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EFL Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Prewriting Strategies in the Writing Process

The Case of Third Year Students of English at the University of Tlemcen

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family especially my beloved parents and all the people that l care about.

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I am *grateful to Allah for giving me strength to complete this thesis*

*I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor **prof.belmekki** his pieces of advice were really of great help to refine my work.*

ABSTRACT

Most students consider prewriting to be an extremely challenging stage in the writing process. The present study aims to investigate third year students 'attitudes and perceptions towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researcher opted for two questionnaires; the first was administered to forty EFL university students while the other one to fifteen teachers of written expression .The results showed that students had positive attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies, they claimed that they generally use these strategies before they attempt to write .Besides, they stated that using prewriting strategies is important and remarkably useful for them in organizing their writing. Furthermore, teachers admitted that the use of prewriting strategies is crucial in the writing process. In sum, the use of prewriting strategies before starting composing is a highly significant step and may have a positive effect on the students' writing skill.

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EFL: English Foreign Language

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

It is widely agreed that learning a foreign language involves acquiring the four basic skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In particular, Writing has usually been considered as the most critical skill that plays a vital role in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. However, students often find serious challenges when composing and this due to the complexity of the writing process that entails the use of certain pre-writing strategies.

Generally, the majority of students dislike writing as a language skill. Mainly, because it is considered to be the most challenging skill the students face in the learning process. Students are often facing the problem of generating ideas whenever they are required to take a writing task, since they are not paying considerable importance to using the prewriting strategies in the early stages of the writing process.

This research study firstly aims to examine the third year EFL student's attitudes and perceptions towards the prewriting strategies .Secondly it aims at investigating the student's attitudes towards the implementation of prewriting strategies in the writing process.

In this regard, three research questions are formulated:

1/ what are the students' attitudes towards the use of pre-writing strategies?

2/ Do EFL students use the pre-writing strategies regularly before they start writing?

3/ Do the use of prewriting strategies useful in the writing process?

In light of the above research questions we hypothesize that:

1/ EFL students may have positive attitudes towards the use of pre-writing strategies in the writing process.

2/ The majority of Students may start their writing by using prewriting strategies.

3/ There is a high possibility that the use of prewriting strategies might be extremely useful in the writing process.

To meet the research aforementioned aim, the investigator opted for two questionnaires in order to collect the necessary data. One is administered to forty students of 3rd year EFL students while the other one to fifteen teachers of written expression at Abou Bekr Belkaid university, Tlemcen. Additionally, an exploratory case study was undertaken to enable the researcher to investigate students and teachers' attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process.

The present research is divided into two chapters; the first one provides a theoretical overview of writing and some of the features that make it effective. In addition, it discusses certain writing difficulties faced by students. Then, it introduces the stages of the writing process and several prewriting strategies. It also tackles the effects of prewriting strategies on students' writing performance. The second chapter gives a description of the empirical work including the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires and providing some suggestions and recommendations.

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Theoretical Background

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1.1. Introduction:

There is no doubt that learning a foreign language demands improving the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. In particular, writing is a tremendously significant skill that students need to master in the academic discipline. Therefore, it is an ongoing and difficult process that frequently involves the employment of several techniques and strategies.

The present chapter provides a brief definition of writing, and then it sheds light on some characteristics of good writing. Next, it exposes certain writing difficulties. Besides, it tackles the process of writing and its stages .In addition; it explains the concept of prewriting and its different strategies. Finally, it interprets the impact of pre-writing strategies in the writing skill.

1.2. Definition of writing:

Writing is a vital macro skill of communication that has a crucial role to play in teaching and learning a foreign language, it was seen as a challenging skill for both teachers and students as well .It has been defined from different perspectives. For instance, Chung et al. (2020) in their study asserted that "writing is a complex task that is vital to learning and is usually acquired in the early years of life". We can assume that the above definition describes writing as a significant activity that might be learned at an early age in life .Moreover, writing is seen as graphic symbols as highlighted in Byrne (1988).

> When we write, we use graphic symbols: that is, letters or combinations
> of letters which relate to the sound we make when we speak. On one level,
> Then, writing can be said to be the act of forming these symbols: "making
> marks on flat surface of some kind ". But writing is clearly much more than
> the production of graphic symbols , just as speech is more than the production
> of sound (p.1).

Furthermore, one point of view is that writing "is a social technology designed to communicate among people…and accomplishes social action" (Mac Arthur et al,

2016:p.1), what is to say, writing is a medium created to facilitate interaction between members of the community. In addition, Hyland confirmed that (2003) writing can be described as signs on a paper or screen, meaningful words, phrases, and sentences organized according to a set of guiding principles. In other words he viewed writing as a systematic form of grammar and semantics. In other one assumption, Torrance, et al (1994:379) states that "academic writing is difficult; it requires a complex combination of generating ideas, selecting the ideas that are appropriate to the writing task, translating these into text and polishing the text to produce a presentable document". In other words, he considered writing as a difficult process that demands gathering ideas, choosing and refining the suitable one to have a well-written text. Similarly, other researchers have defined the notion of writing as "an important skill that requires conscious effort, continuous practice and certain level of proficiency in targeted language forms and structures"(Tanveer et al.,2018,p:116),that is to say ,writing as a crucial skill involves having consistent practice and expertise in given language forms and patterns. Further, the act of writing is more than just a way to communicate, it is also a way of thinking as well as a means of increasing knowledge. Thus, Writing can only be accomplished through reading, thinking, examining and experiencing (Raymond, 1980, as cited in Bida Lailatul Hidayah, 2019).

In sum, writing is truly an essential skill in the teaching and learning process also it is a tiring task that involves a set of techniques and rules that must be used to achieve a well-crafted texts.

1.3. Characteristics of good writing:

Generally, most students are still not aware of how to compose a good academic writing that necessitates the mastery of grammatical rules and good choice of vocabulary besides, knowing how to generate logical ideas which create a consistent passage. In particular, Akkaya and Aydin (2018) noted that "Academic writings require a planned blending of rules of language and writing , times of action , type of discourse (subjective of objective) mastery of specific field terminology , by following the academic stylistic standards" (p.130).Correspondingly, Starkey (2004) suggested the most common elements that guide students and enabling them to achieve high

quality of academic writing which are identified as the following: organization, clarity, and word choice Whereas coherence and cohesion were introduced by other researchers.

1.3.1. Organization:

Organization is an important key element for producing a well-established and structured writing. Any skilled writer should take into consideration when undertaking a paragraph or an essay, the arrangement of ideas and incidents and putting them in a logical order. In particular, Starkey (2004) notes that:

> When you begin your essay with organization, you will have guidance and direction through the writing process, especially if you are in a timed situation .Organization lets you see how your many developing ideas fit within a framework, and clearly maps out any type of essay you are required to write (p.1-2).

Similarly, according to Raimes (1983) organizing thoughts in writing is a process similar to writing itself. It is a way of shifting from broad ideas to precise details then identifying fundamental information and delivering it in an effective manner. In simple words, one of the major priorities of the writing process is placing ideas in a logical sequence.

1.3.2. Clarity:

An efficient academic writing is characterized by its clear and focused meaning. However, the writer is likely recommended to avoid the use of ambiguous and sophisticated language, in order to ensure that the meaning is understood by the reader. In this sense, Starkey (2004) claims that "learning how to be a clear and accurate writer will help make your essay readable, and will guarantee that those who read it understand exactly what you mean to say" (p.11). Likewise, clarity concept is mostly valued in academic writing. Particularly, the writer is required to be precise when

composing (Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006).In other words, clarity is greatly important feature in the writing assignment, in which the writer must focus on making almost everything clear to the reader.

1.3.3. Word choice:

The academic writing involves the use of clear and simple language so as to be comprehensible to the reader. In this context; Starkey (2004) asserted that selecting the appropriate words is among the effective strategies to communicate one's thoughts in an essay. Additionally, obtaining a well organized and unified piece of writing depends primarily on a good choice of words, it means "finding and using the word that fits your meaning and tone exactly"(Macmillan English, 1986:83, as cited in Danglli & Abazaj, 2014). Nevertheless, he also stated that many claim that a good knowledge of synonyms may help writers enhance their writing skills by allowing them to apply a new word rather than only using the same term repeatedly.

