negative comments, lack of time, lack of mobility, financial problems, fears of not meeting supervisor expectations, deadlines, and worrying about finding a job after graduation. At different stages in their writing practice, the students complained that they failed to begin in the first place because they had no idea how to start, where to start, how to find a suitable topic, and if they did find a research topic, how they will begin writing their thesis or their paper. To sum up, anxiety about writing is both a common and conquerable condition among students at the graduate level. However, stress, anxiety, and writing anxiety among master's graduate students is a predominant topic yet not adequately addressed.

Time consumption. No doubt, academic writing requires practice and effort, and among graduate students who are extremely busy and under pressure, time consumption is yet another challenge in their way. The interviews with the master's graduate students (10/14) releveled five main problems related to time consumption. These problems were related to managing time during the writing process, choosing a thesis topic, reading papers, difficulties in understanding academic texts, and learning how to use software analysis. These difficulties bring about obstacles in students writing and might result in falling behind deadlines and delaying writing. For instance, five master's students reported that their time is engrossed in learning using analysis software, like SPSS. The students received no practical training on using the software,

and as they needed to use it, they could not. While students took it upon themselves to learn and "figure out" the shortcomings of their studies and learn how to use such software (i.e., SPSS), students reported that this takes a long time and can hardly be understood and covered easily. That is not only time-consuming, the students believed, but also frustrating and might work and might not.

Frustration. In a recent international study across disciplines, feelings of frustration emerged as a frequent feeling among students more than anxiety (Sword, 2017). Researching higher education and graduate students related studies that deal with frustration, there were few to nothing that dealt with or addressed comprehensively graduate students' academic writing frustration.

Half of the interviewed students (7/14) revealed feelings of frustration that indirectly prevented them from writing. The students reported that frustration stems from the lack of academic writing training, lack of time management, inadequate formative feedback, among many other problems that interconnect with their social life. The reasons beyond the students' frustration are interrelationships with other factors previously mentioned. For example, lack of experience in using software analysis, inadequate academic writing skills, time management, lack of communication with teacher educators' and choosing a topic. Sword et al. (2018) share similar causes resulted from students' frustration in academic writing. To sum up, these challenges hinder the master's graduate students writing and pave their way with more obstacles that they must resolve, causing them more stress, anxiety, lack of time, and frustration all over again.

Busy life. Like all graduate students worldwide, the participants in the study had busy lives. Eight master's students out of 14 stated that they have busy lives, problems, and situations that steer them away from their writing. They were worried about finding work, and some of them worked two jobs while writing their thesis to support their families. Other students had financial problems that derived them to put off their writing or drop from school for a while. These problems led to challenges in the students' academic writing, maybe indirectly, but in a way, it causes them troubles.

Lack of mobility. The pandemic has harmed higher education students and paralyzed their social and academic life. For instance, on-campus courses switched to online classes, and libraries closed their doors. Also, communication between students

and their professors, advisors, and supervisors for guidance and support has changed and became limited.

In the interviews, six students out of the 14 stated struggling in data collection from participants or getting access to research materials. With schools and educational institutions closed, it became complicated to locate members to participate in research experiments and studies. Few students (3/14) failed to carry out their research because their research population is in another country, and curfew restrictions were imposed. That has caused the students to slow down in their writing and became a main and recent challenge to attain their writing goals.

The students relied on personal connections to find participants to participate in their studies to overcome these problems. However, generally, they were not able to find an adequate number of participants. These findings and more are reported comprehensively on up-to-date research on the impact of Covid-19 on the international settings of graduate studies and higher education (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

Lack of motivation. Motivation in language learning settings is significant since it promotes students' feelings to connect their feelings and research interests to write and research (Rahayu, 2021). The interviews with the master's students revealed that half of the interviewed students (7/14) reported a lack of motivation during their writing process. The reasons beyond the lack of motivation are diverse; for instance, social and economic factors and academic life, as previously discussed.

5. Research Question 5: What are the faculty members' perspectives on what is problematic in graduate students academic writing practices?

The faculty members agreed that scholarly writing proficiency is significant in the likelihood of success for the graduate students in the master's program. All faculty members reported that the students writing at the graduate level do not meet the rigor of what they expect from them for several reasons (e.g., lack of reading and problems in students L2 proficiency, etc.). The first question in the open-ended questionnaire aimed to explore the supervisors' and the faculty members' perceptions of their students' academic writing.

The faculty members mentioned very little about the notion of graduate students' academic writing, with no examples from their work with students' writing, their academic papers, or their thesis. For the most part, they have listed problems students

commit in their writing, not giving enough or clear explanations on these shortcomings. However, the overall tone and the responses suggest that the faculty members are not satisfied with their students writing.

