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Analyzing Essential Aspects of Developing English Paragraphs Based on Comparing Levels Five and Nine of EFL Students

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Abstract. Across all levels of study, many college and university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) undergraduate students find it difficult to write paragraphs in English. Indeed, many EFL teachers expect their students to easily create well-written paragraphs; however, after only a few hours of instruction, teachers tend to find that many students simply do not meet such expectations. Thus, this study investigated EFL undergraduate students at two different levels of their college education and explored their perspectives on essential writing components in the construction of well-structured paragraphs, including grammar, vocabulary, and organization. The study also discussed the least important writing aspects that may not at all impact the comprehensibility of written paragraphs. Additionally, the study investigated the strengths and weaknesses of EFL students' English writing. The participants were selected using the convenience sampling method. The final sample included 15 level five college students with an intermediate level of English and 15 level nine students with a high level of English, totaling 30 students. All participants belonged to the Department of Applied Linguistics. Data were collected through mixed-method research. The participants received both online and descriptive surveys. The researcher analyzed the quantitative data by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics version 25) and thematic analysis for the qualitative data. The results of the present study showed minor differences in students' perspectives regarding the most and least important aspects of writing across the two student levels. However, there were significant differences in the respective areas for improvement, including grammar and mechanics. This paper concludes that regardless of the students' college level, students shared similar perceptions about the most and least important components of English writing. They all considered grammar the most important aspect of writing and mechanics the least important. Accordingly, the researcher recommends that curriculum designers and EFL instructors analyze their

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students' needs and weaknesses to design appropriate materials and teaching methods.

Keywords: writing aspects; writing components; developing paragraphs; EFL students

1. Background of the study

Writing is a primary language skill that requires practice. Students must improve their writing ability when attempting to learn a new language and EFL learners recognize the importance of writing in English for both their academic and future employment success (Jamoom, 2021). However, it is a challenging task and requires students to have an educated awareness of important linguistics components (Crossley & McNamara, 2016). Moreover, students' English level may impact their ability to write fluently in English. Several EFL students have encountered challenges in expressing themselves and their ideas in writing, and these difficulties were based on the micro and macro levels (Susilowati, 2018).

EFL learners face problems when writing academic papers, specifically when using the right vocabulary, appropriate structural organization, and the correct grammar and mechanics (Toba et al., 2019). Wirantaka (2016) found that EFL students experienced problems with multiple aspects of paragraph writing, including grammar, word choice, and development of ideas. Some EFL learners may struggle to apply nearly all of the rules of English writing, while others might only have problems implementing one or two of the required linguistics components. For example, Ariyanti (2016) discovered that EFL students have difficulties using correct grammatical structures and delivering the intended messages when trying to express their ideas in English. Thus, EFL teachers must investigate students' writing weaknesses so that they can be developed and improved upon. Additionally, English language instructors must provide their students with adequate time to process learned concepts and apply them in writing because "... it is difficult to teach the whole aspect of writing and expect ESL/EFL learners to write well after enrolled in one course" (Alharbi, 2019, p. 585). Therefore, EFL teachers should create strategies that increase their awareness of students' weaknesses when writing in a foreign language.

Several studies have shown that EFL students struggle to develop their writing skills and therefore find it difficult to communicate in this manner (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022; Alharbi, 2019; Alisha et al., 2019; Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Fitria, 2022; Ibnian, 2017; Nasser, 2019). Many EFL students make various writing errors when writing comprehensible and meaningful texts. Some of these errors are related to grammar, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics (Derakhshan & Shirejini, 2020; Fauzan et al., 2020; Hussain, 2019; Latupeirissa & Sayd, 2019; Mandasari, 2019; Sermsook et al., 2017; Yusuf et al., 2021). The types and the frequency of these errors may be related to the students' English ability. Many studies have discussed the reasons behind the difficulties faced by Saudi students when writing in English (Alghammas & Alhuwaydi, 2020; Alshammari, 2020; Khadawardi, 2022). Other studies have examined the extensive number of challenges that Saudi students specifically confront when attempting to improve

their English writing ability and have also detailed methods to overcome those difficulties (Ahmed, 2019; Alkodimi & Al-Ahdal, 2021; Almalki, 2020; Altamimi & Ab Rashid, 2019; Khadawardi, 2022; Khatter, 2019; Shousha et al., 2020). For instance, Alzahrani et al. (2020) utilized a questionnaire to investigate the writing skills of 12th-grade Saudi learners and identify whether their writing ability needed improving. They found that students encountered difficulties with using vocabulary in the correct context, organizing the targeted content, and applying the appropriate mechanics. Moreover, they exposed that the most challenging aspect Saudi students experience is the inability to generate ideas for the targeted topic because of their lack of practice in English writing. Most existing literature has focused on the weaknesses and challenges encountered by Saudi students studying at a specific level of college when attempting to write in English.

Therefore, there is a significant need to compare two college levels of EFL students majoring in applied linguistics at a Saudi university to explore their perceptions of writing paragraphs. The comparisons in this research revealed how EFL students who received specific writing courses developed their perceptions of English writing from the beginning to the last year of college. Moreover, it showed if the students' strengthened their writing skills or still faced difficulties in writing. The present study also analyzes these students' perceptions of the most and least important aspects of writing that they believe to impact the quality of their English paragraphs. In addition, it assesses EFL students' strengths and weaknesses in English writing. Findings can spotlight the importance of considering Saudi undergraduate perceptions, beliefs, and needs about English writing when designing an English writing curriculum, selecting appropriate pedagogies that improve students' academic writing, and preparing students for the Saudi job market, as careers across various sectors require high English language proficiency skills. These aims were achieved by addressing the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do EFL students at different levels differ in the most important and challenging aspects of writing?
- 2) What are the differences in the areas of strengths and the areas of improvement between two different levels of English learners?
- 3) What are EFL students' perspectives on the most important and challenging aspects of English writing development?
- 4) What are EFL students' perspectives on their own strengths and weaknesses when writing in English?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Writing Components

It is necessary to incorporate all elements of writing to construct accurate paragraphs, including grammar, sentence structure, word choice, organization, and mechanics (Syahputri & Masita, 2018). Correctly applying these components helps achieve the purpose of written communication. Thus, language learners must implement essential writing components when constructing a well-organized paragraph, which will involve accuracy, mechanisms, and the generation of primary ideas and supporting examples (Budjalemba & Listyani, 2020). To develop students' knowledge of academic writing rules and

components, EFL teachers should provide academic support. As Jamoom (2021) argues, EFL teachers should provide students with repeated practice and training to apply essential elements of writing like word choice, grammar, organization, and citations. Therefore, analyzing students' needs in English writing development can facilitate EFL teachers' understanding of the types of materials, activities, exercises, and feedback required to produce effective teaching methods that will improve student's writing ability (Fatimah, 2018).

