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Integrating E-Assessment into the Evaluation of Learners' Writing Production: Case of First-Year EFL Students at Tlemcen University

Thesis submitted to the Department of English in candidacy for the degree of Doctorate in Didactics and Assessment in English Language Education

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Declaration

I, GHOUALI Kamila, declare that this doctoral thesis is the fruit of my own personal investigation, and that it neither contains material previously written by another person, in whole or in part, nor had been accepted for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. I also certify that it contains no plagiarism except where otherwise indicated.

December 2nd, 2020

GHOUALI Kamila

Dedication

To my dear parents,
sister,
nephews,
family,
and friends.

Over the last few years, your unfailing moral support and encouragement during
stressful moments have given me the strength and the will to complete this research.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Technology has brought about considerable changes at the level of the educational sector worldwide during the 21st century. This change has also impacted assessment which had to be adapted to this situation. As such, diverse assessment methods and tools, that rely on technological devices to achieve evaluative purposes, have emerged. Among them lies e-assessment. Although the latter is commonly used in different parts of the world, it has not yet been implemented in the writing module at the Department of English at Tlemcen University which still depends on conventional methods of assessment. Using a mixed-method design that combined a case study along with an experimental design, the work examined the attitude and willingness of teachers and students to introduce such a change in the EFL classroom. Besides, it investigated the effect of the proposed assessment method on first-year English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' written production. To do so, a small-scale needs analysis was undertaken by following Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model. To this end, a structured interview and a questionnaire were respectively administered to 7 writing teachers and 35 first-year students. After analysing quantitatively and qualitatively these data, findings revealed scepticism from the part of teachers and enthusiasm from the part of students. Moreover, innovation, practice, and feedback were reported to be lacking in the module. Consequently, Moodle was opted for as an e-assessment tool upon which the researcher designed, implemented, administered, and corrected the tests of the experimental group. The latter, which consisted of 21 first-year EFL students, was compared with a control group of the same number to assess the effect of the method through a post-test. Then, it was subject to a post-experiment questionnaire to find out students' feedback from their experience. The quantitative analysis of the tests demonstrated that the experimental group had shown improved writing abilities in comparison with the other group. As for the qualitative analysis, it disclosed learners' appreciation for the method. The researcher believed that it was due to pedagogical, practical, and emotional factors behind the proposed type of evaluation. Therefore, a Moodle-based instruction is proposed as a novel technique to teach and assess writing at the Department.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

α: Alpha level

3D: Three dimensional

A2: Elementary level (way stage)

ANCOVA: ANalysis of COVAriance

ANOVA: ANalysis Of VAriance

App: Application

AUF: Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie

B1: Intermediate level (threshold)

B2: Upper-intermediate level (vantage)

C1: Advanced level (effective operational proficiency)

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

CMOOCs: Connectivism Massive Open Online Courses

CMS: Content Management System

COVID-19: COrona VIrus Disease 2019

CWE: Comprehension and Written Expression

Df: Degree of Freedom

E: Electronic

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

ECL: European Consortium for the certificate of attainment in modern Languages examination

EdX: A massive open online course provider developed by Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ERASMUS: European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

EU: European Union

F: Value of Leven's test

H_o: Null hypothesis

H_1: Alternative Hypothesis

Hyp: Hypothesis

IBM: International Business and Marketing

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

IELTS: International English Language Testing System

JISC: Joint Information Systems Committee

LCMS: Learning Content Management System

Lic.1: First-year Licence students

Lic.2: Second-year Licence students

Lic.3: Third-year Licence students

LMOOCs: Language Massive Open Online Courses

LMS: Learning Management System

LMD: Licence Master Doctorate

PDF: Portable Document Format

M: Mean

MANOVA: Multivariate ANalysis Of the VAriance

MCQs: Multiple Choice Questions

M.H.E.S.R: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

M.N.E.: Ministry of National Education

MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses

Moodle: Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

N: Number

OCWT: Online Collaborative Writing Technique

OSS: Open Source Software

P: Probability value

$P_{1,2}$: Participants

PRADO: Plataforma de Recursos de Apoyo Docente (Teacher Support Resource Platform)

RQ: Research Question

Sig.: Significance

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

Std: Standard deviation

T: Value of the independent t-test

T-test: Student test

TD: Travaux Dirigés (tutorials)

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

μ: Population mean

URL: Universal Resource Locator

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

WWW: World Wide Web

XMOOCs: Exponential Massive Open Online Courses

General Introduction

It goes without saying that the English language has been a direct linguistic outcome of globalisation. Consequently, its mastery has become a prerequisite to cope with the needs of this ever-changing society. Algeria has not been spared from this phenomenon either. It is fully aware of the role that this language plays, and has not ceased to provide tremendous efforts to reinforce its use in various sectors, mainly the educational one. Indeed, Algerian learners' journey with the English language is quite early. It starts at the middle school where they study it for four years, and then, three years at high school. After that, they have to attend a compulsory module within almost all disciplines at the university. This shows how officials insist on the importance of teaching it starting from an early age.

The former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Prof. Tayab Bouzid, has been a vivid supporter of increasing its status within the Algerian University. A concrete example of his devotion was the decision that he made in 2019 upon which headings of university documents began to be written in English. This was a novelty in this country where French is the dominating language as a linguistic inheritance from the French colonisation. He even carried out an online survey on Facebook to investigate Algerians' points of view on boosting English at the university. With more than 94 000 participants, results revealed that 94.03% of the informants agreed with such an initiative (Echoroukonline, 2019).

His successor, Prof. Chems Eddine Chitour, has also followed his lead. For instance, in 2020, and for the first time in the history of Algerian higher education, he encouraged doctoral students in different fields of study to write and defend their dissertations in English instead of French. However, no drastic measures concerning the total replacement of English with French as a means of instruction have yet been made. The government is rather opting for its gradual reinforcement, and debates about this linguistic situation are still under discussion.

The problem is that though EFL learners, who are supposed to be future English teachers, embark upon tertiary education with a previous linguistic background of seven years, they face a great deal of problems when studying English at the university. This statement is confirmed by a recent investigation that was

undertaken by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (M.H.E.S.R) in 2017, at a nationwide level, concerning the failure rate of first-year Algerian students at the university per discipline then modules. The goal was to make a state of affairs on a large scale, examine globally the source of the problems, and find solutions by the end. To do so, the ministry elaborated a questionnaire (See Appendix A) which was sent to all Algerian Universities and had to be filled in by the group of trainers in charge of the concerned field of study.

In the beginning, teachers had to mention the starting date of the lessons, the average duration of the semester, the rate of the programme's completion, and the type of difficulties their students encountered. After indicating their personal data, qualifications, and speciality, they had to highlight the presence or absence of continuous monitoring and tutoring system as well as the type of assessment provided (final examination, continuous assessment, and personal work). Next, they were required to fill in the canvas with the number of the enrolled students and the failure rate for each Baccalaureate stream (foreign languages, letter and philosophy, mathematics, scientific, technical, or management). Finally, they had to disclose their opinions about the reasons behind such failure and propose some suggestions and recommendations at the end.

Because of the aims of the present study, only the data related to the major of English were taken into account. Among the reasons behind EFL students' failure, the trainers cited:

- A mismatch between the requirement of the programme and their current level which is generally very low and causes language problems.
- Inadequacies of the secondary education training which focused mainly on grammatical structures rather than developing their communicative competence.
- Disinterest in the field due to a misguidance during the university registration that led to a lack of students' attendance.
- The growing number of students per group which hindered their individual monitoring and resulted in insufficient tutoring sessions and practice.

These are only a few instances of what those trainers believed to be the factors behind the failure. Samples of their analyses, which were provided by an investigating official of the M.H.E.S.R. after requesting permission, are presented in Appendix A. Concerning the modules that students encountered difficulties in, they commonly agree on written comprehension, grammar, phonetics, linguistics, literature, and civilisation. The emphasis of the present work is solely on one of these modules, written comprehension, which is a compulsory module at the university for three years in a row. Yet, despite the many years that these students had spent studying it, their writing proficiency is considered as a low intermediate level (Ahmed, 2018).

The author's review of the writing assessment in the Algerian EFL classroom revealed what Algerian scholars deem the main sources for learners' low writing proficiency:

- Writing deficiencies as far as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, coherence, and cohesion are concerned.
- A lack of writing strategies.
- Negative attitude towards the skill itself.
- The growing number of students per group.
- The insufficiency of the assessment.
- The reliance on traditional assessment methods which hinder their creativity and critical thinking.

Although students' writing problems at the English Department at Tlemcen University are of diverse origins and factors, the current study tackles uniquely one angle of them, Ahmed's (2018) last point, the assessment. Because the latter has always depended on a traditional paper-based evaluation in the writing module, the present work aims to investigate what would happen if it were to be changed. More specifically, it inquires if introducing technology, as an alternative, to correct learners' performances would improve their writing, and, thus, be a possible remedial solution to those issues.

Just like the English language, technological development has also been an outcome brought by globalisation. It has not only shaped every aspect of the societal life, but also changed students' way of learning (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018), and thus, their assessment. Among the tools that enable the design, administration, collection,

and correction of e-assessment related tasks, is the Moodle platform. Its use in the EFL classroom to assess students' writing has been widely discussed in the literature (Lien, 2015; Bouziane & Zyad, 2018; Wulandari, 2016; Gava & Dalla Costa, 2018; Ardiasih et al., 2019; Zyad, 2016).

As it can be seen, this kind of practice has been a common practice in various parts of the world, and has, generally, given promising results in higher education. However, when it comes to Algeria, studies in this direction are scarce. The researcher's extensive investigation on a variety of databases and resources (Web of Science, ProQuest, Scopus, and Google scholars) came to the conclusion that they tend to focus mainly on the reading skill (Sebbah, 2019; Bouguebs, 2019), and are often undertaken in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) settings (Lamri, 2015). Very few of them have tackled its utilisation within the EFL writing classroom, not least as an assessment tool.

What was more surprising is that though the platform was implemented at Tlemcen University a couple of years ago, it was still in its early stages at the English Department in 2018/2019, i.e. when the current work was carried out. At that time, its usage represented only a prerequisite for the newly recruited English teachers to attend a Moodle training in this regard. However, once the training is over, just a minority have recourse to it in their teaching practices. This has been confirmed via an informal interview with some of them.

Nevertheless, the situation radically changed in 2020 after the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Prof. Chems Eddine Chitour, required all the universities to use Video Conferencing tools such as Zoom and Google Meet to deliver the courses, and the numerical platform Moodle to upload the lectures due to the COrona VIrus Disease (COVID) 2019 Pandemic. As all of the universities were closed for several months, teachers had no option left but to rely on the Moodle platform to carry on teaching.

As it can be observed, 2020 has been what can be called a historic year for the Algerian University during which both the English language and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been tremendously reinforced. On the

bright side, these decisions plus the critical importance of the writing skill and the demands of today's world, have further demonstrated the necessity for undertaking such a topic in order to improve, and, possibly, modernise the existing situation. Henceforth, the study tests the feasibility and the usefulness of this Moodle-based assessment. It also investigates the willingness, attitudes, and feedback of teachers and students to introduce it in the EFL classroom. In light of this assumption, the following research questions will gear the study:

- RQ_1: To what extent are first-year EFL writing teachers at Tlemcen University ready to use e-assessment as a means to evaluate their first-year students' written production?

- RQ_2: How do first-year EFL students at Tlemcen University perceive e-assessment?

- RQ_3: Does the Moodle-oriented approach towards e-assessment have any significant effect on the writing performance of first-year EFL students at Tlemcen University?

- RQ_4: How can e-assessment, as an alternative, help first-year EFL students who experienced this evaluation method improve their writing abilities?

For the sake of giving answers to the aforementioned questions, the upcoming hypotheses are suggested:

- Hyp_1: First-year EFL writing teachers at Tlemcen University, most of whom being digital immigrants, feel sceptical about using e-assessment to evaluate their first-year students' written production. They are reluctant and resistant to change, and rather prefer the traditional way of assessment which does not engage any ICTs.

- Hyp_2: First-year EFL students at Tlemcen University, being digital natives, hold a more positive attitude towards e-assessment and feel more motivated. They consider it a more interactive, attractive, and interesting way of learning than the traditional paper-based assessment.

- Hyp$_3$: The Moodle-oriented approach towards e-assessment has a significant effect on first-year EFL students' writing performance at Tlemcen University.

- Hyp$_4$: The detailed and repeated feedback, which is provided by the e-assessment platform, helps first-year EFL students who experienced this evaluation improve their writing abilities.

To confirm or reject the above-mentioned hypotheses, a mixed-method design is opted for which fuses the case study and the experimental design. The case study is used to describe the existing teaching/learning situation in the writing module, to undertake a small scale needs analysis that identifies the lacks at the level of assessment, and to disclose informants' opinions about the integration of such a change. To this end, data are gathered from 7 first-year writing teachers and 35 first-year EFL students and at the English Department at Tlemcen University to whom a structured interview and a questionnaire are respectively administered. Based on those data, the Moodle platform is proposed as a possible solution to those needs.

To test the efficiency of the suggested method, tests are designed, implemented on the assessment tool, and then, administered to students within the same research setting, as part of the experimental design. Those learners are divided into an experimental group which is assessed on the platform, and a control group which is not. After that, a post-experiment questionnaire is administered to the experimental group to find out learners' perception of the online assessment experience.

The work is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is dedicated to the theoretical part of the work in which basic concepts related to assessment, e-assessment, and writing are defined for the sake of having a general overview of the subject area. The second chapter concerns the practical part. It first describes the teaching/learning situation in the writing module before explaining the research design used. It highlights the sampling methods, sampling population, research instruments, and the procedures of administration and analysis of those instruments. As for the analysis, it was carried out qualitatively as far as opinions and descriptions

were concerned, and quantitatively using numbers, statistics as well as percentages. Because the findings of two research designs that geared the study are interrelated and the results of the case study are used in the experimental design, the researcher has divided the results of each into two separate chapters.

Chapter three outlines the needs analysis by presenting the findings of the interview with teachers and the questionnaire to students. It identifies students' needs and lacks at the level of assessment and the informants' attitudes towards e-assessment. Chapter four is reserved for the experimental phase of the work. It describes the numerous steps that are followed to design the experimental tests, from the selection of the model and its adaption, till their implementation and administration on the platform. After that, an analysis and interpretation of the tests' results as well as the ones of the post-experiment questionnaire are provided. The final chapter will suggest a set of solutions and recommendations that would likely improve students' writing in the future.

Chapter One

Assessment, E-Assessment, and Writing Revisited

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1.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical framework underlying assessment, e-assessment, and writing. It seeks to introduce the research topic by explaining the key concepts that are considered to be of paramount importance for the study. For this sake, it is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to assessment by defining it; distinguishing between it, evaluation, and testing; highlighting its importance; mentioning its types; and describing how technology has been merged to it. Then, it shifts to e-assessment. At first, it clarifies it before spotlighting its emergence, tools, and the process through which it functions. Later on, it makes an analogy between the traditional methods of assessment and the online ones before stating its advantages and disadvantages.

The second part revolves around writing as it is the core of the study. First, it sets out a description of the skills and contrasts it with the other productive skill, i.e. speaking. Then, it discusses its nature from mental and socio-cultural stands. Next, it points out the various approaches that have been devised towards its teaching. Subsequently, it unveils the numerous components of the writing skill by describing the most prominent ones. Afterwards, it introduces the way its assessment is carried out by showing the steps involved in the design of writing tests. In the end, it displays the previous investigations that have addressed the integration of e-assessment in the writing skill.

1.2. Assessment

Astin and Antonio (2012) define assessment as the range of activities that are employed by teachers and students as a means to assess one's competence, assign a score, or accord a certificate. It covers a variety of materials such as tests, projects, reports, essays, portfolios, or standardised examinations. The authors argue that it aims at collecting data about learners' performances, linguistic capacities as well as the activities of organisations and establishments, and making use of these data in order to lead to the improvement of the teaching/learning situation. In a similar line of thought, Sárosdy et al. (2006) state that it is utilised to judge students' learning and language development that result from what has been taught or to give them feedback

(See 1.5.3.) prior to their actual examination sometimes without any scoring. It has commonly been assumed in the literature that assessment, testing, and evaluation are synonyms (Bachman, 1990). However, they differ from each other as they have divergent goals. Henceforth, to better comprehend assessment, comparing the three concepts was deemed important.

1.2.1. Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation

While Richards and Schmidt (2010) consider assessment as a data-gathering process that assesses the efficiency of the course, Bachman (1990) considers testing as a tool that quantifies learners' performances and measures their understanding of the course. Yet, both of these scholars agree on the judgmental attribute of evaluation. They advocate that it judges the quality of the programme, curricula, or teaching materials so as to make decisions accordingly. For this reason, Boumediene (2017) claims that evaluation is product-oriented. On the opposite, the author holds that assessment is process-oriented as it requires continuous data collection on students' learning, problem identification, and reflection.

From these definitions, one concludes that testing and assessment are, more or less, restricted to the classroom setting. More precisely, they boil down to teachers, students, and the courses. On the contrary, evaluation is more general and has wider implications since decisions are made upon it that go beyond the classroom context. Though assessment, testing, and evaluation serve different aims, they are interrelated. According to Bachman (1990), the point in common between these three concepts is that tests are part of both evaluation and assessment. In fact, decision-makers and teachers alike depend on tests to obtain the needed data. Decision-makers use them to evaluate the efficiency of the programme, and teachers to refine their teaching and provide remedial work.

1.2.2. Importance of Assessment

In the viewpoint of Appiah and Tonder (2018), assessment plays a crucial role in higher education. Zhao (2013) relates this role to teaching. Indeed, he believes that assessment serves as a meaningful source of information for instructors that permits them to know the quality of their teaching, evaluate the extent of understanding of

learners, determine if the curriculum objectives have been met or not, and identify the important elements that have to be learned. The author has not restricted this role to the teachers only; he defends that learners have also their fair share as it informs them about their learning outcomes. Hyland (2003) upholds that it guarantees adequate teaching that meets students' needs and future expectations, fair assessment of their achievement, significant enhancement of their learning progress, proper design and evaluation of courses, and appropriate determination of the source of their problems and its remedial solution.

Furthermore, Hyland (2003) states that it increases students' motivation, pushes them to double their efforts in learning and trains them for national or standardised tests. In his view, it guides the progress of the course and evaluates either the success or failure of the adopted teaching method or material. Similarly, Blackà (2003) maintains that the set of information obtained from it represents feedback that changes the teaching practices and learning outcomes, and thus, leads to the betterment of learning. JISC (2007), which stands for the Joint Information Systems Committee, asserts that assessment leads to the well-being of institutions and learners by encouraging them to work harder in their respective fields of study and develop their skills over time.

This committee further states that an appropriate assessment is an indicator of the success of teaching and learning. Nasab (2015) discusses its role with regard to the involvement of learners in the learning process and its ability to constantly motivate them to work harder. For this sake, Crisp (2011) insists that teachers should take the necessary time to design an assessment that is intrinsically valuable for them and their learners. It should have long term educational goals that would have implications on the society as a whole as well as a proper design that would signal students' performance (Ridgway et al., 2004). In a similar vein, Brown (1999) insists on the high importance of having a sound mastery of the methods of assessing students' abilities and skills because it is conducive to effective learning.

1.2.3. Types of Assessment

There are numerous types of assessment. Among them, Woolfolk et al. (2007) identify two of them: formative and summative.

1.2.3.1. Formative Assessment

According to Zhao (2013), formative assessment, which is also called assessment of learning, involves using strategies to ensure that students grasp the purposes behind learning and the criteria that will be used to evaluate their performance. He considers that its major goal is to judge students' level of performance on a specific task or at a certain period of teaching, thus supplying information for schools' reporting. He further adds that it enables comprehension of students' own learning and a provision of immediate descriptive feedback about their work. In his view, this pushes them to think about the way of improving their learning, and allows teachers to figure out learners' needs and to make preparations for their teaching activities.

In a similar line of thought, Stanković et al. (2017) defend that it is an in-process evaluation, which is held either at the beginning of the course or directly after its end, that assesses students' progress and understanding. The authors maintain that it is a source of data for both teachers and students. It allows instructors to spotlight the difficulties faced by their learners and make suitable changes so as to refine their teaching, and learners identify their lacks and improve their learning abilities. Daly et al. (2010) suggest that it permits having insights on students' way of learning and the learning outcomes expected to be attained. For these scholars, it is a constant reflection between themselves, teachers and students, or students with other students.

Nasab (2015) advocates that the gathered data from assessment enhance both teaching and learning when they are being employed to call attention to what went wrong, what was effective, and what needs to be bettered or changed in one's teaching or learning. In sum, it could be said that formative assessment deals with the teaching itself for a number of reasons. First, it identifies the strengths and deficiencies in students' learning (Hyland, 2003). Moreover, it accompanies students while the learning is taking place (Stödberg, 2012). Furthermore, it occurs all along with the

lecture. Besides, it focuses on the quality of learning rather than the quantity (Crisp, 2011). In the opinion of JISC (2007), it acts as continuous feedback of students' comprehension that does not grant any certifications or qualifications.

1.2.3.2. Summative assessment

Unlike formative assessment, summative assessment seeks the measurement of the quantity of the students' knowledge at the end of the learning process as it is interested mainly in the learners' or the programme's results (Hyland, 2003). Its purposes are to judge and measure what students have learned so far and grade them accordingly (Stödberg, 2012; Stanković et al.,2017), to hand a certificate (Crisp, 2011), or to place students in specific fields or given classrooms (Rovai, 2000). Similarly, Shute and Rahimi (2016) declare that it is the end product of what has been learned throughout the curriculum.

The authors posit that this type of evaluation is administered at the end of the academic year or schooling for the goal of giving grades, performing high-stake examinations, or being awarded an attestation. They see it as a source of comparison of learners' performance on a large scale that evaluates the degree to which the educational objectives are met or not. For this sake, Ridgway et al. (2004) state that it is taken more seriously by students than the formative assessment because of its deep consequences on their future careers.

In effect, the obtained certificate from the high-stakes examinations opens access to tertiary education and ranks students based on their performances. Henceforth, it is not centred towards learners per se. A considerable audience is involved in it including teachers, parents, schools, institutions, policymakers, and other administrative staff which are commonly named, 'stakeholders' (Ridgway et al., 2004). This point joins the one of Shute and Rahimi (2016) as for the wide implications of summative assessment that can move beyond the school infrastructure so as to reach a national level and policymaker decisions.

1.2.4. Assessment and Technology

In the past, assessment was mostly in a paper and pencil format (Bukie, 2014). Despite the potential of this form of assessment to measure students' performance

and their learning achievement, it demanded tremendous manual efforts for teachers (Boitshwarelo et al., 2017). However, the emergence of globalisation in the 21st-century era has generated a change in students' way of learning that has further reinforced the use of ICTs not only as a teaching tool, but also for assessment purposes (Ridgway et al., 2004). As a result, institutions and instructors in higher education in various parts of the world have started to encourage the provision of assessment in line with this contemporary society through e-learning systems (Boitshwarelo et al., 2017; Usener et al., 2012; Cazan & Indreica, 2014).

The shift from conventional evaluation to more modern ways of assessing students has taken on new perspectives towards assessment that have diversified its formats and tools (Jordan, 2013; Jamil et al., 2012; Timmis et al., 2016). It has also led to a technology-based called e-assessment (Mojarrad et al., 2014) which goes hand in hand with those systems (Tomljanovic & Polic, 2015; Said et al., 2019). This supports Al-Smadi and Guetl's (2008) claims on the urge of educational systems to bounce into the computer-based assessment to meet today's demands. Indeed, technology represents, as what Ridgway et al. (2004) uphold, the glue that holds together teaching, learning, and assessment.

1.3. E-Assessment

Jamil et al. (2012), Al-Qdah and Ababneh (2017), Jordan (2013), Bukie (2014), Timmis et al. (2016), and Kuzmina (2010) mention that the computer-based assessment; computer-based testing; computer-aided assessment; computer-assisted assessment; computer-assisted testing; computer-administered testing; technology-enhanced assessment; technology-enabled assessment; computerised assessment; computerised testing; web-based assessment; e-examination; e-testing; and online assessment are the set of terms that are generally considered synonyms of e-assessment within the literature.

JISC (2007), which is an e-assessment guideline developed for the United Kingdom, Kuzmina (2010), and Mimirinis (2019), define e-assessment as a type of electronic evaluation that relies on the computer or any other technological devices in order to conduct all the process of the assessment, moving from the presentation

of the assignments, to the recording of students' answers for summative or formative objectives (Timmis et al., 2016; Cazan & Indreica, 2014). In line with this statement, Kuzmina (2010, p.1) advocates that it "enables educators and trainers to author, schedule, deliver, and report on surveys, quizzes, tests, and exams". Crisp (2011) puts forward a more detailed explanation and claims that in this ICT-based evaluation, students' assignments, answers, scores, and feedback are elaborated, administered, recorded, corrected, analysed, and stored via digital devices that can be computers, mobile phones, tablets, or gaming tools. It can have several layouts, be them a text, document, sound, picture, video, or game. It can be individual or collective, and synchronous or asynchronous.

Jordan (2013) holds that it is employed to perform an online quiz that can be automatically marked either by computers or humans, submit an assignment online, assess an e-portfolio or a blog, and give audio feedback which can be recorded by the computer. Simply put, e-assessment is an evaluation in which the computer plays an essential component of the assessment as it is the means upon which assessment-related tasks are being achieved (Jamil et al., 2012). Thus, it can be concluded that e-assessment is an umbrella term that englobes all the steps of the assessment process which is made electronically.

1.3.1. Emergence of E-Assessment

Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008) state that this practice is not as recent as it may sound. Indeed, it dates back to the early 1960s and 1970s, a period during which the first computer programmes began to be developed. Then, in the 1980s, was the emergence of the micro-computer for teaching and designing online tests. However, the most prominent creation that revolutionised the computer-based evaluation was that of the World Wide Web (WWW) during the 1990s. Since then, sophisticated web-based assessment systems came to light for both the automatic grading of fixed responses (predictable responses with a pre-determined list of alternatives as it is the case of multiple-choice questions and matching activities), and the evaluation of free responses (non-predictable and non-predetermined answers as in essay writing) (Al-Smadi & Guetl, 2008).

Chapter One Assessment, E-Assessment, and Writing Revisited

E-assessment witnessed difficulties to be widely implemented in the past. Mojarrad et al. (2014), relate those difficulties to the low processing of computers and their high costs. Nevertheless, according to them, the enhancement of technology has changed the situation. Plus, it enabled psychological tests, certifications like the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), and licences to be computer-based in various parts of the world. Bukie (2014) stipulates that one of the reasons behind the emergence of e-assessment was to broaden the delivery of online tests which used to be in paper and pencil format. This has been made possible through e-assessment tools.

1.3.2. Tools of E-Assessment

Among the tools that enable the design, administration, collection, and correction of e-assessment activities, Bukie (2014) cites the e-portfolio, the blog, and students' reports. He claims that the e-portfolio is a sort of proof of students' learning development throughout time. He sees the blog as a virtual journal in which students regularly upload their thoughts. As for the students' reports, he mentions that they can be downloaded, scored, and distributed online to learners. Crisp (2011) notes that e-assessment is not only a matter of providing multiple-choice questions as what many people may think. He believes that it rather permits to broaden the assessment through a wide range of formats and tools. In this respect, he indicates:

- Closed-ended questions in the form of filling in the gaps, answering Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs), selecting one answer from a list, ordering answers which are automatically graded or writing a short or extended answer.
- E-portfolio (a collection of students' work online in a digital format).
- Wikis (modifiable web documents created in collaboration with many authors for online project work).
- Discussions in a forum within a group of participants.
- Social media sites.
- Self-assessment in which each person assesses individually his/her work, or peer assessment where they assess other person's work.
- Blogs where students reflect on a given task and make decisions
- Simulation via interactive applications.

- Virtual world scenarios where individuals are immersed in a 3D environment in which they create avatars, and start role-playing a given character and are engaged in problem-solving situations.
- Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard, Sakai, and Moodle.

Due to the fact that the research work had recourse to the Moodle platform for the sake of conducting the experiment, one needs first to understand what is this platform, what are its features, and how it functions.

1.3.2.1. Moodle Defined

Moodle stands for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. It is what is called a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which is a type of online teachers-students' communication in an e-learning environment.   Unlike the commercial VLE systems, Moodle is an Open Source Software (OSS) which means a free downloadable system accessible to everyone whenever and wherever they want. It has been developed by Martin Dougiamas in 2006 who elaborated it based on a social constructivist approach to learning. Indeed, it gives the possibility for learners to work together on collaborative tasks and to take part in their learning (Wu, 2008). Cazan and Indreica (2014) and Padayachee et al. (2018) mention its advantages for both teachers and students.

Regarding teachers, the authors stipulate that it supplies rich data concerning the behaviour of learners within the platform, i.e. the amount of time they have spent performing the activity; the active, passive, online, or no-shows participants, the extent of their progress, and the aspects they face issues in. As for learners, it allows them to repeat the quiz, and to receive immediate feedback, grade, and correction. It also enables them to develop time management skills, to self-assess themselves, and to be independent in their learning (Cazan & Indreica, 2014; Padayachee et al., 2018). Wogu et al. (2014) further praise its benefits and categorise it as being "one of the platforms which has efficient apps designed to aid students with assignments and tests of all kinds" (p.4063).

For Robertson (2008), it opens room for innovation and creativity in the assessment, prevents the loss of documents, and eases the communication with the instructor. For this purpose, Al-Ajlan and Zedan (2008) advocate that it is a flexible

and user-friendly system. This learning tool is one of the best known and most utilised platforms in the world (Creixell & Ganter, 2016; Lien, 2015). In effect, it is implemented in 229 countries worldwide and its users are estimated to more than 172 million (Retrieved from https://stats.moodle.org/, 2019). Such fame must surely be due to the numerous features it possesses.

1.3.2.2. Features of Moodle

Among the features of Moodle is that it helps teachers create and manage their own personalised online courses including planning, enrolment, and delivery. Furthermore, it allows them to provide documents and audio-visual materials; intervene instantly within the course and interact with the learners; provide assignments; grade; and assess their students' progress over time (Wu, 2008; Anand & Eswaran, 2018). Similarly, Robertson (2008) argues that it acts as a repertoire that stores all sorts of resources in one place and which can be constantly refined. For this sake, Anand and Eswaran (2018) categorise it as a combination of Content Management System (CMS) as far as course creation is concerned, and LMS whereby the above cited-features are exploited. Henceforth, it is a Learning Content Management System (LCMS). Costa et al. (2012, p. 336) make an inventory of the activities yielded by the platform as it is demonstrated in Table 1.1.:

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Table 1.1. Activities of the Moodle Platform (Costa et al., 2012, p.336)

Activity	Module	Description
Creation	Database	allows to build, display and search a bank of record entries about any topic allows to share a collection of data
Organization	Lessons	represent a set of ordered topics summarizing the instructional materials and allow the access to them through the respective link
Delivery	Assignments	allow teachers to collect work from students
		allow teachers to evaluate the student's work and provide feedback including grades, in a private mode
		allow students to upload assignment files
	Workshops	represent a peer assessment activity with many options
		allow students to submit their work via an online text tool and attachments
Communication	Chats	allow synchronous conversation
	Forums	represent a communication tool where students and teachers can exchange ideas by posting comments
	News	represent a special forum for general announcements allow teachers to add posts and to send emails
Collaboration	Glossary	allows creating and maintaining a list of definitions
		represents a mechanism for collaborative activities that can be restricted to entries made by the teacher
	Wikis	allow users to edit collaborative Web pages provide space for collaborative work
Assessment	Choice	allows teachers to ask questions and specify multiple choice answers represents a useful mechanism to stimulate thinking about a topic
	Quiz	allows teachers to design and build quizzes with a variety of questions, with different types of answers, such as multiple-choice, true/false, short answer
	Survey	allows teachers to gather feedback from students using prepackaged questionnaires
	Feedback	allows teachers to create surveys to collect feedback
Reusability	SCORM	represent specifications that enable interoperability, accessibility and reusability of the learning content
		represent tools that enable SCORM packages to be included in the course
	External tools	enable interaction with compliant learning resources (eg. Learning Tools Interoperability) and activities on other Web sites
		provide access to new activities' types or materials

Table 1.1. highlights the various features of the Moodle platform that can help teachers and students both inside and outside the classroom setting. In fact, Moodle enables teachers to have full control over the course and gives them leeway to manage and manipulate it the way they like. They can create, organise, and post the lecture in PDF form, Word documents, PowerPoint, books, videos, audio files, and web page links. Moreover, they can collect, assign, grade, and assess their students via the numerous activities this platform offers such as quizzes, multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, essays or short answers. They also can make announcements and organise workshops.

Students only have to upload the lectures or submit their assignments from the platform. It opens the door to the students to express their opinion on the content of the course via surveys, and to work collaboratively on the elaboration of wikis. It encourages communication between the students and with their teachers by means of chats (synchronous communication), or discussion forums (asynchronous communication) (Costa et al., 2012). In a nutshell, e-assessment covers diverse electronic tools that permit a whole array of assessment possibilities that foster learning. Having defined how it has emerged and is deployed through its tools, it is necessary to understand how such evaluation processes.

1.3.3. Process of E-Assessment

Whitelock et al. (2006) elaborated a cycle, which has been interpreted by Alruwais et al. (2018), that describes the e-assessment process. For them, motivation is the starting point of an e-assessment task. The upcoming step implies the design and elaboration of the assessment. It is then followed by the testing of the students and the distribution of their submissions. After that comes the data processing and the provision of feedback to the students. Finally, the cycle ends with the evaluation of the outcomes by the students who are going to review the feedback as shown in Figure 1.1.:
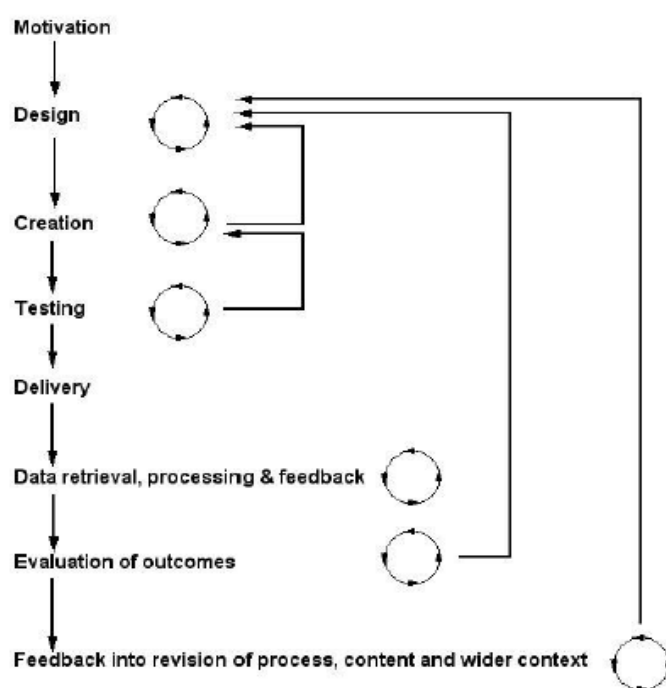
Figure 1.1. E-Assessment Cycle (Whitelock et al., 2006, p.184)

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To elaborate these e-assessment tasks, instructors, as Prakash and Saini (2012) refer to, need to bear in mind the following elements:

- The online materials.
- The fairness of the activities.
- The expected outcomes.
- The required time to submit the activities.
- The time spent during the performance.
- The number of students' attempts.

Ridgway et al. (2004) further continue by highlighting the content of the assignment, the timing of delivery, and the way of implementing it. JISC (2007) stipulates that the appropriate choice of the activity and its pedagogical direction are the principal attributes of e-assessment. One can notice that the e-assessment process quite resembles an ordinary assessment. In effect, e-assessment is sometimes seen to be only a copy of the paper-and-pencil assessment (Al-Smadi & Guetl, 2008) because of the similarities of the types of activities and procedures in both evaluation modes (James, 2016). Yet, the online ones are more interactive, hence entertaining, and have broader implications (Simin & Heidari, 2013). Moreover, the implementation changes in the two contexts (Rovai, 2000). For a thorough comprehension of those differences, a clear-cut distinction should be made between them.

1.3.4. Traditional Assessment versus E-Assessment

Several researchers have compared the two evaluation methods from various perspectives; most of whom are in favour of e-assessment and often, but not always, against and criticising the traditional approaches to assessment for being limited in diverse aspects. Alruwais et al. (2018), Jordan (2013), Cazan and Indreica (2014), Kuzmina (2010), and Timmis (2016) agree on the belief that the use of certain e-assessment tools such as software, virtual games, web-based tools, or audio-visual aids like 3D animated diagrams or multi-angle figures for assessment, has the capacity of generating novel forms of learning that may not occur in a traditional context. This point supports what JISC (2007) stipulate on the potential that e-assessment has to evaluate learning areas that used to be inconceivable in conventional methods.

Additionally, Alruwais et al. (2018) give prominence to the facility of the online tests for being adaptive, a facility that is absent in the traditional assessment. On the reverse of a traditional assessment which is effort demanding (Usener et al., 2012) and time-consuming to assess students' papers and give back the scores, the computer-based assessment is much easier to use (Alruwais et al., 2018) and rapidly analyses, corrects, and stores the papers and scores (Kuzmina, 2010). Moreover, it has an unlimited capacity to handle large data in contrast to the human's which is, more or less, limited (Kuzmina, 2010). Furthermore, the results of the computer-based evaluation are seen to have increased accuracy and reliability in comparison with the ones of the traditional assessment (Al-Qdah & Ababneh, 2017; Jamil et al., 2012; James, 2016).

Adding to this, the duration of the test in a computer-based setting is not as strict as it is the case in a conventional assessment. There is neither the pressure of time, which can be exceeded at students' convenience nor the pressure of the teachers who invigilate and stress the learner to return back the copy. This invigilation can even be withdrawn in an e-assessment environment (Simin & Heidari, 2013). For Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008), the rationale behind its adoption over the traditional evaluation lies in two aspects: practical and pedagogical. Practical in the sense that it is an efficient solution to the increasing number of students and the enduring time reserved for their assessment. From a pedagogical standpoint, however, it is viewed to adequately meet the principles that guide an assessment activity in relation to efficiency, diagnosticity, practicality, validity, and reliability (the three last concepts, which are key features of assessment, are explained in 1.5.).

Similarly, Appiah and Tonder (2018) mention the burden that instructors encounter as for the correction of students' answers and the storage of their marks. They believe that the considerable increase in learners population lately has rendered the management of such tasks daunting for them. Ridgway et al. (2004) also discuss these management and storage difficulties, especially when dealing with large scale data. In the view of Alruwais et al. (2018), the rapid and accurate features of the computer-based assessment in comparison with the conventional one are the reasons for its embracement by most of the universities nowadays. Crisp (2011) and Jordan

(2013) relate this to the limitations of the ancient methods of assessment such as the insufficiency of direct feedback and students' involvement which have rendered learners restricted only to the task.

Furthermore, Timmis et al. (2016) and Pearse-Romera and Ruiz-Cecilia (2019) speak about the unsuitability of the traditional methods represented in their overemphasis on grades and assessment procedure and lack of creativity. Consequently, they decrease learners' self-confidence as well as motivation. Yet, Timmis et al. (2016) do not deny their potential; they just argue that combining technology along with assessment has brought about new skills in the society based on online collaboration, exchange, interaction, and peer assessment. The embracement of these skills is important in order to cope with this ever-changing world. Consequently, e-assessment has come to light as a possible alternative remedy to these long-existing problems (Appiah & Tonder, 2018).

In addition to the practical and pedagogical differences between the two methods of evaluation, Cazan and Indreica (2014) accentuate the psychological aspects. They advocate that the personality traits of the individual can influence his/her readiness and acceptance of e-assessment. In fact, their study, which compared the scale of anxiety and self-efficacy of 80 Romanian students at the Faculty of Psychology who attended the online course and evaluation on Moodle with the ones who did not, highlighted that their anxiety increased in the online context in comparison with the conventional one. The authors have named this condition 'computer anxiety' which is represented by hesitation and resistance to computer use. In a similar line of thought, Wogu et al. (2014) have referred to it as "a phobia" to any Moodle-associated instruction or evaluation.

Contradicting Cazan and Indreica (2014), Al-Qdah and Ababneh's (2017) study obtained different outcomes. Through a survey, these researchers compared the perceptions of two different samples that experienced the same examinations being administered in English and in a paper-based and an online format via Moodle. The first group consisted of 50 male students from the Computer and Sciences Faculty and the other one 50 English female students from the Art and Education Faculty at Tabuk University, Saudi Arabia. The survey pointed out that the e-assessment

experience was more relaxing and less exhausting than the paper-based one. One can conclude that the way computer-based evaluation is seen is controversial. In effect, it diverges from one culture and one field to another.

James (2016) links the increased anxiety in the online assessment with students' dislike of computers. According to him, the anxiety does not concern learners per se; instructors also have their fair share. For Ridgway et al. (2004), the robustness and ease of the paper-and-pencil evaluation and teachers' familiarity with it are the reasons why some of them would stick to it and may see the online evaluation as a more fragile method. These divergent views bring to the fore Prensky's (2001) classification of the two generations of people who perceive technology contrastingly: digital natives and digital immigrants. As stated by Palfrey and Gasser (2011), the digital natives refer to those people who were born during the digital age, especially after the 1980s, and who are recognised to be skilful and knowledgeable about computers.

On the contrary, digital immigrants are the ones who were born prior to the digital age, i.e. before the 1980s and who are less knowledgeable about computers. Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008) and Ghufron and Rosyida (2018) further stipulate that digital natives have been surrounded their entire lives by a technological environment characterised by the availability of ICTs whenever and wherever they wanted. Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008) refer to digital immigrants as the non-skilful users of technological devices. Just like these categories of people, scholars view e-assessment divergently. Some may be in favour of it, and others may not (Wogu et al., 2014). These considerations are categorised into advantages and disadvantages as explained in the subsequent sections.

1.3.5. Advantages of E-Assessment

Crisp (2011) upholds that e-assessment is not a mere change of administration delivery or provision of multiple-choice questions as what many people may think. In his opinion, it has rather wider implications that go beyond what is tested for teachers, learners, and institutions in higher education. In effect, it offers endless capabilities for improvement as it relies on a variety of skills that encourage learning

more deeply, authentically, and diversely (Crisp, 2011). Among other advantages accredited to e-assessment is that it supplies an objective and fair grading (Whitelock & Watt, 2008; Al-Smadi and Guetl, 2008) as well as a reliable and valid assessment that encourages social skills and high order cognitive abilities like reflection and thinking (Jordan, 2013; Alruwais et al., 2018; Al-Smadi & Guetl, 2008; Buzzetto-More & Alade, 2006; Jamil et al., 2012; Amer, 2020).

Alruwais et al. (2018), Appiah and Tonder (2018), and James (2016) highlight about the adaptability and flexibility of e-assessment. For Alruwais et al. (2018) they happen, for instance, by manipulating the level of difficulty based on students' answers, i.e. the more the answers are correct, the more the difficulty increases and vice versa. While in the opinion of Appiah and Tonder (2018), they are a purely teachers' decision. The authors declare that such evaluation gives them the opportunity to either assess basic and easy elements in the form of closed-ended questions, which often lead to a mere recalling of information, or to make use of the numerous e-assessment tools such as wikis, blogs, simulation, self and peer review, simulation, and role-play for the sake of assessing high order cognitive skills that require analysis and evaluation. In sum, these decisions lie at their hands and the objectives that they intend to reach by the end of the evaluation.

For this reason, Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008) stipulate that an appropriately designed e-assessment can become challenging for learners. It should be noted that it is not restricted to the content only, but also in the assessment's delivery because of the diversity of the question types (Crisp, 2011; James, 2016). Plus, it renders the administration, collection, and marking of the assessment and the communication of the results much easier and quicker (Koneru, 2017; Simin & Heidari, 2013). Consequently, it saves teachers' time and efforts and renders the hardcopy needless (Koneru, 2017), especially when dealing with large classrooms (Jordan, 2013).

Besides, it facilitates the storage of students' answers and grades (Crisp, 2011) which will be used by the teaching staff to track the progress of the learners who, in return, assess their own learning development (Simin & Heidari, 2013). As a result, they gain some sort of control over the assessment that allows them to be involved and responsible in their learning while following their own pace (Jordan, 2013;

Alruwais et al., 2018; Prakash & Saini, 2012). In addition to that, it gives the opportunity to their instructors to provide immediate (Kuzmina, 2010), insightful, and detailed feedback of learners' answers, particularly when the assessment is formative (Crisp, 2011), that highlight differences among learners (Alruwais et al., 2018). As a result, they become only guiders of their learning and their interaction with them is bettered (Buzzetto-More & Alade, 2006; Shojaei, & Fatemi, 2016).

The fact that e-assessment creates a judgment-free environment that lets learners make mistakes freely in private (Jordan, 2013); permits to perform the test whenever it suits them (Ridgway et al., 2004); even to reattempt it at their convenience; and have easy access to the resources (Crisp, 2011), encourages practice, and, thus, improvement (Simin & Heidari, 2013). Consequently, it leads to a complete rethinking of the curriculum and development of new educational goals and objectives that stress the necessary elements that need to be learned (Ridgway et al., 2004; Buzzetto-More & Alade, 2006), take learning needs into account, timely examine students' assignments, and boost formative assessment and diagnosis (Koneru, 2017; Al-Smadi & Guetl, 2008).

Crisp (2011) reports that e-assessment supplies real-world experiences with complex problem-solving situations through simulation. This virtual contextualisation proposes novel perspectives of assessing certain skills that may not be assessed by other means (Jordan, 2013) conducive to an authentic assessment (Ridgway et al., 2004) and enduring learning (JISC, 2007). On a similar thought, Timmis et al. (2016) point out that the various e-assessment tools increase learners' decision-making, thus preparing them for managing problems that they may encounter in the future in the societal life.

Moreover, it supports distance learning by creating a personalised and flexible evaluation that fits students who may face some constraints, be them personal or professional, and is at their convenience in terms of time and place (JISC,2007; Timmis, 2016; Amer, 2020). Furthermore, it is more appropriate for disabled learners to whom a paper and pencil evaluation would be difficult (JISC, 2007; Kuzmina, 2010) as there is a possibility to design audio-recorded assessment that they can listen

to and visual tools through which they can modify the size based on their needs (Appiah & Tonder, 2018).

Plus, it boosts at the same time self-assessment (Crisp, 2011) and peer assessment by opening opportunities for collaborative work (Prakash & Saini, 2012; Koneru, 2017; Jordan, 2013; Alruwais et al., 2018), preventing in that way the students to be isolated (Koneru, 2017). Furthermore, it is cost-effective in the long term (Ridgway et al., 2004; James, 2016) in relation to the design in the sense that the test can be updated and modified without any expenses (Simin & Heidari, 2013) which eradicates the costly printing of papers (Appiah & Tonder, 2018; James, 2016). It is also preventive of human errors and user-friendly, i.e. easy to use (Kuzmina, 2010).

Although some scholars like James (2016), Wogu et al. (2014), and Simin and Heidari (2013) advocate that e-assessment encourages cheating, its fervent defend it by mentioning the set of features it possesses that can be a possible solution to eradicate cheating. As far as security problems are concerned, Amer (2020) discloses that e-assessment gives the possibility to check students' identities by passwords, and hence, reduces cheating. Alruwais et al. (2018) further mention other techniques such as fingerprints, facial recognition, or certain inserted cards. As regards to cheating, the authors posit that it has the ability to reorder the questions of the test. This may lead learners to think that the test is different and will stop them to copy from their peers. This last point juxtaposes the claim of Mojarrad et al. (2014) as for the randomisation of the questions of the test.

Besides, James (2016) cites the block browser, that is included in some LMS and which forbids learners to use the internet during the test as well as webcams that verify students' identities before the test takes place. The author even asserts that cheating is more increased in the traditional assessment than in the computer-based one according to the investigations of recent studies. Joining most of what has been said above, this section ends with Al-Smadi and Guetl's (2008, p.3) inventory of the advantages gained from e-assessment by recognising it to be:

Fair: offer fair opportunity for success
Equitable: be indiscriminating between students
Formative: give many opportunities to learn through feedback
Well timed: provide learning stimulus
Redeemable: allow a series of opportunities
Efficient: be manageable within the constraints of resources
Valid: accurately assess the delivered material
Reliable: promote consistency between assessment tasks
Incremental: increase reliability and consistency over time
Demanding: challenge students and ensure high standards depend on the experience of the assessment designer or the system designer

Similarly, Prakash and Saini (2012) hold that e-assessment is a flexible tool and learner-centred, enables the accessibility of the resources, opens the room to learners to compare their performance with other peers, encourages exchange and communication, and actively involves them in the learning process. In the opinions of Chatzigavriil et al. (2015), Chaudhary and Dey (2013), and Al-Qdah and Ababneh (2017), this type of evaluation boosts the improvement of the learning outcomes. One can conclude from the review of the advantages of e-assessment that the fairness, efficiency, validity, the reliability, flexibility, diversity, and authenticity of the assessment; the immediacy of feedback, the accessibility and the availability of resources; and the involvement and collaboration of the students, are the core features accredited to it that the majority of researchers agree on. Nevertheless, just like every concept, e-assessment has cons too as depicted in the following section.

1.3.6. Disadvantages of E-Assessment

Among the criticism addressed to e-assessment is the fact that it fails to assess high cognitive reflective abilities such as critical thinking. Instead, it measures students' memory and surface knowledge since it is generally associated in the literature with closed-ended questions (Usener et al., 2012; Prakash & Saini, 2012; JISC, 2007). These types of questions are, as reported by Simin and Heidari (2013), commonly used by teachers in e-assessment related tasks and tend to decrease students' motivation. These points of view do not go along with the ones of Jordan (2013), Alruwais et al. (2018), Al-Smadi and Guetl (2008), and Buzzetto-More and Alade (2006) who point out the opposite.

