

DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
UNIVERSITY OF ABOU BAKR BELKAID – TLEMCEN  
FACULTY OF ARTS, SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
ENGLISH SECTION

AN ANALYSIS OF EFL WRITING SKILL  
IN SECONDARY EDUCATION  
A CASE STUDY of 3 AS “LETTRES ET SCIENCES  
HUMAINES”  
(BLIDA - TLEMCEN)

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages  
in candidacy for the Degree of  
Magister in Applied Linguistics and T.E.F.L

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Academic Year: 2006 - 2007

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*In memory of my mother*

*To my father, brothers, sisters and larger family*

*To my children:*

*Mohamed Akram and Chahinez*

*To my husband*

*Abdelghani*

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## ABSTRACT

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Algeria has been given much concern since the independence, and mainly after the advent of the globalisation process. But despite all efforts at improving the teaching/learning of EFL, Algerian learners still display a low achievement in English language use, mainly in writing. Even after five years of formal instruction in English, third-year pupils are unable to express themselves, at least, comprehensibly by the time they sit for the Baccalaureate exam.

The present work attempts to investigate the EFL writing skill teaching/learning in secondary education, with reference to 3AS -LSH- stream learners. This work aims not only to find the causes underlying learners' failure in writing, but also tries to suggest alternative solutions that are hoped to alleviate the problem. The central belief guiding this work is the great importance that writing has in language teaching and learning.

Therefore, this work is divided into four interrelated chapters. Chapter One describes the educational context in Algeria, with a focus on the writing skill in secondary education for 3AS – LSH – learners. It attempts to describe the most relevant teaching/learning variables: the approach, the textbook, the teacher, and the learner. Chapter Two provides a theoretical overview of writing as a language skill and as a learning tool, and thus serves as groundwork for the following chapters. Chapter Three describes the empirical phase carried through various analytical tools: questionnaires and interviews. Chapter Four provides alternative remedies to writing failure through different pedagogical perspectives; they concern first the reconsideration of EFL teaching/learning, before focusing on the issue of the writing skill.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Absolute frequency
Bac exam	Baccalaureate examination (Entrance examination for the university)
BEF	Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental (Entrance examination for the Secondary School)
CAPES	Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle d'Enseignement Secondaire
CBA	Competency Based Approach
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
L1	First language
L2	Second language
L3	Third language
LLE	Lettres et Langues Etrangères
LSH	Lettres et Sciences Humaines
LSI	Lettres et Sciences Islamiques
P.L.E.F.T.E.R.	Planner, Linguistic model, Evaluator, Facilitator, Team member, Educator, and Researcher.
RF	Reference frequency
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
U.K.	United Kingdom
VSO	Verb-Subject-Object
1AM	Première Année Moyenne (1 <sup>st</sup> Middle- school Year)
1AS	Première Année Secondaire (1 <sup>st</sup> Secondary- School Year)
3AS	Troisième Année Secondaire (3 <sup>rd</sup> Secondary-School Year)
7 AF	Septième Année Fondamentale ( 1 <sup>st</sup> Foundation-School Year )
8AF	Huitième Année Fondamentale (2 <sup>nd</sup> Foundation- School Year)
9AF	Neuvième Année Fondamentale (3 <sup>rd</sup> Foundation-School Year)



## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

taught in order to ensure learners' awareness of and involvement in the learning process. Nevertheless, what is actually observed is that by the end of general education, and after an English learning experience of five years - in the Middle School and later in the Secondary School, Algerian learners are unable to express themselves in English neither fluently nor accurately. A situation that arises many enquiries about the real causes of such low an achievement, mainly in writing.

In essence, this dissertation aims to discuss the following questions:

- Is the writing skill adequately taught for 3AS level?
- What are the teaching/learning variables which influence positively or negatively pupils' performance in EFL in general, and in writing in particular?
- What teacher and learner profiles are needed to solve the problem, and introduce change in the Algerian School?