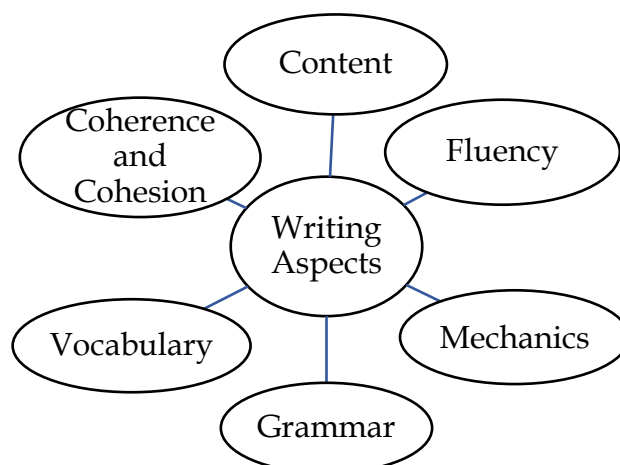


Figure 1: Writing aspects

2.2 Essential Components of Writing

The literature stated that content, cohesion, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics are the most common essential components in writing. Content is a crucial writing component that writers must consider. Content writing should follow the writing process approach of pre-writing, writing, and post-writing; this will allow students to write only relevant details to the aim of the work (Inayah & Nanda, 2016). Each writing stage should increase learners' awareness of the target language use and improve their writing skills. Implementing this approach would help EFL students receive valuable feedback, which could positively affect their writing performance (Çelik, 2020). Applying the writing process approach is necessary when writing about a specific genre as it will develop interconnected ideas and produce targeted content. The writing stage is significant because many students struggle to write relevant ideas and supporting details on the intended topic (Toba et al., 2019). Therefore, a lack of writing practice causes students to face challenges when generating coherent paragraphs or developing new ideas (Husna & Multazim, 2019).

Coherence and cohesion are also important elements of writing (Abbas & Herdi, 2018). Coherent written work is necessary to allow readers to understand the relationship between ideas and paragraphs in the given context and follow writers' ideas smoothly (Solikhah & Surakarta, 2017). Increasing the coherence and cohesion in written paragraphs makes ideas appear unified and orderly (Crossley & McNamara, 2016). To achieve written coherence through the logical

organization of targeted ideas, writers must determine the genre and goal of the paper (Septiwan & Al Hafizh, 2021). Using cohesive devices is a core way to facilitate the reading of the provided text and deliver the intended messages (AlShamalat & Abdul Ghani, 2020). As an example, utilizing transition words such as “however”, “in addition”, and “therefore” could lead to the achievement of text coherence and cohesion.

Selecting the appropriate word that reflects the intended meaning is also essential. Vocabulary is the main aspect of the targeted use of language and communication in social contexts (Dakhi & Fitria, 2019). This is consistent with Mirioglu (2020), who found that vocabulary knowledge is significant in communication success, other language skills improvement, career achievement, and English test accomplishment. Many studies have researched vocabulary acquisition strategies. For instance, Syawal and Bin-Tahir (2017) determined that reading English resources, playing English games, and listening to English music facilitates vocabulary acquisition; Karakoç and Köse (2017) also stated that extensive exposure to reading improves the acquisition of common words that can enrich written text. Hence, the use of different techniques to learn and acquire new words can significantly improve writers’ paragraphs. Using a sophisticated, diverse, and academic lexicon would contribute to high-quality, accurately expressed papers (Ha, 2019). Students’ exposure to various vocabulary could also help them understand the accurate usage of these new words. As revealed by Lailiyah and Setiyaningsih (2021), it is essential for EFL learners to not only use various academic vocabularies but also recognize the correct use of the words that deliver the intended meaning in their written paragraphs.

EFL learners must also recognize how to correctly structure complete sentences when writing in the target language. Grammar and writing strongly relates to EFL students’ writing development (Al-Jarf, 2022). Thus, EFL teachers should teach grammatical rules when providing writing instructions. According to Normawati (2023), EFL students perceived grammar as an important aspect of writing that helps build correct sentences and create meaningful text. The use of appropriate grammar significantly impacts students’ writing (Aksoy, 2021). Therefore, EFL instructors should treat grammar and writing as integral parts of English language learning that must be taught simultaneously (Xavier et al., 2020).

"Mechanics are ways that the writer handles basic conventions of writing such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization" (Solikhah & Surakarta, 2017, p. 36). To create an effectively written paragraph, students should pay close attention to language conventions (Daffern et al., 2017). This should be accomplished in the writing process stages before any piece of writing is submitted. Most EFL students commit errors or are ignorant about the use of written mechanics such as punctuation or capitalization (Abbas & Herdi, 2018). Further, Husna and Multazim (2019) confirmed that the misuse of mechanics can contribute to confusion over meaning. Even if students’ errors in mechanics do not drastically affect the overall understanding of paragraphs, they would at least influence the quality of the written paragraphs (Yuliawati, 2021). Therefore, increasing EFL students’ competence in using mechanics in their writing is crucial to improve the

readability of the provided text (Sukaesih, 2023). To achieve this, EFL learners must realize the influential role of mechanics in giving meaning to their writing.

2.3 Cognitive Writing Model

Writing consists of language aspects and cognitive tasks that good writers should consider when expressing their intended ideas (Fawa'rah, 2019). Figure 2 presents the major cognitive writing processes writers commit to when producing a new written task (Davoodifard, 2022). Submitting good paragraphs involves different cognitive writing processes such as planning, organizing ideas, drafting, and revising. English language learners should consider these steps when constructing a well-written paragraph. According to Davoodifard (2022), writers must follow a number of steps to write effectively. These include planning, where students focus on the targeted audience and the purpose of the intended written paragraphs; organization of the main points and supporting details; draft creation; and revision of the written content. Hence, this study reflected on the writing cognitive processes listed in the online and descriptive surveys to explore level five and level nine students' perceptions of implementing these processes and the effect of the processes on their writing quality.