Contradicting Koneru (2017) and Kuzmina (2010), Cazan and Indreica (2014) and Simin and Heidari (2013) maintain that e-assessment is time-consuming. The

authors relate its difficulty with its implementation, the design of tasks that assess high order skills, and use for learners in non-technical disciplines and instructors who need certain knowledge about ICTs. Indeed, it requires students to be digital literate (Mojarrad et al., 2014) and trained in this regard (Simin & Heidari, 2013); otherwise, the online test will be a failure (Kuzmina, 2010). Though Simin and Heidari (2013) call attention to the economic advantage of the design of e-tests with reference mainly to MCQs, they acknowledge that it is its implementation at the level of institutions, especially with more sophisticated hardware and software tools, which costs.

Kuzmina (2010) mentions other logistic difficulties related to the implementation such as the inability to provide individual computers for each student, particularly when the assessment is based on a large scale. For this reason, Stödberg (2012) affirms that it demands a lot of effort and investment from the part of authorities for the sake of being widely spread. Simin and Heidari (2013) uphold that the non-robustness of certain e-assessment software can lead to the complete failure of the task or examination. The authors along with James (2016) and Wogu et al. (2014) call into question some integrity and credibility concerns that may arise from such evaluation. They state that it increases cheating and plagiarism among learners during the examination, especially when it is not supervised. They also discuss the security risks as for the difficulty of verifying learners' identities.

In addition to that, there is a lack of attention from students during the assignment. Prakash and Saini (2012) declare that the e-designer has to make sure that the students stay focused during the e-activity and do not deviate from it. This lack of attention occurs mostly in wikis where students start chatting and forgetting the aim of the activity. As far as the social interactions generated by the e-assessment tools are concerned, Timmis et al. (2016) sustain that they sometimes lead to isolation or what they called 'social exclusion' within web-based tools and social networking sites. Moreover, Cazan and Indreica (2014) and James (2016) stipulate that it creates computer anxiety for learners and instructors who do not master computers.

One can notice that the number of scholars in the literature promoting the advantages of e-assessment outweigh the cited disadvantages. It is believed that the numerous criticism attributed to e-assessment may lie in the challenges of

implementing it in higher education that many of them consider to be a hindrance to its success. In this light, having students and teachers not mastering ICTs; an unfamiliarity with computers that causes anxiety problems; dealing with poor countries that lack materials and technical infrastructures; or having issues handling group work are the challengers discussed by Alruwais et al. (2018) and Simin and Heidari (2013). Following their ideas, JISC (2007) claims that the difficulties behind e-assessment are caused by technical and financial support.

In the same line of thought, Whitelock and Watt (2008) advocate other pitfalls that may be an issue when using e-assessment which are: problems of plagiarism detection, invigilation, user's identity, and training. Though JISC (2007) and Crisp (2011) highlight that the easy accessibility of e-assessment in terms of place and time is one of the advantages of e-assessment, Appiah and Tonder (2018) and James (2016) suggest that it is one of the reasons that prevent institutions to use if for high-stake examinations due to security concerns which represent another challenge of e-assessment.

The review of the literature has shown that writing is, somehow, promoted by e-assessment. This is demonstrated by the fact that the online evaluation delivers written feedback, assesses students' written responses, and relies on several written tools for the design of tests. As stressed earlier in this chapter, technological advancement has appealed to the incorporation of ICTs as a teaching tool. It goes without saying that its integration in the instruction of writing has not been spared (Hyland, 2003). Because the current research was interested in this direction, the chapter moves to the writing skill before disclosing the previous pieces of research that have merged the two.

1.4. Writing

Writing is an intentional and calculated system that is systematic and ordered (Coe et al., 1985). This productive skill and linguistic output (Sárosdy et al., 2006; Aulia et al., 2016) entails the graphic representation of symbols that combine together letters in order to form meaningful, organised, and coherent words, sentences, or texts. In addition to that, it enables oneself to express an opinion in a written format

to the readers (Byrne, 1979; Aulia et al., 2016) through fixed and noticeable symbols (Sampson, 1985; Aulia et al., 2016). As stated by Harris (1993) and Karyuatry et al. (2018), it is a concrete action in which the writers' thoughts are subject to modifications before being put into words. Rao and Durga (2018) emphasise the paramount importance of this skill for students' education as well as professional careers. They declare that its sound mastery is conducive to successful learning.

Harmer (1998) values writing to be a basic and beneficial skill that should be taught to EFL students for numerous reasons. He asserts that the visual representation of the written language is useful for students' memory. Indeed, it lets them note the newly learned words and see how the language components are linked and constructed. Consequently, it fits the learning style of visual learners. Moreover, it assists the slow learners' reflection due to the time they take to think and produce their pieces of writing. In a nutshell, Weigle (2002) upholds that it is a whole system on its own and not "merely spoken language put on paper" (p.19). This definition opens room for discussion about the writing and speaking skills. Although both of them are productive skills and modes of communication (Sárosdy et al., 2006), they are regarded divergently by academicians from manifold angles. For a better comprehension of how writing functions, it is important to make this comparison.

1.4.1. Writing and Speaking

While Hovey (2008) maintains that speaking exceeds writing and the latter only mirrors it, Čmejrková et al. (1994) suggest the opposite. The authors defend that writing has a more prestigious value than speaking because of its correctness. Weigle (2002), Brown (1994), and Sárosdy et al. (2006) join this point and state that it is, to a greater extent, more formal, accurate, and precise than speaking. Weigle (2002) relates this formality to the linguistic norms that guide writing and which are to be respected as well as the status it has gained inside the educational context. Contradicting Fassett and Nainby (2013) who support that both skills have equal status and none of them is superior to the other, Weigle (2002) advocates that they depend on distinct mental, linguistic, and communicative processes besides socio-cultural norms. Weigle (2002) states that the context in which the two skills are

employed, the communicative goals they achieve, and the purposes behind their use, are completely dissimilar.

Among those differences, Brown (1994) claims that the phonological features involved in speaking, i.e. stress, intonation, pitch, and pauses, strengthen the speech. In contrast, writing does not include such characteristics, and is, thus, more limited. As regards to vocabulary, he believes that it is larger in writing than in speaking. Byrne (1979) stipulates that unlike writing, which is more individual, speaking is an interactive, natural, and spontaneous process. Brown (1994) adds that writing is an action that can be prolonged and refined at any time by the writers, and speaking is an instantaneous reaction from the listeners that enables the flow of a conversation. Weigle (2002) declares that writing is more tangible as it leaves proofs of what has been written. Speaking, on the opposite, does not. The only way to keep them is to record the speech.

Additionally, these three authors, along with Sárosdy et al. (2006), seem to agree on the fact that writing is more distant because writers do not know the persons who are going to read their pieces of writing, cannot communicate with them, are unaware of how they will judge their pieces of writing, and cannot receive their feedback. For this sake, Byrne (1979) and Weigle (2002) maintain that writing depends primarily on the writers' responsibility as they have to make their texts coherent enough and well-constructed for the readers. On the reverse, speaking is face-to-face. Consequently, it gives the speakers this possibility to interact directly with the listeners who, in return, deliver immediate feedback to them-be it verbal or non-verbal, on the effectiveness of the received message (Byrne, 1979; Weigle, 2002; Brown, 1994; Sárosdy et al., 2006).

Another difference between them stands at the level of complexity, which is, according to Brown (1994) and Byrne (1979), more increased in writing than it is the case in speaking. Among the reasons behind that, Brown (1994) states that writing embodies many clauses in comparison with speaking which consists mostly of shorter sentences. On the contrary, Weigle (2002) does not restrict that complexity to the writing skill only. She asserts that the two skills have their fair share of difficulty

because of the mental abilities involved in them and which are used diversely in the two modes.

As for writing, Weigle (2002) declares that it is mentally demanding because it necessitates cognitive efforts to the writers to think about the topic, organise their ideas, and be attentive to grammar. Thus, it takes time to be refined until its final version. Regarding speaking, the mental efforts lie in the speakers' ability to instantly manage several elements of speech such as the flow of a conversation and the avoidance of long pauses (Weigle, 2002). Nevertheless, there is a common agreement between scholars like Flower and Hayes (1981), Adas and Bakir (2013), Heaton (1988), Poorsoti and Asl (2016), and Nosratinia and Razavi (2016) that the writing skill, per se, without reference to speaking, is complex. Its complexity has rendered its instruction a daunting task for teachers who teach EFL learners (Karyuatry et al., 2018; Adas & Bakir) because it is "the most difficult of all the language abilities to acquire" (Adas & Bakir, 2013, p. 254).

1.4.2. Writing: A Difficult Skill for EFL Learners

As EFL learners are non-native English speakers, they find a considerable number of issues when writing in the target language. For İnceçay and Genç (2014), they are due to the cognitive, structural, and organisational aspects of English writing. More specifically, Klimova (2014) and Adas and Bakir (2013) uphold that they are due to students' low knowledge of the foreign language lexicon and discourse structures. Therefore, they construct ill-structured sentences which render their piece of writing misunderstood and confusing. Among the writing problems that these learners encounter, Adas and Bakir (2013) highlight the overuse of certain words and Touchie (1986) the over-generalisation of the grammatical rules.

As its name hints, the over-generalisation comprises the application of the same rule, for instance, the "ed" form or the "s" of the simple present, on all the syntactical aspects without taking into consideration the various grammatical exceptions. Most times, those forms of the target language become fixed and hard to overcome. As a result, the learning ceases and the mistakes become immersed in students' writing as a habit, a phenomenon called fossilisation (Crystal, 2008).

Similarly, Field (2004) explains this situation as the perpetuation of the same grammatical mistakes even after being shown the correct structure. In addition to these problems, Klimova (2014) stipulates that they tend to apply the rules of their native language on the target language writing, an overlapping of the two linguistic systems called language inference.

Adas and Bakir (2013) speak about this interference with reference to Arab learners. They claim that when writing in English, they use the structural and grammatical features which are specific to the Arabic language. As examples, the authors cited the use of longer and run-on sentences as well as the literal translation of Arabic expressions which they named, 'Arabish'. Apart from linguistic problems, Ponnudurai and Jacob (2014) mention psychological factors. They uphold that learners experience anxiety towards this skill which is manifested by an incapability to express their ideas or write a coherent text. Klimova (2014), from another perspective, relates them to social factors that are reflected in a negative attitude that EFL learners may hold against the foreign language culture, thus, decreasing their motivation to write in English. This complexity brings to the fore the nature of this skill.

1.4.3. Nature of Writing

The nature of the writing skill has been for a long time subject to debates among scholars. Myles (2002) holds that it is the direct outcome of formal teaching and experience rather than a natural acquisition. The author maintains that it helps learners shift from basic structures to the composition of several genres such as narration, argumentation, exposition, or description. On the reverse, Shojaei and Fatemi (2016) and Heaton (1988) consider that a good piece of writing is neither a matter of formal training nor acquisition of grammar, rhetoric, and writing models and techniques. They believe that it is, instead, a matter of critical thinking and communication of meaningful thoughts. In a similar vein, Harmer (1998) asserts that the mental activity implied in writing reinforces language learning and offers room for enduring language development.

Flower and Hayes (1981) and Klimova (2014) also acknowledge the cognitive processes involved in writing that writers arrange in their mind while writing. These definitions seem to draw attention to the cognitive aspect of writing. However, other scholars do not agree with that. As a case in point, Weigle (2002) posits that writing is more than a mental process like what most of its traditional views support. Indeed, she states (p.19) "it is not solely as the product of an individual, but as a social and cultural act". She insists that writing is not to be treated in isolation. In lieu, it should be linked to sociocultural facets. She declares that there is an audience to whom the writing is addressed, a social context to which it belongs, and a particular purpose which it ought to follow.

Moreover, she points out that the writers' culture implicitly interferes with their way of writing. She argues the existence of particular textual features that denote the origins of the writers. To support her claims, she exemplifies the Spanish preference for long introductions or the Chinese extensive use of instances. These are just a few instances of the numerous studies undertaken on this situation. One can conclude that writing is at the same time a cognitive and a social-cultural phenomenon. Though different, the two processes go hand in hand since an accurate knowledge of what to write, to whom to write, when to write, and for which purpose to write (Bailey, 2003) is surely a result of cognitive abilities. This point evokes the three approaches that have directed its instruction to learners over time: the product, process, and genre approach.

1.4.4. Product Approach to Writing

For Badger and White (2000), the writing skill in the product approach indicates the end result of what has been taught. In other words, the emphasis is put on the structure of language and linguistic knowledge. It is a teacher-centred approach in which the instructor gives models of texts to be imitated by the learners. The authors divide the approach into four stages. The first one is the familiarisation in which the students get accustomed to the linguistic components of the text. The second one is controlled writing where they start producing simple sentences. The third one is the guided writing in which they are handed with a textual stimulus to be

followed. In the final stage, which is freewriting, they apply their knowledge to compose an essay, a story, or a letter.

Likewise, Hasan and Akhand (2011) mention Steele (2004) who advocates quite the same stages. She supposes that in the first stage of the product approach to writing, students are mere observers of certain linguistic features and the form of the provided text such as formality and paragraphing. Next comes the controlled practice where they start composing individual instances of those linguistic aspects they have observed. The third one is a matter of reorganising their ideas, and the final one is a demonstration of their writing abilities on the basis of the vocabulary and structure they have just learned.

From the standpoint of Rusinovci (2015), the product approach to writing denotes the language learning method that was dominant at that time, i.e. the audio-lingual method in which the focus was solely on grammar and imitation of linguistic patterns. This means that importance is given only to the way the text is written. Among the criticism addressed to it is that it hinders students' potential and creativity. Consequently, another vision of the writing instruction emerged named the process-approach. The latter is perceived to be the dominating approach that has placed the previous approach in an inferior position (Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012).

1.4.5. Process Approach to Writing

Badger and White (2000) consider the process approach to writing to be the various steps that the learner has followed before the final composition of the text. Unlike the former approach, this one does not stress linguistic knowledge. Instead, it encourages the overall writing development caused by repeated drafting, editing, proofreading, and revision. Contrasting the product approach to teaching writing, the process approach is learner-centred and the teacher is a mere tutor. The repetitive and cyclical occurrence of those steps has rendered writing in this approach recursive rather than linear (Rusinovci, 2015). Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2014) define it to be a set of procedures and techniques employed by the writers. They highlight the complexity of the writing process as it requires certain elements such as planning, revising, and reviewing.

In the same line of thought, Oshima and Hogue (2007) declare that the process approach is a continuous set of steps through which the piece of writing is constantly modified and improved until its final desired form. They assert that it consists of four steps: prewriting, organising, writing, and polishing. They suggest that as a first step of the process, writers start by selecting a topic. After that, they list all the ideas and information that come across their mind regarding that topic. The relevant ones are kept whereas the irrelevant ones are removed. In the second step, their ideas are organised in the form of an outline. Based on the outline, they elaborate a draft as an attempt.

In the third step, no importance is given to grammar, structure, or mechanics. These are kept till the final step which is polishing. At this point, the writers revise what they have written so far, and edit their writing by correcting the mistakes. The editing phase can be done either individually (self-editing), or by having recourse to a peer (peer editing) (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Anderson (1983) proposes a model of language writing production which is composed of three stages: construction, transformation, and execution. The construction deals with the brainstorming of an idea; the transformation is about the application of the writers' meaning into a written text, and the execution concerns the actual production of a text.

Anderson's (1983) idea supports Sárosdy et al.'s (2006) disclosure of the two stages of writing: the mechanical process in which the technical aspects are learned, and teaching composition in which writers demonstrate their writing style and abilities to copy and rewrite the original words in their own way. It includes the following sub-skills: spelling, punctuation, orthography, style, register, linguistic competence, cohesion, and the relevance of the text (Sárosdy et al., 2006). Just like the product approach, the process approach has also been criticised for neglecting the socio-cultural facets of writing like the purpose, style, genre, and the audience (Rusinovci, 2015). This gave birth to the genre approach.

1.4.6. Genre Approach to Writing

As stated by Badger and White (2000), the genre approach is quite similar to the product approach on a number of components. They perceive it to be a sort of

extension to it. In effect, the two of them do encourage the linguistic characteristics of writing; however, this is the only point in common between them. The genre approach promotes socio-cultural norms that have been neglected in both of the above-cited approaches. It stipulates that writing has several genres, and each genre depends on a social context and a purpose that guides the writing. Along the same line, Dirgeyasa (2016) upholds that writing in the genre approach has targeted readers as well as a specified purpose and style that are to be respected. He declares that it follows the time and place where it is employed as well as linguistic and social conventions.

Ahn (2012) asserts that the process approach was in a way neglecting the learners. She explains that they are put apart and not shown how the variety of text types ought to be arranged. Instead, the approach lets them discover the text types on their own. She declares that being aware of the social particularities of a text type is crucial because each writing belongs to a social environment that shapes it accordingly. It leads to a manipulation of the language and an immersion in the real world. In sum, she maintains that in the genre approach, writing becomes purposeful and is to be used appropriately with regard to the setting where it occurs. One can observe through the various approaches that certain elements of writing are being emphasised on. Due to the role that they played in the practical stage of the work, it was assumed that such concepts had to be explicated.

1.4.7. Elements of Writing

Heaton (1988) advocates the quality of a good piece of writing lies in terms of the accuracy of sentences; adequate application of the mechanical norms (punctuation and spelling); coherence; relevance of the content and the provided information; and effectiveness of the language used in terms of style. Similarly, Ur (1999) and Coe et al. (1985) posit that writing comprises: syntactic knowledge, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, style, register, linguistic competence, cohesion, and the relevance of the text. These linguistic characteristics are linked to lexicon and syntax and, thus, need to be respected in writing and focused on by the teacher.

Liao (2016) refers to the features associated with grammar and mechanics as the local language features, while the ones connected to the content, organisation, and coherence as the global text features. Since paragraph writing was the way by which first-year EFL students' writing performances were assessed in the experimental phase of the work and because many components of the paragraph were part of the assessment criteria and scoring rubric of the tests, it was believed that such notions of the paragraph have to be cleared up.

1.4.7.1. The paragraph

The paragraph is defined as being a combination of sentences that relates to one subject through which writers express their thoughts. It embodies three parts: the topic sentence, which comes often at the beginning of the paragraph and gives an idea about what the paragraph deals with; the supporting sentences, which represent a continuation and further insights on the topic sentence; and the concluding sentence, which, as its name indicates, comes at last and summarises what has been said earlier (Zemach & Rumisek, 2006). According to Bailey (2003), a paragraph is a group of sentences that are related to one topic. The required topic determines the content of the paragraph be it details, explanations, definitions, descriptions, or arguments. He insists on the importance of organising the paragraph for two reasons: to be meaningful for the readers and have structured ideas.

Savage and Shafiei (2007) put forward the structural components underpinning the formatting of a paragraph such as spacing, indenting, and title. They point out the numerous types of paragraph including the descriptive, argumentative, narrative, process, or example paragraphs. They stress the fact that each type is characterised by distinctive linguistic features. Zemach and Rumisek (2006) add two other types: the comparison/ contract and the problem/solution paragraphs. They list the various writing types as illustrated in the upcoming figure:

Type of writing	Type of organisation
Chronology (historical events, personal narratives, processes)	Order by time or order of events / steps
Description	Order by position, size, and shape of things
Classification	Group ideas and explain them in a logical order
Comparison / contrast	Organise in point-by-point or block style
Argumentation / persuasion and cause / effect	Order from least important to most important

Figure 1.2. The Type of Organisation of the Different Writing Types (Zemach & Rumisek, 2006, p.82)

Figure 1.2. demonstrates the existence of a variety of writing types. For each type, a specific pattern of organisation is allotted. For instance, the time order is reserved for narration, the space order is left for description, and the order of importance is kept for argumentation. Those patterns are what makes a paragraph coherent.

1.4.7.2. Coherence

Savage and Shafiei (2007, p.16) state that coherence indicates that "the supporting details are organised so that information that goes together appears together. Writers often utilise time, space, or order of importance to present the supporting information in a paragraph coherently". One can understand from this quotation that a coherent paragraph is the one whose sentences are logically linked to one another with supporting details. The goal is to show that the upcoming sentence is a rational continuation of the preceding one. Zemach and Rumisek (2006) uphold that coherence is a matter of logic. It is an accurate arrangement of ideas that eases the readers' comprehension of the paragraph. In sum, its sole purpose is to reach the clarity of ideas. Among the ways of reaching coherence in a paragraph, Bailey (2003) and Oshima and Hogue (2007) posit the repetition of the key nouns as well as the use of conjunctions, pronouns, and cohesive devices such as transition signals.

These devices are a set of words and phrases that act as connectors that link sentences together. In the opinion of Bailey (2003), they aim at reminding the idea that has been said previously. Besides, they ensure the cohesion of the paragraph and,

thus, its smooth readability. While for Oshima and Hogue (2007), they guide the flow of the ideas conveyed by the paragraph and show to the readers what the writers are trying to communicate because they can express an addition, opposition, similarity, example, consequence, or conclusion. As part of coherence, the authors insist on consistency in writing. The latter is a sort of stability in writing in which the same word forms are followed from the beginning until the end of the paragraph. As stated by Zemach and Rumisek (2006), coherence is tightly linked with unity. They both go hand in hand to attain the readers' comprehension.

1.4.7.3. Unity

A unified paragraph is a paragraph in which only one single idea is being tackled all over (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It happens when the totality of sentences of the paragraph are relevant to the topic under discussion (Zemach & Rumisek, 2006). The idea exists in the topic sentence, and then, continues in the supporting sentences. If an off-topic sentence is mentioned, it would be the reason that breaks the paragraph's unity (Savage & Shafiei, 2007). It should be noted that unity occurs during the prewriting stage of the writing process. As explained earlier (See 1.4.5.), during this phase, the writers outline their ideas, omit the irrelevant ones, and keep the ones connected to their topic.

1.4.7.4. Accuracy

According to Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012), accuracy in writing, or what they refer to as grammatical accuracy, involves respect of the grammatical rules. They declare that learners' mastery of syntactic knowledge and the English language norms is conducive to effective writing performance. Otherwise, failure will be achieved both in their educational and professional careers. They further stipulate that it leads to clarity in writing. In the viewpoint of Puengpipattrakul (2009), it guarantees adequate communication as it is the means over which the writers express meaningfully their thoughts. Among the ways of achieving this purpose is the utilisation of proper punctuation. This "orthographical component of written language" (Bayraktar et al., 1998, p.1) facilities the readers' interpretation of any text as it shows exactly what the writers intend to convey.

Punctuation, somehow, guides their comprehension by indicating pause, continuation, or stop. Henceforth, its prominence in any piece of writing is undeniable, and its inappropriate use or omission may likely result in ambiguity (Pagel & Norstrom, 2011). There are few aspects of writing which hinder the accuracy of any piece of writing and are to be avoided. On the one hand, some of them have to do with grammar as it is the case with fragments- uncompleted parts of a sentence in which the verb of the subject is missing (Savage & Shafiei, 2007). Others, on the other hand, are mostly associated with punctuation such as comma splices, run-on sentences, and contractions.

Firstly, a run-on sentence denotes the complete absence of any punctuation mark within the sentence. Secondly, a comma splice is the junction of two independent clauses with only a comma in between (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Lastly, a contraction implies the combination of two words together, the removal of certain letters, and then their replacement with an apostrophe. It comprises both affirmative and negative forms and is viewed to not get along with the formalities of academic writing (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Bailey, 2003). Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) maintain that the assessors' overemphasis on grammatical accuracy may be the cause behind students' low scores in writing. Indeed, it is not an end in itself; the style has its fair share too.

1.4.7.5. Style

Bailey (2003) suggests that style entails the tone and purpose intended to be conveyed by one's written production. Accordingly, Weigle (2002) alludes to persuasion, entertainment, and information as part of those writing purposes. Oshima and Hogue (2007) further add creative writing, which indicates the production of stories; personal writing which boils down to writing letters to acquaintances and relatives, and academic writing which is reserved for academic settings mostly at the school or university level. Weigle (2002) along with Heaton (1988) affirm that the style determines the type of register to be used in accordance with the context where those writing types occur. More precisely, this register denotes the purpose and the context of writing, and the audience intended to be reached through it.

Chapter One Assessment, E-Assessment, and Writing Revisited

There are two variant writing styles: formal and informal. The former, as maintained by Crystal (2008), is unstructured and diverges from the linguistic rules. It includes unorganised texts, simple and direct sentences, idioms, contractions as well as colloquial words that are written in the active voice. The latter, in contrast, is a standard style of writing that embraces complicated grammar and vocabulary. It encompasses organised texts, long sentences, and complex lexicons that are written in the passive voice. In the point of view of Hyland and Jiang (2017), informal writing advocates a casual spirit that exhibits personal feelings. As it creates a sort of closeness with the readers, it is seen to be subjective.

Besides, Hyland and Jiang (2017) declare that it is a friendly, flexible, and simplistic everyday conversation. It embodies the use of the first pronoun, WH questions as well as contractions. For this reason, they state that students are forbidden to use an informal style when writing since it is not a standard form and harms their final grade. They are invited, instead, to write formally as it is more adequate in an educational context. Henceforth, the authors attribute to formal writing: structure, correctness, objectivity, rigidity, high vocabulary, accuracy, and avoidance of the active voice. Siddiqi (2007) explains the main linguistic differences between the formal and informal styles of writing. His distinction has been adapted and summarised in the following table:

Table 1.2. The Difference between the Formal and Informal Writing Style (adapted from Siddiqi (2007))

Informal Writing	Formal Writing
Use of contraction (don't, couldn't, wouldn't')	Avoidance of contractions
Use of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person singular	Use only of the 3rd person singular
Addressing readers	Avoidance of addressing readers
Use of active voice	Use of passive voice
Use of short and simple sentences	Use of long and complex sentences
Use of Cliché and abbreviations	Avoidance of cliché and abbreviations
Use of imperative	Avoidance of imperative

Table 1.2. sheds light on the major grammatical and lexical differences that exist between the two styles of writing. It shows that both of them depend on the addressee and the writing context. Subsequent to the definitions of the variety of

elements of paragraph writing, comes the way a writing test ought to be designed and how the assessment is carried out.

1.5. Writing Assessment

In order to design any type of language test, a set of parameters should be taken into consideration. Summarising Cohen et al.'s (2007) ideas, an appropriately designed test is a test whose:

- goals and objectives are clearly stated so that they fit the ones of the syllabus or curriculum.
- type accurately matches its objectives, i.e. placement, achievement, proficiency, diagnostic, aptitude, performance, or standardised.
- content is precisely planned so as to cover all what has been dealt with.
- format is well-designed with clear instructions, question types, and the number of items.
- timing is adequately organised comprising also the time allotted for each item.
- difficulty is relevant to students' level, fair, and indicative of learners' performance. In other words, it distinguishes between high and low achievers
- scoring is carefully arranged with predefined criteria.

Simply put, the authors argue that the crucial components of the design of any test are: which type of test to use, what to include in it, how to present it, how much time it will take to be performed by the students, and how to score it. Similarly, Benmostefa (2014) speaks about three key features that qualify a good language test: practicality, reliability, and validity. She stipulates that practicality encompasses the affordability of the test in terms of financial means; the facility of administration, completion, correction, scoring, and interpretation; and the suitability of the level of difficulty. For her, reliability entails the similarity of the test results if the test is to be repeated under the same testing conditions.

In regards to validity, she states that it indicates the match of the content of the test with the purpose behind testing. She highlights that validity embodies diverse types; yet, according to her, the most utilised ones are content, construct, face, and empirical validity. She posits that content validity implies the accordance of test

content with the skill which is measured. While she links construct validity with the degree to which the test corresponds to the language theory that the test designer is interested in. She suggests that face validity is a matter of learners' accustomedness with every aspect of the test in relation to the provided vocabulary or types of activities. In her viewpoint, a test that deems to have an empirical validity is a test which has been compared to other tests that are accredited to be valid.

It is worth noting that the above-mentioned features of a language test apply also to the writing test. In this respect, Heaton (1998) speaks about the diversity of the type of writing tasks in a writing test that stimulates students to write. As an illustration, he cites letters, dialogues, texts, tables, figures, diagrams, questions, notes, diaries, newspaper reports, or postcards. In his point of view, each task type should correspond to adequate language ability. In other words, the lower the ability is, the easier the task becomes and vice versa. He stresses that when a task has a realistic context, learners become eager to write. Therefore, to design a writing test, several stages have to be followed by the test designer.

1.5.1. Stages of the Design of a Writing Test

Weigle (2002) puts forward three stages in the development of a writing test: the design stage, the operationalisation stage, and the administration stage. The design stage consists of the purpose underlying testing, the features of the target population, and the availability of the resources. This stage stipulates that a test is driven by a purpose that guides the stakeholders in its design. Indeed, important decisions are made upon it that may impact students' future careers. For this reason, the purpose should be accurately mentioned. Moreover, since it assesses specific aspects of language ability, named a construct, and is targeted towards a particular sample population, learners' language proficiency needs to be taken into account. In other words, the content of the test has to match the students' level. It can shift from the measurement of linguistic knowledge for beginner learners, up to academic essays about language use in specific contexts for advanced ones.

In the operationalisation stage, the test becomes operational by means of what is called test specifications. The latter boils down to the test content, the test

organisation, and the number and type of the test items. Weigle (2002) posits that a writing task embodies specifications; each specification has a title, general description, prompt attributes, response attributes, sample item, and specification supplement. While the general description underlines what students have to do, the prompt attributes are related to the content of the test, the topic, and the characteristics of the test. These attributes correspond to students' answers and the criteria that are taken into account when correcting their pieces of writing.

Concerning the sample item, it represents an illustration of the task type in the form of a model. As for specification supplement, it covers further details of the test specifications such as the scoring rubric. The final stage, which is the administration stage, comprises the trial of the test on the sample population prior to its final administration. The test is pretested on a small scale so as to assess its clarity and the appropriateness of the time allotted before the final collection of students' answers for analysis (Weigle, 2002).

In a similar vein, Hyland (2003) points out four elements involved in the design of a writing test. The first one is the rubric which is explained in the upcoming section. The second one is called a prompt which refers to the topic of the assignment that the students have to answer. This stimulating writing input can be asked directly, in the form of a description of the situation, or a text. The third one is the expected response. As its name suggests, it is the teachers' expectations of students' answers. Yet, their anticipations may not always meet reality. In effect, learners may encounter difficulties caused by the vagueness and misunderstanding of the instructions in the rubric or the demanding time of the task. For this reason, the prompt should be clear and well-structured to avoid falling into confusion.

This claim joins the one of Heaton (1988) about the clarity of the instruction of the writing task. He believes that it will not only guide them on the steps they are required to do, but also create a real-life context in students' minds. Referring back to Hyland's (2003) elements of the design, the final one is the post-assessment evaluation. Here, teachers review or rather re-evaluate how the tasks of the writing test have been designed as far as the content, the language, the genre, and the context

of the tasks are concerned. During this phase, the focus is put on the clarity, the appropriateness, relevance, and authenticity of the cited components of a test.

1.5.2. Scoring Rubric

In order to assess students' writing performance, the scoring rubric is devised for that. Hyland (2003) maintains that it is a valuable tool that allows teachers to highlight students' writing problems and provide feedback accordingly. Besides, it incorporates all the procedures of the test: the requirement of the test, the instruction on the way of answering it, the format of the tasks of the test, the amount of time allotted to answer, and the evaluation criteria. Generally, it consists of levels of achievements that shift from the lowest up to the highest. Each level implicates specific descriptive measurable characteristics that match the goals of the course along with a specific mark allocated to each criterion. These characteristics help the grader to determine the features of an effective piece of writing. For this sake, the author insists on the importance of being clearly and carefully designed.

In the viewpoint of Humphry and Heldsinger (2019), there are two types of scoring rubrics: holistic and analytic. In the holistic scoring rubric, teachers provide a general evaluation of the work based on their overall impression in the form of points. In the analytic, they assess the work based on qualitative predetermined criteria. This method of scoring is believed to take students' needs into account as it opens the door for diagnosis and feedback. Heaton (1988) adds that the holistic scoring consists of two or more graders, while the analytic implies only one grader who corrects the written performances. Another essential part of the writing assessment is feedback.

1.5.3. Feedback

Yusof et al. (2012) define feedback as a judgment that gives insights about the students' learning development. Its role lies in its ability to establish the norms and characteristics of efficient writing performance, to reduce the existing gap between learners' actual writing abilities and the intended ones, and to let teachers modify their teaching practices accordingly. Regarding learners, feedback represents a source of motivation that allows them to develop their self-esteem and to become more

responsible for their learning. In sum, it is an open door for reflection and mutual discussion between their teachers, themselves, and their peers. The authors maintain that because of the large classrooms and time limit, some writing teachers find great difficulties to deliver effective feedback. As a solution, they rely on peer-feedback.

Also called peer review, this type of feedback, from the standpoint of Yusof et al. (2012), is a teaching technique that seeks to encourage students to work with one another. They verify the format, the organisation or punctuation of the essay of their peers. It requires the awareness of the writers along with the guidance of either the teachers or peers, who, in return, intervene when necessary in order to give valuable feedback that enables the enhancement of the writing skill. It should be reminded that peer feedback belongs to the polishing stage of the writing process that was explained previously (See 1.4.5.). One can understand that feedback is a crucial teaching activity that initiates collaborative learning and indicates learners' strengths and weaknesses.

Sárosdy et al. (2006) report the existence of two types of feedback: content and form feedback. Content feedback assesses the content of students' writing and their abilities to perform the activity without emphasising on the correctness of the language. The form feedback, however, implies students' linguistic accuracy while performing the task. It is mostly a teacher's analysis and discussion of the students' errors. It has no evaluative ends or grading purposes. Simply, it aims at elaborating feedback (Blacka, 2003). Having discussed the key concepts related to assessment, e-assessment, and writing, the next phase of this chapter is to address the ways researchers merged those three concepts in their research.

1.6. Previous Studies Related to E-assessment and Writing

Since the research work was interested primarily in combining one type of e-assessment tool, specifically the Moodle platform with writing, this section spotlights the previous investigations that have been undertaken in this regard. This point is of central significance before embarking oneself in the practical phase as it serves to situate the present work with what has already been done. It must be stressed that the use of Moodle in the EFL context, particularly in the writing classroom, has been

subject to several studies addressed by a variety of scholars. The review of those pieces of work seems to report, generally, positive outcomes regarding the enhancement of learners' writing.

As a case in point, Lien (2015) undertook action research with her students (41 second-year majors at Hue University, Vietnam) with whom she combined a face-to-face course with an online writing course. In this blended learning, Lien (2015) used Moodle to design a writing course and then assessed its effect on students' writing. Pre-test, post-test, questionnaires, and informal interviews were administered to the students. While the pre-test was used to assess students' abilities before the Moodle course, the post-test explored the improvement after the course. As for the questionnaire and the informal interview, they aimed to find out the factors behind their enchantment and the difficulties they encountered with the course for the sake of ameliorating it in the future.

The study revealed fruitful results that led to their writing enhancement. On the basis of their answers in the questionnaire, it was found that the underpinning reasons behind that were the extra materials, the feedback provided through Moodle as well as the teacher/students' interaction. As far as the difficulties encountered, they pointed out the technicality of the platform and its management. What could be said about Lien's (2015) work is that it emphasised more on the course and the problems that students faced in the platform rather than the assessment. Those problems that she identified did not intend to ameliorate students' writing. Instead, they only sought to improve the course.

A further example would be the pilot study carried out by Wogu et al. (2014). In their work, 267 students at Covenant University, Nigeria were offered a programme in which Moodle was used for teaching, learning, and evaluating the writing skill. In the beginning, learners had the leeway to choose between this Moodle programme and another traditional one. The majority favoured the other course which did not imply any ICTs. According to the investigators, half of the participants had what they called "a phobia" to any Moodle-associated writing instruction or evaluation. However, after a decision that was made by the faculty members, students were obliged to attend those Moodle courses. They were given lectures and

assignments on the platform, engaged in forum discussions, and then assessed. After that, they had to disclose their feedback and appreciation from the online experience by answering a questionnaire.

Findings showed that students held two distinct positions for such an approach: opponent and fervent, yet those who supported e-assessment were slightly more dominant than the others. This category enjoyed Moodle which, in their views, resembled the social networking sites that they usually use. They advocated its necessity at Covenant University to reach the excellence and the status of the most prestigious universities in the world. Additionally, the phobia that they felt at the beginning of the study tremendously decreased. The investigators also made a longitudinal study upon which they compared students' scores after introducing the Moodle e-tests within the university over the years. Results showed enhanced grades as the years go by. Similarly to Lien (2015), Wogu et al.'s (2014) work did not give many clues about those writing abilities or the evaluative part of the study. It was rather concerned with learners' perceptions of Moodle.

In another investigation, Hawley Nagatomo (2006) sought to push 22 EFL learners at a Japanese National Women University to write formally by introducing Moodle as part of her writing instruction. To do so, she depended on action research. She counted the amount of time those learners were spending on Moodle, and calculated the number of words they wrote in online journal writing and discussion forums. She also employed a questionnaire to disclose their attitudes towards this method. The findings of her study demonstrated that not only students liked this method and regularly checked the Moodle home page of the class, but also felt that their writing ability considerably developed.

Hawley Nagatomo's (2006) work was more focused on quantifying the number of written words and the amount of time spent on the platform and how often those learners went back to it, rather than reporting students' writing abilities. Despite the positive attitude of learners towards the platform that the above-cited investigations seem to promote, others did not reach the same conclusions. An example would be Donado and Niebles's (2018) study which tried to remedy by means of Moodle courses Sri Lankan students' difficulties in writing academic papers

at Colombo University. The results appeared to support the inappropriateness and the non-readiness of learners to such a platform.

While reviewing the literature of the integration of Moodle in the EFL writing classroom, it has been noticed that scholars have the tendency to have recourse to the Moodle platform for course/assessment design, and then ask students' perceptions of it or the difficulties that they encountered for the sake of improving it in the future. They are more concerned with the way the writing course has been generated by Moodle and the attitudes of learners rather than the assessment itself. They neither gave many clues about students' writing abilities nor the role that Moodle played in that. This is reflected in the studies of Hawley Nagatomo (2006), Lien (2015), Wogu et al. (2014), Al-Qdah and Ababneh (2017), Donado and Niebles (2018), Adas and Bakir (2013), Zyad (2016), and Wulandari (2016).

Another point in common between these investigations was that the learners' attitudes were disclosed after experiencing Moodle. None of them undertook a needs analysis before the implementation of the course or the assignment on the platform to demonstrate its appropriateness to students' needs. The only exception was Wulandari (2016) who did both. She analysed learners' needs as far as paragraph writing is concerned in order to design a model of paragraph writing along with courses and activities that would meet those expectations prior to the implementation of the platform. Then, she asked the learners to give their feedback about it after being assessed.

Although extensive pieces of research have been carried out by scholars worldwide on the use of the Moodle platform to assess students' writing, very few of them focused solely on the platform alone as an e-assessment tool. Instead, they favoured only some Moodle features which are generally exploited to achieve collaborative purposes tasks like peer assessment and group work. It is used to provide feedback through Moodle forum discussion (Bouziane & Zyad, 2018; Adas & Bakir, 2013; Wulandari, 2016; Gava & Dalla Costa, 2018; Wogu et al., 2014; Zyad, 2016), or wikis (Ardiasih et al., 2019). With the exception of Bouziane and Zyad's (2018) study in which students were asked to self-assess themselves first with the

handed scoring rubric before assessing their peers' written productions, none of these pieces of research took account of formative nor self-assessment.

1.7. Conclusion

The first chapter of the current work has presented the general principles underpinning language assessment. Then, it has shifted to e-assessment by defining it, and explaining its emergence, tools, and process. After that, it has outlined the points of divergence between the online evaluation and the traditional one as far as the psychology of learners, capacities, and limitations are concerned. Next, it has advocated the advantages of the computer-based evaluation through which scholars have accredited validity, reliability, availability, and collaboration. Others have criticised it on many grounds like technical difficulty related to the insufficiency of technological knowledge from the part of teachers or learners, cheating problems, or financial issues.

Afterwards, the chapter has turned its attention towards the writing skill. It has put into light the point of convergence between the other productive skill-speaking-on many stands: production, use, and formality. Then, it has demonstrated its complexity from several standpoints, be them mental or cultural. Moreover, it has spotlighted the numerous approaches that have emerged throughout time with diverse visions as for its instruction. These approaches move from the focus on language structure to the process that the learners follow while writing, and the genre in which writing becomes culture-bounced as it embodies style, context, purpose, and audience.

Furthermore, it has pointed out what are assumed to be the key components of paragraph writing which were part of students' assessment (See Chapter Four). Besides, it has given insights on the way a writing test ought to be designed along with the feedback and the scoring rubric. At last, it has combined writing and e-assessment via listing the previous studies that have been approached by a number of scholars. The next step consists of explaining the way the writing module is being taught and assessed at the English Department at Tlemcen University (Algeria) before moving to the research design that guided this study.

Chapter Two

Methodological Framework

2.1. Introduction

After shedding the light on the theoretical background of the study in which the key concepts related to assessment, e-assessment, and writing have been clarified, the second chapter puts into practice what has been said previously within the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. To achieve this goal and answer the research questions, a mixed-method approach is relied on for this study that has combined two research designs: the case study and the experimental design. The goal behind doing so is to use the case study to undertake a small scale needs analysis in the Comprehension and Written Expression module, and identify the lacks at the level of assessment as well as students' needs and wants. Then, to propose an assessment that would meet those needs and assess its efficiency on students' writing through the tests of the experimental design.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, a general illustration of the educational setting and the way the writing module is taught at the department are provided by describing its syllabus, objectives, and the assessment type. In the second one, the methodological framework of the work is presented. It portrays the two research designs and their distinctive features. After that, it points out the sampling method employed for the selection of the informants and describes their profiles. Next, it reports the way data have been collected, designed, administered, and analysed by mentioning the research instruments, justifying the choices that were made, and explaining the procedures of their administration and analysis.

2.2. Description of the Teaching/Learning Situation of the Research Setting

The present research work was undertaken at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria whose creation dates back to 1988. Since then, it has been subject to numerous changes over time. Initially, in 1994, it was a section of an autonomous Institute of Foreign Languages which lost its autonomy in 1999 and became a Department of Foreign Languages as part of the Faculty of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences. However, in 2014, that section gained its independence and became a separate Department of English at the Faculty of Letters and Languages, comprising a translation section. According to the records of the department of the

academic year 2018/2019, more than 65 teachers made up the permanent teaching staff for almost 2000 students. Among whom, about 1100 were at the Licence Level and 356 were first-year students who were divided into ten groups.

Summarising what has been said by Rahmoun (2017), Bouklikha (2016), and Lamri (2015), 'Licence' in the Algerian University context is a degree that constitutes the first cycle of the Anglo-Saxon System called 'The L.M.D. System' which stands respectively for 'Licence-Master-Doctorate'. It was adopted by the Algerian M.H.E.S.R. in 2008 as a result of the reform that substituted the classical one. In the latter, students were studying four years to obtain a Licence degree, then three years to hold a Magister degree upon which they were recruited as full-time university teachers, and had the possibility to pursue a Doctorate degree. However, with the adoption of the L.M.D. system, considerable changes have been witnessed in the Algerian higher education.

Currently, the undergraduates hold the Licence degree after three common core years of studies, or, more precisely, six semesters (two per each year). They are required to attain a specific number of 'credits' which represent "equivalent to an hourly volume of 20 to 25 hours, encompassing all the forms of education and hours of student's personal work" (Lamri, 2015, p.92), that are accumulated from each module (180 for the Licence and 120 for Master's). An academic Licence degree in English reflects a mastery of the English language that the students are supposed to have achieved during their university studies. It would allow them to be either enrolled in a teaching career, after passing the teaching contest of the Ministry of National Education (M.N.E.) in order to become English teachers at the middle schools, or to opt for postgraduate studies and learn about other aspects of the English language in various Master's degree programmes.

A Master's degree indicates the second part of the cycle. It is obtained subsequently to two years of studies (Master One and Master Two) for four semesters. Learners are given the leeway to choose one among three specialities: 'Didactics', 'Literature and Civilisation', or 'Science of Languages'. In those two years, they are assumed to have attained adequate fluency and accuracy in the English language that

would result in effective communication. They are required to elaborate on a Master's dissertation that would prepare them for the final cycle, 'the Doctorate degree', which lasts for three to four years. It is accessed by a formal contest and finalised with a thesis defence upon which they would become researchers, subject specialists in their areas of interest, and future university instructors. Indeed, it could be said that the eight years of the cycle are a sort of training to the post-university life where their professional careers start to develop. It is also a preparation for the teaching profession with the necessary linguistic skills.

2.2.1. Overview of Licence Level Modules

In the first three years at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, a variety of modules are taught. Table 2.1. gives some details about them. It is worth highlighting that the abbreviations Lic.1, Lic.2, and Lic.3 were used to refer respectively to the first, second, and third-year Licence level.

Table 2.1. Modules Taught at the Licence Level

Lic.1	Lic.2	Lic.3
-Phonetics -Grammar -Comprehension and Oral Expression -Linguistics -Comprehension and Written Expression -Literary Studies -Study Skills -Anglo-Saxon Culture and Civilisation -Human and Social Sciences -French	-Phonetics -Grammar -Comprehension and Oral Expression -Linguistics -Comprehension and Written Expression -Literary Studies -Study Skills -Anglo-Saxon Culture and Civilisation -Translation -French	-English for Specific Purposes (ESP) -Didactics -Comprehension and Oral Expression -Linguistics Comprehension and Written Production -Cognitive Psychology -Anglo-Saxon Civilisation -Methodology -Literary Studies -Translation -French

As shown in Table 2.1., the modules provided during the first cycle of English study allow students to learn the English language system from multiple angles. In the first two years, the focus is put on its history and culture when dealing with modules like the Anglo-Saxon culture and civilisation, and on its structure and the four language skills when studying literary studies, study skills, grammar, phonetics, linguistics, and written and oral expression. In the third year, they move to more complex concerns and dig into detail other specific fields that are mostly related to

language teaching and research like didactics, literature, ESP, methodology, and cognitive psychology. The aim of those modules is to orient them to decide which Master's speciality to pursue further studies.

Table 2.1. also demonstrates that some modules are of high importance to the point that they are taught three years in a row. Among them, it is the Comprehension and Written Expression Module (CWE). It is worth mentioning that the upcoming pieces of information about the CWE module, syllabus, and types of assessment were gathered through the analysis of the first six questions of the structured interview with teachers (See 3.2.), the description of the book from which the syllabus is adapted as well as the researcher's teaching experience when teaching the CWE module (See 2.4.1.2.). Moreover, the data provided below concerned only the academic year 2018/2019. Thus, any changes at the level of the module or syllabus that may have occurred after that year, were not the concern of the present study.

2.2.2. Comprehension and Written Expression Module

From the creation of the Department of English to the present day, writing has always been considered of high significance as it reflects students' accumulated general English language knowledge that they have developed. Its importance is further reinforced by the fact that all the modules taught at the department employ written examinations as part of the summative assessment, except for oral expression. The writing module is what is named a fundamental unit in the first two years since it has a higher coefficient in Lic.1 and Lic.2 (4). During these two years, this modular course is divided between teaching sessions accompanied by practical sessions, i.e. TD (Travaux Dirigés) where students can put into practice what they have learned. The teaching time allotted per week in Lic.1 is 3 h (this was a result of a shortcut of hours from 4 h 30 in the past, to only 3 h), 4 h 30 in Lic.2, and 1 h 30 in Lic.3.

It should be noted that the aim of the module differs each year. For instance, in the first year, the focus is mainly on the organisation of the various types of paragraphs (descriptive, narrative, and argumentative) along with their distinctive features. The particularity of the CWE module in this specific year is that it emphasises on integrating two language skills at the same time: writing with reading

comprehension through short stories (See 2.2.4.2). In the second year, students move from paragraph writing to essay construction where they can learn about the three parts of an essay which are the introductory paragraph with its thesis statement, the body paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph. Then, they apply all these elements on the several types of essays (descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative, and comparative).

In the last year, students are introduced to formality in academic writing. First, they start by revising important elements of writing that were already dealt with in the two preceding years. After that, they move to the stylistic errors that are to be avoided in academic writing, including wordiness, dangling modifiers, faulty parallelism, vague pronouns, and other related items. At last, they conclude with the way of paraphrasing and summarising. Studying these notions of formality in writing prepares them for research methodology as they will have to write extended essays as part of their Master's training. Because the study was interested in Lic1., only the syllabus of that level will be dealt with.

2.2.3. First-Year Comprehension and Written Expression Syllabus

The CWE syllabus in the first year is quite recent as it was first implemented in 2016-2017. It is part of the Licence National Curriculum which has been officially agreed upon by the Algerian M.H.E.S.R, and, hence, should be used by all first-year CWE teachers. It has been adapted from Savage and Shafiei's (2007) book, entitled 'Effective Academic Writing 1', which introduces learners to academic writing starting from the sentence level up to paragraph writing. It is divided into two elements: rhetorical and language focus. While the rhetorical focus gathers all the aspects connected to the paragraph organisation, the language focus concerns the lexicon and the grammatical features involved in it (See Appendix B).

The aim of the syllabus is to guide learners to generate, organise, discuss, and share their ideas, experiences, or opinions in a written format. To achieve these objectives, they should be able to master the elementary rules and norms that govern the English language academic writing like syntax, mechanics, and formality as well as the types of sentences, starting from simple structures to more complex ones. The

syllabus seeks to identify first the components, characteristics, and the organisation of a basic paragraph, i.e. the topic, supporting, and concluding sentence, unity, coherence, and punctuation; then, apply this knowledge on the different types of paragraphs with regard to their respective features in terms of organisation, grammar, vocabulary, scope, and content.