The second question aimed to explore the frequency of academic writing problems among graduate students. The researcher presented the recurrence of these problems from the most problematic to the least in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.2.). All of the faculty members (5/5) agreed that the students have problems in building arguments and claims in their writing and that the students lack resources.

Although there are many publications on the usage of source materials, it is still a complaint among L2 students (Marshall & Garry, 2006; Gilmore et al., 2010) that they produce work in which original materials is poorly referenced that it arises accusations of plagiarism (Shi, 2008; Keck, 2006). Other studies and researchers affirm the study findings and faculty members' perceptions of students' academic writing problems. For example, students' overuse of cohesive devices in their writing affects it negatively, so does inadequate use (Dastjerdi & Samian, 2011; Ong, 2011). The lack of academic reading shows a gap in students writing. That is seen in their lack of information synthesis and building arguments and claims (Zhao & Hirvela, 2015). However, the faculty members provided no explanations on the causes of these problems or what triggers these difficulties among students.

6. Research Question 6: What are faculty members' suggestions to improve graduate students' academic writing?

The faculty members shared three main recommendations to improve students' academic writing at the graduate level. These were reading, proofreading, and planning the process of writing. Regarding the ability to write academically well, one of the faculty members thinks graduate students need to read academic research studies with a critical lens and closely examine "the word choice, style, and punctuation of the more experienced researchers," (FM05, Pos. 5). Badley (2009) proposes an approach called "de-constructing and re-constructing" that aims at reading academic papers as academicians and writing research as researchers, respectively (p. 212). When reading academically, we do not do so to rewrite the exact content of the previous studies but to find and see suggestions, ideas, concepts that might reflect our stance in research (Badley, 2009). Also, the faculty members confirmed that students must read as much

as possible in their research topic, in-depth reading, to reflect and write profoundly. In-depth reading is not merely reporting or commenting on what students read but rather analyzing critically what they write and how it is connected to their research.

Two faculty members' out of five advocated the importance of proofreading in improving one's academic writing. Studies on students' academic writing proofreading are notable for their absence (Harwood et al., 2012). However, we can understand that proofreading is very significant because it helps students notice their mistakes, modify, and correct their writing. In other words, as Munoz-Luna (2015) suggested, proofreading is one of the main ingredients for success in graduate school and academic writing.

Lastly, a few faculty members (2/5) stated that the students need to plan their writing rather than leaving it unplanned. However, little is understood of what faculty members refer to in terms of 'planning' writing.

C. The Implications of the Study

This section will discuss the study implications and the possible changes that might be elicited within the M.A. program. The study's implications might be discussed under three headings: writing retreats, formative feedback support, and EFL master's graduate students' responsibilities.

Writing retreats. The study supports providing apt support and guidance for master's graduate students to enhance and advance their academic writing skills. It is clear that the students find academic writing a highly complex task, and they face many challenges in academic writing. The university might respond to the master's graduate students' needs to improve their academic writing by taking the initiative in providing master's graduate students with practical scholarly writing guidance and support. Several universities have carried out many initiatives to provide their students with support and guidance in their academic writing through counseling, workshops, and courses. However, since the previously mentioned initiatives did not achieve what it promised, universities implemented new initiatives through structured writing interventions, support groups, or structured writing retreats (Tremblay-Wragg et al., 2021; Noone & Young, 2019; Harrington, 2018; Gardner et al., 2018; Kornhaber et al., 2016; Hass, 2011). So, what is a writing retreat? Writing retreats are "events

organized for a group of people writing in a shared space, over several days, during which participants exchange information regarding individual goals, achievements, and setbacks" (Vincent et al., 2021, p. 2). Therefore, writing retreats proved to be helpful for academic writers at the graduate level (e.g., Quynn & Stewart, 2021; Papen & Thériault, 2018; Murray & Newton, 2009) on many levels, as shown below in Figure 4 (Kornhaber et al., 2016).

