



Writing Development across Academic Levels: Evidence from Moroccan Higher Education

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Abstract

Writing development constitutes an essential component of academic success in higher education, as students are expected to demonstrate increasing control over organisation, grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and mechanics throughout their academic careers. Yet, understanding how writing develops remains a complex issue. The present study aims to investigate the development of writing with special reference to Moroccan university undergraduate students. One hundred and twenty-three university students from Sultan Moulay Slimane University in Morocco participated in the current study. A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining students' questionnaire responses and analysis of actual written texts. The questionnaire explored students' perceptions and writing-related practices, whereas the written letters were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, particularly in terms of several writing dimensions. The findings indicated both similarities and differences were observed across several dimensions, suggesting that writing may not develop across academic levels. While certain aspects appeared to show improvement, others remained relatively stable or uneven across second-year and third-year students. The study contributes to the understanding of writing development in Moroccan higher education and highlights the need for instructional practices that support sustained writing improvement across academic levels.

1. Introduction

Writing is widely recognised as one of the most important and complex skills that need to be mastered in higher education, as it enables students to engage in effective communication, build arguments, organise ideas, and participate effectively in academic discourse. Larsen-Freeman (2006) asserts that writing may be characterised by complexity, particularly in grammar and vocabulary. It is a complex process because it involves careful consideration of many interrelated components of language, structure and audience. As university students progress academically, they are generally expected to significantly develop their writing. Such development extends beyond linguistic accuracy to include coherence, organisation, and the ability to produce texts that respond to certain contextual demands. Writing development, therefore, has attracted considerable attention within research because it is viewed as a dynamic and evolving process. Writing development is defined as a dynamic process both across the life span (linear development) and as expertise is expanded to new genres (horizontal development)" (Berninger et al., 1996, p. 215). Development in one aspect of writing does not necessarily guarantee development in other writing elements. Writing performance and writing-related practices may develop with academic progression. Students with greater

exposure to more writing opportunities and instructional practices may be expected to demonstrate improvement in their written performance compared to students at earlier stages. This, in turn, points to the need for research investigating how writing develops across different academic levels.

Despite the growing body of research that has focused on academic writing, limited attention was devoted to examining writing development across different academic levels in Moroccan higher education. Rather than investigating how writing develops across different academic levels using students' perceptions and actual written performance, most of the existing research has focused mainly on the writing challenges, instructional practices, and perceptions of writing. Addressing this gap may contribute to a greater understanding of writing development in the Moroccan educational environment.

Accordingly, the purpose of the current study is to explore writing development across two academic levels among Moroccan university undergraduate students. This study draws on students' questionnaire responses and analysis of written letters to investigate writing development from different perspectives. The study addresses the following research question:

How does writing development differ across academic levels among Moroccan university students?

By focusing on Moroccan higher education, this research aims to provide context-sensitive insights into writing development across academic levels. Ultimately, the study's findings will shed light on whether academic progression is associated with improvements in students' writing performance.

2. Literature Review

Writing Development in Higher Education

Writing development has been widely viewed as a complex process that extends beyond producing grammatically correct sentences. Hyland (2009) argues that it is almost impossible for writing development to be determined by the use of syntactic features. Students can write complex sentences, but they struggle to create clear texts that demonstrate improvement in writing. In contrast, White (2007) argues that writing development is reflected in terms of the use of advanced grammatical structures in an effective way. These contrasting findings highlight the complexity of writing development and the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape this development. In higher education, students are expected to demonstrate development in several dimensions related to writing, including coherence, cohesion, organisation, grammar, vocabulary use, and development of arguments. To Flower and Hayes (1981), the writing process is viewed as a distinctive cognitive process in which writers manage several mental processes while composing a text. Zakaria Mugaddam (2014) argued that "writing is not a process which puts emphasis only on the form of language, or the end product of a particular writing event. Writing is a process which emphasises both form and function to convey a particular meaning to the intended readers" (pp.12-13). From this perspective, writing development is not concerned only with grammatical accuracy; it also requires students to use language to respond to academic demands effectively.

The complexity of writing is demonstrated in the fact that students' development of writing does not necessarily occur across all writing components. Several studies have shown that students may demonstrate control over some aspects; yet, this control is not always even across all aspects. Students may show improvement in vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, while continuing to face limitations related to idea generation, organisation, and development. Dahbi (1984) states that students do not make serious grammatical errors, but rather face issues with organising and presenting their ideas effectively in writing. Thus, writing should not be regarded as a simple process but rather as an uneven process influenced by several interacting factors.