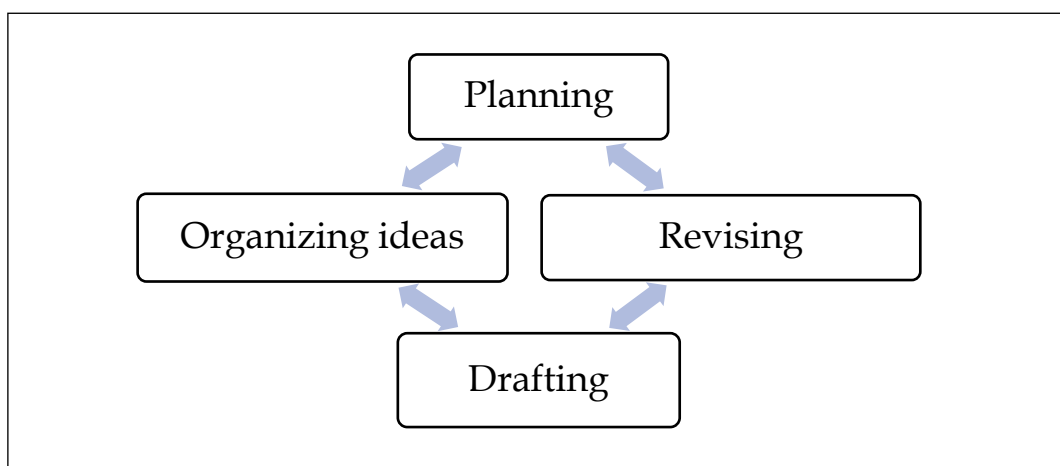


Figure 2: Writing Model

2.4 Writing as a Process

To successfully write in different genres, writers must follow different writing stages that allow them to brainstorm ideas and create multiple drafts. According to Widiati and Cahyono (2006), "Writing as a process relies on the conviction that writing is not a single activity, but one which is recursive" (p. 141). There are three main writing processes: preparation, writing, and correction (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In the same vein, Fajrina et al. (2023) believes that writing must entail a recursive manner of applying cognitive processes, which includes planning, writing, and editing. Conducting the writing process approach is an effective way to improve the accurate meaning of the targeted text because "in the process of academic writing, you will need to think, plan, struggle, revise, rewrite, and mess about in order to discover exactly what it is you want to say and how you want to say it" (Johnson, 2016, p. 4). Thus, these processes consist of different steps in each stage. For example, in the planning stage, students would brainstorm and outline the main ideas and the supporting details, begin writing the first drafts, and then proofread the work (Hermilinda & Abd Aziz, 2018). Applying this approach

might take time and effort from learners, but it is beneficial to develop the necessary writing skills. A study by Sadi and Othman (2012) compared the ability of high-level and low-level students in the writing stage of planning and reviewing. The study revealed that high-level learners spent longer periods thinking about what to include in their text. Moreover, highly skilled learners spent more time revising each written text's form, meaning, and use; by contrast, poor writers focused on revision at the sentence level. Regardless of the time these processes take to be accomplished and the language level of the learners, following these steps should improve students' language use. Consequently, the writing process should be implemented with the aim to improve the quality of the final written product (Agustiana, 2016).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This research aimed to quantitatively and qualitatively investigate the most and least important aspects of writing that can significantly impact the quality of EFL students' writing from the perspectives of students at the two levels of study. To achieve this, the current study applied a mixed-methods research design to investigate undergraduate EFL students at levels five and nine and explore their perceptions of the importance and challenges of writing English paragraphs. This method was utilized to comprehensively understand of the targeted problem and effectively address valuable recommendations for the targeted stakeholders. Specifically, the author used a descriptive survey research design incorporating quantitative and qualitative data to obtain deep and accurate results. Further, the author used the qualitative research method to obtain profound descriptions of EFL perceptions regarding the targeted study. The descriptive survey also explored EFL students' perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in writing paragraphs in English.

3.2 Sample and sampling procedure

The data were collected from Saudi undergraduate students on an applied linguistics course at a Saudi university. There were 30 EFL undergraduate students who participated in answering both the quantitative and qualitative sections. Students on the course are set to graduate after passing four years in the program, and each year consists of different levels. The students in level five have an intermediate English level, and the students in level nine have a high English level. Fifteen students from each level (30 total) participated in this study. The participants took various English writing courses to develop their writing knowledge and skills.

The convenience sampling method was applied, where all participants from levels five and nine took English writing classes with the investigator of this present research. All the students in the two classes volunteered to participate in the study. Because the purpose of the research was to compare level five and nine undergraduate students' perceptions of the most important and challenging aspects of writing, the author wished to utilize all the accessible and available participants in the two classes to best explore the research questions. An exact number of students were used from both levels to collect the quantitative and

qualitative data. In other words, the author selected 15 students from level five of the applied linguistics program to first complete the online survey and then answer the descriptive qualitative section of the survey. Similarly, the researcher selected 15 students from level nine of the same program to complete the online and descriptive surveys. The purpose of choosing two English language learners at two different levels was to explore different perceptions of the most important challenges, strengths, and weaknesses of English paragraph writing. The participants from levels five and nine took various English writing courses, including Writing Foundation, Professional Writing, and Technical Writing. These courses helped familiarize the students with writing different essays, recounting texts, and writing reports. Furthermore, the participants in level nine took the above courses as well as additional writing courses, which helped them with writing proposals and research papers in English.

3.3 Instruments and data collection

The research purpose was achieved by implementing a mixed-methods approach, specifically a parallel mixed design. The researcher collected the quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to respond to related elements of the posted research questions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The data was collected at different stages. The author used Google Forms to conduct online surveys. First, the author used the ranking scale which allowed students to rank the most important and least important aspects of writing. Participants were also asked to rank the writing components from the most difficult to the least difficult based on their perspectives and experiences (see Appendix 1). Then, the 5-point Likert scale survey was created to allow undergraduate students to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in writing in the target language by selecting one of the five options with different degrees (see Appendix 2). After finishing the quantitative part of the survey, follow-up questions requiring detailed answers and explanations related to the online survey formed the qualitative section of the investigation. Moreover, the qualitative part allowed students to express their perspectives on ranking the most important aspects and their strengths and weaknesses. This approach ensured data accuracy by allowing the researcher to match the online survey results with the participants' answers to the qualitative section.

3.4 Validity of instruments

The instruments used in the study were validated both in content and reliability. Internal consistency measures reliability, which is when a measurement gives the same number or score each time it is administered and considers the equality of all other things (Hays & Revicki, 2005). Cronbach's α values (Tables 1 and 2) were above the threshold of 0.70 across the subscales' items. The reliability analysis considered the areas of strength and improvement, shown in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

Table 1: Reliability results on area of strength and item-total correlation statistics (n=30)

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (r)	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. I can write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.	.318	.772
2. I can use diverse vocabulary.	.551	.754
3. I have the ability to choose the word that is appropriate for the given context.	.625	.741
4. It is easy for readers to follow my ideas.	.311	.769
5. I can properly use transitional words.	.245	.777
6. I have no problem with developing several paragraphs.	.649	.729
7. I am able to use punctuation properly within a text.	.362	.765
8. I can spell most of the intended words correctly.	.218	.781
9. I do not have a problem with developing ideas and examples within paragraphs.	.190	.783
10. I can connect the main ideas to the supporting details at the paragraph level.	.657	.737
11. I can use the appropriate text structure for each type of genre.	.520	.748
12. I do not have a problem with applying the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.	.497	.750
Total Items		.775

Table 2: Reliability results on areas of improvement and item-total correlation statistics (n=30)

	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (r)	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. I cannot write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.	.364	.824
2. I have limited knowledge of diverse vocabulary.	.588	.806
3. I face difficulties in organizing my ideas.	.425	.818
4. I lack knowledge on how to use transitional words properly.	.441	.817
5. I have a problem with developing several paragraphs.	.664	.792
6. It is challenging to use punctuation properly within a text.	.618	.797

7. I cannot spell most of my intended words correctly without using an online dictionary.	.366	.825
8. Connecting the main ideas to the supporting details at the paragraph level is challenging.	.528	.808
9. It is hard to use the appropriate text structures for each type of genre.	.572	.804
10. I am struggling to apply the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.	.599	.800
Total Items		.825

A Cronbach's alpha was calculated when an item was deleted from the subscale. All the subscale items showed a satisfactory correlation with the dimension total score belonging to Pearson's $r > 0.2$.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Considering ethical issues, the author provided the participants with a consent form to allow them to acknowledge the purpose of the study by signing the form and to ask if they were willing to participate in the study results. The participants were notified that their participation was voluntary, so they could withdraw from the study at any point. Also, they were informed that their names and personal information would remain anonymous to maintain confidentiality. In addition, the author ensured the validity of the study's findings by collecting qualitative data alongside the quantitative data. Furthermore, the investigator ensured that all participants across the two levels received the same survey and questions, meaning similarities and differences between answers could be effectively compared.