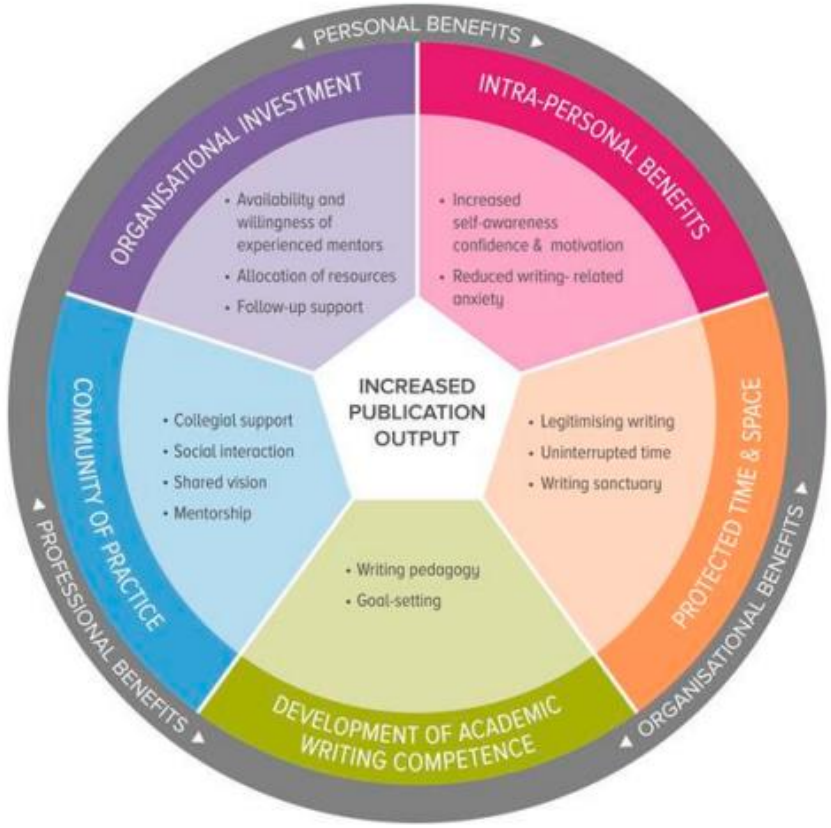

Figure 4. Conceptual Map of the Relationships Between Retreat Outcomes and Key Themes

Source: Kornhaber et al. 2016, p. 1221

***Corrective formative feedback*.** In terms of feedback, the data gathered from the master's graduate students shows that not all participants shared the same attitudes towards the given feedback they received from their supervisors and faculty members' during the program. Supervisors and faculty members' might provide students with formative written and oral corrective feedback; to improve their writing skills, the accuracy of their academic writing and encourage them to write. The role of feedback and assessment that supervisors and faculty members would provide to their students

is not merely to help them edit their assignments. But also, to teach them how to avoid these mistakes when they write again.

EFL master's graduate students. While some students stated they did not receive adequate feedback on their writing or training, guidance, and support through their writing, yet, they could have taken it upon themselves to learn and strengthen their academic writing skills. Students could accomplish that through peers, research group study sessions, private tutors, or the internet and online self-help materials. Indeed, these resources will not cover every aspect of academic writing, especially in complex topics like writing a thesis. However, it would have assisted them in building a better understanding of the process of writing, what they should do to write a well-written academic text and provided them with a decent scholarly writing foundation. Students at the graduate level are at a point in their lives where they need to take up initiative in their educational choices and find alternatives for their limitations in education, not only wait for help from their supervisors and educational institutions. The previously stated outlets, and many others, can equip students with the required skills to produce well-written scholarly work.

D. Limitations of the Study

As in all studies, certain limitations constrained the study and the scope of the collected data. In this study, the researcher detected three limitations: the small number of participants in the quantitative study, inadequate data collected from teacher educators, and the researcher's biases.

Firstly, the number of study participants in the questionnaire has narrowed the study scope. Before the pandemic, it was easy to get access to students. The pandemic has shut down universities, the students traveled to their home countries, communication channels with students became limited, and reaching out to most of them became complex. However, more participants could have been better in enhancing the validity of the research and the findings. Besides, it could have authenticated the study findings and yielded new challenges and perspectives regarding the difficulties the master's graduate students struggle with in their writing practices. Also, this study investigated master's students writing problems in one program at one university. That narrowed the range of the collected data and the difficulties that the graduate students have in scholarly writing. To validate this study,

and for the sake of discovering more challenges related to academic writing among master's students, it could have been better to include more master's graduate students from within the same area of research from the same university or other universities.

Secondly, the lack of semi-structured interviews with faculty members is another limitation. Interviews are a better tool to investigate the research problem in-depth. Also, to elicit any pedagogical recommendations that they might suggest minimizing students' academic writing problems.

Lastly, the researcher's biases regarding the study, academic writing development, and strategies for improving master's graduate students academic writing based on his experience as a second/foreign language learner who is still improving his academic writing skills.

E. Recommendations for Future Research

The academic writing skills of graduate students should be built gradually, from the first day of admission and through the entire program. With a bridge between supervisors, educators, and graduate students, the gap in formative feedback and communication could improve learners' confidence in their writing and minimize their academic writing problems.

