Arab World English Journal
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ISSN: 2229-9327

Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL Number 11. July 2025 Pp. 309-326
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call11.19

Using Moodle as an Online Learning Medium for Academic Writing Skills: Students' Perceptions

Özlem ERDEM ÇAVDAR
Faculty of Letters, Atatürk University, Erzurum, Türkiye
Corresponding Author: ozlemerdem1@gmail.com

Muzaffer BARIN
Faculty of Letters, Atatürk University, Erzurum, Türkiye
Email: mbarin@atauni.edu.tr

Received:04/15/2025 Accepted:07/13/2025 Published:07/26/2025

Abstract
With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, universities switched to the remote learning environment, heightening the use of tools like Moodle. This research paper explores EFL students' perceptions regarding the use of Moodle for developing academic writing skills. Using structured interviewing, the data were obtained by adopting a qualitative case study design by privately interviewing 28 first-year students in an English Language and Literature program in one of the Turkish universities. The study aimed to determine students' perceptions, the type of challenges met or experienced, and the overall experience regarding online academic writing instruction. The results showed a duality in students' perceptions: on the one hand, 79% of students stated that their writing skills had benefited, and on the other hand, 64% preferred in-person lessons. The main advantages were flexibility, easy material access, and helpful teacher feedback. Nevertheless, students identified technological problems and the lack of interaction as key disadvantages of Moodle-based learning environment. The study concluded that Moodle-based writing instruction can be effective when it is supported by well-structured feedback mechanisms, synchronous learning components, and training in digital skills for both students and instructors.

Keywords: Academic writing, English for academic purposes, learning management system, perceptions, writing

Cite as: Erdem Çavdar, Ö., & Barın, M. (2025). Using Moodle as an Online Learning Medium for Academic Writing Skills: Students' Perceptions. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Special Issue on CALL (11): 309-326. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call11.19

Introduction

Writing is one of the four fundamental language skills, alongside reading, listening, and speaking. However, it is often considered the most challenging skill for many. What makes writing challenging is the complex cognitive processes it requires, which differ significantly from those involved in the other language skills (Harmer, 2004). Students are encouraged to develop effective writing skills to be competent language users. To be more specific, students must demonstrate critical thinking skills, a strong command of grammar, an extensive vocabulary, creativity, and subject knowledge to produce effective writing. The field of academic writing, however, has received considerable critical attention in recent years. Learners must ensure coherence, cohesion, and well-developed content to present an effective written product (So & Lee, 2013). This level of organization demands critical thinking, which is developed through extensive reading and interpreting. It requires a strong command of grammar rules, sentence structures, word forms, and punctuation, which are frequently neglected in spoken language. As Ocak Kılınç and Yüksel (2024) suggest, "most EFL learners consider writing as a challenging task because they lack linguistic and lexical resources as well as the experience to translate their thoughts into effective compositions in their L2" (p.1). Due to the inherent complexity and high cognitive demands of effective writing, learners may develop negative perceptions toward the skill. It is for this very reason that this affective barrier is labeled as 'writing anxiety' in the literature (Challob, Bakar, & Latif, 2016). With this anxiety in mind, specialists are seeking to overcome the problem of 'writing anxiety', thus seeking to help students become good at writing.

In the current era of improved technological facilities and innovations, the integration of technology into education, especially language teaching, has been driven by ongoing developments in digital tools and platforms. They have indeed heightened the need for it. Students can be exposed to language more often with the help of technology. Given that language exposure is a key part of learning a language, technology facilitates the learning process by offering increased opportunities for input and practice. Keeping the concept of 'writing anxiety' in mind, there is a growing interest in delivering writing courses within online learning environments. Warnock (2009) explained online learning for writing as an experience of being in a rich and guided learning environment. Students can express themselves to a wider audience through their writing, and are encouraged to write when they can communicate with their teachers and peers via online environments (Warnock, 2009).

Writing anxiety is one of the significant challenges that students must overcome. It has been empirically proven that such a phenomenon arises from the fear of being judged, insecurity stemming from language proficiency, and the need to fulfill academic standards (Challob, Bakar, & Latif, 2016). To exemplify, Guo, Hamat, Jaafar, and Zhang (2025) found that writing anxiety significantly reduced learners' ability to produce complex and fluent texts. To counter this, teachers are beginning to incorporate more technologies into writing instructions to help alleviate anxiety and allow greater flexibility. As Guo, Hamat, Jaafar, and Zhang (2025) suggest "it is essential to implement tailored instructional strategies designed to mitigate the impact of writing anxiety" (p.126).

Over the past few years, interactive web technologies-commonly referred to as Web 2.0 tools, including learning management systems (LMS), forums, and blogs- have played a central role in shaping digital learning environments by fostering interaction and collaboration. Among them, Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an open-source LMS

to submit assignments, receive peer feedback, and communicate with students asynchronously, between the students and the instructors.

Technological tools not only increase learners' exposure to language input but also generate possibilities for more intensive writing. Warnock (2009) maintains that online platforms provide a rich and formal setting through which students reach larger audiences, interact with peers, and receive positive reinforcement through feedback.

Undoubtedly, online-based language education is increasingly common, yet, to date, no proper research has been carried out on the overall effect such education has on the development of academic writing, especially in EFL-related learning. To address this gap in the literature, the present research investigates students' perceptions of utilizing Moodle as a teaching tool in an academic writing course.

To guide the inquiry, the study is structured around the following research questions:

1. How do students feel about incorporating Moodle-based learning into a course on academic writing?

1.a) How do the students perceive the feasibility of the course?

1.b) Does learning with Moodle encourage academic writing on the part of students?

Literature Review

Teaching Writing

Murray and Moore (2006) define writing as "a journey which leads us to discover ourselves, our knowledge and ideas, our surroundings and to evaluate our professional identities as academics, teachers and researchers" (p. 4). Starting from this point, teachers should consider writing a continuous 'journey' or a 'process'. By doing so, they would recognize that the students are in the process of developing their writing performance and discovering the potential within themselves throughout this 'journey'.

