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# The Double Burden: A Mixed-methods Study of Linguistic and Cognitive Barriers in EFL Writing in Libyan Higher Education

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# العبء المزدوج: دراسة ذات منهجية مختلطة للعوائق اللغوية والمعرفية في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي الليبية

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**Abstract**
This study examines the major writing challenges experienced by students at the University of Alhadera, a private higher education university in Tripoli, Libya. It explores the concept of a "Double Burden," in which students simultaneously struggle with linguistic barriers in English and cognitive challenges in academic writing. To achieve this, the study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data from a questionnaire administered to 50 English-major students with qualitative analysis of real samples of their written assignments and exam scripts. Self-reported challenges were triangulated against observed error patterns in student writing. The findings show that, alongside cognitive difficulties such as organization (78%) and a severe lack of plagiarism awareness (42%), the majority of students also have problems with basic linguistic skills such as grammar (80%) and punctuation (76%). Although 84% of students believed their writing classes were supportive and beneficial, 62% of them continued to struggle with writing, indicating a gap between current pedagogical practices and student needs. Hence, the findings are situated within Cognitive Load Theory and the reading-writing connection calling for an integrative pedagogical approach. Evidence-based suggestions and recommendations are reported for curriculum design and development, teaching strategies, constructive feedback literacy, and institutional support to assist students and foster their academic success in the digital age.

**Keywords:** academic writing, burden, cognitive load, feedback literacy, linguistic barriers.


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**الملخص**
تبحث هذه الدراسة في التحديات الرئيسية التي تواجه الطلاب في جامعة الحاضرة - وهي مؤسسة خاصة للتعليم العالي في طرابلس، ليبيا- في مجال الكتابة. و وتستكشف الدراسة مفهوم "العبء المزدوج"، حيث يواجه العديد من طلاب الجامعات ، وفي آن واحد، عدد من العوائق اللغوية تتعلق بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وتحديات معرفية مرتبطة بالكتابة الأكاديمية. ولتحقيق ذلك، اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً بحثياً مختلطاً (تكاملّياً)، يجمع بين البيانات الكمية المستمدة من استبانة وُزعت على 50 طالباً متخصصاً في اللغة الإنجليزية، والتحليل النوعي لنماذج فعلية من واجباتهم الكتابية وأوراق امتحاناتهم. وقد جرت مطابقة التحديات التي أبلغ عنها الطلاب ذاتياً مع أنماط الأخطاء الملحوظة في كتاباتهم. وأظهرت النتائج أنه -إلى جانب الصعوبات المعرفية مثل التنظيم (78%) والافتقار الشديد للوعي بمفهوم الانتحال العلمي (42%)- يعاني غالبية الطلاب أيضاً من مشكلات في المهارات اللغوية الأساسية، كقواعد اللغة (80%) وعلامات الترقيم (76%). ورغم أن 84% من الطلاب يرون أن ما يدرسونه بفصولهم الدراسية داعم ومفيد، إلا أن 62% منهم لا يزالون يواجهون صعوبات في الكتابة، مما يشير إلى وجود فجوة بين الأساليب التعليمية الحالية واحتياجات الطلاب. وبناءً على ذلك، تضع الدراسة هذه النتائج في الإطار النظري لـ "نظرية العبء المعرفي" والعلاقة بين القراءة والكتابة، داعيةً إلى تبني نهج تعليمي تكاملي. كما تقدم الدراسة مقترحات وتوصيات قائمة على الأدلة تتعلق بتصميم المناهج وتطويرها، واستراتيجيات التدريس، وثقافة التغذية الراجعة البنّاءة، والدعم المؤسسي لمساندة الطلاب وتعزيز نجاحهم الأكاديمي في ظل تطور العصر الرقمي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** الكتابة الأكاديمية، العبء، العبء المعرفي، ثقافة التغذية الراجعة، العوائق اللغوية.

## 1. Introduction

Academic writing is a fundamental subject in higher education, crucial for academic success and communication. However, for many university students, especially in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, it represents a demanding challenge. More significantly, this struggle has been more prominent in Libyan private universities like the University of Alhadera, where students frequently encounter a “Double Burden,” which evidently reflects the simultaneous pressure of studying a foreign language (English) and developing the cognitive skills and abilities required for academic discourse. Accordingly, this research probes the interaction between these linguistic and cognitive barriers, providing a comprehensive analysis of the L2 writing problems experienced by students in a Libyan context of higher education.

