



*Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique*



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**BORDJ BOU-ARRERIDJ**

**FACULTE DES LETTRES ET DES LANGUES**

**DEPARTEMENT DES LETTRES ET LANGUES ETRANGERES**

**MEMOIRE DE FIN D'ETUDES**

**Réalisé en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de MASTER**

**Option : didactique des langues étrangères**

**Thème**

**THE ISSUES FACING EFL MASTER'S STUDENTS  
IN UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  
CASE OF EFL MASTER TWO STUDENTS**

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**Année universitaire : 2021-2022**

# *Dedication*

*In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful*

*All the praise is due to Allah alone, the sustainer of the entire world.*

*I dedicate this work;*

*To my dear mother, for her endless support and constant prayers, the reason of what I become today.*

*To my beloved father who cares for me and supported me.*

*To my brothers Abdelrahmane, Mohamed Ayoub and my sisters Hanane and Kawther, you have been my inspiration and my soulmates.*

*Special thanks to my best friend DJEMAOUNE Meriem and to all who helped and encouraged me.*

***Manel***



*In the Name of Allah Most Merciful Most Compassionate*

*I dedicate this work to:*

*My beloved parents and sisters who have been my source of inspiration and gave me strength when I thought of giving up, who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support.*

*To my kindest friends Ahlem, and Basma and to my dear friend whom I shared this work*

*CHELLABI Manel*

***Meriem***

# **Acknowledgement**

First and foremost, heartfelt praises goes to Allah who gave us guidance and patience to accomplish this work.

We would like to express gratitude and appreciation to our honorable supervisor Dr. BENMHAMMED Younes, without his careful help this work would have never been done.

We are also grateful to the members of the jury for accepting to take the time to read and examine this work

## **Abstract**

Conducting effective research is very essential for writing a dissertation, since this latter requires a valuable set of planning and research skills. However, it is not an easy task to be accomplished, as beginners researchers, students encountered many obstacles due to the complexity of the research, which is a mix between two skills; academic writing and methodological skills. The current study examines the issues facing EFL Master two Students at Mohamed El Bashir El Ibrahimi University in understanding and conducting research process, during the academic year 2021/2022. In addition, it aims at addressing the main factors that affect the progress of the dissertation. In this descriptive inquiry, the data collection tools were two questionnaires assigned to a sample of 23 master two English students, and 7 teachers at the department of foreign languages at Bordj Bouarreridj University. The questionnaires revealed that, students have limited ability of understanding research skills .in addition students faced problems with choosing good topic for their dissertation. Furthermore, they complained about the limited time they have to write their dissertations. All of these factors have an impact on the dissertation writing process.

**Key words:** Research methodology, Research writing, EFL Master Students.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**EFL:** English as a foreign language

**P:** Page

**%:** Percent

**PhD:** Doctor of philosophy



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# **General introduction**

## **Statement of the problem:**

It is commonly known that a Master's dissertation is a complex paper that needs certain academic skills to manage the whole process of writing. In other words, students are unable to submit a successful thesis and receive the grades they deserve, unless valuable research methods are used. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the difficulties EFL Master Students face when writing their dissertation and to give them the opportunity to share their perspectives on the types of challenges they encountered in their academic journey, in order to pave the way for tackling such challenges meanwhile, suggesting some useful solutions that may help students write an appropriate thesis.

## **Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the challenges that Algerian EFL Master's students encountered in the research process?
- How do research stages' obstacles affect the process of thesis writing?
- What are the most challenging factors of these obstacles?

## **Significance of the study**

The understanding of applying the major steps of the research methodology process stands to be significant to the overall research knowledge and skills among EFL students, mainly undergraduate students. Thus, the study is expected to have important implications for researchers, students, and teachers in order, to create better conditions for EFL Master Students to overcome the problems involved. Therefore, this study is significant in guiding students to develop their research writing skills as well as enlightening higher education, especially, the Department of Letters and Foreign Languages at BBA University to achieve its goals to stand against those challenging hindrances and to work hard to strengthen the quality of research methodology courses and curriculum.

## **Research aims**

The major inquiry of this study is to help the students understand the process of conducting research for a dissertation, which is considered as a challenging task for them and provide rich implication for education. This study also helps teachers know the difficulties that Master two EFL students encountered while writing their dissertation .in this manner they will be able to guide them in a way that can help them lay out in paper their ideas and insights.

## **Population**

This study deals with students and teachers of the English language at Bordj Bouarreridj university where our sample was taken. The questionnaire of both teachers and students are used for data collection and their answers are analyzed and discussed.

## **Sample**

Students: From a population of about 140 students of second-year didactics Master students, 23 students participated in the students' online questionnaire.

Teachers: Seven teachers of EFL Master at Bordj Bou Arreridj University answer the given questionnaire.

## **Research instruments**

Two semi-structured questionnaires were designed to achieve the purpose of this study; one for students and the other for teachers. They involve closed questions, open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions.

## **Structure of the dissertation:**

The current research is basically divided into three main chapters; two chapters are devoted to the theoretical framework, the first chapter of which contains detailed information about the meaning of research, its objectives as well as the main criteria of good research. Moreover, it introduces the main difference between research methodology and research methods and their function in developing students' research skills and knowledge about the process of writing an academic research paper. On the other hand, the second chapter is about thesis and dissertation, research challenges faced by EFL Master Students; it includes various constraints and factors with the focus on the role of the supervisor in guiding their supervisee. Furthermore, the third chapter is the fieldwork. It is a field study that is concerned with the description and the analysis of students and teachers' questionnaires.

**Chapter One**  
**THEORETICAL**  
**PART**

## **Introduction**

It is worth noting that research is not an easy task by its nature, thus, it is considered as a daunting process especially for undergraduate students, as Kleijn et al. (2012,p.926) claim that, students mostly for the first time in their education, perform a piece of research independently and therefore have to learn how to actually do research, and, on the other hand, students have to show that they are capable of doing research independently.

It is critical and rigorous work that requires considerable mental efforts that necessitate knowledge of the subject matter, planning, care, and hard work, especially for students that aim to get the Master's degree and submit their final assignment. As Sadeghi and Khajepasha (2015, p.357) state that "thesis writing is perhaps the most daunting part of graduate education. Consequently, writing a thesis is considered as the most difficult piece students have ever faced.

Todd, Smith and Bannister (2006, p. 162) further enlighten that, "The introduction of any new approach to learning is always unsettling, and students will inevitably experience challenges when completing their first piece of truly independent work". Hence, the majority of EFL Master's students encountered many obstacles and challenges during the thesis work with the practical skills of research stages including formulating research questions, choosing the research methodology, designing instruments for data collection, and analyzing data statistically. Besides, other hidden challenges exist.

In short, this study aims to examine thesis writing hindrances among EFI Master's students and the main factors behind those hindrances. Finally, we hope that this investigation will help both EFL teachers and students to think about the possible solutions to unveil difficulties in understanding and applying research methodology in the process of thesis writing.

## **1. Research methodology**

### **1.1. Definition of research**

Defining research is a difficult process. Hence, many experts and scholars do not reach to a specific definition, for that reason it was seen from different perspectives and sides and it was defined in different ways. In this line, Singh (2006) states that most of us recognize that the progress which has been made in our society has been largely the result of research, we do not have an exact definition of the term (p.1). For example, Neville (2007, p. 1) defines research as "a process of inquiry and investigation; it is systematic, methodical and ethical; research can help solve practical problems and increase knowledge." Pandey and Mishra (2015, p. 7)



also claim that the “Word Research” is comprised of two words = Re+Search. It means to search again. So, research means a systematic investigation or activity to gain new knowledge of the already existing facts.”

Singh (2006) in his book “Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics”, stated many comprehensive and functional experts’ definitions of research. One of the main important definitions is those defined by:

◆ C.C. Crawford:

“Research is simply a systematic and refined technique of thinking, employing specialized tools, instruments, and procedures in order to obtain a more adequate solution of a problem than would be possible under ordinary means. It starts with a problem, collects data or facts, analysis these Critically, and reaches decisions based on the actual evidence. It evolves original work instead of the mere exercise of personal. It evolves from a genuine desire to know rather than a desire to prove something. It is quantitative, seeking to know not only what but how much, and measurement is, therefore, a central feature of it.”

◆ C. Francies Rummel:

“Research is an endeavor to discover, develop and verify knowledge. It is an intellectual process that has developed over hundreds of years, ever-changing in purpose and form and always searching for truth.” On the other hand, Francis G. Cornell observed “To be sure the best research is that which is reliable verifiable and exhaustive so that it provides information in which we have confidence. The main point here is that research is, literally speaking, a kind of human behavior, an activity in which people engage. By this definition all, intelligent human behavior involves some research.”

Collegiate Dictionary defines research as “ studious inquiry or examination; ESP investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws “.

◆ M. Cook:

“Research is an honest exhaustive, intelligent searching for facts and their meanings or implications with reference to a given problem. The product or findings of a given piece of research should be an authentic, verifiable and contribution to knowledge in the field studied.”

In his definition, he emphasized the following characteristics:

- It is an honest and exhaustive process.

- The facts are studied with understanding.
- The facts are discovered in the light of problem. Research is problem-centered.
- The findings are valid and verifiable.
- Research work should contribute to new knowledge in that field. Singh (2006, p.3)

In sum, research in general attempts to answer certain questions which have not been answered yet, as Booth et. All (2003, p. 10) mention « In the broadest terms, we do research whenever we gather information to answer a question that solves a problem ». Since, research's core is all « about answering questions as we attempt to understand the world around us! When you set about the task of finding answers to every-day questions, you are conducting research. Formal research, like that being done for a thesis, a dissertation, or a funded or unfunded project, involves systematic actions that help the researcher add credibility to the questions and answers engaged in his or her research. » Hancock and Algozzine (2006, p.3)

In our view, the simple meaning of research, as a common basis of all human endeavor, is to use Reason defining human nature, with objectivity via a set of instruments both theoretical and practical to solve a given question. Collecting data, organizing and questioning them with a real and genuine sense of criticism gradually, constitute the royal way to do scientific work. Of course, strong arguments and full explanation along with plain description are required in every single genuine research, giving others the possibility to analyze, in their turn, the final results.

## **1.2. Criteria of academic research**

Having just information and data is not enough to make good research. Thus, research is seen as rigorous work that requires the following certain steps. Furthermore, every step of the research study is important and the neglect of any step can affect the quality of the research.

In addition, Research is one of the means by which we try to discover the truth, or approach it. As a result academic research is not about just choosing a topic and analyzing data to be considered good. Kothari (2004) added that, good research needs to meet the following criteria: The purpose of the research study should be clearly defined with the use of common concepts.

- ◆ The methods used in the investigation must be described in sufficient detail to allow other researchers to replicate research for more progress while maintaining the consistency of what has been achieved.

- ◆ The research design should be carefully planned to achieve results that must be as objective as possible.
- ◆ Weaknesses and limitations of research, and design should be reported by the investigation researchers in order to estimate their impact on study results.
- ◆ Analysis and interpretation of data should be sufficient to reveal its significance.
- ◆ The methods used in data analysis should be suitable.
- ◆ Careful consideration should be given to the reliability and validity of the data.
- ◆ Conclusions should be limited and restricted to data, which are reasonable and adequate information provided by the research.

### **1.3. Objectives of research**

The main purpose of research is to find out the hidden facts through systematic investigations. Hence, each research study has its own specific purpose according to Kothari (2004). Thus, the objectives of the research are listed below:

- To gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it (studies with this object in view are termed explorative or formulative research studies).
- To portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation, or a group (studies with this object in view are known as descriptive research studies).
- To determine the frequency with which something occurs or with which it is associated with something else (studies with this object in view are known as diagnostic research studies)
- To test the hypothesis of a causal relationship between variables (such studies are known as hypothesis testing research studies).

Moreover, Singh (2006, p.16) stated that the research has three objectives:

- Theoretical objective: those researches for the purpose of theory, formulate new theories, principles, or laws. This type of research is explanatory because it explains the relationship of certain variables.
- Factual objective: those researches who study facts and find out new facts. These studies describe facts or events that have occurred before and are done in history.
- Application objective: application means improvement and modification in practice.

For novice researchers, according to Booth & al (2003, pp. 4-5), it may provide the following immediate and practical benefits:

- Learning to do research will help students understand better the material they cover.

- Doing research is an experience that enables students to evaluate carefully what they read through a process full of discoveries.
- Writing the report of one's own work will help them to understand what is behind, what they read as books and what other people (experts) tell through these books.
- Research gives students insights into the nature of knowledge, i.e., the kind of knowledge which results from asking proper questions and offering pertinent answers.
- Research offers students the opportunity to learn skills, which they need now and in further studies. These skills are said to persist when students leave the University or Institution they are studying or working in.
- One more practical benefit of research is the pleasure it offers in solving puzzles and discovering things that other people do not know, and which contributes to the prosperity of human knowledge.

#### **1.4. Research methods vs Research methodology:**

Successful dissertation requires correct choice of research methodology and this later will dictate the kinds of approaches and methods used .Therefore, it is important to make a distinction between these two terms, in this sense (Deborah, 2011) claimed that understanding the difference between methods and methodology is of a paramount importance. Hence, research methods; are « ...all those methods and techniques which are used by the researcher during the course of studying his research problem » Kumar (2008, p. 4).

In other words, research methods are simply the methods and tools used in collecting data in research and aimed at finding solutions to a research problem, Whereas, research methodology is a way of explaining how the researcher intends to conduct the research, it is logical, systematic plan to solve the research problem. Moreover, it is the science that guides the researcher and paved the way for him to complete his study. It is often recognized as how the research is to be done and how knowledge is to be gained (Kumar, 2008, p. 5).