Recent empirical research further supports the view that writing development is multidimensional and does not necessarily occur uniformly across its different components. Li

and Zhang (2021) highlighted that the effect of cooperative prewriting discussions was statistically significant in helping students improve writing, particularly in terms of content, organisation, vocabulary, and language. This finding suggests that improvement in specific writing dimensions does not necessarily require development in all other aspects, indicating the multidimensional nature of writing development. In a similar vein, research conducted among Moroccan EFL university students has shown variation across writing sub-components. According to Akki et al. (2023), the correlation between the five components across descriptive and argumentative genres ranges from strong to weak levels (p. 162). Such variation suggests that different writing components may not develop in the same way. More specifically, within the Moroccan educational context, Mamad and Vigh (2024) report that Moroccan university students face many difficulties in writing, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and organisation.

Writing Development across Academic Levels

Within higher education, it is assumed that writing among students develops with academic progression. Students who spend longer periods in a university context are expected to benefit from frequent exposure to more opportunities for written production, writing instruction, and more academic reading materials. These experiences may lead to improvement in multiple writing-related dimensions, including grammatical accuracy, coherence, and cohesion. Several studies highlighted improvement across academic levels and different aspects. Based on a study conducted by Archibald (1994) on how the discourse proficiency of secondary school students writing in English as a second language improved, students' writing across different age groups developed, particularly in terms of using appropriate links and adjusting language to context as they gained more experience and instruction. This indicates that writers become more effective, both in structuring ideas and adapting language use according to the context, as they progress academically. However, academic progression does not always guarantee equitable development across all writing dimensions.

Research on writing development has examined writers across different stages of development, from novice to experienced writers. While novice writers tend to produce texts with limited planning and consideration of such requirements in their writing (Magnifico, 2010), Sommers (1980) states that experienced writers continuously improve and reshape their written production, focusing mainly on different aspects during each particular stage. This suggests that experienced writers are more capable of refining and enhancing their writing. These results suggest that writing is not a linear process. Rather, it is a continuous process in which writers refine and reshape their written production in response to different contexts. While previous research has emphasised writing development, less attention has been devoted to investigating how writing develops across academic levels in higher education. In fact, exploring these differences between second-year and third-year students can provide valuable insights into students' writing development and the extent to which writing differs across these academic levels.

Despite the growing literature on academic writing, limited attention has been devoted to examining writing development across different academic levels among Moroccan undergraduate students. Compared to the existing research, only a few studies attempt to investigate how writing-related aspects vary across academic levels using students' perceptions and analysis of their actual written performance simultaneously. By addressing this issue, writing development may be better understood in Moroccan university contexts.

3. Research Methodology

Research Approach

A mixed methods study, mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches, was used in the present study. The quantitative approach was beneficial in identifying patterns and comparisons across second-year and third-year students. On the other hand, the qualitative

approach provided deeper insights into students' writing performance. Mixing both approaches increases the validity and the reliability of the data, and thus the quality of the findings.

Participants

The target population involved in the collection of the quantitative and qualitative data used in the present study was composed of Moroccan university students from Sultan Moulay Slimane University in Morocco. The group was composed of sixty-one second-year and sixty-two third-year male and female students in the Department of English. Random sampling was used to select a representative sample of university students. This technique of sampling was chosen because it is more objective, and it gives the chance to everyone to participate in the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The first data collection tool used in this study was an open-ended questionnaire. It is a quantitative data collection instrument used to measure the quantity, amount, and frequency of something. In this study, the questionnaire was used to examine students' writing practices and their perceptions of writing development across the two groups. One-hundred and twenty-three students at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Humanities Sultan Moulay Slimane completed the questionnaire.

As the questionnaire provides limited in-depth data from the respondents, a writing task was also used to collect data. Although the study included more than one writing condition, the present article focuses on one writing condition to explore writing development across academic levels. These qualitative data aim to elicit a richer understanding of students' writing development. Although one-hundred and twenty-three students completed the questionnaire, only seventy-four voluntarily agreed to participate in the writing task. Thus, the writing samples constituted a subsample of the questionnaire participants and were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to examine writing development.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent before data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Data were securely stored, and participants were assured that their responses would be used only for research purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

Questionnaire Findings

Students' Frequency of Writing in English Courses

This subsection presents the findings of the study examining the writing frequency of second-year and third-year students in relation to the frequency of writing essays, paragraphs, reports, creative writing, and social media posts.