Consequently, by examining, understanding, and analyzing these compound and interrelated challenges, instructors can design valuable strategies to improve both language skills and cognitive processes, as well as enhance students' academic performance and confidence. Furthermore, the study findings can direct the attention of broader educational policies, practices, and all stakeholders, particularly in similar EFL contexts where language and cognition intersect to influence learning outcomes. Hence, this study not only illuminates a critical gap in academic writing research but also provides practical insights that can empower students to overcome their writing struggles and succeed in their educational journey.

Building on this, this research paper discusses significant issues related to writing skills, which are usually considered the most difficult skill, and it mainly aims to identify the most dominant linguistic and cognitive obstacles experienced by the University of Alhadera students, examine how linguistic and cognitive challenges intersect to create a compounded double burden for students, and propose targeted interventions to enhance students’ linguistic proficiency and cognitive abilities. To achieve these aims, the following inquiries are required to illuminate:

1. What are the most dominant linguistic and cognitive barriers identified in students’ academic writing?


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2. How do linguistic and cognitive barriers intersect to create a compounded double burden for EFL Libyan students?

## 2. Literature Review

The obstacles that EFL students face in academic writing are well documented, but the specific interrelation between linguistic and cognitive factors, or the Double Burden, has received limited empirical attention, particularly in the Libyan higher education context. This review examines recent literature (2020-2025) concentrating on three core areas: the cognitive load in L2 writing, the reading-writing integration, and the socio-pedagogical factors of feedback and academic integrity.

### 2.1. Cognitive Load and the Linguistic Burden

According to Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), working memory is limited, and tasks and activities that need processing too many elements simultaneously impede learning and performance (Sweller, 1988). This was particularly pronounced in L2 writing, where EFL students struggle to produce accurate written texts. Students must balance critical analysis, organization, and content generation while simultaneously managing the linguistic demands of learning a foreign language (FL), including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Recent studies have confirmed that this kind of dual task causes a significant cognitive burden, which frequently leads to incoherent writing, a high frequency of errors, and disorganized text (Rong & Révész, 2025). Furthermore, studies conducted with Arab students specifically note that interference from their native language (L1), Arabic, can exacerbate this load, as students mentally translate from Arabic, leading to lexical and syntactic errors (Almassry & Said, 2025).

### 2.2. The Reading-Writing Connection

Literacy development is based mainly on the symbiotic connection between reading and writing. This connection is a critical pathway for EFL learners to enhance and improve their academic writing. Recent research has heavily emphasized that an integrative approach, in which reading and writing skills are taught together, is more effective than teaching them discrete skills (Alhujaylan, 2020). Ye and Liu (2023) conducted a comprehensive study modeled the cognitive processes of EFL students while they engaged in integrated writing tasks. Their findings indicated that "reading monitoring was the only factor that had a direct and significant impact on skill integration," which includes discourse synthesis and source use. This empirically supports the educational strategy of using reading as a direct and effective tool to scaffold and improve writing, as it provides students with models and models of effective and successful argumentation, structure, and language use.

### 2.3. Feedback, Technology, and Academic Integrity

Constructive feedback is essential for academic progress, yet its delivery and reception are complicated procedures. The concept of feedback literacy, students' ability to comprehend, process, and respond to feedback, has become more widely recognized. Zhang et al. (2023) found that EFL students can develop feedback literacy over time, emphasizing the need for instructors both to provide feedback and to teach students how to use it effectively. In addition, the development of generative AI has added new dimensions to this process. According to recent research, AI-powered tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT can provide immediate, personalized feedback that improves writing skills capabilities and reduces language anxiety (Mekheimer, 2025; Zhan & Yan, 2025). However, this technological integration must be paired with explicit instruction and practice in academic integrity

Plagiarism also remains a major issue in higher education worldwide, and the Arab world is no exception. For instance, a study conducted by Alsaedi & Alhumsi (2024) on Saudi undergraduate students revealed complex and sometimes contradictory perceptions of what


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constitutes plagiarism. This is compounded by cultural factors and a lack of explicit instructions. Farahat (2022) notes that academic dishonesty is common in many Middle Eastern countries and often stems from a lack of knowledge rather than intentional deceit. This regional context highlights the urgency of the finding that many students at University of Alhadera are unaware of plagiarism, framing it not as an isolated or individual issue but rather as a systemic challenge requiring immediate pedagogical intervention and remedy.