Furthermore, according to Kothari (2004), Research methods refer to the behavior and tools used in the selection and construction of research techniques. They refer to all the methods that are used by the researcher in the process of studying his research. In addition, He stated that research methods can be put into the following three groups:

- In the first group we include those methods which are concerned with the collection of data. These methods will be used where the data already available are not sufficient to arrive at the required solution.

- The second group consists of those statistical techniques which are used for establishing relationships between the data and the unknowns.
- The third group consists of those methods which are used to evaluate the accuracy of the results obtained. Kothari (2004, p.8).

Whereas, research methodology is a systematic approach of solving research problems. It may be seen as a science that studied how to conduct research scientifically, and in it, we study different steps that a researcher usually uses in studying his research problem. Thus, researchers should know not only the research methods but also the methodology (Kothari, 2004).

So, for more specification, methodology is generic while methods are particular instruments utilized for the sake of the general research. But, the goal is the two ways is attaining conclusions as reliable and plausible as possible. Nevertheless, one can employ the two terms to determine a conducted work with objectivity, organization and accuracy alimeted by argumentation and explanation theoretically and practically.

## **2. Challenges that EFL Master Students face in the process of research writing:**

### **2.1. Selecting an appropriate topic:**

Choosing the right topic is crucial in any research. The topic essentially determines the direction of the entire research work. With a perfect research topic, the researcher progresses quickly with the intended work, and the research work becomes a delightful experience. Whereas, in uninteresting topics, a researcher faces countless difficulties, and therefore, the research journey becomes inconsistent. However, selecting an appropriate topic can be the most challenging part of the process of research writing, since it is its first step.

Hence, the majority of students struggle to find a suitable topic for their studies. Obviously, good research writing must be based on a good topic.

In this line, Erbay&Yılmaz, 2017 and Haung, 2007 found that topic selection was a difficult step in the process of writing a dissertation. Moreover, Lise, Mennecke and Townsend (2012, p.143) added that many students are not prepared enough to engage in the appropriate training needed to select a research topic. Furthermore, choosing a suitable topic was not an easy task to do, since there are a large number of options to choose from and every student wants to choose a good topic to impress his supervisor, this later makes him move from topic to topic and consume lot of time on this step.

In addition, the lack of guidance available to students make them unconfident in choosing an appropriate topic and here it comes the role of the supervisor who plays a vital role in helping students choosing the right topic by discussing with them and suggest topics for them

In this respect, Lise, Mennecke, and Townsend (2012, p.143) stated that, while overarching ideas of contribution to the field and the experiential background of the student are mentioned very little guidance is given as to how to select a research topic.

Another crucial challenge is the insufficient time and thus, students try to finish their research work instead of doing it with a whole heart. The fact that they do not have much time to focus on the research topic, they find it difficult to choose a suitable research topic. In consequence, it is always recommended to choose topics that are closely related to your intellectual interests, personal experiences and favorite research areas. Tent (2008: 1).

Because, simple issues can be deepened if they are in the interest field of the researcher. A vertical and a horizontal work is demanded to enrich quest and achieve satisfactory results.

Therefore, research topic is the first thing that determines the success of research and good research topic should have the following qualities:

- Clarity is the most important quality of any research topic. The topic should be clear so that others can understand the nature of your research. Research topic should have one meaning so that people are not distracted. The research topic should be clear and not ambiguous so that you can handle it properly.

But, we can target specialized layer in specific and more profound subjects. So, in the communication process, one must take into account the receiver of the information to succeed his communication operation. The message, forwarded by the expeditor and its nature are related to the receiver who tries to understand it.

- The language of the research topic should be simple.
- The research topic should be clearly defined. If a research topic is not well defined, you will find it difficult to formulate your research questions, goals, and hypotheses.
- Good research topic is researchable: this means that the topic can be investigated through the analyses and collection of data.

Finally, good research topic is interesting: an interesting topic will keep researchers interested throughout the research process.

## **2.2. Defining the research problem:**

Broadly speaking, any question that you want to be answered and any assumption or assertion that you want to challenge or investigate can become a research problem or a research topic for your study, Kumar (2011, p.57). Furthermore, Creswell (2012, p.59) stated that research problems are the educational issues, controversies or concerns that guide to need for conducting a study. In other definition by Kothari (2004, p. 24) research problem in general, refers to some difficulty which a researcher experiences in the context of either a theoretical or practical situation and wants to obtain a solution for the same. We put it another way, research problem can be simply defined as question that researcher attempt to answer or dilemma that a researcher wants to solve. Hence, there are several benefits of formulating a research problem, since, this later is the heart of research study. In this respect, Kumar (2011, p. 57) wrote that the formulation of research problem is the first and most important step of the research process: it is like the identification of a destination before undertaking a journey.

In addition, formulating research problem makes the objectives of the study clear and enables to reach the objective of study. It also provides the framework for understanding the research findings and understand the research procedure in best way.

However, research problem is not easy to formulate like most students think, it is perhaps the most challenging and rigorous step in the research process and many students encountered serious difficulties in conducting this step. According to Singh (2006, p.24), the selection of suitable problem is not an easy task, it is serious responsibility to commit oneself to a problem that will inevitably require much time and energy and which is so academically significant. Moreover, he enumerated the main sources to which one may proceed for an appropriate research problem:

- The researcher's personal experiences in the field of education are the main source for identifying the appropriate problem. Many problems faced in the classrooms and schools or the community are perhaps more suitable for investigation for a beginning researcher than are problems removed from his own teaching experience.
- Additional source of the problem which is commonly used by researchers as suggested by supervisors, is the extensive study of existing literature research abstracts, journal, Handbooks of research international abstracts, etc. He can make an analogy for selecting a research problem or may think the parallel problem in the field of study.

- In selecting an appropriate problem, the researcher has to decide his field of study. he should investigate the field intensively in specific areas, this may help him to identify a problem from the specific field.
- New innovations, technological changes and curriculum development are constantly bringing new problems and opportunities to social studies research.
- The most practical source of the problem is consulting supervisors' experts in the field and most experienced person in the field, they can point most important problem of the areas, he can discuss specific topics in the field to emerge a problem.
- It is common practice for researchers to suggest some problems in their research reports the researcher can choose an appropriate problem for his own research.

Thus, Kumar (2011, p. 59) affirmed that there are many considerations to keep in mind that enable to make your studies manageable and keep you motivated these considerations are:

**Interest:** Interest should be the most important consideration in selecting a research problem.

Research endeavor is usually time-consuming and involves hard work and possibly unforeseen problems. It creates motivation in perseverance and innovation in time and space.

**Magnitude:** You should have sufficient knowledge about the research process to be able to visualize the work involved in completing the proposed study. Narrow the topic down to something manageable, specific, and clear. Then, one is able to extend, if he wants, his domain of study further.

**Measurements of concepts:**

If you are using a concept in your study (in quantitative studies), make sure you are clear about its indicators and their measurement. For example, if you plan to measure the effectiveness of a health promotion program, you must be clear as to what determines the effectiveness and how it will be measured. Do not use concepts in your research problem that you are not sure how to measure.

**Level of expertise:** Make sure you have an adequate level of expertise for the task you are proposing.

**Relevance:** Select a topic that is of relevance to you as a professional. Ensure that your study adds to the existing body of knowledge, bridges current gaps or is useful in policy formula study, This will help you sustain your interest in the study.

**Availability of data:**



If your topic entails collection of information from secondary sources (office records, client records, census or other already-published reports, etc.) make sure that this data are available and in the format you want before finalizing your topic. Furthermore, research fails when there is not enough data to draw conclusion. The availability of data determines the success and completion of the entire study. Therefore, data availability must be considered when choosing a research question

### **Ethical issues:**

Another important consideration in formulating a research problem is the ethical Issues involved. In the course of conducting a research study, the study population may be Adversely affected by some of the questions (directly or indirectly); deprived of an intervention; Expected to share sensitive and private information; or expected to be simply experimental ‘guinea Pigs’.

Similarly, Singh, 2006 identifies steps to be followed in identifying research problem,

- ★ Step 1: identify areas of research in which researchers intend to conduct research.
- ★ Step 2: the researcher should develop the mastery of the area or it should be his field specialization
- ★ Step 3: he should review the research carried on the area for recent trends and studies in the area.
- ★ Step 4: on the basis of review, he should consider areas of focus for research.
- ★ Step 5: he should use analogies and insights when identifying problems or using his personal experience in order to pinpoint problems. He can take help from a supervisor or specialists in the field.
- ★ Step 6: He should identify specific aspects of the problem being investigated. Nonetheless, the Creation of the researcher is aimed in any serious scientific research in the sense that even he returns to previous studies in the field, he always keep an eye on the final goal and the ultimate objective of his effort, namely adding something significant to human knowledge. So, in the beginning of training and formation at the university for instance, student is obliged to start with inquirers literature in the past, but has the opportunity to ask questions freely and criticizing, if he can and wills progressively, the stuff of study.

### **2.3. Reviewing the literature**

According to Creswell (2012, p. 80), a review of the literature is a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describes the part and current state of

information on the topic of your research study. Moreover, the literature review is seen by Ridly (2012) as a part of the dissertation that review previous studies related to the topic of discussion. Kumar (2011, p. 46) also defined literature review as an integral part of the research process and makes an overview of the previously published works on specific topic and it supposed to provide the researchers with a general overview of the existing knowledge of the topic. Hence, kumar (2011), stated the main functions of literature review as follows:

- It provides a theoretical background for your studies.
- It helps you make connections between what you are intend to examine and what has already been examined.
- It allows you to show how your findings contributed to the existing body of knowledge in your profession.
- It enables you to integrate research findings into your existing body of knowledge.

Also, synthesis is another fashion of vulgarizing science and it is actually the start of the research operation and process. The discovery of novel findings and the creation of new horizons from different angles is the summit.

Kumar (2011, p. 46) added that the literature review can help in four ways, it can:

- ◆ Bring clarity and focus to your research problem.
- ◆ Improve your research methodology.
- ◆ Broaden your knowledge base in your research area.
- ◆ Contextualize your findings.

Writing a literature review requires great efforts and responsibility since it is a document that must be reliable, especially its findings and sources, thus, many students affirmed that writing literature review is rigorous work because they struggled with what to and what not to include in their thesis and the inability of synthesizing ideas besides the lack of the sources. Similarly, most tutors report that their students' literature reviews are descriptive summaries rather than critical evaluation of the previous studies 'strengths and weaknesses, other difficulties included finding and selecting relevant sources, using outdated sources, lack of synthesis and problems with citations and references.

Therefore, Creswell (2012, p. 81), identifies 5 steps researchers proceed to conduct a literature review:

- ◆ Identify key terms to use in your search for literature.

- ◆ Locate literature about a topic by consulting several types of materials and databases including those available at an academic library and on the internet.
- ◆ Critically evaluate and select the literature for your review.
- ◆ Organize the literature you have selected by abstracting or taking notes on the literature and developing a visual diagram of it.
- ◆ Write a literature review that reports summaries of the literature or inclusion in your research report.

Kumar, also (2011, p. 48) identifies four steps for conducting a review of the literature:

First, searching for the existing literature in your areas of study: To search effectively for the literature in your field of enquiry, it is imperative that you have at least some ideas of the broad subject area and of the problem you wish to investigate, in order to set parameters for your search.

Second, reviewing the selected literature: Now that you have identified several books and articles as useful, the next step is to start reading them critically to pull together themes and issues that are of relevance to your study.

Third, developing a theoretical framework: Examining the literature can be a never-ending task, but as you have limited time, it is important to set parameters by reviewing the literature in relation to some main themes pertinent to your research topic.

The theoretical framework consists of the theories or issues in which your study is embedded.

Finally, developing a conceptual framework: The conceptual framework is the basis of your research problem. It stems from the theoretical framework and usually focuses on the section(s) which become the basis of your study.

## **2.4. Formulating the hypothesis:**

The term hypothesis has been defined in different ways. For instance, J.W best stated that; a hypothesis is a shrewd guess or reference formulated to explain observed facts or conditions and to guide in further investigation. Furthermore, Kothari (2004, p.9) added that a hypothesis is a tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences. Moreover, Creswell (2012, p. 111) affirmed that Hypotheses are statements in quantitative research in which the investigator makes a Prediction or a conjecture about the outcome of a relationship among attributes or characteristics ‘ traditionally used in experiments, they serve like research questions to narrow the purpose statement to specific prediction.

Hence, a hypothesis is a hunch, assumption, suspicion, assertion or an idea about a phenomenon, Relationship or situation, the reality or truth of which you do not know. A researcher calls these assumptions, assertions, statements or hunches hypotheses and they become the basis of an enquiry Kumar (2011, p. 86). In other words, hypothesis is a prediction about a particular process or phenomenon observes during a study, or it may be tentative explanation, it is often considered as an assumption about the relationship between variables.

The core of hypothesis lies in emitting a certain idea that will be verified and checked along the research process. It can obviously appear right and confirmed or wrong partially or entirely and thus modified or changed. It depends on the reliability of the hypothesis statement and its consistency with data and results in theory and application.

Formulating a hypothesis is one of the important elements of research study, since it is a map that provides guidance and expedites investigations of the phenomena under consideration, it also provides the framework to reach conclusions and can suggest which subjects, tools and instruments are needed. In this respect, Kumar (2011, p. 88) cited the main functions of hypothesis as follows:

- ◆ The formulation of hypothesis provides a study with focus. It tells you what specific aspects of a research problem to investigate.
- ◆ A hypothesis tells you what data to collect and what not to collect, thereby providing focus to the study.
- ◆ As it provides a focus, the construction of hypothesis enhances objectivity in a study.
- ◆ A hypothesis may enable you to add to the formulation of theory, it enables you to conclude specifically what is true or what is false.

Formulating a hypothesis thus, is essential and the success or the failure of research process depends on how best it has been formulated by the researcher, However, there are three possible difficulties that researchers may face during this journey:

First, the lack of knowledge of theoretical framework

Second, research hypothesis cannot be formulated without detailed theoretical evidence, if the researcher does not know the availability of that theoretical evidence.