The study limitations draw attention to the narrow scope of the research. However, they provide a well-founded platform for extended future research. The study limitations are a rich area for future studies to understand the master's graduate students writing difficulties at the master's level. One impediment that particularly stands to be very significant for further research is the lack of adequate data collected from faculty members. Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with faculty members and supervisors could offer a better vision of the assessment and evaluation of scholarly writing. Specifically, future studies could investigate the significance of direct and indirect written corrective feedback on students writing and ensure how they affect master's students writing and develop their writing accuracy.

For future research, the researcher recommends comparing the experiences, challenges, and strategies of ESL/EFL master's graduate students in academic writing. It could be valuable to know and understand better the types of challenges, writing

strategies, and assessments that master's graduate students face and benefit from in their academic writing.

Another recommendation is to conduct similar research among EFL doctoral students. In this research, scholarly trajectories could be conducted to explore several Ph.D. learners' academic writing challenges. This study could provide better insight into the type of challenges EFL Ph.D. students struggle with, their strategies to overcome them, and their perceptions towards academic writing. That could also reveal the writing assessment tools and feedback that students receive on their academic writing and how such writing tools could minimize the challenges doctoral students face in scholarly writing.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

ESL/EFL Graduate Students Academic Writing Difficulties (Adopted from Al-Badi, 2015)

Section one: Biodata

Date: ----------

1. Gender:

   ☐ Male

   ☐ Female

   ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Age:

   ☐ 20-25

   ☐ 26- 30

   ☐ 31-35

   ☐ 36- 40

   ☐ 41 and above

3. State your level of English:

   ☐ pre-intermediate

   ☐ Intermediate

   ☐ Upper-intermediate

   ☐ Advanced

   ☐ Native Speaker

4. Nationality: ----------

5. First language: ----------

Appendix A (Cont.)

Section Two: How often do these statements apply to you when writing assignments? Put a tick (✓) in the suitable column.

Items	**Always (100%)**	**Usually (80%)**	**Often (60%)**	**Sometimes (40%)**	**Rarely (20%)**	**Never (0%)**
1. I write for pleasure in English in my free time.						
2. I go back to check carefully the assignment requirements and instructions.						
3. I ask my teacher about the points I am not sure about, or I need help with.						
4. I discuss what I am going to write with other students.						
5. I brainstorm and write down ideas about the topic.						
6. I make an outline including the main points of my assignment.						
7. I go back to my writing to revise the content and make my ideas clearer.						
8. I go back to my writing to edit the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.						
9. In my assignments, in general, I pay more attention to the language (e.g., spelling, grammar, vocabulary) than to the content (e.g. ideas, organization).						
10. I pay more attention to the content (e.g., ideas, organization) than the language (e.g. spelling, grammar, vocabulary).						
11. I give almost equal attention to both the language (e.g. spelling, grammar, vocabulary) and the content (e.g. ideas, organization).						
12. I discuss my work with other students to get feedback on how I can improve it.						

Appendix A (Cont.)

Section 3: Students' attitudes towards writing assignments in English and the sources they like to use

1. In general, you find writing assignments in English:

☐ Easy

☐ Difficult

☐ Very difficult

☐ Neither difficult nor easy

2. The reference(s) you mostly use:

☐ Books

☐Journals

☐Both

☐Others (specify)

Section four: Put a tick next to the weaknesses or/and difficulties you have faced when writing your assignments:

☐ Paraphrasing

☐ Language use

☐ Expressing own voice

☐ Finding relevant references

☐ Referencing & citation

☐ Coherence & cohesion

☐ Choosing a significant topic

☐ Others (specify)

Appendix B

EFL Graduate Students Semi-Structured Interview

The purpose of this study is to investigate EFL master's graduate students perceived reported experiences with academic writing challenges. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The structure of the interview is semi-structured interview; that is, follow-up questions might be asked during the interview based on students' response.

Section one: background information

- How long have you been studying English?

- How many writing courses have you taken?

Section two: reported experiences of ESL students regarding academic writing challenges

- Do you like writing? How do you feel about your writing skills?

- Have you ever faced any challenges during your writing practices? What are/were they?

- Do you think the teachers' feedback is helpful for your writing improvements?

Section three: recommendations of/for writing students

- Are you interested in taking writing courses (if you were to choose)? Why?

- Do you think writing courses are important for graduate students? Elaborate.

Section four: coping with academic writing difficulties

- What do you do when you have difficulty during your courses?

- What strategies did you use to overcome your difficulties in writing courses? Were they useful? Why?

Section five: feedback/questions

- Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the topics we discussed?