For all these reasons, CWE teachers consider it to be more product-oriented rather than process-oriented as it emphasises on accuracy and grammatical correctness. It could be said that in the syllabus, learners shift from the generalities of paragraph writing up to specificities, in this way, preparing them for more complex writing in the upcoming years when they will combine paragraphs to form essays. It is worth noting that teachers are subject to regular coordinating meetings with the teacher in charge of the module all along the instructional year. These meetings serve to unify the teaching of writing and guarantee that all teachers would conform to the same content of the syllabus.

2.2.3.1. Units of the Syllabus

As displayed in Appendix B, the CWE syllabus is composed of four units: Unit One, Two, Six, and Five which have been adapted from Savage and Shafiei's (2007) book. Each unit allows students to assimilate a series of concepts related to paragraph writing and to study specific types of discourse, i.e. descriptive, narrative, and argumentative. Unit One, 'The Sentence and the Paragraph', is concerned with the sentence structure (dependent and independent clauses; simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences; and coordinating and subordinating conjunctions) as well as the basic organisation of a paragraph (topic, supporting, and concluding sentences; unity, coherence, and patterns of organisation: time, space, and order of importance). It also comprises punctuation marks and capital letters and the elements that have to be avoided in a paragraph such as fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices.

Unit Two deals with the organisation of the descriptive paragraph and the type of vocabulary and grammatical structures used to vividly describe a person, an object,

or a place (adjectives concrete and sensory details, figurative language, relative clauses, and specific language). Unit Six entails the organisation, vocabulary, and grammar reserved for narrating an event, a story, or a personal experience, i.e. sensory details, adverbs, adverbial clauses, past tense (simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous), and transition words and sentences.

The last unit, Unit Five, introduces the organisation of the argumentative/opinion paragraph. It involves making use of the grammatical items and the argumentative vocabulary (adverbs, the existential 'there', the conjunction 'because', and transition words and phrases) to defend opinions about a debatable phenomenon or a situation. It should be noted that Units One and Two are being dealt with during the first semester, which goes from October to January, and Units Six and Five during the second one which goes from February to the end of May. As it can be observed, the order of the units is not chronological and some units of the book are missing. Indeed, as part of the adaptation, CWE teachers chose explicitly only those units and have ordered them by priority because they believed that they were what students need in their first year of English study.

In addition to that, some elements like adverbs and types of clauses and sentences are not part of the book, but have been adopted from a handout written by Zidane and Serir (2010), two teachers at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, named, 'Lectures in Written Expression for 1st and 2nd Year English Graduate Students', in which the previously mentioned lectures are explained in detail. Furthermore, forms of the past tense have also been added as teachers consider grammar to be a key component of the writing module. Appendix B also shows that the aforementioned units are on their own composed of five parts that are taken from Savage and Shafiei's (2007) book.

2.2.3.2. Parts of the Syllabus

Each part of the CWE syllabus is related to a specific element of writing. In Part One, students are introduced to unstructured writing that does not take into consideration any structure, grammar or language. They have to write about a provided image or a text with a series of questions to be answered. In Part Two, they

are taught the rhetorical features associated with paragraph writing. After learning these organisational patterns, they move to the appropriate language to be included in the paragraph in Part Three, and the grammatical features to be mentioned in the paragraph in Part Four. The final part, Part Five, embodies a summary that covers what has been studied within the unit by means of activities. Ultimately, a checklist is given to them in order to help them check if they have applied correctly the necessary information learned in the unit in their paragraphs. The endpoint of the description of the teaching/learning situation was mainly the identification of the learning objectives of the CWE syllabus.

2.2.4. Assessment in First-Year Comprehension and Written Expression Module

Assessment plays a crucial role in the CWE module for both teachers and learners. It enables instructors to measure students' knowledge of the elements learned in the syllabus to evaluate their writing performances. As for students, it allows them to assess their understanding of the courses in the hope of improving their writing abilities and learning from their mistakes. In the module, it is formative through the set of activities, and summative as it embodies tests and final examinations. Since the assessment was the principal concern of the present work, having a detailed picture of it was deemed necessary.

2.2.4.1. Activities

Every unit of the syllabus comprises a wide range of activities that boil down to the rhetorical, grammatical or linguistic features related to the concerned units. Teachers have the leeway to either use the activities proposed by Savage and Shafiei (2007), or to come up with activities of their own. The assignments for Unit One revolve around identifying supporting sentences or the concluding sentences related to the topic sentence, finding out the pattern of organisation of a given paragraph (time, space, or order of importance), underlying the irrelevant sentences that do not support the unity of the paragraph, or stating which one of the suggested paragraphs is more coherent and unified.

Other exercises may consist of combining sentences with the appropriate conjunction (subordinating or coordinating) to form compound, complex, or

compound-complex sentences, or to construct a coherent paragraph. The remaining activities entail correcting a paragraph full of punctuation mistakes, comma splices, fragments, or run-on sentences. In the Second Unit, students are handed with a descriptive paragraph in which they have to answer a set of questions related to either the content or the structure. These questions are intended to help them see how the descriptive paragraph is organised. As an illustration, they involve underlining the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence; or highlighting the main idea of the paragraph.

Students are given a series of sentences and are asked to combine them to have only one coherent sentence, to form a relative clause, or to have a coherent paragraph free from any repetition. They are also required to rewrite given sentences or a paragraph with very broad details for the sake of being specific as much as possible. They are also provided with a paragraph full of adjectival mistakes to be corrected. At the end of the unit, they are asked to write a descriptive paragraph about a person, an object, or a place. The Sixth Unit implies assignments such as answering questions about the narrative paragraph and underlining its topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. By practising this, learners will know how this type of paragraph is organised and how its ideas are sequenced.

Other activities encompass using transitional words and phrases appropriately, reordering sentences to have a coherent sequence of events, distinguishing between emotional and sensory details as well as the adverbs types. This unit also emphasises on putting the verbs in the adequate past forms (past simple, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous). At last, students are engaged in a narrative paragraph writing about a story, an event, or an experience. The activities of the Fifth Unit are quite similar to the ones of the Second and Sixth Units in terms of instruction. The only difference between them lies in the purpose and content since this unit is concerned with the opinion paragraph. The assignments embody, for instance, contrasting between a fact, experience or explanation; 'they're/there/their/', and 'because/because of'. Here again, students are asked to write an opinion paragraph.

2.2.4.2. Tests

Tests in the CWE module turn around a number of short stories that all first-year students are required to read, approximately, each month, and are tested about them once the unit is finished. Generally, five to six short stories are tackled all along the academic year. Due to the lack of time, sometimes two of them are combined at the same time. They are selected carefully by CWE teachers as a result of regular coordination meetings through which they agree on the content and scoring of the tests. The responsible teacher gives the general guidelines, and then, teachers design their own tests while taking those guidelines into account. The proposed tests are later on revised by that teacher to guarantee that no similar questions would be administered to groups because of differences in schedules. As tests are students' practical work mark (TD), this method encourages learners to read more, acquire new vocabulary, and work at home.

The questions of the tests combine the content of the stories with the objectives of the studied unit in order to measure students' comprehension of the lectures dealt with. For instance, in the test of the First Unit, students are asked to answer a question related to the short story in the form of complex, compound, or compound-complex sentences. In the test of the Second Unit, students have to write a descriptive paragraph about one of the characters of the short story using adjectives, sensory details, and relative clauses. In the test of the Sixth Unit, students have to put words taken from the short story in complex sentences, more precisely, an adverb clause of time. They are also given notes about a character from the short story and are requested to reorder them using the appropriate past tense, transitional words, and adverbs to form a coherent narrative paragraph. Samples are shown in the appendices (See Appendix C).

2.2.4.3. Final Examinations

The final examinations in the CWE module aim at testing students' comprehension of what has been studied during the year and evaluating the success or failure of the CWE syllabus. Just like tests, examinations also adhere to coordination meetings before they take place. Each teacher is asked to propose samples of activities that have to abide by the guidelines of the teacher in charge of

the module. The latter combines the most relevant activities, makes the appropriate changes, provides the grading scale, designs the examination, and shows the final result to the teaching staff to make sure that they all agree about it and its elements have already been dealt with. One can notice that real teamwork exists between first-year CWE teachers, and is monitored by the teacher responsible for the module.

Students' writing performances are assessed upon a traditional paper-based examination (the same being administered to all first-year students). There are two examinations per year, one at the end of each semester. The first term examination is held around mid-January and implies the First and Second Units of the syllabus; whereas, the second one is by the beginning of June, and encompasses the Sixth and Fifth ones. As an illustration of the first-term examination of the academic year 2018-2019, students were asked to extract the sentences that were off-topic from a paragraph, to combine simple sentences using subordinating conjunctions to form complex sentences, to avoid repetition in a paragraph through rewriting it using conjunctions and relative clauses, and to write a descriptive paragraph about a place or a character from a book, movie, or television programme using sensory details and figurative language.

The second-term examination entailed putting the verbs in the correct past tense, combining simple sentences to avoid repetition and form complex ones, and matching sentences with either 'because' or 'because of'. As for paragraph writing, students had the choice between either narrating about a happy memory from childhood using: the past tense, adverbs, adverb clauses, sensory and emotional details; or giving their opinion concerning the usefulness of reading books to develop students' writing using transitional words (See Appendix C).

Having a detailed picture of the type of the assessment methods in the writing module at the Department of English at Tlemcen University was the main reason behind the description of the teaching/learning situation that was undertaken. However, the above-mentioned information would not have been gathered without the research design that was adopted in this study. Therefore, the upcoming sections will be devoted to a description of the design, the aims behind its selection in relation

to the research objectives and questions, and the various steps of its deployment.

2.3. Research Design

Kumar (2010) considers the research design as a structured plan that researchers ought to follow when making research for the sake of answering the research questions. In his view, it indicates the way the sample is selected, and the data collected, analysed and interpreted. It provides justifications for the choices that were made while ensuring the validity and reliability of the results. For De Vaus (2001), an appropriate choice of the research design guarantees a coherent and logical choice of the data collection and analysis that would directly match the research problematic. Based on this problematic, the researchers decide about the design that would best meet the aims of the work. The author further asserts that there are several types of research designs in the literature: the longitudinal design, casual design, cross-sectional design, descriptive design, exploratory design, historical design, meta-analysis design, observational design, action research, case study, and experimental design.

The present study embraced a mixed-method approach which is, as its name suggests, a type of methodology that combines the quantitative and qualitative approaches within the same research (Hinkel, 2011; Perry, 2011). Indeed, the case study, which is a qualitative research type (Duff, 2018), was combined with the experimental design which is employed in quantitative research (Williams, 2007). This was explained by the fact the both of them were needed as their respective research instruments allowed answering the research questions so that to prove or reject the previously mentioned hypotheses, and cross-validate the obtained results for enhanced comprehension of a research problem (Hinkel, 2011; Perry, 2011).

Fraenkel et al. (2012) highlight the existence of three types of mixed-method designs: exploratory, explanatory, and triangulation designs. In the exploratory mixed-method design, the study starts with the collection and analysis of the qualitative findings, then moves to the quantitative ones. The qualitative data mainly guide the quantitative data by identifying the research variables and showing the relationship between them. Unlike the exploratory mixed-method design, the

explanatory design proceeds in the opposite way. It begins with the quantitative data, and later on, has recourse to the qualitative ones for the purpose of validating the findings. It could be said that the qualitative data are additional support to the quantitative ones.

The triangulation mixed-method design illustrates the simultaneous use of both types of data to be able to reach similar results (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The exploratory mixed-method design was used because the study proceeded in two parts. In the first part, the case study was carried out and learners' needs were identified. Then, based on the obtained results, the tests of the experiment were designed and the experiment was undertaken. Thus, it could be said that the findings of the case study completed and supported the ones of the experimental design. These two designs will be tackled in the following sections.

2.3.1. Case Study

Kumar (2010), Cohen et al. (2007), and Fraenkel et al. (2012) declare that the case study enables researchers to have sound background information and an in-depth understating about a problem, phenomenon, situation, event, process, or project. This is made possible through gathering information from particular groups, communities, individuals, classrooms, schools, or organisations by means of observations, interviews, focus groups, or questionnaires. The authors assert that it embodies the study of instances from the population which can be either representative of the whole population, or only of a very specific community; this depends on the research objectives.

In the authors' opinion, one of its advantages is that it permits having a concrete idea of what is going on in real life from the participants' own experiences. Based on their concrete examples, general assumptions can be made on the target population. De Vaus (2001) speaks about its ability to gather data about phenomena that are rarely dealt with or poorly investigated, and to restrict broad topics into smaller cases that can be researchable. Yin (1984) advocates the existence of three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies.

The exploratory case study, as its name indicates, aims at exploring a situation, a phenomenon or a problem. The explanatory case study seeks to explain the reasons behind the problem or phenomenon investigated. In the descriptive case study, the focus is no longer on the exploration or explanation of the phenomenon, but on the description of the phenomenon itself and its process. Stake (1995) further suggests three other types of case studies: the intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple case study. The intrinsic case study embodies the study of one single case from various angles to better understand and dig into the inner causes of its problem. In the instrumental case study, the researchers attempt to make general assumptions from the studied single case. While in the multiple case study, several cases are tackled simultaneously within the same research.

An instrumental exploratory case study was opted for in the present context in order to disclose teachers' as well as students' opinions and attitudes about integrating e-assessment for evaluating students' written production. In effect, it was of crucial importance to study and be aware of the environment in which this tool would be administered, and how those involved in this situation would perceive such a change before venturing into the final implementation of e-assessment. In addition, the case study was also used to undertake a small scale needs analysis.

2.3.1.1. Needs Analysis

Romanowski (2017, p.149) defines needs analysis as "the process of establishing 'what' and 'how' of a course", and considers that its "power does not lie in simply collecting data but rather in its interpretation". The author maintains that the decisions made upon those needs will direct the course content and objectives. He speaks about its importance as part of the elaboration of any type of language course and claims that it takes into account the opinion of the people concerned with this course, i.e. teachers and students as they are the most aware of those needs. Needs analysis is part of the ESP process towards a course or syllabus design (Songhori, 2008; Benyelles, 2009; Lamri, 2015; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

It should be noted that ESP refers to the instruction of a particular type of English for particular reasons (professional or academic) in particular contexts

(workplace or a field of study or research). It aims at adequately equipping learners or people alike (future workers or researchers) with the linguistic demands of the target situation. This is undertaken by identifying their specific needs, designing courses, and selecting materials accordingly (Robinson, 1980; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & Saint John, 1998; Benyelles, 2009; Lamri, 2015; Bouklikha, 2016). Henceforth, needs analysis plays a crucial role in that. In this respect, Ramani and Pushpanathan (2015) advocate several reasons underlying its use:

- Recognising the specific language skills that have to be acquired by the students so that to communicate adequately in a particular context.
- Evaluating the efficiency of the course par rapport to their needs and gathering data on the issues they face in this regard.
- Testing the appropriateness of the course to students' level.
- Highlighting the existence of any inadequacies between what they are currently able to do and what they are required to perform.

Having recourse to needs analysis in the current study enabled describing the state of the teaching/learning situation in the CWE module in terms of learning objectives of the syllabus, the content of the lectures, and the assessment types and procedures. Moreover, it determined what students wanted and needed at the level of assessment in the writing module and what was lacking in their present context. It was believed that the implementation of any tool for evaluating learners' writing performance could not be successfully achieved without demonstrating that the proposed tool would likely meet those particular needs.

In other words, the results obtained from the needs analysis would not only justify the choice of the e-assessment tool and the reasons for implementing it, but also design the series of tests within the experimental design. In addition to that, the research work was carried out in an academic setting where English was taught for Academic Purposes (EAP). Being on its own a branch of ESP used for "helping learners to study, conduct research, or teach that language" (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p.6), further supported its adoption. However, instead of a course or syllabus design, like it is generally the case in an ESP context (Pleşca, 2017), tests were designed and experimented. This would join Songhori's (2008) claims on the

necessity of needs analysis for the elaboration of English for Academic Purposes tests.

2.3.1.2. Needs Analysis Model

For needs analysis, the researcher decided to work with Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model. It consists of two types of needs: the target needs and learning needs. On the one hand, the target needs refer to what students have to do or to know once they are in the target situation. They are composed of three types of needs: necessities, lacks, and wants. Necessities display the required knowledge for the sake of achieving effective communication when being in the target situation. Lacks imply students' insufficiencies in terms of linguistic proficiency or capacities when comparing their actual knowledge with the demands of the target situation. Wants indicate what students desire to accomplish when learning the target language (Mohammed et al., 2018; Benyelles, 2009; Lamri, 2015).

The learning needs, on the other hand, portray the path that should be followed by the student while learning the target language (Gusti, 1999). Tahir (2011) has interpreted Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) definition of learning needs by classifying them into three types: psychological and cognitive needs, sociological needs, and methodological needs as it is shown in Figure 2.1.:
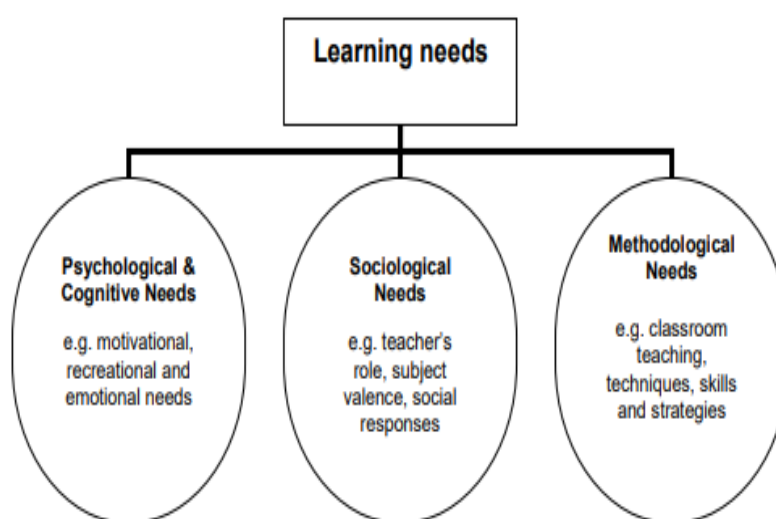
Figure 2.1. Learning Needs of ESP Learners (Tahir, 2011, p.6)

According to Tahir (2011), the psychological and cognitive needs indicate the psychology of the learners when learning in relation to their motivation, reaction, and feeling towards their learning environment. The sociological needs display the relationship and the interaction that students need with their teacher. These types of needs emphasise mainly the role that the teacher plays as to the social responses provided to his/her students' answers, i.e. feedback and correction. The methodological needs correspond to the pedagogical needs of the students at the level of instruction concerning the skills, strategies, and techniques used.

Consequently, the underpinning reason behind the selection of Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model was that it suited the aims of the study. Indeed, students' linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, methodological, and sociological needs and wants were important parameters that had to be taken into account before designing and implementing e-assessment in the CWE module. In sum, the case study allowed to identify the problems at the level of assessment in the CWE module through a needs analysis by interpreting the responses of the studied cases. The obtained results served to justify the importance of introducing e-assessment in the module as an attempt to solve those problems, and embarked the researcher upon a design process of tests that were experimented.

2.3.2. Experimental Design

For the sake of examining the effect that the change from a traditional evaluation to one that depended on technology had on students' writing in the CWE module, an experimental design was used. More precisely, it investigated whether the fact that the students were digitally assessed led to enhanced grades in comparison with the ones who were traditionally assessed. The enhancement would be associated with a general improvement of their writing abilities in terms of decreased spelling and grammatical mistakes and informalities. This effect could not be witnessed until it is experienced concretely with them. Thus, the experimental design seemed to be the appropriate choice for testing the effectiveness of the e-assessment approach and answering the previously mentioned research questions.

Accordingly, this type of research aims at proving the validity of the proposed research hypothesis which predicts the existence of a cause-and-effect relationship between specific variables. The aim behind this design is to inquire whether the change of the condition of a given variable would impact the outcomes of another one. These variables are referred to as the independent and dependent variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Kumar, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007; Perry, 2011; Leroy, 2011; Grubišić et al., 2009; Sousa et al., 2007).

2.3.2.1. Variables of the Experimental Design

The independent variable, also called experimental or treatment variable, is deliberately controlled and manipulated. The dependent variable, also called criterion or outcome variable, is observed and measured. In other words, the independent variable is the one that is supposed to affect the dependent variable, and the dependent variable is the one on which the change is observed. The manipulation of the independent variable is illustrated by the fact that the researcher has a wider control over the subjects involved in the experiment by assigning them to either an experimental or a control group (the former is the group that receives the treatment and the latter does not), and deciding about the type of treatment/intervention to be dispensed, its duration, location, timing, time allocation, the manner and degree of administration, the interval between the tests, and the group that receives it.

Controlling that variable will guarantee that the only reason behind the change in the dependent variable is the independent variable itself, rather than the interference of other variables that the study was not interested in in the first place. These variables are referred to as 'extraneous variables'. If the researcher fails to control or eradicate them, they negatively hinder the final results by deviating from the aims of the study, falling in the trap of bias, and hindering the internal validity of the work. For this purpose, one of the requirements of the experimental design is the pre-test that is administered right before the experiment.

 The pre-test serves to have background information about the two groups, and confirm that they are homogenous, have equal abilities, and are under the same controlled conditions. The only divergence between them should lie in the nature of

the provided treatment/intervention. At the end of the experiment, the experimental group is measured after receiving the treatment through the post-test. If a difference is noticed in the dependent variable when comparing the tests of the two groups in the post-test, one can conclude that the treatment was indeed the cause of change. Therefore, the independent variable has affected the dependent one, and the research hypothesis has been proven (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Kumar, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007; Perry, 2011; Leroy, 2011; Grubišić et al., 2009; Sousa et al., 2007).

Concerning the variables of the experimental design, the e-assessment tool 'Moodle' (See 1.3.2.1.), was the independent variable. As it will be explained in the upcoming sections, a series of online tests were administered by means of that platform to assess students' writing performances. This variable was manipulated as the researcher decided the place and the period of the administration of the tests, the amount of time allotted to answer, the way of correcting them, the number of tests to be administered, and the interval between them. It was supposed to affect students' scores in the writing tests which was the dependent variable. They were dependent on the e-assessment tool and were assumed to change during the experimentation. In other terms, it was the means to investigate if this online evaluation would lead to students' writing improvement throughout time or not for the sake of confirming or rejecting the hypothesis posited before.

2.3.2.2. Type of the Experimental Design

Fraenkel et al. (2012) highlight several types of experimental designs: the one-shot case study; the one-group pre-test-post-test design; the static-group comparison design; the static-group pre-test-post-test design; the true experimental design; the randomised post-test-only control group design; the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design; the randomised Solomon four-group design, the quasi-experimental design, the time-series designs, the matching-only design, and the factorial design. After studying the purpose of each one of them separately and relating it to the objectives of the study, the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design was selected. It is illustrated in the following figure:

R	O	X	O
Random Assignment to experimental group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test

R	O	X	O
Random Assignment to the control group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
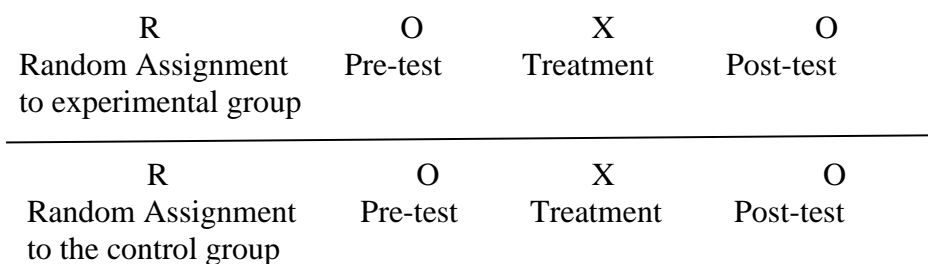
Figure 2.2. Randomised Pre-Test-Post-Test Control Group Design from Fraenkel et al. (2012, p.272)

As shown in Figure 2.2., the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design consists of a variety of symbols. R refers to the random assignment of the groups, O to the tests (pre and post-tests), and X to the treatment. The authors advocate that in this type of design, two groups are randomly assigned to a control and an experimental group. Then, they are pretested at the beginning of the experiment to confirm that they have similar abilities. After that, the treatment is given only to the experimental group. Finally, both groups are post-tested to assess the effect of the treatment.

Accordingly, to test if the proposed e-assessment approach was effective or not on students' writing, one should first assign randomly the students to two different groups; test both of them at the beginning of the experiment; then administer the computer-based evaluation to the experimental group and the traditional paper-and-pencil examination to the control group; retest both of them at the end of the experiment; and later on compare the results of the two groups. Hence, for all of these reasons, the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design was viewed to be the most appropriate choice of design that would meet the objectives of the experiment. Once the research design was sorted out, the next step of this research is the sampling.

2.4. Sampling

When conducting research, investigators come across certain constraints that hinder them from obtaining clues about the target population like time, expense, and the accessibility of that population (Cohen et al., 2007). To overcome those issues, they rely on the sample. The latter embodies a group of informants, that are generally human subjects, named sampling units. They represent cases that are chosen from the

whole population in the view that they would represent them (Kumar, 2010). They are a source of information upon whom data are collected for twofold purposes: answering the research question and examining the validity of the hypothesis. Based on the findings, generalities concerning the target population are made (Perry, 2011).

As to the present study, the sample population consisted of a number of CWE teachers and first-year students at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. It is worth noting that the selection of any sample is dependent on its size, representativeness, accessibility, and the method used for its selection, a process called sampling. Along with a sound methodology and relevant research instruments, the appropriate choice of a sampling strategy, hence design, is one of the most important criteria for effective research work (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, the next sections will be devoted to the sampling design used for the selection of those informants.

2.4.1. Sampling Design

As maintained by Kumar (2010) and Kothari (2004), the sampling design denotes a plan that guides the researchers to select their sample as well as the elements involved in it. For this sake, it needs to be reliable to meet the requirements of the study. Consequently, two sampling designs have been devised for that: the non-probability/non-random and the probability/random sampling. Both of them possess advantages and disadvantages. For this purpose, investigators need to choose carefully the one that best fits the context and the objectives of their work since the generalisation of the findings is affected by the decision they make (Kumar, 2010). After studying each sampling design and method separately and relating it to the aims of the present work, a non-probability/non-random design with a purposive sampling method was used for teachers' selection and a probability/random sampling design with a simple random method for students' selection in the case study and the experimental design.

2.4.1.1. Non-Probability Sampling Design

Kothari (2004) defends that in the non-probability/non-random design, the researchers deliberately select only a small part of the sample in the view that it would

mirror the target population. As a result of this non-random selection, their personal judgment interferes in the selection creating some bias in the collected data. In fact, such a design is dependent on pre-determined elements. For instance, it is used when researchers lack sufficient information about the subject under investigation, or judge that the participants of the study share the specific characteristics of the wider population. Cohen et al. (2007) further explain that the aim behind this sampling design is neither the generalisation of the findings nor their representativeness of the wider population. Instead, it aims at generalising only what has been obtained from a particular portion from the whole such as a classroom, a group of teachers, or a specific type of examination.

It is composed of five sampling methods: quota sampling, accidental sampling, expert sampling snowball sampling, and judgmental/purposive sampling (Kumar, 2010; Kothari, 2004). The researcher worked purposefully only with first-year CWE teachers instead of the ones of the other modules or levels as the aim of the present work was to modernise the assessment only in the CWE module and for first-year students. Therefore, the purposive sampling method was viewed to be appropriate. This sampling method embodies the researchers' interference in the selection of the informants as they have a specific purpose in their mind. It means that they deliberately decide which participants they believe will provide the necessary data on the topic they are looking for (Cohen et al., 2007).

2.4.1.2. Probability Sampling Design

The probability sampling guarantees that all the members involved in the sample can be fairly chosen, i.e. their selection is based only on chance, independently of any other pre-determined criteria. Moreover, it is not deliberate but rather random. The personal judgment of the researchers does not interfere in the choice of the sample, and the decision of choosing or not one participant over other participants will have no consequences because each one is independent of the other. If independence lacks, then the sample is not representative (Kumar, 2010; Kothari, 2004).

Cohen et al. (2007) assert that the sole purpose of this design is to generalise the results so that to reach their representativeness of the wider population. The only condition is that the selected sample ought to possess the distinctive features which exist in the whole population. While the non-probability/non-random sampling is considered to be biased, the probability sampling design is, on the opposite, seen as being more objective. It encompasses simple random, stratified, systematic and cluster sampling (Kumar, 2010; Kothari, 2004).

The probability/random sampling design with a simple random sampling method was used to select students in both designs. This gave an identical chance for every first-year student to be included in the sample, assigned to either a control or an experimental group, and administered the treatment as well. Consequently, informants were randomly selected from the total population according to the needed number. Their selection was made without any interference from the part of the researcher or pre-determined criteria. It only intended to generalise the findings on the target population (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, the fact that randomisation is a key feature of the experimental design (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Kumar, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007; Perry, 2011) was another reason for the selection of that design.

It should be noted that the researcher taught the experimental group for over one academic year. Being a novice and part-time writing teacher, the only way to comprehend the teaching/learning situation in the CWE module, to know concretely how to elaborate those tests, and to have better control over the experiment was to teach that group. However, the selection of the group was made randomly before teaching them and launching the experiment. In other words, no prior information about the students in that group or their writing abilities was in possession of the researcher. Furthermore, the experiment was undertaken during extra sessions out of the classroom to avoid taking important time from the teaching hours. This random selection was also applied to the participants in the control group who were taught by another writing teacher. Therefore, it could be said that the researcher was at the same time the need analyst, the teacher, and the assessor.

2.4.2. Teachers' Profile

The informants comprised 7 first-year CWE teachers at the English Department at Tlemcen University. Without counting the researcher, those respondents represented the first year CWE module teaching staff. They included six females and only one male. All of them were full-time experienced teachers who had been teaching the writing module for several years. They were specialised in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and applied linguistics. Four of the participants held a Doctorate degree (one professor and three senior lecturers). The three remaining were assistant lecturers who held a Magister degree.

Since the CWE syllabus was at the heart of this study, CWE teachers provided to the researcher valuable pieces of information that allowed her to have a more concrete picture of the current teaching situation in the module. Indeed, they were the ones the most aware of writing issues as they evaluated students' writing in the examinations and tests. Besides, it was deemed necessary to investigate their opinions regarding the introduction of such a change in their classroom as teachers are, as Hiebert and Stigler (2017) put it, a lever for change responsible for improving the existing situation.

2.4.3. Students' Profile

77 students at the English Department at Tlemcen University took part in the study: 35 in the case study and 42 in the experimental design, 21 per each group. They were first-year undergraduate students who have just embarked upon higher education. They were taught similar lectures and assessed upon the same tests, examinations, and grading scale during the academic year 2018/2019. As there were more female than male students at the department (according to that year's records), gender homogeneity could not be achieved for the control and experimental groups. Being one of the requirements of the adopted design, the writing abilities of these two groups were assessed before administering the treatment to confirm their similarities in writing proficiency.

As for the case study, the research work relied on first-year students because the goal was to collect data about first-year students' opinions concerning the current teaching/learning situation, needs, and perceptions about the introduction of a new type of evaluation in the module. Their responses were insightful data upon which the tests of the experiments were designed. Regarding the experimental design, it was believed that it would be preferable to start it with beginners as a first step, see its effect, and then, move up to higher levels. Furthermore, they were freshers who were assumed to be more involved and open-minded to a new experience in comparison with Lic.2 or Lic.3.

2.5. Instrumentation

Instrumentation refers to the medium by which information about a given topic has been gathered in a research work. This is made possible through relying on several means like questionnaires, interviews, observations, surveys, or tests in order to obtain recorded, audio-visual, verbal, observed, or digital data (Perry, 2011). The research instruments used to collect data in the present study and to answer the previously mentioned research questions were: an interview, a questionnaire, tests, and a post-experiment questionnaire. A definition and a description of each instrument are supplied in the upcoming sub-sections. It is worth highlighting that all of the tools were validated and revised by experienced teachers who gave feedback, and were later on refined following their pieces of advice. Moreover, the structure of the interview and the questionnaire was inspired by the ones of Bouklikha (2016).

2.5.1. Interview with Teachers

The interview had several purposes. First, it examined the current teaching/learning situation as far as the CWE module was concerned. The aims behind doing so were to identify the learning objectives of the CWE syllabus (the set of skills, knowledge, competencies and concepts that should be acquired and understood by the students) (Brown et al., 1997), and have an idea of the types of assessment provided in the CWE courses. This constituted the necessities of Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model within the framework of the needs analysis that was carried out. Additionally, it was used to identify the lacks at the level of the

assessment in the module as another part of the analysis. Moreover, it was intended to investigate teachers' opinion about integrating e-assessment in their classroom for evaluating first-year EFL students' written production.

Besides, the majority of teachers had several constraints, be them instructional or administrative. Consequently, it was used instead of the questionnaire because most of them would not have the time to answer and return it back. Thus, it was assumed that an interview held at the Department would be preferable and less time-consuming for them than the questionnaire. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, the researcher taught one of the groups of the experimental design for the sake of designing the experiment. Despite this teaching experience, she was a novice teacher that did not have enough experience in the teaching profession. Therefore, asking experienced teachers by means of the interview was necessary.

2.5.1.1. Definition of the Interview

The interview is defined as a conversation in which two persons or more mutually exchange point of views (Cohen et al., 2007). Perry (2011) considers it to be a method of gathering data that associates observation within written data. It looks like a discussion between the interviewers and the participants which resembles a questionnaire. In his standpoint, three types of interviews exist: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In the structured interview, the interviewers have to stick to the questions they prepared and are not allowed to make any changes.

The semi-structured interview comprises already pre-established questions that can be modified either by deleting or adding questions according to the course of the conversation. In the open-structured interview, the interviewers are not restricted to what they have already planned but have the leeway to divert the speech to what suits their goals (Perry, 2011). Concerning this study, the researcher opted for a structured interview because the questions were carefully planned with specific objectives in mind. The investigator was seeking direct responses that would answer the research questions rather than deviating to other elements.

2.5.1.2. Description of the Interview

At the beginning of the interview, teachers had to mention certain information regarding their position at Tlemcen University, speciality, and experience teaching the CWE module. This served to describe their profile. The interview was divided into three different parts. Each part consisted of a set of questions that had a specific aim. The first two parts had to do with Hutchinson and Waters' model of needs analysis. While part one was related to the necessities which served as situational analysis, part two was about the existing lacks in the module at the level of assessment. The last part was interested in teachers' readiness for e-assessment. A total of fifteen questions were asked (See Appendix D).

● *Part I: Situation Analysis (Necessities)*

Questions from one to six aimed at describing the current teaching/learning situation in the first-year CWE module. They were also utilised for identifying the necessities at the level of assessment in the module as part of the needs analysis.

- **Question one** inquired about the aim of the CWE module at the Licence level

- **Question two** interrogated the content of the CWE syllabus.

- **Question three** questioned the focus of the syllabus (product or process).

- **Question four** was concerned with the learning objectives of the syllabus (skills, knowledge, and competencies).

- **Question five** looked for the assessment provided to students in the module with relation to the types of activities, tests, and examinations.

- **Question six** inspected the focus of teachers' correction of students' papers.

● *Part II: Lacks in the Module*

Because feedback, track of students' progress, and organisation are the key features of e-assessment, questions from seven to eleven attempted to find out if those

aspects were lacking at the level of assessment in the module.

- **Question seven** *looked for* the presence of teachers' feedback on students' papers and its type.

- *Question eight* examined if teachers tracked their students' progress.

- *Question nine* investigated teachers' feelings when correcting students' written assignments.

- *Question ten* explored whether students' handwriting could influence the teachers' correction.

- *Question eleven* queried about the existing lacks in the module.

● *Part III: Attitude towards E-Assessment*

Questions from twelve to fifteen inspected teachers' knowledge, use, attitude, and readiness for e-assessment.

- **Questions twelve** attempted to find out if teachers thought about changing their current assessment method in the module.

- **Question thirteen** questioned whether teachers were willing to encourage their students to present their written assignments typed.

- **Question fourteen** was interested in discovering teachers' use of e-assessment

- **Question fifteen** sought to disclose their willingness to introduce it into the writing classroom, the benefits that could arise to them and their students as well as the reasons that prevented them from doing so

In addition to the above-mentioned instrument, a questionnaire was also used.

2.5.2. Questionnaire to Students

The questionnaire was a continuation of the interview in identifying the existing lacks in the assessment of the module. In addition to that, it was employed to find out their needs and wants which were part of the needs analysis, and their attitudes towards the integration of e-assessment as a means to evaluate their writing

performance. This instrument was viewed to be more appropriate for them instead of the interview for numerous reasons. In fact, the researcher assumed that because learners were still in their first year, they might probably feel shy, have difficulties, or lack the necessary skills to answer face-to-face questions directly with her, and would likely be more at ease when answering them on the paper.

In this vein, Kuzmina (2010) asserts that both research instruments have their pros and cons. Therefore, choosing one over the other depends mainly on the research type and objectives and the characteristics of the studied population. According to the author, the interview is favoured when the illiteracy, age, or health issues of the sample become a constraint to the research; thus, rendering the questionnaire inappropriate. However, the latter is more suitable when dealing, for instance, with an unreachable sample in which an interview would be costly, or tackling very sensitive topics that may cause embarrassment for the informants if they were interviewed. In that case, anonymity is advised. Confidentiality was another reason for its selection. Since the answers were anonymous, the students could honestly and freely express their views about the CWE module without any reference to their names.

2.5.2.1. Definition of the Questionnaire

Brown (2001) defines the questionnaire as a written tool that embodies a set of questions that have to be answered by participants. He considers it to be a time-saving, economical, and valuable source of data that can be addressed to a large sample. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2007) mention its usefulness, easy analysis, financial advantage, and wide use. Nevertheless, its design is an important aspect that should be carefully carried out. In this respect, Kuzmina (2010) insists on the readability of the questions. Indeed, to avoid any ambiguity for the informants, the author asserts that the questions should be clearly stated with a simple vocabulary and logically sequenced. Furthermore, they should not be doubled barrelled (asking two questions at the same time), leading (expecting targeted responses), or presumed (assuming that the subjects do a certain behaviour or have previous knowledge about some elements).

2.5.2.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The present questionnaire was divided into four parts. While the first three parts were related to needs' identification and based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model of needs analysis, the last one was concerned with learners' attitude toward e-assessment. In sum, twelve questions were dealt with (See Appendix E) combining both closed and open-forms. Perry (2011) defines the closed-form items as the multiple suggestions in which the informant has to choose from the proposed items. They include yes/no or agree/disagree questions, and do not require effort in the analysis. Open-form items, on the opposite, give freedom to the informants to answer the way they like according to their vision and way of thinking where there will be a variety of different answers.

● *Part I: Necessities*

This part was related to students' necessities in the module, and was used to design the assessment criteria and the scoring rubric of the tests of the experiment. It embodied the first two questions of the questionnaire which explored their expectations from the module and the aspects of writing that they needed to learn for the sake of improving their writing abilities.

● *Part II: Lacks*

It inspected the existing lacks in the module and examined learners' perceptions about the quality of assessment provided to them and its deficiencies on affective, pedagogical, and practical bases. They involved six questions:

- *Question three* questioned the way CWE teachers corrected their students' papers.

- *Question four* sought to investigate if students believed that their handwriting influenced the obtained mark.

- *Question five* inspected students' feelings when the test sheet was provided to them.

- *Question six* examined their teacher's use of technology in the module.

- *Question seven* inquired whether a change in their teachers' corrections would be noticeable if their papers were typed on the computer.

- **Question eight** interrogated whether their feeling would be the same or different from the traditional assessment if the paper was given to them on the computer.

- *Part III: Wants*

It was related to students' wants at the level of assessment. It served to disclose their opinions about the present learning situation and provide an assessment that would meet those wants. It consisted of two questions:

- *Question nine* was concerned with students' perception about the way they were currently assessed in the module.

- *Question ten* investigated students' views about modifying the assessment method in the module and the aspects that needed to be added.

- *Part IV: Attitude*

It had to do with students' attitude and involved questions ten and eleven:

- **Question eleven i**nspected students' knowledge of e-assessment.

- **Question twelve** attempted to disclose students' feelings and attitudes about introducing the digital evaluation into the classroom and the benefits it could provide for them.

Once the needs were identified and the attitudes disclosed, tests were used as a third research instrument.

2.5.3. Tests

Tests were employed because they were part of the requirement of the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design that was used in the research design of the present research work. They were elaborated based on an already established syllabus and courses, and were only an assessment of what students were currently studying. Moreover, they were the means through which the efficiency of

the treatment, or more precisely the e-assessment tool, was tested since they acted as a source of comparison between the two groups. This comparison would assess the presence of any progress after administering the online evaluation. For all of these reasons, tests were seen to be the appropriate method to assess students' writing performance.

2.5.3.1. Definition of Tests

Perry (2011) declares that tests are a method of measuring one's memory as well as linguistic, physical, or mental capacities. In the same line of thought, Richards and Schmidt (2010) maintain that they are a tool employed to calculate a person's competence, knowledge, or achievement. While for Bachman (1990, p.20), they serve "to elicit a specific sample of an individual's behavior". They suggest that their sole focus is the quantification of learners' performances by using a set of procedures. Cohen et al. (2007) consider them to be a strong means of collecting data for teachers and researchers.

Cohen et al. (2007) stipulate that they are a vast domain that measures different angles of learners' lives at all age ranges. They can be mental when assessing their aptitude, achievement, performance, language proficiency, reasoning, intelligence, or high order skills; psychological when evaluating, for instance, their degree of stress, personality traits, self-esteem, psychological state, social adjustment, motivation, or attitude; and diagnostic when identifying their problems. Besides, they can be utilized to place them in a specific group or class according to their scores or abilities. Therefore, for each purpose, a specific test type is devised.

Regarding the type of tests of the experimental design, they were an adaptation of a standardised test named, 'The European Consortium for the certificate of attainment in modern Languages examination' (the ECL exam). Details about it are provided in Chapter Four (See 4.2.). In this respect, a standardised test is a test that has been subject to experimentation and testing, before its final administration, through which its validity and reliability have been accredited. It is distinguished by norms and unified procedures in terms of format, content, and time limits (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

The ECL exam is what Cohen et al. (2007) commonly name a commercially produced test. It is a test in the public domain which is characterised by its objectivity, validity, reliability, standardisation, representativeness on a large scale population, and easiness of scoring and administration. In addition to that, manuals for guidance have been provided for this sake. It also acts as a criterion-referenced test. Unlike the norm-referenced test which aims at comparing the scores of the learners with the ones of other learners, the criterion-referenced test emphasises the effective individual achievement of the learner in relation to a predetermined criterion. In sum, the goal is to assess how well the criterion has been performed by the student rather than how results are ranked par rapport to the classmates (Cohen et al., 2007).

2.5.3.2. Description of Tests

A series of tests were used which dealt with different units of the CWE syllabus. The pre-test covered Unit One and Two. Being another requirement of the randomised pre-test-post-test control group design (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2007), it aimed at investigating whether the students in both groups were similar in terms of writing proficiency prior to the launch of the experiment. Furthermore, it was used to test the homogeneity of variances of the two groups for the statistical analysis (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000; Hatcher, 2003; Urdan, 2005).

The treatment tests comprised Units Six and Five and were directly related to the treatment. The post-test encompassed Unit Five, and explored the existence of any noticeable improvement in students' writing of the experimental group in comparison with the control group after receiving the treatment. In more technical terms, it sought to find out a statistical difference in the means of the two groups, and assess the effect of the adopted assessment tool. However, because of the adopted experimental design, only the pre-test and the post-test were analysed.

Tests were undertaken under the same conditions in terms of content, assessment criteria, and scoring rubric. Regarding the content, they consisted of a paragraph writing, or what Perry (2011, p.125) refers to as "open-ended/ constructed response" as it was the main goal of the CWE module in the first year. Moreover, all of them involved a required length of about twelve lines, at least three supporting

sentences, and certain grammatical elements that were related to a given unit of the syllabus. For instance, in the pre-test, the paragraphs had to include adjectives, relative clauses, sensory details, and an instance of figurative language. For the first treatment test, they had to comprise sensory and emotional details, transitional words and phrases, adverbial clauses, and the past tense.

Since the second treatment test and the post-test were based on Unit Five, the assignment of those tests was the same. They had to encompass transition words and phrases, the existential 'there', the possessive adjective 'their', the preposition 'because of', and the subordinating conjunction 'because'. The assessment criteria and scoring rubric of the tests will be explained in detail in Chapter Four (See 4.4. and 4.5.). The differences between the tests in both groups were the aim behind testing and the way of approaching the results.

As for the control group, the tests represented only a traditional evaluation of what had been taught without any consideration of the obtained results. However, the ones of the experimental group had formative ends since their results would enable the researcher to measure students' mastery of the lectures, highlight the types of mistakes they produced, the areas of difficulties they encountered, give feedback and then find a remedial work both online, by means of the educational platform, and within the classroom. The final research instrument was a post-experiment questionnaire.

2.5.4. Post-Experiment Questionnaire

The purpose of this research instrument was to investigate students' impressions after being assessed online and compare these results with the ones of the questionnaire of the case study. The post-experiment questionnaire comprised seven questions (See Appendix F). Each question had a specific objective:

o *Question one* explored whether the students liked the computer-based assessment or not.

o *Question two and three* attempted to find out what were the elements that they liked the most, and the ones that they liked the least.

o *Question four* examined if students preferred the online evaluation or the traditional one.

o *Question five* inquired students' willingness to use the online evaluation in the writing module in the future.

o *Question six and seven* investigated students' perceptions on the quality of the feedback provided on the platform, and if its repetitive providence and delivery on Moodle would contribute to their writing development throughout time or not.

2.6. Instrumentation Administration Procedure

After describing the research instruments that were used for collecting data, the subsequent step implied the different steps that the researcher followed when administering each one of them.

2.6.1. Interview with Teachers: Administration Procedure

The interview was delivered to seven first-year CWE teachers at the Department of English at Tlemcen University during the academic year 2018/2019. More precisely, it was submitted prior to the launch of the experiment since the obtained data were used for the design of the tests. At first, the researcher contacted all of the respondents by email in order to explain the aim of the study and to arrange appointments with them. After that, each respondent was interviewed separately for about 15 up to 20 min. The conversations were recorded with a phone after having their oral consent. Those recordings were later on manually transcribed for the sake of analysis. Interviewees were insured that no reference to their identities would be mentioned in the study and their answers would be kept in total confidentiality.

2.6.2. Questionnaire to students: Administration Procedure

The questionnaire was provided to 35 first-year EFL students at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, and presented in a printed format. After having their oral consent, it was conducted in the classroom with the presence of the researcher from the beginning of its distribution, where the aim behind the study and the questionnaire was clarified and misunderstandings cleared up, until its collection. In sum, it lasted for about 40 mn. Just like the interview, it was distributed during the same period, explicitly before launching the experiments since their answers were used to identify their needs and were the basis for the design of the tests. Furthermore, it was administered after being tested in the CWE module. Indeed, because they were still in their first year and the study was concerned with their perceptions regarding the current assessment situation in the module, it was believed that asking them after they experienced their first test and saw how the correction was undertaken would be more accurate. They were reminded to not mention their names in the questionnaires.

2.6.3. Tests: Administration Procedure

Prior to the beginning of the experiment, a pre-test was submitted to 42 first-year EFL students at the Department of English at Tlemcen University. It was dispensed in the classroom by mid-January 2019, or more precisely, after the first-term examination purposefully. The rationale behind that was to let students get used to the way the tests were organised, their teacher's way of correcting, and the learning environment at the university since it was a new experience for them. Moreover, because it took time for the researcher to make the platform ready and get accustomed to it, the experiment started at the beginning of February 2019 during the second semester where the treatment tests were administered. By the end of the instructional year in May 2019, a post-test was addressed to the two groups. It is worth mentioning that the same tests were administered simultaneously to both groups, after the unit was taught, with an allotted time of 1 h per each test.

While the experimental group was performing them online through the Moodle platform with the researcher as she was their teacher, the control group was

doing them only in the classroom with another writing instructor. However, before launching the experiment and after having the authorisation of the Head of the Department subsequent to a request addressed to him (See Appendix G), the experimental group received workshop sessions. It was explained to the students how Moodle functioned, how they would be assessed, and which criteria would be taken into account. The experiment was held in the internet room of the department, which is, as its name implies, a room equipped with 30 computers connected to the internet. Two engineers were working there and were present in case of any problem.

The goal of undertaking it in that place was to show the feasibility of e-assessment at the department and give it a formal context. The researcher was present with the learners throughout it and was at their disposal in case of misunderstanding, question, or difficulty with the platform. All the learners were controlled while they were writing on their computers to make sure that they did not have recourse to Google for finding synonyms, copying and pasting, or translating from Arabic or French. Learners were also reminded to work individually because the purpose was to assess each learner alone, and have a true picture of their writing abilities as if they were passing a test in the classroom. In sum, from the pre-test till the post-test, the experiment lasted for about 4 months.

2.6.4. Post-Experiment Questionnaire: Administration Procedure

Once the experiment ended, a post-experiment questionnaire was administered only to those students who took part in the experiment. Because it was the end of the instructional year and most of the students did not return to the university after the examinations, the researcher provided it online through Google Form. After explaining its aim, it was sent to them by email. They could ask the researcher in case of misunderstanding. Just like the previous questionnaire, the answers were anonymous. They were later on collected online for analysis. Successive to the design and description of the collected information from the research instruments comes data analysis.

2.7. Instrumentation Analysis Procedure

Data can be analysed in two different ways: quantitatively or qualitatively. Perry (2011) distinguishes between the two methods and advocates that quantitative and qualitative research have two divergent origins. The former comes from psychology, whereas the latter originates from anthropology and sociolinguistics. The qualitative method of analysis aims at verbally describing the findings according to the respondents' perceptions of the situation. In contrast to it, the quantitative method focuses on statistics for the sake of numerically interpreting the results and generalising them on the target population (Perry, 2011).

Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that the richness of the data and the smallness of the sample are what characterise the qualitative analysis. They are also what differentiates it from the quantitative one which is portrayed by the statistical interpretation of the data and the largeness of the sample. The present research work was a combination of the two types of analysis. In effect, the results of the interview with teachers, the questionnaire to students, and the post-experiment questionnaire were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. This was explained by the fact that the three of them implied quantitative and qualitative data through closed-ended and open-ended questions.

The closed-ended questions were quantified and transformed into numerical measurements and representations in the form of percentages, tables, and figures. The underpinning reason for that was to have a concrete comprehension of the existing needs and lacks in the module and an estimation of the extent of readiness for e-assessment. The open-ended questions were used to explore the teaching/learning situation and to gather descriptive explanations of the respondents' opinions and attitudes. The experimental design, on the contrary, was a purely quantitative analysis as it depended on statistical software 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences' (SPSS), version 20.0, for the analysis of the scores obtained in the pre-test and post-test. Those scores represented a source of comparison between the experimental and the control group upon which the effect of e-assessment was measured.

2.8. Conclusion

The second chapter has outlined the methodological framework of the study. It has described the teaching/learning/assessment conditions within the writing module at the Department of English at Tlemcen University. It has highlighted the definitions, justifications, and procedures underlying the choices made regarding the case study and the experimental design. This included the research design, the sampling design, the sample population, the research instruments, and the procedures of data collection and analysis. This chapter has also shown that despite their distinctive objectives, features, designs, and instruments, the case study and the experimental design have complemented each other in the current work.

In fact, the findings of the former informed the design of the latter. This implies that based on those gathered needs, the experimental design will be proposed as an alternative solution that is supposed to remedy them. Consequently, the researcher preferred to divide the findings of each design into two separate chapters and deal with each individually. Thus, the findings of the needs analysis will be outlined in the upcoming chapter, and the ones of the experimental design are reserved for the fourth chapter.

Chapter Three

Needs Analysis

3.1. Introduction

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the case study was used to carry out a needs analysis through an interview with teachers and a questionnaire to students. In fact, since the aim of the work is to implement a new assessment tool to evaluate learners' writing performances and test its efficiency, undertaking a needs analysis was necessary. It did not only help the researcher to find out the necessities and lacks at the level of the assessment in the CWE module, but would also guarantee that the proposed assessment approach would meet those specific needs and correspond to students' wants.

Henceforth, the third chapter analyses quantitatively and qualitatively the data gathered from the two research instruments. Then, it interprets those collected data, and identifies the needs which will be employed for the design of the tests of the experimental design. Additionally, it will demonstrate the readiness of the informants of the study (teachers and students) for this change for the sake of answering the first two research questions. It, thus, represents the first empirical phase of the research work.

3.2. Interview with Teachers: Results

It should be reminded that the interview consisted of three different parts (See 2.5.1.2.) that were based on the model of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) of needs analysis. Therefore, each part will be analysed separately to facilitate the identification of the needs. This was undertaken both quantitatively and qualitatively using numbers, percentages, figures, and descriptions of the respondents' opinions into a verbal format. These participants were coded into P1, P2 and so forth in order to ensure the confidentiality of their answers, and to quote their answers to certain questions. It is worth noting that the structure of the analysis was inspired by Bouklikha (2016).

3.2.1. Necessities

This part of the interview enabled the researcher to describe the current teaching/learning situation in the first-year CWE module along with its syllabus.

They were also utilised for identifying the necessities at the level of assessment in the module as part of the needs analysis.

- **Question One: The Aim of the CWE Module at the Licence Level**

The answers to this question were utilised in order to comprehend the aim of the writing module in the first three years as it is summarised in 2.2.2. One can notice from that section that the level of difficulty gradually increases from one year to the next. Indeed, students move from the most basic and easiest elements of writing in the first two years, to more complex concerns. For this sake, the name of the module changes from Comprehension and Written Expression in the first two years, to Comprehension and Written Production in Lic.3. In other terms, the beginning of the construction of concrete academic pieces of writing.

- **Questions Two, Three, and Four: The Content, Focus, and Learning Objectives of the Syllabus**

The answers to these questions are provided in 2.2.3. Because these three questions were related to the CWE syllabus, their results were combined together and used to find out the learning objectives of the first-year CWE syllabus. On the basis of the teachers' answers, the researcher elaborated Table 3.1. as a summary of those objectives. Therefore, what is highlighted below constitutes the knowledge that first-year EFL learners at the Department of English at Tlemcen University ought to acquire, and the abilities that they ought to master at the end of each unit of the syllabus. Additionally, it represented the first step of the design of the tests of the experiment.

Table 3.1. The Learning Objectives of the CWE Syllabus

Units	Unit1	Unit2	Unit6	Unit5
Learning Objectives	When writing, students will be able to: -Compose an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. -Employ simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences effectively while avoiding fragments. -Employ tenses, pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, and gerunds correctly. -Use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation without run-on sentences and comma splices. -Avoid spelling mistakes. -Use a clear and accurate language. -Provide clear and effective information about the required topic. -Relate all their sentences to the topic. -Follow a logical sequence of ideas through using an appropriate pattern of organisation (time order, space order, or order of importance).	When describing, students will be able to: -Write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. -Employ simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences and relative clauses effectively while avoiding fragments. -Employ pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, and gerunds correctly. -Use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -Avoid spelling mistakes. -Use figurative language (metaphors and similes), adjectives, transitional words, prepositions, and conjunctions effectively in order to indicate time, place or manner. -Use a specific and clear language. - Provide a vivid and clear description -Use sensory details effectively in order to address the readers' senses and create an image in his mind. -Relate all their sentences to the topic. -Follow a logical sequence of ideas by using an appropriate pattern of organisation (space order).	When narrating, students will be able to: -Write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. -Employ simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences, and adverbial clauses effectively while avoiding fragments. -Employ the past simple and past continuous, pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, and gerunds correctly. -Use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -Avoid spelling mistakes. -Use a clear and accurate language. -Employ conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs, and transitional words and phrases effectively in order to indicate time, place or manner. - Provide sufficient and clear narrative details by effectively using sensory and emotional details. -Help the readers visualise the characters/ setting of the described scene in order to understand what happened in the story. -Relate all their sentences to the topic. -Follow a logical sequence of events by using an appropriate pattern of organisation (time order).	When arguing, students will be able to: -Write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. -Employ simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences effectively while avoiding fragments. -Employ tenses, pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, and gerunds correctly. -Use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -Avoid spelling mistakes. -Use a clear and accurate language -Employ conjunctions, prepositions, and transitional words and phrases effectively. - Give reasons to defend their opinions with strong arguments in order to convince the readers to agree with them. -Differentiate between facts, personal experiences, or explanations. -Relate all their sentences to the topic. -Follow a logical sequence of ideas by using an appropriate pattern of organisation (order of importance).

As illustrated in Table 3.1., the four units share almost the same general features of a basic paragraph studied in Unit One as far as organisation, mechanics, and grammatical structures are concerned. It means that each type of paragraph dealt with in Unit Two, Six, and Five should imply a topic, supporting, and concluding sentences; and should be coherent, unified, well-punctuated, and grammatically correct. However, the three units will diverge from one to another depending on the concerned type of paragraph and its specific characteristics. More specifically, the differences between them lie at the level of the content, the type of vocabulary, and the purpose that each type of discourse ought to fulfil, i.e. description, narration, or argumentation.

- **<u>Question Five: Type of Assessment in the CWE Module</u>**

The results of this question are highlighted in section 2.2.4. As it can be witnessed, various types of activities are provided to Lic.1 learners for both formative and summative purposes. Additionally, despite certain linguistic and organisational similarities of the four units as explained above, their assessment purposes differed according to the objectives of each unit.

- **<u>Question Six: Focus on Correction</u>**

For this question, the totality of teachers (7) posited that they focused on grammatical and lexical knowledge; content and coherence of ideas; organisation of the paragraph; and mechanics, especially punctuation, capitalisation, and spelling when correcting their students' writing performance. These answers were used to elaborate on the assessment criteria and the scoring rubric of the tests.

3.2.2. Lacks

This part of the needs analysis was employed to find out the insufficiencies that were present when assessing students' papers within the writing module. They were related to feedback, track of students' progress, organisation, and emotional factors.

- **Question Seven: Presence of Feedback and its Type**

    The totality of teachers (7) claimed that they provided feedback to their students. When asked about its type, five participants (5) declared that it was a detailed one for the sake of helping them to find out their weaknesses. The remaining two (2) said that it was a holistic one. They asserted that because of the large number of students, they stressed on only the most important elements that have to be taken into account.

- **Question Eight: Track of Students' Progress**

    Three participants (3) maintained that they tracked their students' progress. Two of them were tracking that progress in terms of writing enhancement rather than in relation to grades because they did not consider them to be objective, and the third one claimed only noticing that progress. However, the other four participants (4) did not track their students' progress as shown in Figure 3.1.:
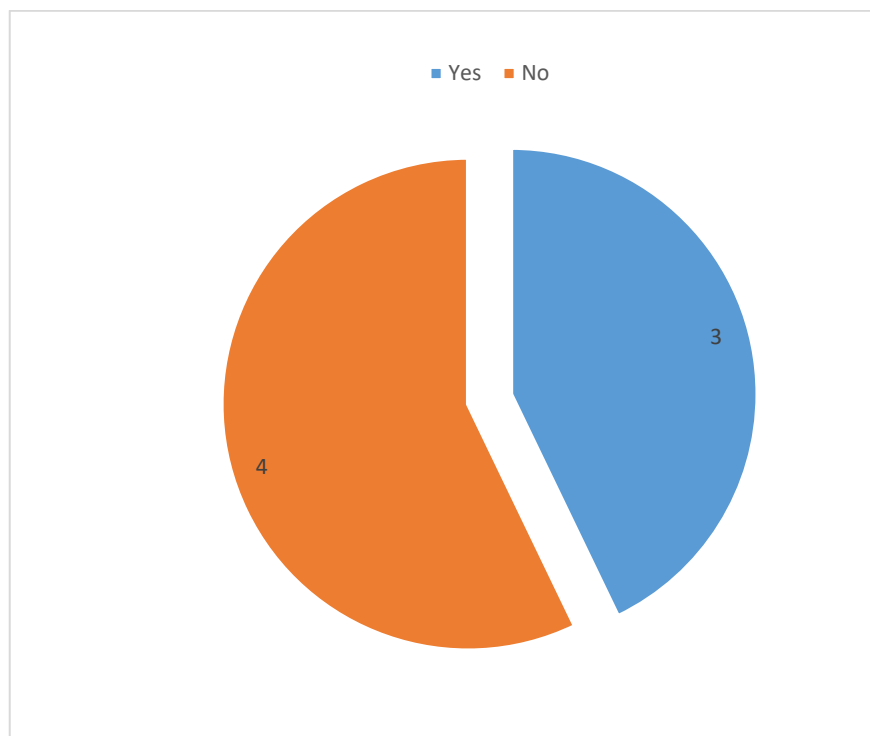
Figure 3.1. Track of Students' Progress

- **Question Nine: Feeling during the Correction**

    As depicted in Figure 3.2., four participants (4) confessed a feeling of exhaustion during the correction of their students' written assignments. According to

them, the paper-based correction was often conducive to a lack of concentration and boredom, especially when dealing with a large number of copies. Two participants (2) felt neutral, and only one (1) felt motivated during the correction.
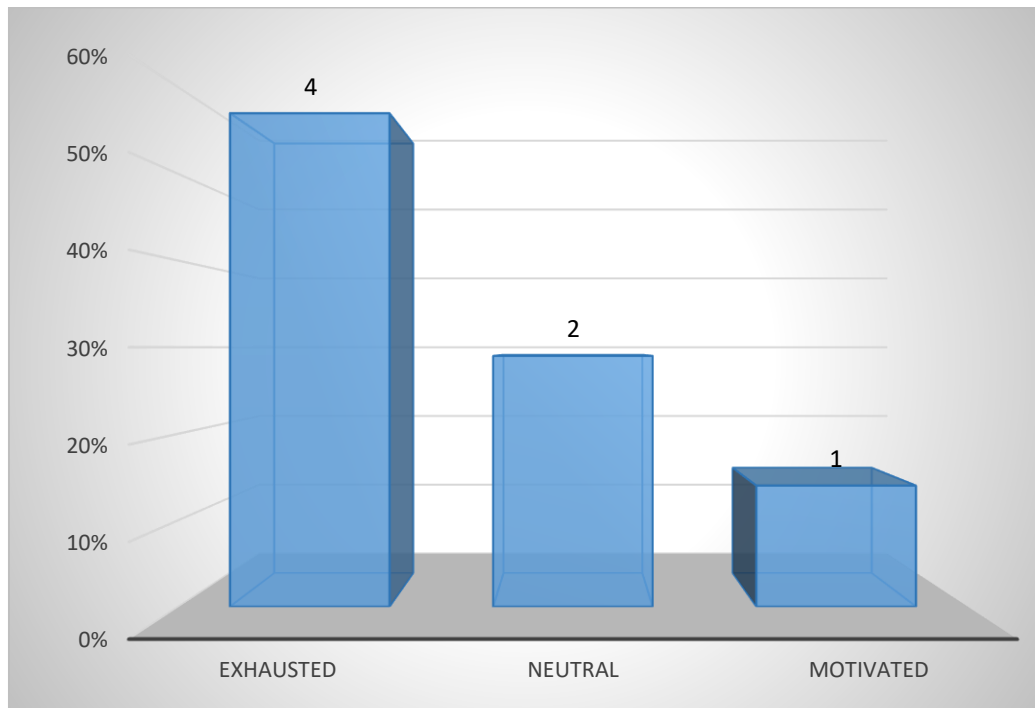
Figure 3.2. Teachers' Feeling during the Correction

Question Ten: Influence of Students' Handwriting on the Correction

Six participants (6) out of seven advocated that students' bad handwriting was a real problem for them. They asserted that it had a negative impact on the correction as they faced difficulties in understanding it and, therefore, lost a large amount of time. Only one (1) teacher upheld that incomprehensible handwriting created, indeed, a disturbance, but that would have no consequence on the correction. These results are demonstrated in Figure 3.3.:
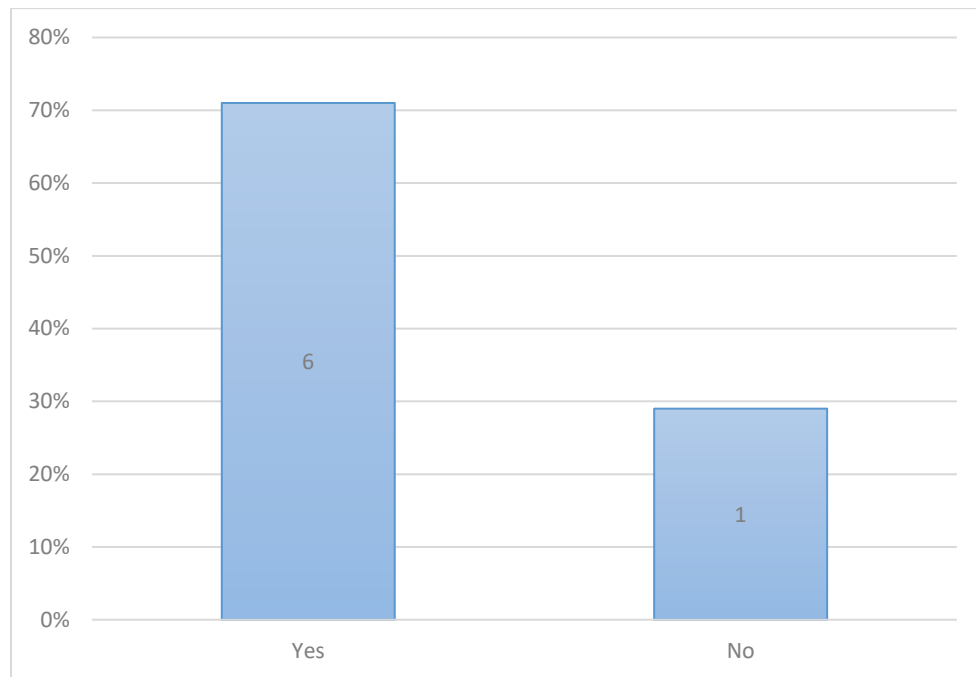
Figure 3.3. The Influence of Students' Handwriting on the Correction

- **Question Eleven: The Lacks at the Level of Assessment**

When interrogated about the lacks that existed at the level of assessment in the CWE module, teachers gave a variety of answers. P1 posited that feedback was tremendously lacking, and asserted that the large number of students per group rendered checking all of them every week and providing feedback separately to each one of them quite impossible. P2 viewed that the writing sessions allocated to the writing module per week were insufficient. The shortcut of hours from 4h30 in the past to only 3h made it difficult for that teacher to tackle teaching, assessment, remedial teaching, and feedback at the same time. As a result, that teacher was feeling lost, overwhelmed, and stressed.

P6 pointed out that the summative assessment was fine and well-organised as it was the result of a collaboration between teachers. However, the formative assessment left much to be desired as more practice about paragraph writing, feedback, and remedial works were needed. P7 considered that the two exams per semester and the number of tests provided during the year were not enough to identify the students' problems in writing. P3 mentioned the insufficiency of the short stories that students have to read in the module (See 2.2.4.2). P5 declared that only the end

product was emphasised; the process that students have gone through, which is an important aspect of writing, was completely neglected in the module.

3.2.3. Attitude

This part of the analysis attempted to find out the extent of teachers' readiness for e-assessment.

- **Question Twelve: Changing the Current Assessment Method in the CWE Module**

As exhibited in Figure 3.4., four teachers (4) out of seven did not think about changing their current assessment and liked it the way it was. The three other ones (3) had thought about changing it.
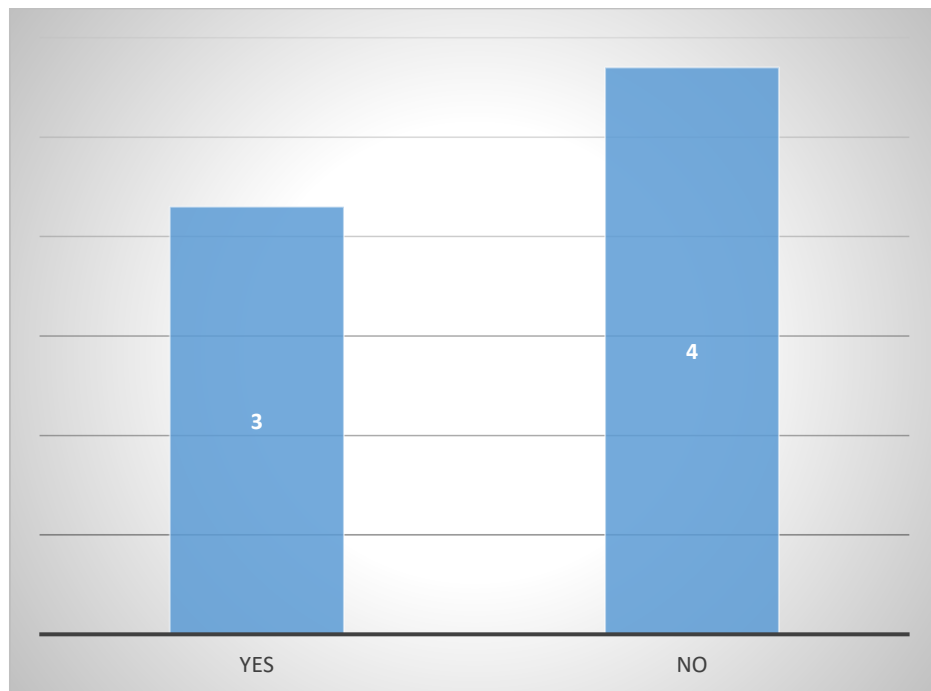
Figure 3.4. Changing the Assessment Method in the Module

To justify their claims, the three informants pointed out what follows:

- **P1:** "Yes, I regularly think about changing it because most of the classrooms comprise mixed abilities with different language proficiency. In many cases, the assignments do not meet the needs of those specific students and become inappropriate to their level… they are either too difficult for weak students, or too easy for good ones".

- **P3:** "Yes, of course. Students have only to read six short stories in the academic year as part of their assessment. This is not sufficient as extensive reading is a prerequisite for the improvement of their writing abilities. I have in mind to provide more reading sessions".

- **P7:** "Yes, there are a number of lacks in the assessment including self-assessment. So, I'm trying to encourage it by mentioning on the margin the number of mistakes that I find on students' paragraphs and let learners correct them by themselves".

- **Question Thirteen: Letting Students Present their Written Assignments Typed**

When asked if they would encourage their students to present their written assignments typed, five (5) teachers agreed. They shared a common belief that it would be more organised, quicker, easier, and less stressful than the classical method, thus saving their time and energy. As an example, P2 highlighted that it would introduce students to technology and prepare them for writing extended essays in Master two. P3 believed that all teachers should encourage their students to send their assignments via diverse forms of online communication; otherwise, they will not do it.

On the contrary, two participants (2) were against that idea. P7 advocated never encouraging students to send their assignments typed and confessed preferring them to write them with their hands on the paper. They considered that computers encouraged laziness and cheating as they can correct their mistakes. P1 mentioned the unnecessity of the computer because of the socio-economic situation of less fortunate learners that prevented them from possessing a computer at home. These results are summarised in Figure 3.5.:
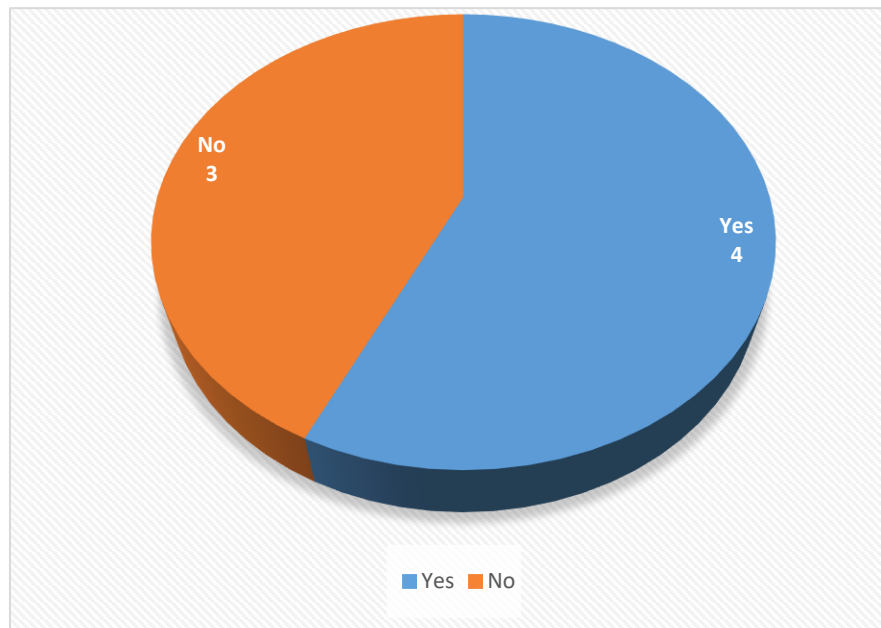
Figure 3.5. Typing the Assignment on the Computer

- **<u>Question Fourteen: Teachers' Use of E-assessment in the CWE Module</u>**

Regarding this question, the totality of teachers (7) had never used e-assessment in the CWE module, and some were even unaware of it. The researcher had to explain it to them.

- **<u>Question Fifteen: Attitude towards E-Assessment</u>**

As it is illustrated in Figure 3.6., only two (2) teachers were willing to introduce e-assessment in the module while the other five (5) were not.
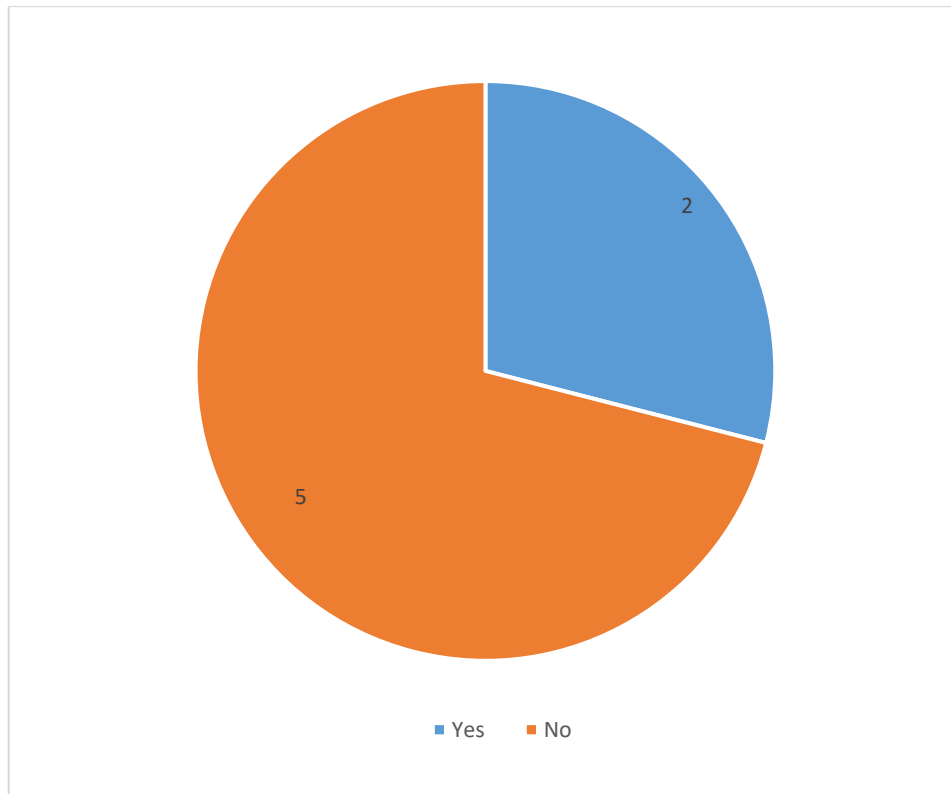
Figure 3.6. Attitude to the introduction of E-Assessment in the Module

Their answers are categorised into positive and negative attitudes in the following table:

Table 3.2. Attitude towards E-Assessment

Positive Attitude	Negative Attitude
P2: "Yes. I am willing to. I strongly believe that putting learners in an e-learning environment would be very beneficial for them. It would certainly motivate them and lead to the development of their writing performances through the variety of advantages it possesses. They would even learn better".	P1: "No, I believe that it would be useless. The department is not equipped for that and most of the learners do not even possess a computer. Personally, between teaching, supervision, invigilation and the administrative stuff, I am already overloaded. I neither want to know more about it, nor to have some training sessions. I do not have the time, patience, or the energy for that".
P3: "Yes, if the e-assessment is well-undertaken and results from an agreement and collaboration between all first-year writing teachers, it would be very helpful. It could facilitate the correction of the paper and save my time. I would be in favour of using it in the future with my students. However, the university environment should be prepared for such a change through the provision of adequate equipment, teachers' training, and smaller groups".	P4: "No, I do not see its usefulness neither for me nor for my students. The traditional assessment is the most effective method of teaching writing and the only method that could concretely lead to students' improvement. I do not see myself using any other way".
	P5: "No, I think I will find it boring and not important to rely on the computer to assess students' papers in the writing module. There is no relationship between e-assessment and the enhancement of students' writing. The writing module must be assessed traditionally with a red pen and the teacher underlying the mistakes. No, I am not interested in it".
	P6: "No, the traditional assessment is much better and more useful for their writing. It would not be fruitful at the department. The actual environment is not ready and not adequately equipped without forgetting the large number of students per group. No, I'm not interested to know more about it".
	P7: "No, in the paper-based assessment students are more attentive to what they write. They make more effort and rely on themselves. E-assessment would render them effortless and would encourage them to be passive students who would no longer be autonomous. No, I do not want to learn more about it".

As Table 3.2. shows, teachers had two different reactions towards introducing e-assessment in the module. The minority of them, who agreed on doing so, claimed that it could facilitate the correction, save their time, and render students more motivated when learning in an e-learning environment. It would also lead to the development of their writing performances through the variety of advantages it possesses. Yet, they highlighted certain conditions which, in their views, would be conducive to effective e-assessment practice and their future adoption for such a type of assessment. Among which, they mentioned the adequate preparation of the university environment through the provision of adequate equipment, teachers' training, and an agreement and collaboration between all first-year CWE teachers.

On the contrary, the majority of teachers were sceptical about its efficiency and questioned its feasibility within the department. They maintained that it would not be fruitful at the Department of English at Tlemcen University because of the lack of materials and the large number of students per group. They asserted that assessing students digitally would neither help them nor enhance their writing abilities, and claimed that no relationship existed between the two. They maintained that the computer-based evaluation would render them effortless, and would encourage them to be passive students who no longer rely on themselves.

Some mentioned the boredom and the unimportance of relying on the computer to correct students' papers in the CWE module and strongly believed that the traditional way was much better and more useful. They argued that in the paper-based evaluation, students were more attentive to what they wrote, made more efforts, and relied on themselves. Others spotlighted that having recourse to e-assessment would be a burden and time consuming for them that would be added to their overloaded teaching time. They wanted neither to know more about it nor to have some training sessions.

3.3. Questionnaire to Students: Results

Similarly to the interview, the questionnaire also comprised different parts that were related to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model of needs analysis, and which will be analysed individually. The analysis was undertaken qualitatively and

quantitatively for increased comprehension of the gathered needs.

3.3.1. Necessities

The analysis of this part of the questionnaire uncovered the linguistic aspects that learners thought they necessitated. Those aspects served to design the assessment criteria and the scoring rubric of the tests accordingly.

- **Question One: Requirements of the CWE Module**

Summarising students' answers, learners pointed out that they needed to learn the different types of sentences (simple and complex structures), the organisation of a paragraph (topic, supporting, and concluding sentence; unity and coherence), and the organisation of the descriptive, narrative, and argumentative paragraphs along with the vocabulary and grammar of each type.

- **Question Two: Aspects of Writing Wanted to be Developed in the CWE Module**

Concerning this question, 31% of the students pointed out that they wanted to improve their grammatical knowledge, 25% mechanics, 19% formality, 15% organisation, and 10% coherence as exemplified in Figure 3.7.:
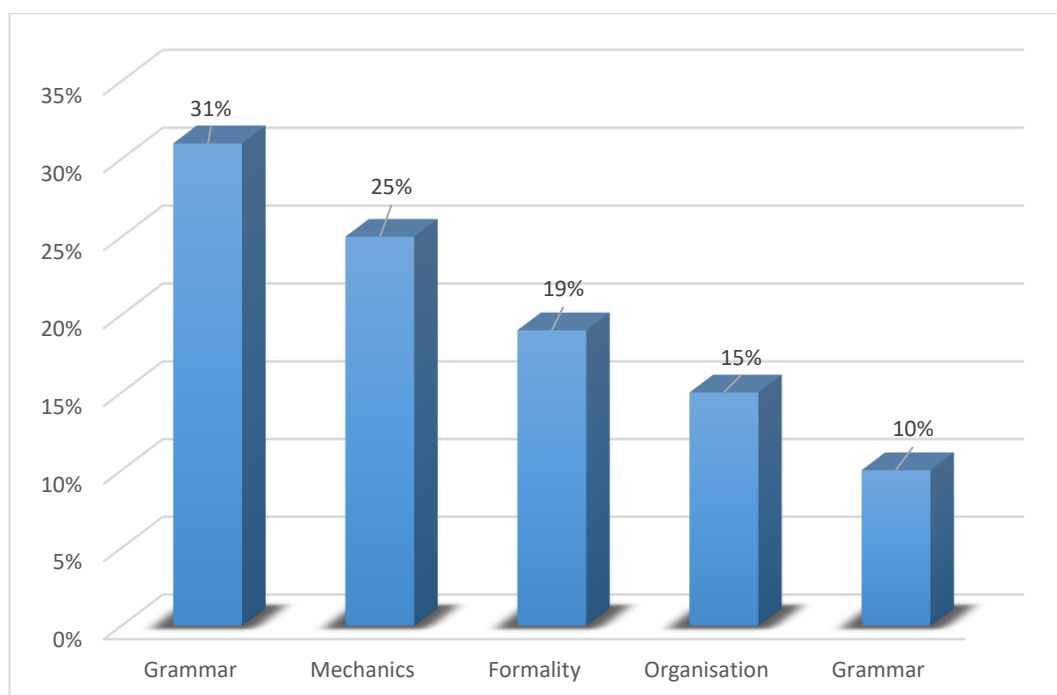
Figure 3.7. Elements of Writing Needed to Develop

3.3.2. Lacks

This part allowed the researcher to find out the lacks in the assessment in the writing module from the viewpoints of learners. Students' answers would disclose those deficiencies from affective, pedagogical, and practical perspectives.

- **Question Three: Teachers' Way of Correcting**

When asked about the way their teacher corrected their papers, 46% (16) of the students answered that their teacher circled their errors, 34% (12) claimed that their errors were corrected, and only 20% (7) declared that their teacher let them correct by themselves. Their answers are summarised below:
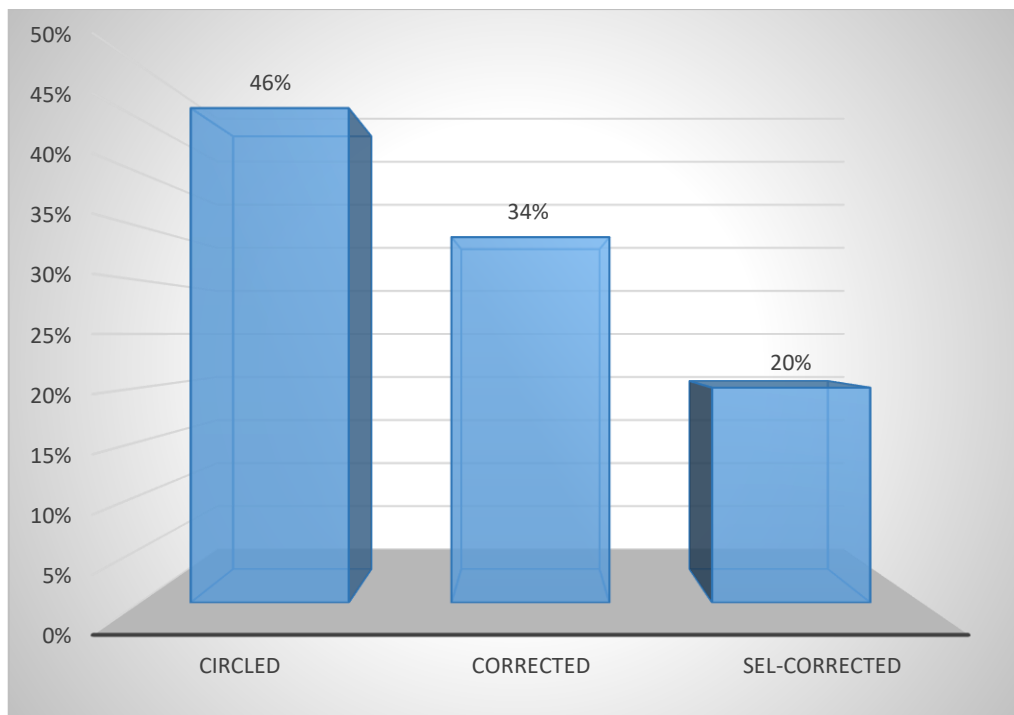
Figure 3.8. Teacher's Way of Correction

- **Question Four: Influence of Handwriting on Teachers' Correction**

As instanced in Figure 3.9., 57 % of the students (20) pointed out that their handwriting influenced the way the teachers corrected the paper. To justify their point of views, they declared that incomprehensible handwriting could lead to an inaccurate correction and, consequently, to a low scoring even though the answers might be correct. They assumed that their teachers would not waste their time reading and understanding it and would rather consider their answers incorrect.

They upheld that good handwriting would be more useful and might even lead to a flexible correction as the teachers would face no difficulty in understanding what was written. The remaining 43 % (15) stipulated the opposite.
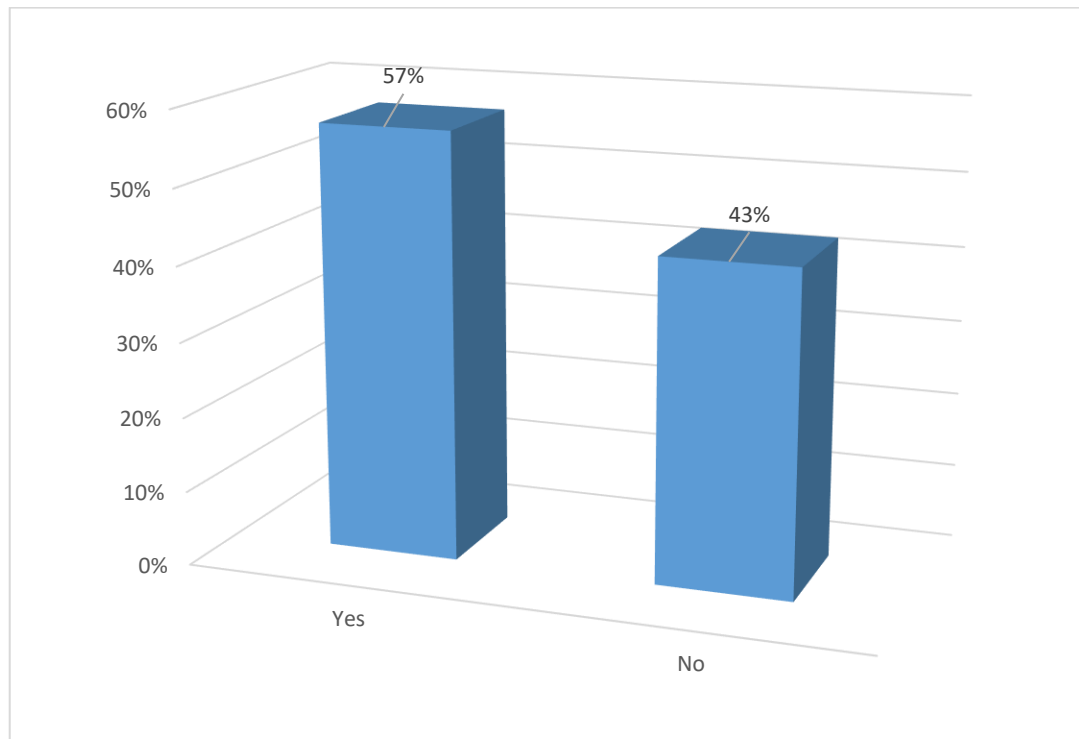
Figure 3.9. Influence of the Handwriting on the Correction

- **Question Five: Feeling during a Traditional Paper-Based Test**

As for students' feelings when the test sheet was given to them the day of the test, 43 % (15) felt stressed, 37% (13) neutral, and only 20% (7) motivated. These findings are highlighted in Figure 3.10.:
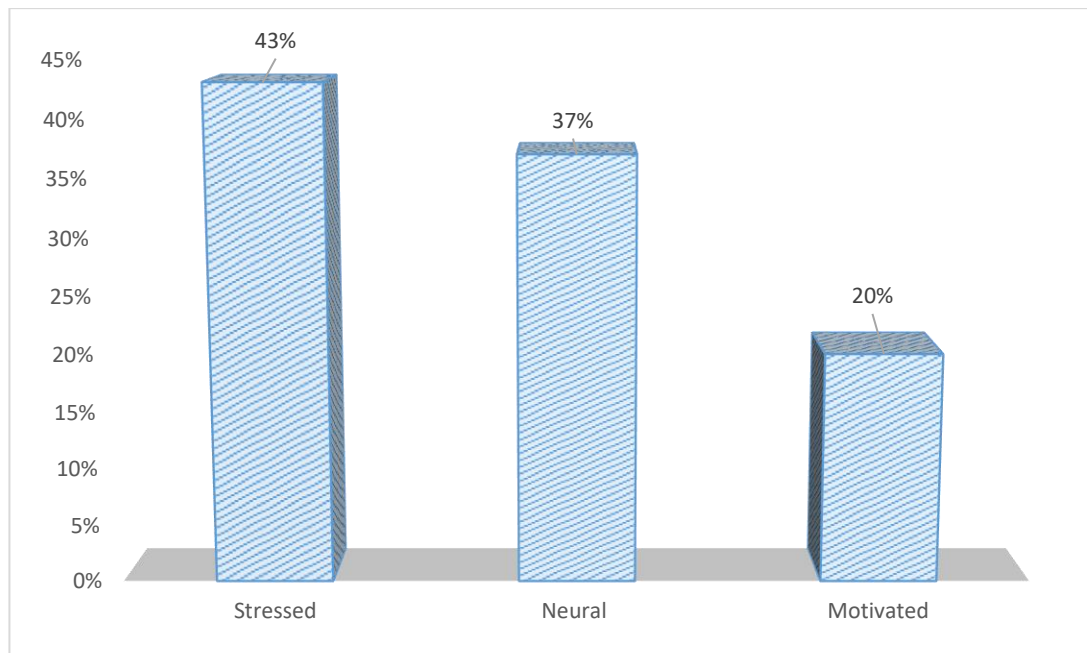
Figure 3.10. Students' Feeling during the Test

- **Question Six: Teachers' Use of Technology**

As for teachers' use of technology to correct their assignments or tests, the totality of respondents (35) pointed out that it was not the case.

- **Question Seven: The Influence of Typing the Assignment on the Computer on Teachers' Way of Correcting**

When interrogated if the teachers' correction would be different if the paper was typed on the computer, 60 % of the learners (21) agreed. They asserted that the presentation of the paper on the computer would be clearer, more comprehensible and organised for the instructors. They stated that it would facilitate their job and be a real time saver for them, especially when correcting students with bad handwriting. Furthermore, they maintained that this type of correction would advocate an objective and fair grading and the correction would be, to some extent, even stricter than the traditional one.

Some even stated that it would help them get good marks. However, 40% (14) were against this idea and claimed that it will make no difference. They upheld that the content, vocabulary, spelling or the grammatical mistakes, and teachers' remarks and grades would be the same in both contexts. They declared that they preferred the

traditional way of assessment in the writing module. The results are demonstrated in Figure 3.11.:
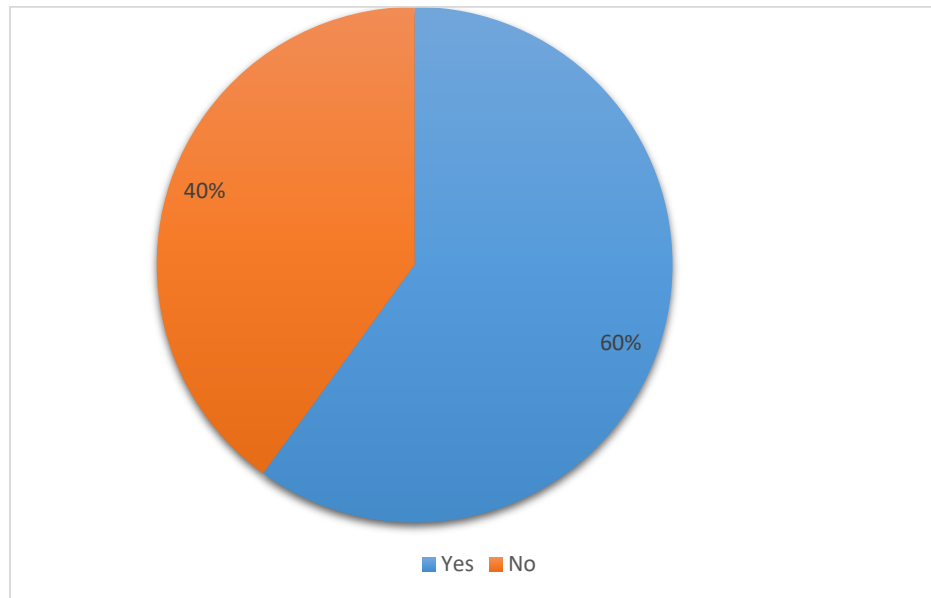
Figure 3.11. Difference between Teacher's Correction

- **Question Eight: Feeling if the Test Sheet Was Given on the Computer**

In case the test sheet was given to them on the computer, 43% of the students (15) maintained that they would feel motivated. They stated that the fact that they were accustomed to such devices in their daily life would create ease, fun, and comfort which were not found in the traditional paper. They supposed that it would suit the needs and interests of the new generation, introduce change in the writing module that would boost their motivation to learn, and encourage them to work harder and overcome the stress created by the traditional sheet. Hence, they were fervent for this idea and promoted its benefits.

Additionally, 34% of the respondents (12) asserted that they would be neutral and that no difference existed between the two. They expressed their scepticism due to the non-safety of computers and the numerous viruses and hacking problems found there. As for the remaining 23% (8), they confessed that the degree of stress felt would be the same in both contexts as it would still be considered a test. They maintained that another cause of stress would be generated because of their non-mastery of computers which would create embarrassment for them. The findings are

supported in Figure 3.12.:
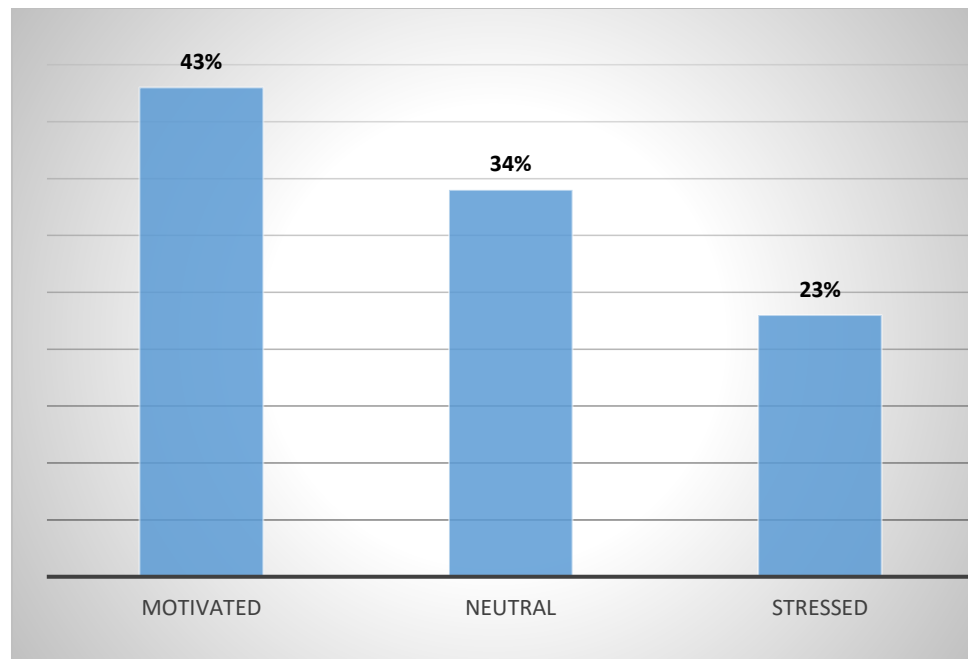
Figure 3.12. Students' Feeling during a Test on the Computer

3.3.3. Wants

Analysing students' wants at the level of assessment was important to provide an assessment that would meet those wants.

- **Question   Nine: Perception of the Current Assessment in the CWE Module**
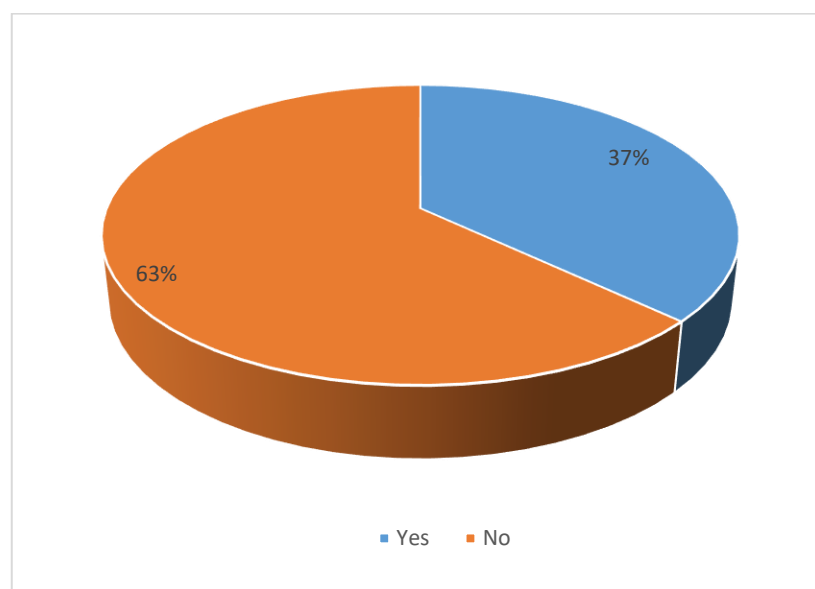
Figure 3.13. Students' Perceptions of the Current Assessment

As instanced in Figure 3.13., 37% of the respondents (13) advocated that they liked the way they were currently being evaluated in the writing module. They considered that it helped them improve their writing abilities which were becoming, throughout time, more academic. They even praised their writing teachers' correction for being fair, appropriate, encouraging, and meticulous since everything was taken into account.

The other 63 % (22), however, expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the assessment in the writing module. They highlighted the insufficiency of practice on paragraph writing and the need for more exercises on sentence structures, coherence, formal writing, mechanics. They also mentioned that they wanted their errors to be diagnosed by themselves and that their teacher would help them remedy them more frequently. They considered this type of evaluation to be insufficient in the module. Some even criticised the short stories that they are required to read for the test for being boring, time-consuming, and difficult to understand.