## 3. Methodology

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the writing challenges among students at the University of Alhadera, the current study employed a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative questionnaire data and qualitative analysis of student writing were collected in parallel and integrated during interpretation. This design was selected to triangulate students' self-reported perceptions of their writing difficulties against observable features of their written work, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The study was conducted in two phases: a questionnaire phase and a textual analysis phase.

### 3.1. Participants and Sampling

Fifty (50) Libyan English majors at the University of Alhadera, a private university in Tripoli, Libya, participated willingly in this study. The participants were selected using a purposive convenience sampling method from the third to the sixth academic semesters. These students had considerable writing experience, having completed Writing 1, 2, and 3 courses; this selection approach ensured representation across various stages of their academic program. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample**.**

**Table 1.** Participants' Demographical Data (N=50)

| Variable | Category | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | 34 | 68 |
| | Male | 16 | 32 |
| Age | 19–21 | 22 | 44 |
| | 22–24 | 18 | 36 |
| | 25–27 | 8 | 16 |
| | 28–30 | 2 | 4 |
| Nationality | Libyan | 50 | 100 |
| Semester | Third | 10 | 20 |
| | Fourth | 18 | 36 |
| | Fifth | 15 | 30 |
| | Sixth | 7 | 14 |
| Years of prior English study | 2 -3 years | 8 | 16 |
| | 4- 5 years | 17 | 34 |
| | 6-7 years | 25 | 50 |

As shown in Table 1, the participants were 50 English majors at the University of Alhadera. All were Libyan, and Arabic is their first language (L1). Based on their demographic profile, they represent a homogeneous sample. Most respondents were female (68%), while males accounted for 32%. In terms of age, most were between 19 and 21 years old (44%), followed by those aged 22 to 24 (36%), with smaller proportions in the 25 to 27 (16%) and 28 to 30 (4%) age ranges. Regarding academic semester level, 36% of participants were in the fourth semester, 30% in the fifth, 20% in the third, and 14% in the sixth; the fourth semester had the


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highest rate. Regarding their experience studying English before attending the Department of English, participants had moderate exposure: most had studied English for six to seven years.

### 3.2. Instruments

To collect the data needed to achieve the study's purpose, two types of tools were used in parallel. First, a 20-item questionnaire was developed for this study based on the research questions and reviewed by two applied linguistics experts for face validity. This instrument was designed and administered to collect data on several crucial demographics and academic characteristics. The instrument collected data across five sections: The first section gathered demographic data, including gender, age, nationality, semester and years of experience in studying English before university; the second section consists of 5 items to investigate students' writing experience, self-assessed skill level, and confidence; the third section perceived writing problems, including specific linguistic and organizational challenges; the fourth section propped classroom practices, including frequency of writing practice, assignments, and feedback; the fifth section consisted of two closed ended items to find out the helpful factors, capturing students' perspectives on what supports their writing improvement; and it ended with two open-ended responses inviting suggestions for improvement. Items in sections 1-4 used a yes-no, multiple-choice format; section 5 was multiple-choice format and open-ended. The questionnaire was administered in English because it is the language of instruction at the academic program. A pilot administration with 15 students not included in the main sample was conducted to check clarity and item functioning; minor wording revisions were made following the pilot. Internal consistency for all the scaled items was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84955$). The survey data were analyzed systematically to identify frequencies and percentages, highlighting crucial trends and problem areas.

Second, writing samples: Qualitative data consisted of 100 (midterm and final) examination scripts and 50 written assignments produced by the participating students during the semester in which the study was conducted. The samples were selected to represent the range of performance levels within the cohort. All samples were produced under normal assessment conditions and were anonymized before analysis.