Harmer (2004) summarizes the teacher's role in a writing class as a demonstrator, motivator, supporter, responder, and evaluator. Considering those roles, an academic writing teacher should possess some crucial abilities or skills to help the learners express themselves effectively with their writing. In other words, academic writing can be viewed as a 'student-centered' activity rather than a teacher-centered one; the teacher acts as a 'guide' with their feedback and guidance for the students to perform well in their writing.

Students' Perceptions of Using Online Learning Environments

Technology enables learners to share their knowledge with a broader audience, collaborate easily with their classmates, and enhance their creativity, all of which contribute to improving their writing skills and lexicon (Camahalan & Ruley, 2014). Several studies have examined the use of Moodle-based environments and students' perceptions regarding the integration into language instruction. A considerable number of these studies highlight a range of positive and negative perceptions of the students regarding the use of Moodle-based environments (Hosseinpour et al., 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Purnawarman et al., 2016; So & Lee, 2013).

Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) concluded that Edmodo, an online learning platform, motivates learners to engage in writing by allowing them to practice writing outside the classroom. They added that it enhanced students' ability to express their ideas, as well as lexical resources, and grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Hosseinpour et al. (2019) revealed that Edmodo improved students' writing proficiency. The platform enabled learners to share knowledge, which fostered

creativity in their writing. However, not all students responded positively to Edmodo; low-achieving students reported that it did not help them improve their writing proficiency since it was difficult to concentrate on multiple tasks simultaneously. Another issue reported by low-achieving students was that they had problems with their group members, which prevented cooperation and collaboration. Other reported pitfalls of using Edmodo included poor internet connectivity, lack of technological devices, and incompatibility (Hosseinpour et al., 2019; Purnawarman et al., 2016).

AlDaghri and Oraif (2022) explored the influence of online teaching via Blackboard on students' engagement in writing. They used the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ) and surveyed 148 female students. According to the findings, students demonstrated high skills engagement, while emotional, participation/interaction, and performance engagement levels are moderate. While challenges such as limited face-to-face interaction and technical issues were acknowledged, students largely perceived online writing instruction in a positive light particularly appreciating the benefits of flexibility, comfort, and access to additional resources.

Sheerah et al. (2022) studied the perceptions of EFL teachers and female students in an Intensive English Writing Program. They conducted a focus group interview with 42 participants. The study indicated that both teachers and students generally held positive views toward online learning. The positive aspects of online learning are increased flexibility, accessibility to sources, and improved writing skills among motivated learners. Students benefited from asynchronous learning, while teachers emphasized the utility of immediate feedback and structured online activities. However, the study also reported significant challenges like unstable internet connectivity.

Wulandari (2016) investigated how a Moodle-based learning model could improve students' paragraph writing performance. They study combined traditional classroom instruction with Moodle-based tasks including discussions, writing practices and feedback. The findings showed that the model enhanced students' motivation and autonomy, as "students felt more enthusiastic and confident when writing paragraphs through Moodle" (p.77). Moreover, the platform's flexibility supported independent learning and greater engagement with course materials.

Teng and Wu (2024) conducted a longitudinal study involving 627 Chinese university students to examine the influence of self-efficacy beliefs, language learning motivation, and metacognitive strategies on students' perceived progress in online learning. The study found that students with higher self-efficacy beliefs were more likely to adopt metacognitive strategies, maintain motivation, and report greater progress in online learning.

Alqarni and Abdul Rahman (2021) investigated the effects of emergency online learning during the pandemic on writing anxiety. The study revealed that most participants experienced moderate to high anxiety, particularly of the cognitive type. The study also found that "most participants suffered from cognitive writing anxiety rather than somatic or avoidance behavior" (p. 204). Students attributed this to "limited interaction with instructors", "lack of feedback", and unfamiliarity with digital writing tools, while technical challenges also played a role (p.205).

Ocak Kılınç and Yüksel (2024) investigated the effects of online collaborative writing on A2-level EFL students' writing performance. Over a four-week intervention using Google Docs and Zoom, 26 students collaboratively engaged in writing tasks. The findings showed significant improvements in lexical complexity and fluency; however, no statistically significant gains were observed in syntactic complexity-possibly as a result of the limited duration of the intervention.

Based on their findings, Purnawarman et al. (2016) offer several suggestions, such as being sure about the technological infrastructure before the practice and encouraging students to work individually rather than in groups, as group work may lead to over-reliance on peers for completing the task.

Methodology

The study was carried out in a state university in northeastern Turkey. To explore students' perceptions in depth, the researcher utilized a case study approach within a qualitative research design. However, some open-ended questions also yielded quantifiable data, which were analyzed in the results section under a separate title. All in all, even if the nature of the study allows it to be qualitative, it also includes quantitative data to add methodological diversity.

Participants

The study involved 40 first-year students taking the Research and Writing course within the English Language and Literature program. All participants had completed a one-year preparation course in English or passed the department's English proficiency exam. At the end of the semester, students submitted 29 responses, and the researcher included 28 of them in the analysis. The reason for using convenience sampling was its usefulness and availability. Table one below summarizes the key demographic and academic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. *Participant Profile Summary*

Variable	*Description*
Total Participants	28 (out of 40 enrolled students)
Age Range	19 to 35 years
Gender Distribution	Mixed
Academic Program	English Language and Literature (1st year)
Prior English Training	1-year preparatory program or passed departmental proficiency exam
Sampling Technique	Convenience sampling
Data Collection Timing	After 8 weeks of online instruction
Response Format	Structured interview questions

Data Collection

The researcher administered open-ended interview questions after the students completed eight weeks of online learning. Based on the responses gathered through these interviews, the researcher gained insights into the students' perceptions of the online learning experience.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data collected from the open-ended interview questions using Creswell's (2003) analytical framework, which involves organizing, preparing, coding, and interpreting the data. The researcher examined the responses from the structured interviews conducted at the end of the semester to identify emergent themes about students' perceptions. Furthermore, illustrative quotations from students' responses were selected to provide deeper insights and to substantiate the thematic analysis.