- **<u>Question ten: Changing the Assessment in the CWE Module</u>**
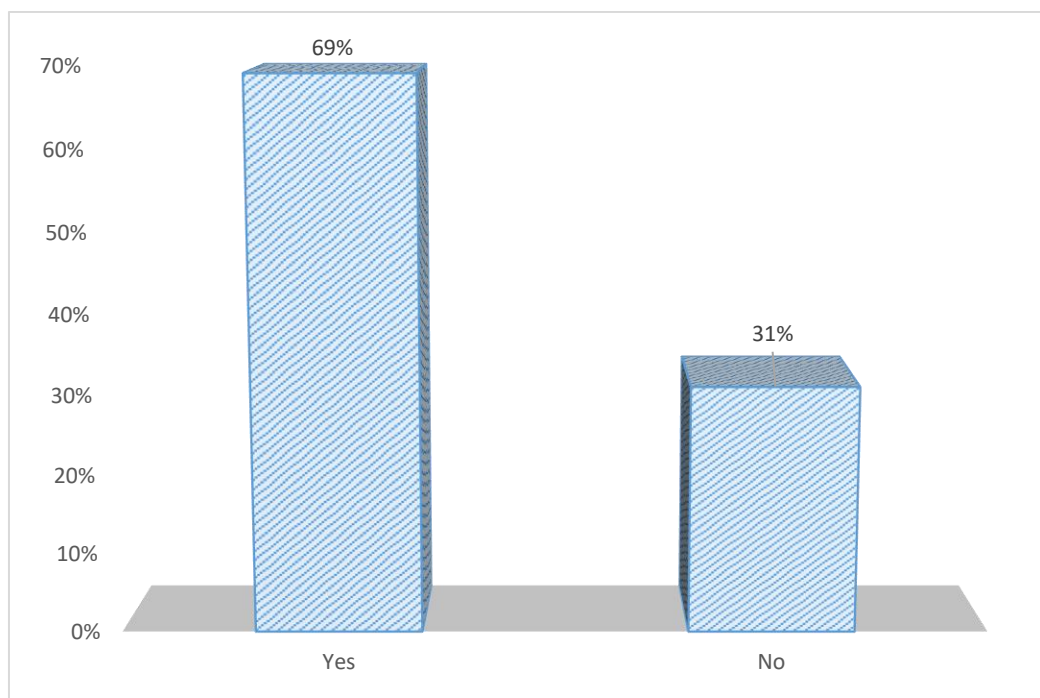
Figure 3.14. Changing the Correction in the Module

Figure 3.14. exhibits that 69% (24) of the students agreed that change should be made at the level of correction in the CWE module, whereas 31% (11) asserted

that no changes should be made. When the ones who wanted change were asked about the type of change they wanted to have, 38% (9) wanted modernisation in the module through ICT, 33% (8) more feedback, and 29% (7) more teacher-learner interaction as displayed in the underneath Figure 3.15.:
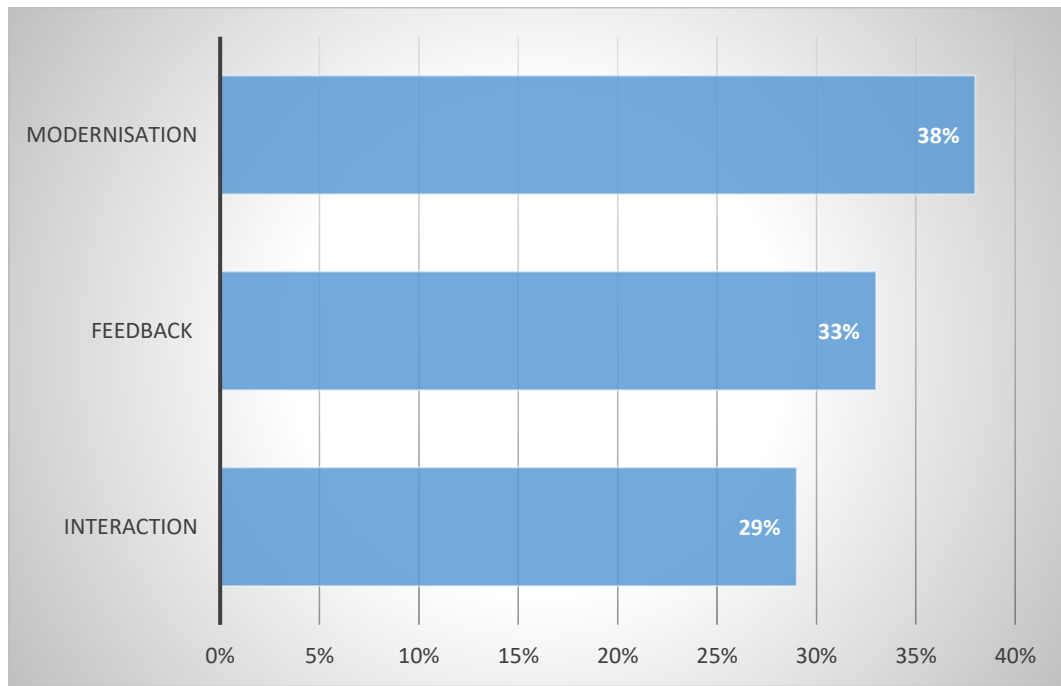
Figure 3.15. The Type of Change Desired in the Module

3.3.4. Attitude

The final part of the needs analysis attempted to disclose the attitude of these informants toward e-assessment.

- ***Question eleven: Knowledge of e-assessment***

When interrogated if they had ever heard about e-assessment before, 51 % of them (18) knew and 49% (17) did not as presented in the forthcoming figure:
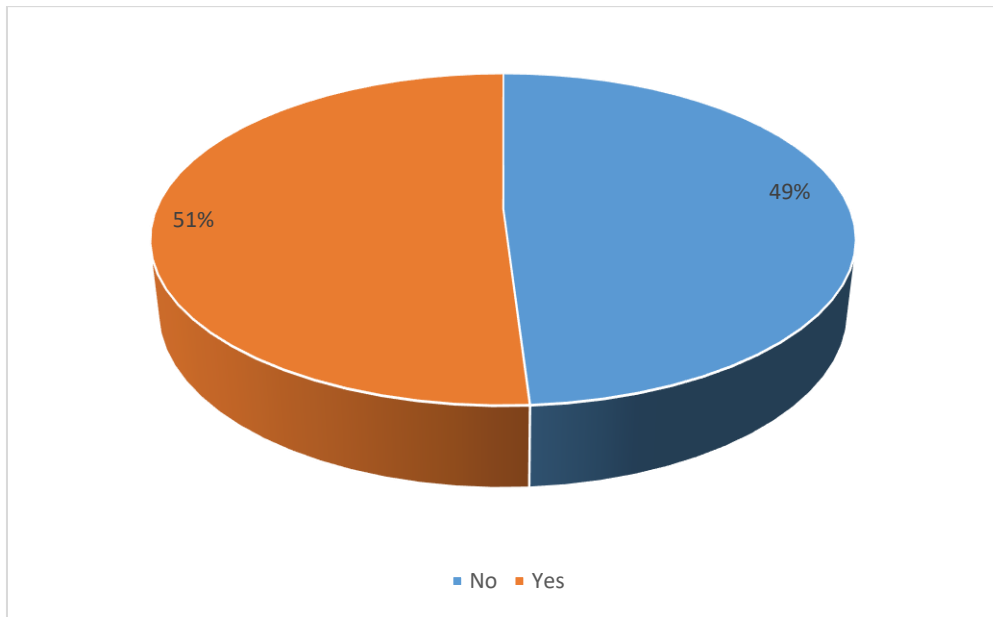
Figure 3.16. Students' Knowledge of E-assessment

- **Question Twelve: Attitude about Introducing E-assessment into the Classroom**
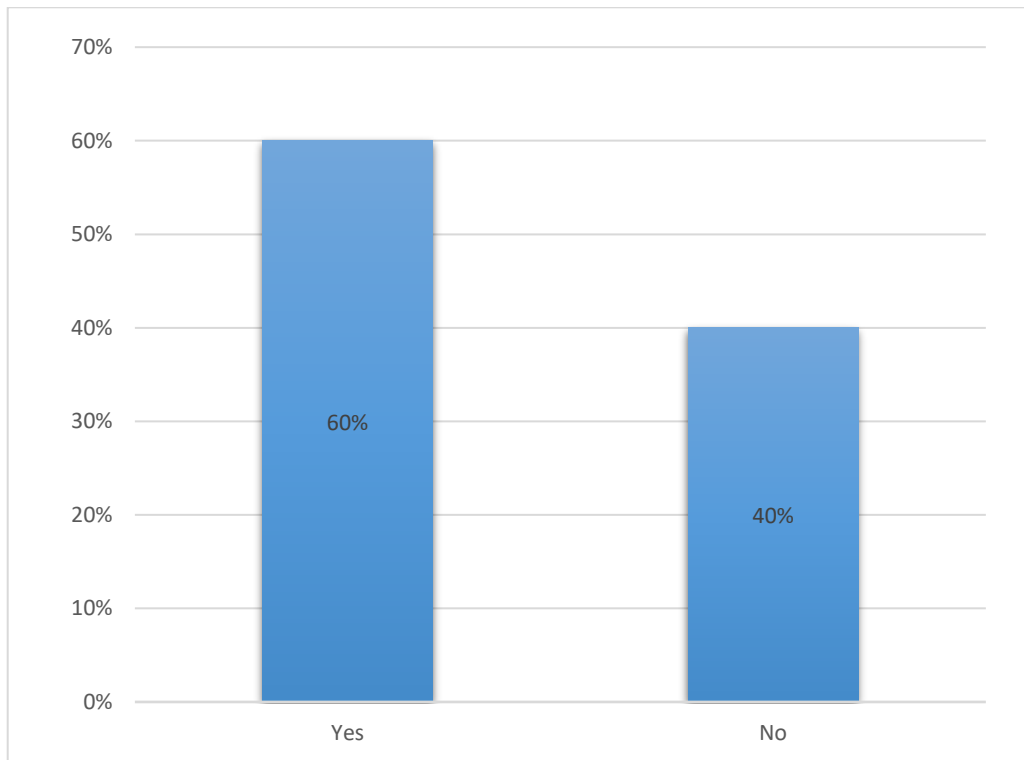
Figure 3.17. Students' Perception of the Use of E-Assessment

Figure 3.17. displays that 60% of the students were in favour of the introduction of e-assessment as a means to evaluate their written assignments in the CWE module. These students considered that e-assessment would be a quicker, cleaner, more useful, organised, comfortable, understandable, beneficial, specific, interesting, motivating and efficient than the traditional correction. In their view, writing on the computer would be much easier for them than writing on the paper as they would only have to click on the letters that are presented on the keyboard, which they were already used to in their daily life without facing any difficulty.

Others claimed that it would help them learn how to write correctly and contribute to their writing development. Some stated that since they were living in the era of technology where technology had become part of their everyday life, making use of them in education was necessary to meet today's needs. Some expressed curiosity and a desire to know more about it. On the contrary, the remaining 40% opposed its introduction and strongly doubted its efficiency. They believed that the high importance of the writing skill required a teacher highlighting the mistakes directly on the paper, and hence, using the computer would be useless.

They asserted that they were unable to picture themselves being evaluated in any other way than on the paper as their entire lives they have been tested like that. They highlighted their comfort when writing on the paper with their hands, and argued that the direct contact between them and the paper helped them improve their writing abilities. They stipulated that the paper had a special charm that could not be found on the computer. They confessed their love to the red pen; it represented a source of motivation that allowed them to have a clear idea of the type of mistakes and learn from them.

Others did not deny the benefit that it could have on their writing abilities, yet they did not see its use in the writing module as a necessity as the present teachers' correction was viewed to be appropriate and did not require any changes. Some were sceptical due to the lack of information about e-assessment. They asserted being unable to make any judgment before having an idea about how it functioned. However, they declared that they would probably show more interest in it if they had

the opportunity to experience it. Subsequent to the analysis of the data obtained from the research instruments, comes their interpretation.

3.4. Interpretation and Discussion of the Main Results

One can interpret from the above-mentioned results that students' handwriting was considered to be a disturbance to some teachers that hindered their comprehension of students' intended meaning from their pieces of writing. Even though some answers might be correct, students' unreadable writing could lead to an incomprehension from the part of teachers, thus, influencing the obtained mark. This problem could be solved if the paper was presented on the computer.

The numerous suggestions proposed by the teachers concerning introducing change at the level of assessment in the CWE module indicated that they were conscious about the problems and lacks that existed, not only regarding the assessment but also in terms of teaching practices. Some were trying to remedy these problems on their own by using certain techniques in the module. They even proposed a set of solutions that in their views would likely improve the existing situation. Yet, as it can be noticed, none of those suggestions implied the reliance on technology.

The findings revealed that teachers were fully aware of the importance and the benefits that e-assessment could provide for their teaching practices with reference to organisation as well as time and effort gain. In fact, they would like to have the paper presented on the computer as a result of their incomprehension of students' handwriting; to gain time when correcting; to introduce modernisation; to have the paper well-organised and clearer, but when it comes to reality, no one was willing to make a change or to make effort for that.

Even though the importance of e-assessment was not denied, they were still sceptical and unwilling to use it in the CWE module. Their scepticism about it prevented the slightest possibility of introducing it in the CWE module or to only attend some training to see how it functions, an idea systematically refused. They strongly maintained that the use of e-assessment in the CWE module was inconceivable, inappropriate, and even, useless. They judged it to be ineffective before even having recourse to it or trying to know more about it. They claimed that

the writing module must be assessed traditionally without any reliance on the computer.

They preferred the existing situation which did not involve computers and which they considered to be the most effective way of teaching writing and the only way that could help students improve. They argued that the non-readiness of the current environment at the Department of English at Tlemcen University to technology and the lack of adequate materials rendered them unable to picture themselves using it or any other way than the traditional assessment.

The results indicated that technology has never been associated with the CWE module, not least as a means to improve students' writing abilities. Moreover, teachers had a negative image of e-assessment which they tend to associate with laziness and cheating. They have biased assumptions and a fear of change. They systematically advocated that it would not be possible before even finding a way of introducing it. They are conservative in their teaching practices. They preferred sticking to old habits and to what they had been using for ages, which they claimed to be the most effective way of assessing students, rather than introducing some change.

They underestimated the usefulness of technology and dismissed it directly. This negative attitude might be related to a lack of sufficient knowledge about how e-assessment functions or a misconception concerning the computer-based evaluation. The insufficiency of knowledge was further confirmed by the fact that many teachers had never heard about e-assessment before. It could also be associated with computer anxiety which is caused by the lack of mastery of computers (Cazan & Indreica, 2014).

In addition to that, the computer-based evaluation is time-consuming. This was considered a real burden for them as they mentioned that they were already overloaded between their administrative and teaching time, and they did not see the usefulness of taking from their efforts, time, and energy to invest themselves to learn more about it. It means that teachers were opponent to change and did not like it. This reluctance to change could be explained by the fact that e-assessment evoked a

personal investment and efforts that they were unwilling to provide.

Throughout the findings, teachers' collaboration was emphasised on. In other words, if all first-year CWE teachers agreed to work collaboratively with one another to use e-assessment tools to assess students, it would create a sort of modernisation in the CWE module that would likely lead to fruitful results. Besides, the results had put forward the crucial role that teachers could play in introducing change through promoting e-assessment and the benefits that educational platforms could have. Hence, if it was ever to be introduced, it would be the result of their personal initiation and devotion because they are the ones who can encourage and push students to use innovation; otherwise, none of the students would be willing to.

Unlike the results of the interview with teachers, which showed that the majority of teachers expressed a considerable reluctance to change, the ones of the students displayed two divergent opinions, one being slightly more dominant than the other. Indeed, more than half of the informants were in favour of e-assessment, whereas, the other half were against it. The portion of students who were fervent for e-assessment claimed for change as they did not like the state of the actual situation at the level of assessment, and wanted to be introduced to innovation in the CWE module through the inception of ICT in their evaluation.

For them, this change was associated with fun and motivation to learn and an assessment illustrative of the needs of this new generation of digital natives. E-assessment would also help them to be aware of their mistakes in a very organised and clear way. On the opposite, the traditional assessment was associated with boredom and a source of stress. They had expressed curiosity in this computer-based assessment and were willing to use it if ever it was to be scheduled at the Department. They draw attention to its benefits without even having recourse to it. They had analysed the situation and were aware that some lacks were present in the module. Thus, they asserted that a sort of modernisation, through an assessment that would be indicative of today's needs, might enhance the existing situation. They were even eager for it.

Although one may have some biased assumptions and generally see the students as a tech-loving generation, who may automatically like the introduction of technology into the EFL classroom and be fervent for change, reality demonstrated the reverse. In effect, a large number of students preferred old habits and their teacher's way of correcting. They got used to certain habits in the assessment and did not want to change anything about it. In other terms, not only teachers were reluctant to change, but also a considerable percentage of students who had shown the same scepticism as their elders.

This portion of learners was more conservative and liked the way things were going on. Such a reaction might be linked to computer anxiety, or what Wogu et al. (2014) refer to as a "phobia" to any Moodle-associated instruction or evaluation, which is, according to Cazan and Indreica (2014), caused by a non-mastery of computers. Indeed, some of the respondents admitted being afraid of using computers and non-mastering technological devices. The findings of the present work also bring to the fore Bali's (2014) claims as to the behaviour of instructors and learners towards technology use.

Bali (2014) highlights the unconsciousness of teachers regarding the change that incorporating it into their teaching practices would bring to society. She stipulates that this idea is refused and not even imagined by them because of their lack of online teaching experience. According to her, it would create a sort of discomfort felt not only by them, but also by their students as it was expressed in the findings of the current work. Based on the interpretation of the interview and the questionnaire, the researcher identified the needs at the level of assessment in the CWE module.

3.5. Needs Identification

Table 3.3. summarises the target and learning needs that were reached from the adopted model of needs analysis. It should be noted that Tahir's (2011) interpretation of the model of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) was added to it. If one links their model to the CWE module, it could be said that for the target needs, the necessities exhibited the language aspects that had to be learned in the module. The lacks were the insufficiencies that were present when assessing students' papers. As

far as the wants were concerned, they corresponded to what the students desired to be changed, removed, added in the assessment.

Regarding the learning needs, the psychological and cognitive needs were related to learners' psychology towards the assessment in the writing module. They had to do with their motivation, reaction, and feeling about the existing needs in the environment in which the assessment was carried out. The sociological needs represented the relationship and the interaction that first-year students needed with their writing teacher. They were social responses in the form of feedback and correction. The methodological needs were the pedagogical needs of the students at the level of the assessment in relation to the type of assessment administered for them as well as the skills, strategies and techniques employed when they were evaluated. The findings are illustrated in Table 3.3.:

Table 3.3. Needs' Identification

	Necessities	**Lacks**	**Wants**
Target Needs	Students need to: -Master the different types of sentences starting from simple structures to more complex ones as well as the mechanics of the English language. -Write an organised, unified and coherent paragraph. -Differentiate between the organisation and the content of the different types of paragraphs. -Identify the grammatical features and the vocabulary used in the descriptive, narrative and argumentative paragraphs -Write formally and accurately in the target language. - Write effectively in an academic context.	Students need to have: -More practice and activities in the writing module about paragraph writing, sentence structure, punctuation, and grammatical items related to a given type of paragraph. -More teaching sessions.	Students want change and to be introduced to new technologies in the writing module. They want: -An assessment that would be representative of today's generation and meet their interest. -A funnier and a more comfortable and attractive assessment. -A clear and organised paper easy to be corrected -A clear picture of their writing difficulties and the type of mistakes they make so as to remedy them. -To develop sentence structure, grammatical knowledge, formal writing style, and coherence in their writing. -To be able to master the English language norms, structures, and mechanics. -To write correctly without spelling and grammatical mistakes.
Learning Needs	**Psychological and Cognitive Needs** -Students need motivation to learn through introducing innovation and ICTs in the writing module -They need a less stressful assessment than the one created by the traditional paper-based assessment.	**Sociological Needs** -Students need more individual teacher-learner interaction and detailed feedback from the part of the teacher so that to improve their writing abilities and be aware of their mistakes.	**Methodological Needs** Students need: -Formative assessment. -Remedial work in the module. -Self-assessment in order to reflect on their mistakes.

The needs analysis revealed that students lacked writing sessions, practice, feedback, teacher-learner interaction, self-assessment, remedial work, formative assessment, and diagnosis. They also needed to have a relaxing, motivating, attractive, and up-to-date 21ˢᵗ-century evaluation that would help them, accurately, be aware of their mistakes and writing problems in an organised manner. These results seem to support the implementation of e-assessment in the writing module, and enabled the researcher to opt for Moodle for numerous reasons.

As it is explained in chapter one (1.3.2.2.), Moodle offers large features and resources. Therefore, it is assumed that making use of those features would meet the above-cited needs. In fact, Moodle would offer more writing sessions, practice, feedback, teacher-students' interaction, diagnosis, remedial work, and track of students' progress. Moreover, being one type of e-assessment tools (Crisp, 2011), it was believed that it would suit the implementation of e-assessment in the sense that it would facilitate the design, submission, and the correction of the tests for teachers. Indeed, it gives them the possibility to design the test and the scoring rubric, manage all the features of the test, correct, and grade the students only with one click. Thus, it would save their time.

Furthermore, students mentioned their needs for innovation in the module. In addition to that, Tlemcen University, like a variety of other Algerian universities, is using Moodle. Therefore, the researcher preferred working with an institutional platform, which is officially used by the university, rather than any random platform because it was supposed to have more credibility. For all these reasons, Moodle was considered to be an adequate choice for achieving the aims of the study. It will allow students to vividly experience e-assessment, and be immersed in an e-learning environment.

It is worth mentioning that the choice of the sampling design and method employed in the selection of the students within the case study, which was probability sampling design with a simple random sampling (See 2.4.1.2.), would justify that the findings obtained from one sample could be denotative of the target situation. In other words, the needs that were identified were supposed to be the same ones shared by

all the target population including the students within the experimental study.

3.6. Conclusion

Chapter three has analysed and interpreted the results of the questionnaire and the interview as the first step towards answering the research questions, i.e. the attitude of instructors and students about the use of the computer-based evaluation in the writing module. The results indicated an overall reluctance and scepticism from the part of teachers. They had biased assumptions about its efficiency and a preference for conventional methods. On the contrary, the majority of learners viewed it positively and praised it. Yet, some of them expressed quite the same scepticism as their teachers. Besides, this chapter has divulged the findings of the needs analysis that was undertaken which allowed finding out the learning objectives of the syllabus as well as the lacks at the level of assessment.

The learning objectives advocated the important grammatical aspects that were taken into account in students' writing, and which will be used to design the tests of the experiment. The lacks revealed the insufficiency of the writing sessions, feedback, practice, teacher/learner interaction, and a desire for innovation in the module. Consequently, Moodle, as an e-assessment tool, was selected as a probable solution that would meet those lacks due to the numerous advantages it possesses from psychological, pedagogical, and sociological considerations. The appropriateness of Moodle in meeting students' needs was only the first step of the implementation of the platform. The next step will consist of making use of the gathered data in order to design the experimental tests, and experimenting concretely the effect of e-assessment on students' writing. This will form the general layout of the succeeding chapter.

Chapter Four

Experimentation Procedure

4.1. Introduction

On the bases of the findings of the preceding chapter, it was found that the use of technology was one of the needs that was lacking in the writing module at the level of assessment. Living in an era of technology, the reliance on a technology-based assessment has become a key element in the educational sector. Being never experimented in the writing module for first-year EFL students at Tlemcen University, the fourth chapter has been designed to assess the outcomes of such an evaluation on students' writing abilities for the sake of answering the third and fourth research questions.

First, a model was selected to design the tests of the experiment that would match the learning objectives that were identified. Then, the chapter provides a detailed description of that model before venturing oneself in explaining the reasons behind its selection. After that, it highlights the process of adaptation. Next, it points out the assessment criteria and the scoring rubric of the tests. Moreover, it discloses the way the tests were implemented on the e-assessment tool. At last, it analyses and interprets the results obtained from the tests as well as the post-experiment questionnaire. Thus, it could be said that chapter four, which is the final step of the empirical work, represents a follow up of the previous one due to their interrelatedness.

4.2. Description of the ECL Model

In order to test concretely the effect of the e-assessment approach on students' writing and design the tests of the experiment, a series of steps were followed. The first one being already achieved in the previous chapter (identification of the learning objectives of the module), the second one consisted of finding the appropriate model of tests. For this purpose, the ECL exam was selected. The latter represents a multilingual international examination system that promotes a variety of languages including Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, and Spanish. As a result, it is administered in 29 examination centres worldwide (2018).

This examination dates back to 1992 when it was established in London as a starting point. Because the goal was to standardise, unify, and validate the examination so as to be recognised all over Europe, it was then further spread to the rest of the European Union (EU) thanks to the ERASMUS and lingua schemes. For this reason, experts in the field have for a long period of time proved its validity and reliability by investigating it on target groups. Since every aspect of the exam was taken into account for the design of the tests of the experiment, the upcoming data, which were gathered from its official website (visit www.eclexam.eu), were considered to be worth mentioning. They were available for the public for free and were allowed to be used for evaluative purposes.

4.2.1. Levels of the Model

The ECL exam consists of four levels, 'A2, B1, B2, and C1', which refer, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), respectively to the elementary (way stage), the intermediate (threshold), the upper-intermediate (vantage), and the advanced level (effective operational proficiency). The A2 level test takers are supposed to produce and understand basic structures of every day's context, and ask questions while using the target language. Testees in B1 are assumed to understand and use the target language within real-life situations such as applying for a job in the target country, using the target language at work with colleagues, or comprehending the news in the target language.

For the B2 level, candidates are able to learn more complex structures and features. They easily understand foreigners' speech and the literature of the target language, and can even envisage studying in the language of the target country. In C1 level, the testees are able to perform anything native speakers do without any difficulties comprising: writing, speaking, reading, studying, working, conducting research work as well as broadening historical and cultural understanding of the target language.

4.2.2. Topics of the Model

The ECL Exam proposes an array of topics that move from daily life situations to more complex concerns. In fact, the degree of difficulty of the topic increases

according to the level of the exam. It shifts from basic every day's routinised situations in the A2 and B1 levels such as shopping, travelling, housekeeping, ordering food, keeping in contact with friends and relatives, studying, working, practising sport, celebrating, furnishing the house, and living abroad; to ideological, ethical, political, environmental, cultural, and socio-economic problems that are occurring in the European societies in the B2 and C1 levels.

4.2.3. Parts of the Model

The ECL Exam is divided into two parts: the oral exam which encompasses oral and listening comprehension, and the written exam which implies reading and written communication. Each part deals with a specific skill, assesses different elements, contains two tasks, is being assigned 25 points, and requires the candidates to obtain at least 40% in order to pass. Oral communication tests the candidates' speaking capabilities via a guided conversation engaged between two test-takers on a proposed topic plus a verbal description of a provided picture.

Listening comprehension evaluates their abilities to comprehend an authentic conversation held between native speakers on a given topic. Reading comprehension assesses their aptitude to understand the meaning conveyed from an authentic text. Written communication judges their capacities to express their opinions in a written format about certain subjects via writing an email, job applications, reports, or letters; or by writing paragraphs or essays by answering a series of questions.

4.2.4. Assessment of the Model

The assessment for both listening and reading communication is similar as both of them involve completing missing words in sentences, choosing the correct answer from a list of options, finding the missing part of a text, matching answers, completing sentences, or answering questions related to the heard conversation or the read piece of writing. However, in the writing and speaking sections, the candidates are assessed upon a set of evaluation criteria which are: formal accuracy, written/oral accuracy, vocabulary, style, and communicative effectiveness (See Appendix G). 0 to 5 five points are accredited for each.

The researcher interpreted those criteria based on the data provided on the website. It was concluded that formal accuracy deals with the morpho-syntactic aspects of language. These items constitute the students' grammatical knowledge (linguistic competence in the Chomskyan sense). Written accuracy focuses on how accurate students are in their writing by adequately using punctuation, paragraphing, and paragraph construction, and avoiding spelling mistakes. Oral accuracy, on the reverse, tests the extent to which candidates are accurate in their speech in terms of correct pronunciation, fluency, and tone while avoiding pronunciation mistakes.

Vocabulary deals with the expected knowledge of semantics and the activation or selection of the appropriate words to be displayed when writing or speaking about a given topic. Style mainly embraces pragmatics and some sociolinguistic aspects through applying a specific register that matches the task. It means that the testees should address their writing to a particular audience they have in mind, respect a specific context, and achieve a targeted aim. Communicative Effectiveness refers to the content of the candidates' piece of writing or speech, in the sense that it should reflect how the task is effectively performed, meaningful, and relevant to the assignment.

Since the core of the present study is writing, the researcher focused only on the writing section of the exam to design the tests of the experiment. The ECL exam was selected as a model for the design of the tests of the experiment because its evaluation criteria, as far as the writing section was concerned, matched the objectives of the first-year CWE syllabus for various reasons. Accuracy is included in the syllabus as many grammatical aspects are being taught such as types of sentences (simple, compound, complex and compound sentences); clauses (adverbial and relative clauses); tenses (past simple, past perfect, past continuous, and past perfect continuous); subject-verb agreement, in addition to punctuation (punctuation marks and comma splice, capitalisation); and spelling.

Vocabulary is also incorporated because students are tested on their abilities to activate the range of lexical items appropriate for the descriptive, narrative, and argumentative paragraphs through using adjectives, figurative language, transition

words, conjunctions, or adverbs according to the requirement of the type of paragraph. Although first-year CWE teachers argued that style was not really emphasised on in the first-two years in the CWE module but rather in the third one, some notions of formalities in writing are initiated like the use of a formal language, the avoidance of contractions and abbreviations, and other informal elements. Hence, one can say that it is partially included in the syllabus.

Communicative effectiveness is implied in the syllabus as they are tested on their efficiency to complete the task. For instance, they have to use sensory details when describing or narrating a story and rely on arguments to defend their opinions. They are also evaluated upon the clarity and the relevance of the content so that they produce unified and coherent paragraphs. Moreover, the ECL exam was opted for because it was a standardised test. Hence, it was assumed that a test that has been used for years and is still being used all over Europe is a valid and reliable choice of selection.

Despite the fact that the ECL exam served most of the aims of the CWE syllabus, covered the majority of the areas that the researcher was interested in, and met almost all students' needs, some modifications were necessary. The third step of the design comprised its adaptation so that it accurately fits the concerns of the CWE courses. It should be noted that the adaptation of the model, upon which the topics, assessment criteria, and scoring rubric of the tests were designed, was validated and revised by experienced teachers before any implementation on the platform.

4.3. Adaptation of the Model

The ECL exam was first adopted, and then, adapted through contextualising it according to the aims of CWE syllabus. The adaptation boiled around mainly the criteria and the topics of the ECL exam.

4.3.1. Adaptation of the Criteria of the Model

As part of the adaptation, the previously mentioned data of the syllabus (See 2.2.3.) and its learning objectives that were identified in Table 3.1. were joined with the above-stated evaluation criteria. The researcher categorised and classified the

features of each unit of the syllabus within those criteria. Therefore, formal accuracy and written accuracy were combined only into accuracy as the main goal behind this criterion is accuracy in students' writing. It was believed that joining the two into only one would be appropriate since they are linked and serve one main goal which is how accurate students are in their writing. Punctuation and spelling included in written accuracy were joined with accuracy as well. The organisation was added in the assessment criteria of the tests because the first-year CWE syllabus mainly focuses on the mastery of paragraph organisation. Thus, construction and paragraphing were added to it. The style was not included as a separate criterion but was rather added within vocabulary under the heading of formal language.

4.3.2. Adaptation of the Topics and Level of the Model

The topics provided by the ECL exam were also adapted as they did not go along with what the researcher was seeking. Hence, other themes were added which dealt with daily life situations or personal problems that were assumed to be experienced by every student at least once in his/her life or observed in society. The aim was to give them the chance to express themselves freely about real-life issues according to their own vision. If these topics were to be included in the topics of ECL, they would be placed under the heading 'societal issues and personal experiences'.

To ensure the content validity of the tests, the proposed topics were shown and discussed with experienced first-year CWE teachers in order to guarantee their content appropriateness. Those instructors also advised the researcher to choose the A2 level of the ECL exam instead of the B1 level because they considered their learners to be low-intermediate. Additionally, this was further reinforced by the fact that they were still in at the beginning of their university studies and would be taught grammatical rules and writing features from scratch. Thus, it was preferable to select the A2 level, start with the easiest and the most basic elements in writing concerning sentence and paragraph structure, and deal with more complex elements later on. For this sake, the topics were chosen deliberately because they were believed to be easy, general, and within the reach of students' current level.

Each topic of the test had a specific objective. As for the pre-test, students had to write a descriptive paragraph concerning the most valuable object that they possessed. The objective of this question was to assess students' abilities to describe the shape of that object with vivid descriptive and sensory details so that to demonstrate its emotional value. Regarding the tests of the treatment, two different topics were provided: one dealing with the sixth unit and the other one with the fifth unit. The topic related to the sixth unit consisted of writing a narrative paragraph about the day that they could not forget, be that happy, scary, funny, sad, or strange. This question was seeking to uncover students' abilities to portray the happiness, sadness, humorousness, or awkwardness that they emotionally felt on that memorable day.

Since the second treatment test and the post-test depended on the fifth unit of the syllabus, students in those two tests had to write an opinion paragraph. However, two different topics were provided for each. While the first one concerned students' opinions on initiating children to use technology at a very young age, the second one was about the influence of social media on the Algerians' way of life. Those questions intended to measure their abilities to state their position vis-à-vis such debatable topics with strong and persuasive arguments in the form of facts, personal experiences, or explanations (See Appendix G). Once the model was selected and adapted, the fourth step of the design involved the elaboration of the assessment criteria of the tests.

4.4. Assessment Criteria of the Tests

Fastré et al. (2010) consider assessment criteria as indicators of the important aspects of students' learning that are taken into account. They are "the features of a student's performance on an activity which will be used as the basis for judging a student's performance" (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.36). As for the present context, they were in the form of tables reserved for each unit of the syllabus that represented all the aspects through which the researcher evaluated students' paragraph writing. They were her proper elaboration and interpretation of the objectives of the syllabus that she concluded from the needs analysis, the teaching experience, and the

description of Savage and Shafiei (2007). They were composed of the criteria which were previously discussed (organisation, accuracy, vocabulary, and communicative effectiveness), a set of features assessed, and the goals and the learning objectives of the tests.

The features assessed represented what CWE teachers highlighted in the sixth question of the interview concerning the most important elements that they focused on when correcting their students' writing performance, and what students mentioned in the first two questions of the questionnaire about the requirements of the modules and the elements of writing that they needed to develop. They implied: grammar, mechanics, paragraph organisation, content, unity, coherence, and word choice. The aim was to assess them based on what was taken into consideration by the teachers. The criteria were ranked by order of importance starting from the basic to the most complex aspects, i.e. from organisation and accuracy up to vocabulary and content.

The goals are, according to Brown et al. (1997), general assertions that are intended to be achieved from the course. They imply students' abilities, target needs, and the requirement of the target situation. In the current context, they represented the general aims of the tests that were supposed to be achieved by the students when it would be finished, and which were related to the skills assessed in the course. The learning objectives of the tests were the learning objectives of the syllabus that were identified through the needs analysis (See Table 3.1.), and which were expected to be performed by the learners. For each test, a set of assessment criteria were elaborated.

4.4.1. Assessment Criteria of the Pre-Test

The assessment criteria of the pre-test combined Units One and Two of the CWE syllabus. This was also due to the fact that the second unit was a sort of a continuation of the first one. Moreover, students had already dealt with the organisation and characteristics of a basic paragraph in Unit One. They had only to apply it on the descriptive paragraph with regards to its respective purpose, content, and features like it is shown in Table 4.1.:

Table 4.1. Assessment Criteria for the Pre-test

Criteria	Features Assessed	Tests' Goals	Learning Objectives
Organisation	-Paragraph organisation	By the end of the tests, students will be able to write an organised descriptive paragraph.	When describing, students will be able to write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.
Accuracy	-Sentence structure -Grammar -Mechanics (punctuation and spelling)	By the end of the tests, students will be able to: -use different types of sentences when writing a descriptive paragraph -use appropriate grammar. -respect punctuation, capitalisation and spelling.	When describing, students will be able to: -employ simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences as well as relative clauses effectively while avoiding fragments. -employ pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, and parallel structures correctly. -use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -avoid spelling mistakes.
Vocabulary	-Word choice	By the end of the tests, students will be able to: -use the vocabulary appropriate for description. -use literal and figurative language.	When describing, students will be able to: -use figurative language (metaphors and similes), adjectives, transitional words, prepositions, and conjunctions effectively in order to indicate time, place, or manner. -use a specific and clear language.
Communicative Effectiveness	-Content -Clarity of ideas -Unity -Coherence -Task completion	By the end of the tests, students will be able to: - describe with relevance and sufficient details. -communicate effectively and meaningfully their ideas. - write a unified and coherent descriptive paragraph.	When describing, students will be able to: - provide a vivid and clear description. - use sensory details effectively in order to address the readers' senses and create an image in their mind. -relate all their sentences to the topic. -follow a logical sequence of ideas by using an appropriate pattern of organisation (time, space, or importance). -provide at least five supporting sentences.

Regarding the organisation, students should be able to write an effective topic sentence that introduces the described person, object, or place; effective supporting sentences that provide descriptive details about the elements in concern; and an effective concluding sentence that restates the topic sentence and gives their opinion about what is described. Accuracy comprises their abilities to use different types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences (with an emphasis on relative clauses) effectively when writing a descriptive paragraph while avoiding fragments. They should be able to use pronouns, singular and plural nouns,

articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, and other grammar-related items correctly.

They should also be able to avoid spelling mistakes, and provide adequate punctuation and capitalisation without run-on sentences or comma splices. As far as vocabulary was concerned, students should be able to employ adjectives, prepositions, conjunctions, metaphors, and similes effectively when describing a person, an object, or a place. This vocabulary should indicate the location of a place or object and their position in space, or the way the described person behaved or felt. They should also use a specific rather than a general language because being precise as much as possible is a key element in the description.

Communicative effectiveness involved their abilities to attract the readers' attention with a vivid and clear description. This would render the described element fascinating, and help the readers to visualise or feel what the writer wanted to convey or illustrate. To achieve these aims, they should be able to depict in detail a sight, smell, taste, sound, feeling, touch, texture, shape, size, material, or colour when describing the physical setting of a place; the appearance, personality traits, or behaviour of a given person; or the shape of an object for the sake of addressing the readers' senses.

They should be able to relate all the sentences of the paragraph to only one main idea, which is provided in the topic sentence, without deviating from it. Moreover, they should follow a logical and chronological sequence of ideas, and demonstrate a physical movement of the described object when moving from one descriptive element to the other. They should also take into account the length of the task. Although the randomised pre-test-post-test control group experimental design that was used in the present work implies only a pre-test and a post-test like its name indicates, the researcher also elaborated on the assessment criteria of the treatment tests. This will provide a better understanding of what is required of learners in those units of the syllabus.

4.4.2. Assessment Criteria of the Treatment

The assessment criteria of the treatment embodied two tests that dealt with two different units of the CWE syllabus: Unit Six and Five. This section will tackle only the assessment criteria of the sixth unit as demonstrated in Table 4.2. The ones of the fifth unit will be discussed in 4.4.3.

Table 4.2. Assessment Criteria for the Treatment (Unit 6)

Criteria	Features Assessed	Tests' Goals	Learning Objectives
Organisation	-Paragraph organisation	By the end of the test, students will be able to write an organised narrative paragraph.	When narrating, students will be able to write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.
Accuracy	-Sentence structure -Grammar -Mechanics (punctuation and spelling)	By the end of the test students will be able to: -use different types of sentences when writing a narrative paragraph -use an appropriate grammar. -respect punctuation, capitalisation and spelling.	When narrating, students will be able to: -employ simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences and adverbial clauses effectively while avoiding fragments. -employ the past simple and past continuous, pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, and parallel structures correctly. -use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -avoid spelling mistakes.
Vocabulary	-Word choice	By the end of the test, students will be able to use the vocabulary appropriate for narration.	When narrating, students will be able to: -use a clear and accurate language. -employ conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs, and transitional words and phrases effectively in order to indicate time, place, or manner.
Communicative Effectiveness	-Content -Clarity of ideas -Unity -Coherence -Task completion	By the end of the test, students will be able to: -narrate with relevance and sufficient details. -write a unified and coherent narrative paragraph. -communicate their ideas effectively and meaningfully.	When narrating, students will be able to: -provide sufficient and clear narrative details by using sensory and emotional details effectively. -help readers visualise the characters/ setting of the described scene in order to understand what happened in the story. -relate all their sentences to the topic. -follow a logical sequence of events through using an appropriate pattern of organisation (time order). -provide at least five supporting sentences.

Table 4.2. denotes that for the organisation, students should be able to write an effective topic sentence that introduces the story; effective supporting sentences that portray the events included in the story with details, and an effective concluding sentence that restates what happened in the story and shows their feelings about it. Accuracy indicates that students should be able to use different types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences (with an emphasis on adverbial clauses) effectively when writing a narrative paragraph while avoiding fragments.

They should be able to use pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, parallel structures, and other grammar-related items correctly. They should also be able to avoid spelling mistakes and provide adequate punctuation and capitalisation without run-on sentences or comma splices. Vocabulary encloses that students should be able to employ conjunctions, prepositions, and transitional words and phrases effectively in order to indicate the time and the place in which the event/story happened, and describe the way the characters involved in the story behaved and felt.

Communicative effectiveness entails that students should be able to narrate about their stories or personal experiences through illustrating, with details, the emotions felt in the story be them joy, fun, sadness, or regret. The aim behind that is to create some suspense, excitement, or empathy for the readers. This would help them visualise the setting, understand the context and the aim behind the story, feel the described scene, and be involved emotionally. They should also indicate the moral or the learning experience concluded from the story, relate all the sentences of the paragraph to only one main idea, which is provided in the topic sentence, without deviating from it, and follow a logical and chronological order of events with a degree of importance when moving from one event to the other. They should also take into consideration the required length of the task.

4.4.3. Assessment Criteria of the Post-Test

Since the second treatment test and the post-test were concerned with Unit Five, the researcher decided to join both of them in Table 4.3.:

Table 4.3. Assessment Criteria for the Second Treatment Test and the Post-Test (Unit 5)

Criteria	Features Assessed	Tests' Goals	Learning Outcomes
Organisation	-Paragraph organisation	By the end of the test, students will be able to write an organised argumentative paragraph.	When arguing, students will be able to write an effective topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.
Accuracy	-Sentence structure -Grammar -Mechanics (punctuation and spelling)	By the end of the test, students will be able to: -use different types of sentences when writing an argumentative paragraph. -use an appropriate grammar -respect punctuation, capitalisation and spelling.	When arguing, students will be able to: -employ simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences effectively while avoiding fragments. -employ tenses, pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, and parallel structures correctly. -use appropriate punctuation and capitalisation while avoiding run-on sentences and comma splices. -avoid spelling mistakes.
Vocabulary	-Word choice	By the end of the test, students will be able to use the vocabulary appropriate for argumentation.	When arguing, students will be able to: -use a clear and accurate language -employ conjunctions, prepositions, and transitional words and phrases effectively.
Communicative Effectiveness	-Content -Clarity of ideas -Unity -Coherence -Task completion	By the end of the test, students will be able to: -write a unified and coherent argumentative paragraph. - argue with relevant reasons. -communicate their opinions effectively and meaningfully. - write a unified and coherent argumentative paragraph. -respect the length of the required task.	When arguing, students will be able to: -give at least three strong reasons to defend their opinions with strong arguments in order to convince the readers to agree with them by using fact, personal experience, or explanations. -relate all their sentences to the topic. -follow a logical sequence of ideas by using an appropriate pattern of organisation (order of importance). -provide at least five supporting sentences.

Table 4.3. indicates that regarding the organisation, students should be able to write an effective topic sentence that states their positions in relation to the topic under discussion; effective supporting sentences that support their opinions about the topic in question with facts or explanations, and an effective concluding sentence that restates their opinions. Concerning accuracy, students should be able to use different

types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences effectively when writing an argumentative paragraph while avoiding fragments. They should be able to use pronouns, singular and plural nouns, articles, tenses, subject-verb agreement, infinitives, gerunds, and other grammar-related items correctly.

They should also be able to avoid spelling mistakes and provide adequate punctuation and capitalisation without run-on sentences or comma splice. When dealing with vocabulary, students should be able to employ an effective, clear and accurate vocabulary when arguing via using, for instance, the existential 'there' and the possessive adjective 'their' to introduce facts, the preposition 'because of' and the conjunction 'because' to provide an argument, and transitional words and phrases to connect between sentences.

Communicative effectiveness suggests that students should be able to give strong reasons to defend their opinions about a debatable phenomenon or a societal problem so as to show their position vis-a-vis the topic under discussion. They should, somehow, exaggerate and dramatise in order to persuade the readers to agree with them. They should be able to relate all the sentences of the paragraph to only one main idea which is provided in the topic sentence without deviating from it. Moreover, they should follow a logical order of ideas in terms of the degree of importance when moving from one argument to the other, and respect the length of the task. The fifth step of the design was the elaboration of the scoring rubric.

4.5. Scoring Rubric of the Tests

The scoring rubric was used to grade students' papers in the tests. It was composed of the fourth criteria previously explained, a detailed description for each criterion that relates to a particular level of achievement, and a given grade accredited to each level. It was designed based on the goals and the learning objectives of the tests and by combining several rubrics taken from a variety of sources which were: Heaton's Scoring Composition (1988, p.146), Buzzetto and Alade's Writing Assessment Rubric (2006, p.262), Hyland's Rubric for the First Draft of a University Expository Essay assignment (2003, p.210) and Analytic Scoring Rubric (p.243). These rubrics were used because they contained the evaluation criteria dealt with in

the test like content, mechanics, organisation, language, structure and other related elements. As for the type of scoring rubric, an analytic one was employed. The rubric was in the form of a table as shown below:

Table 4.4. Tests' Scoring Rubric

Level of Achievement / Criteria	Unacceptable 0-1	Developing 1-2	Satisfactory 2-3	Exemplary 3-5	Scoring
Organisation	-Lack of organisation -Absence of the topic sentence -No supporting sentences are offered. -Absence of the concluding sentence.	- An attempt at organising the paragraph is shown, but it is still unorganised. -The topic sentence does not introduce the topic. - Some supporting sentences are offered but do not support the topic. - Concluding sentence does not restate the topic sentence.	-Acceptable topic sentence; however, some improvement is needed. -Supporting sentences are acceptably mentioned, but need some improvement. -Acceptable concluding sentence; however, some improvement is needed.	-Well-organised paragraph - Well-formulated topic sentence that introduces the topic. -Supporting sentences are mentioned effectively with details/ explanations /examples. -Well-formulated concluding sentence that restates the topic.	**0-5**
Accuracy	-Sentences are neither well-structured nor varied. - Various grammatical errors. -Misuse of capitalisation and punctuation. -Various fragments/run-on sentences/ comma splices are found. -Various spelling mistakes are found.	- An attempt at structuring and varying sentences is shown, but they are still unorganised. -Some fragments -Some problems with grammar. -Some errors of capitalisation and punctuation. -Some run-on sentences/ comma splices are found. -Some spelling mistakes.	-Most of the sentences of the paragraph are varied and acceptably structured but need some improvement. -Few fragments - Acceptable grammar; but improvement is needed. -Acceptable use of capitalisation and punctuation, but improvement is needed. - Few run-on sentences/ comma splices are found. -Only few spelling mistakes.	- All the sentences of the paragraph are varied and well-structured. -Absence of fragments -No grammatical errors. - Effective use of punctuation and capitalisation. - Absence of run-on sentences/comma splice. -Mistake free.	**0-5**
Vocabulary	- Vocabulary is inappropriate/narrow/ vague /unclear/irrelevant for the topic.	-Some problems with vocabulary.	-Acceptable vocabulary but improvement and/or adjustment needed.	- Vocabulary is effective/ accurate/comprehensible / fully appropriate for the topic.	**0-5**
Communicative Effectiveness	-Task poorly handled. -Supporting details are limited/unclear/irrelevant and/or unrelated to the topic and/or illogically sequenced. - The readers are confused/ lost/ and have difficulties following the ideas.	-Task fairly handled. -An attempt at ordering the supporting details is shown, but they are still irrelevant/ unclear /unrelated to the topic. -The readers do not totally follow the flow of ideas and are still confused.	-Task acceptably handled. -Content contains all the necessary elements; however, improvement is needed to maximise its effectiveness. -Supporting details are acceptably mentioned/related to the required purpose/ logically sequenced but need some improvement. -The readers are less confused/ lost and start to follow the ideas.	-Task effectively handled. -Supporting details are sufficient, clear, relevant, properly developed, related to the topic, and logically sequenced. -The readers are attracted/excited/affected and can easily concentrate/visualise/ follow the flow of ideas.	**0-5**

Table 4.4. demonstrates that the descriptive remarks gradually moved from one level to the other according to students' writing abilities, i.e. from the weakest level up to the strongest. The unacceptable level indicated poor writing abilities represented in the absence of organisation, the non-structure of sentences, the irrelevance of the vocabulary, and the inaccuracy of the ideas. The developing level showed students' attempt at reorganising their paragraphs and making them clearer; however, problems were still present. The satisfactory level demonstrated an acceptable writing performance, but that needs further improvement. The exemplary level, as its name stipulates, meant that the paragraph was efficient and free from any mistakes be them orthographical, grammatical, lexical, or semantical.

Each level was assigned a given grade while respecting the scoring system of the ECL exam which was from zero to five points. Students were supposed to get five points on each criterion so as to reach 20. Their writing abilities determined the obtained mark so that the higher the writing performance was, the higher the grade would be and vice-versa. The remarks stated in the table reflected students' writing level and acted as feedback that was written on their paragraphs so that to assess their writing. It was intended to portray the types of errors produced by the students, help them learn from their mistakes and not repeat them, and categorise the strengths and weaknesses of their pieces of writing.