Appendix C

Open-ended questionnaire: Faculty members perceptions on graduate students academic writing and coping strategies

Section one: Biodata

1. Gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

2.Age:

- ☐ 31-35
- ☐ 36-40
- ☐ 41 and above

3.State your years of teaching experience:

- ☐ 10-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 20 and above

4.First Language: ----------

Section two: Faculty members perception

1. What is your perception of your supervisees' regarding the most pervasive academic writing skills deficits among graduate students? Give one example, at least, please

2. What aspects of your supervisees' academic writing are strong or weak when they are asked to write academically? ***Put the following items in order from the most problematic to the least***:

Item		Order
1.	Level of English proficiency	
2.	Synthesis of information	
3.	Building arguments and claims	
4.	Control of academic writing style	
5.	Use of source material	
6.	Cohesive devices	
7.	Vocabulary	
8.	Punctuation	

Appendix C (Cont.)

3. Do you recommend/suggest any strategies and/or methods that your supervisees/students should apply to minimize and/or overcome their writing difficulties?

Appendix D

Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 05.01.2021-292

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Personel Daire Başkanlığı

Sayı : E-54167746-300-292
Konu : Khaled A. H. Alustath KHALED A. H. ALOSTATH'ın Anket Onayı hk.

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Enstitünüz Y1812.020009 numaralı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans programı öğrencilerinden Khaled A. H. Alustath KHALED A. H. ALOSTATH'ın "Graduate Students' Challenges in Academic Writing" adlı tez çalışması gereği anket sorularını Üniversitemiz öğrencilerine uygulaması talebiniz uygun görülmüştür.
Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Yadigar İZMİRLİ
Rektör

Ek:Khaled A. H. Alustath KHALED A. H. ALOSTATH'ın Anket Onayı hk. (45 sayfa)

Appendix E

Interview Consent Form

Study aim:

The purpose of this study is to investigate ESL/EFL graduate students perceived reported experience with academic writing challenges. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The structure of the interview is semi-structured; that is, follow-up questions might be asked during the interview based on participants' responses. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and **then sign this form** to certify that you approve the following:

1. the interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced
2. you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
3. the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by **Khaled Alostath** as research investigator
4. access to the interview transcript will be limited to **Khaled Alostath** and/or any academic researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
5. any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
6. the actual recording will be destroyed
7. any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

Appendix E (Cont.)

Quotation Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

By signing this form, I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I have read the information sheet.
4. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
5. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participant name:

Signature:

Appendix F

Open-ended questionnaire with faculty members approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 30.12.2020-4689

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-88083623-020-4689 30.12.2020
Konu : Etik Onayı Hk.

Sayın Khaled A. H. Alustath KHALED A. H. ALOSTATH

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 22.12.2020 tarihli ve 2020/11 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur.
Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Alper FİDAN
Müdür Yardımcısı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

Belge Doğrulama Kodu : *BE6P3I163I* Pin Kodu : 58091
Belge Takip Adresi : https://evrakdogrula.aydin.edu.tr/enVision.Dogrula/BelgeDogrulama.aspx?

Adres : Beşyol Mah. İnönü Cad. No:38 Sefaköy , 34295 Küçükçekmece / İSTANBUL
Telefon : 444 1 428
Web : http://www.aydin.edu.tr/
Kep Adresi : iau.yaziisleri@iau.hs03.kep.tr

Bilgi için : Tuğba SÜNNETCİ
Unvanı : Yazı İşleri Uzmanı
Tel No : 31002

Appendix G

Results collected and analyzed from online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews

Dear faculty members,

My name is Khaled Alostath, and I am a graduate student at the English Language and Literature department at IAU. For the final phase of my thesis, I am examining your perception of graduate students' academic writing practices, your conceptions of the most problematic features in students' writing practices, and your recommendations to minimize these difficulties.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached open-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questionnaire will take between 5 to 7 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor there is any risk. If you choose to participate in this project, answer all the questions as honestly as you can, please.

For a better understanding of students' academic writing challenges and problems, I have included a summary of the initial findings of data collected from students via (Online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews).

If you are not comfortable using the word document and prefer to share your perspective anonymously, please click on the link below to go to Google Surveys (or copy and paste the link into your browser).

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational journey. The collected data will be of great importance to advance the literature of academic writing and finding solutions to the obstacles that impede students' scholarly writing. If you require any further information or if you have any questions, feel free to contact me at the email/phone number listed below.

Survey link: https://forms.gle/DomozL46vuLz7Skk9

Results collected and analyzed from online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews

- Quantitative data

Appendix G (Cont.)

The participants in the online questionnaire were 28 graduate students from the English Language and Literature department at IAU. Participants shared their perspectives on their academic writing practices and the difficulties they encounter when they are asked to write academically.