Basically, the ultimate aim of this dissertation is to uncover the major causes of 3AS pupils' low achievement in the writing skill. Therefore, investigation throughout this work will attempt to provide arguments for the research hypotheses that can be roughly formulated as follows:

- The writing skill is neither taught nor learnt adequately; consequently, third-year pupils end up general school education unable to write neither fluently nor accurately, and this is clearly perceived in the Baccalaureate results.
- The educational setting does not encourage the teaching or development of EFL, in terms of instruction forms and conditions and in terms of evaluation practices.
- Teachers are not adequately trained to teach EFL for secondary school pupils; and so, they are incompetent in teaching the writing skill; in addition, learners hold negative attitudes towards English and are not motivated to learn writing.

## General Introduction

Worldwide changes resulting from the globalisation process have imposed educational reform as a major condition for human development. Part of this educational reform concerns foreign language teaching/learning. Since teaching English as a foreign language is of great importance in academic, professional and international domains, Algeria has brought in changes into her educational system so as to achieve the desired goals. Likewise, different approaches to foreign language teaching have been adopted since the independence. Moving from the Grammar Translation Method to the Audio-Lingual or Direct Method, and then to the Communicative Language Teaching, all efforts are targeted to one aim: adequate teaching/learning of foreign languages, among them English. However, and despite huge efforts devoted for so many years at improving learners' achievement in EFL, the results are still strikingly unsatisfactory.

This dissertation attempts to provide an analysis of the EFL writing skill teaching/learning at Secondary-School level. A case study is chosen for this research: 3AS; it is a decisive year because of the Baccalaureate examination, and a specific stream -'Lettres et Sciences Humaines' (henceforth LSH)- is selected, since it is the one which shows more failure in English and mainly in writing, compared to other learning streams. The choice of the writing skill as the focus of study in the present work is due to many reasons. Writing is a highly important cognitive activity that may be considered as an end in its own right, and as an index of learners' mastery of preceding lessons in the pedagogic unit. Writing is also important for tests and exams, reading skill development, future career projects as well as Internet use. Writing, then, has to be carefully



What is actually needed is a reconsideration of writing as a major language and learning skill. To this end, teacher and learner roles have to be redefined in the light of the significant changes that have occurred worldwide. Therefore, reform should be introduced at different levels in order to resolve the problem. This can be done by consulting relevant theory, and conducting an investigative study to arrive at the core problem, and by so doing, be in a better position to suggest appropriate remedies. Thus, the issue of the writing skill will be dealt with in this dissertation into four interrelated chapters.

Chapter One describes the educational context with reference to the writing skill teaching/learning for 3AS learners. Therefore, the teaching variables that are closely related to the teaching of the writing skill are examined: the applied teaching approach, the official textbook, the teacher and the pupils. Besides, learners' needs are analysed with reference to the officially stated EFL objectives, and to the syllabus designed for secondary education.

Chapter Two tackles the topic of writing as a language skill, and as a learning tool. It is based on the assumption that writing is unknown from both teachers and learners. Thus, this chapter tries to define writing with its related sub-skills, purposes, teaching norms, and evaluation procedures. It also attempts to provide a theoretical basis on which the teaching/learning of EFL writing skill can be analysed and ultimately improved.

Chapter Three deals with the empirical phase which aims at finding illuminative data that would guide the research. This investigative phase is carried out through different analytical tools. A first questionnaire is submitted to third year learners, and a second one to secondary school teachers. In addition, an unstructured interview is conducted with secondary-school teachers and a semi-structured interview with EFL inspectors. This phase investigates teachers' training, teaching practice and constraints, learners' proficiency level and motivation, as well as the status of the writing skill in the

## General Introduction

Worldwide changes resulting from the globalisation process have imposed educational reform as a major condition for human development. Part of this educational reform concerns foreign language teaching/learning. Since teaching English as a foreign language is of great importance in academic, professional and international domains, Algeria has brought in changes into her educational system so as to achieve the desired goals. Likewise, different approaches to foreign language teaching have been adopted since the independence. Moving from the Grammar Translation Method to the Audio-Lingual or Direct Method, and then to the Communicative Language Teaching, all efforts are targeted to one aim: adequate teaching/learning of foreign languages, among them English. However, and despite huge efforts devoted for so many years at improving learners' achievement in EFL, the results are still strikingly unsatisfactory.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

#### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to give a systemic description of the educational context in Algeria, with reference to the EFL writing skill in secondary education, and more specifically, to the 3AS-LSH-stream. The writing skill is chosen on account of its importance in learning and testing, and of the fact that it is the skill most neglected by both teachers and learners. As for the choice of the 3AS-LSH-stream, the third year is considered to be the decisive year in secondary education because of the Baccalauréat examination<sup>1</sup> (henceforth Bac exam). In addition, the LSH stream is the one which shows more failure in English and mainly in writing, compared to other learning streams. A thorough analysis of the teaching/learning of EFL writing skill would,

expectantly, shed light on the causes of such low-proficiency output, and would guide efforts towards improvement. For such a purpose, the ELT situation in Algeria is portrayed as well as the EFL objectives and syllabus for 3AS are stated. This is done in accordance with the pedagogical instructions and recommendations of the Ministry of Education mentioned in *Syllabuses for English* (2004) and in *The Guide for Baccalauréat Exam Elaboration* (2003)<sup>2</sup>. Besides, this chapter includes a description and analysis of learners' needs, as perceived by policy-makers, and how these needs are catered for through the designed syllabus, programme and evaluation practices.



EFL curriculum. Results of this investigative study would provide a thorough diagnosis of the problem, and would pave the way to alternative remedies that will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Four aims at proposing alternative recommendations to deal with the problem of failure in writing skill. It suggests reconsidering some of the teaching and learning parameters before moving on the writing skill issue. The proposals concern mainly the new teacher and learner roles, with regard to the educational reforms that have occurred at national and international levels. They also concern improving the writing skill through continuous practice and reinforcement until learners acquire the writing habit. When they are better writers, these pupils would expectantly become better learners.

A successful teaching situation should be systematically based on the collaboration of both teachers and learners. Besides, learners' needs, aptitudes and interests have to be central to syllabus design and curriculum development. In addition, teachers, as agents of change, are to pursue their task to guide these learners towards effective foreign language learning. To this end, the writing skill has to be given its rightful place as a compulsory learning tool, through which pupils develop their learning strategies during and after the course. The present work cannot give a one-for-all solution to the problem, but hopefully aims at reevaluating the teaching/learning of EFL writing skill with an ultimate goal of making of writing a fruitful and an enjoyable practice for both teachers and learners.

**THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT**

**CHAPTER ONE**

## CHAPTER ONE: THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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#### 1.4.4. The Learners

#### 1.4.4.1. Profile of the Learners

#### 1.4.4.2. Learning Conditions

#### 1.4.4.3. Proficiency Level

### 1.5. Conclusion

## Notes to Chapter One



Different variables related to the teaching of the writing skill are considered. Firstly, the chosen approach is illustrated in terms of stated objectives and classroom practices. Secondly, the textbook designed for third year classes is examined with reference to writing skill activities. Thirdly, the teacher's role, training and administrative constraints are discussed. Fourthly, the pupils, as the centre of the whole educational system, are described in relation to their proficiency level in the English language.

## 1.2. The ELT Situation in Algeria

After the independence in 1962, Algeria has carried on and reinforced the teaching of foreign languages in the school curriculum. French prevailed as the language of instruction - an educational heritage left by the French colonialism; while Spanish, German and English were taught as foreign languages with no difference in status. Because of worldwide changes, however, English has imposed itself as an international language, and has consequently become the most studied language in the world. English is now one of the most important languages of communication; it gives access to information in different fields: business, finance, medicine and technology. In addition, students who become fluent in English are believed to be able to contribute to the development of their country, mainly in the light of the globalisation process. For such reasons, the Algerian authorities have proceeded to reform the existing educational policies to cope with the new world requirements. Therefore, much importance has been given to the teaching of EFL, and thus English has become a compulsory subject-matter in the curriculum in all schools all over the country. It is clearly stated in the National Charter (1976) that English is

*a means to facilitate a constant communication with the world, to have access to modern sciences, modern technologies and to encourage creativity in its universal dimension*

In parallel to these changes in status of foreign languages, Arabic has been instituted since the 1970s, and generalised to all school levels by the 1980s<sup>3</sup>. So, Arabic has become the language of instruction, giving French a second rank as a first foreign language- despite its wide use in everyday life, in higher education and in many state-run institutions (See 1.4.4.2.). Consequently, English has been considered ever since as a second foreign language. It is taught in the Middle School for two years (8AF and 9AF) and in the three years of the Secondary School. Thus, by the end of secondary education, the pupils will have accumulated an EFL learning experience of five years<sup>4</sup>.