The aim of grading students was to quantitatively evaluate the presence of any improvement in the grade of the experimental group after receiving the treatment in comparison with the control group. Indeed, improvement of the grade would indicate the efficiency of the adopted assessment method. After selecting the model of the test to be used, adapting it to the present context, and designing the tests (topics, assessment criteria, and scoring rubric), the last step was their implementation of the Moodle platform.

4.6. Implementation of the Treatment on the Platform

To implement the tests of the treatment on the Moodle platform, which is accessible through the link https://elearn.univ-tlemcen.dz/, numerous procedures were followed starting with the creation of the course. It should be noted that the

courses of the different faculties of Tlemcen University are categorised in the general layout of the platform. Each faculty embodies specific lectures reserved for the concerned discipline. Since the ones of the English Department were under the heading, 'English courses', a course was created in that category named, 'Comprehension and Written Expression', along with its abbreviation (CWE).

The layout of the platform, which is displayed in Figure 4.1., was taken from the website during the academic year 2018/2019. It is worth highlighting that this layout was modified in 2020 when the Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research obliged teachers to use the platform to deliver their courses during the lockdown. Since the experiment was carried out before, any changes that have occurred after 2019 were not taken into account in the present work.
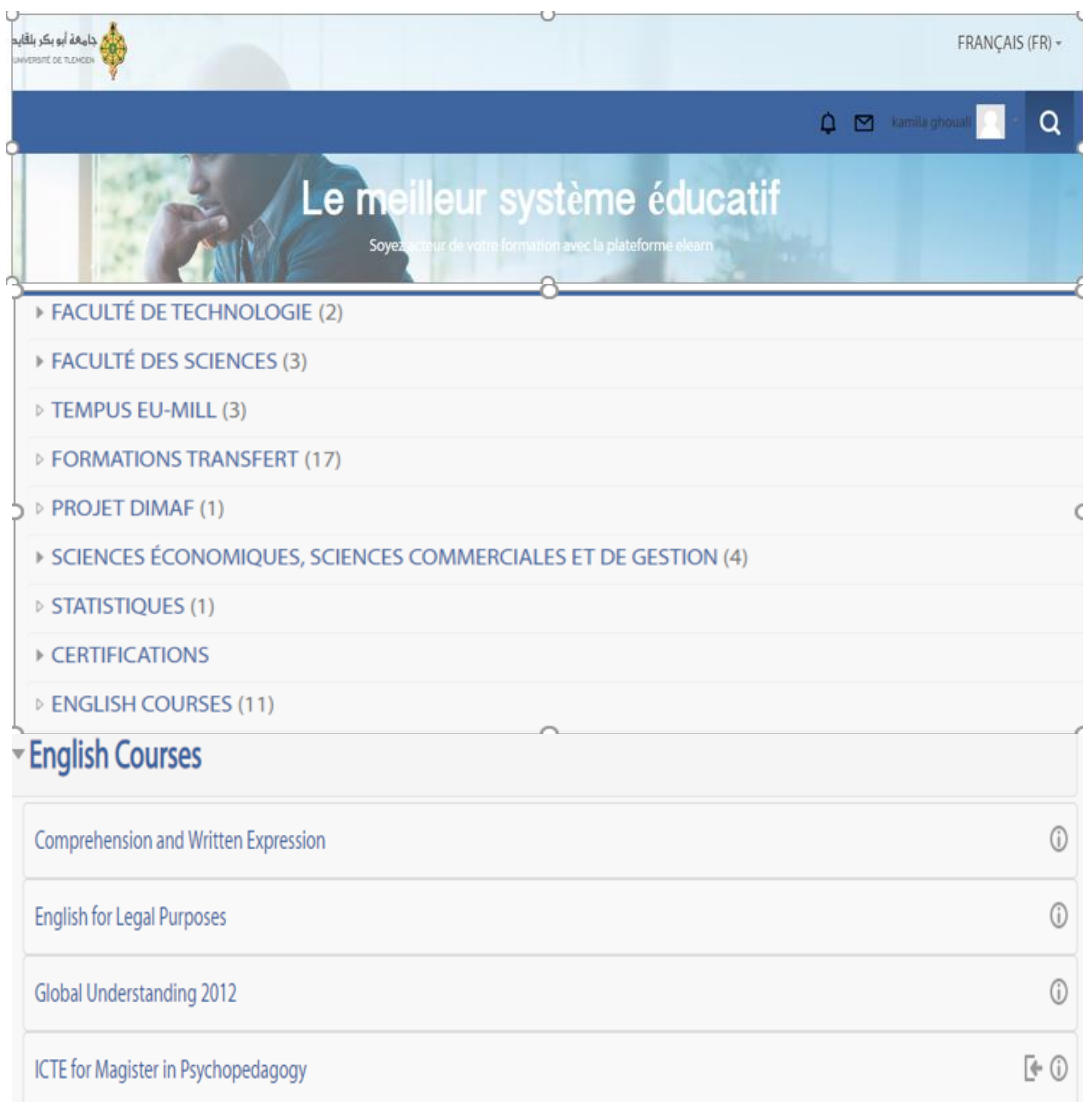
Figure 4.1. Moodle Layout in the Website of Tlemcen University

After that, an account was created for the researcher who was assigned as the administrator of the course. It means that she was the only person allowed to edit, manage the settings, correct, grade, and control all what was going on in the platform. It is worth mentioning that all the courses come empty in the beginning. They are arranged, designed, and organised by the teacher according to one's convenience. Thus, a general description of the course was displayed in the presentation that allowed them to have an overview of its content.
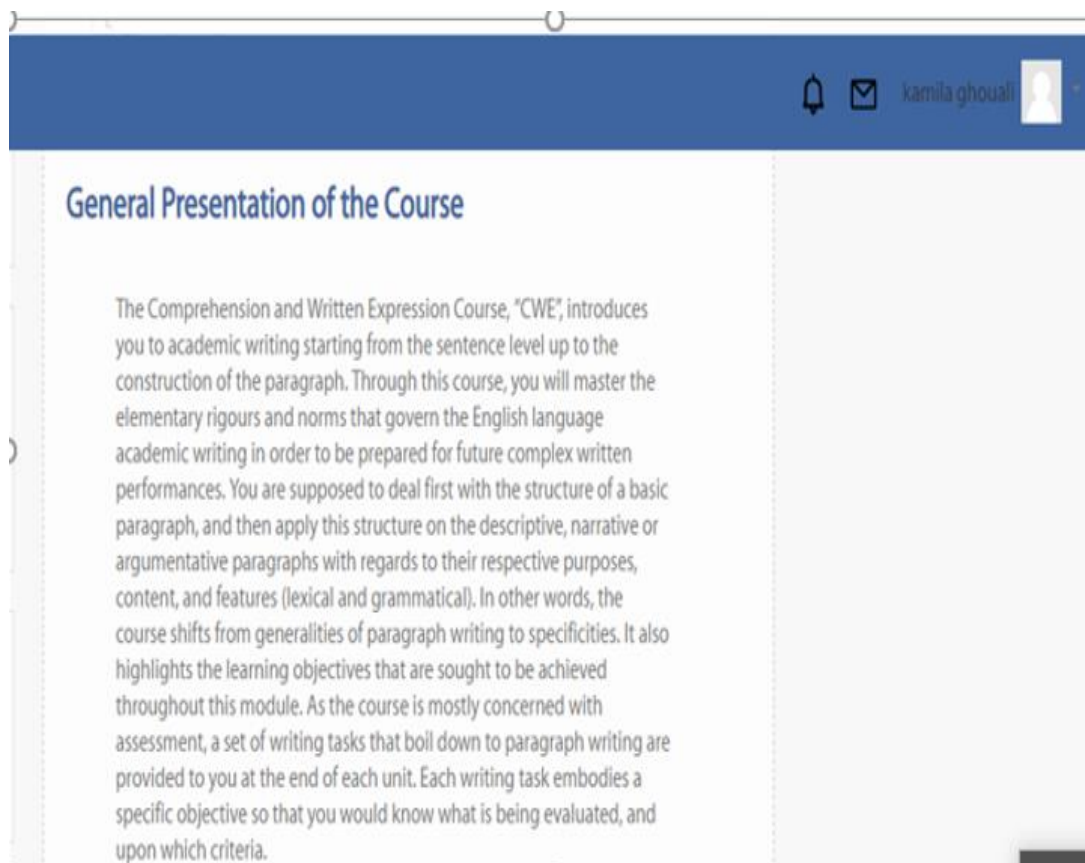
Figure 4.2. General Description of the Course

When they clicked on it, a detailed description regarding the goals, learning objectives, and the skills assessed from the course were shown. The purpose behind it was to help them know precisely what they were assessed about, and what was expected from them. Unit three and four were used to refer to the sixth and the fifth unit of the syllabus. In addition to that, a conceptual map in the form of a diagram was provided to them that summarised the content of the four units (See Appendix G). The course was composed of different sections; each one of them was related to a specific unit of the syllabus along with its description. Since the experiment on the

platform comprised only the Sixth and Fifth units, only those sections were included. Within them, there was the option of adding an activity or resource in the form of assignments, multiple-choice questions, quizzes, chats, forums, feedback, surveys, files, lessons, books, glossaries, wikis, and so forth.
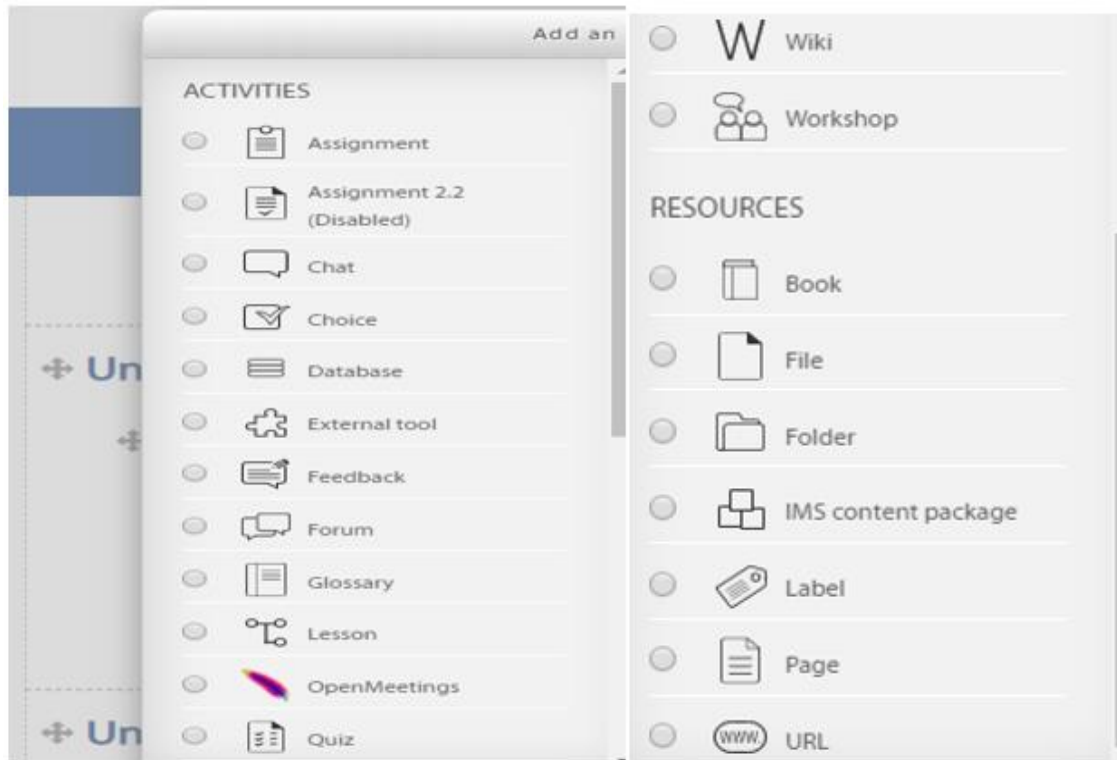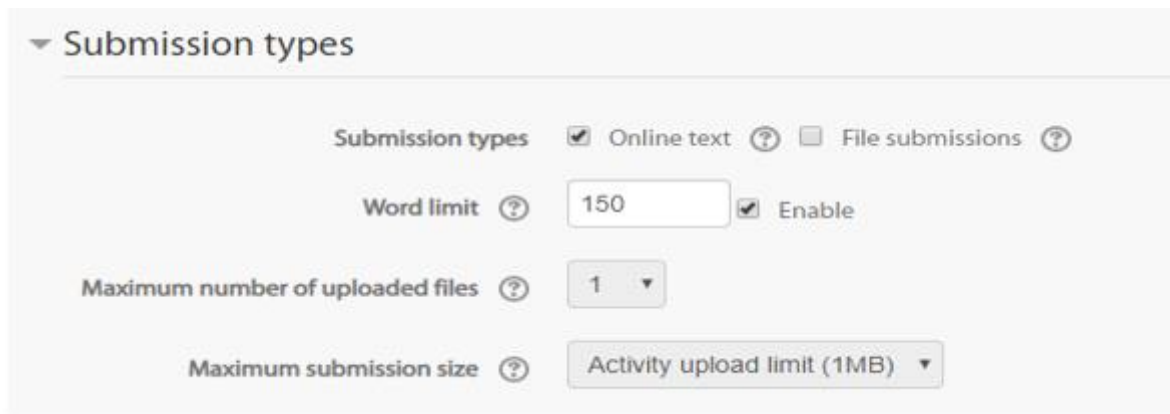
Figure 4.3. Features of Moodle

Assignments were chosen as they comprised all the features of a test design that the researcher was looking for such as comments, feedback, scoring rubric, and grading. Henceforth, they were deemed appropriate for the experiment to carry out assessment-related tasks. They were first given a name, and then, the previously mentioned topics were added within the description. After that, their characteristics were settled, i.e. when they would be accessible to the students, the number of words not to be exceeded, and the type of students' submission which can be either through an online text or a file. Accordingly, they submitted their paragraphs directly on the

platform through an online text.
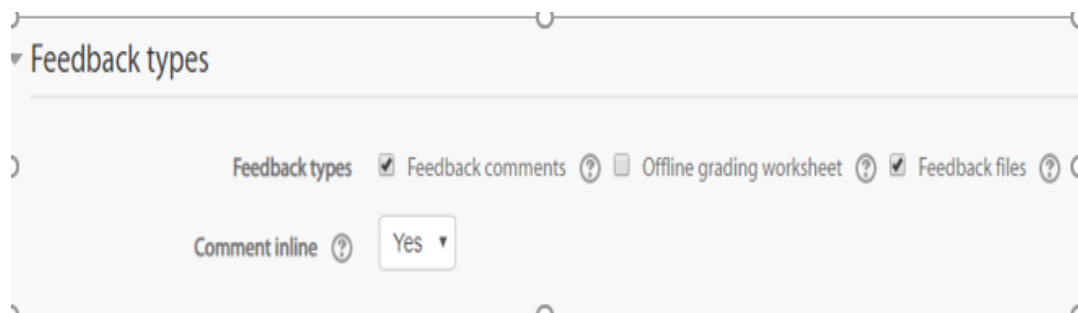
Figure 4.4. Submission Types

The setting also allowed the researcher to include how to correct students'
paragraphs, i.e. either by means of feedback comments or feedback files. Both
methods were used.

Figure 4.5. Feedback Types

As for the type of grading, there was the possibility to settle the highest mark
to be given, the grade to pass, and the grading methods which can be either by a rubric
or a simple manual grading. In the present context, a rubric was opted for.

Figure 4.6. Grading Types

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The platform provides an empty model of a rubric that contains assessment criteria, their description, and the number of points to be given for each criterion. The researcher had only to fill in it with the already designed rubric (See 4.5.). Once the tests were implemented, learners had to login into the Moodle platform by writing down their usernames and passwords, go directly to the test, and submit their pieces of writing online.

Figure 4.7. Paper for the Online Text

It is worth mentioning that the automatic spell check was disabled. Students were writing on the platform on a white blank page like they would have done on a regular paper without having the computer correcting their spelling or grammatical mistakes. The researcher wanted to identify their writing issues, and have a true picture of their writing abilities as if they were passing a test in the classroom. Additionally, they were able to edit their paragraph before its final submission like the draft given in the classroom.
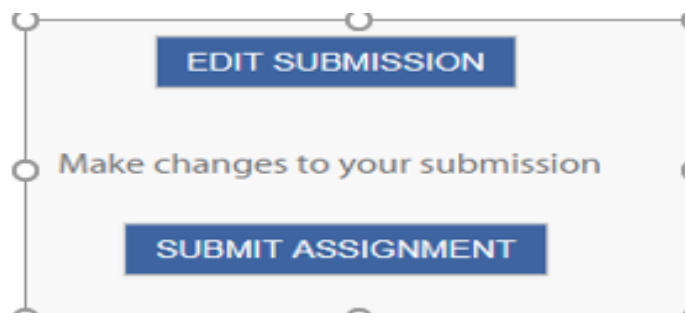
Figure 4.8. Edition/Submission of the Assignment

Moreover, to guarantee that their performance was their own, they had to click on a consent agreement provided by the platform that would prove that their pieces of writing were not plagiarised from another source.
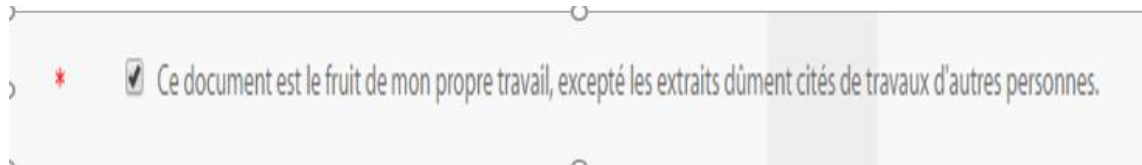
Figure 4.9. Consent Agreement

Being the administrator of the course, their paragraphs were sent back to the researcher for correction directly after they submitted their online texts. The paragraphs were transferred in Word in order to highlight their mistakes in red along with a comment next to it to indicate its type, for instance: grammatical, mechanical, or semantical. Moreover, some explanations regarding the mistake made were pointed out. Samples of students' paragraphs are shown in Appendix G.
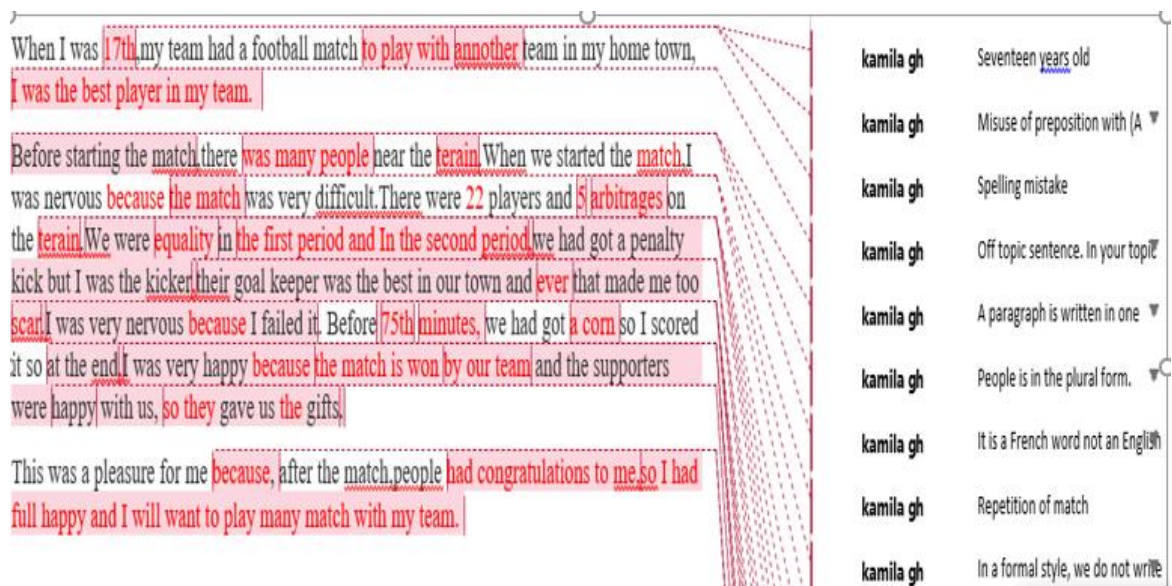
Figure 4.10 Sample of the Correction

These mistakes were attached in a downloadable feedback file that they could find when they would login into the platform. They could keep it with them and go back to it whenever they wanted.
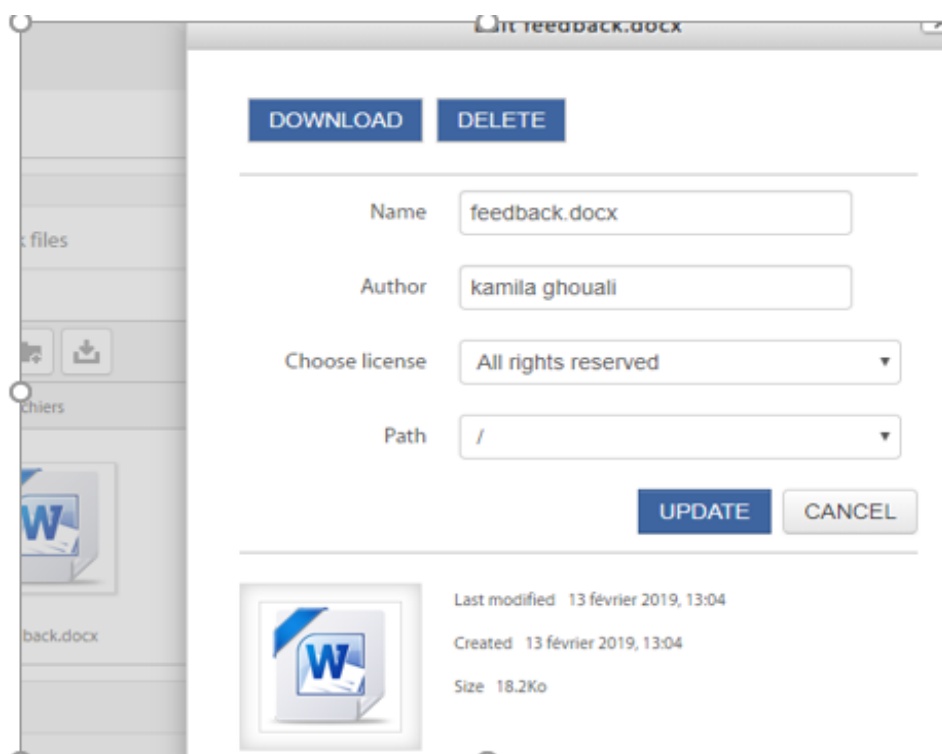
Figure 4.11. Feedback File

In addition to that, feedback comments were provided in the form of remarks, pieces of advice, and some tips within the correction. These comments were intended to help students reflect on their wiring problems which they might not be aware of. Those remarks would, eventually, prevent the mistakes from becoming fossilised throughout time, and would help learners improve their writing abilities.
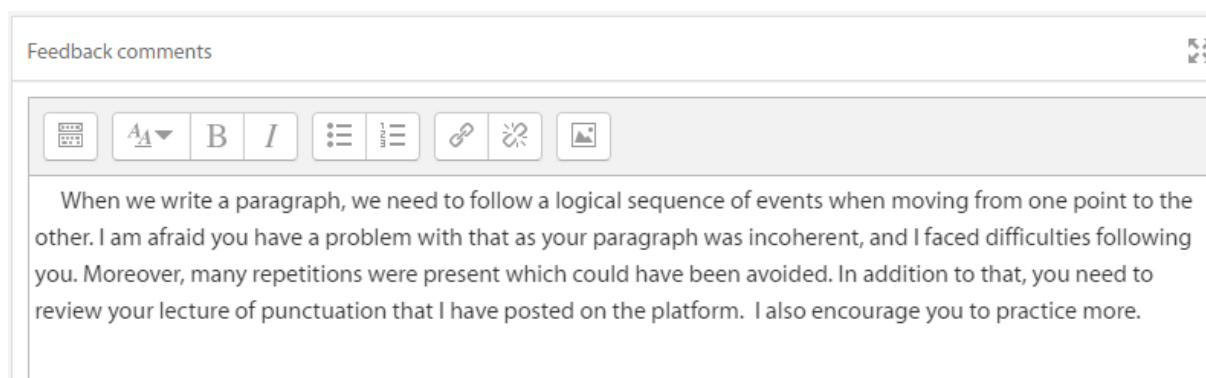
Figure 4.12. Sample of Feedback Comments

Students were later on asked to rewrite their pieces of writing by correcting those mistakes and taking into consideration the researcher's feedback, in that way, opening the door for self-assessment. After that, the paragraphs were graded

according to the criteria of the scoring rubric (See Appendix G). The researcher had only to click on the description of the concerned criteria that would match students' performance and give the mentioned mark. Among the writing problems that students faced, the researcher identified problems with punctuation, grammar, and style. Accordingly, lectures were posted as remedial work.

Those lectures implied, for instance, informal versus formal writing; prepositions, punctuation, and capitalisation; tenses; articles; avoidance of repetition; parallel structure; and other elements of writing. They were in PDF form, Word documents, pictures, PowerPoint presentations, or books about academic writing and grammar that students had only to click on to download. These lectures sought to help students overcome their mistakes on their own through practice and revision, and initiate them to formal writing.

Transition2   Oxford Grammar Book

Preposition of Time, Place and Movement   Oxford Grammar Practice

Preposition (picture)   Academic Writing

Preposition2   Introduction to Academic Writing

Preposition3   Academic Writing2

Narrative Paragraph Checklist   Grammar Sheets

Punctuation and Capitalization   Articles (an, a, the)

Comma Splices, Run-ons, and Fragments   This, that, those, these

Parallel Structure   Subject/Verb Agreement

How to Avoid Repetition in Writing?

Formal versus Infromal Writing Style

Figure 4.13. The Posted Lectures

This method allowed students to work at home following their own pace and was trying to boost autonomous learning. However, during the upcoming tests, those lectures were hidden and reopened after the test was finished to avoid cheating. Additionally, further explanations were provided in the classroom by the researcher, who was their teacher, on the nature of their mistakes. Subsequent to the design and

the implementation of the tests, this research work moves to the obtained results.

4.7. Results

This section starts with the analysis of the tests of the experiment which would prove or not the efficiency of the proposed e-assessment approach. Then, it tackles the findings of the post-experiment questionnaire to disclose the respondents' perceptions of such an experience.

4.7.1. Experimental Tests Results

As far as the tests of the experimental study were concerned, data were analysed quantitatively using SPSS IBM 20.0. The underpinning reason behind choosing SPSS for the analysis of the tests was to prove the existence of any relationship or statistical significance between the means of two groups by relying on the descriptive and inferential statistics that the software offers. To undertake a statistical analysis, the statistical literature (Antonius, 2003; Warner, 2008; Elliott & Woodward, 2014; Urdan, 2005; Einspruch, 2005; Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Shojaei & Fatemi, 2016) suggests following a number of steps. First, one needs to undertake a normality test, then test the homogeneity of variances, and finally, find out a statistical significance between the mean score of the experimental and control group after administering the treatment.

4.7.1.1. Normality Test Results

According to the above-cited authors, the normality test is a prerequisite for any statistical analysis. It advocates the normal distribution of the samples from the population they belong to, and determines the statistical test to be used. Accordingly, two types exist: the parametric and the nonparametric. The parametric tests suppose that the samples under the study have certain characteristics, and claim that they are normally distributed. These tests are viewed by scholars to be more powerful and to yield reliable data in comparison with the nonparametric ones. The nonparametric tests, on the contrary, make no supposition about the samples and do not assert their normal distribution. They are, thus, seen to be less powerful (Antonius, 2003; Warner, 2008; Elliott & Woodward, 2014; Urdan, 2005; Einspruch, 2005; Ghasemi &

Zahediasl, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Shojaei & Fatemi, 2016).

There are several normality tests, yet in the view of those authors, the most widely used ones are the Shapiro-Wilk and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. It should be noted that they are included within the statistical descriptive of SPSS. The reference that determines the normality of the samples is a statistical significance, named the probability value (p-value). It is under the abbreviation 'sig.' in SPSS with an estimated significant alpha level of .05 (α=.05). A null hypothesis (H_0) should be formulated which states that the two samples are normally distributed, and an alternative hypothesis (H_1) which stipulates the reverse.

Simply put, if the p-value exceeds .05 $(p > .05)$, then one concludes that the samples are normally distributed; the parametric tests will be carried on, and the null-hypothesis will fail to be rejected. A p-value inferior to .05 $(p < .05)$ would be indicative of the non-normality of the distribution. Henceforth, the nonparametric tests would be used instead of the parametric ones, and the null hypothesis would be rejected (Antonius, 2003; Warner, 2008; Elliott & Woodward, 2014; Urdan, 2005; Einspruch, 2005; Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Shojaei & Fatemi, 2016).

As far as the current research work was concerned, the researcher created two variables in SPSS that were respectively named pre and post. They were under two columns that gathered the marks of the two groups in the pre and the post-test. To distinguish between them, they were coded one and two. Group one stood for the experimental group and group two for the control group. For the sake of finding out if both of them were normally distributed or not and decide about the type of tests to use, the Kolmogorov-Sminirov and the Shapiro-Wilk tests were employed as illustrated in Table 4.5. Null and alternative hypotheses were articulated as follows:

H_0: The two groups are normally distributed $(p > .05)$

H_1: The two groups are not normally distributed $(p < .05)$

Table 4.5. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre	,109	42	,200[*]	,952	42	,076
Post	,102	42	,200[*]	,963	42	,184

Table 4.5 advocates that the p-value in the Kolmogorov-Sminirov for the pre and the post-test was the same (sig.=,200). As for the Shapiro-Wilk test, it was (sig.=,076) in the pre-test and (sig.=,184) in the post-test. Since the p-value in both tests exceeded .05, the null hypothesis that advocated the normality of the distribution of data failed to be rejected. In other words, the sample distribution of the two groups was normal. This gave the researcher permission to conduct parametric tests. The second step of the analysis consisted of choosing the adequate parametric test. Hsu (2005) cites a variety of parametric tests: ANOVA, MANOVA, ANCOVA, regression, correlation, and t-tests.

After studying the aims of each one of them separately and relating them to the objectives of the experiment, the t-test was deemed the adequate choice. T-test, also called student test, serves to find out a significant difference between the mean scores of one sample which is being compared with a specific known population, i.e. one-sample t-test (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 2000); or within the same group that is being measured several times, i.e. paired sample t-test (Szafran, 2011); or of two different samples, with an independent and a dependent variable, which are compared and tested once, i.e. independent samples t-test (Hatcher, 2003; Urdan, 2005). Because the study fell into the category of the last cited case, the independent samples t-test was selected for the analysis of both the pre-test and the post-test.

4.7.1.2. Pre-Test Results

The purpose of the pre-test was twofold: testing the approximation of the writing proficiency of the two groups prior to the launch of the experiment and the homogeneity of the variances of the samples. It is noteworthy that the first purpose is one of the requirements of the randomised pre-test-post-test control group experimental design that geared the study (See 2.3.2.2.). The second one is another assumption along with the normality of the distribution that should be met by any t-

test related analysis. Homogeneity refers to the equality of variances of the samples under comparison. It is undertaken through Levene's test (an F test included in the t-test table of SPSS).

Both of Levene's test and the F test work hand in hand. More precisely, the significance level of the F value in Levene's test determines which of the two lines presented in the SPSS inferential table to be relied on: the top line (equal variances assumed), or the bottom one (equal variances not assumed). A non-significant F value that exceeds .05 means the absence of a difference in the variances of the two samples, i.e. their equality and homogeneity. In this case, the results of the top line are reported. Whereas a significance value less than .05 indicates a difference in the variances, and thus, their inequality and non-homogeneity. In here, the second line is utilised (Warner, 2008; Elliott & Woodward, 2014; Urdan, 2005; Einspruch, 2005).

Similar to the test of normality, null and alternative hypotheses are also formulated. The former maintains that the population variances are equal ($p > .05$), and the latter suggests the opposite ($p < .05$):

- H_0: There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the two samples in the pre-test
- H_1: There is a significant difference in the mean scores of the two samples in the pre-test

H_0 asserted that $\mu_1 = \mu_2$ $_{(p > .05)}$, and H_1 upheld the contrary $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ $_{(p < .05)}$ (Utts & Heckard, 2011). The results of the pre-test of both the experimental and the control group are highlighted in Table 4.6. followed by the descriptive analysis of SPSS in Table 4.7.:

Table 4.6. Pre-Test Results

Experimental Group		Control Group	
Participants N°	**Grades**	**Participants N°**	**Grades**
1	8	**1**	13
2	12	**2**	7
3	10	**3**	6
4	11	**4**	8
5	13	**5**	13
6	14	**6**	14
7	9	**7**	10
8	8	**8**	11
9	9	**9**	14
10	15	**10**	11
11	9	**11**	15
12	15	**12**	12
13	10	**13**	13
14	9	**14**	15
15	15	**15**	9
16	14	**16**	8
17	11	**17**	7
18	10	**18**	12
19	12	**19**	13
20	12	**20**	12
21	11	**21**	8

Table 4.7. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Scores in the Pre-Test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre	Experimental	21	11,29	2,327	,508
	Control	21	11,00	2,811	,613

As Table 4.7. highlights, the mean scores of the experimental group (N=21, M=11,29, Std=2,327) quite resembled the one of the control group (N=21, M=11,00, Std= 2,811). Nevertheless, to compare the statistical significance between the scores, independent samples t-test was run. The results are presented in Table 4.8.:

Table 4.8. Results of the Independent Samples T-Test for the Pre-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre	Equal variances assumed	1,175	,285	,359	40	,722	,286	,796	-1,324	1,895
	Equal variances not assumed			,359	38,653	,722	,286	,796	-1,325	1,897

Table 4.8. illustrates that the Levene's test F value was (F=1,175) with a significance (sig.=,285). Being higher than .05, one concludes that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the control and the experimental groups in the pre-test was met. Therefore, the top line of the t-test (equal variance assumed) was depended on. The results of the t-test indicated that the t score was (t=,359) with a degree of freedom (df=40), p-value (sig.=,722), and mean difference (,286). The final step of the analysis was to verify the occurrence of a statistically significant change in the means of the experimental group the post-test after the administration of the treatment.

4.7.1.3. Post-Test Results

To analyse the post-test, the researcher formulated a null hypothesis which stated that e-assessment had no significant effect on first-year EFL students' writing production. In other words, the mean scores are equal. Whereas the alternative hypothesis suggested that there was a significant effect on their written production, i.e. inequality of means:

- H_0: e-assessment has no significant effect on first-year EFL students' writing production
- H_1: e-assessment has a significant effect on first-year EFL students' writing production

The results are illustrated in Table 4.9.:

Table 4.9. Post-Test Results

Experimental Group		Control Group	
Participants N°	**Grades**	**Participants N°**	**Grades**
1	12	**1**	12
2	13	**2**	11
3	15	**3**	5
4	8	**4**	10
5	12	**5**	9
6	9	**6**	9
7	13	**7**	11
8	13	**8**	12
9	11	**9**	12
10	15	**10**	9
11	15	**11**	9
12	14	**12**	8
13	10	**13**	11
14	12	**14**	10
15	10	**15**	10
16	10	**16**	11
17	13	**17**	10
18	11	**18**	12
19	8	**19**	13
20	15	**20**	9
21	14	**21**	12

To test the null hypothesis, the researcher compared the scores of the participants in the post-test through descriptive statistics of SPSS as presented in Table 4.10.:

Table 4.10. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Scores in the Post-Test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post	Experimental	21	12,05	2,269	,495
	Control	21	10,24	1,814	,396

Table 4.10. points out that the mean scores of the experimental group (N=21, M=12,05, Std=2,269) was higher than the one of the control group (N=21, M=10,24, Std=1,814). In order to examine the significance of the difference between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was run. Results are demonstrated in Table 4.11.:

Table 4.11. Results of the Independent Samples T-Test for the Post-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post	Equal variances assumed	1,653	,206	2,855	40	,007	1,810	,634	,528	3,091
	Equal variances not assumed			2,855	38,152	,007	1,810	,634	,526	3,093

As shown in Table 4.11., the Levene's test F value was (F=1,653) with a significance value of (sig.=,206). Due to the fact that it was larger than .05, the researchers relied on the top line of the row: equal variances assumed. The independent samples t-test table displays that the t-statistic was t (2,855) with a degree of freedom (df=40), p-value (sig.=,007), and mean difference (1,810). Once the data of the tests were analysed, this research work moves to the analysis of the findings of the post-experiment questionnaire.

4.7.2. Post-Experiment Questionnaire Results

To disclose the experimental group perceptions of such an experience, the data were analysed mostly qualitatively as it was primarily concerned with learners' attitudes towards the online assessment; yet, some numerical findings were also presented in percentages and figures. Each question will be tackled separately:

- **Question One: Students' Appreciation of E-Assessment**

The totality of the students (21) expressed their appreciation of the online evaluation on the Moodle platform.

- **Question Two: The Positive Elements of E-Assessment**

When asked about the elements that they liked the most in the computer-based assessment, students pointed out the following answers:

I like that it was useful and time-saving. It was a good new experience.
Its direct instruction
What I appreciate the most about it is that I can get many appropriate sheets about the module
without having difficulties in searching for them. Being on this platform makes me feel like I am in
the classroom. It also improves my use of technological tools.
The fact that we recognise our mistakes.
I like how it can help us in our daily studies
I liked that we get feedback so that we can improve
I learned more from my mistakes
Useful and can make it everywhere
Mostly the part where I can see my mark instantly, unlike in the classroom where I have to wait for
the teacher to hand the papers to every student. Online evaluation does really save time.
time-saving and testing our knowledge
Something online so it's useful
Evolution of students writing and we can write any time and any place
The lessons. It's a place to improve our writing skills.
The thing that I liked the most about the platform that it was very easy and useful and we can do it
everywhere and in a very short time
The evaluation of your own capacity
I can feel comfortable while using it and it does need to change my place or prepare specific things
to use it
The ability to add and omitting ideas without making the paper dirty, if you get what I mean.
You can use it wherever and whenever
This platform provides us with some vital tips to help us improve our English writing skills.
The lectures that were posted were the greatest thing that I really like on the platform. I liked how
the lessons are organized and written in different colors. It inspires the student to check more lessons
and to learn more … also the idea of writing the lessons in diagrams really help the student to
remember them easily.

They stressed its easiness and usefulness, as well as the time it saves. They stipulated that it allowed them to use it anywhere and everywhere, especially from home. They considered it to be a direct form of instruction that created a sort of comfort for them, and which did not require efforts or prior preparation. Being on the platform made them feel as if they were in a classroom, but in a more pleasant and entertaining way. They enjoyed that they could see their marks instantly without waiting for the teacher to hand the paper to every student as it is the case in the traditional evaluation.

They viewed writing on the platform to be cleaner than writing in the paper in the sense that they could omit words or phrases, and reform their ideas without making the paper dirty. They appreciated the fact that they could express their opinion on a variety of subjects online and in a simple manner. They claimed that it enabled them to notice the evolution of their writing abilities throughout time and learn from their mistakes. It was also a means that helped them improve their digital skills. However, what they loved the most about that new experience was the lectures that were posted on the platform. According to them, those sheets were not only well-

organised and available at any time and place, but also rapidly found without having difficulties searching for them.

- **Question Three: The Negative Elements of E-Assessment**

    Despite the overall positive impression that students had on this new type of evaluation, few negative elements were disclosed. While some declared that they had sometimes difficulties connecting to the platform due to network problems, others stated the issues they encountered when using it for the first time and getting accustomed to it. What they found to be missing in the online assessment was the direct interaction with their classmates like pair or group works as they were used to inside the classroom. Adding to that, they did not enjoy the word limit that was enforced on the platform setting, and they blamed themselves for being lazy and not committed to such evaluation since it is online and not on paper.

- **Question Four: Preferences between the Traditional and the Online Evaluation**

    As far as students' preferences between the traditional and the online evaluation, learners were divided between three views as shown in Figure 4.14.:
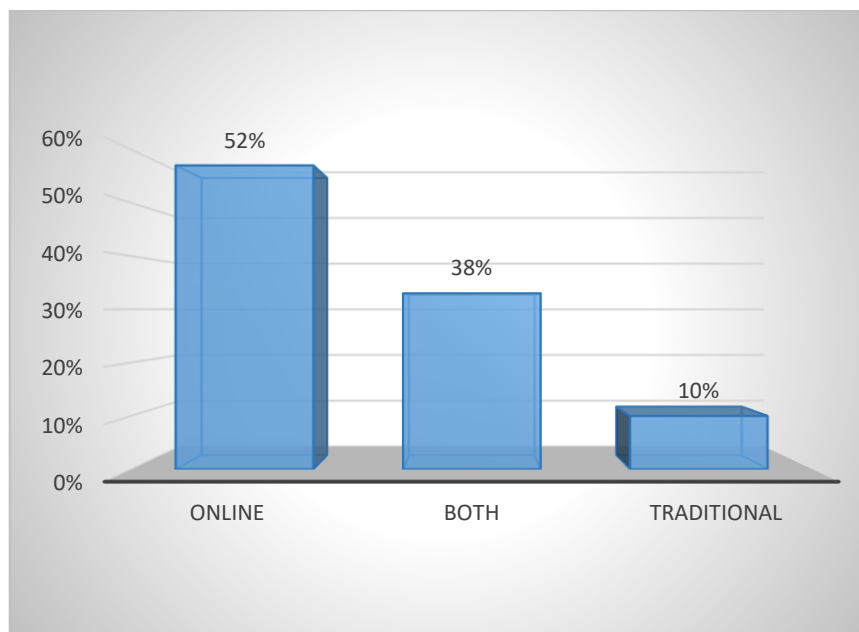
Figure 4.14. Students' Preference between the Online and the Traditional Evaluation

After students experienced the online evaluation, they compared it with what they were used to in the classroom on different angles. Like it is demonstrated in Figure 4.14., 52% (11) preferred the online assessment. To support their claims, they argued that this type of evaluation was more updated and appropriate to their generation. For them, since they lived in an era where everything was digitised, introducing ICT in the classroom was necessary and efficient. Being evaluated online made them realise that they were using technological devices for fruitful reasons, and not just wasting their time. They stipulated that e-assessment was more flexible, less time consuming, and less stressful than the traditional evaluation where everyone can see their marks.

They stated that they felt that they had more freedom online, control over their studies, and self-assessment. Moreover, all the lectures, documents, books, and their paragraphs were saved and organised. This allowed them to keep them and consult them at their convenience; unlike the printed papers which they tend to be lost. Furthermore, it is calmer than the evaluation in the classroom where the noise disturbed them. They believed that it was much easier for the teacher to correct their paragraph without being bothered by the handwriting. They even suggested applying this method in the other modules. Below are some instances of their answers:

P1: I prefer this method of evaluation than the one in the classroom because it was a developed method and it was very easy and we can do it everywhere
P3: Online evaluation for sure, because as I said above, classroom method consumes time, and it's really stressful when everyone knows about your test mark.
P6: I prefer this method because it is easy to use and because you find all the courses on the platform
P9: I prefer the method of evaluation because it is easier than the one in the classroom and time saving and has more explanations. It allows self-evaluation and we can use it at any time we want.
P10: I like this method because you will focus on correcting each mistake you did while in the classroom the teacher might correct you just few mistakes because of the huge number of students he must correct theirs
P12: I prefer this one because it will simplify the way of correcting our exams for teachers for they would not have an issue on trying to understand someone's handwriting for example.
P15: I think this one is more developed because of the use of devices such as computer, phone ... we feel like yes there something fruitful to do with these devices, not just wasting our time.
P17: Yes I prefer this method because in the platform I found everything the lessons that we have done books my paragraph that I have written everything and what i like most is everything is saved and organized in files
P19: This one because it keeps me relax and have no fear of facing my mistakes in front of my mates
P20: I think the method of evaluation is more useful
P21: This one because it does not take too much time and I can study from home

38% of them (8) liked both methods and pointed out that each one of them had their respective benefit. They suggested the eventual efficiency of mixing the two. Here are some of their answers to justify their positions:

- P2: A mixture of both. Where I find the platform easier, in the classroom we would be more focused
- P4: Both because in the first evaluation, we use it whatever and wherever we want, and the second one is in front of the teacher
- P8: I find that both methods have the same point because, in the end, we will have the same answers. However, there is a little bit of difference among these methods like the tool which we use.
- P11: Both of them because we can't ignore their respective usefulness

The remaining 10% (2) preferred the traditional evaluation. They advocated the pen and pencil evaluation was simpler and more direct than the online assessment. According to this portion of students, the teacher was more present in the classroom, and they were focusing on the lectures and instructions while they were listening. However, they were a bit lost in the platform, especially when they did not master the settings. Moreover, they admitted that they were more committed to the traditional evaluation than the online one.

P14: I prefer in the classroom because the teacher is more present in the classroom than online on the platform. Sometimes, when you do not master the platform settings, you will lose much time, but in the classroom, with your pen, it is very simple and direct. P18: I think the classroom evaluation is better because of commitment

- **Question five: Future E-Assessment Use**

While 95% of the students agreed to use e-assessment in the writing module in the future, only 5% refused the idea.

- **Question Six: Feedback Quality**

For this question, the feedback provided in the platform had received an overall general appreciation of the learners. It was considered to be interesting, helpful, easily accessible and understandable, direct, detailed, and accurate. They claimed that they became conscious of the mistakes that they tended to produce repeatedly without being aware of them. It made them feel as if the teacher was present with them on the platform. They declared that it pushed them to be autonomous by correcting those mistakes on their own and applying on their paragraphs the lectures that were posted. They even confessed that they checked it

whenever they had a new assignment or test. They felt that it led to the improvement of their writing abilities. In spite of these positive impressions, some stated that more details and explanations were needed along with the teacher's presence.

- **Question Seven: The effect of Repetitive Feedback on their Writing**

The totality of students (21) agreed that a repetitive providence of the feedback on the platform would be beneficial. It would play a crucial role that would lead to their writing enhancement throughout time. They pointed out that it would prevent them from repeating their mistakes, and would insert the rules in their minds forever. They stated that the more something was being constantly reminded of, the more they would understand. They also mentioned that it would encourage them to work harder so that to become good writers. Additionally, the facility of its delivery and reception further encouraged its adoption by them. After analysing the results of the two research instruments, the researcher moves to the interpretation of the obtained results in relation to the research hypotheses.

4.8. Interpretation and Discussion of the Main Results

For the sake of investigating the effect of e-assessment on students' written production, tests were designed, implemented, and corrected through the Moodle platform. Then, a post-experiment was administered to the experimental group to find out their perception about the e-assessment experience. In the first place, a statistical analysis was carried out on those tests. It comprised a number of assumptions that had to be met, starting with the normality of the sample distribution. As illustrated in Table 4.5., the p-value in Kolmogorov-Sminirov and Shapiro-Wilk tests exceeded .05. Therefore, it was concluded that the two groups came from normally distributed samples, and the independent samples t-test was used as a parametric test on the pre-test and the post-test.

Once the normality was proven, the second assumption was the homogeneity of variances of the two groups and the equivalence of their writing level in the pre-test prior to the administration of the treatment. Despite the fact that the statistical descriptive of SPSS (See Table 4.7.) demonstrated the resemblance of the mean score of the experimental group (M=11,29) and the control group (M=11,00), the

independent samples t-test had to be carried out to confirm such similarities. As Table 4.8. highlights, the significance of the F value of Levene's test was (sig.=,285). Being higher than .05, it meant that the assumption of homogeneity of variances between the control and the experimental groups in the pre-test was met.

As for the t-test results, the significance of the p-value was (sig.=,722). Since it exceeded .05, it confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups. Put differently, the informants had almost the same level of writing proficiency prior to the implementation of the treatment. Thus, the null hypothesis that articulated the equality of means failed to be rejected. The last step of the analysis encompassed assessing the presence of any statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups after the administration of the treatment.

Table 4.10. portrays that the mean score of the experimental group (M=12,05) was higher than the one of the control group (M=10,24). Yet, to verify the significance of the difference between the two groups, an independent samples t-test was run. The findings of that test (see Table 4.11.) showed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group with a p-value (sig.=,007). Since the p-value was inferior to .05, one can understand that the students who were e-assessed by means of Moodle significantly outperformed the students who were traditionally assessed.

In effect, the period of time that the experimental group had spent being assessed online led to a positive effect of the Moodle-oriented approach to assessment on their writing performances. These findings go along with the ones reached by the investigations of Hawley Nagatomo (2006), Lien (2015), Adas and Bakir (2013), and Wogu et al. (2014). This statistical evidence was supported by the researcher's observation of the overall writing improvement of students' writing abilities. Actually, they were paying more attention to what they wrote in terms of grammar, spelling mistakes, and paragraph organisation. They even reduced their informalities in writing in comparison with their writing at the beginning of the academic year.

This enhancement was related mainly to the way students' paragraphs were corrected and their writing problems dealt with. In fact, using Moodle enabled the researcher to treat every student individually by giving him/her detailed feedback through the feedback files and remarks, as well as posting lectures accordingly and explanations in the classroom as remedial solutions. This assumption was further confirmed by the informants' responses in the post-experiment questionnaire in which they praised the quality of the feedback that was offered by the platform. Indeed, they found the feedback interesting, helpful, easily accessible, direct, detailed, and accurate. In addition to its quality, they stipulated that its repetitiveness and rapidity, combined with the posted lectures, made them feel that their writing abilities were improving.

It should be reminded that the repeated feedback, interaction with all the students, and the identification of their problems were reported by first-year CWE teachers in the needs analysis to be lacking due to time constraints and the insufficiency of writing sessions. Thus, the proposed method rendered such elements possible. Moreover, they confessed applying those lectures on their paragraphs and to check the feedback file whenever they had a test or an assignment. The fact that they regularly consulted the feedback and took the researcher's remarks into account meant that this method pushed them to make more effort, and raised their awareness about certain mistakes they made that they were unaware of.

