**Results**

**Writing Competency Assessment Results**

Table : Self-Perceived Writing Proficiency Results

| **Student** | **Motivation** | **Confidence** | **Vocabulary & Grammar** | **Organization** | **Use of Evidence** | **Coherent Paragraphs** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student 1** | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| **Student 2** | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| **Student 3** | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| **...** | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |
| **Mean** | 3.63 | 4.51 | 4.34 | 4.57 | 4.29 | 4.11 |

The writing samples of the participants were analyzed, and a number of trends, strengths, and weaknesses were discovered. Some of the participants had strong organizational skills and were able to effectively structure their arguments and ideas. Others wrote without errors and displayed a high level of grammar and mechanics proficiency. Participants' vocabulary usage was found to vary, with some relying on a limited number of words while others displayed a rich and varied vocabulary.

Table : Challenging Aspects of Writing in English

| **Student** | **Challenging Aspect** |
| --- | --- |
| **Student 1** | Conjugating verbs |
| **Student 2** | The structure and some words |
| **Student 3** | Finding a good subject to write about |
| **...** | ... |
| **Mean** | Participants mentioned various challenging aspects |

Some participants' writing lacked logical connections between ideas or a consistent flow, making it difficult for them to write coherently. In addition, there were instances of poor clarity in which participants failed to convey their ideas in a concise and clear manner. Some participants also showed weaknesses in grammar and mechanics, with mistakes in sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling affecting their writing's overall quality.

Language proficiency and cultural background were taken into account when assessing writing competency levels. Overall, participants' writing skills, including vocabulary usage, grammar, and coherence, were generally better in those with a higher level of language proficiency. However, it was also noted that writers from diverse cultural backgrounds exhibited distinct writing strengths. The participants' vocabulary selection, writing style, and ability to incorporate cultural references into their work were all influenced by cultural diversity.

**Thematic Analysis of ESL Instructor Interview**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts with master's teache. To better comprehend the phenomenon under investigation, thematic analysis entails locating recurring patterns, themes, and meanings in the data. The interview data were transcribed, looked over several times, and relevant segments were coded to find important themes and patterns. After that, these themes were put together and looked at to get useful insights. Following patterns and themes were identified.

***Comparison of Writing Performance to Other Skills:*** According to the teacher, ESL students in Belgium's 5 TSO generally outperform their productive speaking and writing skills in the receptive skills of listening and reading. Also, when the students had time to prepare, it was found that their oral skills were better than their written ones.

***Common Writing Challenges:*** The interview brought to light a number of difficulties that ESL students face when writing in English. Dependence on online translation services can result in literal translations that may not accurately convey the intended message; spelling errors, which are prevalent; as well as issues with using the right tenses in their writing.

***Evaluation of Writing Skills:*** The teacher uses rubrics with a variety of criteria in his evaluation method. The students' abilities are made abundantly clear in these rubrics, allowing for a methodical and impartial evaluation of their writing abilities. Students are provided with a structured framework for self-evaluation and this assessment method assists in identifying specific areas for improvement.

***How to Improve Your Writing Skills:*** The teacher employs a variety of methods to improve the writing abilities of ESL students. Colors serve as visual cues to encourage students to correct their errors, which are highlighted. Students are able to identify areas in which they can improve by using rubrics. In addition, the portfolio's additional assignments provide additional practice and skill-building opportunities.

The conversation with Master’s teacher revealed significant instructional strategies used to assist ESL students in developing their writing. Spelling checkers, grammar rules, and translation websites are all available to all students, regardless of their writing proficiency. This strategy helps students who struggle with writing and promotes inclusivity. In addition, the portfolio's focus on tracking progress emphasizes growth and improvement, ensuring that each student receives the resources and support they require.

The writing abilities of ESL students are influenced by a variety of contextual factors, including the educational system in Belgium and the particular curriculum offered by 5 TSO. The observed differences between students' writing and speaking abilities may be attributed to the emphasis placed on receptive skills and the requirement for students to prepare for oral activities. In the educational setting of 5 TSO in Belgium, the utilization of rubrics is consistent with the evaluative procedures that are frequently utilized.