In addition, specific responses to the interview questions generated quantifiable data, which were analyzed using percentage calculations and visually represented through percentage charts to enhance the comprehensibility and generalizability of the findings. The outcomes of this quantitative analysis are presented and elaborated upon in a separate section under the "Results" heading.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher used the following notion of member checking: the researcher showed appropriate participants' interpretations of major themes to confirm them. Furthermore, the researcher consulted a peer with expertise in applied linguistics as part of the peer debriefing process to verify the accuracy of the coding procedure and the themes' correctness. Triangulating both qualitative and quantifiable data strengthened the credibility of the results and enriched the overall findings.

Ethical Considerations

The university ethics committee granted ethical clearance for the study. The participants were informed about the research's intention and nature and provided voluntary consent. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, and students could withdraw without penalty.

Results

Quantitative Results

Twenty-eight students answered the structured interview questions at the end of the semester. While the primary focus of the questions was on the use of distance education in English language instruction, the inquiry also aimed to explore whether students possessed the necessary technological resources and could create conducive learning environments. Accordingly, the interview included items addressing students' internet usage skills, the reliability of their internet connections, and their access to essential technological equipment.

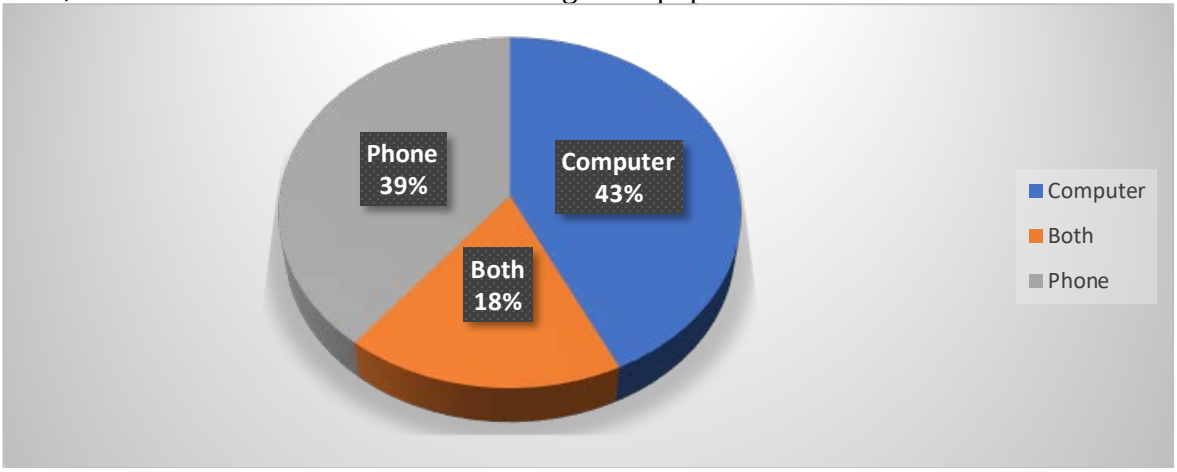


Figure1. The devices students used for online learning

Figure one shows that 43% of the students reported using computers to complete the required online course tasks. Accordingly, 39% of the students indicated using phones for online learning activities. Lastly, 18% of the students indicated that they used both devices to follow their tasks and assignments on Moodle.

Regarding infrastructural facilities available for online learning, 86 % of the students reported having a stable internet connection, while 14% indicated that they had a bad internet connection. 64 % of the students used Wi-Fi connections, whereas 22% relied on mobile data. Additionally, 14% of the students said they utilized Wi-Fi and mobile data for online education.

When asked to evaluate their technological competency on a scale from 1 to 5, the students reported an average score of 4,17 out of 5, indicating a relatively high level of self-perceived technological proficiency.

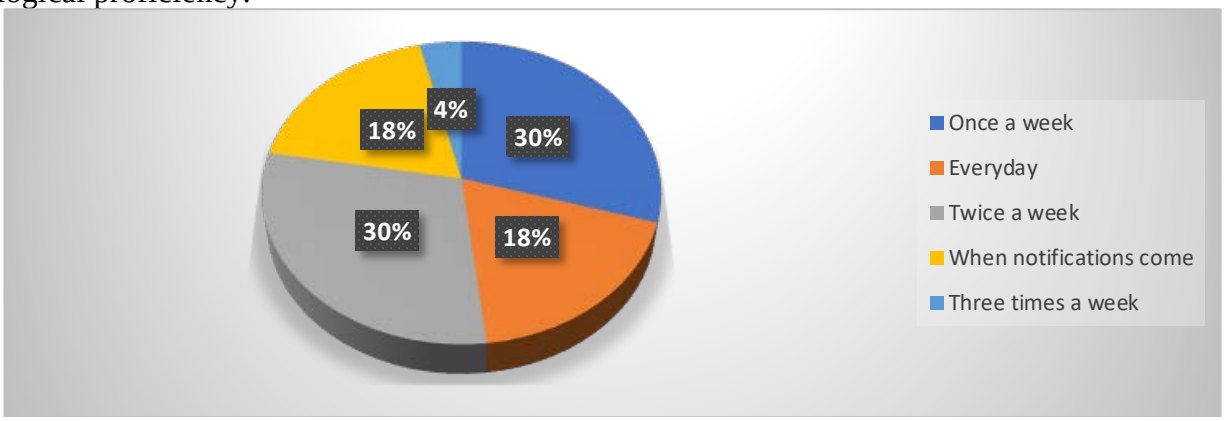


Figure 2. Responses to the question: "How often do you visit the platform?"