By the same token, according to Smith (2003) word choice is defined "as the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader ". On the whole, a proper selection of words tends to be extremely significant in the academic writing production. The following Diagram illustrates the relationship between linguistic sub-disciplines including; grammar, syntax, semantics, lexical words, fluency and accuracy in relation to word choice.
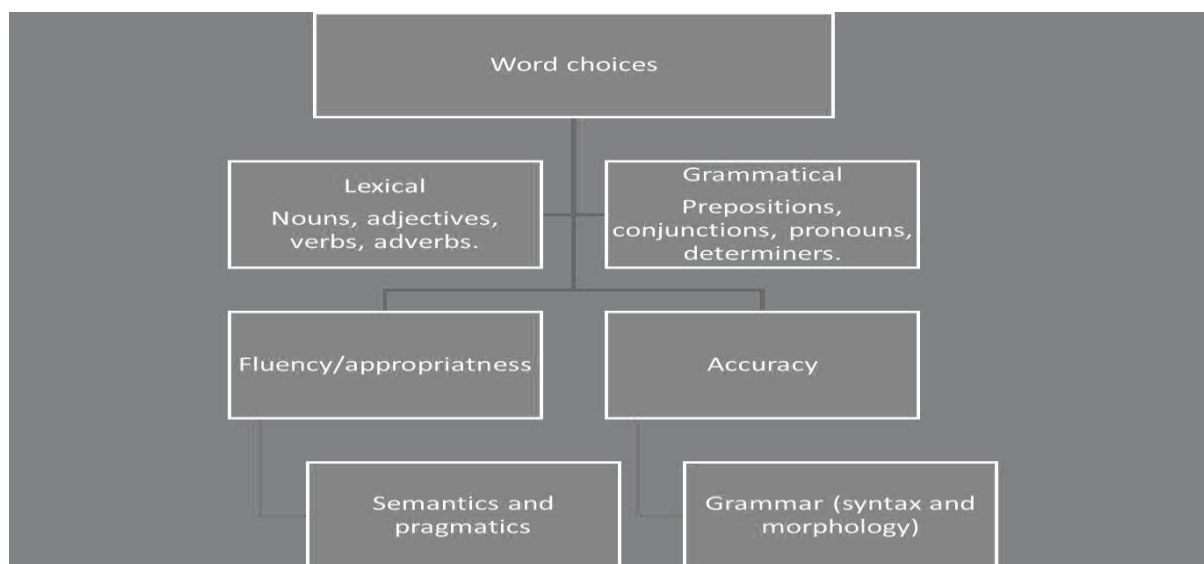
Figure 01: The Relation of Words to Disciplines (Martin, 2014: 43).

1.3.4. Coherence and cohesion:

Writing in the academic setting necessarily entails a clear and logical structure. Coherence is referred to the manner in which sentences and paragraphs are connected together to maintain a precise meaning. This assumption was supported by Anita and Judit (2000) who noted that "A coherent paragraph / essay contain sentences that are logically arranged and flow smoothly" (p.22). Thus, cohesion in the other hand is also crucial in written product, in this context; Hinkel (2004) concludes that:

> Cohesion refers to the connectivity of ideas in discourse and sentences to one another in text, thus creating the flow of information in unified way. In addition, in textbooks on writing and composition, cohesion can also refer to the ways of connecting sentences and paragraphs in to a unified whole (p.279).

Additionally, Halliday and Hasan were the first who established the notion of cohesion in 1976, which has been used to refer to the elements, i.e., syntactic rules, semantics and lexical, that are linked together to make meaning within the text. Eventually, according to them cohesion is achieved through the use of proper grammar and vocabulary (Tanskanen, 2006).In the same way, Oshima and Hogue (2007) confirmed that a regular usage of nouns and pronouns within a paragraph is one step towards achieving coherence.

1.4. The writing issues:

Writing is regarded as the most fundamental and challenging skill to acquire in foreign language classes, mainly due to its complex processes and techniques. Henceforth, both teachers and students have to be aware of all the underlying principles upon which the writing skill is depending. For instance, Heaton (1975) professed that "the writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devises but also of conceptual and judgmental elements" (p.135). In most cases, learners could encounter a wide variety of issues that can cause high levels of stress during the writing process.

First, Handwriting might greatly pose a serious challenge for most learners as reported by Harmer (2004):

> Handwriting can be particularly difficult for some students. For those who are brought up using characters such as in Chinese or Japanese … Areas of difficulty can include producing the shapes of English letters … For student accustomed in their L1 to writing from right to left, western script, which of course goes in the opposite directions can involve not only problems of perceptions but also necessitates a different angle and position for the writing arm (pp: 44-45).

Second, spelling is believed to be a common irritating problem among students generally. For instance, According to Harmer (2004) the poor spelling is another issue that hinders the student's performance in the writing process. For instance, the absence of harmony between the speech sound and the written form of the word is the main reason for this problem. Notably, it is claimed that a certain sound might be spelled in a different manner as the words threw and through. However, they seem to have the same pronunciation. Third, the lack of motivation typically might be a frustrating problem for nearly all learners. Typically, students who are not motivated during the learning process might not be able to write. From this perspective, Harmer (2004) noted that "student writers often find themselves 'lost for words', especially in creative writing tasks. This is where the teacher can help, provoking the students into having ideas, enthusing them with the value of the task, and persuading them what fun it can be" (p.41),i.e., whenever students run out of words, teachers might inspire them with ideas and attempt to convince them how writing is an important and enjoyable task. Moreover, the psychological problem is another challenge that has a negative effect on student's writing ability; in this regard Byrne (1988) asserted that speech is a means of interaction with people, using a specific language as it demands a full participation of the individual in the conversation. Whereas, writing is considered to be difficult since it is a solitary activity that requires the learner to write without connecting or receiving any feedback from the others. Eventually, Grammar is regarded to be the intrinsic core

of the writing skill. Nevertheless, learners often struggle to construct correct sentences. In this sense, Raimes (1983) argues that writing in a second language is a challenging for the majority of students; this is primarily due to the fact that some of them are having difficulty with the usage of accurate grammatical rules, as well as the issue of choosing the appropriate words to express their thoughts. In general, writing is a particularly complicated task in which students encounter both language and syntactic issues.

1.5. The writing as a process:

Writing is a difficult and intricate process and to write effectively, students have to be familiar with the basic stages of writing. Specifically, Harmer (2004) claims that "Process writing is not an easy option for students or teachers" (p.13).Subsequently, Kane (2000) hypothesized that the writing process has three steps. First, thinking, that entails selecting the topic and attempting to develop it then creating a clear outline to

 deliver a well-organized content. The second step is referred to as drafting and revising is the third step. Furthermore, he also noted that the students should take into consideration to concentrate on the whole writing process while composing, instead of focusing just on each stage separately. Similarly, with regard to the above mentioned; Oshima and Hogue (2007) maintained that there are essentially four basic steps involved in the writing process mainly, generating ideas comes first, and arranging them takes place afterwards, then writing a rough draft in the third step. While, editing and revising occur in the last step. In simple words, writing is usually viewed as a complicated process in which students are supposed to be engaged in various writing stages.

1.5.1. The stages of the writing process:

In the writing process the students are frequently supposed to go through several stages so that to obtain a unique and well-structured piece of writing; in light of this, Seow (2002) proposed that the writing process is considered as an individual task which consists of four major stages: planning (prewriting), drafting, revising and

editing, for instance; the following figure demonstrates the four main phases of the writing process undertaken by the students.
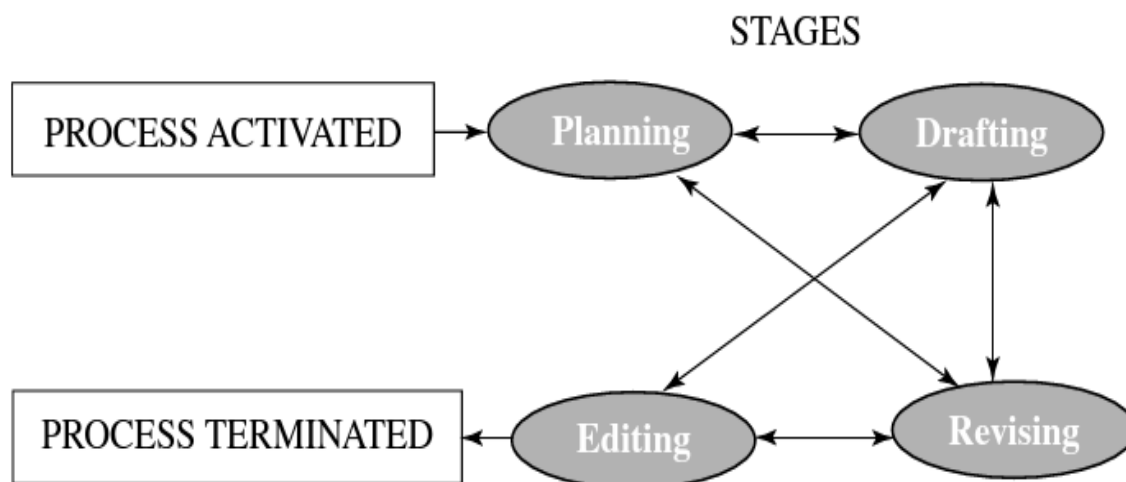
Figure 02: The writing process (Seow, 2002:315)

1.5.1.1. Prewriting (planning):

Prewriting is the early stage of the writing process in which learners are actually required to pick a particular subject after that they are supposed to collect data and evidence about it. Notably, there are variety of techniques for gathering these information, including listing, clustering, journal writing, questioning, interacting with friends and peers as well as reading books (Oshima & Hogue,2007). Another essential point, Oshima and Hogue (2006) have defined pre-writing as the first step in writing which is always done before starting to write, generally it requires selecting a topic and gathering knowledge about it. Moreover, Baldwin (1986) expressed the opinion that the prewriting stage is an essential part of the writing process since it serves as a major motivator for students to write successfully. As within this stage, ideas are formed, modified and developed. Besides, she went further to say, "the prewriting stage provides the raw materials that will be given shape by the writing process" (Baldwin, 1986:38).In other terms, during the prewriting phase the writer is attempting to construct ideas and come up with the basic resources needed to offer a reliable written production. In the same vein; it can be seen that pre-writing is the primary emphasis of the writing process which has mainly four basic activities; brainstorming, clustering, questioning, and freewriting that are implied by learners so that to

encourage them generate ideas as well as assisting them in deciding what they intend to express and how to state it before begin composing (D'Aoust, 1986).Therefore, according to Starkey (2004) the first and most important step in producing an effective essay is prewriting , within this stage students are required to take enough time to concentrate and arrange their thoughts before composing in the same way using the prewriting strategies will also help them to contrive new ideas as well as making the existing ones clearer.