**Analysis of Questionnaire Responses**

Analyzing the writing samples using the rubric scores, with a maximum score of 4 for content, organization, language use, and mechanics, and a maximum overall score of 16, reveals noteworthy trends and areas where ESL students may benefit from improvement. The mean scores were calculated for content (2.07), organization (1.93), language use (2.04), mechanics (2.56), and overall score (8.56).

Among the categories, the organization received the lowest mean score of 1.93, indicating that it poses the most significant challenge for ESL students. This may be due to difficulties in structuring ideas, maintaining logical flow, or establishing smooth paragraph transitions. Closely following organization, the content and language use categories obtained relatively low mean scores of 2.07 and 2.04, respectively. The content score reflects potential limitations in vocabulary or struggles in expressing ideas clearly and effectively. The language use score suggests the presence of grammatical errors, inappropriate word choices, or overall language proficiency concerns.

In contrast, the mechanic’s category received the highest mean score of 2.56. While this score is not exceptionally high, it indicates that ESL students better understand mechanics, encompassing punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, compared to the other assessed categories. With an overall mean score of 8.56 out of a possible 16 points, it becomes evident that there is ample room for improvement in the writing abilities of the ESL students.

The test results revealed that the participants performed better in their speaking, reading, and listening skills than their writing skills. In terms of speaking, the participants demonstrated a range of abilities, showcasing fluency and clarity to varying degrees. Similarly, their reading comprehension skills exhibited diverse levels of understanding, with some participants displaying strong comprehension abilities. Additionally, the participants showed varying proficiency levels in listening comprehension, with some individuals showcasing excellent comprehension skills.

First, with an average rating of 3.63, students' motivation to complete assignments appears to be moderate.

Second, a mean rating of 4.51 indicates that students have a moderate amount of confidence in their English writing skills. This positive self-evaluation can act as an establishment for building understudies' composing abilities further.

With an average rating of 4.34, students report being confident in their ability to correctly use English vocabulary and grammar in writing.

With a mean rating of 4.57, students demonstrate a relatively high level of proficiency when it comes to organizing ideas and thoughts. This suggests that students have the ability to effectively structure their writing. However, educators can still assist students in developing more sophisticated organizational strategies, such as logical essay outline and structure.

With a mean rating of 4.29, students' ability to use evidence to back up their arguments in English writing assignments is rated as moderately proficient.

Student give their English paragraph writing skills an average rating of 4.11 out of 5. Teachers can further improve students' paragraph writing skills by emphasizing topic sentences, supporting details, transitions, and concluding sentences, despite the fact that this indicates a reasonably solid foundation.

**Discussion**

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 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. 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. The results are consistent with the results of Adnan & Sayadi (2022), emphasizing that 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 (Hyland, 2019).

Another strategy that has been shown to be effective is incorporating technology into writing instruction. Grammar and spelling checkers, online dictionaries, and writing platforms are just a few examples of the many resources and tools that technology can provide to make writing easier (Akhtar, 2020). Effectively incorporating technology into the classroom can increase EFL students' engagement and motivation while simultaneously providing them with immediate feedback and revision opportunities.

In addition, explicit instruction, feedback, and scaffolding are essential for supporting the writing development of EFL students. To help students comprehend and effectively apply writing's rules, structures, and conventions, explicit instruction entails explicitly teaching them. Students learn to identify areas for improvement and improve their skills when they receive timely, constructive feedback on their writing. As students improve as writers, scaffolding, which entails providing support and direction, gradually decreases.

These methods are in line with previous research of Bhowmik (2021), that stresses the significance of taking a comprehensive approach to writing instruction. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can better prepare their students for academic, professional, and social success by focusing on the various aspects of writing, such as language proficiency, organization, coherence, and clarity.

Additionally, the statement emphasizes the significance of writing proficiency assessments, which are frequently included in language proficiency tests like the TOEFL and IELTS. For international students wishing to increase their professional mobility or gain admission to higher education institutions, these tests serve as entry points. As a result, accurately assessing the writing abilities of EFL students becomes crucial for their academic and professional goals as concluded by Floris & Renandya, W. A. (2019).

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?”

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