As shown in Figure two, a remarkable percentage of the students (96%) reported visiting the platform Edmodo page for their Academic writing class at least once a week. Only 4 % of the students stated that they visited the Edmodo course page when they received notifications. This finding is noteworthy, given that the platform consistently provides notifications for assignments and teacher announcements. The responses indicate that students are aware of their academic responsibilities and make efforts to stay engaged with the course requirements.

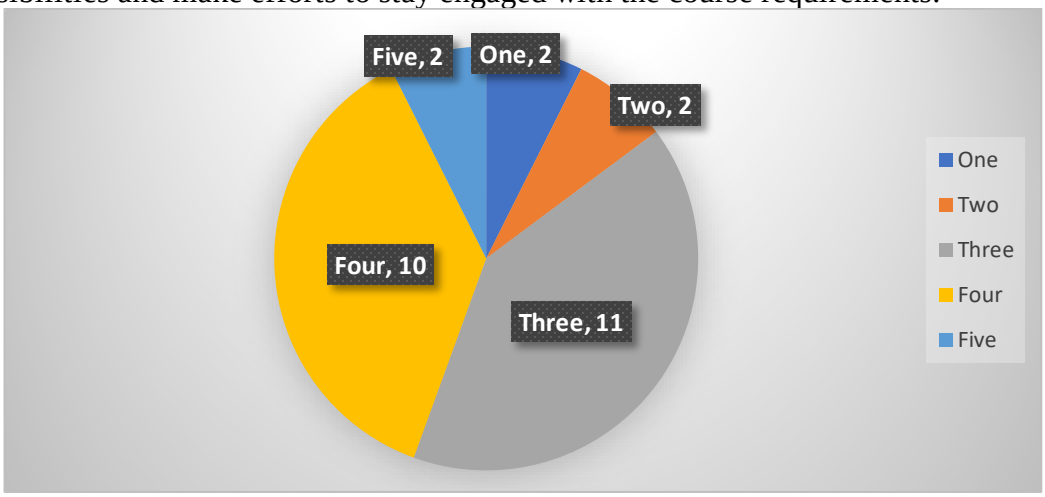


Figure 3. Responses to the Question: "Could you evaluate the effectiveness of the online course?"

Figure three presents how students rated the effectiveness of online course on a scale from 1 (not effective) to 5 (effective). What stands out in the figure is that a significant number of the students (44%) rated the course as effective. A remarkable number of the students (41%) rated the course as moderately practical by assigning it a score of 3. Only a small proportion (15%) of the students perceived the online course as ineffective.

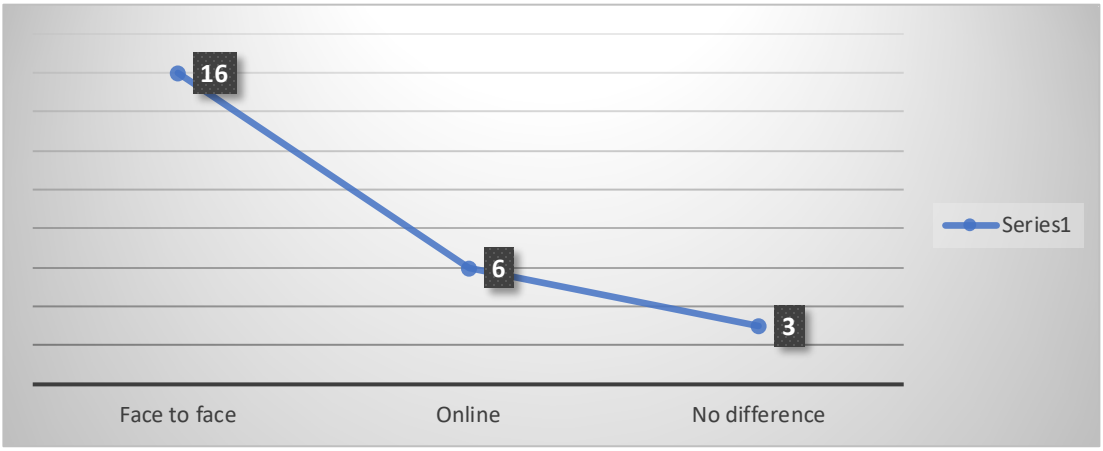


Figure 4. Students' responses to the question "Do you want to take this course online or face-to-face in the following semesters?"

As illustrated in Figure four, a substantial proportion of students (64%) preferred face-to-face instruction over online learning. In contrast, 24% of the participants preferred to continue with the online format. Only 12% reported no preference, stating that there was no significant difference between face-to-face and online course delivery.

Qualitative Results

The Experience of Using an Online Platform

The researcher asked students to describe their experience of using an online platform in an academic writing course in a single word or phrase. Table two presents the various expressions provided by the participants. A common theme that emerged was that students found their experience "useful" but "challenging". As seen in Table two, many students described their experience using positive adjectives as fantastic, exciting, amazing, and enjoyable. However, a smaller yet notable group characterized their experience with negative adjectives such as hatred, inefficient, stressful, and challenging.

Table 2: *How students define their experience*

Positive	Times	Negative	Times	Neutral	Times
Suitable for writing	1	Hard	3	Homework	1
Following assignments regularly	1	Hatred	1	Normal	1
Easy-accessible	1	Not efficient	2	Different	1
Awesome	1	Stressful	1		
Exciting	1	Challenging	1		
Fine	1				
Useful	3				
Effective	1				
Amazing	1				
Easier than traditional	1				
Good	1				

Enjoyable	1				

Students identified the strengths and weaknesses of using an online platform. Table three presents the common themes that emerged from their responses, along with the frequency of each. As evident from the table, students reported more positive themes than negative ones. A closer analysis reveals that a prominent advantage perceived by students is the *easy accessibility* of online learning, an essential goal of integrating technology into education. Additionally, five students highlighted the benefit of accessing various online resources and the flexibility to study anytime and anywhere, underscoring *the flexibility dimension* of online education. Other frequently mentioned positive aspects included support for *individualized learning*, *time efficiency*, *practicality*, and *paper-saving*.

