**Discussion**

**Tips:**

* **Identifying correlations, patterns, and relationships among the data**
* **Discussing whether the results met your expectations or supported your hypotheses**
* **Contextualizing your findings within previous research and theory**
* **Explaining unexpected results and evaluating their significance**
* **Considering possible alternative explanations and making an argument for your position**
* Examples: Interpretation sentence starters
* In line with the hypothesis…
* Contrary to the hypothesized association…
* The results contradict the claims of Smith (2022) that…
* The results might suggest that x. However, based on the findings of similar studies, a more plausible explanation is y.

The present study examined the writing challenges encountered by fifth-year TSO ESL learners in Belgium through a mixed-methods research design and compared their writing performance with other language skills. The study's findings underscore several key areas of difficulty in writing abilities, with their writing performance notably lower than in other language skills.

The findings showed that while ESL students generally excel in vocabulary, they struggle with organization, content, and language use in their writing. Language use, content, and organization all had relatively low mean scores, with organization receiving the lowest average score. These results align with other research showing how difficult it is for ESL students to learn new vocabulary and use proper grammar. The low score for organization shows how hard it is for students to structure their ideas, keep a logical flow, and make smooth paragraph transitions. In contrast, the mechanics’ category had the highest mean score of all the assessed categories, suggesting that pupils have a stronger grasp of correct punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. According to the questionnaire results, students' levels of motivation and self-confidence in writing varied, and many of them found writing challenging. In addition, the questionnaire's open-ended responses revealed that students lacked deliberate practice and writing improvement strategies. The teacher's observations, in which she noted that students struggled with vocabulary and grammar, aligned with these findings.

The study found that EFL students in Belgium lack writing proficiency for several reasons. The discoveries propose that students may struggle to organize their ideas, express them clearly, and use appropriate vocabulary, leading to syntax errors and disjointed composition. Moreover, limited opportunities to practice and feedback may contribute to a lack of motivation and confidence in their writing abilities. Also, the results show how important it is to include self-evaluation tools like rubrics in the teaching method to help students evaluate their writing skills and determine where they need to improve. This helps students develop metacognitive skills and allows them to take charge of their learning. The teacher's observation highlighted the lack of support and guidance during the writing task, with brief explanations and no clear instructions provided. More scaffolding, step-by-step guidance, and constructive feedback could have improved students' writing skills. The classroom atmosphere was tense and unproductive, with disruptions and high noise levels. Creating a suitable learning environment, addressing classroom management concerns, and reducing distractions would enhance student concentration and engagement, leading to better writing outcomes. Additionally, students required assistance with time management, as excessive planning left insufficient time for actual writing and editing. Explicit training on effective time management strategies and proper time allocation for writing and editing would enhance students' writing productivity and quality.

The study’s findings, consistent with previous studies in the literature, suggest that effective pedagogical strategies may be required to address these issues. Enhancing opportunities for meaningful writing practice and genuine exposure to the target language, incorporating technology into writing instruction, and providing explicit instruction, feedback, and scaffolding are all examples of such strategies. Language proficiency tests like the TOEFL and IELTS, frequently used to admit international students to higher education institutions or facilitate their professional mobility, may include writing proficiency assessments as an essential component. Therefore, assessing EFL students' writing abilities is crucial to their academic, professional, and social success and developing linguistic proficiency and communication skills.

Despite the study's valuable insights into the difficulties and potential factors contributing to EFL students' low writing proficiency, some limitations should be considered. Although this research offers significant perspectives on the writing challenges encountered by fifth-year TSO ESL learners in Belgium, it is important to acknowledge different limitations. The study primarily centered on a particular cohort of ESL learners from a solitary educational institution in Belgium, thereby potentially constraining the applicability of the outcomes to a more extensive demographic. Enhancing the external validity of the findings could be achieved by conducting the research again with a more extensive and heterogeneous population of ESL learners originating from various educational institutions and geographical locations. The collected data was mostly based on student self-reports and teacher observations, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias or inaccurate collection. To address these constraints, measures were taken to safeguard confidentiality and secure voluntary participation. Finally, the research primarily evaluated writing proficiency through a standardized assessment of writing competencies. Although this methodology yielded significant findings regarding particular writing challenges, it may not encompass the complete intricacy of students’ writing proficiencies and the many elements that impact their writing achievement. Subsequent investigations may consider Integrating supplementary evaluations, such as portfolio assessments of longitudinal studies, to furnish a more all-encompassing comprehension of the progression of writing skills among ESL learners. Despite these drawbacks, the mixed-methods approach, data triangulation, and standardized writing test contributed to the study's increased reliability and validity.

Drawing from the outcomes of this study, several recommendations can be put forth for future research projects. First, future studies might investigate the impact of various teaching methods, such as scaffolding or technology, on ESL students’ writing abilities. Comparative research endeavors may explore the effects of distinct methodologies on the writing proficiency of pupils, as well as their levels of motivation and involvement throughout the writing procedure.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies can monitor the writing progress of ESL learners for a prolonged duration, thereby enabling scholars to scrutinize the enduring impacts of writing pedagogy and detect trends or trajectories of advancement. In addition, more research might determine if there is a connection between ESL writers’ writing abilities and their command of the language in other areas. Comprehending these interrelated aspects may provide insights for comprehensive language development strategies that can better incorporate the four language skills; Finally, considering the impact of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on writing proficiency, forthcoming research endeavors may investigate the obstacles encountered by ESL learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Conducting comparative analyses may facilitate the identification of culturally responsive teaching strategies and interventions tailored to address the distinct requirements of diverse populations of ESL students. Hence, it is imperative to conduct additional research that centers on exploring the viability of a particular intervention to enhance writing proficiency in the context of ESL education. For this intervention phase, the study question could be: “How can explicit instruction and scaffolding techniques help fifth-year TSO ESL students in Belgium organize their writing?”