Third, good research hypothesis cannot be done unless, the investigator is aware of the scientific research techniques.

Thereafter, CR Kothari (2004, p. 185) added that hypothesis must possess the following characteristics :

- ◆ Hypothesis should be clear and precise.
- ◆ They should be capable of being tested.
- ◆ They should state relationship between variables.
- ◆ Should be limited in scope and must be specific.
- ◆ Hypothesis should be stated as far as possible in most simple terms so that the same is easily understandable by all concerned.
- ◆ It should be consistent with most known facts.
- ◆ Should be amenable to testing within a reasonable time.
- ◆ Hypothesis must explain the facts that gave rise to the need for explanation.

In addition to that, Singh (2006) added up that there are a number of considerations to keep in mind when constructing a hypothesis:

- A hypothesis should be simple, specific and conceptually clear: the construction of hypothesis should be simple not ambiguous because ambiguity will make your hypothesis difficult to test.
- Hypothesis should be capable of verification: it should only test one relationship or hunch at a time .to be able to make a good hypothesis, you must be familiar with the subject.
- A hypothesis should be related to the existing body of knowledge: it is important that your hypothesis emerged from existing body of knowledge.
- A hypothesis should be operationalizable: this means it can be expressed as measured.

It is a question of clarity, for the formulating of the subject of study in a question to treat gives rise to hypothesis implicitly. But, in general the researcher guides readers by announcing clear hypotheses especially in practical subjects and applied studies.

## **2.5. Preparing the research design:**

According to Singh (2006) Research design is a mapping strategy which is based on sampling techniques. Goals, random samples, research strategies, tools, and techniques for gathering evidence, analyzing data, and reporting the outcomes are all part of it. Therefore, a research design is a statement about the subject of the survey; The declaration of the research's goal and how it will be achieved. Moreover, a research design is the work that must be accomplished before the project can begin. More importantly, the plan of the research in a overview manner facilitates the search for the researcher and the reading for the reader.

A research design includes the following components:

- a) Research method or research strategy.
- b) Sampling design.
- c) Choice of research tools,
- d) Choice of statistical techniques

Singh (2006, p.77). Besides, He stated (2006) the main characteristics of a good research design:

- ◆ It should be free from bias or learning.
- ◆ It should be free from confounding effect. A good research design eliminates confounding of variables or kept it to a minimum so the results can be interpreted separately. There should be a statistical precision. The hypotheses can be tested by employing most appropriate statistical technique » (p. 79).

On the other hand, He highlighted the main potential problems and difficulties which make the research design poor:

- ◆ Inadequately stating and testing hypotheses.
- ◆ Missing or unusable data.
- ◆ Bias in sampling.
- ◆ Inadequate measurement.
- ◆ Lack of precision in statistical technique or inappropriate statistical devices. »Singh (2006, p. 79).

Broadly speaking, preparing research design presented a challenging task for Algerian EFL Master students. Hence, EFL Master's Students in many countries affirmed that they started the writing process before them doing the research design. Moreover, they said that they faced struggles in selecting the appropriate information. This means that the research was not well designed in their mind and they did not think carefully about what they want to accomplish. As a result, their final product is the result of a poorly thought-out design. In this respect, before the researcher can start designing his research, He should already have a clear idea of the research question he wants to investigate. As Kumar (2011, p. 41) noted « The main function of a research design is to explain how you will find answers to your research questions. The research design sets out the specific details of your enquiry ».

In fact, there are various ways; researchers could go for answering this question. More importantly, His research design choices should be driven by his aims and priorities; start by

thinking carefully about what he wants to achieve. Therefore, For any investigation, the selection of an appropriate research design is crucial in enabling you to arrive at valid findings, comparisons and conclusions. » However, »A faulty design results in misleading findings and is therefore tantamount to wasting human and financial resources » Kumar (2011, p. 41). And, He noted, also that researcher must have a compelling rationale for choosing a particular design; he must be able to justify his choice; and he must be aware of its advantages, flaws, and limitations. Moreover, he must explain the logistical requirements for implementing the proposed design. In other words, the first-choice researcher needs to make is whether he will take a qualitative or quantitative approach. It is also possible to use a mixed-methods design that integrates aspects of both approaches. Either case, he should carefully consider which methods are most appropriate and feasible for answering his question.

## **2.6. Collecting data:**

According to Singh (2006, p.212) “data means observations or pieces of evidence ». Whereas, »data collection is the accumulation of specific evidence that will enable the researcher to properly analyze the results of all activities by his research design and procedures ». Furthermore, He (2006) added « The main purpose of data collection is to verify the research hypothesis. » (p.212). In the same vein, Kumar (2011, p.43) pointed out that the main function of collection data is « having formulated a research problem, you then collect the data from which you will draw inferences and conclusions for your study. »

He (2011) further enlightens that the purpose for which the information is collected, the types of data collected, the resources available to the researcher, his ability to use a particular data collection method, and the socioeconomic demographics of the study population, will all influence the data collection method he chooses. Moreover, each method has its own set of benefits and drawbacks, and each method is suitable for specific situation. Additionally, the choice of a specific data collection method itself is important to ensure the quality of the information, but no data collection method can guarantee 100% accurate information. Besides, the quality of his information depends on several methodological, contextual, and investigative factors, and his ability as a researcher lies in controlling or minimizing the influence of these factors in the data collection process.

More specifically, He (2011, p. 43) stated also that « many methods could be used to gather the required information. For example, depending upon your plans, you might commence interviews, mail out a questionnaire, conduct nominal/focus group discussions or make observations. As Singh (2006, p. 212) confirmed that « The data may be obtained by administering questionnaires, testing, personal observations, interviews and many other

techniques of collecting quantitative and qualitative evidence ». In addition to that, the researcher must deal with many procedures:

To begin with, the researcher must know how much and what kind of data collection will take place and when. Furthermore, He must also be sure that the types of data obtainable from the selected instruments will be usable in whatever statistical model he will later use to bring out the significance of the study. Singh (2006, p. 212). In line with that, many students declared that they struggled enormously about how to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative data; they are not knowledgeable about the difference between them. Moreover, they do not know how either to collect or to analyze data. On the other front, some students are unfamiliar with the subject matter that interests them; they dislike working and learning new knowledge. In addition, they dislike questions that require clarification and explanation, and they prefer yes or no questions.

Kothari (2004) stated that primary data can be collected either through experiment or through survey. If the researcher conducts an experiment, he observes some quantitative measurements, or the data, with the help of which he examines the truth contained in his hypothesis (p. 17). Whereas, in a survey data can be collected by the following methods:

First, by observation: observation is a purposeful, systematic, and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. Kumar (2011, p. 134). Moreover, He (2011) added that; when you are more interested in the behavior than in the perceptions of individuals, or when subjects are so involved in the interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collect the required information (p. 134).

In fact, there are two types of observation; participant observation and non-participant observation. The first type is a qualitative research methodology in which the researcher studies a group not only through observation, but also by participating in its activities; the researcher observes and participates in the activities of a group. On the other hand, on participant observation involves observing participants without actively participating. Thus, observation entails gathering data from the researcher's own observations rather than questioning respondents. The information gathered is relevant to what is currently occurring and is unaffected by respondents' past behavior or future plans or views. This technology is undoubtedly costly, and the information it provides is also extremely limited. As a result, this strategy is ineffective in investigations involving big samples.



Second, by personal interview: The researcher follows a strict procedure and conducts personal interviews to obtain answers to a set of pre-determined questions. This form of data collection is normally done in a systematic manner, with the outcome mostly dependent on the interviewer's ability.

Third, through telephone interviews: This method of data collection entails calling the respondents directly on the phone. This is not a widely utilized method, but it is critical in industrial surveys in industrialized countries, especially when the survey must be completed in a short period of time.

Forth, mailing questionnaires: If this technique of survey is used, the researcher and the respondents will come into touch. Respondents are mailed questionnaires with instructions to return them once they have completed them.

Last but not least, through schedules: Enumerators are appointed and trained using this procedure. They are given schedules that include pertinent questions. These enumerators deliver these schedules to respondents. Enumerators fill out schedules based on the responses made by respondents to collect data. Consequently, the researcher should select one of these methods of collecting the data taking into consideration the nature of investigation, objective and scope of the inquiry, financial resources, available time and the desired degree of accuracy. Though he should pay attention to all these factors but much depends upon the ability and experience of the researcher. Kothari (2004, p.18). In this vein, Kumar (2011) mentioned that Primary data can be collected in a variety of ways. The method chosen is determined by the study's goal, the resources available, and the researcher's abilities.

## **2.7. Analyzing and interpreting data:**

Data analysis and interpreting is the process of giving meaning to the information collected and determining the conclusions, significance and implications of the results.

“Once data have been collected, the next step is to look at and to identify what is going on– in other words, to analyze the data. Here, we refer to “data analysis” in a narrower sense: as a set of procedures or methods that can be applied to data that has been collected in order to obtain one or more sets of results”. Consequently, “once a set of results has been obtained from the data, we can then turn to the interpretation of the results”. Academy for Educational Development (2006, p. 19). Besides that, according to Singh (2006, p. 229), the analysis and interpretation of data represent the application of deductive and inductive logic to the research process. The data are often classified by division into, subgroups, and are then analyzed and synthesized in such a way that hypothesis may be verified or rejected.

On the other hand, Kumar (2011) pointed out that « The way you analyze the information you collected largely depends upon two things: the type of information (descriptive, quantitative, qualitative or attitudinal); and the way you want to communicate your findings to your readers »p.43. For more precision, He (2011) argued that you should be familiar with the right program if you want to analyze data on a computer. You should also be able to construct a data file, execute the methods involved, conduct statistical tests, and understand the results. Clearly, computer and statistical understanding are essential in this field. Additionally, He (2011) stated that « knowledge of statistics helps you at each step of the research process. However, you can also carry out a perfectly valid study without using any statistics procedures. This depends upon the objectives of your study » (p. 256).

Additionally, the researcher should differentiate between the type of analysis in qualitative and quantitative research. As Kumar (2011) explained that, “it is in light of the purpose of your study and your impression about the level of understanding of your readership that you decide the type of analysis you should undertake. For instance, in quantitative research the main emphasis in data analysis is to decide how you are going to analyze information obtained in response to each question that you asked of your respondents”. Moreover, He (2011) added that; in quantitative studies, data processing begins with data editing, or ‘cleaning’ your data. Following by, data coding, which comprises creating a codebook, pre-testing it, coding in general, and confirming the coded data. Whilst “in qualitative research the focus is on what should be the basis of analysis of the information obtained; that is, is it contents, discourse, narrative or event analysis?” (p. 227).

In the same vein, Kothari (2004, p. 18) added; « A great deal of data, especially in large inquiries, is tabulated by computers. Computers not only save time but also make it possible to study large number of variables affecting a problem simultaneously. Analysis work after tabulation is generally based on the computation of various percentages, coefficients, etc., by applying various well-defined statistical formulae. » This means, in general terms, describe the strategy you intend to use for data analysis. Kumar (2011, p. 256).

Similarly, He (2011, p. 43) declared that; in addition to the qualitative–quantitative distinction, it is important for data analysis that you consider whether the data is to be analyzed manually or by a computer. Thus, the main point to consider in data analytics is; whether you are going to analyze the data manually or by computer. With the focus of presenting data in tables, figures, and pictures to summarize it, however, according to many students a variety of difficulties faced them when they come to analyze data, they have collected before. First, some of them said that their supervisors asked them to use SPSS, but

they did not know how to use this later. In addition, they did not know how to use Microsoft and computer to present or analyze data from the questionnaire. Moreover, they faced hindrances in creating pie charts, pictures, tables and graphs. As they had little experience in doing that, since, they did not see that in their classes. On the other front, they added that they faced difficulties in designing questionnaires and the online interviews. Eventually, lack of research writing knowledge skills made the process of data analytics more daunting and problematic for EFL Master Students.

## **2.8. Writing the dissertation:**

As it is commonly known, writing a dissertation is a daunting task that obviously requires great efforts and support. Following to the integration of research knowledge and skills, including adequate knowledge of how to undertake research and how to organize the dissertation into sections and chapters. At this point, Sadeghi and Khajepasha (2015, p. 357) mentioned that “thesis writing is perhaps the most daunting part of graduate education”. Also, Todd, Smith and Bannister (2006) argue that “The introduction of any new approach to learning is always unsettling, and students will inevitably experience challenges when completing their first piece of truly independent work” (p. 162). Eventually, Han (2014) declared that “The process of thesis writing is more important than the writing result itself. For EFL learners completing a thesis is a big project, which will take up almost every student’s last year at university” (p. 120). This means that, the process of writing dissertation is not an easy task especially for EFL master’s students, so that it must be situated in a clear framework containing plain ideas and a consistent plan. When insights are available the mind, the process of writing follows fluently and naturally.

At this point, comes the role of the supervisors; they should play a vital role to encourage and guide their students in their writing dissertation journey. As Pearson and Brew (2002, p. 139) said that the main goal of supervisory activity as to “facilitate the student becoming an independent professional researcher and scholar in their field, capable of adapting to various research areas”. Besides this, Zhao et al. (2007, p. 263) pinpointed “most relationships, of course, fall between these extremes: good in some ways, fair or poor in others”.

Meanwhile, Am (1997, p. 81) wrote that “the quality of postgraduate research degree supervision depends as much on the supervisor’s ability to meet the needs of a student as on the student’s expectation of her or his own responsibilities in relation to those of the supervisor”. And since writing dissertation is a difficult process that needs commitment and support for this difficult task, good supervision plays an important role in the success of

writing thesis or dissertation. It is an element that makes writing theses easier and higher product. However, many students struggled enormously with the supervision; most students did not receive enough guidance and help from their supervisor. Consequently, the success of master programs is heavily dependent on « good » supervision. Supervision is the factor that either facilitates or complicates the process for EFL Master Students.