Regarding the drawbacks of online learning, more than half of the participants (n=17) reported that connection issues and inadequate technological resources negatively impact the effectiveness of online courses. Beyond infrastructural challenges, a few students (n=3) expressed that online learning often includes excessive homework, which they viewed as an additional burden. Other negative perspectives voiced by the students included difficulties in following the lessons, lack of interaction, limited technological proficiency, and concerns about technology addiction.

Table 3: *Positive and Negative Sides of Using an Online Platform*

Positive	Times	Negative	Times
No pandemic risks	1	Difficult to get used to/new	1
Use different sources from the internet	5	Connection problems	12
Learn individually	2	Lack of facilities	5
Paper saving	1	Lots of homework	3
Comfortable	2	Unreliable sources on the net	1
Easy-accessible	4	Hard to follow/understand	2
Improving online skills	1	No interaction	1
Time saving	2	Lack of knowledge in online skills	1
Effective	1	Not real	1
Practical	1	Technology addiction	1
Access information easily	2		
Study whenever, wherever you want	4		
Makes students organized	1		

In literature, many previous studies have reported both positive and negative student perceptions regarding online learning (Hosseinpour et al., 2019; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Purnawarman et al., 2016; So & Lee, 2013). The present study's findings align with existing literature, demonstrating a similar pattern in students' perceptions of online learning environments.

The Problems Students Faced

When students were asked whether they had encountered problems during the online teaching and learning process, 34% reported that they had not experienced any issues. However, the remaining 66% indicated that they had faced various challenges, most related to internet connectivity and technical difficulties with the platforms used for exams and assignments.

A more detailed analysis of the responses reveals that most of the reported problems were related to internet connectivity issues or power outages, which sometimes led to students failing a course or an exam.

"Yes, I experienced. I cannot take an exam because of my internet service. I am not sure whether I can take the exam again or not. I consulted a makeup exam."

"I have experienced that my connection is bad, so I felt nervous during the exam because I fear my internet connection will cut off."

"Yes, while you gave feedback, there was a power cut."

"At once, my home's electricity was cut off. In the meantime, I was trying to send my assignment, and I failed."

An analysis of the student quotations presented above indicates that the primary challenge in online education is the inadequacy of technological infrastructure. This issue often leads to feelings of anxiety and stress among students, particularly during online classes, examinations, or while submitting assignments through digital platforms. These findings are consistent with the studies of Hosseinpour et al. (2019) and Purnawarman et al. (2016), both of which highlighted internet connectivity issues, insufficient technological devices, and device incompatibility as major drawbacks of online learning environments.

Developing Writing Skills

One of the most critical concerns for educators regarding online education is whether it effectively supports the development of specific learner skills. In this context, to explore students' self-perceptions of their progress in academic writing, the researcher asked: *"Do you think you have improved your academic writing skills this semester?"* In addition to their yes/no responses, students were encouraged to elaborate on their answers by explaining the reasons behind their perceptions.

An analysis of the students' responses revealed that 79% believed they had improved their academic writing skills over the semester, whereas 21% felt they had not made such progress. Given that the course was primarily delivered online, exploring the underlying reasons for these perceptions is essential, as expressed in the semi-structured interviews. The quotations below reflect the views of students who reported improved writing skills. A closer examination of these statements suggests that teacher and peer feedback on students' written work significantly fostered their academic writing development.

"Yes, I improve myself. I wrote an essay and sent it to my teacher; she gave me feedback. This feedback is constructive for my writing."

"I think I have improved my skills but it is not easy for me. Firstly, we have to study all topics by ourselves. I mean, our teacher gave us all the equipment, but it is hard because we need to do everything like lecturing. Secondly, our teacher and I are always in contact thanks to Edmodo. She gave homework in Edmodo, and we can do it. I think I can improve myself since the homework."

The feedback cycle and regular assignments have facilitated meaningful interaction and sustained engagement between the teacher and students throughout the online learning process. Another commonly mentioned factor contributing to students' perceived improvement was the use of Edmodo platform. According to students, Edmodo supported their self-organization and provided a structured environment, enabling the instructor to monitor and track their academic progress effectively.

"Yes, I think it is effective and improves me. Because we did research ourselves before writing. We have created an infrastructure. Then we tried to write carefully and without hurrying."

Lastly, the fact that technology makes it faster and easier to reach any information appears to support learners throughout the process.

"Yes, I do. Because we have written our writing in the direction of some kind of feedback, it helps me write better."

On the other hand, students who reported no improvement in their writing skills emphasized that face-to-face education offers more effective student–teacher and peer interaction. The absence of such interaction in the online environment led some students to attempt to resolve their difficulties independently, rather than seeking support from the instructor. Overall, the primary shortcoming of online education, as perceived by these students, appears to be the lack of meaningful interaction. Therefore, it is essential to design online courses in a way that actively promotes student engagement and fosters interactive learning experiences.

"I cannot say that I have fully improved my academic skills because you are not telling the lesson right now. There are many points that I don't understand. So, I am not doing my homework as it should be."

"Not as much. Face to face would have been better."

"I think I am not. Because it is not productive. Normal education is the best."

Another noteworthy perspective came from a student who reported feeling unmotivated throughout the online course. It is evident that the shift to online instruction negatively affected some students, primarily due to their unfamiliarity with this mode of learning. Being required to manage all tasks independently in a virtual environment led some students to experience a decline in motivation, which they attributed to their emotional state or a lack of self-regulation skills, such as planning and organizing their own learning process.

"No, but it is not related to this online course. I was not able to get a good mood."