Table 1. Frequency of Writing Types Reported by Second-Year and Third-Year Students

Type of writing	2nd Year (N=61) Mean	2nd Year SD	3rd Year (n=62) Mean	3rd Year SD
Essays	0.72	0.45	0.52	0.50
Paragraphs	0.67	0.47	0.60	0.49
Reports	0.05	0.22	0.11	0.32
Creative writing	0.34	0.48	0.24	0.43
Social media posts	0.26	0.44	0.23	0.42

As shown in Table 1, unexpectedly, a large majority of second-year students outperformed third-year students in several writing types, particularly in writing essays. Specifically, the mean scores for second-year students were (M=0.72, SD= 0.45) compared to third-year students (M=0.52, SD=0.50).

Students' Improvement of Writing since Enrolling in University.

The following table aims to compare the development of writing since enrolling in university among second-year and third-year students.

Table 2. Second- and Third-Year Students' Writing Improvement

Test	X2	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	.000a	1	.984

As shown in Table 2, the Pearson Chi-square test indicated no statistically significant difference between second-year and third-year students ($X^2=.000$, $p=.984$).

Factors Contributing to Students' Writing Development

The factors that contribute to students' writing development are presented, followed by a focus on the role of teachers' encouragement in developing writing.

Table 3. Factors Contributing to Writing Development of Second-Year and Third-Year Students

Contributing Factors	2nd Year (N=61) Mean	2nd Year SD	3rd Year (n=62) Mean	3rd Year SD
Writing practice	0.85	0.36	0.89	0.32
Reading materials	0.66	0.48	0.77	0.42
Teacher feedback	0.41	0.50	0.47	0.50
Peer feedback	0.11	0.32	0.18	0.39

As the table demonstrates, the mean scores for all contributing factors to writing development were higher among third-year compared to second-year students. The largest difference was noticed in 'writing practice', where third-year students reported it as the most contributing factor to improving their writing. The second most chosen factor was 'reading materials'; 'the teacher feedback' came in the third position, and 'students' peer feedback' was the last chosen factor. The teacher feedback and the peer feedback were not as highly ranked or important as the first two options. Even though third-year students were observed to have higher mean scores, there were no statistically significant differences, indicating that the difference between the two groups was not large.

Table 4. Teachers' Encouragement Reported by Second-Year and Third-Year Students in Developing their Writing

Test	X2	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	.472a	2	.790

Results show that while the vast majority of both second-year and third-year students reported that some teachers encouraged them in developing their writing, only a few reported they did not. Since the p-value was (0.790), there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Also, the chi-square value (0.472) was low, which shows that the differences between the two groups were minimal.

Overall, the result was somewhat surprising because third-year students would normally be expected to show more writing proficiency, especially when writing essays. Yet, the majority of second-year students outperformed third-year students in writing essays. The stronger performance in writing essays differed between groups. The question that we should ask ourselves here is why, then, does writing essays stand as the most frequently used type and the one in which differences between the two groups were statistically significant? In other words, unlike the authors in earlier studies (Dinsa, 2023 and Jones-Mensah, 2024), progression across academic levels does not necessarily lead to noticeable development in writing, and there may be specific factors which could affect students' engagement in various types of writing such as course design, teaching practices, teachers' encouragement and students' motivation. The most striking fact about these findings is that despite the differences in the levels of the students and their contexts of study, the ranking of the writing types does not show very significant differences. This finding does not go in line with McDonough & De Vleeschauwer (2021, p. 26)

This comparison of EFL texts written by first- and second-year university students showed evidence of language development in terms of increased complex nominals and AWL words."

Furthermore, the results suggest that third-year students may have more experience with writing compared to second-year students. Overall, both groups share similar views towards their writing improvement since enrolling at university. Yet, this difference may be due to their different academic levels and exposure to more writing activities. This high rate implied that the two groups' perceptions were similar.