Teaching EFL in Algeria has witnessed a gradual development concerning its importance and role, curriculum goals, syllabus design and objectives. All these have to be given a close consideration, in the way they are set in the official guidelines and with reference to the Secondary School level.

### 1.3. Teaching EFL in Secondary Education

Secondary education lasts three years at the end of which a Baccalaureate examination is held. EFL is part of the curriculum for all streams at all levels, with a difference in coefficient and time load, as it is illustrated in the following table:

Streams		Weekly Time Load			Coefficient
Literary Streams		IAS	2AS	3AS	
- Arabic language and literature	2h+1h	3h	3h	3h	2
- Human and Islamic Sciences		3h	3h	3h	2
- Arabic Literature and foreign languages		4h	4h	4h	3
Scientific streams					
- Natural Sciences	1h+1h	3h	3h	3h	2
- Technology		3h	3h	3h	2
- Exact Sciences		3h	3h	3h	2

Management streams			
	- Economy and Management	3h	2

Table 1.1. EFL Time Load and Coefficient in the Secondary School

After five years of formal instruction, Algerian learners still display a low-level performance in English whether in speech or in writing. Moreover, they score very badly during tests and exams, and mainly in the Bac exam. Here is a sample of the results of English examination in the Baccalaurate, session 2005.

		[0,5]	[5,8]	[8,9]	[9,	[10,	[12,	[14,	[16,	[18	Tota
Successful	B	36	53	14	11	7	3	1	0	0	125
Pupils	G	85	182	52	32	34	8	4	1	0	398
	T	121	235	66	43	41	11	5	1	0	523
Unsuccess	B	453	239	13	6	8	2	1	0	0	722
	G	1055	804	73	42	27	2	1	0	0	2004
ful pupils	T	1508	1043	86	48	35	4	2	0	0	2726
	B	489	292	27	17	15	5	2	0	0	847
Pupils present	G	1140	986	125	74	61	10	5	1	0	2402
	T	1629	1278	152	91	76	15	7	1	0	3249
Percentage		50.27	39.44	4.69	2.8	2.34	0.46	0.21	0.03	0	100

Table 1.2. Results of English Examination in the Baccalaurate, session of

2005, in the wilaya of Blida, for the LSH stream.

(Academy of Blida, Office of exams and competitions)

B: boys G: girls T: total



Results in the above table are to a great extent self-explanatory; they reflect a total failure on the part of pupils. Only 3% of the candidates attained the average level, which means that about 97% of them obtained marks below 10/20; while 50% (half of the candidates) got marks below 5/20!

The results are approximately similar all over the country. This is so despite the combined efforts of teachers, inspectors and syllabus designers aiming at improving learners' proficiency in English through setting objectives based on learners' potential needs, designing syllabi that would comply with the set objectives and through teaching and assessment practices.

### 1.3.1. EFL Objectives

According to Syllabuses for English (2004), the general objective set to the teaching of EFL is that learners should be able to “*communicate efficiently in a normal and/or working situation both orally and in writing*” (2004: 6); at the same time, to enable these learners to use language as an investigative tool at university level or in the job field.

At the end of the third year, the pupils are expected to achieve a satisfactory mastery in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. They also have to be aware of aspects of culture and civilisation of target language societies, mainly learners of the literary streams who will need practice in translating and interpreting (ibid: 10).

In written expression, it is presumed from learners to “*master different writing skills: note-taking, organizing and summarizing; so as to be able to be autonomous in written expression when starting from models learnt in class*”(ibid). Different functions are to be exploited while achieving the main skills such as describing, narrating, comparing, and so on. In the light of these objectives, a syllabus is designed for each stream at each level accordingly.