1.5.1.2. Drafting:

Drafting is the second attempt at writing; here is that when learners are more concerned with writing fluency rather than accuracy, as well as the audience they are addressing and the objective of their writing (Seow, 2002). In the same way, Brown and Hood (1989) went further to say that students start writing during the drafting stage where the most important thing is only jotting down words on paper, while no attention is paid over grammar, punctuation or spelling. Additionally, the student composer often strives to obtain the best piece of writing at the first endeavor in the drafting stage .However, this is extremely hard to accomplish mainly because the more you draft the better writing becomes (Kane, 2000).In brief, composing in the drafting stage allow the learners attain the best version of their writing text.

1.5.1.3. Revising:

Revising is one of the stages of the writing process; it is the act of allowing the students to reflect on what they have already written and the way in which they express their thoughts. Therefore, the aim of the revision stage is not just scanning grammatical errors; it also involves arranging and enhancing the overall content in order to make the reader realize the writer's expected meaning (Seow, 2002). Similarly, Oshima and Hogue (2006) expressed the opinion that when the student writer is finally completed drafting, it is time for him to begin revising what he has composed earlier in a rough draft. In particular, he may add, reorganize or omit words to convey his ideas in a straightforward manner to the audience. However, paying attention to the organization and content of writing is the most important thing in this stage. More importantly, it is reported that revising is regarded as a crucial step in

writing. Hence, Students have to devote enough time for it. At this phase, they are more likely committed to do some changes in their written text if it necessary, and somehow need to be aware that their writing's goal is comprehensible also making sure that they specifically explained their positions (Brown & Hood, 1989).In sum, in revision stage, students are mostly concerned with the content and logical order of ideas than language structure.

1.5.1.4. Editing:

Editing phase is where students attempt to polish their writings to get it ready for the teacher's assessment, during this stage usually they start proofread and edit their texts for inadequate punctuation, grammar structure, and sentence patterns so that to compose an effective piece of writing that is clear to the reader (Seow, 2002). In other terms, correcting language errors is the most significant within this stage. Likewise, Grenville (2001) noted that editing basically entails ensuring that the phrases flow smoothly and are simple to perceive, as well as a proper employment of words and clauses to establish a well-formed content. Correspondingly, Harmer (2004) asserted that when students are involved in the editing stage, they have to carefully check their writing whether the data submitted is obvious or vague and if it is essential or not. They may even rearrange passages or produce new ones. In addition, he also stated that experienced writers usually focus on the broad meaning of writing rather than the specific details.

1.6. The prewriting Strategies:

Pre-writing is recognized to be an effective process that supports students to get ready to write as well as motivates them to generate ideas and thoughts to produce an organized piece of writing (Seow,2002).Mainly, pre-writing is composed of four main techniques that could assist learners and enabling them to achieve a high quality of writing . These strategies include the following: Brainstorming, Mind mapping, free writing, Questioning.

1.6.1. Brainstorming:

Brainstorming is often regarded as group activity by which students spontaneously interact with each other to generate ideas and share information about a certain topic moving from general to specific details without considering the validity of the responses (Seow, 2002).Besides, According to Starkey (2004) brainstorming is a prewriting technique that is virtually identical to free writing in terms of time constraints. However, it is done by students to come up with useful ideas for writing about a specific topic in unplanned way. Further, Creme and Lea (2008) noted that students should take notes first before they directly start writing an assignment. Basically, Brainstorming means jotting down certain ideas and unlimited number of words and sentences regarding a given subject without correcting anything was written. Eventually, they may add or delete any item. This task is typically accomplished as a list or, better yet, by organizing these notes in accordance with the order they were written on the paper to see how well these ideas are logically connected. Thus, it might be helpful using a blank sheet of paper to organize their brainstorm thoughts wherever they like and the way they conceive them. Galko (2001) expressed the opinion that Brainstorming is a strategy that could be applied to originate new ideas whether individually or collectively. Besides, this latter technique tends to provide a free flow of thoughts in a limited period of time. Clearly, brainstorming is a useful technique which is done by students to enable them construct ideas and to successfully initiate their writing.

1.6.2. Mind mapping:

Students often use mind mapping as prewriting strategy to take notes on any topic before undertaking the writing task. It is a technique that is essentially applied as an organizer to enable them connects all the ideas in a paragraph (Hedge, 2005). Besides, Galko (2001) stated that "mapping is called clustering or webbing. When you map your ideas, you make a visual diagram about a topic. Often the topic is circled in the center of a page. From there, the writer draws spokes linking ideas together. Mapping helps you generate new ideas and relate them to one another (p.24).In other words; it is described as a flow chart that arranges information and associates an idea with another.

Eventually, a mind map is a graphical representation of how thoughts are organized. It is usually called webbing, it is a process for creating ideas for a particular topic and demonstrating how they are interconnected by drawing circles and liked by arrows (Starkey, 2004).

1.6.3. Free writing:

Free writing is one of the stages of writing where the student is supposed to gather ideas about a subject and write continuously for a set period of time without paying attention to any capitalization or punctuation of sentences (Ochima & Hogue, 2007). Additionally, it is stated that the ultimate goal of free writing technique is to stimulate the student's memory to construct as many ideas as he can, as it prevents him from getting blocked at some level during composing. Eventually, in the latter strategy the writer is intended to give primacy to the content of writing over the form (Hedge, 2005).

1.6.4. Questioning:

Questioning is a common prewriting technique in the writing process that involves asking specific questions to obtain a clear and focused ideas on a particular subject or topic. From this perspective, Seow (2002) states that "students generate who, why, what, where, when and how questions about a topic. More such questions can be asked of answers to the first string of wh-question, and so on. This can go on indefinitely" (p.316).In other terms, questioning is an effective prewriting technique that is used to help the writer to have a clear idea regarding what he is going to write about. It is mainly based on asking questions about the reason, purpose and what target population he is going to address.

1.7. The impact of the prewriting strategies on the quality of students' writing:

The prewriting is the most important stage of the writing process. It helps the students to organize and generates a lot of potential ideas about a topic. In this vein Harmer (2004) states that "Experienced writers plan what they are going to write. Before starting to write or type, they try and decide what it is they are going to say "(p.4). In

other words, prewriting is an effective strategy which encourages and facilitates the writer to begin the writing process.

1.8. Conclusion:

This current chapter reviews the definition of writing which is considered as a difficult skill in EFL teaching. Besides, it gives an overview of some characteristics of writing, and then it mentions certain difficulties that any student may encounter. It provides an outlook on the stages of the writing process that students have to be aware of. Hence, this chapter highlights the most essential prewriting strategies which might be completely useful for learners to improve and reinforce their writing abilities.

Chapter Two:

Data collection and Interpretation

Chapter Two: Data collection and Interpretation

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2.1 Introduction:

This present chapter aims to explore students and teachers attitudes and beliefs towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process. It studies the case of third year EFL students at Tlemcen University, in which the researcher focuses on the use of two questionnaires addressed to students and teachers then he analyses the data obtained quantitatively. The aim of this research instrument is to investigate the students and teachers perception and attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the prewriting strategies in the writing process.

2.2 Research Methodology:

In this section, the researcher will have to adopt a suitable research methodology to be used in this research work in order to accomplish reliable and valid results.

2.2.1 Research Design:

This present work is an exploratory case study that tries to explore the students and teachers' attitudes towards the prewriting strategies as well as to know their perceptions about the importance and effectiveness of using these strategies in the writing process.

2.2.2 Site of Research:

The research study took place at Abou Bekr Belkaid University of Tlemcen, in the department of English language where the teachers and EFL students have taken part to achieve the goal of this research study.

2.2.3 Sample population:

The sample plays a pivotal role in any research work. Thus, the sample populations chosen to participate in this research are the third year EFL students and teachers of written expression. Accordingly, there are 40 students selected randomly as a sample, whereas, the teachers engaged in this investigation are 15.