For the majority of master two students, time management is another challenged task besides the supervision problem. Most of them need more time to choose the right topic, learn the methodology, and write the dissertation. Hence, they face different obstacles and stand between two options. On one hand, they attempt to explain and articulate complex concepts in their dissertations' text. As Nunan (1999) stated “the most difficult task to do in language learning is to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing, which is even more challenging for second language learners” (p. 271). Moreover, Lavelle & Bushrow (2007, p. 809) mentioned that “integrating disparate ideas, synthesizing perspectives, and extending theory which demand a higher-level construction skills and perspective-taking, as well as greater concern for accuracy, voice, and audience». Thus, they need to express the concept in a professional and technical manner. This skill of handling time to adjust the work to it and in it is key in finalizing the research quietly and effectively.

On the other hand, they lack the ability to construct complex FL words that communicate the message, they wish to convey, when writing their dissertations, students struggled to find the correct words to convey a concept. Eventually, either they choose to write long, ambiguous sentences that are not explicit or clear, or they prefer to write short, straightforward sentences that are concise and understandable. The first step to take is to make simple phrases and sentences with mere words and common terms, far from the complication of too intertwined sequences and strange words. This is a beginning, a good one, which will be augmented in time and practice by the fancy style in favor of the creative spirit of the writer.

The most significant general challenges are; first, lack of knowledge and experience in organizing the different sections of a dissertation. In fact, students' writing difficulties did not stop with literature review section but also with other writing difficulties. Such as, writing introduction chapter, methodology chapter as well as writing result and conclusion chapter. Second, linguistics challenges, mainly with various grammatical structures, vocabulary usage.... etc. In addition to that, regular meetings with supervisors and good supervision in general. On the other hand, lack of research projects and lack of resources are the most common problems associated with research institutes.

In brief, Students do not know what a thesis is and how it has to be written. They do not know even the difference between a dissertation and a research proposal. Moreover, students cannot find the right methodology to their research. In addition, they have problems working with supervisor namely; not receiving enough help and guidance. On the other front, they do not have enough sources and references at the library. They also do not have enough time to either conduct the research or write the dissertation. Furthermore, students did not receive sufficient academic writing instruction and lectures. As a result, research methodology and statistics should be included in master curricula, as well as regular practical workshops on research methodology and statistics for students and supervisors, adequate funding for academic thesis works, and adequate research facilities and resources in all institutes/universities conducting master's student courses, and introducing a checklist and meeting schedule for supervisors and students to utilize during thesis writing.

### **3. Students 'perspectives on research methodology courses**

EFL Master Students in particular, must understand the research process itself, additionally, they need to know its skills, importance and contributions relevant to their field of study, Furthermore Universities play a vital role in providing students with research methodology courses to prepare them in order to conduct better research, in this regard Biggam (2008, p. 4) confirmed that “Your University should provide you with a Master’s Handbook containing clear guidance on aspects of your dissertation”, similarly, (Elen and Verburgh 2008) stated that “Research and teaching are two of the main tasks of universities. A close link between them is often considered to be at the heart of the institution” (as cited in Visser-Wijnveen, van der Rijst, & Van Driel 2015, p. 474). In addition, (Crooks, Castleden & Van Meerveld, 2010) claimed that “Research methods courses are becoming increasingly popular in degree requirements” (as cited in Braguglia & Jackson, 2012, p. 348). As a result, the majority of students are taking the course as a graduation requirement.

At the Algerian universities for instance, teaching research methodology courses starts from first year license until graduation, to be more specific, it has been noticed that research methodology is taught utilizing a teacher -centered approach at Mohamed El Bashir El Ibrahimi University, at the level of English department. Hence, (Sablonnière et al., 2009, p. 2) stated that according to this approach “Knowledge is defined as an entity that can be given or transmitted and absorbed by students”, and “the professor is the essential figure”, and “the main source of knowledge, while the learner is expected to follow the instruction, and the information provided by the teacher in order to learn the material” (Sablonnière et al., 2009, p. 1). It is also noticed that, most research courses take the form of formal lectures, when

knowledge is available, such a module should be actively learned through practice, especially within the field of second year of master's degree. Thus, learning to do research and to critically evaluate research practices are better facilitated by training critical research problem solving and reasoning skills than by having students memorize research terms and definitions (Ball & Pelco, 2006, p. 152). Moreover, (Kilburn & al, 2014) explains the student's attitudes toward studying this course; as that may have difficulties to comprehend its major concept, or "To meaningfully connect what they learn in these classes to what they learn in the rest of their plan of study". (EKmekci & al, 2012, p. 272) ; the difficulty in connecting research in theory and research in practice make the students frustrated and therefore they become dissatisfied with the course. Therefore, writing a Dissertation is very difficult task. Thus, it is essentially the product of effective training and proper guidance. Komba (2016, p. 79), He suggested two main recommendations to minimize student's weaknesses in writing the dissertation :

First, the research methodology courses offered by the university need to be reviewed in content and teaching methods.

Second, universities should aim to subject all undergraduate students to academic writing training with a focus on how to write a research report.

#### **4. The importance of research methodology courses :**

According to Kothari; The study of research methodology gives the student the necessary training in gathering material and arranging or card-indexing them, participation in the field work when required, and also training in techniques for the collection of data appropriate to particular problems, in the use of statistics, questionnaires and controlled experimentation and in recording evidence, sorting it out and interpreting it, (2004, p. 10). Along these lines, teaching research methodology and techniques permits students to learn about several components of the research process, such as formulating useful research questions, research design, data collecting, analysis, writing, and presentation. The quality of research methodology courses and postgraduate supervision are associated to high completion rates in postgraduate study. Many successful supervisors are also well versed in a variety of research techniques. More specifically, (Rajasekar, Philominathan, & Chinnathambi, 2006, p. 6) stated that the significance of research technique is focused on the following:

- (1) Why is a particular research study undertaken?
- (2) How has one formulated a research problem?
- (3) What types of data are collected?

(4) What particular method has been used?

(5) What was a particular technique of analysis of data used?

Research methods provide students with the necessary knowledge to conduct better research and potentially become successful career researchers. Additionally, teaching students about research methods has become more important than ever due to the changing nature of data. For instance, (Crooks, Castleden & Van Meerveld, 2010) affirmed that “Research methods courses are becoming increasingly popular in degree requirements” (as cited in Braguglia & Jackson, 2012, p. 348). Unfortunately, the current structure and content of many research methods courses do not adequately support students in acquiring the necessary skills to work with complex data and new analytical tools. Many studies have shown that research methods courses are not popular with students. Many universities offer limited research methods courses, and it is expected that tutors can provide students with the necessary guidance in methodological aspects. However, this expectation is not necessarily tenable, as some supervisors may lack expertise in the methods students want to use in their projects. In addition, the Research Methods program is severely underfunded, and the curriculum is designed for the isolation skills students need to do their dissertation work, rather than preparing students to become qualified researchers.

On that account, (Kilburn at al., 2014) argue that research requires “a combination of theoretical understanding, procedural knowledge and mastery of a range of practical skills”. Therefore, teachers should well prepare and organize their courses in order to motivate students to learn the strategies of planning the course. Since, “Students respond positively to a well-organized course” (Davis, 1993, p. 2). For instance, the course should be well designed so that the early lectures are more ideal for students who need a broad theoretical basis in research, while the later lectures are more appropriate for students who want to learn specific details and methods. Nonetheless, all students, whether at the beginning or later stages of their research projects, are strongly encouraged to read and ponder the entire course in order to be fully informed of all aspects and to receive the appropriate response on their inquiries.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter focuses on the importance of studying research methodology as a course, since writing dissertation depends on how students are familiar with research skills and knowledge of how to conduct research .Furthermore, giving the students the opportunity to express their attitudes towards research methodology courses that are provided by their universities. With the focus on the main criteria that students should follow in order to write a comprehensive

paper. Moreover, it tried to mention the main obstacles students faced, as well as, emphasizing the supervisor's role in facilitating the process of writing their final assignment. As a result, these hurdles will be lifted if adequate frame theoretically and practically at academic institutions and others is well thought and exercised. The interaction between supervisor, in the case of dissertation, and the supervisee is essential to the final elaboration of the work. The action of the supervisee represents, in our view, the heart of the pedagogical/didactical operation under the eye of the supervisor psychologically and intellectually in the terrain of learning.

## **Previous related studies**

When we reviewed various research studies on the challenges that EFL students face when writing their thesis, it became clear to us that despite the majority of them provided valuable insights into the nature of such challenges, they did not address the master thesis writing process holistically. Instead, they concentrated on the product.

Students have trouble arranging the constituent sections of the thesis, according to Shaw (1991),

Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006), Ho (2013), Komba (2016), and Singh (2015), Introduction and Discussion (Shaw, 1991), Literature Review (H0, 2013), and Discussion of Results (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006) were shown to be the hardest thesis chapters to write. These issues were linked to EFL students' lack of genre-specific writing abilities and ignorance of the thesis' rhetorical structure. Singh (2015) observed that international EFL students struggled to write the Literature Review, Methodology, and Findings parts.

A sample of 42 EFL students and 4 teachers was picked from a Libyan state university in another study to do so. This study used a mixed-methods approach, collecting data through questionnaires and interviews. According to the findings of this study, EFL students had a lot of trouble with the research stage of the thesis writing process. The tasks of finding a research area of interest, selecting a topic, framing research challenges, and producing a literature review are the ones they struggle with the most. They also faced obstacles such as difficulties in gathering and evaluating data, lack of basic knowledge about research, a lack of motivation, and lack of library resources.

Earlier research such as that of Komba (2016) examines the challenges that Tanzanian postgraduate students face when preparing theses and dissertations. In addition, the research aims to discover a solution to these problems. The researcher examines 39 theses and 64 dissertations from three Tanzanian universities for the study. According to the findings of the



study, half of the postgraduate students whose theses and dissertations are examined experience a variety of challenges when completing research, including inappropriate chapter presentation and weak academic writing skills. The researcher concludes that the substance of research technique courses offered at universities needs to be improved.

Claudius, Alsied and Ibrahim (2017) also investigate the difficulties Libyan EFL students encounter when writing research papers. In addition, the study looks into instructors' perceptions of their students' research abilities. The study's sample includes 42 students and four instructors from Sebha University. The findings show that participants have difficulty writing research in their field of interest, choosing a subject, identifying a research problem, reviewing related literature, and presenting the study's findings. The findings also show that instructors have a negative attitude toward students' work for a variety of reasons, including a lack of motivation and library resources, a lack of background information, and the necessity to offer more research-related courses.

Moreover, previous research by Divsar (2018) looked at demonstrating the difficulties encountered by Iranian TEFL students when writing their theses. The findings of this study suggested that the most significant barrier for Iranian EFL students was language challenges (e.g., grammatical and organizational issues, lack of knowledge of academic writing style.).

Students, on the other hand, reported a wide range of other obstacles, which were divided into three categories: first, instructional and pedagogical inadequacies (primarily students' lack of knowledge and experience in researching and writing their thesis), second, personal problems and affairs, such as poor time management and lack of interest and motivation in the thesis-writing process. Third, educational support, such as the limited availability and accessibility of educational resources.

Other important concerns noted by Todd, Smith, and Bannister (2006) include intellectual challenges experienced by students, such as time management issues and how to identify and narrow down a study topic. The most difficult issue that students may encounter is time management. Students have a tendency to put everything off until the last minute, making it difficult to complete their study on time. According to Dombeck and Wells-Moran (2006), time management skills boil down to organization, commitment, and awareness, and may be applied to a variety of tasks in life.

From what has been stated above, previous researchers' studies have identified the factors behind the difficulties that students faced during the journey of writing their dissertations.

That conducts us to reconsider the importance of simplicity for profoundness gradually in research generally and writing specially. Moreover, this process is inscribed in a solid relation between supervisor and supervisee, in which this latter tries to enter in contact with the stuff of study in order to discover new matter and bring his own contribution to knowledge, whatever its small or big size.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Writing dissertation**

## **Introduction**

Dissertation writing is a time-consuming process that necessitates careful planning and guidance, this means that it is a difficult undertaking to do individually, it takes much time and efforts. As well as, it needs a good understanding of the research process and learning about the numerous aspects of research skills, this can be done through research methodology courses which provide the students with the necessary knowledge about the research methodology, in order to write a successful dissertation .Thus, research methodology courses are very essential to novice researchers.

### **1. Thesis and dissertation:**

A dissertation is a research project completed as part of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. In some countries, this term is only used for the final assignments of PhD degrees, while in others, the terms ‘thesis’ and ‘dissertation’ are interchangeable. A dissertation typically permits students to present their results in answer to a question or proposition of their choosing. More specifically, The master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation are written documents that describe a graduate student’s research. Additionally, the student’s Supervisory Committee must approve the thesis/dissertation topic, which is chosen in cooperation with the student’s major adviser. Although the Supervisory Committee should provide format and content guidelines, there is no prescribed length for the thesis or dissertation.

A master thesis should indicate the student’s ability to conduct independent research or study, as well as their ability to utilize the techniques used in their field of study. Basically, to pass your Master’s dissertation you need to show that you are a competent researcher. On the face of it, this is quite a difficult task, mainly because this is probably the first time that you have attempted an independent piece of research work of this magnitude. Biggam (2008). He (2008) defines a competent researcher as someone who can demonstrate the « ability to face different stages » of the master’s thesis (p. 4). On the other hand, doctoral dissertations should show technical expertise in the student’s specialty as well as extend or alter current knowledge. Dissertations should either deal with good material, draw new results, make new conclusions, or reinterpret previous published information. It is expected that the thesis/dissertation research would be worthy of publication in acceptable peer-reviewed journals. Students are required to complete the manuscript(s) before to or shortly after completing their graduate program. Hence, writing a dissertation is a challenging task for many students. As Biggam (2008) mentioned, dissertations have always been a problematic area for students. Students registered for a taught Master’s program not only have to cope

with their core subject areas, but they are also required, largely through independent study, and within tight time constraints, to complete a substantial dissertation (p.11).