In addition, the factors that contribute the most to the development of students' writing include 'writing practice' and 'reading other materials.' The most striking fact about these findings was that despite the differences in the academic levels of the students, their ranking of the factors was similar. The slight difference between second-year and third-year students was most pronounced in all factors. Although some higher mean scores were observed, no statistical significance was reached between the two groups. This implies that the contributing factors to writing development for both second-year and third-year students were not influenced by the academic level. Concerning teachers' encouragement in developing writing, a majority of students reported that only some teachers encouraged them to develop their writing, indicating partial support, which may affect students' confidence and overall writing. Teachers' knowledge of writing instruction and support is essential for writing development. Similarly, as noted by Van Kraayenoord et al (2009), teachers who possess knowledge about writing instruction are better able to support learners who experience writing difficulties. Overall, these findings suggest that while students acknowledge a variety of factors contributing to writing development, teachers' encouragement is consistent across different academic levels, and both second-year and third-year students may have similar experiences regardless of their academic level.

Writing Samples Findings

The quantitative analysis of the writing samples revealed differences between second-year and third-year students across the assessed linguistic aspects.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Writing Scores

Aspects	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Organisation of ideas	73	1	4	2.08	.829
Use of cohesive devices	73	0	4	2.30	.739
Vocabulary range	73	2	4	2.55	.554
Grammar accuracy	73	2	4	2.67	.602
Mechanics	73	1	4	2.47	.783

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the five aspects used in scoring students' letters. Overall, the highest mean score was obtained for clarity of purpose ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .873$). On the other hand, the lowest mean score was observed for organisation of ideas ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .829$).

The following table presents the descriptive statistics by academic level.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Writing Scores by Academic Level

Aspect	2nd Year (N=34) M	2nd Year SD	3rd Year (N=39) M	3rd Year SD	Total (N=73) M	Total SD
Organisation of ideas	1.76	.781	2.36	.778	2.08	.829
Use of cohesive devices	2.32	.638	2.28	.826	2.30	.739
Vocabulary range	2.47	.507	2.62	.590	2.55	.554
Grammar accuracy	2.44	.561	2.87	.570	2.67	.602
Mechanics	2.24	.741	2.67	.772	2.47	.783

Third-year students tend to obtain higher mean scores than second-year students on most writing aspects. For instance, aspects such as [accuracy of grammar], [mechanics], [vocabulary range], and [organisation of ideas] show higher mean scores among third-year students. However, second-year students obtained lower mean scores on multiple aspects, particularly [use of cohesive devices].

Overall, the quantitative findings showed that third-year students tend to obtain higher mean scores than second-year students on several writing aspects, indicating great development in elements related to writing as students advance from one academic level to another. Higher mean scores were observed among third-year students, particularly in the accuracy of grammar, suggesting a stronger understanding of this element. In contrast, second-year students obtained lower mean scores, especially in organisation and mechanics, which indicates that these elements may not yet be adequately understood and developed at this academic level. On the other hand, third-year students tend to show more consistent performance, suggesting a shared understanding of some aspects. These results suggest that the academic level plays an important role in developing students' writing. The higher mean scores among third-year students reveal more exposure to writing development tasks during their university studies. Nevertheless, there are writing aspects where the difference was minimal, highlighting some stability between the two groups.

Overall, third-year students achieved higher mean scores than second-year students in most linguistic aspects. To better understand these differences, the next qualitative analysis examines excerpts from students' written letters.

Organisation

While the majority of second-year students organised their letters to some extent, a small proportion showed weaker performance. An example of students' writing is presented below. "Learning English language is very important because it is international language, English language can open up more job opportunities English is a key language in global media enterment". The excerpt shows limited organisation, with no clear connectors, greeting or closing. Furthermore, a large proportion of third-year students showed partial organisation, while some students demonstrated an effective use of organisational features. The excerpt below provides an example of students' writing. "Dear friend hosine, I send you this letter to inform you that English is very important because it is a global language that open door to a new opprotonuties, cultures and connection...Your friend Youssef". The excerpt shows good mastery of organisational features, starting with a greeting, body and ending with a closing.

Overall, the qualitative findings further revealed that second-year students' letters demonstrated that organisation was generally moderate. The majority of students scored 2, showing fair organisation, while a few scored 1, indicating limited organisation. Only 2 letters were given a score of 3 in terms of organisation, demonstrating that an organised letter was rare. The ideas are relevant to the task, but not well-connected. They lack clear connectors and also the components of a letter: a greeting and a closing. This clearly shows that students can generate and present ideas, but are unable to successfully organise them according to the given task. In contrast, third-year students demonstrated a good awareness of how to organise their letters compared to second-year students. Most students scored 2, indicating a fair level of organisation, while some students scored 3 and 4, showing well-structured writing. Even though most students did not effectively organise their writing, a better organisation is still noticed in some students' letters, which demonstrates a structured organisation of ideas in a logical order. Overall, the organisation of students' writing improved from second-year to third-year students, which is consistent with Miller and Pessoa's (2016) finding that "students' use of these organisational features showed an overall improvement trend even without explicit instruction of these features" (p.23). However, unlike their findings, third-year students' writing showed no improvement in terms of organisation compared to second-year students.