To sum up, although some students reported no significant improvement in their academic writing skills, the majority (79%) perceived noticeable progress. A closer analysis of their responses reveals that those who consistently completed the assigned tasks and actively engaged with the course content experienced the most improvement. In contrast, students who struggled with self-organization and failed to keep up with the assignments tended to show little or no progress by the end of the term.

Comparison of Traditional and Online Classes

Students were asked to compare their experiences in traditional and online classroom settings. As they had received instruction in both environments, they could reflect on and evaluate their writing performance across the two modalities. Analysis of their responses revealed that 74% of the students believed their writing performance improved during the second term, which was delivered online. In contrast, 19% reported better performance during the face-to-face instruction in the first semester. Only 7% of the participants indicated no noticeable difference in their performance between the two semesters.

A closer examination of the students' responses provides valuable insight into their experiences with traditional and online classes. In reflecting on these two modes of instruction, several students shared the following statements:

"I can say that I am getting self-confident daily, I learned the meaning of different words."

"I think I could not fully improve myself, but now I write knowing where I made mistakes, which is an important point and improvement."

"Of course, there are huge differences between the previous semester and right now. Until now, we have had much work on writing skills. This semester, I can write an essay better than in the previous semester."

"I think, yes, we took distance education, but I learnt many things and thanks to this information, I started to write better."

"I think the feedback from your peers or teacher for my writing was useful. Because of the feedback, I recognize my fault in my writing."

A general evaluation of the students' quotations offers meaningful insight into why many believed their performance improved during the second semester. A predominant theme that emerged was the significant role of feedback and the structured process of writing essays in enhancing their academic writing skills. This perceived improvement appears to be influenced not only by the affordances of online learning but also by differences in the tasks and topics covered in the second semester compared to the first. Furthermore, both peer and teacher feedback emerged as key factors contributing to students' progress and motivation. This feedback loop fostered a sense of connection among students and between students and the instructor, transforming the learning experience from a one-way delivery into an interactive process. Through sharing their work, receiving feedback, and providing constructive comments to peers, students gained a deeper understanding of the writing process and how to improve their work.

The following interview question explored students' perceptions by asking them to imagine their experience in a face-to-face classroom setting and compare it with the online learning environment. Selected student responses are presented below:

"Listening subjects face to face would be better. I always say that, but we handle it perfectly and our lessons are productive."

"I can see my teacher, and I can ask for the misunderstood point. At the internet I cannot ask the time that I have to ask."

"Sometimes, I would like to talk to my teacher face-to-face."

"I could attend the course and it was effective, I could improve myself as speaking, cultural, opinion, much more than online platform."

"Maybe it might be regular or more productive."

"If we had taken this course face-to-face, it could be difficult to talk about our essays with the lecturer because our class is so crowded."

An analysis of the students' quotations suggests a general preference for face-to-face interaction with both peers and instructors. One student described face-to-face education as "more regular" and "more productive," while another pointed out a potential drawback, noting that it might be challenging for the teacher to provide individualized feedback on students' essays in a crowded classroom setting. Another participant acknowledged that although face-to-face education may have certain advantages, the online course was conducted effectively, enabling students to remain productive.

In summary, while most students perceived face-to-face classrooms as more productive and interactive—facilitating more effective learning—some also acknowledged the potential of online learning environments to be equally engaging and efficient when designed and implemented appropriately.

Feedback

Feedback is widely recognized as an indispensable component of writing instruction, in both face-to-face and online learning environments. In the context of online education, where direct interaction between students and teachers is often limited, feedback serves as a crucial tool for fostering engagement and supporting learners' development.

Based on the students' responses to the interview questions, it is evident that they valued the feedback they received and viewed it positively. The following excerpts illustrate students' perceptions of the feedback provided by their teacher and peers:

"I communicated with my teacher effectively. I understand the lesson better when my teacher teach us."

"I prefer feedback from our teacher because sometimes one gave a feedback two person or no one. Also, I do not think feedbacks that are given are not made sincerely. I prefer from our teacher because she is professional and she always wants us to improve."

"Of course feedback is useful. When I got the feedback from my teacher, it was useful. I see and correct my mistakes. But actually, my peers are like me. I think they cannot fully correct mistakes."

"Feedback from teachers is beneficial because he/she added a comment objectively, but my peers do not comment objectively and do not have enough experience and knowledge for this."

"Certainly yes. One of the most important things to improve academic writing is feedback. According to it, we can see and correct our mistakes."

It is evident that students held positive views regarding the feedback they received on their essays; however, the majority emphasized the value of teacher feedback, noting that it was more effective in enhancing their writing skills. Although the teacher provided specific guidelines for peer feedback, many students felt peer responses were less helpful. This was mainly due to peers' perceived lack of competence in identifying errors or offering constructive suggestions.

Students' Suggestions

At the end of the interview, students were invited to share their suggestions regarding the course. While the majority chose not to offer any specific recommendations, a few participants provided constructive suggestions for improving online courses. Below are selected quotations from their responses:

"I would like to share some thoughts. While taking an online exam, I fear my connection will cut off. Also, some of my friends can get a high scores while they do not get a high scores in the face-to-face semester. They may be cheating and may be using the internet during the exam. That's why, this situation affects my academic career."

"Teacher should ask the students individually if they have problem or idea about the anything such as internet, courses and also they should think that our special life and that's why, they should be understanding and not forced the students about the assignments or grades."

An analysis of the students' responses suggests that the concerns and suggestions offered were largely related to broader issues in online education rather than course-specific matters. For

instance, one student expressed frustration with the online examination process, believing that low-achieving students may receive high scores due to opportunities for academic dishonesty. Another student emphasized the need for greater empathy from instructors, noting that some learners may struggle to create a suitable learning environment at home due to various personal or technological challenges.

In addition to the concerns raised, some students provided positive suggestions regarding online education. One student, for example, remarked that online learning encourages learners to conduct independent research rather than relying solely on teacher-led instruction.