2.2.4 Data collection:

Collecting data entails the election of an appropriate research instrument. Therefore, in this academic study the researcher opted for two questionnaires addressed to both students and teachers. In particular, this tool is used for measuring peoples 'intentions, opinions and attitudes about a certain issue.

2.2.4.1 Students' Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was designed and administered online to students via the Facebook group of the third year student that involves all groups. It includes two types of questions: close-ended questions and multiple choice questions. The first category enables the respondents to choose the answer with "Yes" or "No". However, the second category provides the participants with a set of multiple responses and he is required to select one or more answers.

2.2.4.2 Questionnaire Procedure:

This questionnaire was clearly designed for the sake of gathering information about the students' opinions and personal views regarding the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process. The researcher attempted to collect the necessary data by sharing the questionnaire within a facebook group that gathered all the third year EFL students. Moreover, the questionnaire contains 14 questions divided into three sections; the first one gathers basic information about the students' level in English, the difficult skills according to them and their levels in the writing skill. The second section is about the writing process and includes five questions. The first one focuses on whether the students face issues in writing and the second is about the difficulties encountered by students while composing. The third question linked to the student's use of planning in writing. The fourth one is related to the average number of time devoted for it. Eventually, the last question shed light on whether students they go through the stages of writing or not. The third section is concerned with students' attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies it consists of six questions .The first one is seeking students' views about the prewriting stage. In addition, the second question refers to the students if they have been introduced to prewriting strategies before or not. Then, the third question involves mentioning the prewriting strategies

that the students are familiar with. Besides, the fourth one asked about the most used prewriting strategy to construct their ideas and the fifth question about how many times they tend to use these strategies. The last question intended to know students 'opinions about the importance of using prewriting strategies in the beginning of their writing.

2.2.4.3 Teachers' Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was designed and administered to 15 teachers of written expression via emails. It consists of two types of questions; the closed-ended questions and multiple choice questions.

2.2.4.4 Questionnaire procedure:

This questionnaire is administered to teachers in order to know their opinions about the prewriting strategies and its significant role in the writing process. The questionnaire encompasses nine close-ended and multiple choice questions, it contains three sections; the first section is concerned with the basic information about asking teachers about their qualification and the period of time spent teaching writing. The second section is the writing skill, this part is mainly related to the teachers' perception about the level of their students in writing and whether they face difficulties in it or not. They are also asked how frequently they provide their student with writing assignments. The third section is devoted to the prewriting strategies in the writing process; it includes a series of questions. Particularly, teachers are asked if the prewriting stage is the most difficult skill or not. Besides, they are asked if they have taught the prewriting strategies to their students or not. They are requested to state whether the prewriting strategies are important or not in the writing process. The last question is about knowing whether the use of prewriting strategies is effective in improving students 'writing or not.

2.3. Data Analysis:

This section is devoted to the analysis of the data that have been collected from both learners' and teacher's questionnaires.

2.3.1 Results of students' questionnaire:

➢ Section One: Basic information

Question 1: How do you assess your level in English?

Options	Number	Percentage%
Intermediate	**29**	**72.5%**
Advanced	**9**	**22.5%**
Elementary	**2**	**5%**

Table 1: Students' level in English
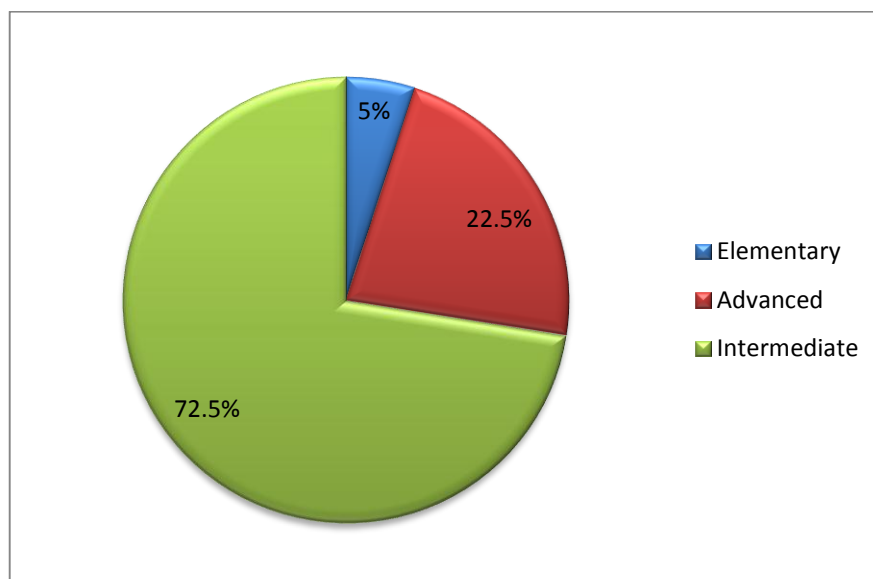
Figure 3: Students' level in English

The majority of students 72.5 % assumed that they have an intermediate level in English; however 22.5 % of students claimed that their level is advanced. Besides only few students 5 % admitted that their level is elementary. This shows that the students' level in English is generally average.

Question 2: Which of these skills is the most difficult for you?

Options	Number	Percentage%
Listening	**9**	**7%**
reading	**4**	**5%**
Speaking	**26**	**45%**
writing	**20**	**23%**

Table 2: Students 'most difficult skills

Figure 4: Students' most difficult skills

Most students claimed that they face most difficulties with the productive skills; speaking 44% and writing 34% rather than the receptive skills; listening 15% and reading 7%.Overall, speaking and writing are considered to be the most difficult skills the students face.

Question 3: How do you evaluate your writing?

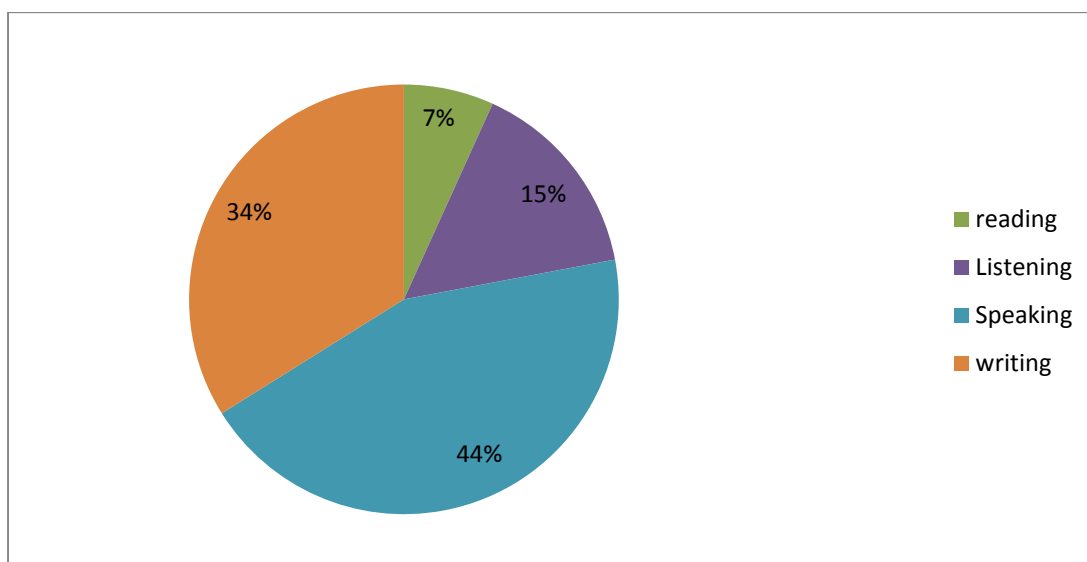| Options	Number	Percentage %
Average	**23**	**57 %**
Good	**14**	**35 %**
Excellent	**3**	**8 %**

Table 3: Students' level in the writing skill
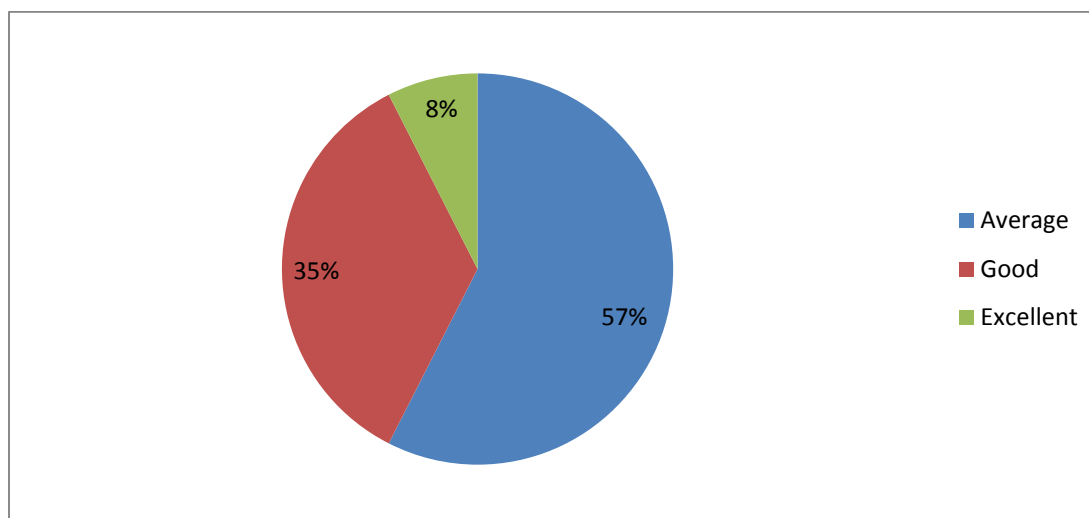
Figure 5: Students' level in the writing skill

As demonstrated in the figure above, most of the students 57 % admitted that their writing is average, whereas 35 % of students perceived themselves as good writers. Thus, only 8 % believed that they have an excellent level in the writing skill.