### 3.3. Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software with descriptive statistics, in which frequencies and percentages were computed for all closed-ended items. Moreover, the open-ended responses gathered from the students' questionnaire, which provided crucial suggestions for improvement and writing instructions, were thematically analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure to complement and enhance the quantitative data. To obtain more valid evidence and identify typical errors, students' writing samples extracted from midterm and final exam papers and assignments were examined, classified, reviewed, analyzed, and then reported. Themes were reviewed carefully to enhance trustworthiness. This qualitative analysis focused on identifying and classifying patterns in terms of grammatical, lexical, and structural errors, providing concrete examples of the difficulties students encounter. Qualitative error frequencies were tabulated alongside self-reported problem frequencies to enable direct comparison. The two strands were integrated through a triangulation matrix, and each self-reported challenge was compared with the corresponding observed error category. Convergence between self-report and textual evidence was treated as strengthening the finding; divergence was noted and interpreted.

By combining these two approaches, the study provides a comprehensive and clear picture of both the students' perceptions of their writing challenges and the tangible evidence of these difficulties in their written work.


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### 3.4. Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the study and collecting the necessary data, approval to collect data was obtained from the management of the University of Alhadera. The ethical principles of educational research were observed throughout the study. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty or embarrassment. Data were anonymized at the point of collection, securely stored, used only by the researchers, and used exclusively for academic purposes. No identifying information or any sensitive data appear in this research. Participants were encouraged to provide honest responses based on their personal experiences and perceptions regarding English writing and the difficulties they usually encounter in academic writing.

## 4.Findings

The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data gathered from students' questionnaires and writing samples reveals a clear and consistent pattern of challenges that aligns with the "Double Burden" framework. The findings are presented into two sections: student self-reported challenges from the questionnaire and frequent errors that are identified in their written work.

### 4.1. Student Perceptions and Self-Reported Challenges

Data from the questionnaire indicate that while a slight majority of students (56%) enjoy writing, a larger majority (62%) find it a difficult and stressful task. This implies and reflects clearly a potential conflict between interest and ability. The tables below display questionnaire's most significant findings.

**Table 2.** Top 5 Self-reported writing problems (N=50)

| Rank | Writing Problem | Number of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Grammar Mistakes | 40 | 80% |
| 2 | Organization Problems | 39 | 78% |
| 3 | Punctuation Errors | 38 | 76% |
| 4 | Choosing Correct Words | 37 | 74% |
| 5 | Sentence Clarity | 36 | 72% |

As presented in Table 2, students identified grammar mistakes and organization problems as their two main challenges. This finding empirically supports the "Double Burden" concept, with a primary linguistic issue (grammar) and a primary cognitive issue (organization) being the most pressing concerns for students.

**Table 3.** Factors considered most helpful for improvement (N=50)

| Rank | Helpful Factor | Number of Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Teacher Feedback | 43 | 86% |
| 2 | Integrated Activities (Reading + Writing) | 40 | 80% |
| 3 | Writing Regularly | 39 | 78% |
| 4 | Reading Books | 35 | 70% |
| 5 | Working with Classmates | 32 | 64% |

As clearly shown in Table 3, a striking 86% of students identified teacher feedback as the most helpful and beneficial factor for their progress, emphasizing the crucial role of instructors in the learning process. Moreover, 80% of students valued integrated activities that integrate reading-writing, providing strong support for the paper's main conclusion.


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### 4.2. Common Errors in Students Writing

The qualitative analysis of student writing samples revealed a variety of common and recurring errors that reflect the students' self-reported challenges. These errors were categorized into three main categories as follows:

1. **Linguistic errors** including;

- Grammatical errors: the most frequent issue, which includes incorrect verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, word class, and misuse of articles and prepositions due to the difference between L1 and L2 ( Arabic and English) grammar.
- Vocabulary errors: the use of informal language in academic contexts and incorrect word choices. with L1 (Arabic) strongly influencing students' thinking patterns.
- Punctuation errors: misuse or omission of commas, periods, and other punctuation marks, which automatically lead to run-on sentences or fragments.
- Spelling errors: frequent misspellings of both academic and common vocabulary used.
- Mechanical errors: issues related to word order and capitalization problems.

2. **Discourse / organizational errors** including;

- Organizational errors: poor paragraph structure, coherence problems, unclear topic sentences, and poor logical flow of ideas.
- Style and Tone: frequent use of redundant and vague style with inconsistent academic tone.