3.6 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics ver. 25) was utilized to analyze the study's quantitative data. The study conducted frequency distribution and employed counts, percentages, the mean, and standard deviation as descriptive tools for the findings. For inferential statistics, a t-test was applied for the significant differences. The P value is set at ≤ 0.05 .

The scoring system for each of the scale items, a transmutation equivalent, was designed with an equal interval of 0.80 such that the resultant means of the items may fall under the following categories:

<1.80	-Strongly Disagree
1.80-<2.60	- Disagree
2.60-<3.40	- Neutral
3.40-<4.20	- Agree
4.20 -5.00	- Strongly Agree.

3.7 Analysis for the Qualitative Data

The author analyzed the collected qualitative data using thematic analysis following the steps below:

- 1) The author read the data several times until they became familiar with it.

- 2) The author created coding and categories and transcribed them into Microsoft Excel.
- 3) The author wrote a memo for each research question.
- 4) The author created four major themes from the data collected.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Results

Research questions number 1 and 2 were answered quantitatively.

Q1. To what extent do EFL students at different levels differ towards the most important and challenging aspects of writing?

To answer question 1 (Q1), frequencies and percentages for each aspect regarding importance and difficulty were produced at different levels (five and nine). The students ranked the most important and challenging aspects of writing based on their own experiences. In addition, they evaluated their strengths and weaknesses as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Results in Table 1 show that 46.7% of the level five students ranked grammar as the most important aspect of writing in contrast to 66.7% of level nine students. Rankings were made by choosing between levels one to three to indicate aspect importance; other ranks indicated the insignificance of the aspect. Further, 60% of level nine students thought spelling was the most crucial aspect, unlike 40% of level five students. Moreover, 46.7% of level nine students ranked word choice as the most important aspect of writing while this aspect was ranked at 40% by level five students.

This result implies that grammar, word choice, spelling, and organization emerged as the most important aspects of writing. However, the spelling aspect was ranked second by 26.7% of level nine students and 13.3% of level five students. Overall, minor differences were observed regarding the ranking of writing aspects among the students, regardless of the larger differences in addressing the aspects of grammar, word choice, spelling, and organization, which were more important for level nine students than level five. Regarding the challenging aspects of writing, students in levels five and nine did not face difficulties with punctuation, spelling, planning, drafting, revising, or organization, as shown in Table 2. The students at both levels ranked all these aspects at the end of the list. Rather, both groups revealed they faced most difficulties with grammar, coherence, and cohesion. Furthermore, grammar was one of the most difficult aspects that language learners encountered when writing English paragraphs due to their inability to construct well-structured sentences (Alisha et al., 2019).

Table 3: The aspects of writing ranked most important

Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8	Rank 9
Level 5									
Word Choice	6 (40.0)	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	-	1 (6.7)	-	-	-
Grammar	7 (46.7)	6 (40.0)	2 (13.3)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fluency	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)
Coherence	2 (13.3)	-	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	-	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-
Cohesion	2 (13.3)	-	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	-	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-
Punctuation	-	2 (13.3)	-	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)
Spelling	6 (40.0)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	-	-	-	1 (6.7)
Development of ideas	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	-	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)
Organization	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)	-
Level 9									
Word Choice	7 (46.7)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-	-	-
Grammar	10 (66.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-	-	-
Fluency	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	5 (33.3)	2 (13.3)	-	-	-	-
Coherence	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	-	1 (6.7)	-	-
Cohesion	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-
Punctuation	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	-
Spelling	9 (60.0)	4 (26.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-	-	-
Development of ideas	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	-
Organization	6 (40.0)	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-

Table 4: The most challenging aspects of writing

Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8	Rank 9	Rank 10
Level 5										
Word Choice	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)
Grammar	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	3	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)
Coherence	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)
Cohesion	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)
Punctuation	-	1 (6.7)	-	-	4 (26.7)	2 (13.3)	-	-	1 (6.7)	7 (46.7)
Spelling	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	5 (33.3)
Planning	1 (6.7)	-	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	7 (46.7)
Drafting	-	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	-	-	1 (6.7)	8 (53.3)
Revising	1 (6.7)	-	-	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	-	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	8 (53.3)
Organization	1 (6.7)	-	-	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	-	-	1 (6.7)	11 (73.3)
Level 9										
Word Choice	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)
Grammar	-	5 (33.3)	4 (26.7)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	-	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)
Coherence	-	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	-	2 (13.3)	-	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)
Cohesion	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	3 (20.0)	-	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)
Punctuation	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	-	-	1 (6.7)	-	7 (46.7)
Spelling	-	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	-	5 (33.3)	-	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)
Planning	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	-	1 (6.7)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	4 (26.7)
Drafting	-	3 (20.0)	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	-	2 (13.3)	-	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	5 (33.3)
Revising	-	-	3 (20.0)	-	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	5 (33.3)
Organization	-	2 (13.3)	1 (6.7)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	1 (6.7)	-	-	3 (20.0)	3 (20.0)