➢ **Section Two: The writing process.**

Question 1: Do you encounter difficulties while writing?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	**30**	**75 %**
No	**10**	**25 %**

Table 4: Students'opinions about their difficulties in writing
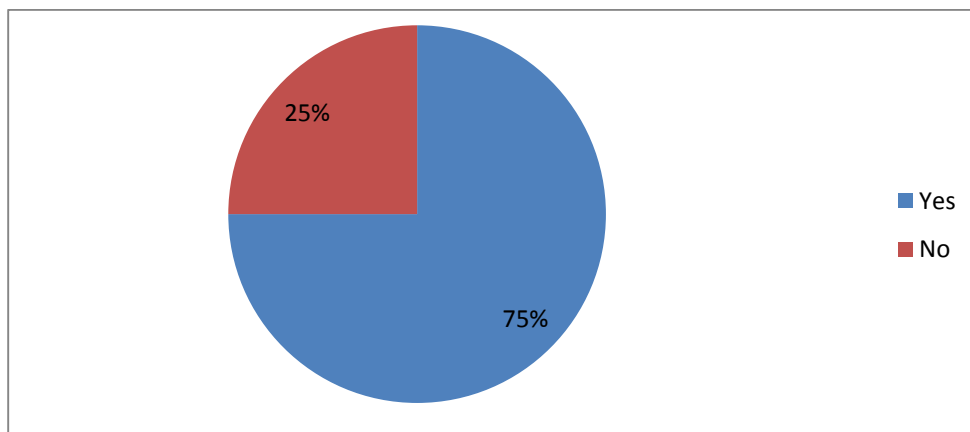
Figure 6: Students' opinions about their difficulties in writing

It is shown from the figure above that 70 % of students stated that they face difficulties when they are writing. While, 20 % of them claimed that they do not encounter any difficulty in writing skill.

Question 5: If yes, which problem do you encounter?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Spelling	8	18 %
Grammar	10	22 %
Lack of vocabulary	23	51 %
Punctuation	4	9 %

Table 5: Students' difficulties writing
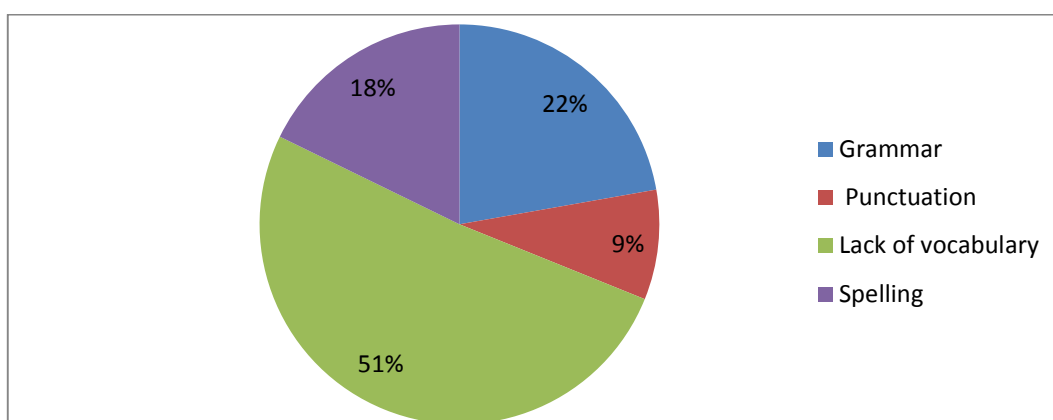
Figure 7: Students' difficulties writing

The results showed that the majority of the respondents 51 % have the difficulty of lack of vocabulary and 22 % they face grammar issues. Moreover, 18 % of students claimed to have the issue of spelling. Whereas, small number of students 9% who said that they encounter problems with punctuation. Consequently, the above results imply that most students are struggling with the lack of vocabulary issues while they attempt to write.

Question 6: Do you make a plan before you start writing?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	**28**	**70 %**
No	**12**	**30 %**

Table 6: Students' opinions about planning before writing
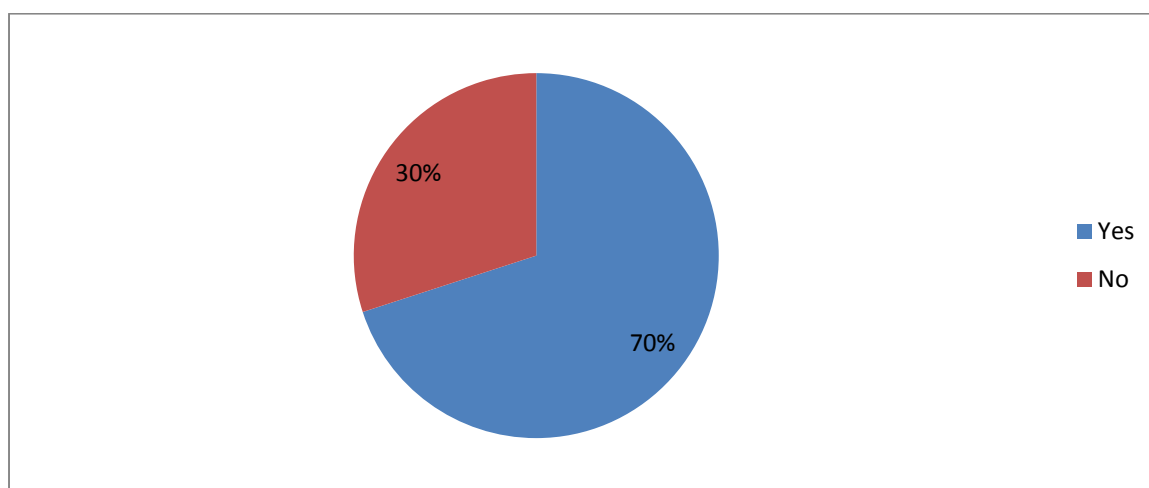
Figure 8: Students' opinions about planning before writing

The results of this question revealed that the vast majority of students 70 % claimed that they make a plan whenever they take a writing task. However, other students 30% reported that they are not concerned with planning and they directly start writing.

Question 7: If yes, how often do you make a plane?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Sometimes	21	70 %
Always	8	27 %
Never	1	3 %

Table 7: Students' frequency of planning
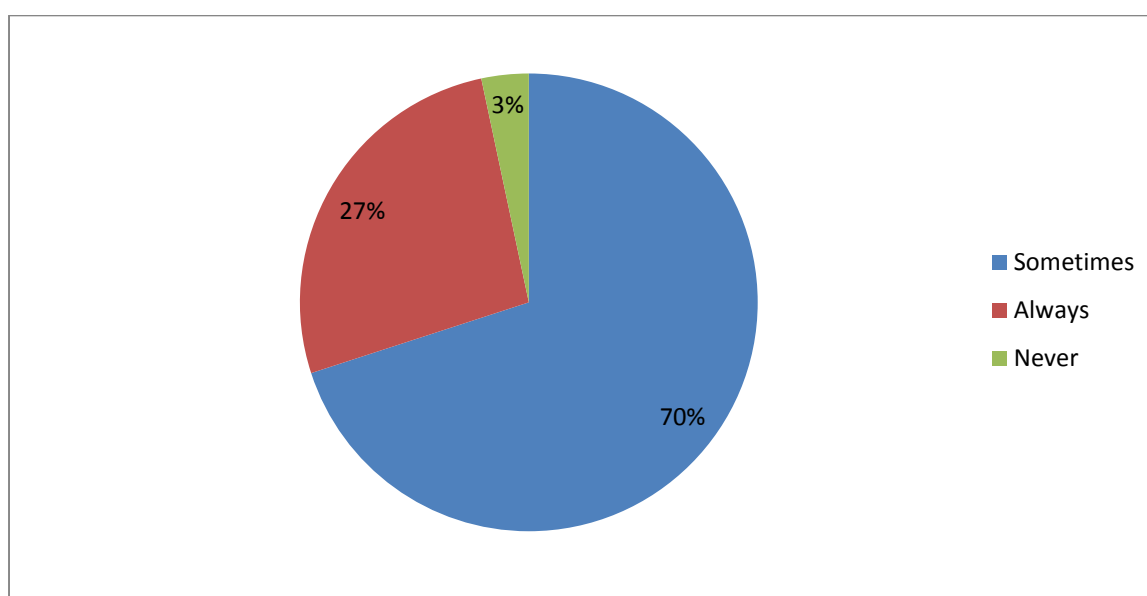
Figure 9: Students' frequency of planning

A greater number of learners 70 % stated that they sometimes make a plan before they are starting to write. In addition, 27 % of the learners asserted that they always plan before writing; however, the minority claimed that they rarely make a plan before starting to write.