**3**. **Integrity issues**

One of the most significant findings was limited awareness of plagiarism: 42% of participants reported that they did not know what constitutes plagiarism. This highlights a fundamental gap in students' writing and citation skills as well as their research abilities.

## 5. Discussion

The findings provide compelling evidence for the "Double Burden" experienced by EFL students at University of Alhadera, in which linguistic and cognitive challenges appear to be closely interrelated. The data reveal a student body simultaneously grappling with the fundamental mechanics of English writing and the advanced cognitive abilities required for academic achievement. This discussion situates the findings within the theoretical frameworks of Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) and the reading-writing connection, and considers their pedagogical implications.

### 5.1. The Double Burden in Light of Cognitive Load Theory

The high preponderance of self-reported difficulty with grammar (80%), punctuation (76%), and word choice (74%) indicates that a substantial linguistic barrier persists among the participants. According to Cognitive Load Theory, these lower-level linguistic encoding tasks are likely to consume a considerable share of students' limited working memory. This leaves fewer cognitive resources available for higher-order processes such as planning, structuring an argument, and synthesizing information (Sweller, 1988; Rong & Révész, 2025). The high rate of organizational problems (78%) is therefore consistent with a cognitive-overload account. Future research using direct measures of cognitive load (e.g., dual-task or self-report scales) would be needed to test this interpretation. Students who devote substantial attentional resources to avoiding surface-level errors may have insufficient capacity for the architectural demands of an academic text. The finding that 62% of students struggle during writing and find it difficult and stressful, despite 84% finding their classes helpful and supportive, further suggests that current curriculum and instruction may not be adequately designed to manage this cognitive burden and need to be taken into consideration.


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### 5.2. The Instructional Paradox and the Power of Integration

This instructional paradox -high satisfaction with instruction alongside persistent difficulty- points to a possible gap between teaching methods and learning needs. The solution may lie in the students' own suggestions. The high value placed on an integrative approach (80%) aligns completely with recent studies which emphasize the effectiveness of the reading-writing connection (Ye & Liu, 2023). When students read a range of academic texts, they are not only absorbing content but also internalizing models of argumentation, sentence structure, and disciplinary conventions. The process of modeling may reduce the cognitive load associated with writing from scratch, because it provides a valuable scaffold for students' own production. An integrative pedagogy moves beyond decontextualized grammar drills and instead integrates language instruction within the authentic context of academic discourse, thereby addressing both the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of the burden simultaneously.

### 5.3. Feedback Literacy and Academic Integrity in the Digital Age

Despite the fact that 86% of students valuing their instructors' feedback, its effectiveness is mediated by their "feedback literacy" (Zhang et al., 2023). Students must be taught how to interpret and apply feedback for it to be transformative. This is especially crucial in the digital age. The finding that 42% of students reported not using digital writing tools represents a missed opportunity. Recently, modern tools, including AI-powered platforms, can provide immediate, low-stakes feedback on grammatical and stylistic issues, freeing up valuable class time and instructor focus for higher-order concerns (Mekheimer, 2025). The implementation of these technologies, however, must be accompanied by explicit instruction in academic integrity. Furthermore, the finding that 42% of students are unaware of what constitutes plagiarism is alarming but consistent with broader regional patterns (Alsaedi & Alhumsi, 2024; Farahat, 2022). This is not merely a skills gap but a fundamental threat to academic credibility. Therefore, teaching plagiarism avoidance is not merely a procedural matter but an essential component of developing an ethical academic identity as a student and future researcher.

### 5.4. Comparison with Previous Research

The prominence of grammar (80%) and organization (78%) difficulties in this sample echoes findings from comparable Arab EFL contexts. Almassry and Said (2025) similarly report L1 interference in Libyan students' English writing, while Alsaedi and Alhumsi (2024) document widespread confusion about plagiarism conventions among Saudi undergraduates. The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that these linguistic, cognitive, and integrity-related challenges co-occur within the same student population and may be mutually reinforcing, the "double burden" framing. The instructional paradox identified in this study also suggests that satisfaction with instruction is not a sufficient indicator of instructional effectiveness, a point that merits attention in future evaluation research.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the current study findings and informed by recent literature, the following evidence-based recommendations are proposed to address the dual linguistic and cognitive challenges frequently experienced by many Libyan students, including those at the University of Alhadera. First, developing the quality of the national curriculum needs to be taken into consideration; instructors and curriculum designers should collaborate to update the national curriculum and adopt an integrative reading–writing pedagogy. As 80% of participants supported and recent research validates (Ye & Liu, 2023), the curriculum should be redesigned to explicitly integrate reading and writing. Rather than teaching language skills and grammar in isolation, instructors should use valuable and authentic academic texts as models to inspire and encourage students to analyze their structure, argumentation, and linguistic features before they start writing.