In Table G1, graduate students share their perception towards academic writing assignments in English. The initial findings of the questionnaire as shown in Table 1 exhibited that a great percentage of graduate students (53.6%) reported that they find academic writing easy; however, the number of graduate students who reported that English is neither difficult nor easy was (39.3%). The rest of the respondents (7.1%) stated that writing academically in English is difficult.

Table G1. Graduate Students Attitudes towards Writing Assignments in English

	N	%
Easy	15	53.6%
Difficult	2	7.1%
Very difficult	00	00%
Neither difficult nor easy	11	39.3%
Total	28	100%

However, in G 2, participants were asked to report the major problems they face in academic writing. They have been given eight problems and weaknesses and were asked to check what they find problematic when they write academically. The given choices problems/weaknesses were *paraphrasing, language use, expressing one voice, referencing and citation, cohesion and coherence, and others*.

Appendix G (Cont.)

Table G2. The Frequency of Problems/Difficulties Students Face in Academic Writing

		Responses	
		N	Percent
Q. Put a tick next to the weaknesses or/and difficulties you have faced when writing your assignments (Check all that applies).	Paraphrasing	8	19.5%
	Language use	4	9.8%
	Expressing own voice	8	19.5%
	Referencing & citation	12	29.3%
	Coherence & cohesion	7	17.1%
	Other	2	4.9%
Total		41	100.0%

As stated above in G2, the great majority of students (29.3%) struggle in refereeing and citation while paraphrasing and expressing their own voice came in second with (19.5%) each. Graduate students reported that the third frequent problem they have is concerned with writing a coherent and cohesion text (17.1%) while four students found the usage of language problematic (9.8%). The other problems (4.9%) that students reported were anxiety and lack of command in vocabulary.

- Qualitative data

The initial coding of the semi-structured interviews revealed that there are significant problems in graduate students' academic writing that impede them from meeting the requirements of scholarly writing and the expectations of graduate school. The major categories of data included "*Academic writing as a major struggle", "supervisor's relationship", "socioeconomic obstacles"* and "*language problems.*

In G3, I present the themes and subthemes that I have detected and results from the interviews.

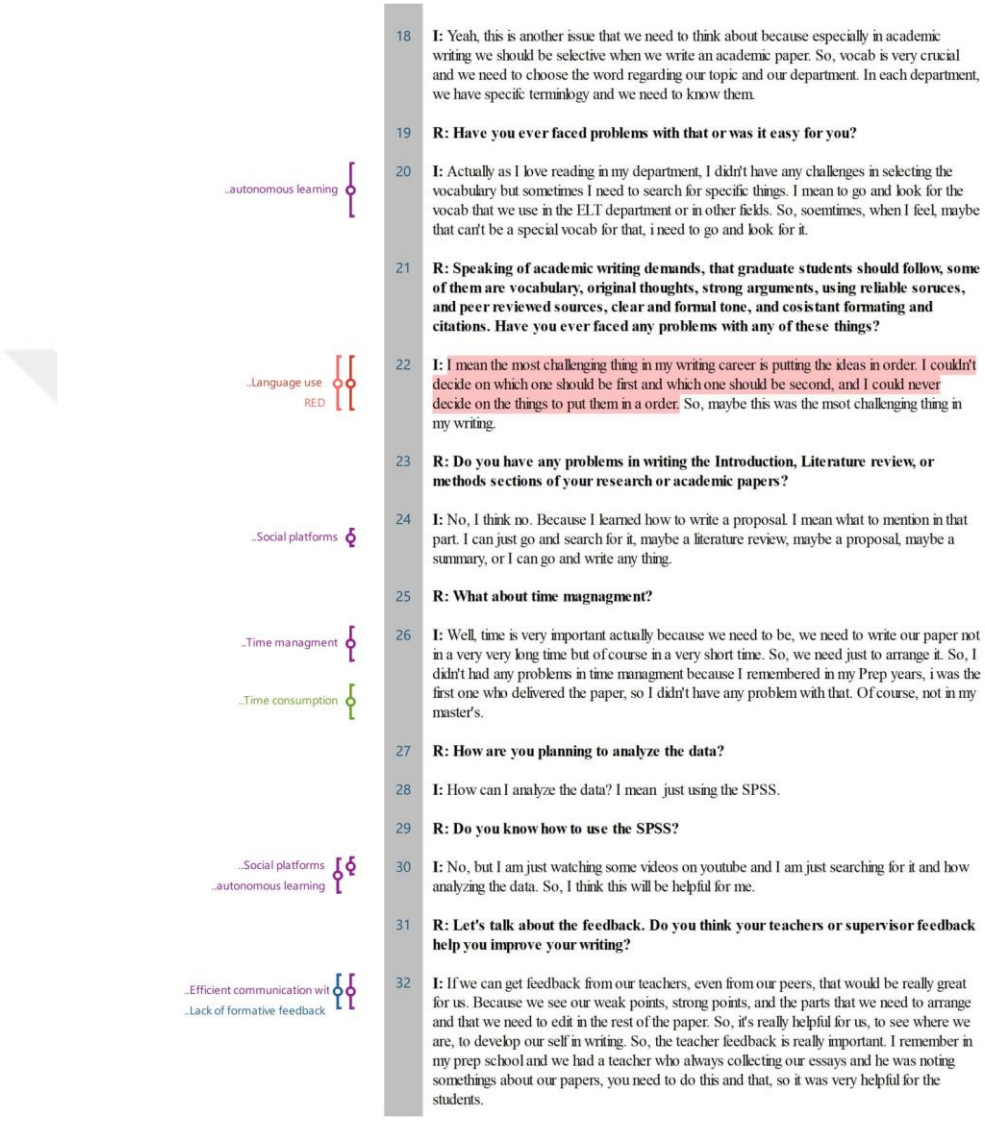
Appendix G (Cont.)