Additionally, this method permitted the researcher to measure learners' mastery of the lectures, and identify areas of difficulties and misunderstanding concerning the lectures as well as the types of mistakes they produced. This supports the findings of Lien (2015), Ardiasih et al. (2019), and Adas and Bakir (2013) whose research revealed that the provision of feedback and the exposure to online extra materials through Moodle ameliorated their informants' writing abilities. Adas and Bakir's (2013) study showed that the students who experienced Moodle-based assessment improved their coherence, cohesion, punctuation, spelling, capitalisation, and grammar in comparison with the ones who did not.

Adas and Bakir (2013) uphold that when learners receive a visual input of their mistakes, their memory on how that word is written increases, and are, thus, likely to not repeat that mistake again throughout time. In this particular context, the feedback file, that was provided to the students, served this purpose. Likewise, Ardiasih et al. (2019) advocate that the delivered feedback on Moodle creates a sort of online teacher's/students' interaction that leads to fruitful results which, in their work, ameliorated the stages of the writing process that learners went through as far as argumentative essays were concerned.

Similarly, Bouziane and Zyad (2018), Gava and Dalla Costa (2018), and Wulandari (2016) found that the feedback was one of the reasons behind students' writing enhancement. The only difference between these pieces of research and the current one was that it was students/students centred rather than teacher/students centred. For instance, in Bouziane and Zyad's (2018) work, the mutual transfer of knowledge between peers within Moodle increased learners' awareness and led to the development of their writing abilities with reference mainly to accuracy and complexity. Moreover, a radical change in its quality was noticed over time. Indeed, it shifted from surface-level comments (grammar and mechanics) to meaning level (coherence, content, and cohesion).

By the same token, in Gava and Dalla Costa's (2018) investigation, learners' writing abilities, vocabulary, high-order analysis, synthesis, and group work skills improved due to the knowledge that the students constructed collaboratively within the online social context. In other words, it could be said that Moodle promotes, favours, ameliorates, and eases the delivery, exchange, and reception of feedback, be it between teacher or peers. Despite the fact that the researcher suggests that the provision of detailed feedback and the treatment of students' writing problems both online and in the classroom were the causes of their enhancement, she also thinks that it might be related to motivational and practical factors.

The results of the post-experiment questionnaire revealed that students found this type of evaluation more updated, appropriate for their generation, flexible, time gaining, and less stressful in comparison with the traditional evaluation. This

correlates with the findings of the needs analysis where they expressed their needs for a relaxing, motivating, attractive, and up-to-date 21st-century evaluation that was lacking in the traditional paper-based. Furthermore, their e-assessment experience made them realise that technology was not restricted to entertainment only, and could be beneficial when being used for educational purposes. This brings to the fore the claims of Abas and Bakir (2013) as to the inadequacies and the monotony of the traditional methods of assessment as well as the importance of providing attractive ones to learners.

According to the authors, low motivation is one of the reasons behind their failure in the writing classroom. Therefore, they suggest that attracting learners by using technology is the only way of increasing their motivation and reaching successful results. Abas and Bakir's (2013) work is living proof that confirmed this claim. Additionally, 95 % of the informants in the post-experiment questionnaire expressed willingness for future adoption of a Moodle-based evaluation in the module. Some of them wanted that assessment type to be spread on the rest of the modules. If one compares these answers with the one of needs analysis, it can be noticed that there was a positive appreciation towards the online evaluation after having experienced it concretely.

The negative perceptions that were upheld by some of them turned into encouraging reactions that they related to the freedom, flexibility, and easiness of the assessment. Just like the work of Wogu et al. (2014), a change in students' attitudes was noticed subsequent to the use of Moodle. It changed from phobia to any Moodle-associated writing instruction or evaluation, to increased interest. They also advocated that they had more control over their studies, and were becoming autonomous. The authors explain that the main reason behind the decrease in their fear was the exposure to the Moodle-based assessment.

These findings support previous studies in which students expressed a positive attitude after the Moodle experience. They found it easy and useful (Zyad, 2016; Gava & Dalla Costa, 2018), attractive with diverse activities (Wulandari, 2016), more relaxing and less exhausting than the paper-based one (Al-Qdah & Ababneh, 2017)

as it increased their enthusiasm, self-confidence, critical thinking, and autonomy (Ardiasih et al., 2019), and as comfortable as the other networking sites they are accustomed to. They considered it to be a prerequisite for any university to become among the top leading universities in the world (Wogu et al., 2014). Consequently, it increased students' motivation.

In addition to motivation, the researcher assumes that some practical aspects of e-assessment had also their fair share in their improvement. Learners reported that they liked having lectures, documents, books, and their paragraphs saved and organised, and keeping their paragraphs to consult the mistakes at their convenience instead of being lost like it is the case in the traditional printed version. They also declared that the traditional assessment was noisy, disturbing, and indiscreet as everyone could see their marks. This meant that Moodle was associated with the quality of organisation, calm, and anonymity that they confessed needing, features that pushed them to work harder and increased their autonomy in learning.

Therefore, it could be said that the improvement was not solely caused by the fact of replacing the paper-based assessment with a technological tool. It was rather about how the numerous features of the platform were fully exploited to perform certain tasks that were often difficult in the classroom. One can conclude that e-assessment acted in this work as pedagogical teaching support that was an added value to the traditional evaluation. Moreover, the underpinning reasons behind students' enhancement were pedagogical, practical, and emotional factors.

4.9. Conclusion

In order to test the effect of a Moodle-based approach towards assessment on students' writing, experimental tests have been designed. To this end, chapter four has provided a detailed description of the different steps that have been undertaken as part of that design. First, it has outlined the model of tests that has been selected based on the needs that were identified in the preceding chapter. Then, it has explained the way it has been adapted in terms of topics and criteria. After that, it has disclosed the assessment criteria and the scoring rubric of the tests. Then, it has highlighted the way they have been implemented on the e-assessment platform,

administered to the students, and corrected. At last, it has analysed and interpreted the obtained results of the experiment and the post-experiment questionnaire which has divulgated students' opinion after their assessment.

When comparing the results of the two groups at the end of the experiment, it has been found that the Moodle-based assessment has had a significant effect on the performance of the experimental group as they scored higher than the experimental group in the post-test. Additionally, an overall positive attitude has been demonstrated by the students toward this approach. They highlighted its benefits with regard to constructive feedback, practicality, and increased motivation. On the basis of this presumption, the fifth chapter has been designed. It embraces several suggestions and recommendations that are intended to have recourse to technology to improve students' writing skills.

Chapter Five

Suggestions and

Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

The findings of the present work have shown how the introduction of technology into first-year EFL students' evaluation can be a beneficial way to improve their writing. Following this line of thought, this chapter will advise a set of suggestions and recommendations that are sought to be applied in the future by English writing teachers at the Department of English at Tlemcen University in order to enhance the existing situation. These solutions would respond to the scepticism expressed by the informants as to the viability of e-assessment at the department and the aspects that they reported missing in the study. For this reason, organising scientific events on e-assessment and contextualising such an evaluation at the department are suggested.

Moreover, features of the platform like collaborative writing and peer assessment via forum discussion, workshops, and wikis are recommended. Furthermore, using Moodle for reading, dictation, and e-portfolios are proposed. Almost all of these suggestions are purposefully followed by previous investigations that were carried out by scholars so as to provide concrete examples and further reinforce the computer-based evaluation. Besides, the elaboration of a Moodle handbook and the role of teachers as motivators are emphasised. Plus, web-based tools for writing such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and automated-written corrective feedback are encouraged. At last, games for writing and the development of an academic writing module throughout students' university studies are advised.

5.2. Study Days, Symposiums, Conferences, and Workshops

The analysis of the interview with teachers revealed a considerable reluctance from the majority of teachers concerning the introduction of ICTs in the EFL classroom as well as a negative attitude towards the computer-based evaluation. These informants did not see it as a priority, but rather as a time constraint and useless energy that they were unwilling to provide. In the viewpoint of the researcher, their beliefs might be related to some factors like a non-mastery of computers, negative image about the online evaluation, and lack of knowledge about the platform and how

it operates. In effect, though Moodle was implemented at Tlemcen University a couple of years ago, most of the participants of the study were unaware of it when this research was undertaken. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic changed the situation as they were obliged to use it to pursue their studies.

Despite this initiative, the researcher thinks that further insights on this topic are needed at the Department. In this regard, she proposes, with the consent of the Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Languages at Tlemcen University, to organise study days, symposiums, or conferences on the use of Moodle in the writing classroom. The purpose underlying these scientific gatherings would be to eradicate those bad apprehensions, raise teachers' awareness of the necessity of technology in the EFL classroom, and encourage them to have recourse to it within their teaching practices. They also attempt to push them to shift from routinised teaching and assessment to one that can bring about innovation and fun to learning.

The theme that will be dealt with would be an explanation of the Moodle-based assessment along with its numerous functionalities as well as an exposition of the previous studies that have been tackled by researchers worldwide. Some subject-specialists in e-learning could be brought for deeper insights. In addition to these presentations, workshop sessions for both teachers and learners could be held. Instructors would be taught how to implement an online course, add a resource, design assignments, score learners, manage the setting, and deliver feedback. As for learners, they would be shown how to answer the activities, check the teachers' feedback, or access the online resources.

It is assumed that having concrete and practical sessions about the platform would be an added value that would likely lead to fruitful results. These workshops seek to demonstrate the easiness of this learning platform and its advantages as far as time, scoring process, assessment, feedback delivery, and follow up of learners are concerned. In order to reach a higher audience, the workshops could be organised with the joint collaboration of the Department of Technology at Tlemcen University, which possesses the necessary materials, as well as the help of specialists in ICTs.

Another challenge faced by the researcher during this piece of work was showing to the respondents the feasibility of the computer-based assessment at the Department. These informants were unable to imagine that this type of evaluation could ever be carried out there. To justify their position, they stated its lack of materials and non-readiness to such a change, the increasing number of learners per group, and the socio-economic situations of some students which hindered them to own computers. As a solution to these concerns, the researcher proposes the contextualisation of e-assessment so as to adapt to the current situation.

5.3. Contextualising E-Assessment at the Department of English at Tlemcen University

At least once a week, first-year CWE teachers could arrange themselves, according to their time table and to the one of their learners, to find a suitable timing to work in the internet room of the department. As the latter contains 30 computers, it can carry the general number of students per group which ranges approximately from 30 to 35. Regarding the over-crowded classrooms, learners can either work in small groups of two to three, or those who possess a computer can bring it with them as additional support. Teachers can post on the platform lectures and give online assignments to be done at home. Those learners who cannot afford such an advantage can use the already available materials at the Department.

The classroom context would be, therefore, only reserved for correction, explanation, and discussion, a concept called 'the flipped classroom' (Wang & Zhu, 2019). Once teachers master the functionalities of the platform thanks to the organised scientific events and are shown how e-assessment can be contextualised at the department, the next step would consist of exploiting its features to design assessments that would improve students' writing. Moreover, since learners, unlike their instructors, expressed their enthusiasm for such an idea in the post-experiment questionnaire, the researcher proposes to expand the e-assessment experience by exploring other facets of the platform.

5.4. Exploiting Moodle to Improve Students' Writing

As it was highlighted previously, Moodle comprises numerous features that offer a wide range of possibilities for assessment. However, because of the delimitations of the present study, only some of them were tackled. Henceforth, the researcher believes that they could be avenues of research that would likely improve learners' writing abilities. Among them lie collaborative writing and peer assessment.

5.4.1. Moodle for Collaborative Writing and Peer Assessment

Moodle for collaborative writing and peer assessment has been subject to numerous investigations which have yielded positive results. An example would be Zyad's (2016) qualitative study which explored 24 EFL learners' acceptance and engagement in Moodle-directed blended writing instruction at Hassan II University, Morocco. Following a scaffolding technique, the author put the participants into group works with mixed linguistic abilities. Then, he initiated them into online collaborative work in which they were supposed to help each other to produce a written performance on Moodle. The researcher had recourse to a focus group, an online survey on Moodle, and a report of students' activities. The analysis of the research instruments revealed mitigating attitudes. Though the majority pointed out the easiness and usefulness of the platform, their engagement, however, was ranged from moderate to restricted.

It should be reminded that collaborative work was mentioned in the post-experiment questionnaire to be lacking since the core of the study was individual assessment, and to some extent, self-assessment. Henceforth, the researcher envisages designing project works that would engage first-year students into collaborative writing tasks on Moodle. This would at the same time contextualise the assessment at the department, respond to teachers' reluctance regarding the increasing number of students per group, and meet students' wants. The platform would represent a virtual place where they can interact with each other, write collaboratively on a given assignment to assess each other's piece of writing, and give mutual feedback.

To do so, first-year CWE teachers could rely on Harmer's (1998) proposal of creative writing. With consideration to the students' age, interest, and level, they would place them in virtual social, cultural, or political global or national problems that they are likely to face in their daily life. To solve those problems, they would have to write a letter, report, complaint, small article, job application, post-card, advertisement, or an email to the manager or employer. In Harmer's (1998) view, the concrete aspect of these types of assignments does not only involve creatively the learners, but also enables the teacher to evaluate their command of the language. Yet, to put the proposition into practice, it should be carried out in three different phases: forum discussions, workshops, and wikis.

5.4.1.1. Moodle Forum Discussion

In the first phase of the above-cited suggestion, the researcher proposes to give the topic to the students to be discussed within the Moodle forum. They will share their opinions, debate over the topic, ask questions, and exchange dialogues with their peers. These dialogues could also be assessed by the writing teachers to evaluate learners' command of the language and ways of expressing their viewpoints. This would concretely consolidate with what has been taught in Unit 5 of the CWE syllabus, 'the Opinion Paragraph' (See 2.2.3.1.). The instructors need to set the goals and rules of the forum discussion at the beginning of the activity, and control from their computers everything that happens there. This control is important in order to ensure that learners do not deviate from the instructional context; otherwise, they will be reprimanded.

Moodle forum discussion for collaborative purposes has been widely discussed by scholars in a variety of ways. For instance, Adas and Bakir (2013) inquired about the impact that the blended learning approach towards teaching writing would have on 60 undergraduate Palestinian EFL learners' paragraph writing. To achieve their aims, they relied on an experimental study and employed the Moodle platform for the design of varied assessment tasks to the experimental group. Students' paragraphs were posted in the forum discussion section of the platform and learners had to analyse their classmates' errors and give feedback. Then, they were

provided with visual input through a picture that they have to comment on or a video to write a paragraph about while answering the questions.

As part of the assessment, organisation, mechanics, and grammar were taken into account, pre-tests and post-tests were used to compare between the two groups. Adas and Bakir's (2013) work showed improved writing ability of the experimental group in comparison with the control group as far as coherence, cohesion, punctuation, spelling, capitalisation, and grammar were concerned. The researchers linked that to the increased motivation of students in the blended course, the exposure of online material, and the visual stimulus when reading their peers' written performances. By the same token, Wulandari (2016) also used Moodle forum discussion in their study. However, unlike the previous pieces of work, this researcher had recourse to another type of research method, 'the Education Research and Development method'.

The Education Research and Development method served to validate the Moodle learning model of paragraph writing that the researcher proposed at the English language education study programme at Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia. To achieve her research aims, she followed several phases. At first, she analysed learners' needs as far as paragraph writing was concerned by relying on two interviews: one with four writing teachers and the other with students. The interviews aimed at identifying the learning objectives of paragraph writing, and finding students' difficulties and expectations of an online model so that the proposed model would meet those expectations.

Next, she started the design phase on the platform where the material, content, and topics were designed. This was followed by the development phase where she elaborated the teaching activities. After that, she implemented those Moodle courses and activities about paragraph writing to the students. They posted their pieces of writing on Moodle discussion forums. This allowed them to receive feedback from their peers, and enabled her to notice their progress. At last, there was the evaluation phase upon which the model would be validated. To this end, she administered to

them a questionnaire to give their feedback about the model and provide a set of suggestions.

Another instance of collaboration would be Gava and Dalla Costa's (2018) work which investigated the effect of the Moodle forum discussion with 32 EFL students from Cordoba University, Argentina. In this quasi-experimental study, learners were first engaged in a debate in the Moodle forum as a pre-writing activity with the guidance of the researchers. Next, they had to work collaboratively on an online writing assignment in which they were required to apply their cognitive skills to write an essay. A survey was later on used to disclose their perception. The conclusion obtained from this research was indicative of the method's efficiency and the improvement of learners' writing abilities, vocabulary, high-order analysis, synthesis, and group work skills.

Gava and Dalla Costa (2018) explained that the enhancement was due to the knowledge that students constructed collaboratively within the online social context on Moodle forums through dialogues. Positive perceptions were also reported as students praised the usefulness of this socio-cognitive approach to writing that had been generated by Moodle forums. As it can be noticed, Moodle forum discussion offers an array of possibilities that enable the diversification of the assessment. Subsequent to it comes the Moodle writing workshop.

5.4.1.2. Moodle Writing Workshop

In the second phase of the project, learners will be divided into groups within the Moodle writing workshop. In this virtual setting, they would start, collaboratively, planning their projects and structuring their ideas. This could be followed by a small report of the different steps they have gone through. The role of their writing instructors will be to guide them in case of difficulties and control the flow of the assignment. They can provide extra materials related to the discussed topic that would help them in the activity. According to Ray and Laminack (2001), writing workshops are the most effective manner to enhance learners' writing abilities and develop metacognitive abilities because they are an open room for constant reflection.

Ray and Laminack's (2001) statement is confirmed by the findings of previous studies which have yielded positive outcomes. For instance, Bouziane and Zyad (2018) carried out a quasi-experimental study on the impact of the online self and peer assessment on the writing performances of 48 learners at Hassan II and Chouaib Doukkali Universities, Morocco. The informants were divided into a control and an experimental group of 24 each. The control group, which attended a traditional writing course, was required to write essays in groups. As for the experimental group, the researchers elaborated for them a Moodle writing course along with its materials and criteria-based scoring rubric.

The students were asked to write an essay and self-assess themselves first with the handed scoring rubric, and then, assess their peers' written productions through collaborative group works using Moodle workshops. With the help of the researchers who were monitoring the assignments, students had to read their classmates' paragraphs, provide remarks and feedback, and revise them before their final publication on the platform. The investigators gathered those comments from the Moodle activity reports, classified them according to their relevance, and coded them for the sake of the research. At last, they corrected those pieces of writing.

A pre-test and a post-test were employed to compare scores. The findings yielded positive outcomes from the part of the experimental group in comparison with the control group. According to the investigators, the enhancement was due to the mutual assessment and exchange of feedback. This collaborative transfer of knowledge increased learners' awareness and led to the development of their writing abilities with reference mainly to accuracy and complexity. Additionally, a radical change in the quality of that feedback was noticed over time. Indeed, it shifted from surface-level comments (grammar and mechanics) to meaning level (coherence, content, and cohesion). In addition to the workshop, another way to use Moodle is to rely on wikis.

5.4.1.3. Moodle Wikis

The last step of the project will be Moodle wikis upon which learners would publish their final products on the platform. Being modifiable web-pages in which

many persons work collaboratively to elaborate a given project (Crisp, 2011), the researcher believes that they would be appropriate for what has been suggested. Following the study of Bouziane and Zyad (2018), the writing teachers would hand the students a scoring rubric that would assess all the elements that were dealt with in the classroom. Each group would have to self-evaluate its piece of writing first using that rubric before moving to the evaluation of their peer's wikis and giving remarks and suggestions. In the end, those wikis will be graded by the instructors and receive feedback for betterment.

Since all their work will be posted, read, and later on assessed by their classmates and teacher, it is assumed that they would be careful in choosing adequate words, syntactic structures, and spelling. To motivate them, a competition could be held between them upon which the best wiki will be rewarded by publishing the produced essay on the newspaper of the faculty. Just like the previous features, Moodle wikis have been widely discussed in the literature. One among the scholars who used them lied Ardiasih et al. (2019). The authors employed them as an Online Collaborative Writing Technique (OCWT) to explore their effect on the writing abilities of 29 EFL students' argumentative essays at Terbuka University, Indonesia.

In Ardiasih et al.'s (2019) descriptive research, learners were asked to edit and provide feedback to their peers' written performances. Data were gathered by means of statistical tests, observation reports, and questionnaires which were used to unveil students' attitude about such an integration in the writing module. It was found that enhanced writing abilities were achieved as far as argumentative essays were concerned. The investigators concluded that wikis well-fitted and even enhanced the stages of the writing process that learners went through. According to them, the reasons behind that were the teacher/learners' and students/students' interaction within wikis.

This communication plus the collaboration between students through feedback had led to knowledge construction. Moreover, the adopted approach generated a feeling of autonomy and increased students' enthusiasm, self-confidence, and critical thinking. As it can be noticed from the above-cited studies, peer assessing each other

by reading one's piece of writing and sending and receiving feedback through Moodle has given fruitful results. In this regard, Tuan (2012) speaks about the influence of reading on writing and claims that reading and analysing another person's writing style can be an influence on one's own writing. This calls attention to the importance of the reading skill on writing and how to integrate it within Moodle.

5.4.2. Reading with Moodle

It is generally acknowledged that good writers are good readers (Cernek, 2007; Clark, 2007; Macceca, 2013). Indeed, a tight relationship exists between these two skills. Day (2008) declares that the fact of seeing how the language is formed and the different words combined together to make meaning reduces learners' spelling and syntactic mistakes. Therefore, reading guides them to write appropriately. Moreover, it expands their linguistic, lexical, and cultural knowledge. Despite its high importance improving their writing abilities, Day (2008) stipulates that there is a tendency among them to dislike it. This is confirmed by the answers of some informants in the questionnaire who reported their dislike for the short stories which are part of their assessment in the CWE module. They found them boring, time-consuming, and difficult to understand (See 3.3.3.).

Regardless of learners' apprehension, the researcher believes that extensive reading sessions carried out attractively would likely create a love for this skill that would push them to read more. Accordingly, she proposes to use Moodle to design reading-based assignments. An instance of research conducted in this direction is Sebbah (2019). This scholar wanted to assess the effect of a flipped learning approach on the reading abilities of 100 first-year EFL students at Algiers 2 University (Algeria). To achieve this purpose, she combined a traditional classroom with an online one via Moodle. In her piece of work, Moodle was the tool upon which the students accessed online videos, lectures about reading strategies, and assignments outside the classroom.

After that, they took part in a group discussion where they were supposed to help each other explaining the online materials. As to the traditional classroom, they put into practice those learned reading strategies by working collectively in text-

comprehension activities. In the third phase of the work, they had to come back to Moodle to undertake diverse types of online assignments. At last, she administered a post-test upon which she assessed the impact of the proposed approach. The findings advocated the efficiency of the flipped classroom on students' reading skills. Sebbah's (2019) work further demonstrates the efficiency of Moodle for reading purposes as future research perspectives.

Before concretising this suggestion in the future, the writing instructors should first carry out an investigation to find out learners' favourite authors or preferred genres so that to meet their interest. Then, they could post on the platform small extracts of those selected stories. For further entertainment, they could be in a video-format that students would watch, and followed by activities on Moodle such as multiple-choice questions, filling the gaps, direct questions, or paragraph writing. While using their cognitive skills, learners could summarise them based on their understanding. As they are still in their first-year, this type of activity would represent an initiation to analysis and critical thinking. Consequently, it would prepare them for future complex texts, especially for those who are willing to embrace the field of literature.

Another way of merging reading with writing could be using Moodle forum discussion and workshop. The forum discussion could be used to post those summaries for peer assessment and exchange of feedback, or discuss the theme that is tackled in the stories. As to the workshop, it could be employed for collaborative assignments such as imagining another end of the story, writing their own short story with a plot and characters as a final project that would be submitted at the end of the year, or using the jigsaw method.

As stated by Esnawy (2016), the jigsaw is a technique for teaching reading. It consists of giving a text to the students to be read, and then, splitting the classroom into groups which are respectively named the expert group and the jigsaw group. After that, the members of each group explain what they have understood from the text to the other group. This method allows each student to participate in the activity and work collaboratively for better comprehension. Besides, it promotes their

motivation, teamwork, critical thinking, autonomous learning, and even social skills like empathy (Esnawy, 2016; Baron, 2019). In addition to reading, the other way to enhance writing is dictation.

5.4.3. Dictation with Moodle

While some scholars regard dictation as an ancient practice (Kazazoğlu, 2013), others have demonstrated the opposite through their very recent studies (See Robinson-Kooi & Hammond, 2020). Nevertheless, what is undeniably agreed on are its benefits on students' language skills, mainly writing and listening. In effect, it helps learners notice the structure of the target language and the grammatical links between words, and identify as well as remedy their spelling mistakes (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2017). Moreover, it enhances their vocabulary and eases the memorisation of words (Tang, 2012). Additionally, it is believed to prepare them for standardised tests like the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam in which a similar type of assignment is provided (Rashidi & Javanmardi, 2011).

To modernise its traditional classroom context, the researcher proposes to carry it out on Moodle. For example, the writing teachers could add Universal Resource Locator (URL) links of YouTube videos or recordings of native speakers that learners would listen to several times and with different speeds (from the slowest to the quickest). Next, they would have to rewrite what they have heard as part of a graded assignment. Unlike the previous suggestions, this one would be more emphasised on self-assessment so that the instructors can detect the language problems of each learner and give individual feedback. Alternatively, it could also be subject to peer assessment. To record these written productions, Moodle e-portfolio could be used.

5.4.4. Moodle E-Portfolio

A portfolio is a student's content creation that teachers collect for the sake of assessing the presence of learning evolution over time (Aulia et al.,2016; Caner, 2010). This teaching tool ensures an effective global assessment of learners' abilities, and thus, opens room for on-going improvement (Baturay & Daloğlu, 2010). Moreover, it boosts autonomous learning (Lo, 2010; Occhi, 2016) as well as

analytical and critical thinking skills (Occhi, 2016). It also promotes both self and formative assessment (Aulia et al., 2016). With the advent of the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), the portfolio is no longer in the traditional printed format, but rather in an electronic one, leading to what is called the e-portfolio (See 1.3.2.). As such, VLE systems like Moodle have started to be used in this regard (Aulia et al., 2016).

Accordingly, Aulia et al. (2016) conducted a pilot study in which they investigated the opinions of EFL students at the State of Polytechnic of Pandang, Indonesia as to the use of e-portfolio to improve their four language skills. Findings reported informants' positive perceptions and the adequacy of the platform for delivering materials and performing assignments. Therefore, the researcher recommends writing teachers to use the platform as a repertoire where any piece of writing that students would have produced on assignments, wikis, workshops, or forum discussions, would be stored.

Instead of being lost, as it is generally the case in the traditional classroom, they would be kept in one place to be checked and modified at one's convenience. This suggestion should not be reserved for the first academic year only, but kept throughout the years to see a longitudinal evolution of their writing. To this end, an open assignment could be left on the platform so that each group would put any text that s/he would have written until the end of their academic studies. Undeniably, these written productions would be subject to a series of assessments.

This is believed to be beneficial for both teachers and students. It would allow CWE teachers to evaluate students' mastery of the taught lectures and the efficiency of the instruction, detect the existing students' writing issues in order to find an adequate solution, and track their progress. As regards to learners, it would open their eyes on their writing level, and compare it as the years go by as far as style, lexicon, grammatical structures, word choice, spelling, cohesion, and coherence of ideas are concerned. Consequently, they would make more effort to better their writing abilities. As it can be noticed, the totality of the afore-mentioned suggestions focused principally on Moodle as an assessment tool as it was the core of the work.

Nevertheless, the platform also allows pedagogical possibilities that are not to be denied.

5.5. Moodle Handbook

With the COVID-19 Pandemic, each University in the world had handled the crisis in its own way. As a case in point, Granada University (Spain) neither interrupted teaching nor the assessment despite the fact that it was closed during the sanitary crisis. After asking the Head of the Department of Didactics of Language and Literature of the Faculty of Science of Education, he stated that instruction and evaluation were carried out through PRADO (Plataforma de Recursos de Apoyo Docente), the name of their Moodle platform. To guarantee their good deployment, the university put at the hand of teachers and students a detailed guideline. The latter explains step by step all the procedures that have to be followed so that to remove any ambiguities or questions that may come to one's mind. This action plan is accessible through the website of the university (visit https://covid19.ugr.es/informacion/docencia-virtual).

Concerning the assessment, the instructors elaborated online questionnaires in the form of multiple questions, essays, and guided activities that were designed, administered, and corrected through PRADO. The assessment protocol was also part of the guideline. Some of it is mentioned in Figure 5.1. in its translated version (For the complete one, visit https://covid19.ugr.es/informacion/docencia-virtual/guia-evaluacion-no-presencial/indicaciones-estudiantado).

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During the test

1. **Connection** . The student body will connect to PRADO, through their personal authentication codes, 10 minutes in advance of the start time of the questionnaire indicated in the call.

2. **Start of the questionnaire** . The student body will enter the questionnaire and will observe a countdown that will indicate the exact moment in which they can start the test.

3. **Communication with the teaching staff** . Any question that should be addressed to the teaching staff in relation to the questionnaire will be made through the communication channel established in the call (institutional email, Google Meet, Google Chat, etc.).

   - Only in the event that a videoconference room has been established as a channel for communication and monitoring of the event, the following additional indications will be taken into account:

   - The student body will connect to the Google Meet room identified in the call about 10 minutes before the start time of the exam. For this you will use your account @ go.ugr.es.

   - The teaching staff may ask the student body to show the camera their identification (DNI or any other valid means of identification admitted by the University of Granada).

○ For the purposes of correct supervision of the test, the camera of the device through which the students take the test, as well as the microphone, must be active if required by the teacher.

○ To avoid capturing images related to your private life, you will organize the development of the test in such a way that it does not interfere with your exclusively domestic environment.

○ The session will not be subject to recording.

4. **Technical problems during the test** . Students who have technical connection problems during the test will try to do as much of it as possible. It is recommended that the student body take screenshots of the errors and notify the teaching staff of this circumstance, for the purpose of the timely verification of the incident that must be carried out later.

5. If during the development of the test with PRADO a videoconference is held, the capture and / or recording of the session, as well as its reproduction or dissemination, in whole or in part, regardless of the medium or device used, is prohibited. Any improper action will entail a violation of current regulations, and the relevant legal responsibilities may arise.

Test completion

1. Sending the questionnaire.

2. **Request for proof of technical incidents** : As soon as possible, the affected student body must prepare a report justifying the individual technical incident that may have occurred during the test and send it to the teaching staff responsible for the subject.

Through PRADO.

Exam review

Through the communication channel determined by the teaching staff.

Figure 5.1. COVID-19 Assessment Protocol at Granada University

While taking the example of Granada University, Tlemcen University could design its proper Moodle guideline. This would be a reference for those teachers, who are not familiar with technology, to design their courses and assessment. It would also ease the task for learners when performing the assignment. It should be noted that during the Pandemic, the university also used the Moodle platform for course delivery subsequent to the Minister's decision. As such, for each level, module, speciality, department, and faculty, lectures were posted so that to encourage distance learning, a premiere for the Department of English. Figure 5.2. illustrates the lectures of the first-year CWE module that were posted on the platform:

Figure 5.2. First-Year CWE Lectures on Moodle

Nevertheless, these lectures could be expanded in the future in more detail with targeted learning objectives. Besides, a large number of activities could be provided to the students by using Moodle features. Additional assignments would respond to one of the needs that was identified in the needs analysis, i.e. practice. The latter was reported to be tremendously lacking because of the loaded syllabus and the insufficient teaching sessions (See 3.5.). This proposition would be, therefore, a sort of a handbook that would guide future writing teachers that are not yet acquainted to the teaching profession.

Accordingly, Whitelock and Watt (2008) emphasise the importance of having a pedagogical e-assessment model. This model would boost students' autonomous learning and critical thinking, and enhance their learning. It would also allow teachers to improve their teaching practices (Whitelock & Watt, 2008). It goes without saying that to guarantee the implementation of the proposition, it needs to be the fruit of a collaboration between CWE teachers and regular coordinating meetings, just like what they were used to in the module (See 2.2.3.). This collaboration could also be with first-year grammar teachers because the CWE syllabus embodies several grammatical aspects.

This brings to the fore the claims of Simin and Heidari (2013) who stipulate that a good flow of e-assessment should be the result of a thorough organisation and collaboration between all the people concerned by it, moving from teachers up to the administration. As it can be noticed from the above-cited sections, scholars insist on the importance of teachers in ensuring a good e-assessment practice. In effect, they fulfil an array of roles in the learning process from which they guarantee that everything occurs appropriately (Yilmaz et al., 2015). In addition to being designers, they are also motivators (Tambunan, 2018).

5.6. Teachers as Motivators

Motivation has been for a long period of time accredited to be the secret recipe behind the success of students (Yuan & Zhang, 2017). It should be reminded that the motivational aspect of the Moodle platform was, according to the researcher's interpretation of learners' responses in the post-experiment questionnaire, one of the reasons behind the experimental group's improved scores. Indeed, they found the proposed evaluation up-dated and attractive. Since the researcher was also the teacher of that group, it further confirms the high importance of instructors as motivators.

In this respect, Alhodiry (2016) holds that the way teachers behave, teach, and interact with the students inside the classroom positively impacts students' motivation. He describes them as being a fountain of encouragement and endless inspiration that reveals the inner force that exists within each student. He states that they constantly push students to double their efforts, defeat themselves, and make their best to succeed both academically and professionally. Moreover, they push them to look for more challenges, learn not to be satisfied with minimum accomplishments, take initiatives, eradicate their fears and shyness, and always seek for perfection. Consequently, motivation has changed their role from providers of knowledge to facilitators who monitor, control, and manage the students, who, in return, have become self-reliant in their learning (Alhodiry, 2016).

As far as the present work is concerned, it assumed that if e-assessment is ever to be implemented in the future at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, it would be the result of the role that CWE teachers would play in it. More

specifically, they need to use different teaching techniques to elaborate lectures and assignments on Moodle that captivate the students' attention, meet their needs, level, and interests. This would certainly increase learners' motivation and render writing a challenging and exciting activity (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Iurea, 2015). Additionally, they need to praise the benefit of e-assessment. If not, the situation will remain the same. For this purpose, instructors are considered to be 'lever for change' responsible for ameliorating the existing situation (Hiebert & Stigler, 2017). Though the emphasis of the present piece of work was solely on Moodle, it should be noted that other web-based e-learning tools have their fair share in higher education.

5.7. Web-Based Learning Tools for Writing

The advent of the internet has led to the emergence of web-based learning. As its name hints, the latter embodies the reliance of WWW recourses for the sake of developing an online learning environment (Karyuatry et al., 2018). Unlike the conventional way of learning, which is centred on the teachers, web-based learning directs its attention towards the learners. In fact, this type of instruction is based on collaboration, reflection, and interchange of ideas between learners. Therefore, it has rendered them active participants in that process, self-reliant, and no longer passive participants like they used to be, boosting by that their long-term memory and communicative abilities (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004; Boulikha, 2016). Besides, it has eased the publication of students' work, editing, and exchange and reception of feedback (Karyuatry et al., 2018). As such, various websites have been developed to serve this purpose; among them are MOOCs.

5.7.1. MOOCs

As reported by Pireva et al. (2015), Sahli and Benaissi (2018), Wang and Zhu (2019), Hollands and Tirthali, 2014, Blagojević and Milošević (2015), Admiraal et al. (2015), Li et al. (2015), Balfour (2013), Billington and Fronmueller (2013), and Berge and Muilenburg (2013), MOOCs stand for Massive Open Online Courses. Summarising the interpretation of the afore-mentioned authors, each letter of the acronym indicates a specific characteristic that describes the functionalities of these courses:

- Massive in the sense that they can carry an unlimited number of participants from all over the world as well as providing a vast choice of activities.

- Open as they are easily and freely accessible to anyone willing to register to the proposed course.

- Online since the way the content and interaction are designed, managed, delivered, and accessed through the internet.

- Courses because they are in the form of organised lectures, that cover a whole array of disciplines, with goals, objectives, hourly and weekly volumes, learning materials, contents, activities, and assessments.

The first MOOC, named 'Connectivism and Connective Knowledge' and introduced by Siemens and Downes at Manitoba University (Canada), dates back to 2008 (Hollands & Tirthali, 2014; Berge & Muilenburg, 2013; Wang & Zhu, 2019; Pireva et al., 2015; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015; Sahli & Benaissi, 2018). With 2200 participants as a starting point, it was later on followed by Thrun and Norvig's (2011) Introduction to Artificial Intelligence course that comprised more than 160, 000 learners (Pireva et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Billington & Fronmueller, 2013). Since then, MOOCs have gained considerable popularity and the world's top institutions like Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard, or Stanford started developing their own MOOCs like edX, Coursera, FutureLearn, Khan Academy, or Udacity, to name a few.

These courses are now dominating the market and have become, through partnerships with other institutions, the providers of free high-quality courses. For this sake, MOOCs are considered to be a sign of elite that advocates a quality teaching (Pireva et al., 2015; Sahli & Benaissi, 2018; Bali, 2014; Wang & Zhu, 2019; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020; Hollands & Tirthali, 2014; Billington & Fronmueller, 2013), and a promoter of "life long learning" (Bali, 2014, p. 52). As highlighted above, MOOCs are free of charge. Nevertheless, the participants, who are seeking a certificate at the end of the training, are required to pay fees in some of them such as Coursera

(Billington & Fronmueller, 2013), edX, and Udacity (Mesquita, 2015; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Hollands & Tirthali, 2014).

This last point represents, according to Bali (2014), a considerable profit-making behind MOOCs. Apart from this certificate, what has attracted people the most is their ability to enrich one's knowledge thanks to the large availability of resources, and to develop an important 21st-century skill, 'digital literacy' (Mesquita, 2015). Yet, the question that may come to one's mind is how do MOOCs function? For better comprehension of their process, one has to refer back to Admiraal et al.'s (2015), Godwin-Jones's (2014), Hollands and Tirthali's (2014), and Bali's (2014) classification of the types of MOOCs.

5.7.1.1. Types of MOOCs

Although several types of MOOCs exist in the literature, according to Admiraal et al. (2015), Godwin-Jones (2014), Bali (2014), and Hollands and Tirthali (2014), the most important ones are xMOOCs and cMOOCs, two pedagogical approaches that have divergent principles. To distinguish between them, they are preceded by the letter x and c. Hollands and Tirthali (2014) explain that the former indicates exponential, i.e. "massive enrollments" (p. 25), and the latter refers to connectivism. XMOOCs, such as Udacity, Coursera, and edX (Admiraal et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014), are a traditional-alike teacher-centred approach to learning. Indeed, they comprise planned courses with fixed objectives, contents, hourly volume, and assessment.

Generally, they embody lectures that were already recorded by experts of elite universities in the form of short videos of a few minutes that students watch. In addition to those videos, other materials are provided such as lectures, readings, PDF documents, URL links, or articles. As far as the assessment is concerned, multiple-choice questions, short-answer assignments, and graded quizzes and exams are used (Admiraal et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Bali, 2014; Hollands & Tirthali, 2014). Like Bali (2014) asserts, they are a mere conversion of traditional courses into an online one.

CMOOCs, on the opposite, are connectivist and constructivist-based pedagogies upon which the learners, depending on their learning wants, are the sole responsible for their educational path. They are being guided by their instructors who are solely facilitators in that process. CMOOCs are a learner-centred pedagogy through which students take an active role in content creation by using various social networking sites such as wikis, blogs, YouTube videos, Tweeter, Facebook posts, Whatsapp, or even Google hangout (Admiraal et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Bali, 2014; Hollands & Tirthali, 2014). Henceforth, they require a sound mastery of technological tools (Bali, 2014; Godwin-Jones, 2014).

Despite their emphasis on autonomous learning, they are also based on the principle that knowledge is shared in a virtual community. The interaction, collaboration, and exchange of feedback between participants in these social networking tools represent the informal assessment method within cMOOCs. For this reason, they are viewed to be diverse, open, and interactive (Admiraal et al., 2015; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Bali, 2014; Hollands & Tirthali, 2014). As it can be noticed from the above-highlighted sections, not all MOOCs are similar (Bali, 2014). They are driven by different principles, philosophies, purposes, and even teachers' roles. What is also notable is that certain characteristics of MOOCs quite resemble the ones of the e-assessment tool, 'Moodle'. Indeed, the two systems have a lot in common.

5.7.1.2. Moodle and MOOCs

It should be highlighted that both MOOCs and Moodle depend on educational materials and audio-visual realia like videos and recordings for course-related purposes (Pireva et al., 2015; Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020). Moreover, they promote a common ideology, i.e. openness, adaptability, flexibility (Pireva et al., 2015; Ventura et al., 2014), interaction, and collaboration in learning (Ventura et al., 2014). Furthermore, they rely on multiple-choice tests, quizzes, self, peer, automatised, and computer-marked assessment (Admiraal et al., 2015). Additionally, they favour communication (be it either between teachers and students or among learners), collaborative tasks (through wikis, forums, and workshops), as well as reporting of

students' activities (Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). Despite their similarities, the two platforms are also different on certain grounds.

5.7.1.3. Moodle versus MOOCs

The divergences between Moodle and MOOCs lie mostly on their purposes, capacities, and features. MOOCs are designed to host an unlimited number of participants (Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020; Berge & Muilenburg, 2013), with varied age range, professions, and nationalities, that are willing to improve their skills (Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020; Berge & Muilenburg, 2013; Bali, 2014). For this reason, Pireva et al. (2015) declare that they aim at eradicating barriers in education, be them geographical, economic, or social, in that way guaranteeing a free distance education which is accessible to anyone in the world.

On the contrary, Moodle is a more institutional-based platform that is most fitted to students and academic staff. Indeed, it is geared by the principle of a one-institution only permitted access with a very restricted capacity of enrolling participants (Kumar, 2017; Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020). Moreover, the course and the evaluation on Moodle are created and managed by the administrator or the teacher only. The learners are allowed to access the course, upload their work, perform the assignments, and participate in the forum discussion, workshops, and wikis (Rice, 2008). Unlike it, the participants in MOOCs can take part in the course creation by adding and sharing materials (Berge & Muilenburg, 2013).

Furthermore, MOOCs imply developed interactive features that Moodle does not. Examples of these features include real-time virtual labs, meetings, workshops, and group discussions via social networking sites (Berge & Muilenburg, 2013; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). These advanced features have rendered MOOCs an up-dated, innovative, and attractive online learning tool (Kumar, 2017; Godwin-Jones, 2014). To take full advantage of two systems and fill in their respective gaps, they have been merged and Moodle has started to deliver its content via MOOCs (Blagojević & Milošević, 2015).

Despite the above-cited limitations of Moodle, scholars seem to agree on the fact that what the platform offers in terms of tools is more varied than MOOCs

(Godwin-Jones, 2014; Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). It should be reminded that Moodle has been for a long period of time one of the most notorious and utilised platforms in the world (Creixell & Ganter, 2016; Lien, 2015; Pireva et al., 2015; Meri Yilan & Koruyan, 2020). However, until very recently (Motzo & Proudfoot, 2017; Wang & Zhu, 2019), the situation has changed and MOOCs are starting to take the lead (Sahli, & Benaissi, 2018; Bali, 2014).

The popularity of MOOCs is so increasing that scholars believe that the number of their participants will outnumber the one of Moodle in the near future (Blagojević & Milošević, 2015). In effect, they are viewed to be the last development in open online education (Bali, 2014; Ventura et al., 2014), or as North et al. (2014, p.69) state, "the next logical phase of distance learning". Given the interest of the top-ranking institutions to these courses, the researcher considers that this direction is worth exploiting at the Department of English at Tlemcen University.

5.7.1.4. Suggestions with MOOCs

MOOCs embody a wide range of disciplines including the ones related to language learning commonly known as LMOOCs (Bárcena et al.,2014; Ventura et al. 2014; Ding & Shen, 2019). These MOOCs are viewed by Ding and Shen (2019) to be beneficial for learners because they offer varied activities that engage them in an authentic language produced by native speakers. Godwin-Jones (2014) further highlight that they can meet students' different needs. For instance, they enhance their language skills, prepare them for the IELTS exam, or equip them linguistically in their specific professions. Additionally, they promote flexibility, interaction, and collaboration (Ventura et al., 2014) and well as autonomy in learning (Ding & Shen, 2019).

Regarding writing, edX, for instance, proposes a number of courses related to writing such as 'academic writing for clarity and meaning' or 'how to write an essay'. Therefore, the researcher proposes that first-year CWE teachers at the department should show the students how these courses work by asking them to enrol in the aforementioned xMOOCs and be part of these lessons as a home assignment. Discussion and activities inside the classroom could arise from them. To further

expand the MOOC experience, they could be part of cMOOCs in the future whereby they would participate in virtual interactive writing workshops and forum discussions with other students abroad. They would be involved in peer assessment and exchange mutual feedback.

Alternatively, CWE teachers could elaborate their proper MOOC about writing like other institutions. It goes without saying that this cannot be carried out without proper training due to the newness of MOOCs at the department. It should be noted that in 2017, a training workshop was organised by a joint collaboration by Tlemcen University and the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) on the utilisation of MOOCs. A call for application was open for those holders of a MOOC or the ones willing to present their projects.

Additionally, in 2020, a number of students at Tlemcen University were offered free MOOCs in different fields and were given a certificate upon course accomplishment. Despite these initiatives, MOOCs are still in their early stages at Tlemcen University. Henceforth, more pieces of training, conferences, and workshops on this practice need to be held at the department with the help of experts in the field as it was proposed earlier in this chapter with Moodle (See 5.2.). In addition to MOOCs, other websites have been devised for teaching and writing such as automated written corrective feedback.

5.7.2. Automated Written Corrective Feedback Websites

As their name indicates, automated written corrective feedback websites automatically correct a piece of writing and give instant corrective feedback (Ranalli, 2018). Their inclusion in the EFL classroom has become trendy recently. Indeed, they are viewed to be beneficial for EFL students' writing as they open room for rehearsal and improvement (Koltovskaia, 2020). Besides, they are also helpful for instructors and a real gain of time for them in the sense that they correct for them those mechanical and syntactical mistakes and let them focus on more complex matters such as organisation and content (Koltovskaia, 2020; Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018; Ranalli, 2018). Some scholars even believe that their consistency and objectiveness

are higher than the human rating (Koltovskaia, 2020). However, this claim is still under debate.

An array of these websites exist on the internet such as Virtual Writing Tutor, Expresso-App, Ginger Software, Scribens, LanguageTool, Reverso, or WritingAssistant, to name a few. Yet one of them that is gaining trend lately is Grammarly. The latter is a free online grammar and spell checker/proofreading website. At first, it allows the writer to set the goals behind writing, i.e. the audience to whom the text is addressed, its level of formality, the domain it tackles, and tone used as illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 5.3. The Goals in Writing Proposed by Grammarly

Once the goals are set, it instantly scans the text and gives automated feedback that detects syntactical, lexical, and mechanical errors; corrects them; and proposes alternatives to better one's writing as well as pieces of advice and grammatical rules (Ghufron & Rosyida, 2018; Karyuatry et al., 2018). Examples are shown below:
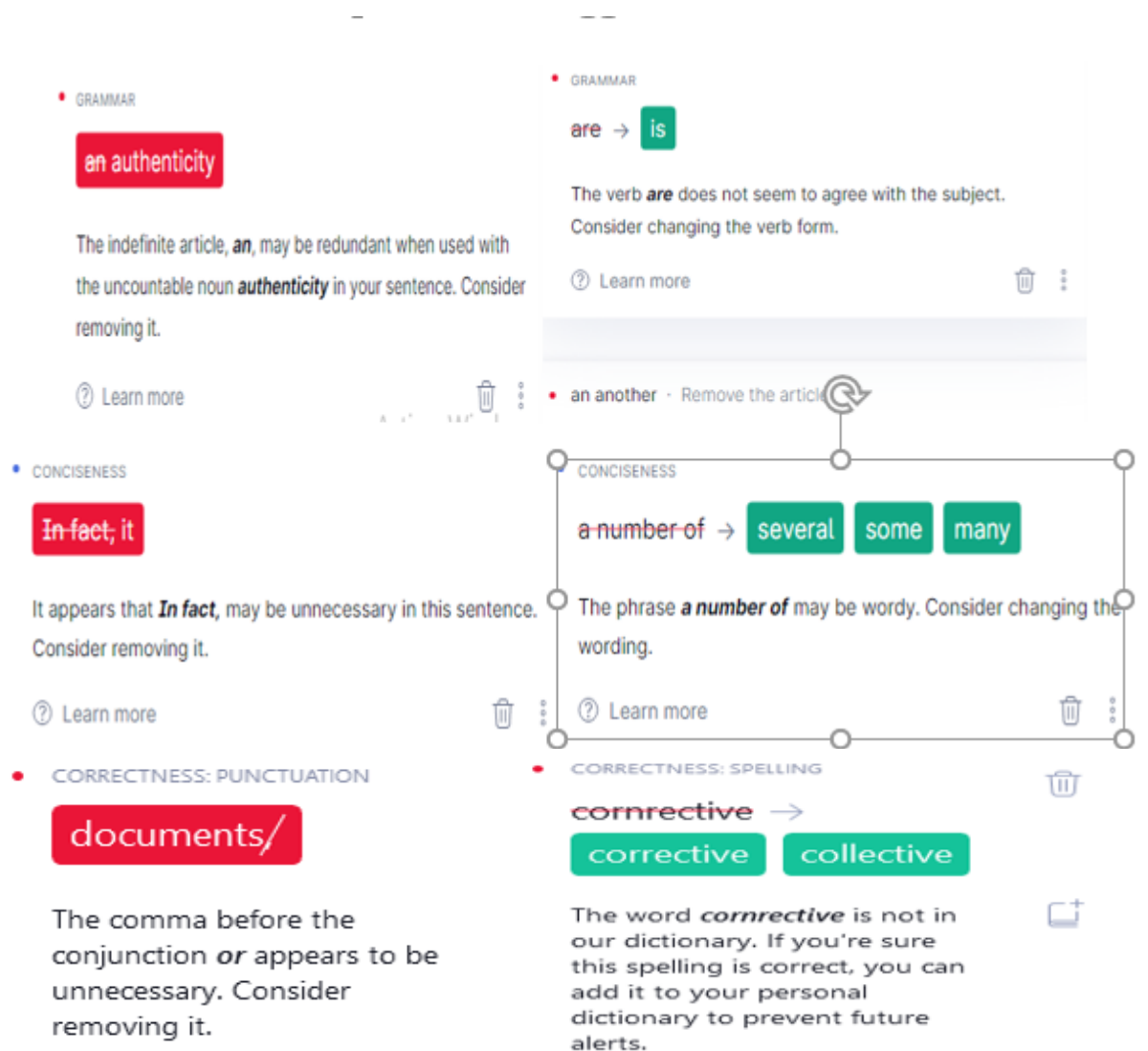
Figure 5.4. Instances of the Correction of Grammarly

Although the aforementioned features are free of charge, the paid version of Grammarly gives to the writer more developed options that spotlight what they call, 'premium issues'. Accordingly, the writer is being offered services such as plagiarism detection, expert's proofreading, and other lexical, stylistic, and semantical suggestions that would increase the readability and fluency in writing. A number of studies were undertaken which proved the efficiency of Grammarly on EFL students' writing. Using a quasi-experimental study on 40 students in a writing classroom at English Education Study Programme University, Indonesia, Ghufron and Rosyida (2018) used Grammarly as a treatment. Both groups were given a writing test; however, the way the teacher corrected those tests was different.