(See Appendix A)

The objectives and the syllabi differ according to learners' needs in each stream, and so do the skills to be focused on. For the LSH stream, EFL is seen to have great importance as it is perceived that *“they [literary streams] will use it for oral communication (teaching, interpreting...), and for written communication (documentation, literature, translation...)”* (ibid: 8).

These syllabus objectives are important and desirable, but they seem to be over ambitious about the level of proficiency of pupils at the end of each school year, beginning from Middle School level. This fact shows unawareness on the part of syllabus designers of the EFL teaching and learning situation, primarily because English has no established functions in the Algerian community.

### 1.3.2. Syllabus for 3AS

The LSH pupils in the third year have 7 subject-matters with a different coefficient and a different time load for each.

Subject-matter	Time Load per week	Coefficient
Arabic language and literature	7 hs	5
Philosophy	7 hs	5
History and Geography	4 hs	4
French	3 hs	3
English	3 hs	2
Mathematics	2 hs	2
Physical training	2 hs	1
Total English time load and coefficient	3 / 28	2 / 22

*Table 1.3. English Time Load and Coefficient in the Curriculum for 3 AS -LSH-stream*

The table above shows the place English sustains in the curriculum. The coefficient is low, compared to the English language importance for learners and compared to other literary subject-matters. English is equated with mathematics in coefficient and is thus considered as an additional subject-matter. Even the time allocated for English is insufficient, yet the official guidelines maintain that *"those who choose the literary streams, will feel a greater necessity for English"* (ibid : 38).

In the third year, the pupils are 'supposed' to have an acceptable command of the main functions and be able to express themselves with sufficient fluency in English. They are exposed to different types of discourse and are to move from skill getting to skill using. That is why the 3AS syllabus is built around themes (family, emigration, pollution...) not functions, as the focus will be on authentic communication than on individual functions. The language structures are to be studied, the rules drawn and then consolidated through different activities. In addition, the four language skills have to be taught in an integrated way to reach a suitable fluency. Concerning the writing skill, the learners are expected to attain an adequate mastery of the different writing skills to move gradually from guided to free composition while exploiting the different themes included in different text types.

### **1.3.3. Pedagogic Unit Organisation**

The EFL syllabus for 3AS is divided into themes comprised in eleven pedagogic units. Each unit is to be covered in approximately four weeks' time, with an average time load of three hours per week. It is up to the teacher to order the units gradually according to the needs of the learners, provided that all the themes are covered by the end of the year for each stream accordingly

( COMET, 1997:6). (See Appendix B)



The four skills are dealt with in each theme, but the writing skill is left to the end of the unit. On the one hand, it is the most difficult for learners (and may be for teachers too). On the other hand, it is supposed to be the culminating point where all the other skills converge. In other words, the writing lesson functions as a consolidation process for all the preceding lessons in the pedagogic unit. The pupils have to treat the themes related to their streams with their teachers' guidance and help, keeping in mind the end of the year Baccalaureate examination.

#### **1.3.4. English Examination**

The writing skill is evaluated along the school year in the form of tests or homework, and at the end of the year during exams. An EFL exam is basically written; the oral practice of the language is not tested at all. This is one major contradiction in the application of the supposedly chosen approach (See 1.4.1.2.) Each term exam in English as well as the Baccalaureate exam is divided into three parts or sections (See Appendix C). The objective of the written expression phase is to *“evaluate the candidates'...ability to express themselves reasonably correctly through of either a guided or free composition.”*

*(The Guide for Baccalaureate Examination, 2003: 2)*

The learners are asked to choose one of the two topics suggested. One is guided consisting of note-expansion, while the other consists of free personal expression or a summary of the reading passage. The length of the composition depends on the stream; for the LSH stream, it ranges from 80 to 120 words (i.e. from 8 to 12 lines). When evaluating pupils' writings, the teachers are required to consider equally form and content. The writing activities designed for the third year together with their typical instructions are summarized in the following table:

	<b>Suggested Topics</b>	<b>Typical Instruction</b>
Either A	1- Changing from dialogue to prose	Change the following conversation into prose
	2- Changing from prose to dialogue	Example: Write the conversation between me and my sister Jane
	3- Expanding a telegram into a letter	Expand this telegram into a letter
	4- Expanding notes	Using the following notes, write a composition of (so many) words.
	5- Information transfer: from table to paragraph and vice versa	Example: Using the following notes, write full sentences and build a paragraph
	6- Writing an ending or a different ending to a reading passage	Write an ending to this story
	7- Completing a dialogue	This is a conversation between A and B. Complete what B says.
Or B	1- Summarizing	In no more than (so many words), write a summary of the reading passage on page 1.
	2- Writing a conversation on a given topic	Example: Write a conversation between a customer and a shop-assistant
	3- Writing a formal or an informal letter	Example: Letter writing You have just bought a new computer. There seems to be a problem with it. As it is still under guarantee, you write a letter to the shop manager and ask him to replace it for you. Sign your letter John Wilson. Write your address as: 12, Oxford Street , London

	4- Writing a paragraph on a given topic	Write a composition of about (so many) words or lines on the following topic
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*Table 1.4. Written Expression Suggested Topics and Typical Instructions*

*(The Guide for Baccalaureate Examination, 2003:18-20)*

The teacher should include most, if not all, of these activities in the pedagogic units and in tests and exams during the school year. Although, it is expected that by the end of secondary education, learners should be able to express themselves in English fluently, whether orally or in writing; the reality is in fact deceiving. Most pupils end their general education with little proficiency in English; the situation is even worse concerning the writing skill. Teachers have noticed during the school year or in the Baccalaureate correction centres that learners tend to neglect the last part of their exam, the one about written expression, or at the best produce unsatisfactory compositions which do not reflect the exposure they have had to the target language in terms of dense vocabulary, rich grammatical structures and through authentic texts of varied discourse. Neither do they reflect the efforts of teachers who supposedly have devoted time and energy in training pupils perform in this skill; the fact that urges us to investigate the sources of the problem causing EFL failure in general, and in writing in particular.

#### **1.4. Teaching the Writing Skill**

In order to have a diagnosis of the factors that enhance or impinge on the teaching of the EFL writing skill in secondary education, such related variables as the approach, the textbook, the teacher and the pupils have to be closely analysed.



### **1.4.1. The Approach**

The quest for the best method in language teaching was a preoccupation of teachers and applied linguists throughout the twentieth century. The innovations in foreign language teaching reflect changes in what language is thought to be and how it is believed to be best taught. Like many countries, Algeria is affected by worldwide changes, and this is clearly seen in the various approaches adopted in the teaching of EFL at successive periods.

#### **1.4.1.1. A Diachronic Overview**

In the 1960s, the grammar translation method prevailed in Algeria, and this could be seen in ELT textbooks existing at that time<sup>5</sup>. Language was then taught through the explicit teaching of grammatical rules, their memorisation and their application in translation tasks. Reading and writing were the major focus, but little attention was paid to speaking or listening skills. Pupils were exposed to literary texts and long lists of words equivalents. Accuracy was favoured over fluency, and teaching was basically teacher-centred. But, teachers themselves were deprived of any innovation, and were keen on finishing the programme in a limited period of time. The result was that the pupils were passive learners and ended their education unable to speak the language even though they learnt the grammatical rules (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). The Grammar Translation Method was criticised worldwide, and reactions to its limitations were accompanied with socio-political changes, the fact that urged the introduction of new approaches and methods in ELT methodology. This gave way to the structuralist view of language based on the principles underlying the Audio-Lingual method; these were: the primacy of the spoken language over the written one, the gradation of the four skills into listening, speaking, reading and writing, the use of the target language as the only language of instruction and the development of speech habits through mimicry-memorisation of entire sentences or whole dialogues; while the writing skill is delayed to later stages.