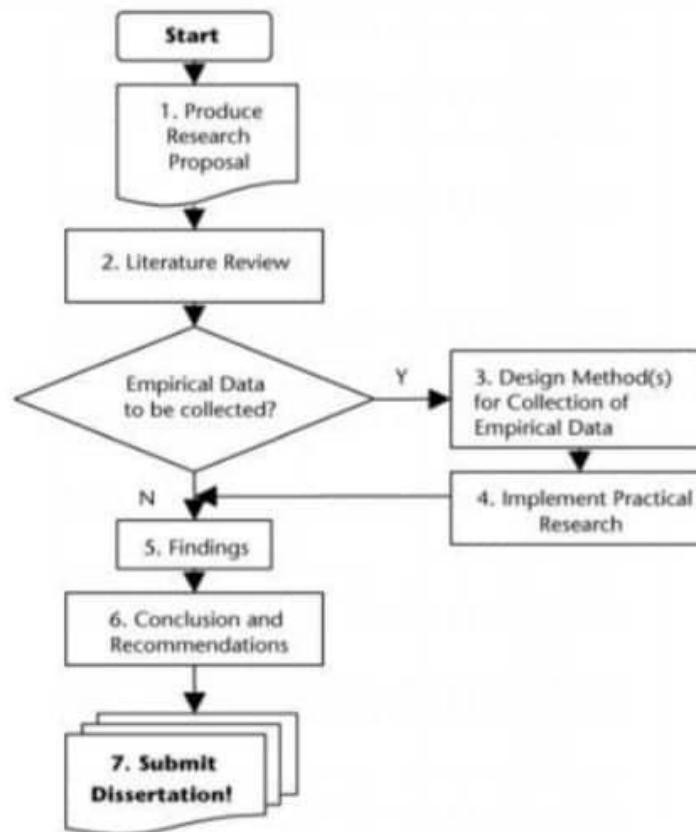
### **1.1. Stages of dissertation**

To pass your Master's dissertation you need to show that you are a competent researcher. Biggam (2008, p. 14). In other words, He(2008) views a competent researcher as one who can show proficiency in tackling the various phases found in the dissertation life cycle (p.14). According to him, the life cycle of a master's thesis is divided into several stages:

- The first stage begins with the creation of a research proposal, which specifies preliminary research materials and methods to be used.
- Candidates then proceed to the literature review step to read, evaluate and review what has been written on the research topic.
- The next stage is to collect empirical data through design, and implementation of research methods.

Additionally, the following stage deals with the results of the research conducted by the candidate. Followed by the conclusions and recommendations phase. Then, the final stage is to submit the thesis.

Really, collecting data, organizing stuff and formulating hypotheses under a theoretical shape that will be checked along the analyzing process of information, constitute the opening door to true results as much as possible. These outcomes are put into a work of dissertation where ideas are clear and the general plan established for the details afterwards.



**Figure 1: Dissertation Life Cycle (DLC), Skills and Qualities of an Academic Research**  
Biggam (2008, p. 5)

## 2. Factors affecting the progress of the dissertation:

Many undergraduate students encountered some challenges that affect the process of writing a dissertation, and this later makes it difficult for students to complete their dissertation, which is considered a time-consuming process requiring much efforts and money.

These challenges can be related to many factors such as: personality factors, sociocultural factors and linguistic factors.

### 2.1. Personality factors

According to Brown (2007, p.139) « Personality factors are the intrinsic side of effectivity within a person that can contribute in some way to the success of language learning » Motivation and anxiety are considered to be among the most important personal factors.

#### 2.1.1. Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of Tension, worrying thoughts and physical changes such as increased blood pressure and it can be an obstacle for undergraduate students.

The American psychological association states that: “people with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns”. They may avoid certain situations out of worry; they may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, dizziness, or a rapid heartbeat.

#### 2.1.2. Motivation:

Motivation is the degree to which individuals commit effort to achieve goals that they perceive as being meaningful and worthwhile. Johnson & Johnson (2003, p.25). This means that Motivation is crucial in the process of writing the dissertation. Motivation includes biological, emotional, social and cognitive variables that drive behavior. Moreover, it drives the process of dissertation writing. Similarly, Brown (2007, p. 152) argue: Motivation is the most frequently used catch – all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task.

### **2.2. Sociocultural factors:**

Language cannot be separated from culture, it is very essential to analyze the difficulties in writing dissertation from the perspectives of sociocultural issues, as brown (2007, p. 189) stated that culture becomes strongly important in the learning of second language.

Therefore, the focus on sociocultural factors are bold in three aspects:

- Social distance between each undergraduate students and their supervisors.
- The relationship between undergraduate students and their mentors.
- Supervisors timing

Thus, language is culture and vice versa. The cultural charge is connected to the linguistic language. In this sense, the writer must stick to the sequences that bear cultural meanings to not get out from the linguistic system of the language in which we write. It's evident that the social links and psychological connections between supervisor and supervisee participate hugely in the good progress of understanding and then writing in a whole frame of work.

### **2.3. Linguistic factors**

Non native speakers face a lot of difficulties when writing and acquiring the new language. Hence, in their thesis's drafts, they made errors in various aspects of English grammar rules, syntax, form, structure, punctuation and meaning is almost inevitable. Thus, EFL undergraduate students encounter difficulties with language when it comes to writing their dissertation. Reading and using authentic materials aid in ameliorating students' level in the language by which one writes his dissertation.

### 2.3.1. Grammar

Good grammar knowledge makes the dissertation a successful piece of writing, it plays an important role in writing the dissertation, and the more students understand grammar rules, the better the dissertation becomes effective. Further, joining practice to theory contributes to a well-written thesis being well thought and planned in mind.

Harmer (2001, p. 12) defines grammar as the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in the language.

Hence, EFL students struggle with the rules of grammar in writing their dissertations, these rules comprise, tenses, prepositions and many others.

In this respect, Baehaqi (2005, p. 1) states that if students do not study grammar, it is impossible for them to know and comprehend the words that have different meanings.

### 2.3.2. Word choice

For EFL students, word choice mistakes in academic writing can affect students' academic progress, resulting in misunderstanding or incomprehensibility. Simple terms and structures ease the writing process for students and teachers. They exploit then the stocked baggage linguistically and intellectually. Clear ideas are necessary but not sufficient in the dissertation since language skills are strongly required.

### 2.3.3. Spelling and punctuation:

One of the most important things any student should be aware of when editing his dissertation is punctuation, the reason is simple; if they don't use them correctly the meaning of the text can be completely changed

Furthermore, academic writing is based on the right use of punctuation.

Moreover, spelling is one of the important components of successful writing. Thus, spelling and punctuation are one of the most common writing difficulties among EFL students. Revision and review of work by another reader is necessary to make sure errors are avoided and eventually corrected.

### 2.3.4. Coherence and cohesion:

In order to create a clear and well-structured piece of writing, students must be able to use certain aspects primarily related to cohesion and coherence. Thus, cohesion problems may occur due to the inconsistencies in the writing, these inconsistencies usually involve tense, tone, voice, person, number, style, or viewpoint. The harmony of ideas is also a capital element in successful in well-done dissertation. It translates therefore the researcher degree of



concentration and capability of argumentation and explanation without omitting precise description.

### **3. Supervisor's role**

Students who are expected to conduct research and write a dissertation are inexperienced and have never completed a similar assignment before, that's why supervisors are required. Along this journey or even before that, supervisors play a crucial role in facilitating this daunting task. In this line, Mizany, Khabiri, Sajadi (2012) concluded that: supervisors are responsible for helping students in choosing an appropriate subject for their dissertation, encouraging them to continue their efforts in writing the dissertation, establishing a good relationship with their students and finally having enough scientific capabilities in research methodology and statistics (p. 2).

In addition, Izah, Norizan, Engku, and Zulkifli (2012) pinpointed that "effective supervision is one of the most important aspects of a successful written research project. According to their research, the most important requirements for a good supervisor are being friendly with the supervisees, being open-minded and flexible, being informed/ resourceful, and encouraging students' self-regulated learning. Besides, they confirm, "Supervisors play an important role in the academic life of the students as well as personal careers" (p. 220).

Additionally, this was confirmed also by Kumar, Bujang & Huat (2011). Thus, they said that being a supervisor just like being a parent, is one of the hardest jobs in the world. It is a labor of love that has the potential to lead the next generation to a successful career and life. It's difficult and time consuming, but it can be extremely rewarding, fulfilling, and rewarding, but also frustrating and frustrating at times. Furthermore, they enumerated the main supervisor's responsibilities and activities; one of the most of them are illustrated as following below:

- ◆ Giving guidance and advice. Supervision is teaching – do not expect the student to know everything. For instance, « do not say things like – you are doing a MA/Ph.D., you are supposed to know this. »
- ◆ Monitoring the progress of the research – this includes submitting.
- ◆ Initiating regular contact – meet your students at least once in a month.
- ◆ Being aware of the supervisee's developmental needs – this includes the supervisees' need to be provided with academic and emotional support and also the need to provide guidance in the initial stages of the research.
- ◆ Giving both oral and written feedback on the supervisee's work. Feedback should encourage and not discourage the student.

- ◆ Ensuring ethical and professional conduct. Treat students with respect. They are nature students (p. 34).

Moreover, according to them (2011), the following are some of the most significant characteristics that students do not like in a supervisor:

- Too busy to be effective.
- Poor feedback.
- Lack of commitment and interest.
- Tensions/conflict with the supervisory team.
- Poor communication skills.
- Conflicting/unrealistic expectations.
- Selfishness and disrespectfulness.
- Supervisor not up to date in the field.
- Lack of experience as a supervisor.
- Personality clashes.
- Advocating a master-slave relationship.

In addition to that, they identified the key characteristics that students regard to be the main important qualities of an ideal supervisor:

- Support.
- Availability.
- Interest and enthusiasm.
- Knowledge and expertise in the field.
- Interest in the student's career.
- Good communication.
- Constructive feedback.
- Direction and structure.
- Approachability and rapport.
- Experience and interest in supervision.
- Encouraging.
- Reliable and punctual at meetings.
- Responds to student as an adult.
- Advocating a peer-to-peer model of supervision (p. 37).

In brief, supervisor plays an important role in the progress of writing dissertation. Thus, students should take advantage from the meeting of his/her supervisor to make dissertation writing process less difficult, since as Biggam (2008) confirm that; if you understand how to

take advantage of meetings with your supervisor, then you will be better placed to advance work on your dissertation. On the other hand, if you fail to appreciate how to exploit supervisor meetings then you may hinder the development of your research. Furthermore, supervisor is not asked to enter in a familiar relationship with his supervisee, the simple reciprocal respect is sufficient to make the supervision task easy, successful and efficient.

**Conclusion:**

Obviously, writing a Master's dissertation can be the most challenging task students will ever face at university. This chapter attempted to present the differences and similarities between thesis and dissertation. In addition, it mentioned the stages of the dissertation. It also tried to identify most of the difficulties that students may encounter when conducting their research and writing the final paper which is the dissertation. Besides, it attempted to reveal the factors behind those difficulties, as well as, emphasize the supervisor's role in facilitating the process of writing their final assignment.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Fieldwork**

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation of the results**

# **Section one: collecting data and analysis method**

## **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the practical side of the study. It attempts to find out the difficulties that second-year Master's students faced when writing their dissertations. As a result, questionnaires were given to students and teachers to identify these common obstacles and challenges. The chapter also deals with the description of the research method, population and sample, and the data gathering tools. In addition, it will attempt to discuss the main findings.

Finally, it will provide suggestions and recommendations for further investigation.

### **1. Research approach:**

The current study uses a descriptive analytic approach to identify the common obstacles in understanding and applying research methodology that second year master's students face while preparing their dissertation.

A qualitative method is used to collect the data required for the completion of this study. The quantitative data gathered through the questionnaires helps to provide a summary of the qualitative data.

### **2. Population and sample of the study:**

The current study included a sample of twenty-three second year Master students.

Population concerned with this study included second year Master students and teachers at Mohamed El Bashir El Ibrahimi University of Bordj Bouarreridj.

Out of a total of 140 students, 23 responded to the student's questionnaire .as for teachers, seven were selected on the basis that they are second year Master supervisors.

### **3. Data collection tools:**

To carry out this research, one data collection tools is used, which is a questionnaire .two questionnaires were designed for both teachers and students, for the objective of gathering qualitative data .

## 4. Students' Questionnaire

### 4.1. Description of students' questionnaire

The students' questionnaire consists of ten questions divided into closed-ended, open-ended, and multiple-choice categories. The closed-ended questions are designed to elicit some information about their research abilities and knowledge. The open-ended question aims to generate responses and explanations about which aspects of the dissertation students find the most challenging to write.

### 4.2. Administration of the Students' Questionnaire

Google Forms was used to create the students' questionnaire. Due to time restrictions and the absence of second-year Master students, the questionnaire was distributed online via « Facebook » to a group of second-year Master students. Twenty-three students responded to the survey.