"Thanks to the online education, I realized that as a student, it was more effective to encourage students to research than to teach the subject."

These findings suggest that students generally hold positive attitudes toward taking an academic writing course through online education, despite acknowledging specific challenges. While both face-to-face and online learning environments present limitations, these can be mitigated through careful planning, thoughtful course design, and responsive instructional practices.

To conclude the various student responses and theme patterns, Table four summarizes major themes, example quotes, analysis, and frequency of theme occurrence.

Table 4. *Summary of Student Responses and Emerging Themes*

Theme	Student Response Excerpts	Interpretation / Code	Frequency / Count
Technological Access & Use	"I use my phone to access the platform." "I have a stable internet connection."	Device usage, Internet stability	86% stable connection; 39% use phones
Platform Engagement	"I visit Edmodo at least once a week" "I respond when there is a notification."	Regular engagement with the platform	96% visit regularly
Course Effectiveness	"The course is effective." "It is moderately effective." "It is not effective for me."	Varied perceptions of course success	44% rated as effective (5), 41% moderate (3)
Preferred Mode of Delivery	"Face-to-face is better." "Online is more flexible." "No difference between the two."	Modality preference	64% prefer face-to-face
Overall Experience with Online Tools	"Enjoyable, useful, amazing." "Stressful, inefficient, complicated."	Mixed perceptions (positive/negative/neutral)	Positive responses dominate
Perceived Benefits	"I can study whenever I want." "Easy access to sources." "It improves my organization."	Flexibility, accessibility, autonomy	5+ strong themes
Perceived Drawbacks	"Internet issues affected my exam." "Too much homework." "Hard to follow online."	Connectivity, workload, and cognitive overload	66% experienced issues

Academic Progress – Writing Skills	"Yes, I improved through feedback." "Homework helped." "No, I did not improve—miss teacher explanation."	Progress linked to feedback, struggle due to isolation	79% said "Yes"; 21% said "No"
Traditional vs Online Comparison	"Now I write with fewer mistakes." "Face-to-face helped me improve speaking more." "Online is less interactive."	Reflection on semester comparison	74% said performance improved online
Feedback Value	"Teacher feedback helped me see mistakes." "Peer feedback is less helpful—they don't know enough."	Teacher feedback preferred over peer	Dominant theme
Suggestions /Final Thoughts	"Teachers should be more understanding." "Some students cheat in online exams." "Online helped me do more research independently."	Academic integrity, empathy, student autonomy	Thematic variation

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate a complex and multifaceted student experience in an online academic writing course. The results also align closely with the previous research regarding the perceptions of blended or online academic writing instruction. In line with Hosseinpour et al. (2019) and Purnawarman et al. (2016), the current study has determined motivational and infrastructural factors influenced students' experiences of Moodle. For example, the emphasis attached to teacher feedback supports Liu's (2013) claim that the presence of the instructors is also significant in the success of online writing instruction. Similarly, the preference for structured platforms where assignments could be accessed continuously reflects So and Lee's (2013) findings that flexible learning environments promotes learner autonomy. The fact that the current research is congruent with those prior studies further enhances the generalizability of the research, especially those EFL cases in a developing or a transitional education system.

Although weak internet connectivity was usually cited as one of the disadvantages of online learning, it seems that the desire of students to be taught face-to-face lies much deeper and has more pedagogical and emotional origins. Participants also highlighted the absence of real time interaction with teachers leading to a consequent loss of immediacy and spontaneity in the online setting environment. Face-to-face classroom provides active verbal and non-verbal feedback, immediate alleviation of confusion, and a feeling of school spirit, which are not easily transferable to an online setting. These results confirm Sheerah et al.'s (2022) findings, which indicate that face-to-face communication increases motivation and engagement rates, particularly in writing-focused instruction where iterative feedback and discussions play a central role.

Moreover, the present study supports Wulandari's (2016) findings on the effectiveness of Moodle-based learning models. The positive impact of online platforms like Moodle and Google Docs indicates that flexibility and self-paced practice can foster more meaningful learner engagement and lead to improved writing performance.

Another essential dimension influencing learner progress is individual learner factors. Teng and Wu (2024) note that self-efficacy and metacognitive strategies tend to improve as learners

adapt to digital formats, indicating that the attitudes towards online writing instruction may become more positive over time and with continued exposure.

Conducting the study during the pandemic likely influenced the outcomes since it affected both the learning environment and participants' perceptions. The limited time for preparation due to the abrupt modal change along with the lack of readiness at an institutional and individual level probably affected the attitude of students towards online learning. Students may have developed negative perceptions because of the emotional and cognitive challenges such as uncertainty, digital fatigue, and social isolation. Students may have a very different experience in a post-pandemic context, and it is here that the planning of online learning and training can be made more effective through institutional training and students have greater hybrid opportunities.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to provide insights into the use of online platforms as a medium of blended learning, with a particular focus on students' perceptions of the online learning environment within an academic writing course. It further explored the feasibility of implementing online education in writing instruction by identifying both the advantages and drawbacks of such a delivery mode. Accordingly, the study offers meaningful implications for both teachers and students engaged in similar contexts.

Given its experimental nature, the study collected data on students' perceptions through structured interviews conducted at the end of the semester. Findings indicate that students hold both positive and negative views toward online education. Specifically, when asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the online course, a notable percentage of students (41%) rated the course as '4' or '5' on a five-point scale, indicating that they found it 'effective' or 'very effective'. However, when asked about their instructional mode preference, 64% of the participants reported a preference for face-to-face instruction.

The qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of students' experiences. While some students described the online learning environment using negative terms such as "hard, stressful, and challenging", the majority used positive language. Terms such as "easy-accessible, useful, effective, and enjoyable" reflected favorable attitudes toward the experience.