This stream of thought was deeply rooted in the Algerian School in the 1970s. The structural approach was evident in ELT textbooks, such as those designed by Alexander<sup>6</sup>, which included artificial texts meant to illustrate grammatical points. The extensive teaching of grammar was believed to be essential to language learning. However, concentration on formal grammar instruction cannot lead automatically to the practical use of the language as it is expressed by Hymes (1971: 15) "***There are rules of use without which rules of grammar would be useless***". The pupils were left short of any ability of using language effectively in formal or informal situations, though the core principle of Structuralism and Audio-Lingualism was to stress on the oral side of language teaching. This was so because emphasis was put on studying 'about' the language rather than on using the language for communication. Hence, there came the necessity to adopt another approach, the one that has 'revolutionised' the field of foreign language methodology: the Communicative Approach. Highly influenced by the concept of 'communicative competence', the new orientation in language teaching has shifted towards Communicative Language Teaching. CLT came to be strongly applied all over the world; in Algeria, it has been present since the 1980s. In CLT, learning is to be learner-centred, since focus is on the communicative needs of learners. In other words, language is taught to enable learners to use it for communicative purposes.

The new methodology aims at developing in learners 'communicative competence' rather than 'linguistic competence' in the Chomskyian sense<sup>7</sup>. Language is no more considered in terms of structures –grammar and vocabulary-, but also in terms of the communicative functions it performs. Therefore, more attention is paid to language use rather than to language usage (to borrow Widdowson's dichotomy), fluency is emphasized over accuracy, the use of the mother is permitted to some extent, and errors are tolerated. Accordingly, a new series of ELT textbooks has been designed to meet the



In addition, there is a strong assumption that learners have undoubtedly reached the desired objectives in writing and in other skills at the end of each school year, and so there is no attempt at recycling knowledge through repeated practice. In a highly teacher-centred classroom, teaching-learning is done in a linear way, giving as such no chance for consolidation or review. What is more, the official guidelines state that *"the various skills will be integrated to move from skill getting to skill using"* (*Syllabuses for English*, 2004: 36); however, little effort is done to integrate the four skills, either on the part of syllabus designers or on the part of teachers through their teaching practice. The four skills are taught separately and successively, and thus the writing skill is delayed to later stages in the pedagogic unit and in the official exams. The result of such a paradox is apparent in learners' failure in tests and exams, and even in the low proficiency level of those who go on further studies at university level. What can be concluded so far is that failure in writing is closely related to failure in EFL teaching in general.

#### 1.4.2. The Textbook

In the teaching-learning process, the textbook sustains an important position. An EFL textbook should represent the 'materialisation' of the official syllabus within the set objectives. In this context, Harmer states that *"Good books are carefully prepared to offer a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, motivating texts..."* (Harmer, 2001:304)

Different criteria have been put forward for the elaboration and evaluation of textbooks. These criteria include, among others, methodological, instructions, syllabus type selection and grading, linguistic coverage, and cultural acceptability. It is equally important for learners and teachers as *"it will inevitably determine the major part of the classroom teaching and the students' out-of-class learning"* (Rivers, 1968: 475). Teachers rely on it for



(2004) do not fully comply with the ones existing in COMET. For instance, four themes are suggested for 3AS in the official syllabus, while five units have been designed for this same stream in COMET. The comparison is summarized in the following table.

Themes suggested in the official syllabus	Units designed for LSH stream in <u>COMET</u>
1- Modern Life in English Speaking Countries	1- Modern Life in English Speaking Countries (unit 1)
2- Algeria and English Speaking Countries	2- Trade and Development (unit 5)
3- Human Rights	3- Media (unit 7)
4- Racial Problems	4- Human Rights and Racial Problems (unit 9)
	5- Great Challenges to Mankind (unit 11)

Table 1.5. Comparison of themes suggested for 3AS -LSH-in the official syllabus and in COMET

All the units follow the same format with no pictures, diagrams or charts, and with no games or puzzles. In short, the monotonous design of COMET tends to demotivate learners and teachers alike. Moreover, the title does not reflect the values or principles of the Communicative Approach since the textbook does not contain material that would promote the meaningful and thus communicative use of the language. So, despite the richness of COMET in terms of authenticity of texts and density of vocabulary, though *“often beyond the learners' comprehension abilities and the teacher's pedagogical explanations”* (Ourghi, 2002: 26), it seems not to take into consideration pupils' needs and proficiency level in English, nor their socio-cultural environment.