This suggests that the academic level and experience do not always contribute to students' ability to organise their letters effectively.

Cohesion

The majority of second-year students demonstrated a moderate use of cohesive devices. The following excerpt illustrates students' performance. "Well at first I started to learn English just because I was bored and because I was in love with English music, but then I found a video about an English book and that's how I made a bigger effort to learn it just to read that book. And by time I started..." The excerpt shows some use of cohesive devices, with no appropriate transitions or smooth flow. The majority of third-year students demonstrated some use of cohesive devices. The following excerpt illustrates students' performance in terms of cohesion. "First, it is a global language that nowadays everybody use. Second, learning English helps you discover different cultural identities around the world. Finally, learning English can help you access different jobs opportunities". The excerpt includes cohesive devices in some instances, with the use of repetitive and mechanical transitional words.

Regarding cohesion, most second-year students scored 2 and 3. The sentences were not well connected, and most letters lacked appropriate transitions, demonstrating weak transitions and a lack of flow. If a few logical connectors are added, this would make it flow much better. This clearly suggests that most students did not focus on connecting their ideas in a logical order. Third-year students displayed similar results compared to the second-year group. Few students obtained higher scores. A moderate use of cohesive devices is shown in students' letters. Some used other transitional words to connect sentences. Yet, most of them were repetitive and mechanical. Overall, unlike Crossley et al. (2016), who reported that growth in the use of cohesive devices was demonstrated among L2 writers over the course of a semester, the present study showed no significant improvement in cohesion between second-year and third-year students. Cohesion was at a fair to a moderate level, though some letters demonstrated weaker and limited use of devices. There was a lack of flow and ineffective cohesion.

Vocabulary

Most second-year students showed some use of vocabulary. An extract from students' written letters is presented. "First, it is concerned to be the language that all countries in the speak. Even in economics everything is dealt in English, beside that it is easier and entertaining to learn". The excerpt shows the use of limited, simple, and general vocabulary. Concerning third-year students, most of them showed a consistent use of vocabulary. An example drawn from students' letters is presented. "English is very important in our days...and learning it will be beneficial. English is very useful, because it helps us getting a good job". The excerpt includes a good range of vocabulary, as they frequently used more descriptive words or phrases.

The use of vocabulary among second-year students' letters was generally fair to moderate, with most scores around 2. Even though a few students scored 3, indicating varied and appropriate lexicon, the majority of students frequently relied on a restricted range of vocabulary items. Such lexical items show a lack of accuracy and richness, with repetitive and general terms. Regarding third-year students, the use of vocabulary was moderate to good. The results reveal that the majority of responses fall within the higher score range, with most scores around 3. This suggests a good awareness of choosing an appropriate lexicon without fully using an academic tone. The use of vocabulary among second-year students was simple, limited and characterised by the use of general words. In contrast, third-year students showed good awareness of choosing an appropriate lexicon. This finding is consistent with Newton et al. (2023), who explained that as writing expertise develops, writers' attention to words becomes increasingly sophisticated.

Grammar Accuracy

The majority of second-year students used adequate vocabulary to some extent. The following excerpt illustrates students' performance: "it's help to get a good job in this bad time in our life". The excerpt shows the commitment of many grammatical errors, particularly in tense and subject-verb agreement. The results related to the accuracy of grammar among third-year students showed evident use of grammar. This can be seen in the following excerpt, "Ever since I started studying English more seriously, I have realised how many doors it opens whether it is understanding movies without subtitles, chatting with people from other countries or even just feeling more confident online. It really makes a difference!" The excerpt shows fewer grammatical errors and the use of correct tense agreement.

The majority of second-year students scored 2. This demonstrates a moderate or developing level of grammar, but their grammatical accuracy is still inconsistent. However, fewer students obtained higher scores, indicating more control. On the other hand, the majority of third-year students scored 3, demonstrating a good level of grammar mastery. These students made mistakes, but they were less frequent compared to second-year students, reflecting better control of grammar use among this group. Overall, Students' grammatical accuracy improved from second-year to third-year students, and they showed good mastery. This finding is consistent with Crossley et al. (2014), who found that L2 writers exhibited significant growth in syntactic complexity as a function of time spent in writing classes. This suggests that academic level and experience contribute to students' ability to make correct grammatical sentences.