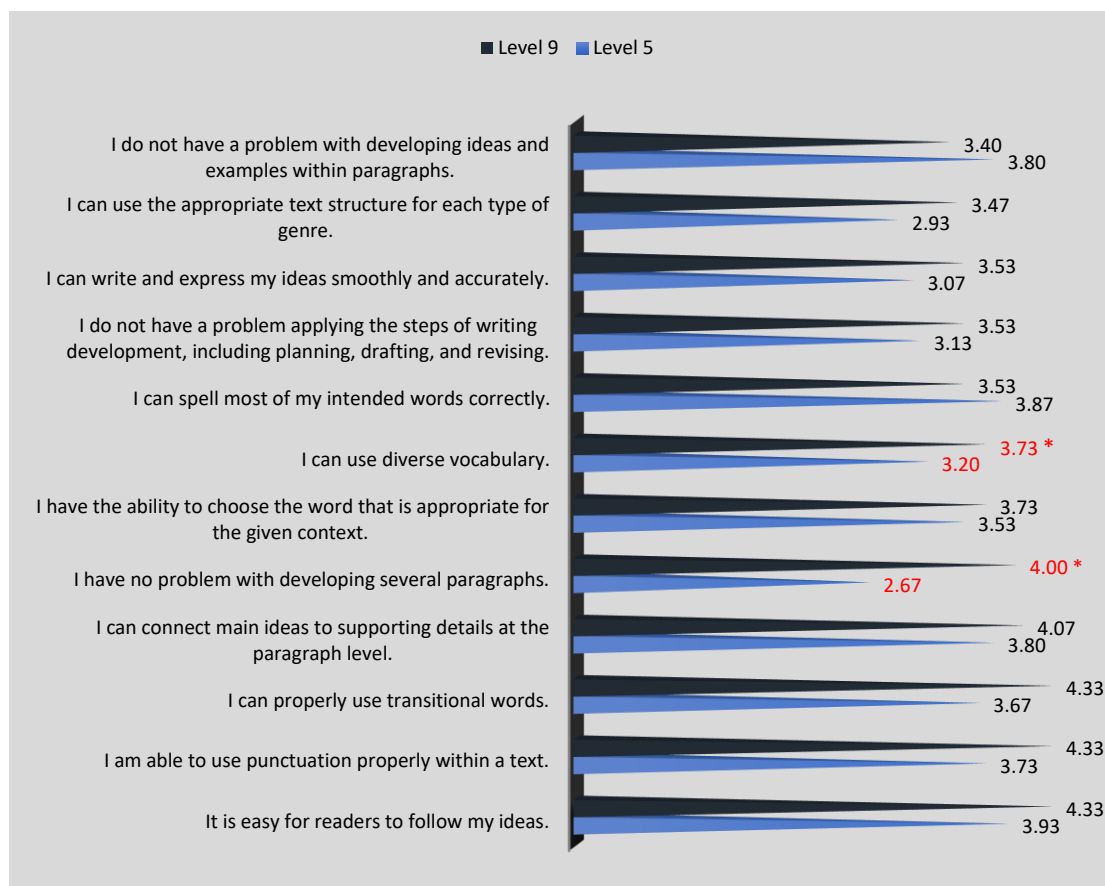
Q2. What are the differences in the areas of strengths and the areas of improvement between two different levels of English learners?

Research question 2 (Q2) was answered using a t-test to determine the differences between areas of strength and areas of improvement, and the results are shown in Tables 3-5. The results shown in Table 5 indicated statistically significant differences in strengths and improvement ($t = 2.06, 2.13, P \text{ values} = .049, .042$), respectively. The difference trend favored students in level nine due to the highest mean (3.83), which was statistically and significantly higher than the same figure for level five (3.44). The results came as expected for the areas of improvement; the trend difference was in favor of students in level five due to the highest mean (2.67) where improvement was required for this level. However, there were highly significant differences in two areas of strength: the capability to use diverse vocabulary and the ability to develop several paragraphs ($t = 2.53, p\text{-value} = .017$), and ($t = 3.45, p\text{-value} = 0.002$), respectively.

Table 5: Student t-test for differences in stronger areas (n = 30)

Areas of strengths	Level 5		Level 9		t	P value
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
I can write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.	3.07	1.280	3.53	1.12	1.60	0.30 ^{ns}
I can use diverse vocabulary.	3.20	0.68	3.73	0.46	2.53	0.017*
I have the ability to choose the word that is appropriate for the given context.	3.53	0.92	3.73	0.80	0.64	0.529 ^{ns}
It is easy for readers to follow my ideas.	3.93	0.70	4.33	0.82	1.44	0.162 ^{ns}
I can properly use transitional words.	3.67	1.05	4.33	0.90	1.87	0.072 ^{ns}
I have no problem with developing several paragraphs.	2.67	1.23	4.00	0.85	3.45	0.002**
I am able to use punctuation properly within a text.	3.73	1.03	4.33	0.98	1.64	0.113 ^{ns}
I can spell most of my intended words correctly.	3.87	0.74	3.53	1.30	0.86	0.40 ^{ns}
I do not have a problem with developing ideas and examples within paragraphs.	3.80	1.01	3.40	1.06	1.06	0.30 ^{ns}
I can connect main ideas to supporting details at the paragraph level.	3.80	0.94	4.07	0.80	0.84	0.410 ^{ns}
I can use the appropriate text structure for each type of genre.	2.93	1.22	3.47	0.83	1.40	0.174 ^{ns}
I do not have a problem applying the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.	3.13	1.19	3.53	1.30	0.88	0.387 ^{ns}

*Significant at.05 level** significant at.01 level, ns= not significant, SD= standard deviation



* $P < .05$

Table 6: Student t-test for differences in the areas of improvement (n = 30)

Areas of Improvement	Level 5		Level 9		t	P value
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
I cannot write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.	2.53	1.19	1.80	0.94	1.88	0.071 ns
I have limited knowledge of diverse vocabulary.	2.87	0.64	2.13	0.83	2.70	0.012*
I face difficulties in organizing my ideas.	2.33	0.72	2.50	0.94	0.54	0.599 ns
I lack the knowledge of how to use transitional words properly.	2.67	1.29	1.60	0.74	2.78	0.010*
I have a problem with developing several paragraphs.	3.20	1.32	2.00	0.85	2.97	0.006**
It is challenging to use punctuation properly in a text.	2.60	1.40	1.93	1.03	1.48	0.150 ns
I cannot spell most of the intended words correctly without using an online dictionary.	2.13	1.06	2.60	1.35	1.05	0.302 ns
Connecting main ideas to supporting details at the paragraph level is challenging.	2.73	1.33	2.20	1.21	1.15	0.261 ns
It is hard to use the appropriate text structure for each type of genre.	3.07	0.88	2.20	1.01	2.50	0.019*
I am struggling to apply the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.	2.60	1.35	2.60	1.35	-	-

*Significant at .05 level ** significant at .01 level, ns = not significant, SD = standard deviation

Table 7: Student t-test for differences in the areas of strength and improvement (n = 30)

	Level 5 n=15		Level 9 n=15		t	P value
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
Areas of strength	3.44	0.54	3.83	0.50	2.06	0.049*
Areas of improvement	2.67	0.67	2.15	0.67	2.13	0.042*

*Significant at .05 level** significant a t.01 level, ns = not significant, SD = standard deviation

4.2 Qualitative Results

Research questions 3 and 4 are answered based on the collected qualitative data. The researcher presented the findings based on the generated themes.

Q3. What are EFL students' perspectives on the most important and least important aspects of English writing development?

The answers of the participants in research question 3 are described thematically in terms of: 1) the most important writing aspects in English; and 2) the least important writing aspects in English.