Students highlighted several benefits of online education, including support for individualized learning, practicality, flexibility, time-efficiency, and ease of access to information. Nevertheless, they also identified certain challenges including internet connectivity issues, an overwhelming workload, difficulty in following lessons, limited interaction, and a lack of digital literacy. These findings underscore the importance of addressing these potential obstacles when designing online writing courses.

A key strength of the online course was the use of feedback, both from peers and the teacher, which was played a crucial role in enhancing students' writing skills. This feedback facilitated meaningful interaction and helped mitigate some of the limitations of the online setting. Furthermore, regular assignments and portfolio assessment proved effective in monitoring student progress and skill development through a continuous cycle of feedback and revision.

Implications

The findings yield several practical recommendations for educators and administrators seeking to integrate online platforms into writing instruction. First, designing interactive online learning environments is crucial to promote student engagement, communication, and

collaboration. Tools such as real-time feedback systems and collaborative writing platforms like Google Docs can help replicate the interactivity of traditional classrooms. Second, conducting a needs analysis at the beginning of the semester can help identify students' technological access, digital literacy levels, and potential pedagogical challenges, allowing instructors to tailor their instructional strategies accordingly. Third, providing training for both teachers and students on the effective use of online education tools can enhance digital competence, boost confidence, and ensure the smooth implementation of online instruction. Finally, incorporating a variety of Web 2.0 tools—such as blogs, wikis, and digital mind-mapping applications—can enrich the writing process by fostering student autonomy, supporting differentiated instruction, and providing diverse modes of expression. These strategies collectively aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of online writing education.

Funding: This research is not funded.
Acknowledgments: Not applicable.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work
Artificial Intelligence Statement: AI and AI-assisted technologies were not used.

About the Authors:

Özlem Erdem Çavdar has been working as an English language lecturer at Artvin Çoruh University, Turkey, since 2009. She graduated from the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University in the same year. Afterward, she completed her M.A. in Applied Linguistics at Karadeniz Technical University and is currently pursuing a PhD in English Language and Literature at Atatürk University. Her research interests encompass English Language Teaching, Teaching Writing, Translanguaging, Blended Learning, and Flipped Learning. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3927-1647

Dr. Muzaffer Barın retired from Atatürk University the Faculty of Letters at Atatürk University after working in different positions for nearly 40 years. He pursued his B.A, M.A. and PhD degrees at Atatürk University. His research interests include philology, teaching language skills, second language acquisition and teacher and learner autonomy. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2010-083X

References

AlDaghri, A. A., & Oraif, I. M. (2022). The impact of online teaching on students' engagement in writing during the pandemic of COVID-19. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 23*(3), 216–229. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.1137290

Alqarni, S., & Abdul Rahman, R. (2021). Exploring the effects of online learning on EFL learners' writing anxiety: A case study of Saudi EFL learners during COVID-19. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ), 2nd Special Issue on COVID-19 Challenges*, 193–210. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/covid2.14

Camahalan, F. M. G., & Ruley, A. G. (2014). Blended learning and teaching writing: A teacher action research project. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies, 15*, 1–13. https://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/131651.pdf

Challob, A. A. I., Bakar, N. A., & Latif, H. (2016). Collaborative blended learning writing environment: Effects on EFL students' writing apprehension and writing performance. *English Language Teaching, 9*(6), 229–241. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n6p229

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Guo, T., Hamat, A., Jaafar, N. M., & Zhang, G. (2025). The effects of writing anxiety on writing performance of argumentative and narrative essays among intermediate EFL learners in China. *Arab World English Journal, 16*(2), 116–135. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol16no2.7

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Longman.

Hosseinpour, N., Biria, R., & Rezvani, E. (2019). Promoting academic writing proficiency of Iranian EFL learners through blended learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 20*(4), 99–116. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/tojde/issue/50876/658177

Liu, M. (2013). Blended learning in a university EFL writing course: Description and evaluation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 4*(2), 301–309. https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.4.2.301-309

Murray, R., & Moore, S. (2006). *The handbook of academic writing: A fresh approach*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Nguyen, H. B., & Nguyen, B. T. P. (2019). Edmodo use in ESP writing: Students' perceptions. *European Journal of English Language Teaching, 4*(1), 1–10. https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/eajlt/article/view/2484

Ocak Kılınç, B., & Yüksel, H. G. (2024). Online collaborative writing in an online EFL writing class. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning, 19*(22), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-023-00232-w

Purnawarman, P., Susilawati, S., & Sundayana, W. (2016). The use of Edmodo in teaching writing in a blended learning setting. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 5*(2), 242–252. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v5i2.1348

Saleh Al-Essa, N. (2018). The impact of using Edmodo as a blended learning medium on promoting Saudi EFL female secondary school students' English grammar. *Arab World English Journal (Special Issue: November 2018 Theses)*, 221–235. https://awej.org/images/AllIssues/Specialissues/November2018theses/17.pdf

Sheerah, H. A. H., Yadav, M. S., Allah, M. A. E. F., & Abdin, G. J. (2022). Exploring teachers and students' perceptions towards emergency online learning intensive English writing course during COVID-19 pandemic. *Arab World English Journal (2nd Special Issue on Covid-19 Challenges)*, 64–84. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/covid2.5

So, L., & Lee, C. H. (2013). A case study on the effects of an L2 writing instructional model for blended learning in higher education. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 12*(4), 1–10. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1015432.pdf

Teng, M. F., & Wu, J. G. (2024). An investigation of learners' perceived progress during online education: Do self-efficacy belief, language learning motivation, and metacognitive strategies matter? *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 33*, 283–295. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-023-00727-z

Warnock, S. (2009). *Teaching writing online: How and why*. National Council of Teachers of English.

Wulandari, M. (2016). Moodle-based learning model for paragraph writing class. *LET Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching, 18*(2), 73–90. https://jurnal.um.ac.id/index.php/let/article/view/8364