The experimental group was asked to write a paragraph, save it, and then, create a second version using Grammarly for revision purposes. Afterwards, they were required to compare it with the initial piece of writing before its final evaluation by the teacher. As to the control group, it was subject to a traditional teacher's corrective feedback upon which the mistakes were highlighted, and remarks were given. After that, they had to correct those mistakes and submit the paragraph to the teacher. Content, organisation, diction, mechanics, and language use were assessed. The findings of the post-test revealed that the experimental group reduced their mistakes in terms of diction, language use, and mechanics thanks to the feedback of the software.

Besides, an increase in their autonomy was also noticed. However, regarding the content, organisation, and even coherence, the software was not able to detect those aspects of writing and the teacher's corrective feedback in the control group was more efficient. Another instance of studies conducted in this direction is Karyuatry et al. (2018). As a result of an interview that revealed 40 students' disinterest in writing because of its difficulty, the authors decided to carry out action research on the effect of Grammarly to enhance students' descriptive essay writing at As-Syafi'iyah Islamic University, Indonesia. At first, the researchers inquired about the number of problems faced by the students in writing. Once the problems were identified, they elaborated a lesson plan and engaged their learners in a writing activity.

The activity consisted of writing an essay following their outline, and having recourse to Grammarly for revision. This tool was supposed to help them improve their sentence arrangement. After assessing content, organisation, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, learners were administered a questionnaire to investigate their opinions regarding the inception of Grammarly in the classroom. The analyses of the essays and the questionnaire showed that the majority of the informants improved their grades and disclosed their appreciation for the tool. The authors concluded that Grammarly decreased students' mistakes, involved them in the learning process, and raised their language awareness as far as grammar and vocabulary were concerned.

For all of these reasons, the researcher recommends CWE teachers to add the link of those websites into the classroom's Moodle page so that to push students to employ automated written corrective feedback websites to enhance their writing, practice more, and self-assess themselves. Moreover, many of these websites can be used both in Microsoft word to correct long documents or as an extension in web browsers for emails or Social Networking Sites (SNSs). In that way, it would permit a constant assessment of any piece of writing that learner would produce. Apart from e-learning platforms and educational websites, games could also be a solution to students' writing.

5.8. Game-Based Writing

Reinders (2009) mentions the existence of several educational games for writing purposes. Among them, he cites puzzles, riddles, or crosswords. However, he states that these games are often considered to be boring by students. Therefore, as an interactive way of teaching writing, he suggests the introduction of free computer games in the EFL classroom. As writing tasks, he suggests asking the students to write about the game in terms of environment, levels, or tackled theme so that to give their opinion about it. Virtual games like 'the Sims' or 'Second Life', which imply the creation of characters, could be used. This would allow students to describe characters and defend the reasons behind their selection.

From the standpoint of Reinders (2009), this method is appropriate for teaching writing for numerous reasons. First, video games embody written input that allows learners to learn new words and practice their syntactic knowledge. Additionally, they include a chat section. Hence, teachers can ask the students to write to each other only in English while playing, and then, assess those conversations. Apart from linguistic benefits, he declares that they fit the totality of students' learning styles, i.e. visual, oral, written, spatial, and kinaesthetic. Furthermore, they enable them to develop logic, critical thinking, and strategy.

5.9. Academic Writing Module

The researcher observed throughout students' pieces of writing that learners lacked mastery of academic norms. It should be reminded that academic writing is

merely initiated in the two-first year of English study at the English Department at Tlemcen University. It is only in the third year that learners start having detailed notions of academic writing as a preparation for dissertation writing in Master two. One year of academic writing is believed to be insufficient, especially that the majority of the modules depend on a written examination in the form of essays or paragraph writing. Such knowledge of formalities in writing is deemed to be crucial for those learners who will pursue post-graduate studies. The researcher advises adding a module of academic writing until the end of the university cycle. By doing so, the learners will be trained to write formally and ready for writing extended essays or articles in the future.

5.10. Conclusion

One can notice throughout the work that the merge of technology along with teaching leads to fruitful results on EFL students' writing. On this basis, this chapter proposed a number of suggestions that could better first-year students' writing abilities at the Department of English at Tlemcen University. At first, it insisted on the importance of vulgarising the Moodle-based assessment via organising workshops, study days, conferences, and pieces of training. These scientific events would aim at broadening knowledge about the computer-based assessment, eradicating people's scepticism about it, and training teachers and students so that to master such a type of evaluation.

Then, it showed how it could be contextualised at the department. One of these ways was exploiting the angle of collaboration. Accordingly, it suggested using Moodle features to design collaborative writing tasks through wikis, forum discussions, workshops. In addition to these tasks, the chapter focused on collaboration with regard to the teaching staff. It assumed that being collaborators is by far one of the most important factors behind the success of e-assessment at the department that would likely to provide innovation and attraction in the CWE module.

Besides being collaborators, their other roles were dealt with in this chapter as they are also believed to have their fair share. They included designers, organisers,

guiders, facilitators of the learning process, and motivators. Moreover, this chapter did not focus on assessment only, but also addressed some pedagogical aspects whereby e-portfolios would be collected, handbooks designed, reading added to writing because of their interrelatedness, academic writing taught throughout students' university studies, and games used. Additionally, other alternatives to Moodle were proposed that boiled around to web-based materials.

General Conclusion

The present research work was designed to assess the effect of changing the assessment in the CWE module at the Department of English at Tlemcen University by introducing an educational platform, 'Moodle', to achieve e-assessment-related tasks. Being never used in the module while living in an era surrounded by technology, having recourse to such a type of evaluation has become necessary in order to cope with the needs of this changing society. However, because of the novelty of this assessment within the department, this integration could not be carried out without taking many parameters into account.

These parameters included first the environment where the experiment would be undertaken. It was of crucial importance to investigate the willingness, attitudes, and feedback of teachers and students towards it as well as its feasibility and usefulness, and then, the where, when, and how to implement it. Henceforth, those parameters required the adoption of a mixed-method design. The latter combined the case study along with the experimental design.

Through the case study, a needs analysis was carried out by following Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model. Moreover, the teaching/learning situation in the CWE module was described, a crucial element for the design of the experimental tests, i.e. content and scoring rubric. Furthermore, learners' needs, wants, and lacks at the level of assessment were identified, and the opinion of teachers and students towards this change were explored. To achieve these objectives, a structured interview was administered to 7 first-year English teachers and a questionnaire to 35 first-year EFL students and at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, and were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

Once the needs analysis was carried out, the experimentation started. To this end, tests were designed, implemented, administered, and then, corrected on the e-assessment platform for an experimental group that consisted of 21 first-year EFL students. The experimental group was compared to another control group of a similar number that was traditionally assessed within the same research setting. While the tests were subjected to only a quantitative analysis using SPSS, the post-questionnaire depended on both types of analysis.

To structure this piece of work, five chapters were elaborated. The first chapter reviewed the literature of assessment, e-assessment, and writing, and outlined the previous studies that tackled the computer-based assessment within the EFL writing classroom. The second chapter was devoted to the description of the teaching/learning situation in the CWE module and the research methodology that geared the work. It highlighted the research designs, the sampling methods, the sample population, the research instruments, and the data collection and analysis procedures along with definitions and justifications for the choices that were made in this regard.

Chapter three dealt with the first phase of the data analysis where the necessities, wants, lacks, and attitudes were identified by interpreting the findings of the interview and questionnaire. Chapter four represented the core of the study as it assessed the effect of the proposed evaluation method. It indicated the various steps that were followed throughout the experimental phase of the work. They moved from the description and the adaptation of the model of test that was used for the design, implementation, and administration of the experimental tests on the e-assessment platform. It also reported their analysis and interpretation as well as the ones of the post-experiment questionnaire. In the last chapter, some recommendations and suggestions were proposed for the sake of improving students' writing abilities.

The findings of the needs analysis revealed that students needed more writing sessions, practice, feedback, teacher-learner interaction, self-assessment, formative assessment, remedial work, diagnosis; and a motivating, attractive, and up-to-date evaluation. These needs demonstrated that the Moodle platform, as an alternative assessment method, can meet them. As far as the attitudes were concerned, the majority of teachers were reluctant to change due to their preference for the traditional assessment and scepticism about the usefulness and feasibility of e-assessment at the department. Moreover, they had a biased assumption and a negative image of this form of evaluation which they tended to relate with laziness and cheating. They also considered it to be a constraint and a waste of time which required efforts and continuous investment.

On the contrary, a minority of teachers (2 out of 7) supported this idea and praised the benefits e-assessment could provide for them and their students. They believed that the implementation of this method of evaluation in the Department required proper training, collaboration, and involvement of all writing teachers. Henceforth, Hyp1, which stated a scepticism towards e-assessment and a reluctance and resistance to change from the part of teachers, was confirmed.

Regarding students, the majority of the informants were in favour of the introduction of e-assessment in the writing module. They did not like the state of the current assessment, and wanted to be introduced to innovation in the writing module through the inception of ICTs in their evaluation. It was associated with fun and motivation to learn as most of them declared feeling more at ease with computers. In effect, as most of them are digital natives and are already accustomed to such devices in their daily life, they demand more interactivity in learning and tend to be more involved in an e-learning environment. Thus, e-assessment is more appropriate for them.

The remaining respondents preferred the old habits and their teacher's way of correcting which they considered to be appropriate and did not necessitate any modifications. Hence, Hyp 2, which stipulated a more positive attitude towards e-assessment because students consider it to be a more interactive, attractive, and interesting way of learning than the traditional paper-based assessment, was confirmed. As far as the tests were concerned, the quantitative analysis revealed that students who experienced the Moodle-based e-assessment obtained a higher score in comparison with the ones who did not, confirming, thus, Hyp3 which asserts a significant effect of the Moodle-oriented approach on first-year EFL students' writing performance at Tlemcen University.

The researcher related the improvement mainly to the way students' paragraphs were corrected and individual feedback and remedial work provided both online and in the classroom. This was supported by students' answers in the post-experiment questionnaire in which they declared that the efficiency of the feedback in terms of quality, repetitive occurrence, and rapidity was the reason behind the

improvement. However, the enhancement was not solely due to the feedback as it is highlighted in Hyp4. Indeed, based on their other answers, it was found that they associated e-assessment with fun, motivation, gain of time, and organisation. Henceforth, the researcher concluded that there were pedagogical, practical, and emotional factors behind the proposed type of evaluation, and that Moodle acted as a pedagogical teaching support to the traditional evaluation. Thus, Hyp4 was partially confirmed.

Though the work was undertaken only on a small scale, one cannot deny the efficiency of the proposed assessment method. The obtained findings are promising and open the door for new perspectives towards assessment. Therefore, the researcher strongly believes that this type of evaluation should be part of teachers' instruction within the department for numerous reasons. In fact, it would facilitate the job of the teacher because the design, submission, delivery, and correction of the tests as well as the management of the results would become much easier. Moreover, it would represent an organised, clear, relaxing, motivating, attractive, user-friendly, and up-to-date 21st-century evaluation. Furthermore, it would open the door for rehearsal, feedback, teacher-student interaction, self-assessment, autonomous learning, diagnosis, remedial work, and track of students' progress.

Additionally, it would enable students to have direct feedback on their performance as it gives a clear vision of the types of errors they produce. Besides, it would create a better learning environment for learners since technology is an interactive way of learning that would motivate them to provide more effort, attract them, and involve them in the learning process. In addition to that, it would overcome some of the limitations that can be found in the traditional assessment. Plus, it would enable students to have better control over their mistakes throughout time so as to enhance their writing abilities. Consequently, it would lead to quality education that would improve both teaching and learning.

For this sake, the technological-based assessment should never be denigrated like what the respondents, mainly teachers, expressed in this study concerning the mere idea of using it in the writing module without even giving it a try. The researcher

hopes that just like those teachers followed the orders of the Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and had recourse to Moodle, as it was the sole option left to pursue studies given the circumstances of the COVID-19 Pandemic, they would start considering its use for assessment as well. In effect, although the Minister restricted the platform to the instruction only, he or another responsible could also order its use for evaluation purposes and it could be the future of the Algerian University.

It goes without saying that given the current socio-economic situation at the Algerian university, which is reflected by the lack of materials, moving from what has been implemented for ages at the level of assessment to e-assessment will not be done overnight but rather gradually. Such a change is not an easy task. It takes time and requires a lot of effort and investment from the part of the authorities to widen its use. However, the researcher strongly believes that through a proper adaptation; thorough organisation; and increased enthusiasm, collaboration, and devotion from the part of all the people involved in the assessment (teaching and administrative staff and students), its successful deployment will certainly be ensured.

Like every investigation, the present work was not carried out as planned and certain problems came across its running, problems commonly known as research limitations. One of those limitations was related to the size of the sample. In fact, the researcher intended to gather the data from a much larger sample so that the results could be representative of the target population. However, some students either did not return the questionnaires or left them blank, and many were not committed to the experiments until the end. The laziness and lack of collaboration of certain learners, and time constraints reduced the number of questionnaires to be analysed and informants during the experiment lied behind the research difficulty.

Moreover, the work solely emphasised on assessing the writing skill per se while addressing only some of its areas such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, organisation, and content. In addition to that, it did not address some variables such as age and gender. Furthermore, the experiment was restricted to the English department at Tlemcen University and lasted for only 4 months. It should be reminded

that the experiment started during the second semester of the academic year 2019. Henceforth, only the two last units of the CWE syllabus were implemented within the platform. Because of time constraints, the researcher was unable to tackle the remaining units. Besides, the experiment represented a first attempt at the proposed assessment method.

The researcher suggests that the experiment could reach a much larger audience, and be repeated in the remaining Algerian Universities for generalisation purposes. It could be extended to other advanced levels and last for a longer period of time. It could also take age as a variable in order to see which range would perform better, and the gender variable to find out if there would be significant differences between them. The remaining units could be expended in the future on Moodle along with their learning objectives and a large number of activities. Additionally, because the platform includes an array of possibilities for assessment, they could explore the effect of these features such as the e-portfolio, collaborative learning, wikis, forums, and peer assessment on students' writing.

Plus, more in-depth investigations and analyses should be carried out by future researchers as far as the design of research instruments of the study are concerned. This would offer wider and more detailed perspectives on the subject area, and deal with elements that were not tackled in the present work. For instance, they could centre their attention on the effect of Moodle on specific aspects of writing instead of general writing assessment. Moreover, they could shift the area of interest to the rest of the language skills such as speaking and reading. Despite these limitations, this piece of work is believed to act as a guideline for future writing teachers within the Department of English at Tlemcen University who want to implement such practices in their EFL classroom because of the scarcity of investigations on this topic there.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Investigation made by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Evaluation du taux d'échec en 1ère année – Domaine : LLE – Filière : Langue Anglaise

1. **Date de démarrage des enseignements**

2. **Durée moyenne du semestre**

3. **Taux de réalisation du programme /matière**

4. **La 1ère évaluation**

   ➢ **Contrôle continu** :
   ➢ **Contrôle semestriel** :

5. **Réalisation du TP nombre/semestre**

6. **Enumérer les difficultés principales :**

Indiquer, à chaque fois :

La composition de l'équipe de formation, en précisant les noms, prénoms, spécialités et grades des enseignants intervenants.

   (Liste jointe en annexe)

Les types d'évaluation réalisées (examen final, contrôle continu, travaux personnels,…) :

Existence ou non d'un système de tutorat. Si oui, indiquer le type et l'organisation et l'appréciation de l'effet introduit par le tutorat.

Modèle de canevas à renseigner :

Domaine : ST (MI/LLE)   **(Canevas joint en annexe)**

Type de bac	Matière 1		Matière 2		Matière 3		…	
	inscrits	Taux échec	inscrits	Taux échec	inscrits	Taux échec	inscrits	Taux échec
Maths								
Sc Exp								
….								

Avis global de l'équipe de formateurs :

Recommandations :

Appendices

Samples of Teachers' Analysis (French version)

1. Nombre d'étudiants élevé, ce qui rend l'enseignement de certains modules (tels que l'expression orale, l'expression écrite,

   la phonétique, la méthodologie) qui nécessitent une prise en charge individualisée de l'étudiant, presque impossible.

2. Manque d'assiduité des étudiants.

3. Niveau de beaucoup d'étudiants en deçà des exigences de la filière.

Le niveau des étudiants ne dépasse pas le seuil de l'identification et de la compréhension. Il leur faut beaucoup de travail pour atteindre les niveaux d'analyse, de synthèse et d'évaluation.

Les étudiants sont souvent confrontés à des problèmes linguistiques qui les empêchent d'avancer dans leur apprentissage et dans l'acquisition des connaissances qui leur sont transmises par le biais de modules tels que la culture de la langue et la littérature.D'où un déséquilibre palpable entre le niveau linguistique et les objectifs de la formation.

Matière	Semestre 01	Difficultés principales	Propositions
Matière 1	Compréhension et expression écrite 1	- Difficulté scripturale/ lectorale - Vulnérabilité des prérequis	- Intensification des travaux de TD - Accompagnement
Matière 2	Compréhension et expression orale 1	- Répertoire lexical limité	- Exploitation des TICE
Matière 3	Grammaire de la langue d'étude 1	- Le profil n'est pas adéquat au contenu universitaire	- Travaux intensifs. - Accompagnement
Matière 4	phonétique corrective et articulatoire 1	- Problème de corrélation entre le signe graphique et phonique	- Activités de remédiation
Matière 5	initiation à la linguistique 1 (concepts)	- Problème d'assimilation de concepts	- Opérationnalisation des concepts
Matière 6	initiation aux textes littératures	-Culture littéraire limitée	- Développer le gout de lecture littéraire.
Matière 7	Culture (s) / Civilisation(s) de la langue 1	- Absence d'une culture générale sur les pays anglophones	- Autonomie des savoirs
Matière 8	Techniques du travail universitaire 1	- Absence de processus de maturation	- Développer des acquis
Matière 9	Sciences sociales et humaines 1	- Logistique - Efforts des apprenants	- Plus de documentation bibliographique

Appendices

Samples of Teachers' Analysis (English version)

First year students demonstrate serious weaknesses at the level of language skills in the sense that they do not respond to the standard requirements of higher education studies. The reasons might be attributed to a few main factors. Many students enrolled in this specialization (English) not because they have interest to study English or that they possess the necessary skills, but because they were not oriented properly. Another major factor is the fact that most of their pre-university English studies were given mechanically with little or no practice of the language skills. The focus was generally given to teaching grammar and vocabulary with no importance given to communicative competencies. In addition, it is very important to highlight the problem of multilevel and overcrowded classes where a foreign language is taught. These are among the main challenging problems that a foreign language instructor encounters, the results of which affect on the limited amount of practice, regular assessment, and hence little progress. Other factors that may contribute negatively to the students' learning difficulties can be the teaching methods and the lack of proper equipment to foreign language instruction. Therefore, it is important to consider the above-mentioned challenges that affect the teaching-learning processes by revisiting at the first place the criteria of students' enrollment in foreign (English) language studies, and provide a solid orientation program to guide them through their first years of study at the university.

Appendix B: First-Year CWE

Syllabus

L1 CWE SYLLABUS (2016-2017)

Units	Rhetorical focus	Language focus
Unit 1 : Sentence & paragraph parts 2 to 5	• Paragraph organization • Unity • Coherence	• Sentence structure (simple, compound & complex sentences) • Clauses • Punctuation
Unit 2 : Descriptive paragraph parts 2 to 5	• Paragraph organization • Use of concrete and sensory details • Figurative Vs literal language	• Use of adjectives • Use of relative clauses
Unit 6: Narrative paragraph Parts 1 to 5	• Paragraph organization • Transition (order of events)	• Use of past simple and continuous • Use of adverbial clauses
Unit 5: Opinion/ Argumentative paragraph Parts 1 to 5	• Paragraph organization • Using reasons to support opinion • Transition	• There is/ there are, their/ there • Because/ because of

In addition every month students are provided with a short story (PDF/ online) to read and are tested on it

Appendix C: Assessment in the CWE Module

Appendices

Name…………………………………………

CWE Test

1)- Employ the following words in complex sentences:
Delighted   Earned   Eager Delay
………
………
………
………
………

2)- Underline the clauses and state their types in each of the following sentences:
- The girl was very impatient, especially as the cab seemed to crawl along as slowly as possible.

- Although he does not know why he should be so sure, he knew that the girl is telling the truth.

- I must say, Joan, that I have never been on a journey that has made me so tired.

- The drive back to the hotel was even slower than the drive out, and when they got back to the centre of the room, the cab driver stopped outside a hotel that was unknown to her.

- This terrace was the same place where my father was murdered a week ago.

- I started thinking why I am doing this, about my theory that he was murdered.

- She noticed a young man, who to judge by his clothes could not be anything else but English, and although modest by nature, she jumped out of the cab and ran into him

- I should feel much happier if only I know what happened to her.

3)- Write a descriptive paragraph of 10 lines in which you describe one of the following topics. Use at least two relative clauses (underline them) and at least two sensory details.

Mr. Bates
The doctor in the short story: 'The Mystery of Room 342'.
The hotel room in which Miss. Day and her mother were.
Lina's feeling when she went back in time and saw her father.

....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....
....

Name…………………………………………….

CWE Test

1)- Put each of the following words in a complex sentence with an adverb clause of time that you should underline:
Outstanding   Conquer   Fair play
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2)-In a coherent and organised narrative paragraph of about twelve lines, write the story of Sir Francis DRAKE according to the notes provided below. Do not forget to use the appropriate tense, liking devices, adverb clauses and some sensory details. The topic sentence has been provided for you.

Among the famous English sailors and soldiers in British history lies Sir Francis DRAKE.
- (to participate) in some of the earliest English slaving voyages to Africa
- (to send) by Queen Elizabeth II to South America in 1577
- (to earn) a reputation for his piracy against Spanish ships and possessions.
- (to return) home via the Pacific
- (to become) the first Englishman to circumnavigate and sail around the globe
- (to reward) by the queen with a knighthood.
- (to serve) in 1588 as second-in-command during the English victory over the Spanish Armada. The most famous mariner of the Elizabethan Age
- (to be able) to break the power of Spain
- (to die) off the coast of Panama in 1596
- (to burry) at sea wearing full armour and encased in a lead-lined coffin.

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Name:…………………...………

CWE Test

1)-The following underlined words have been taken directly from the short story. Write each word in a complex sentence and underline the main clause in each:
-I <u>resolved</u> to give two pounds to Eliza -I <u>rushed out</u> after him- I did not mean to simply <u>hand </u>them to her

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2)-What do you think about the personality of Eliza's husband? Answer this question in a compound-complex sentence.

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3)- What was the pleasant surprise that Eliza's husband was planning for her? What happened to the money which was hidden in Eliza's pockets?

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UNIVERSITY OF TLEMCEN
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
1ST year Licence

Comprehension and Written Expression
First Exam (Jan 2019)

EXERCISE 1
Read the paragraph below and extract the sentences which are off-topic.

Each of the U.S. manned space exploration projects had specific major goals. For example, the Mercury project was designed to test whether or not human beings could survive and function in outer space. In addition, the Mercury project tested rockets with the new Mercury space capsule, which could hold one person. As another example, the Gemini project was intended to find out whether two people could work in the weightless environment of space. One way of doing this was by having Gemini astronauts take "spacewalks." That is, they floated outside their spacecraft in a spacesuit, connected to it by a tether. This type of walk was developed into the famous dancing move called 'moonwalk' by Michael Jackson. Finally, the Apollo project, with three astronauts, had the goal of testing spacecraft and skills so that people could actually fly to the Moon and land on it. Probably people will spend their holiday on the moon in the future. Other goals included performing scientific experiments on the lunar surface and collecting rocks for study on Earth. These three space projects have different goals with different lessons for human beings.

EXERCISE 2
Combine the following pairs of sentences using subordination.
1-He is the accountant. You recommended the accountant to me.
2-I will never forget the man. That man stole my car.
3- We have a meeting in the restaurant. We met in this restaurant yesterday.
4-He is eating a cake. His mother has prepared the cake.

EXERCISE 3
Rewrite and improve the following paragraph by avoiding repetition

I live with my family in a beautiful house. This house is Malaysian. This house is neither modern nor old. We have two bedrooms. We have a living room. We also have a dining room. We have a kitchen. We have a garden and we have some flowers there. The garden is a little garden. I have a brother. My brother is older than me. I have a sister. My sister is younger than me. I think I am very lucky to live with my brother and my sister. I enjoy playing with my brother and my sister and sharing with my brother and my sister. Our house is a beautiful house, and I am happy to live in it with my family.

EXERCISE 4

Write a descriptive paragraph of 10 to 12 lines using at least two instances of different **sensory details** (that you underline) and an instance of **figurative language** (that you surround) on one of the following topics:

a. A character from a book, movie, or television program
b. A place you have visited.

Appendices

Comprehension and Written Expression
Second Exam (June 2019)

EXERCISE 1 (6pts)

Put the verbs between brackets in the <u>Past Simple</u> or <u>Past Continuous</u>.

I (buy) a new alarm clock the other day in Taylor's the jewelers, when I actually (see) somebody shoplifting. I'd just finished paying for my clock and as I (turn) round, an elderly woman (slowly put) a silver plate into a bag that she was carrying. Then she (walk) over to another part of the shop and (pick up) an expensive-looking watch a number of times. When she (think) that nobody (look), she (drop) it into the bag. Before I had a chance to tell the staff in the shop, she (notice) that I (watch) her and (hurry) out.

EXERCISE 2 (4pts)

Link the first part of the sentence in column A to the suitable second part in column B using <u>because</u> or <u>because of</u>

A	B
1-The government banned that movie**.**	a-His strange accent
2-All the flights were cancelled.	b-The harsh weather conditions
3-Jim is trying to find a place of his own.	c- He wants to feel independent.
4-I couldn't understand him.	d-The public opinion was against it.

EXERCISE 3 (2pts)

Combine the following sentences into one sentence (avoid repetition)

1)a-The sounds disturbed him.
   b-The sounds were of an orchestra.
   c-The orchestra was composed of many musicians.
   d-The musicians' instruments were very noisy.

2)a-The house was sold.
   b-The house is red.
   c-The house is next to ours.
   d-The owners of the house were short of money.

EXERCISE 4 (8pts)

Write on <u>one</u> of the following topics:

1) In a paragraph of about twelve lines, narrate about a happy memory from your childhood including sensory and emotional details, adverb clauses and adverbs.

2) Is reading books helpful to develop students' writings? Give your opinion in a paragraph of twelve lines using reasons to support your opinion and appropriate transitional words.

Appendix D: Interview with Teachers

Appendices

Interview with Teachers

Dear teacher,

Thank you very much for taking from your time and accepting to participate in the study. This conversation will be kept confidential without any reference to your name during the entire phase of the study.

If you don't mind, I would like to tape-record our conversation for the sake of making sure that no single detail is being missed and being able to concentrate with you during the whole conversation.

The present interview seeks to investigate the current teaching situation of the CWE module as well as your opinion about the integration of e-assessment as a means to evaluate first-year EFL students' written production. The interview is divided into three parts. The first part will be about the current teaching situation of CWE. In the second part, I will ask you about your opinion on the lacks that exist at the level of assessment in the module. In the last part, I will ask you about your opinion on the integration of e-assessment as a tool to evaluate your students' writing performance.

- Before starting the interview, would you please introduce yourself? (position at Tlemcen University, speciality, and experience teaching the CWE module).

Part I: Situation Analysis (necessities)

1. Could you explain the aim of the CWE module at the Licence level?
2. What does the Lic.1 CWE syllabus consist of?
3. Do you believe that it emphasises more on writing as a product or rather as a process?
4. What are its learning objectives?
5. What sort of assessments (activities, tests, and exams) are provided to Lic.1 students in the CWE module?
6. What do you focus more on when correcting their papers?

Part II: Lacks in the Module

7. Do you provide feedback to your students when correcting their papers?

   If yes, which type of feedback do you provide?

   Holistic ☐

   Detailed ☐

8. Do you track your students' progress?

9. How do you feel when you correct your students' tests or written assignments?

Exhausted ☐   Neutral   ☐   Motivated   ☐

Other   (please   specify)

……………………………………………………………………………

10. Does your students'handwriting influence the correction?

11. In your opinion, what do you think is lacking at the level of assessment in the CWE module?

Part III: Attitude towards E-Assessment

12. Have you ever thought about changing your current assessment method in the CWE module?

13. Would you encourage your students to present their written assignments typed? Why?

14. Have you ever used e-assessment in the CWE module?

15. Would you be willing to introduce e-assessment in the module to assess your students' writing?

If yes: How would you benefit from its introduction?

How would your students benefit from its introduction?

Do you think that it can contribute to the development of your students' writing abilities? Why?

If no, could you explain why?

Would you like to know more about it?

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Appendix E: Questionnaire to Students

Appendices

Questionnaire to Students

Dear student,
Thank you for accepting to fill in this questionnaire that aims at investigating your opinion about the present situation in the CWE module as well as the integration of e-assessment (a type of evaluation that relies on the computer) as a means to evaluate first-year EFL students' written production.
All the answers that you provide for the sake of this study are appreciated. Note that your identity and answers will be kept in total confidentiality.
Please put a ✔where there is a small box, and answer the questions in the given space. You are kindly invited to respond to the following questions.

Part I: Necessities

01-What do you need to learn in the writing module?

....

....

....

02-Which aspects of your writing do you want to improve thanks to the writing

module in order to be able to write effectively?

Sentence structure ☐
Grammar ☐
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalisation) ☐
Formality ☐
Coherence (logical sequence of ideas) ☐
Organisation ☐
Other   (please   specify)
…………………………………………………………………………………………...

Part II: Lacks

03- When correcting your paper, does your teacher: (choose only one answer)

Circle/ underline your mistakes? ☐
Correct your mistakes? ☐
Let you correct by yourself? ☐
Give no remarks? ☐
Other   (please   specify)
…………………………………………………………………………………………...

04- Do you think that your handwriting influences the way he/she corrects your

paper?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, could you explain more?

....

....

....

05-How do you generally feel when the test sheet is given to you the day of the test?

(choose only one answer)

Stressed ☐
Neutral ☐
Motivated ☐
Other   (please   specify)

……………………………………………………………………….....................

06-Has your teacher ever used technology to correct your assignment or tests?

Yes ☐   No ☐

07-Do you think that your teacher's correction would be different if the paper was

typed (on the computer)?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Justify your answer

....

....

....

08- How would you feel if the test sheet was given to you on the computer? (choose

only one answer)

Stressed ☐
Neutral ☐
Motivated ☐
Other   (please   specify)

……………………………………………………………………….............

Explain why?

....

....

....

Part III: Wants

09- Do you like the way you are currently being evaluated in the CWE module?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Why?

....

....

....

10- Do you think that changes should be made at the level of correction in the CWE module?

Yes ☐   No ☐

If yes, which of the following changes would you like to be added: (choose only one answer)

-Modernisation of the correction through using technology ☐

-More feedback (remarks about your writing) should be given by the teacher   ☐

-More teacher/learner interaction ☐

Other   (please   specify)

………………………………………………………………………………......

Part IV: Attitude

11-Have you ever heard about e-assessment (the computer-based evaluation) before?

Yes ☐   No ☐

12- Are you in favour of introducing the computer-based evaluation as a means to evaluate your written assignments in the writing module?

If yes, how do you think it will be beneficial for you?

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If no, why?

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………………………………………………………………………Appendices…

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Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix F: Post-Experiment Questionnaire

Post-Experiment Questionnaire

Dear students,
Thank you for accepting to fill in this questionnaire that seeks to investigate your impressions about the fact of being assessed online by means of an educational platform. We appreciate all the answers that you provide for the sake of our study. Your identity as well as your answers will be kept in total confidentiality. Please put a ✓where there is a small box, and answer the open-ended questions in the space given. You are kindly invited to answer the following questions:

1-Did you like being evaluated on the platform?
Yes ☐   No ☐
2-What did you like the most about it?
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3-What did not you like about it?
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4- Do you prefer this way of evaluation or the one in the classroom? Why?
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5- Would you like this method of evaluation to be introduced in the writing module in the future?
Yes ☐   No ☐
6-How did you find the feedback provided on the platform?
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7- If this feedback was given to you repeatedly on the platform, do you think it will help you improve your writing abilities?
Yes ☐   No ☐
Justify your answer
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Appendix G: Steps of the Experimentation

Request Addressed to the Head of the Department to undertake the Experiment in the Internet Room

ghoualikamila@gmail.com

Tlemcen le : 03/02/2019

A l'intention de Monsieur le chef du département

Objet : Demande de salle

Monsieur le chef du département,

J'ai l'honneur de vous demander de bien vouloir mettre à ma disposition la salle d'informatique du département afin de lancer, en présence des étudiants, la mise en œuvre d'une plateforme en relation avec ma thèse de doctorat. Les dates d'utilisation seront fixées en commun accord.

Recevez, Monsieur, mes salutations respectueuses.

GHOUALI Kamila

Appendices

Assessment Criteria of the ECL exam

Writing

Assessment

A2

Part 1

FORMAL ACCURACY	WRITTEN ACCURACY	VOCABULARY	STYLE	COMMUNICATIVE EFFECTIVENESS
3	**4**	**5**	**5**	**4**
adequate use of structures with a number of inaccuracies not impairing comprehension	mostly adequate punctuation, some spelling mistakes, lack of paragraphing.	activation of vocabulary fully adequate for the topic	entirely adequate use of relevant content; well organised text; use of appropriate basic register and style, and some cohesive devices	task handled with good effectiveness, content sufficient and relevant to topic, adequate communication

Tests on Moodle

Write an opinion paragraph, including at least three reasons, in which you give your opinion about the following topic: The introduction of media in the Algerian society has influenced the Algerians' way of life.

Bearing in mind that the opinion paragraph includes:

-A topic sentence that states your position in relation to the topic under discussion (whether you agree or not)

-Supporting sentences that support your opinion about the topic in question with facts, personal experience or explanations.

-Reasons and strong arguments to persuade the reader to agree with you.

- Transition words and phrases to connect between sentences.

-A concluding sentence that restates your opinion.

Bearing in mind that the opinion paragraph includes:

-A topic sentence that states your position in relation to the topic under discussion (whether you agree or not)

-Supporting sentences that support your opinion on the topic in question with facts, personal experience or explanations.

-Reasons and strong arguments to persuade the reader to agree with you.

- Transition words and phrases to connect between sentences.

-A concluding sentence that restates your opinion.
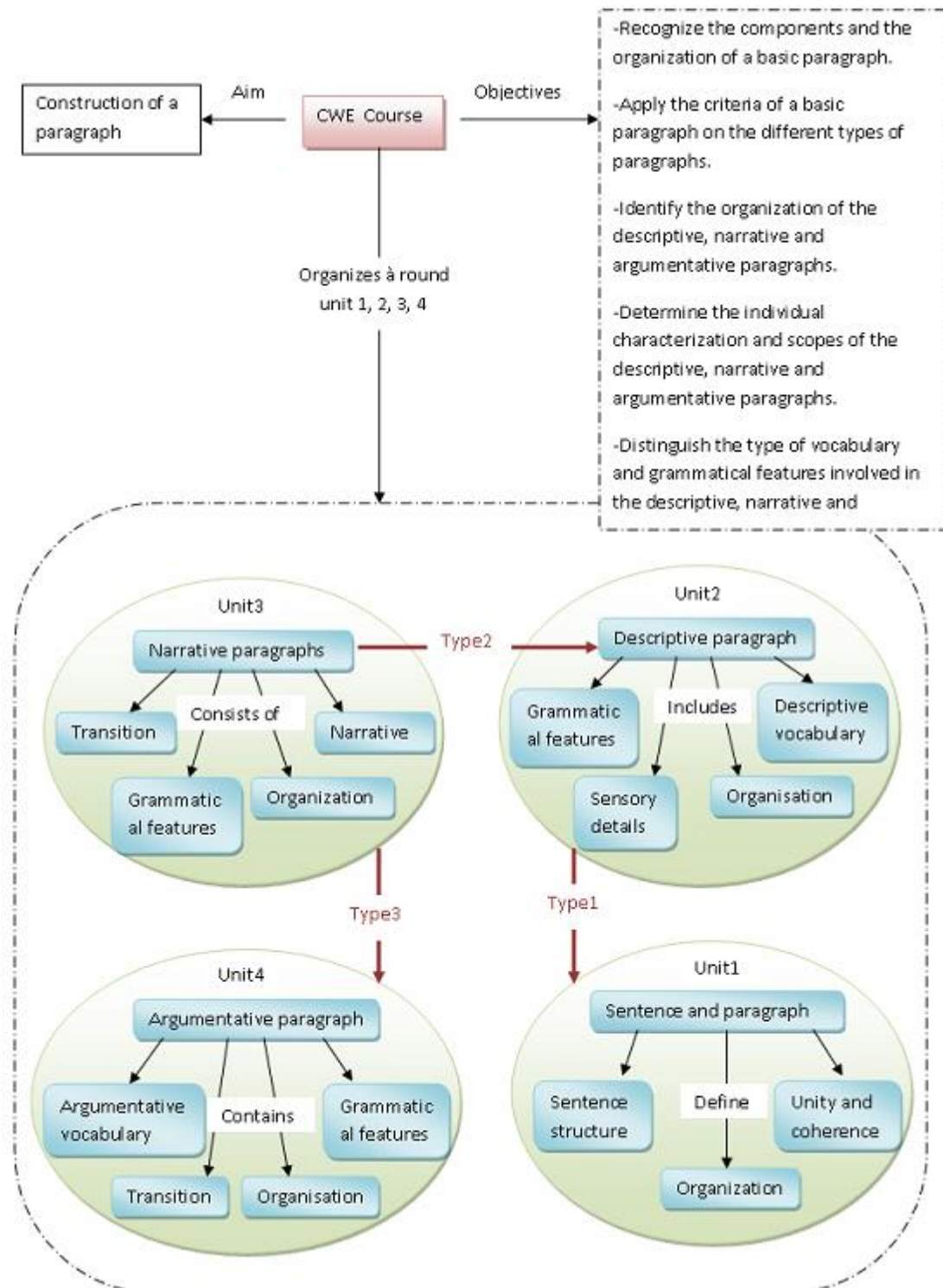
Write an opinion paragraph in which your stay whether you agree or not on encouraging children to use technology at a very young age

Write an opinion paragraph, including at least three reasons, in which you give your opinion about the following topic: The introduction of media in the Algerian society has influenced the Algerians' way of life.

Bearing in mind that the opinion paragraph includes:

-A topic sentence that states your position in relation to the topic under discussion (whether you agree or not)

-Supporting sentences that support your opinion about the topic in question with facts, personal experience or explanations.

-Reasons and strong arguments to persuade the reader to agree with you.

- Transition words and phrases to connect between sentences.

-A concluding sentence that restates your opinion.

Conceptual Map

Samples of Students' Paragraphs on Moodle

When I was at the age of ten, I had a bad experience that I will never forget it forgood. I still remember it was a sunny day. My family decided to go to a trip but they didnot take me because i was ill. So I stayed alone then my aunt came in order to take care of me. It was the afternoon, i was slept with my aunt in my own room. sudenly I hear a noise in the kitchen my heart start biting I was very afraid. I wake up my aunt and i tell her what i hear she tell let see my dear iam see it is just the cat, when we enter the kitchen, we saw a person tray to jump from the window. i start screaming and my aunt also I was very scared, thankd god my father returned because he forgot his phone he hear the noise he enter the house quicly and help us. He tell me this is the last time i will let you alone because people cannot be trust and we donot know their intention because the ʼperson that I trust him ans tell him to take care of my house decieved me. I was very chocted about this fact .i will never forget this day it was the worst day Ipassed it.

kamila gh	Ten years old
kamila gh	Remove it
kamila gh	Two separate words
kamila gh	Did not
kamila gh	I is always capitalized
kamila gh	sleeping
kamila gh	spelling mistake
kamila gh	heard
kamila gh	start a new sentence
kamila gh	started
kamila gh	spelling mistake

The day of my succeding in my first exam.a surprise I will never forget was organized in my school yard in Bamako in 2015.

At first, my headmaster called me to come at school because he need me.

When i arrived there, there were all my family and neibords who shout together" CONGRATULATIONS ʼ! it was a surprise for me.

Ater. I felt myself very important for all these people and i was crying of emotion because it was the best surprise i have received in my life.

And at last they gave me many gifts .My father offered me firstly a new bleu KTM motorbike after, my headmaster a big french dictionary, then, my brother a new golden watcht. I have got many others things that day.

I will never forget this wonderfull event because it permeted me to know the importance of study and i realized that working hard will give me things i do not imagine.

kamila gh	Spelling mistake
kamila gh	Misue of the preposition (at)
kamila gh	Unclear. Reword it :
kamila gh	This is not the structure of the
kamila gh	The pronoun I is always
kamila gh	Repetition of there. Remove it
kamila gh	Spelling mistake
kamila gh	Use the past tense
kamila gh	Put the exclamation mark before
kamila gh	Capitalize it
kamila gh	French word

Among the widespread means of communication in today's world : The Social Media. This latter , is invading almost all countries , and Algeria is one of them . Yet , the introduction of social media has not only positive effects on our society , but it has also a negative impact on the Algerians' way of life .

First it can help in families' disconnectedness , since the family members do no longer visit each other . Moreover by using social media, Algerians , mainly adolescents , tend to imitate the foreigners (Clothes, Cairdressing...). Consequently, they start losing their customs, traditions and even values .

In addition, the use of dangerous social network applications , may lead adolescents towards a menacing and threatening way , the one filled of crimes and aggressions.

To sum up , and according to me , people and more specifically Algerians should know how and when to use social media in order not to be affected in the wrong way. They should also take into consideration the time devoted to their use.

The development of the technology has increased our abilities and capacities and as we know , children are the new generation and the future of this world and by the use of the technology in a very young age that will help them to grow special.

Firstly , the brain of a child is totally different from an old man , which mean that a child has the ability to learn things fast and with the technology he will be able to use his abilities to build his brain . Seconly, instead of playing with tools or spending all the day sleeping, it's good to play video games in order to create new strategies. As a result he will see the real world as a game and then he will use what he learned from the game to solve problems . thirdly, the internet which is a result of the technology become a school to study and a society to take experiences. Because many of children don't want to go to school or outside maybe a fear or something else, so by the use of the internet he will feel that he is in the real world without the need to go out .

To conclude, the technology help the children to grow smart with the power of the information ,many scientist shared the same idea and the society is showing that , because the age is just a numbers.

Scoring Rubric on Moodle

Organization	Unacceptable Lack of organization Absence of the topic sentence No supporting sentences are offered Absence of the concluding sentence 1 points	Developing Attempt at organizing the paragraph is shown, but it is still unorganized. The topic sentence does not introduce the topic. Some supporting sentences are offered but do not support the topic. Concluding sentence does not restate the topic	Satisfactory Acceptable topic sentence; however, some improvement is needed Supporting sentences are acceptably mentioned, but need some improvement. Acceptable concluding sentence; however, some improvement is needed	Exemplary Well organized paragraph Well formulated topic sentence that introduces the topic. Supporting sentences are effectively mentioned with details/ explanations /examples. Well formulated concluding sentence that restates the topic.	
Accuracy	Sentences are neither well-structured nor varied. Various grammatical errors. Misuse of capitalization and punctuation. Various fragments/run-on sentences/ comma splices are found. Various spelling mistakes are found. 1 points	Attempt at structuring, and varying sentences is shown but are still unorganised. Some fragments Some problems with grammar. Some errors of capitalization and punctuation. Some run-on sentences/ comma splices are found. Some spelling mistakes.	Most of the sentences of the paragraph are varied and acceptably structured, but need some improvement. Few fragments Acceptable grammar, but improvement is needed. Acceptable use of capitalization and punctuation, but improvement is	All the sentences of the paragraph are varied and well-structured. Absence of fragments No grammatical errors Effective use of punctuation and capitalisation. Absence of run-on sentences/comma splice. Mistake free. 5 points	

Vocabulary	Vocabulary is inappropriate/narrow/ vague /unclear/irrelevant for the topic. 1 points	Some problems with vocabulary. 2 points	Acceptable vocabulary but improvement and/or adjustment needed. 3 points	Vocabulary is effective/ accurate/comprehensible / fully appropriate for the topic. 5 points
Communicative Effectiveness	Task poorly handled. Supporting details are limited/unclear/irrelevant and/or unrelated to the topic and/or illogically sequenced. The reader is confused/ lost/ and has difficulties to	Task fairly handled. Attempt at ordering the supporting details is shown, but they are	Task acceptably handled. Content contains all the necessary elements; however, improvement is needed to maximize its	Task effectively handled. Supporting details are sufficient, clear, relevant, properly developed, related to the topic and logically sequenced. The reader is attracted/

<div dir="rtl">

ملخص

أحدثت تكنولوجيات الإعلام والاتصال في التعليم تغيرات عديدة. كما أصبح تعدّد كيفيات التقييم أكثر من ضرورة لقدرته على التكيّف مع الوضعيات المختلفة. في هذا الإطار، يهتمّ العمل المنجز أساسا على دمج التقييم الالكتروني، بواسطة أرضية مودل، في مقياس الفهم والتعبير الكتابي الذي يدرّس في السنة الأولى ليسانس لغة انجليزية، كونه يعرف نسبة رسوب ملحوظة. فبواسطة منهج مشترك، يمزج بين دراسة الحالة والدراسة التجريبية، أبانت الأعمال المنجزة نجاعة المقاربة المعتمدة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة تلمسان. وعليه، وانطلاقا من عيّنة شملت أساتذة وطلبة وبعد التحليل الكمّي والنوعي المنجز، فان طريقة التقييم المقترحة قد أدت إلى تحسين دال للكتابة لدى الطلبة بالنظر لما لها من إيجابيات تعليمية وعملية وعاطفية. من جهة أخرى، يجدر التذكير بأن استعمالها كان بمثابة دعامة إضافية للقسم التقليدي. كذلك فإن بعض وظائف أرضية مودل، التي لم يتم استغلالها في هذا العمل، قد تمّ اقتراحها من أجل تحسين أفضل للكتابة لدى طلبة اللّغة الانجليزية.

كلمات مفتاحية: تقييم إلكتروني، تكنولوجيات الإعلام والاتّصال، مقياس فهم وتعبير كتابي، مودل.

</div>

Résumé

L'utilisation des TIC dans l'enseignement a apporté de nombreux changements. Du même que la diversification des modalités d'évaluation est devenue plus que nécessaire et s'adapte aux situations variées. Dans ce cadre, le travail entrepris s'intéresse principalement à l'intégration de l'évaluation électronique, par le biais de la plateforme Moodle, dans le module de compréhension et d'expression écrite dispensé en 1 ère année d'anglais, source d'un taux d'échec appréciable. A l'aide d'une méthode mixte, combinant à la fois une étude de cas et une étude expérimentale, les travaux réalisés mettent en exergue l'efficience de l'approche proposée au département d'anglais à l'Université de Tlemcen. En effet, à partir d'un échantillon d'enseignants et d'étudiants et après une analyse quantitative et qualitative élaborée, la méthode d'évaluation proposée a conduit à une amélioration significative de l'écriture des étudiants en raison de ses avantages pédagogiques, pratiques et émotionnels. Par ailleurs, il est à souligner que son utilisation a été d'un soutien supplémentaire à la classe traditionnelle. En outre, certaines fonctionnalités de Moodle, n'ayant pas été exploitées dans ce travail, ont été suggérées pour améliorer davantage l'écriture des étudiants d'anglais.

Mots clés : évaluation électronique, module de compréhension et d'expression écrite, Moodle, TIC.

Summary

The use of ICTs in education has brought about many changes. Likewise, the diversification of assessment methods has become more than necessary and is adapting to a variety of situations. Accordingly, the work undertaken focuses mainly on the integration of e-assessment, via the Moodle platform, into the module of comprehension and written expression taught to first-year EFL students, a source of a considerable failure rate. Using a mixed-method design, that combines a case study and an experimental design, this piece of research highlights the efficiency of the method. Indeed, based on a sample of teachers and students and after a quantitative and qualitative analysis, the proposed evaluation method has led to a significant improvement of students' writing due to its pedagogical, practical, and emotional benefits. Furthermore, it should be stressed that its use has been additional support to the traditional classroom. Henceforth, some Moodle features, which were not exploited in this work, have been suggested to further improve students' writing.

Keywords: Comprehension and written expression module, e-assessment, ICTs, Moodle.