Theme 1: Most Important Writing Aspects in English

The perspectives of the level five EFL students indicated that grammar is English's most important writing aspect. In contrast, vocabulary and the mechanics of writing (including punctuation and spelling) are considered the least important aspects in English writing development. The participants indicated that grammar is essential since it helps increase readers' comprehension of the written sentences, improve the clarity of the written ideas, and effectively deliver intended meaning. One of the participants stated that "[I]f you did not use grammar appropriately, your topic would lose its value." Hence, they confirmed that grammar is fundamental to any language people desire to develop. Students stated that grammar helps avoid misunderstandings and makes the targeted text more meaningful. Another participant said, "Grammar is important because they have to understand what I want to deliver or what I mean." Thus, students mentioned that grammar improvement is crucial above all other writing elements, including the application of the cognitive writing process, when submitting high-quality written paragraphs.

Similarly, level nine EFL students claimed that both grammar and vocabulary are the most important writing aspects of English writing development. They believed that focusing on grammar was essential to writing a paragraph in English. For instance, one participant said, "I believe that the most important aspect is grammar because no matter how good your research is, having grammatical mistakes will make your readers distrust you." The participants determined that accurately employing the targeted language's grammatical rules would contribute positively to the writing's professionalism and more effectively deliver their messages. However, making grammatical errors or mistakes would interrupt the flow of the written paragraphs and cause misunderstandings of the presented ideas. As reported by the level nine participants, "In my opinion, I think grammar is the most important component because if you do not have at least the

basic grammar, the writer cannot convey the required meaning correctly to the readers." Moreover, the participants stated that the inability to accurately apply grammatical rules would reflect writers' weak knowledge of the targeted language and could cause readers to discontinue reading the presented text.

Moreover, level nine EFL students also said that vocabulary knowledge is another an essential aspect of English writing, alongside grammar. The participants found vocabulary knowledge to be necessary in writing, particularly when recognizing how to appropriately use acquired vocabulary words in a given context. One participant explained, "Word choice is an important aspect in writing because it will be tough for me to write easily and clearly if I do not have sufficient understanding of terms and how to write and communicate my views in English." They explained that writers should understand the meaning of the words used to communicate their ideas efficiently and accurately. The participants revealed that they knew the advantages of using various academic or sophisticated vocabulary words. However, at the same time, they confirmed that knowing the meaning of the targeted words and using them effectively in the text was more important. For example, one participant pointed out, "I believe the overuse of fancy words might distract the readers from the actual point that the writers are trying to give, so sometimes simple words are clear enough to get a point." Therefore, level nine participants perceived vocabulary use as one of the most essential aspects of content comprehension.

Theme 2: Least Important Writing Aspects

The level five EFL students stated that word choice and mechanics were the least essential aspects of English writing development since they did not utilize extensive vocabulary or highly academic words to express their thoughts. They explained that even if they did not have a wide range of vocabulary at their disposal, they could still use basic words or synonyms to deliver their messages. Students indicated they had adequate fundamental words to discuss the targeted topics without any communication issues. Also, they posited that, if the structures of their sentences were created correctly and their texts were understandable, they did not need to be concerned about the variety of vocabulary used. The participants pointed out that using correct grammar and writing well-structured sentences were more significant than including a wider range of vocabulary. For example, one of the participants stated, "For me, it is grammar because it is an essential component of any language, and it also helps in arranging the learned vocabulary understandably." Hence, level five showed their strong belief in grammar as the most crucial aspect of writing.

Likewise, data collected from level five participants revealed that writing mechanics, such as punctuation and spelling, received less attention from EFL students when writing their paragraphs. The participants determined that misuse or ignoring punctuation is not extensively significant nor does it deserve excessive focus because it would not affect the paragraphs' comprehension or meaning; rather, the other elements of writing, such as grammar, would. As one of the participants explained, "The presence of punctuation marks is not important because it is not a requirement in everything." Furthermore, the participants

added that spelling was one of the least important writing aspects and they did not have to be anxious about it if it did not impact readers' understanding. A participant said, "I think that the least important aspect of English writing is spelling because you can forget a letter or make a mistake in some words, but the general meaning of the written ideas is still understandable." Thus, students think spelling does not majorly affect the meaning of the written paragraphs.

Level nine EFL students also claimed that mechanics such as punctuation are the least important aspect of English writing. Most believed that the use of proper punctuation marks should receive less attention as these do not negatively impact readers' understanding of the given content. For example, one participant expressed her thoughts: "Punctuation is the least important writing aspect because it does not change the meaning of what I am writing." The participants thought punctuation was an extra aspect of writing and that its misuse or ignorance would not impact their written communication. In addition, some of the students at level nine thought that spelling was one of the least important components when writing a paragraph in English since they usually use Microsoft Office, and the spelling of their written words would be corrected automatically. The participants stated that even if they were required to write their paragraphs on paper, misspellings would not disrupt readers' understanding, especially if there were few misspellings or if the incorrect spelling was still fairly close to the correct spelling. One of the participants said that "familiar words could be easily recognized by others even if they were misspelled; however, a lot of misspelling in a paragraph writing would disturb the reader and make it uncomfortable to continue reading." Overall, EFL students believed there were more important writing components they needed to consider than correct spelling.

Q4. What are EFL students' perspectives on their own strengths and weaknesses when writing in English?

In answering research question 4, the participants' responses are categorized into two themes: 1) strengths in writing and 2) weaknesses in writing.

Theme 1: Strengths in Writing

The data analysis of the level five EFL students showed they found themselves strongly able to express their ideas smoothly and articulate their intended meaning clearly. They said they could easily discuss the provided topics in their written paragraphs. One of the participants stated, "I have the ability to express my ideas; sometimes I cannot start, but if I start writing, I have the ability to create amazing sentences." The participants explained that starting to write the first sentence on the targeted topics might take some time, and the other ideas would flow with little effort once they began creating the first sentence. Therefore, they believed they could express their thoughts and create understandable sentences. The level nine students believed that with a high level of English, they could express their ideas regarding the given topics easily and clearly. They stated that they could structure their sentences in an organized way that contributed to making their texts more understandable. As one of the participants explained, "My strengths in writing in English include being able to express ideas clearly and concisely, maintaining a logical flow of thoughts, and effectively using appropriate vocabulary to convey intended meanings." The participants claimed

that they were able to create several paragraphs that were connected and comprehensible. Additionally, they could use the right words at the discourse level to precisely express their targeted meaning.

Theme 2: Weaknesses in Writing

Level five students disclosed that creating a well-structured sentence with no grammatical errors was one of the challenges that they encountered when writing an English paragraph. The participant stated, "Grammar is the most thing that makes me struggle with writing in English, and if I was required to write, I always see it as hard for me." The students explained that despite the importance of grammar in writing, they found it to be the most challenging aspect and they needed help putting their ideas into writing. They thought that various types of sentences, such as complex sentences with no grammatical errors, for example, decreased the quality of the work, and expressed that they wished to receive help with modes of grammatical expression so they could improve their writing. For example, one student said, "I find it difficult to write long sentences, and instead, I can express my ideas better using short sentences." Students found it difficult to write complex sentences with accuracy. Thus, to reduce students' difficulties in applying grammatical rules when writing in English, language teachers need to identify common errors and design instructional lessons related to these weak areas (Matiso, 2023).