Table G3. Themes and Subthemes Emerged from the Semi-Structured Interviews with Participants

Themes	Subthemes
Academic writing as a major struggle	- Lack of understanding the concept and demands of academic writing - Choosing a good thesis topic - Ambiguity in academic writing stages - Lack of resources - Poor academic writing skills - Lack of critical thinking - Poor mechanical conventions (e.g., APA style) - Difficulty in research methodologies (Qual, Quan, Mixed methods) - Difficulty using analysis software (e.g. SPSS) - Plagiarism - Difficulty writing some parts/chapters of academic assignment (e.g., literature review) - Lack of prep academic writing course
Supervisor's relationship	- Supervisors' lack of interest in students' chosen topic. - Lack of [corrective] feedback. - Unresponsive supervisor - Inadequate support from supervisor - Unfamiliarity with the topic of choice - Too busy supervisor or unavailable - Difficulty reaching out to the supervisor - No feedback at all
Socioeconomic obstacles	- Work pressure - Busy life - Family commitment - Unemployment - COVID-19 - Stress, anxiety, depression - Financial issues - Time management - Motivation
Language problems	- Poor vocabulary usage - Unconventional grammar usage - Problems in sentence structure and word order - Difficulty organizing paragraphs - Poor usage of connection and transitions - Sentence level problems (e.g., repetitive words, L1/L2 interaction, fragment sentences,

Appendix H

Extract from the research codes



	18	**I:** Yeah, this is another issue that we need to think about because especially in academic writing we should be selective when we write an academic paper. So, vocab is very crucial and we need to choose the word regarding our topic and our department. In each department, we have specific terminlogy and we need to know them.
	19	**R: Have you ever faced problems with that or was it easy for you?**
..autonomous learning	20	**I:** Actually as I love reading in my department, I didn't have any challenges in selecting the vocabulary but sometimes I need to search for specific things. I mean to go and look for the vocab that we use in the ELT department or in other fields. So, soemtimes, when I feel, maybe that can't be a special vocab for that, i need to go and look for it.
	21	**R: Speaking of academic writing demands, that graduate students should follow, some of them are vocabulary, original thoughts, strong arguments, using reliable soruces, and peer reviewed sources, clear and formal tone, and cosistant formating and citations. Have you ever faced any problems with any of these things?**
..Language use RED	22	**I:** I mean the most challenging thing in my writing career is putting the ideas in order. I couldn't decide on which one should be first and which one should be second, and I could never decide on the things to put them in a order. So, maybe this was the msot challenging thing in my writing.
	23	**R: Do you have any problems in writing the Introduction, Literature review, or methods sections of your research or academic papers?**
..Social platforms	24	**I:** No, I think no. Because I learned how to write a proposal. I mean what to mention in that part. I can just go and search for it, maybe a literature review, maybe a proposal, maybe a summary, or I can go and write any thing.
	25	**R: What about time magnagment?**
..Time managment ..Time consumption	26	**I:** Well, time is very important actually because we need to be, we need to write our paper not in a very very long time but of course in a very short time. So, we need just to arrange it. So, I didn't had any problems in time managment because I remembered in my Prep years, i was the first one who delivered the paper, so I didn't have any problem with that. Of course, not in my master's.
	27	**R: How are you planning to analyze the data?**
	28	**I:** How can I analyze the data? I mean just using the SPSS.
	29	**R: Do you know how to use the SPSS?**
..Social platforms ..autonomous learning	30	**I:** No, but I am just watching some videos on youtube and I am just searching for it and how analyzing the data. So, I think this will be helpful for me.
	31	**R: Let's talk about the feedback. Do you think your teachers or supervisor feedback help you improve your writing?**
..Efficient communication wit ..Lack of formative feedback	32	**I:** If we can get feedback from our teachers, even from our peers, that would be really great for us. Because we see our weak points, strong points, and the parts that we need to arrange and that we need to edit in the rest of the paper. So, it's really helpful for us, to see where we are, to develop our self in writing. So, the teacher feedback is really important. I remember in my prep school and we had a teacher who always collecting our essays and he was noting somethings about our papers, you need to do this and that, so it was very helpful for the students.