Question 8: When you start writing do you go through the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing)?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	32	91 %
No	8	9 %

Table 8: Students' following the stages of the writing process.
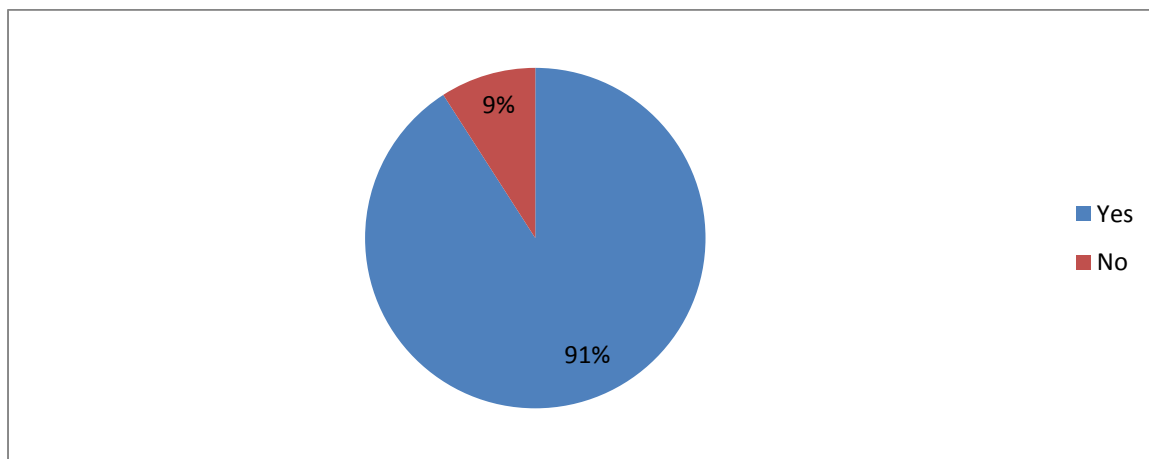
Figure 10: Students' following the stages of the writing process.

According to the above results we assumed that 91 % of students go through the stages of writing. Whereas, 9 % reported that they do not follow these stages.

➢ **Section three: Students' attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies**

Question 9: How do you find the prewriting stage?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Easy	13	32.5 %
Not easy	24	60 %
Difficult	4	4 %

Table 9 : Stusents' opinions about prewriting stage
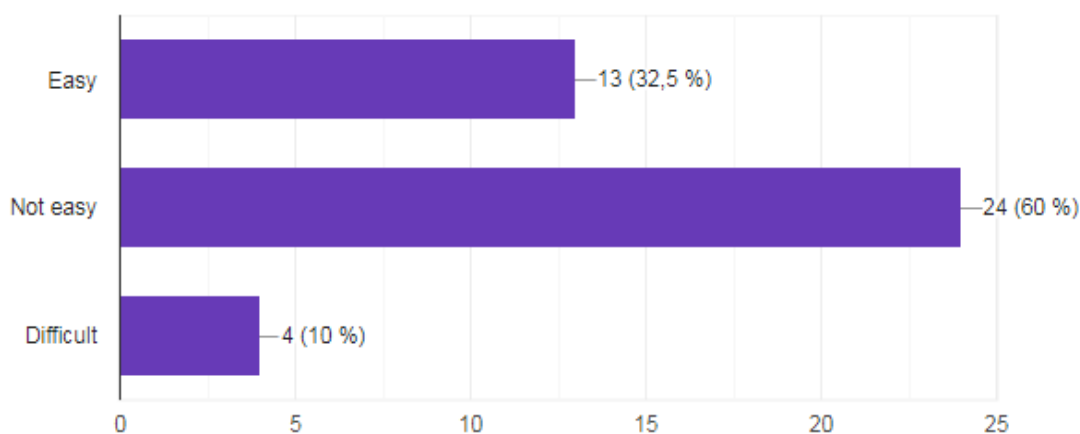
Figure 11: Students' opinions about prewriting stage

The above figure indicated that 60 % of the learners find prewriting not an easy stage in the writing process, In turn, 32.5 % of students found the prewriting stage an easy stage. Hence, only few respondents stated that prewriting is an extremely difficult step in writing.

Question 10: Have you ever been taught before about the prewriting strategies in the written expression course?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	25	62.5 %
No	17	42.5 %

Table 10 : Students' knowledge about the prewriting strategies
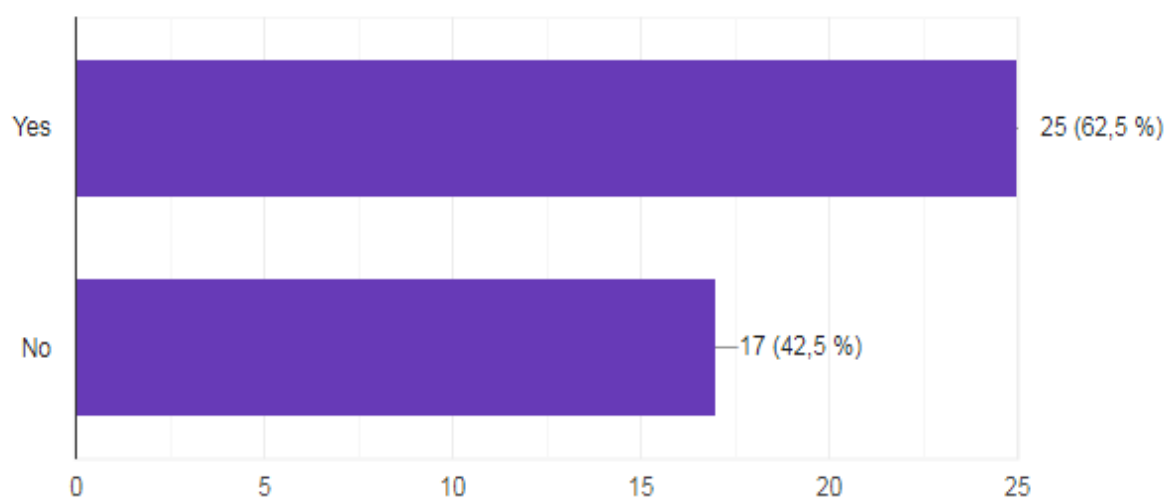
Figure 12: Students' awareness of prewriting strategies

The results of the figure showed that 62.5 % of the participants were introduced before to the prewriting strategies. Whereas, only few participants 42.5% answered that they have not been taught about prewriting strategies before.

Question 11: If yes, name these strategies please.

Brainstorming	4
Free writing brainstorming mapping	1
Clustering and Wh questions.	1
Brainstorming, clustering or mind mapping, making an outline.	1
Brainstorming, outlining	1
Mapping	1
brainstorming/free writing/ questioning	1
Narrowing the subject, gathering ideas, ordering ideas	1

Table 11: Students' knowledge about prewriting strategies

The majority of students who answered with "yes" have been taught about prewriting strategies before and they mentioned the ones they are familiar with as shown in the table above.

Question 12: What prewriting strategy do you use most to generate your ideas?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Brainstorming	**20**	**50 %**
Mind mapping	**12**	**30 %**
Free writing	**17**	**42.5 %**
Questioning	**10**	**25 %**

Table 12: Students' most used prewriting strategies
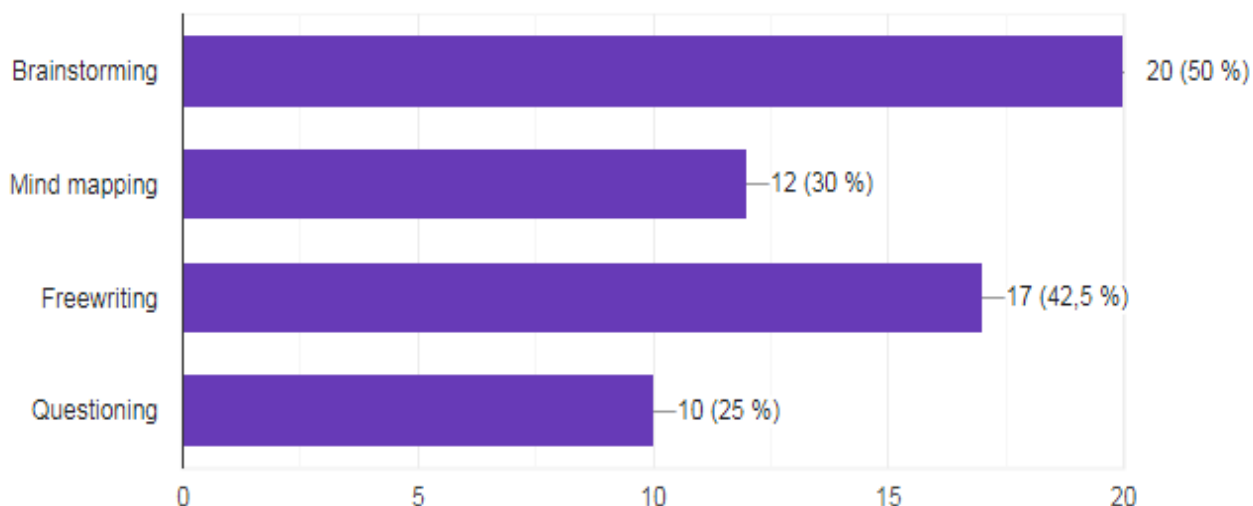
Figure 13: Students' most used prewriting strategies

As shown in figure 12 the most of the students 50 % use brainstorming to construct their ideas. Moreover, 42.5 % of them use free writing. Besides, 30 % of the students opted for mind mapping while only 25 % of them use questioning.