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Second, developing student feedback literacy is highly recommended**.** Given that 86% of students view teacher feedback as the most beneficial and helpful factor, its impact should be maximized. Rather than merely correcting errors, instructors should offer process-oriented feedback. Additionally, they should explicitly teach students how to interpret and act on this feedback, thereby improving their feedback literacy (Zhang et al., 2023).

Third, scaffolding instruction should be used to manage cognitive burden and improve writing skills**.** With a view to reducing the effects of cognitive overload, instructors should break down complex writing tasks into smaller, manageable steps (e.g., thesis statement draft, full outline, first draft). This scaffolding allows students to focus on one aspect of the writing process at a time, reducing the cognitive burden and improving the quality of final written production. Besides instructors can help their students to overcome the double burden and achieve their full potential as writers by encouraging peer learning and collaborative writing activities to build confidence and reduce anxiety.

Fourth, providing language support programs and mandating a foundational course on academic and digital integrity. To mitigate the 'double burden' challenges, the University of Alhadera and similar institutions can implement effective strategies; for instance, providing intensive language courses focused on language elements and structure, and held workshops for training instructors to address both language and cognitive aspects of writing. Additionally, the alarming finding that 42% of students are unaware of plagiarism, a figure that resonates with regional studies (Alsaedi & Alhumsi, 2024; Farahat, 2022), requires urgent institutional action. A mandatory, credit-bearing course should be introduced for all first-year students, focusing on ethical source integration, proper citation, and the efficient use of digital writing tools.

Fifth, investing in and integrating AI-powered writing tools. The fact that a low percentage of students use digital tools in academic writing represents a major missed opportunity. Hence, the university should provide institutional access to premium versions of tools like Grammarly, Perplexity, QuillBot, and DeepSeek and train students on how to use them as learning aids. According to recent research, these tools can provide valuable, immediate feedback, especially on lower-order linguistic issues, enabling instructors to focus on higher-order cognitive skills (Mekheimer, 2025).

## 7. Conclusion

This research confirms that students at the University of Alhadera are contending with a significant "Double Burden" in their academic writing, characterized by simultaneous linguistic and cognitive difficulties. By situating these local study findings within the broader theoretical frameworks of Cognitive Load Theory and the reading-writing connection, they provide a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences. The quantitative data from the student survey, enhanced and supported by qualitative analysis of their writing, reveals that while students value their instruction, a clear gap remains between current pedagogical efforts and the development of proficient writing skills.

Furthermore, the study findings emphasize the urgent need for a more holistic and integrated approach to writing instruction, one that moves beyond teaching grammar drills in isolation to involve organizational techniques and strategies, critical thinking, feedback literacy, and academic and digital integrity. By implementing the targeted, evidence-based recommendations outlined in this study, the University of Alhadera can empower its students to overcome these barriers. Ultimately, the goal is to create a supportive educational environment where students' academic achievement is a real reflection of their intellectual capabilities, rather than a measure of their struggle with the complexities of academic writing in a foreign language.


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## 8. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study is significant and sheds light on the "dual burden", it has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The sample size is limited (N=50), and the study used purposive convenience sampling. It included participants from a single private university in Libya, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the conclusions were primarily established the examination papers and coursework assignments of the participating students; a study involving a larger sample of students and their written work might reveal additional linguistic and cognitive challenges. Additionally, the questionnaire data relied on self-reports, which may be susceptible to what is known as "social desirability bias." Future research could address these limitations by employing a larger, more diverse sample and utilizing multiple data sources. Moreover, research examining both educators' and students' perceptions would further illuminate the double burden in the higher education writing context.

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**Declaration of AI Use**

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**Compliance with ethical standards**

*Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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