On the other hand, most level nine students stated that spelling was a writing aspect they struggled with the most. It has been revealed by one of the participants that spelling is the most challenging writing component. The student said, "I always suffer with word spellings, and I think the main reason is using technology to check the words, so I do not have to memorize them." Thus, most participants determined that auto-correct meant they did not memorize the spelling of various words, and that they depended on checking these words with technological tools. They found this weakness when exposed to paragraph writing in their midterms and final exams. As revealed by one of the participants, "Spelling is the most thing that I have a problem with when I am writing, especially when handwriting on exams like writing paragraphs because there is no electronic error correction." However, the participants believed that this aspect of writing did not require as much attention as the other components related to comprehensibility and the meaning of paragraph writing. Resources like online dictionaries are widely available so they did not try to recognize how to form words correctly.

5. Discussions

5.1 Quantitative Discussions

The findings of this study are supported by several outcomes of previous studies. Agustiana (2016) noted that the writing process is conducted to improve the quality of the final written product. Various components of academic writing are necessary, including word choice, grammatical structures, text structure, organization of the targeted text, and mechanical conventions (Syahputri & Masita, 2018). Constructing a paragraph in a target language requires apprehension about the precise use of all aspects of writing. Findings revealed that grammar, word choice, spelling, and organization are the most important

aspects of writing and that grammar and writing strongly relate to EFL students' writing development (Al-Jarf, 2022). This result was consistent to some extent with Fajrina et al. (2023), who found that writing a paper is a recursive process that incorporates the stages of planning, writing, and editing. In the present study, a high proportion of level five students ranked grammar as the most important aspect of writing; moreover, the majority of level nine students believe this to be the case. This aligns with a claim from Xavier et al. (2020) proposing that grammar is a fundamental element that requires students to be educated.

Raising EFL students' competence in using mechanics such as spelling in their written paragraphs is vital to improving textual readability (Sukaesih, 2023). The current research results revealed that most level nine students thought spelling was the most important aspect. However, less than 50% of level five students think the same. It was found that the importance of spelling was more important to those with a higher level of English. Similarly, EFL students at both levels ranked other aspects besides grammar, such as word choice and organization, as essential aspects of writing. However, most level nine students ranked those other writing components as more important than level five students. Students must understand the need to use an appropriate word reflective of their intended meaning. Accordingly, the students faced difficulties with grammar, coherence, and cohesion; these elements formed the most challenging aspects of writing for students at both levels. Generating coherent paragraphs and developing new ideas requires writing practice (Husna & Multazim, 2019). Most students find it difficult to stick to relevant ideas and keep to details about the proposed topic.

In the study's findings, minor differences were observed regarding the ranking of writing aspects among two different levels of students. However, grammar, word choice, spelling, and organization were more likely to be more important for level nine students than for level five students. Sadi and Othman (2012) reported that high-level learners spend longer periods thinking about what to include in their text than less skilled writers. Besides, highly skilled learners spend longer revising each written text's form, meaning, and use of the target language than poor writers, who more commonly focus on revising based on the sentence level. Further, significant differences in strengths and improvement were observed by comparing two levels of English learners' answers, which showed that level nine students have more areas of strength than level five students. Improvements in various writing aspects were required for the level five students.

Level nine students were found to be able to employ diverse vocabulary and develop several paragraphs. This interesting finding helped consolidate an idea of the strengths of these students. Utilizing different techniques in education and learning new words can develop writers' paragraphing ability (Ha, 2019). Additionally, in another context, students at both levels had the same top strength: "It is easy for readers to follow my ideas." This area was ranked first by both groups of students. Other areas of strength were observed among students in the two levels, particularly in level nine, including selecting the appropriate words, using punctuation in a text, and developing ideas and examples within paragraphs. To enhance students' academic writing, educators should investigate

students' needs and provide materials, activities, exercises, and constructive feedback to overcome their written weaknesses (Fatimah, 2018).

The current research results found that the students at both levels tended to be more sensitive towards the areas of weakness since the mean scores of each proposed area of weakness were in the neutral range. However, level five students reported difficulties that included challenges in developing several paragraphs, using the appropriate text structures for each type of genre, a lack of diverse vocabulary, and using punctuation properly within a text. Students' contact with various vocabularies could encourage them to precisely use a wider variety of words. A recent study reported the importance of recognizing the correct use of the words to accurately deliver the intended meaning in the written work (Lailiyah & Setiyaningsih, 2021). Nonetheless, there is still much work to be done. Applying such writing aspects requires time and effort, especially for students. However, the outcomes have been significant for the development of students' writing skills. The findings may provide evidence for additional areas of improvement, and further studies are required to produce further findings regarding this issue and to determine the exact methods effective for promoting and improving the quality of EFL students' writing.

5.2 Qualitative Discussions

Discussions of the Third Question

The study's results showed that all 30 participants agreed that grammar was the most crucial aspect of writing since it affects the comprehension of written paragraphs. This was consistent with several studies that concluded how grammar significantly contributes to students' creation of correct and meaningful sentences (Aksoy, 2021; Al-Jarf, 2022; Normawati, 2023). In ranking and describing the most important aspects of writing, the participants did not discuss the importance of applying the cognitive writing process, which might be related to their lack of practice and motivation. According to Bulqiyah (2021), EFL instructors' attitudes, instructions, and teaching strategies greatly contribute to students' lack of motivation and difficulties in applying the writing process when composing paragraphs. Thus, EFL teachers should draw students' attention to the positive contribution of following the writing process in the quality of their written paragraphs.

On the other hand, punctuation and spelling were the least important aspects of writing because they were believed to not hinder readers' understanding as much or impact the meaning of the written paragraphs. This is inconsistent with a study from Husna and Multazim (2019), who highlighted the importance of mechanics in facilitating the meaning comprehension of written paragraphs. On the contrary, the students believe that if their sentences were structured well and had no grammatical errors, their ideas would be presented clearly as grammar is firmly related to paragraph comprehension. Furthermore, all the participants agreed that having an adequate number of words and recognizing how best to use them to ensure clarity in the writing was more significant than utilizing a wider vocabulary. Lailiyah and Setiyaningsih (2021) concluded that EFL students should improve their vocabulary acquisition and recognize how to properly use these words in context.

Discussions of the Fourth Question

Based on the study's results, learners at levels five and nine shared similar points of strength. They all agreed they could express their intentions clearly and were capable of making their paragraphs understandable and readable. Based on the data results, it was obvious that level nine students were competent in developing several paragraphs on targeted topics, unlike level five students who needed more time to brainstorm ideas. Developing new ideas for writing paragraphs on the targeted topic was a challenge faced by EFL learners (Wirantaka, 2016). Moreover, level nine students indicated they could write the targeted main points and supporting details in a connected and organized manner. Solikhah and Surakarta (2017) noted how the use of coherent sentences makes ideas easier to follow and understand.