#### Data analysis

### 4.3. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

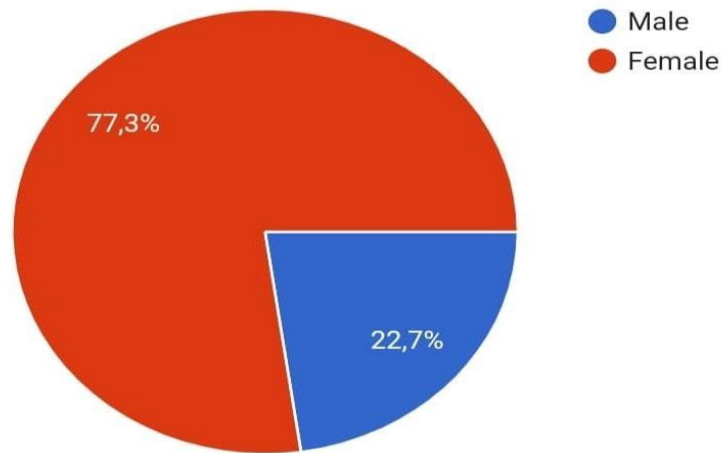
#### Section one: Bio-data

This section aims at gathering data about students' personal information: gender and age.

**Table 1.1 : Students' gender.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
<b>Male</b>	5	22,7%
<b>Female</b>	18	77,%
<b>Total</b>	23	100%

As the table shows, the percentage of female students is 77,3 % (n=18); however the percentage of male is 22,7% (n=5) ; so the number of female at master two didactics classes is more than male students.

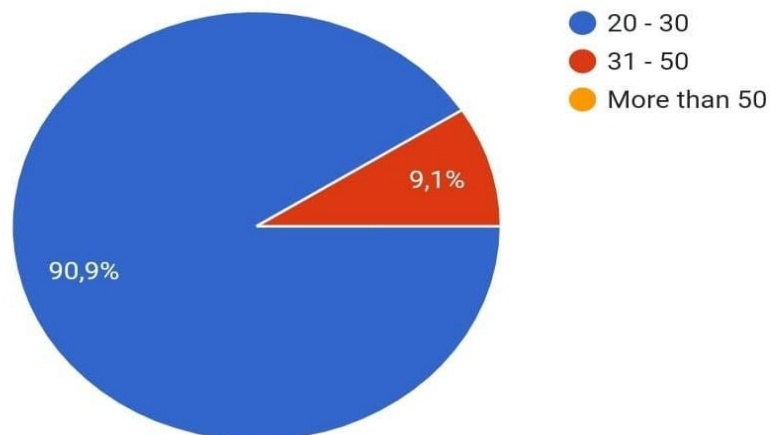


**Figure 2: Students' gender.**

**Table 1.2: Students' age.**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	21	90,9%
31-50	2	9,1%
More than50	0	0%
Total	23	100%

The majority of the participants are from the same age group 90,9% (n=21), that is between twenty (20) and thirty (30) years old. However, 9,1% (n=2) students are old aged may be they have repeated years or they did not started their primary education early or they are students worker.



**Figure 3 : Students' age.**

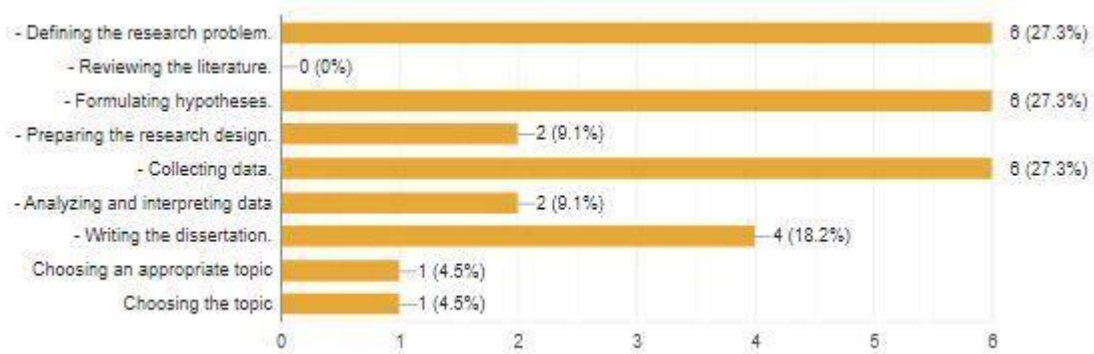
**Section two: research writing process**

This section aims at eliciting information about the hindrances faced by students in conducting their research.

**Item 1:** When conducting research, what are the steps of the research process that you find the most difficult to conduct?

**Table 1.3: Students' difficulties when conducting a research.**

Options	Percentage
Defining the research problem	27%
Reviewing the literature review	0%
Formulating hypothesis	27%
Preparing the research design	9,1%
Collecting data	27%
Analyzing and interpreting data	9,1
Writing the dissertation	18,2



**Graph 1: students' difficulties when conducting a research.**

According to this table 1.3 and graph 1, the results clearly clarify that the majority of students (80%) related their research conducting difficulties to many aspects; defining the research problem, formulating hypothesis and collecting data have the highest percentage, (18,2%) of them stated that they have difficulties with preparing the research design ,analyzing and



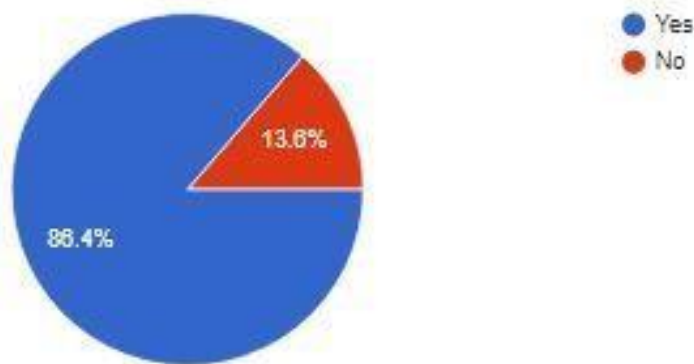
interpreting data. Moreover, (18,2%) of students displayed that they encounter difficulties in writing the dissertation, while just few of them (8,5%) add that they faced difficulties with choosing the appropriate topic.

**Item 2:** Do you know how to design:

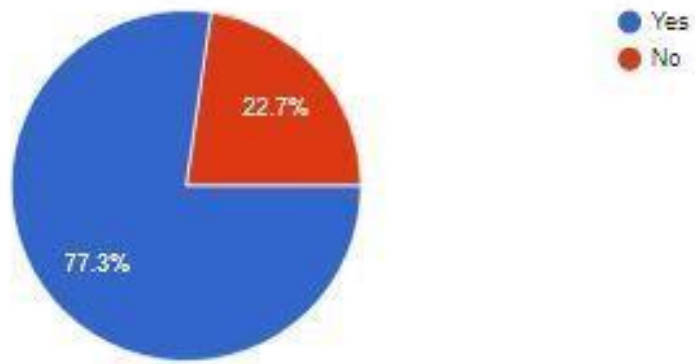
- a) A Questionnaire
- b) An interview
- c) An experiment

**Table 1.4: Research tools design difficulties.**

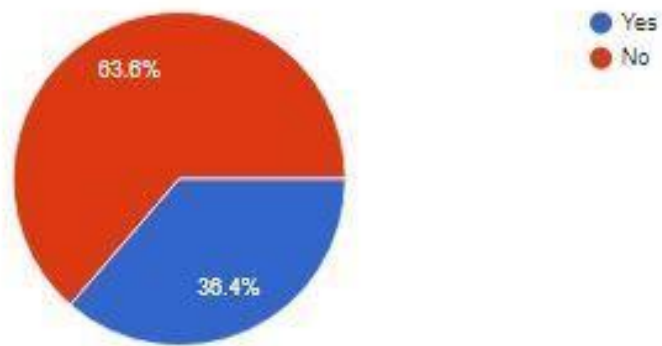
Options		Percentage
<b>Questionnaire</b>	Yes	86,4%
	No	13,6%
<b>Interview</b>	Yes	77,3%
	No	22,7%
<b>Experiment</b>	Yes	63,6%
	No	36,4%



**Figure 4: Questionnaire designing difficulties.**



**Figure 5: Interview designing difficulties.**



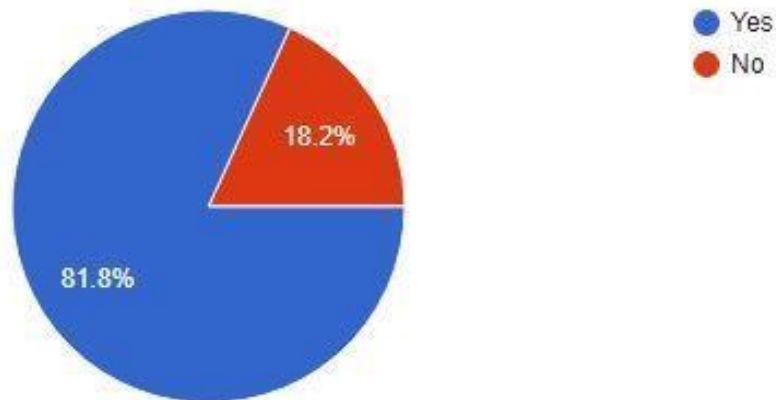
**Figure 6: Experiment designing difficulties.**

**Item 3:** Do you know how to analyze:

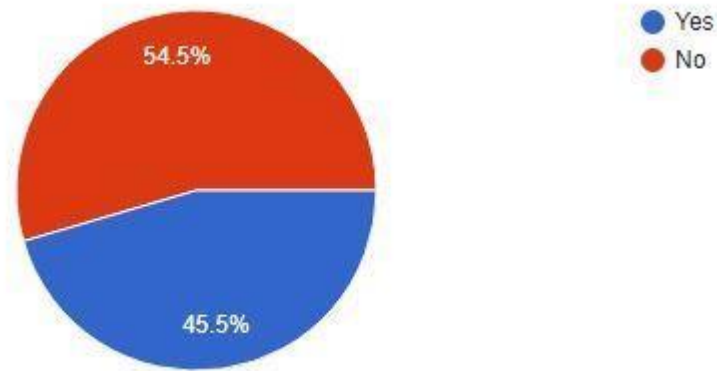
- a) A Questionnaire
- b) An interview
- c) An experiment

**Table 1.5: Data analysis difficulties.**

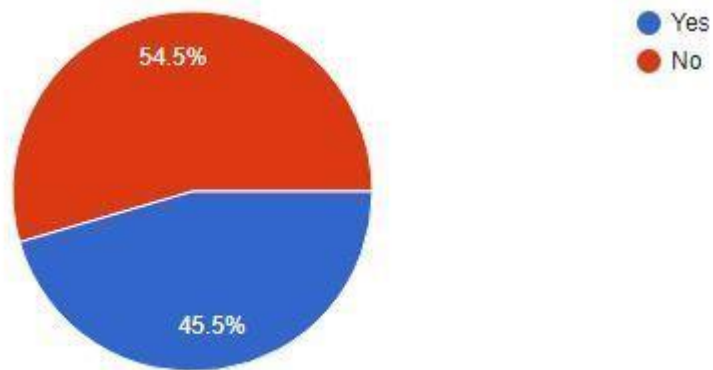
Options		Percentage
Questionnaire	Yes	81,7%
	No	18,2%
Interview	Yes	45,5%
	No	54,5%
Experiment	Yes	54,5%
	No	45,5%



**Figure 7: Questionnaire analyzing difficulties.**



**Figure 8: Interview analyzing difficulties.**



**Figure 9: Experiment analyzing difficulties.**

According to the participants' responses, the two most difficult areas for undergraduate students to overcome are not only designing research tools, but also analyzing them. This lack in capacity of analyzing data forms a handicap in critiicising well them, deprchoosehe study of useful outcomes and final results.

This means that the majority of undergraduate students fail to control the ongoing conformance of data, they cannot fix what they have measured, which represents breaking in a continuous improvement in the research. Despite that, the percentage of no response is low, they should know how to design and analyze data since they are master students, those steps must be clear and obvious as well undertaken in a well organisation.

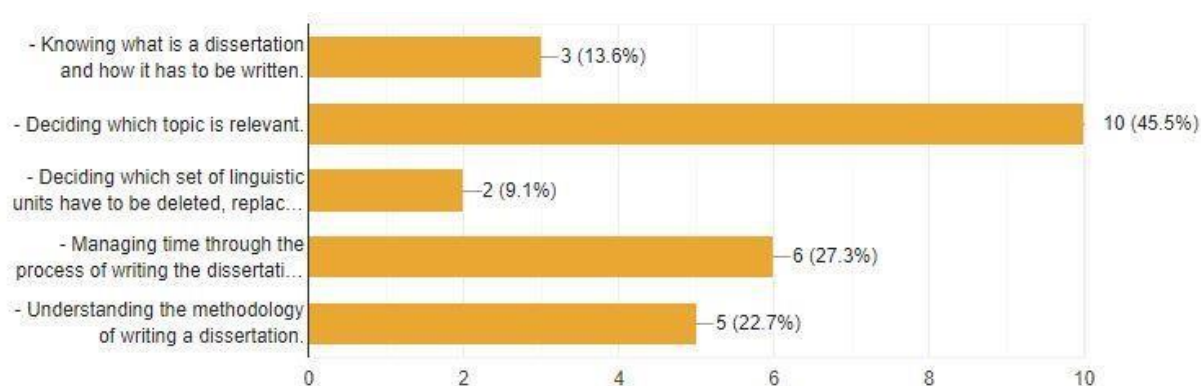
### **Section three: Writing and dissertation**

**Item 6:** What were the difficulties you faced when conducting your master dissertation?

This section attempts to reveals the most difficult aspects in writing a dissertation.