Question 13: How often do you use the prewriting strategies?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Always	**12**	**30 %**
Sometimes	**24**	**60 %**
Almost never	**7**	**17.5 %**

Table 13: Students' frequency use of prewriting strategies
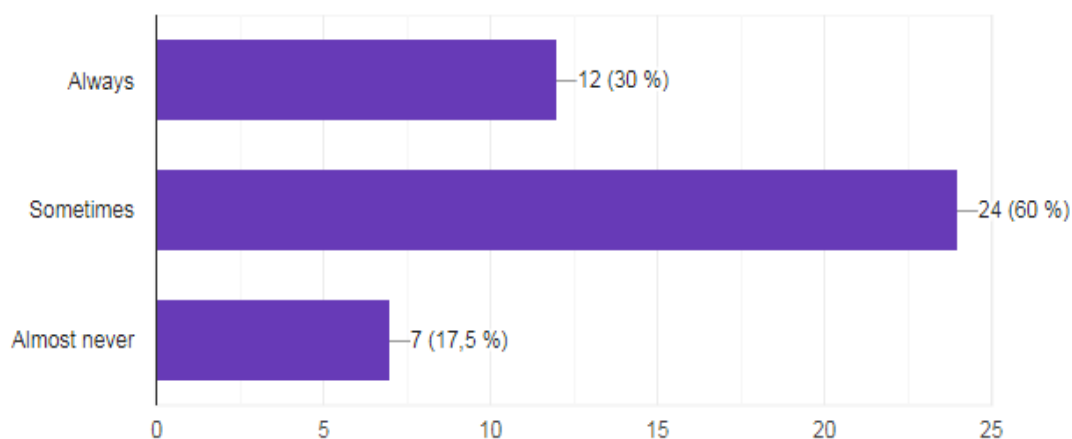
Figure 14: Students' frequency use of prewriting strategies

The results showed that 60 % of participants asserted that they sometimes use prewriting strategies. Besides, 30 % of them stated that they always use it. While the rest of the participants 17.5 % stated that they almost never use these strategies.

Question 14: How important are the prewriting strategies in helping you to organize your thoughts?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Very useful	**21**	**52.5 %**
Useful	**20**	**50 %**
Not useful	**1**	**2.5 %**

Table 14 : Students'attitudes towards prewriting strategies.
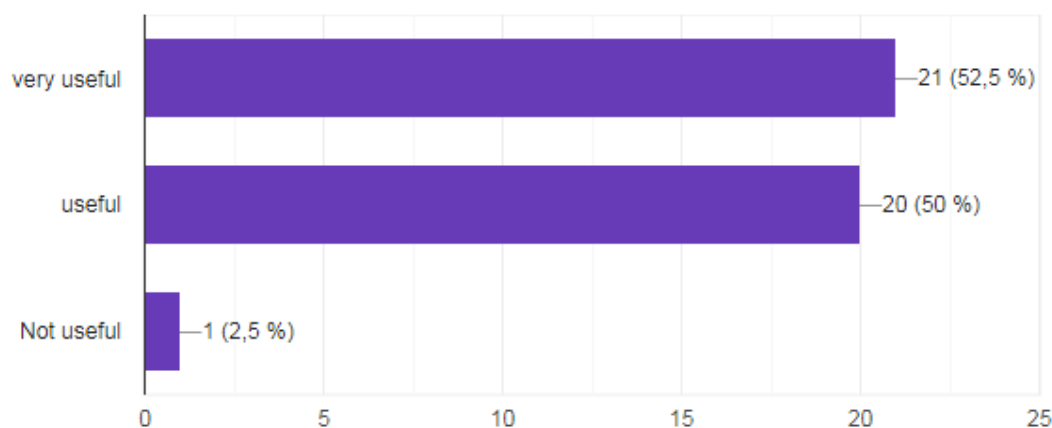
Figure 15: Students'attitudes towards prewriting strategies.

The above figure demonstrated that 52.5 %of the students perceive the prewriting strategies as a very useful and important technique that helped them to organize their ideas. Moreover, 50 % of them also found it useful; however, only 2.5 % of students claimed that it is not useful. In general, the majority of students were well aware of the importance of the prewriting strategies.

2.3.2 Results of teachers'questionnaire:

➤ **Section One: Basic information**

Question 1: What is your qualification?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Doctorate	**11**	**73%**
Magister	**4**	**27%**
BA(license)	**0**	**0%**

Table 15: Teachers' qualification

The results shown in the table indicated that the majority of written expression teachers 73 % hold a Doctorate degree whereas only 27 % of them hold a magister. However, none of them has a License degree.

Question 2: How long have you been teaching writing?

Options	Number	Percentage %
5 years	**7**	**46.7 %**
6-10 years	**4**	**26.7 %**
More than 10 years	**4**	**26.7 %**

Table 16: Teachers' years of experience in teaching writing

The results of the table demonstrated that the majority of teachers 46.7 % have been teaching writing for 5 years while 26.7 % of them have been teaching from 6 to 10 year. Then, the rest of the teachers they have more than 10 year of experience in teaching writing.

➤ **Section Two: The writing skill**

Question 3: How do you evaluate your students' level of writing?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Good	**2**	**13.3 %**
Average	**13**	**86.7 %**
High	**0**	**0 %**

Table 17: Teachers' opinions about their students' level of writing
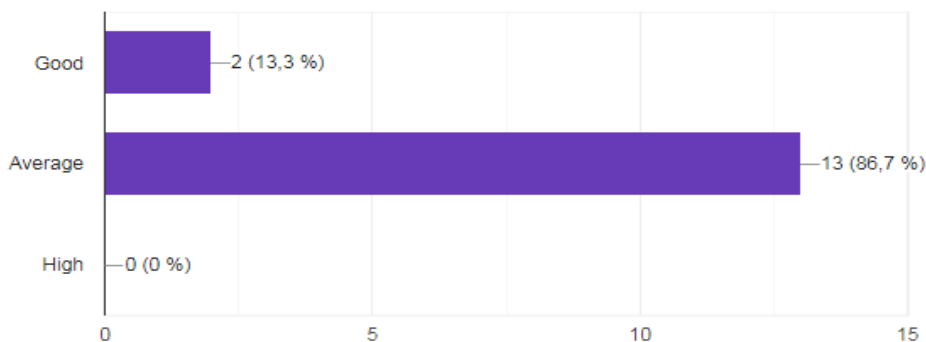
Figure 16: Teachers' opinions about their students' level of writing

The obtained results of this question showed that most teachers 86 % stated that the majority of their students have an average level in writing. Additionally, 13.3 % of them believed that their student's level of writing is good.

Question 4: Do your students face difficulties in writing?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	**15**	**100 %**
No	**0**	**0 %**

Table 18: Teachers' opinions about their students' difficulties in writing

The result of this question indicated that all the teachers 100 % agreed that most of their students face difficulties in writing, this mainly due to the fact that writing is the most difficult skill for students to master.

Question 5: How often do you assign writing tasks to your students?