RESUME

Name Surname: Khaled A. H. Alostath

EDUCATION

Istanbul Aydin University **Turkey/Istanbul**

- Master's degree (Yuksek lisans) in English language and Literature
  August 2018 – August 2021
    - Graduate Students' Challenges in Academic Writing (MA Thesis)

Gaza University **Palestine/Gaza**

- Graduated with B.A. in English Language and Translation
  January 2014 – May 2017
- Chairman and EFL conversation club leader, English translation club, 2014-2016
- Event organizer and translator, Peace Message 2 Museum
- Lab assistant, 2015

EXPERIENCE

English Time **Feb 2021 – May 2021**

EFL teacher

- Teaching A1 level students
- Mentoring and assessing their progress on weekly basis
- Planning lessons beyond the coursebook

American Culture Language School **Oct 2019 – Sep 2020**

EFL teacher

- Planning and delivering lessons
- Preparing teaching materials
- Checking and assessing student's work
- IELTS preparation lessons

Mosaic Theater Company of DC **Jun 2017 – Jul 2017**

Intern/Company Management

- Assist with daily administrative duties.
- Research and evaluate digital content.
- Collaborate with staff on new ideas, directions, and venues for communication.

United Palestinian Appeal **Feb 2017 – Apr 2017**
Transcriptionist/ Translator

- Work on a book about Gaza with Professor Brian Barber
- Translating articles and essays about major topics in the book as assigned.
- Research assistance.
- Location: Washington DC, USA

Embassy English Center **Oct 2016 – Mar 2017**
Instructor

- Lead small-group classes in English language conversation and skills
- Teaching reading
- Mentor other teachers.

Al-Amal Institute for Orphans **Dec 2015 – Nov 2016**
Program Director, Reading Stars of Gaza

- Founded program to teach English speaking and writing skills to approximately 20 boys in grades 2– 6
- Coordinate donations of supplies
- Recruit volunteers for the program
- Conduct story reading and related learning activities
- Help children with learning disorders and trauma adjust to their life situation, obtain confidence, and set goals.
- Prepare English Teaching materials for the classroom and provide feedback.
- **Sponsored by New Story Leadership (USA) and Storybag (Netherland)**

Educational Development Association **Oct 2014 – Dec 2015**
Translator

- Manage the translation section (oral and written) for a nongovernmental organization
- Mentor the freshmen interns
- Translate a variety of legal, political, and cultural documents

PUBLICATIONS

Alostath, K. (2021). Teachers Perception of EFL Students Poor Writing Skills: The Challenges, Causes, and Remedies. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, *10*(4), 647–651. https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v10i4/SR21413012657.pdf

Alostath, K. (2021). Online Learning among Higher Education Students: Challenges and Strategies. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology.* [accepted for publication]

Editor-Reviewed Online Publications

- Hope can come from unlikely people (2015)
- A book lover's simple dream (2015)
- Warning: Facebook can be dangerous to your health (2016)
- The Reading Stars of Gaza (2016)
- A sweet spot in Gaza (2017)
- The dilemma of the exile (2019)
- Unconsciousness (2019)
- Melancholy (2019)
- Language of exile (2019)
- Suicide (2019)
- Lost and blue (2020)
- Be my home (2020)
- Depression is like a cloak (2020)
- Midnight shivers (2020)
- Once Upon a Sunset (2020)

EXAMS

IELTS exam **Dec 2020**

(Overall score: 7.5)

ACHIEVEMENTS

New Story Leadership

- Fellow for the summer 2017 training program, Washington, DC http://www.newstoryleadership.org/khaled-al-ostath/ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jvEZE1IBNc

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Arabic (multiple dialects): Fluent (native)

English: Fluent (native-like)

Turkish: Advanced, professional (third language)

OTHER SKILLS

Researching; public speaking; writing; editing; translating; Microsoft Office; SPSS; MAXQDA; Python (beginner level); R language (beginner level).