**Table 0.6: Students' Difficulties When Conducting Master Dissertation.**

Options	Percentage
Knowing what is a dissertation	13,6%
Deciding what topic is relevant	40%
Deciding which set of Linguistics unit have to be deleted, replaced, supplied ,and reordered on my dissertation	9,1%
Managing time through the process of writing dissertation	27,3%
Understanding the methodology	22,7%



**Graph 2: Students' difficulties when conducting master dissertation.**

Through table and graph above, the results confirm that the majority of the participants (40%) stated that one of the most difficult aspect in writing their dissertation was the decision about choosing the appropriate topic, which topic is relevant to their field. In selecting a topic, students noted the following reasons behind the challenges they have faced:

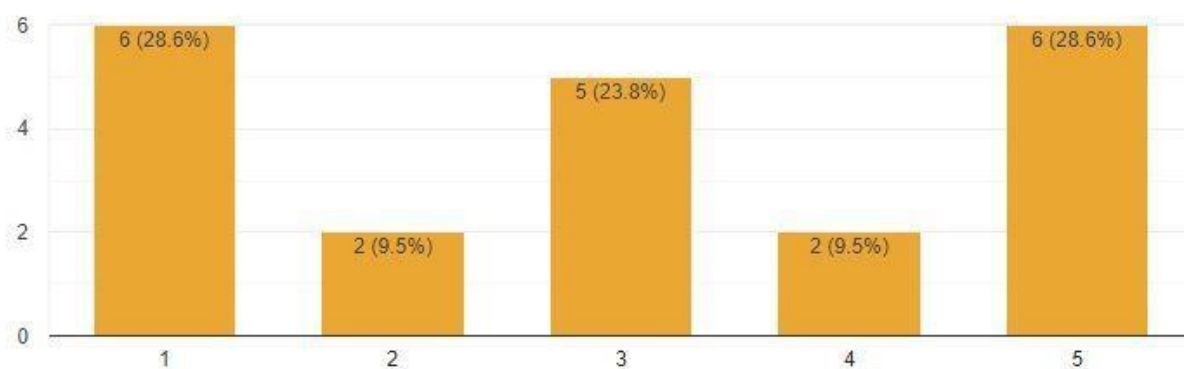
- ◆ Lack of time and experience.
- ◆ It is not easy to come up with a new original topic.
- ◆ Requires more reading and sources.
- ◆ Difficulty in narrowing down the topics.
- ◆ Confused in deciding about the appropriate one from many topics.
- ◆ Not sure that the administration will accept it.

“Because I do not choose supervisor early then each time. I asked the teachers they said they are busy and having a lot of candidates, so I let the administration choose him”. Managing time through the process of writing dissertation (27,3%), (22,7%) of students displayed that they faced difficulties with understanding the methodology of dissertation ,this means that they do not know the main parts of the dissertation .For example, its division into many sections and chapters.

While, less than the half of participants (13,6%) declared that they faced difficulties with knowing what is a dissertation. Only few of students (9,1%) identified understanding set of Linguistics as a challenging task.

#### **Section four: Other factors affecting the process of thesis writing**

**Item 7:** How satisfied are you with research methodology courses.



**Graph 3: Students' satisfaction about research methodology courses.**

According to the graph above, half of the students (28%) chose very much option ,this means that they are satisfied with research methodology courses ,and the other half (28%) declared that they are not very much satisfied with them ,while the others were in between. Their justifications were as below:

- « The courses are not delivered effectively .Our teachers focus only on the theoretical side rather than the practical one »
- One other student also adds, « They are more theoretical than practical ».
- « Does not imply all aspects we actually need to do a research ».
- « They (teachers) gave us a handout. No one explained what it is for or tell us more explanation ».

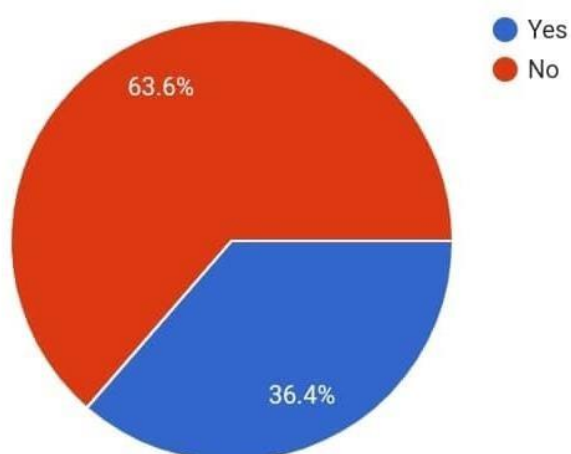
However, one student justified by this sentence "we had the best teachers to understand Researcher Methodology course (I know it is personal, though it is the only truth I have)."

**Item 8:** Have you trained on writing research in the classroom courses?

**Table 1.7: Training on research writing in the classroom courses.**

Options	Percentage
Yes	63,6%
No	36,4%

As the table shows, the majority of students (63,6%) reported that they have trained on research writing in the classroom courses ,while others (36,4%) reported that they did not have trained.

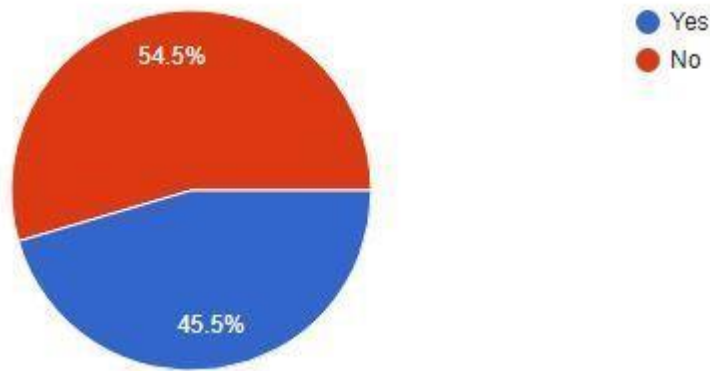


**Figure 10: Training on research writing in the classroom courses**

**Item 9:** Were you able to meet your supervisor regularly?

**Table 1.8: Supervisor's Meeting**

Options	Percentage
Yes	56,7%
No	43,3%



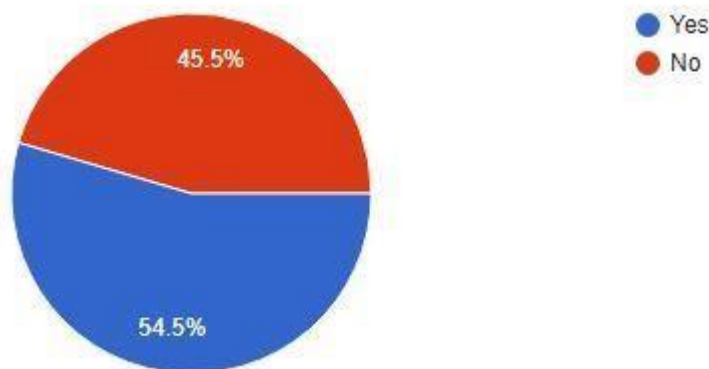
**Figure 11: Supervisor's meeting.**

According to the results presented in table 1-8 and figure 11, more than half of the students (54,5%) claimed that they were able to meet their supervisors regularly, while the others (45,5%) stated that they were not able to meet their supervisors regularly.

**Item 10:** Did your supervisor give meaningful feedback throughout the process?

**Table 1.9: Supervisor's meaningful feedback.**

Options	Percentage
Yes	54,5%
No	45,5%



**Figure 12: Supervisor's meaningful feedback.**

According to the obtained data, half of the students (54%) claimed that the supervisors gave meaningful feedback throughout the research process, and the other half (45,5%) claimed that



supervisors did not give meaningful feedback throughout the research process. Out of twenty-three students (23), only six (6) who provided an explanation:

- ◆ (Our supervisor is not always available).
- ◆ (I did not have enough support from the supervisor).
- ◆ (Sometimes, he puts a line under my sentences without remarks and sometimes he wrote for a whole paragraph change it, I did not understand his comments).
- ◆ (He ignored us many time; He just gave negative feedback).
- ◆ (She did not give enough information until later what made me stick to a tight deadline).
- ◆ (He was not always around).

## **5. Teachers' Questionnaire**

### **5.1. Description of teachers' Questionnaire**

The questionnaire includes ten questions, divided into close-ended and open ended questions require teachers to choose either one answer or multiple answers .The open-ended questions require full justifications and answers of the teachers' choices.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts; the first part provides information about teachers, including their academic qualifications and writing teaching experience. The second part deals with teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the process of supervising undergraduate students and students' deficiencies in writing research papers.

### **5.2. Administration of teachers' Questionnaire:**

A total of ten questionnaires were distributed to English teachers who are also supervisors of Master two English students in the English language division at Mohamed El Bashir El Ibrahim University.

The ten Questionnaires were administered online .The data gathered from the teachers' questionnaires helped in investigating obstacles that EFL Master two English students encountered in understanding research methodology process and applying the research skills in writing their dissertations, Which contributed to the enrichment of this study.

## Data analysis

### 5.3. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire :

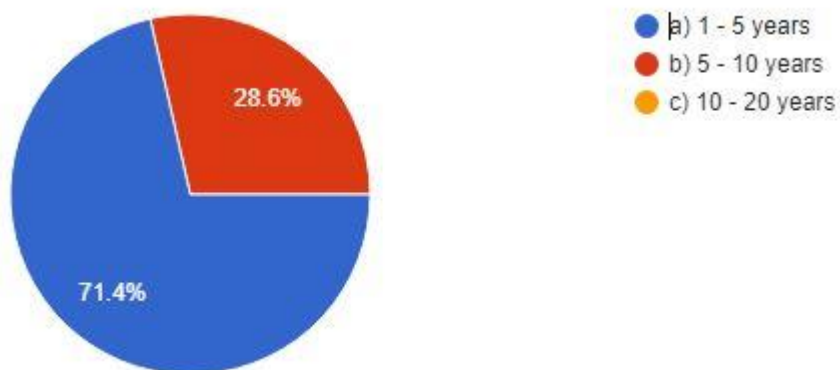
**Question 1:** How long have you been teaching English at University?

**Table 2.1: Teachers' experience in teaching English.**

Years	1-5	5-10	10-20
Percentage	71,4%	28,6%	0%

As indicated in the table above, five teachers have been teaching English at University from one to five years, while two teachers' teaching experience expands over five years.

However, identifying experienced teachers is more complicated because the number of years doesn't guarantee a teacher's experience.



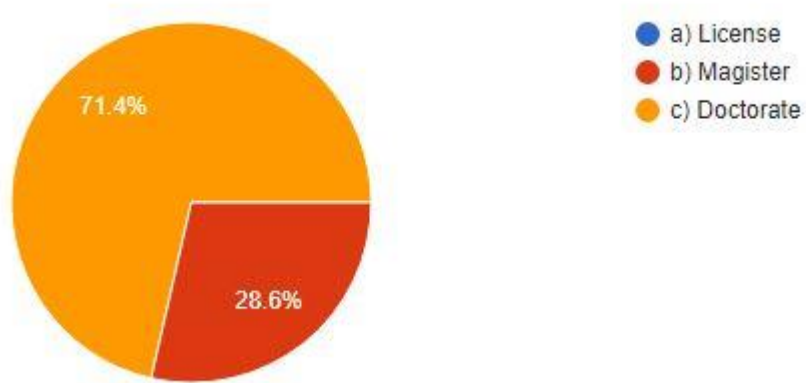
**Figure 13: Teachers' experience in teaching English.**

**Question 2:** Please, Specify the degree you have achieved?

**Table 2.2: Teacher's educational qualification.**

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
License	2	28,5%
Magister	0	0%
Doctorate	5	71,4%

Concerning the academic degree (s) obtained by teachers, five assert having doctorate degree, while the two remaining teachers report holding magister.



**Figure 14: Teachers' educational qualification.**

**Question 3:** Which module have you been teaching master students?

Three teachers claimed that they have been teaching research methodology, while the four remaining teachers report that they have been teaching cognitive psychology.

**Question 4:** How many years have you been teaching Master students?

The majority of teachers report that they have been teaching master students for two years, while three other teachers revealed that they have been teaching Master students for three years.

**Question 5:** How long have you been supervising undergraduate students?

**Table 2.3: Teachers' experience in supervision.**

Years of supervision	1-5	More than 5 years
Percentage	100%	0%

100% of the teachers have a little experience at supervision. Thus, the quality of the supervision might be affected by the experience at supervision, which based on the quality guidance.



**Figure 15: Teachers' experience in supervision.**

**Question 6:** When you are supervising undergraduate students, how do you find this process?

**Table 2.4: Supervision process.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Easy</b>	<b>Hard</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	14,3%	85,7%

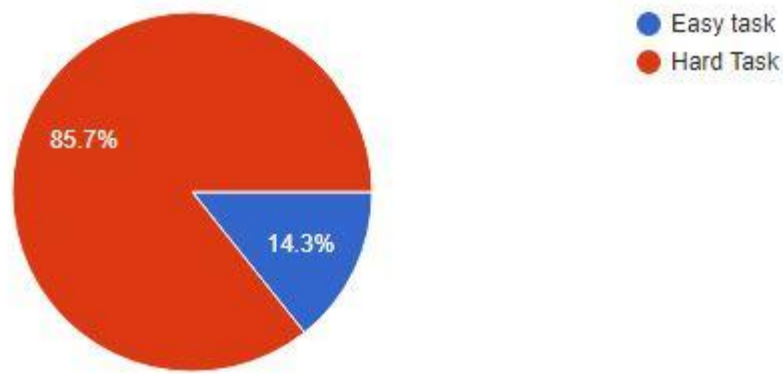
As the table shows, The majority of supervisors 85,7% considered supervision as a hard task, while 14,3% of supervisors considered it as an easy task. Thus the process of supervision is seen as a difficult task for most of the teachers, according to them the reasons of this difficulty can be limited in that, most of the students do not master the necessary research skills .

Therefore, teachers state the following:

- Supervision is considered a rigorous task because it demands a lot of efforts.
- It is hard as students are beginners' researchers who need much time supervision.
- Orientation is necessary in concluding any task and writing in particular. That procures the direction of research to students practicing dissertation in various ways, especially if students, like in this case, are not well equipped with necessary research knowledge.

One of the teachers explains: “I like to supervise as a teaching task, but students know nothing about the basics of research skills and methods, they come with empty mind”.