Options	**Number**	**Percentage %**
Always	5	33 %
Generally	10	67 %
Rarely	0	0 %

Table 19: Teachers' frequency of assigning writing tasks to students
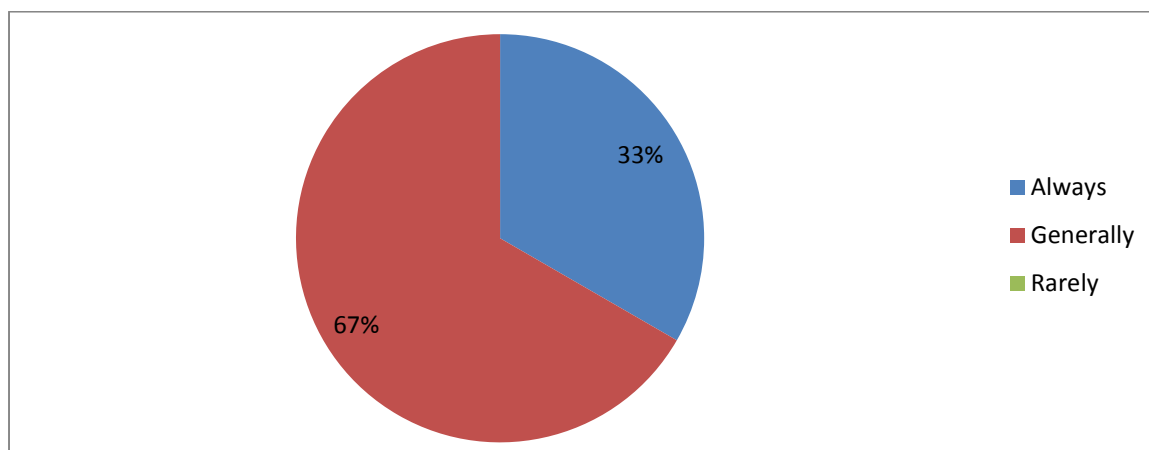
Figure 17: Teachers' frequency of assigning writing tasks to students

The majority of teachers 67 % reported that they generally give their students writing assignments while others 33 % mentioned that they always do so. It seems that most teachers frequently provide their learners with writing tasks.

> **Sections Three : The prewriting strategies in the writing process.**

Question 6 : Do you think that prewriting is the most difficult stage in the writing process?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	9	60 %
No	6	40 %

Table 20: Teachers' attitudes about the difficulty of prewriting stage

As noticed in the above table, a significant number of teachers 60 % agreed that the prewriting is the most difficult stage in the writing process while the remaining teachers 40 % viewed prewriting as not being the most challenging stage of the writing process.

Question 7 : Have you ever taught your students the prewriting strategies?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %

Table 21: Teachers' opinions about teaching the prewriting strategy

The table above demonstrated that all teachers 100 % stated that they taught their students prewriting strategies.

Question 8: Do you think that the use of prewriting strategies crucial in the writing process?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %

Table 22: Teachers' attitudes about the use of prewriting strategies

The result of this question showed that all teachers 100 % affirmed that the use of prewriting strategies is highly important in the writing process.

Question 9: Do the use of prewriting strategies have a positive effect on the students 'writing skill?

Options	Number	Percentage %
Yes	15	100 %
No	0	0 %

Table 23: Teachers' perceptions about the effect of prewriting strategies

According to the results of the above table, it was viewed that all teachers 100% agreed that the use of prewriting strategies have a positive effect on the students 'writing performance.

2.4 Discussion of the main findings:

This part is mainly devoted to provide a discussion of the main results obtained from the students and teachers' questionnaires and then relating these results to the previous stated hypotheses, regarding the first hypothesis which denoted that EFL students may have a positive attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies, the results revealed that the majority of students have a positive attitudes towards these techniques and they claimed that it is important in the writing process. On the other hand, teachers also perceived these strategies as a crucial step in writing. Concerning the second hypothesis which stated that the majority of students may start their writing by using prewriting strategies, the results obtained showed that a greatest number of students admitted that they use prewriting strategies before they begin writing. The third hypothesis stipulated that there is a high possibility that the use of prewriting strategies might be extremely useful in the writing process. The findings demonstrated that most of students found the prewriting strategies very useful in helping them to organize and construct their thoughts; teachers also indicated that the use of these strategies is important and has a positive effect on the students' writing performance.

2.5. Conclusion:

This chapter provides a description of the research design, the research instrument chosen by the researcher and the sample population that has been selected .Besides, it presents an analysis of the data gathered from both students and teachers' questionnaires .Then, and it introduces a discussion of the main results obtained.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Learning and teaching the writing skill is not an easy task to accomplish. The majority of students face serious difficulties in writing, especially at the level of prewriting stage. The main problem is that they are unable to reorganize their ideas and this due to the fact that they are unaware of the importance of using prewriting strategies before starting to write, with regard to this problem, the aims of this research is to investigate students' and attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process.

This current research work is divided in two chapters: the first one is associated with the theoretical part of the study, which reviews the definition of writing, the difficulties, and its characteristics, also the stages of the writing process. Besides the prewriting strategies and its impact on the students' writing skill. Whereas, the second chapter is concerned with the practical part of the study; it provided a description of the research methodology, data collection and an analysis of the obtained data. Then, it dealt with a discussion of the main findings.

The results of this study revealed that the majority of students have positive attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing process. Besides, it proved that the majority of students generally use the prewriting strategies whenever they take a writing task. Then, it showed that a significant number of students stated that the use of prewriting strategies is highly useful and has a positive effect on their writing skill.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

This study aims at investigating the students' attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies in the writing skill. Your answers will be extremely helpful for the research .your answers will be anonymous and will be used for academic purposes only. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: Basic Information

1. How do you assess your level in English?

- Advanced
- Intermediate
- Elementary

2. Which of these skills is the most difficult for you? (You can tick more than one box)

- Listening
- Speaking
- writing
- reading

3. How do you evaluate your writing skills?

- Good
- Average
- Excellent

Section Two: The writing process

4. Do you encounter difficulties while writing?

- Yes
- No

5. If yes, which problem do you encounter? (you can tick more than box)

- Lack of vocabulary
- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation

6. Do you make a plan before you start writing?

- Yes
- No

7. If yes, how often do you make a plan?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

8. When you start writing, do you go through the stages of the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising and editing)?

- Yes
- No

Section Three: Students' attitudes towards the use of prewriting strategies.

9. How do you find prewriting stage (the first step in writing)?

- Easy
- Not easy
- Difficult

10. Have you ever been taught before about the prewriting strategies in the written expression course?

- Yes
- No

11. If yes, name these strategies please

[ ]

12. What prewriting strategy do you use most to generate your ideas?*

- Brainstorming
- Mind mapping
- Free writing
- Questioning

13. How often do you use the prewriting strategies?*

- Always
- Sometimes
- Almost never

14. How important are the prewriting strategies in helping you to organize your thoughts?

- very useful
- useful
- Not useful

Appendix B

Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear, teachers.

We would be grateful if you fill in the following questionnaire to express your attitudes about the use of prewriting strategies in the writing skill. Your answers will be of great importance to this research, thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: Basic information

1. What is your qualification?

- Doctorate
- Magister
- BA(license)

2. How long have you been teaching writing?

- 5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

Section Two: The writing skill

3. How do you evaluate your students' level in writing?

- Good
- Average
- High

4. Do your students face difficulties in writing?

- Yes
- No

5. How often do you assign writing tasks to your students?

- Always
- Generally
- Rarely

Section Three: The prewriting strategies in the writing process

6. Do you think that prewriting is the most difficult stage in the writing process?

- Yes
- No

7. Have you ever taught your students the prewriting strategies?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you think that the use of prewriting strategies crucial in the writing process?

- Yes
- No

9. Do the uses of prewriting strategies have a positive effect on the students 'writing skill?

- Yes
- No

Résumé

La plupart des étudiants considèrent l'étape de la pré-écriture comme une étape extrêmement difficile dans le processus de rédaction. La présente étude vise à étudier les attitudes et les perceptions des étudiants de troisième année à l'égard de l'utilisation de stratégies de rédaction préalable dans le processus de rédaction. le premier a été administré à quarante étudiants universitaires de l'EFL tandis que l'autre à quinze enseignants d'expression écrite. Ils ont affirmé qu'ils utilisent généralement ces stratégies avant de tenter d'écrire .En outre, ils ont déclaré que l'utilisation de stratégies de pré écriture est importante et remarquablement utile pour eux dans l'organisation de leur écriture. En outre, En somme, l'utilisation de stratégies de rédaction préalable avant de commencer à composer est une étape très importante et peut avoir un effet positif sur la capacité de rédaction des élèves.

الملخص

يعتبر معظم الطلاب مرحلة ما قبل الكتابة مرحلة صعبة للغاية في عملية الكتابة. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى استقصاء اتجاهات وتصورات طلبة السنة الثالثة نحو استخدام استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة في عملية الكتابة. ولتحقيق الغرض من هذه الدراسة اختار الباحث استبيانين. الأول كان لأربعين طالبا جامعيا في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بينما الآخر إلى خمسة عشر مدرسا للتعبير الكتابي. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه استخدام استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة ، وزعموا أنهم يستخدمون هذه الاستراتيجيات بشكل عام قبل محاولتهم الكتابة . إلى جانب ذلك ، ذكروا أن استخدام استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة أمر مهم ومفيد بشكل ملحوظ بالنسبة لهم في تنظيم كتاباتهم. علاوة على ذلك ، اعترف المعلمون بأن استخدام استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة أمر بالغ الأهمية في عملية الكتابة. باختصار ، يعد استخدام استراتيجيات ما قبل الكتابة قبل البدء في التأليف خطوة مهمة للغاية وقد يكون لها تأثير إيجابي على مهارة الكتابة لدى الطلاب.

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