Students at levels five and nine had different weaknesses regarding grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Grammar and mechanics were two academic writing aspects that EFL learners struggled to use appropriately (Toba et al., 2019). EFL students at level five had difficulties structuring correct grammatical sentences, whereas level nine students had difficulties writing the targeted words with correct spelling. Students' grammatical difficulties might be related to their need to sufficiently practice, take on extra tutorial sessions, and read through extensive examples. Taking these measures is likely to help them apply the learned grammatical features (Dehghani et al., 2016). Further, EFL students' problems with accurate spelling was examined by several studies, (Alshammari, 2020; Alzahrani et al., 2020; Haberman et al., 2020; Nuruzzaman et al., 2018; Setlight et al., 2023). Some of these studies discussed the reasons for spelling errors in EFL Saudi learners' written paragraphs. For example, Altamimi and Ab Rashid (2019) explained that Saudi students make extensive errors in spelling English words for various reasons, such as the influence of the first language, instructors' insufficient discussion of the rules and strategies of spelling, and a lack of content related to spelling instructions. This is consistent with a study from Alzahrani et al. (2020), who found that Saudi students made spelling errors due to the distinctions between the English and Arabic linguistic systems. Insufficient grammatical knowledge and dependency on technological tools contributed to students' difficulties in applying grammar and spelling correctly in their writing. Dependent on electronic auto-correction, students performed poorly in handwritten tasks (Ismael et al., 2022). The similarities and differences between level five and nine students could be helpful for EFL teachers to recognize how best to create activities and materials that could strengthen their students' weaknesses and help them develop the quality of their paragraphs. EFL teachers should be conscious of their students' needs in writing well-written English paragraphs since it would be challenging for EFL students to acquire every writing component after taking only one or two language courses (Alharbi, 2019).

5. Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted on a small number of students and is not generalizable for all language learners. Further studies should be conducted on a larger population of language learners to more comprehensively understand the intended topic.

6. Conclusion

This research explored the perceptions of two different levels of undergraduate EFL students regarding the most and least important aspects of English writing. The author examined students' strengths and weaknesses in writing and how these positively or negatively impact the quality of their written paragraphs. The framework of this study, which included writing elements, the cognitive writing process, and online and descriptive surveys, was tailored to best achieve the study's aims. In the framework, participants were asked to rank their opinion regarding the most and least essential elements of writing, based on their experience. They were also asked about the importance of applying the writing cognitive process to the quality of their paragraphs. The findings mainly revealed that level five and nine students shared similar perspectives regarding the critical aspects of writing and areas of strength in creating English paragraphs. They all perceived grammar as one of the most crucial components of writing in English. This might be related to the designed curriculum and teachers' instructions and feedback, which focus more on accuracy than fluency. Alghammas and Alhuwaydi (2020) indicated that Saudi teachers pay more attention to students' syntactical errors than semantical errors. Moreover, the participants ignored the significance of the implementation of the cognitive writing process, including planning, writing drafts, and editing. As concluded by Bulqiyah (2021), EFL students experienced difficulties in essay writing for different reasons, such as a lack of knowledge surrounding the writing process and a lack of linguistics knowledge. Therefore, EFL students exclusively believed that grammar is even more important than applying the cognitive writing process. The writing aspect of grammar made students anxious since they thought that perfect writing meant correct grammar (Almalki, 2020).

Furthermore, most participants believed that mechanics, such as punctuation or spelling, would not have a strong effect on the meaning of their written paragraphs as grammar. Thus, mechanical errors occur in EFL writing because they receive "less attention in writing practice" (Husna & Multazim, 2019, p. 74). Moreover, the data showed that EFL students' needs and weaknesses vary depending on their English levels and beliefs. This study revealed that EFL students have their own experiences and beliefs about the best way to write in English and the areas most important to the writing process. The present study encourages EFL teachers to explore their students' perspectives regarding improvement of their writing skills.

7. Recommendations

Based on the current study's findings, the author proposed six suggestions for EFL stakeholders:

1. The Saudi educational system should address all writing component rules and activities in their textbooks, for example by illustrating the rules of spelling English sounds. According to Altamimi and Ab Rashid (2019), "textbooks do not contain writing activities that teach students about English spelling rules" (p. 188).
2. EFL teachers should encourage their students to use different learning resources for English writing improvement.

3. EFL instructors should be conscious of their students' needs and their language level when designing the appropriate instructional materials and exercises.
4. The EFL educational system should highlight the significance of considering all the important aspects of writing, including mechanics like punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, to increase the quality of students' paragraphs.
5. Learners should be encouraged to carry out writing cognitive processes, such as planning, drafting, and revising.
6. Future investigators should utilize different research data collection methods, such as document analysis, for a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of paragraph writing seen in undergraduate EFL students studying English at different levels.

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Appendix 1

Rank the following language aspects of English writing from the most important to the least important

Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8	Rank 9	Rank 10
Word Choice										
Grammar										
Coherence										
Cohesion										
Punctuation										
Spelling										
Planning										
Drafting										
Revising										
Organization										

Rank the following language aspects of English writing from the most difficult to the least difficult

Category	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7	Rank 8	Rank 9	Rank 10
Word Choice										
Grammar										
Coherence										
Cohesion										
Punctuation										
Spelling										
Planning										
Drafting										
Revising										
Organization										

Appendix 2

Areas of strengths in writing

Areas of Strengths	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.					
I can use diverse vocabulary.					
I have the ability to choose the word that is appropriate for the given context.					
It is easy for readers to follow my ideas.					
I can properly use transitional words.					
I have no problem with developing several paragraphs.					
I am able to use punctuation properly within a text.					
I can spell most of the intended words correctly.					
I can connect the main ideas to the supporting details at the paragraph level.					
I do not have a problem applying the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.					

Areas of improvement in writing

Areas of Strengths	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I cannot write and express my ideas smoothly and accurately.					
I have a limited vocabulary.					
I face difficulties in organizing my ideas.					

Areas of Strengths	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I lack the knowledge of how to use transitional words properly.					
I have a problem with developing several paragraphs.					
It is challenging to use punctuation properly within a text.					
I cannot spell most of the intended words correctly without using an online dictionary.					
Connecting the main ideas to the supporting details at the paragraph level is challenging.					
It is hard to use the appropriate text structures for each type of genre.					
I am struggling to apply the steps of writing development, including planning, drafting, and revising.					

Appendix 3

1. What are the most important aspects of writing in English?
2. Are grammar, word choice, and organization important in English writing? Explain?
3. Are mechanics important in English writing, including punctuation and proper spelling? Explain?
4. How are coherence and cohesion important in English writing?
5. Why is following the writing process, such as pre-writing, during, and post-writing, necessary in English writing?
6. What are the least important aspects of writing in English?
7. What are your strengths in writing in English?
8. What are your weaknesses in writing in English?
9. What makes you satisfied with your writing in English?