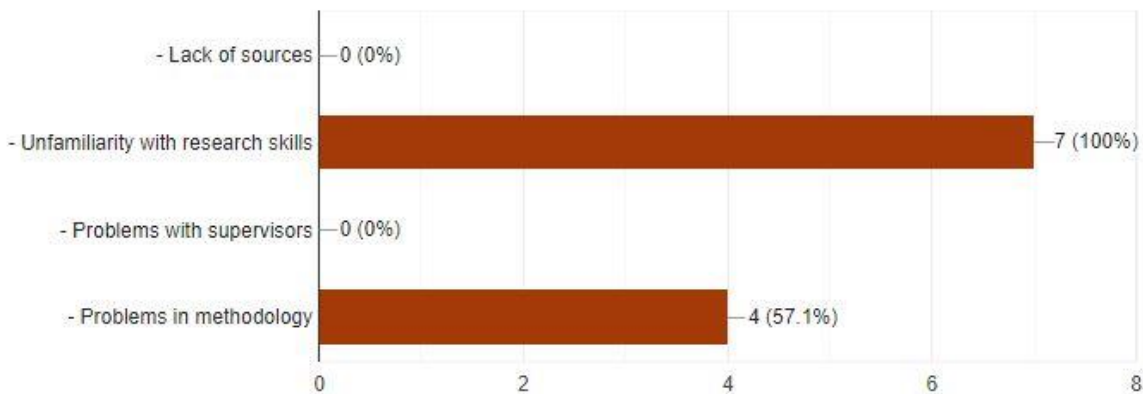
As this teacher clearly explained, supervision can only be an easy and enjoyable task if students well learned the basics of research and methodology.



**Figure 16: Supervision process.**

**Question 7:** Relying on your experience, do you think that problems that students face in writing dissertation are related to:

- a. Lack of sources.
- b. Unfamiliarity with research skills.
- c. Problems with supervisors.
- d. Problems in methodology.



**Graph 4: Teachers view concerning the source of problems that students face.**

Like the graph shows, the majority of teachers claim that problems that students face when doing their dissertations are having limited ability of understanding research skills and problems in methodology.

**Question 8:** Do you think that research courses are helpful for students in undertaking their dissertations?

**Table 2.5: The importance of research courses in writing the dissertation.**

<b>Options</b>	Yes	No
<b>Percentage</b>	100%	0%

As noted in the table, all of the participants 100% agree that research courses are necessary before undertaking dissertations .As a result, teachers described that it is necessary to include research courses in learning programs in order to prepare students to be good researchers.



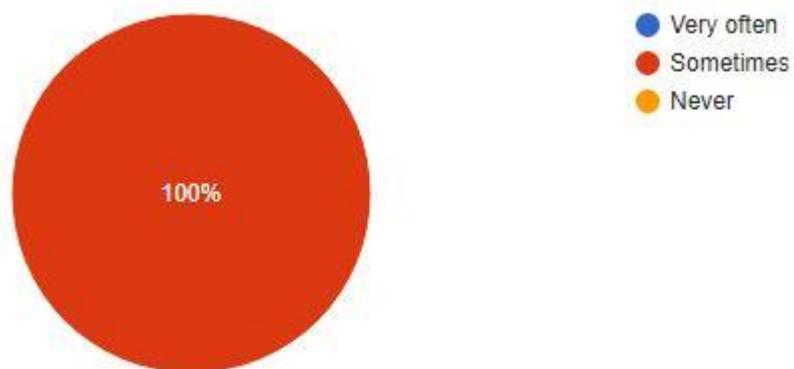
**Figure 17: The importance of research courses in writing the dissertation.**

**Question 9:** How often do you assign research papers to your students?

**Table 2.6: Teachers’ assignment of research papers.**

<b>Choice</b>	Very often	Sometimes	Never
<b>Percentage</b>	0%	100%	0%

In this question, teachers were requested how often they assign research works to their students. The findings shows that 100% of teachers assign papers sometimes.



**Figure 18: Teachers 'assignment of research papers.**

**Question 10:** Are you satisfied with your student’s research papers?

**Table 2.7: Teachers' satisfaction about students' research papers.**

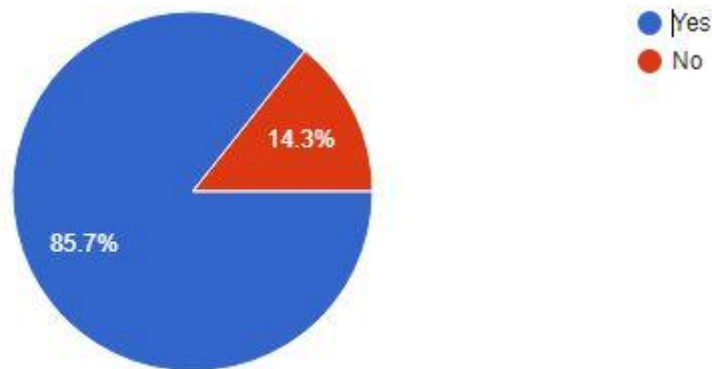
Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	85,7%
No	1	14,3%

The table above interprets Teachers' satisfaction and not satisfaction with their students' papers.

85,7% of teachers are satisfied with their students' research papers quality, while 14,3% of teachers are disappointed from research papers' quality.

For those who are not fully satisfied with researchers' work, they provide us with arguments about students deficiencies as follows:

- ◆ Some students are not serious about this academic paper.
- ◆ Lack of Coherence and unity in research papers.
- ◆ Poor methodological skills.



**Figure 19: Teachers' satisfaction about students' research papers.**

We should underline the interest of evaluation either by teachers or by students themselves. In this era of technology, remonte learning via internet gives learners more occasions to first assess their level by auto-evaluation exercises offered by teachers with guidances and advises both theoretical and practical. Then, they continue the process of learning by post-evaluation that sequential assessment assists very well.

## **Section two: Discussion and interpretation of the findings**

### **1. Discussion of Students' Questionnaire :**

This research was carried out essentially to assess master two difficulties in understanding and applying research methodology. Such as, understanding how to define the research problem, reviewing the literature, formulating hypothesis, preparing the research design, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and finally writing the dissertation. Thus, on such basis, Master students are confronted with various stages of difficulties during their dissertation conduction process, since, they are not familiar with research knowledge and skills. In addition to the inadequate research-related skills, dissertation challenges primarily included deciding what topic is relevant as the highest percentage. Then, managing time through the process of writing dissertation and understanding its methodology. Additionally, from the findings of the questionnaire, it is worth noting that students have their circumstances that lead them to frustrate to write a complete comprehensive research paper. For instance, some students reported that research methodology courses was not delivered in an effective manner, their teachers focus mostly on the theoretical subject rather than the practical ones. Moreover, most of them asserted that they have problems with their supervisor, such as the absence of the meaningful feedback. Besides that, they are not frequently meeting them to provide guidance and support. In short, these difficulties may lead to student frustration and withdrawal from research work; therefore, it may affect the quality of the final research project.

### **2. Discussion of Teachers' Questionnaire :**

The data collected from the teachers' questionnaire provided in depth information regarding the issues tackled by this study. Most teachers revealed that supervising undergraduate students is not an easy task since; they are novice researchers who need much time supervision. In addition, according to most teachers, the issues and difficulties regarding writing dissertation arise mainly from the limited ability of understanding research skills. Hence, it was assumed that students' understanding of research skills is limited and research courses are necessary before undertaking their dissertations.



## **Conclusion**

This chapter shed light on the practical aspects of research, it dealt with the description of research methods, data collection tools and interpretation of results.

In brief, the submitted questionnaires help to collect information about difficulties and challenges encountered by EFL Master Students in conducting research and writing dissertation, where the findings revealed that students struggled most with defining the research problem, formulating hypothesis and collecting data, as well as choosing the appropriate topic

## **General conclusion**

This study aims to examine the various difficulties encountered by Master two English students at Bordj Bou Arreridj University when conducting research and writing their dissertations, which is indeed challenge task for the students.

To answer the question of the study, the work is divided into three chapters; the first two chapters involve a literature review of two variables (research writing and writing a dissertation), while the third chapter is devoted to the fieldwork.

To gain a deeper understanding of the subject, questionnaires were given to students and teachers.

Therefore, the analysis of the questionnaires in addition to what is provided in the literature review, required valuable answers for research questions.

The findings of the questionnaire showed that EFL Master Students have limited ability of understanding research skills, managing time through the process of writing dissertation. In addition, they struggle to find an appropriate topic for their dissertation.

## **Recommendations**

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the results, the researchers suggest that future studies should include homogeneous volunteers from diverse groups of different universities and institutions. Furthermore, the data were collected at only one university, preventing findings from being generalized. Therefore, future studies should collect data from a variety of sources to draw more general conclusions. Additionally, Teachers must devote more time to research methodology module and, most importantly, ensure that students receive continuous feedback on their academic writing. Supervisors should also provide students with appropriate guidance and assistance. Moreover, universities and EFL English departments must effectively teach and prepare Master students for writing their theses by holding training days and workshops on the various processes and components of writing the Master thesis, particularly the most challenging ones.

It is also useful to examine the strategies students used to overcome these difficulties. Future research may also be undertaken to examine the perspectives of EFL PhD students learn about their thesis writing challenges to see if they face the same or different types of challenges.

Finally, this study proposes the following topics for further research:

- ◆ Solutions to overcome obstacles students face in Master's writing paper.
- ◆ The role of curriculum training in writing a creative master's thesis.
- ◆ Improve students' skills by teaching research courses
- ◆ Teaching and research supervision models that address student challenges write their thesis.

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# Appendices

## A. Students' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate Master two English students difficulties in understanding the process of research writing, the results obtained will remain confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

Please answer by yes or no by putting a tick (✓) on the appropriate box.

### Section One: Personal Information

1. Specify your gender:

A- Male       B- Female

2. Age:

A- 20-30     B- 31-50     C- More than 50

### Section two: Research writing process

3. When conducting research, what are the steps of the research process that you find the most difficult to conduct?

- Defining the research problem
  - Reviewing the literature
  - Formulating hypotheses
  - Preparing the research design
  - Collecting data
  - Analysing and interpreting data
  - Writing the dissertation
- Others: .....

4. Do you know how to design?

e) A questionnaire

Yes     No

f) An interview

Yes     No

g) An experiment

Yes     No

5. Do you know how to analyze?

a) A questionnaire

Yes     No

b) An interview

- Yes     No
- c) An experiment
- Yes     No

### Section Three: Writing the Dissertation

6. What were the difficulties you faced when conducting your master dissertation?
- ◆ Knowing what is a dissertation and how it has to be written.
  - ◆ Deciding which topic is relevant.
  - ◆ Deciding which set of linguistic units have to be deleted, replaced, supplied, and reordered on my dissertation.
  - ◆ Managing time through the process of writing the dissertation.
  - ◆ Understanding the methodology of writing a dissertation.

Justify .....

### Section Four: Other Factors Affecting the Process of Thesis Writing

7. How satisfied are you with research methodology courses?

Very much     not very much

Justify .....

8. Have you trained on writing research in the classroom courses (research skills, statistics, research methodology)?

9. Were you able to meet your supervisor regularly?  Yes     No

10. Did your supervisor give meaningful feedback throughout the process?  Yes  No

Explain .....

## B. Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher (s) , this questionnaire is an attempt to gather information to investigate obstacles that EFL Master two English students face in understanding research methodology process and Applying research skills in writing their master dissertation.

Please tick (✓) your answer(s) in the appropriate box .thank you for your time and your cooperation.

1. How long have you been teaching English at University?

- a) 1-5 years
- b) 5-10 years
- c) 10-20 years

2. Please, specify the degree you have achieved?

- d) License
- e) Magister
- f) doctorate

3. Which module have you been teaching master students?

4. How many years have you been teaching master students?

5. How long have you been supervising undergraduate students?

- ◆ 1-5 years
- ◆ More than 5 years

6. When you supervising undergraduate students, how do you find this process?

Easy task

Hard task

Explain please.....

7. Relying on your experience, do you think that problems that students face in writing dissertation are related to?

- Lack of sources
- Unfamiliarity with research skills
- Problems with supervisors
- Problems in methodology

Others.....

8. Do you think that research courses are helpful for students in undertaking their dissertations?

9. How often do you assign research papers to your students?

- Very often
- Sometimes

Never

**10.** Are you satisfied with your students' research papers quality?

Yes     No

If you are not, what are their deficiencies? .....

## **Résumé :**

Conduire une recherche efficace est très essentiel pour la rédaction d'une dissertation, car cette dernière requiert un ensemble précieux de planning et de talents de recherche. Cependant, ce n'est pas une tâche facile à accomplir et, en tant que chercheurs débutants, les étudiants rencontrent plusieurs obstacles dus à la complexité de leur recherche qui est un mélange de deux talents : rédaction académique et connaissances méthodologiques. L'étude présente examine les questions auxquelles sont confrontés les étudiants de Master 2 ALE à l'université de Mohamed El bachir Al Ibrahim, dans la compréhension et la conduite du processus de recherche durant l'année académique 2021/2022. Aussi, a-t-elle pour objectif de déterminer les facteurs majeurs affectant le processus de dissertation. Dans l'enquête descriptive, les outils des données collectées sont deux types de questionnaires distribués à un échantillon de 23 étudiants en Master 2 d'Anglais, et 7 enseignants au département de langues étrangères à l'université de Bourdj Bou Arréridj. Les questionnaires ont révélé que les étudiants avaient une capacité limitée à comprendre les talents de recherche. En outre, les étudiants étaient face à des problèmes de choix d'un bon sujet pour leur dissertation. Et, ils se sont plaints du temps restreint pour la rédaction de leur dissertation. Tous ces facteurs ont un impact sur le processus de rédaction de la dissertation.