Mechanics (Spelling, Punctuation, Capitalisation)

Concerning the use of mechanics, most second-year students showed some use of mechanics. The excerpt below provides an example of students' writing: For example, a student wrote, "Learning english language is important. first it helps us enhance our brain. Second with learning English we can communicate with other people in different centary. And make a new friend. finally learning english helps individual in social life". The extract shows the frequent occurrence of spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation errors. The data related to mechanics among third-year students showed that the majority of students used mechanical features to some extent. The excerpt below illustrates students' performance: As one student mentioned, "I just want to tell you. That I think learning english is super important. most of the things I love are in english". The extract shows fewer mistakes related mainly to capitalisation and punctuation.

Second-year students often made spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation errors. Whereas only a smaller number achieved low scores, as 1 was given as a score 3 times, most students scored 2 and 3, indicating limited control of correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation. This finding is consistent with Nasim and Mujeeba (2024), who found that EFL learners reported that they encountered several challenges with punctuation, spelling, and capitalisation during writing. Third-year students had fewer mechanical errors. Most students scored between 2 and 3, with only a few students achieving either high or very low scores, which indicate a moderate use of appropriate mechanics. Students' mechanics improved from second-year to third-year students. This suggests that the academic level and learning experience seem to contribute to students' advancement in the use of mechanics. Furthermore, it is also observed that third-year students demonstrated the highest degree of mechanical accuracy compared to second-year students.

5. Conclusion

The present study has examined the development of writing among Moroccan undergraduate students across two academic levels. Given the importance of writing development, it has been postulated in this study that students' written performance develops across the two academic levels. This premise, however, is not confirmed in the case of Moroccan students at Sultan Moulay Slimane University of Beni Mellal, whose progression in academic level does not necessarily lead to significant improvement in their writing.

Accordingly, it can be asserted that academic progression alone does not guarantee consistent improvement across all writing dimensions.

These findings suggest that the development of writing remained similar across both academic levels and is influenced by a variety of contributing factors to writing development, including writing practice, reading materials, teacher feedback, and peer feedback. It is normal to expect that writing develops significantly as students move from one academic level to another because of their exposure to more advanced tasks. Yet, this progression alone does not necessarily lead to noticeable development in writing. This development may depend on teachers' encouragement, sustained feedback from teachers, and engagement in different writing activities.

Based on the findings of this study, several pedagogical implications for the teaching and learning of writing in higher education emerge. These implications highlight the need for instructional practices that directly support the development of writing among both second-year and third-year students. Lindemann (1987) notes that writing instruction should be based mainly on guidance during the writing process and the discussion of students' written production. The first pedagogical implication concerns the role of explicit teaching in relation to writing. Despite differences in written performance across academic levels in most assessed aspects, questionnaire findings indicate that students' writing development does not necessarily progress significantly as they move from one academic level to another. This clearly suggests that teachers should not perceive students' advancement as solely due to exposure to writing tasks. The instruction, however, should include guidance on how to brainstorm information, outline ideas, draft, and review the written production. Such instructions may help students become more strategic writers who are better equipped with the required tools to improve their writing. Another implication concerns the importance of feedback in helping students gradually develop their writing. The importance of feedback lies first in its crucial role in identifying areas of improvement in relation to writing. Such sustained instructional guidance may also be considered the best support for writing development. Continuous feedback may help students develop a sense of reflective practice and gradually develop their writing. In addition, the results highlight the important role of instructional resources to help with writing development. Access to reading and online resources, extracurricular activities, and peer and teacher support may help students improve their writing. However, without instructional application, such resources may not be integrated effectively. Teachers may therefore focus on effective ways through which these resources might be applied, such as designing tasks that foster collaborative writing, discussions, and reflective writing practices to develop writing. In brief, these findings suggest that writing development should be approached as a long-term process rather than as simply a skill to be mastered quickly. In so doing, teachers may adopt several instructional strategies to emphasise students' engagement with multiple tasks throughout academic levels. These strategies may include teachers' encouragement, collaborative discussions, and reflection on students' written performance. Such methods may lead to the development of writing.

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