The teacher's task is made even more difficult because of the absence of the teacher's guide, which would *“not only provide procedures for the lesson in the*

lesson planning or for tests elaboration; however, they are not compelled to follow the textbook slavishly since *“the textbook is not the Holy Koran”* (Syllabuses for English, 1999: 4). So, teachers have to be witty enough so that they adapt it to suit their learners' abilities and needs. A textbook is also a reference for revision for learners who need to go back to reading texts, language study activities, or just enjoy themselves with games and puzzles. Taking into account all these considerations, and in order to meet the needs of future university students, a textbook has been designed for 3AS classes: COMET.

#### 1.4.2.1. COMET: Design and Aims

COMET was introduced and implemented in schools in 1997; it was designed for all third-year streams. The title is an acronym standing for Communicative English Teaching, which is to show the new approach adopted by Algeria, namely the Communicative Approach. This textbook contains 11 units which include different topics or themes related to learners' respective streams (See Appendix B). These themes are to be covered under the teacher's guidance who keeps in mind the end of the year Baccalauréat examination (COMET, 1997: 6).

Each of the 11 units consists of 10 successive phases: Pre-listening, Listening, Post-listening, Pre-reading, Reading, Post-reading, Writing, Get Ready, Time for a Song and Reading for leisure. Besides, each unit is to be dealt with in 12 or 13 hours. Half of this time would be devoted to the study of the main skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing. The other half is supposed to be devoted to the explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary, together with other light activities such as the song or the reading for leisure passage. Going through the unit, however, one would find no grammar study or word-building activities (the pupils are assumed to have mastered all the necessary lessons in previous years). Furthermore, the themes suggested in Syllabuses for English



*student's book, but also offer suggestions and alternatives, extra activities, and resources.*" (Harmer, 2001:304). The teacher, then, has great difficulties in exploiting the official textbook and is faced with two alternatives: either simplify the material -mainly the reading passage- adapting it according to the pupils' level, or have recourse to other teaching material.

#### 1.4.2.2. Writing Activities in COMET

Throughout the different units, learners are exposed to different types of discourse embodied in different text types (texts, dialogues, and letters). They are thus expected to produce compositions equally varied by the end of the unit, in the writing phase.

The writing activities suggested in COMET constitute a continuation of the reading and/or listening phase, since the topic treated in the writing phase is prepared beforehand in the form of class discussion in post-listening or post-reading sections. The writing activities related to the units designed for 3AS-LSH-, with the type of discourse required for each writing assignment are as follows:

Units	Type of writing assignment	Type of required discourse
1- Modern Life in English Speaking Countries	a paragraph	Expository
5- Trade and Development	a paragraph	Argumentative
7- Media	A magazine article	Argumentative and Expository
9- Human Rights and Racial Problems	a letter	Argumentative
11- Great Challenges to Mankind	a letter	Argumentative and Expository

Table 1.6. Writing activities designed for 3 AS-LSH- in COMET



All the suggested activities are guided, following the usual reproduction and production steps; focusing on three main procedures: information gathering, selection of information and organisation of content. Nevertheless, the pupils alone cannot exploit the textbook to produce a written work. Little help is offered to them in terms of generating ideas, and organising them into sentences, then into coherent paragraphs. Although some expressions and key vocabulary items are given to them<sup>9</sup>, the learners have no guidance as to how to use these expressions meaningfully in their written prose. What is more, the writing tasks designed for 3AS –LSH- are repeated (See Table 1.4. above), and thus offer little opportunity for output variety. Moreover, the textbook does not cover all the writing activities stated in The Guide for Baccalaureate Exam Elaboration (December, 2003)<sup>10</sup>.

All this makes it difficult for teachers to use the textbook as it is. Therefore, teachers have no other alternative than adapting the textbook, modifying the already existing writing activities or adding others. The result is that the writing phase success relies heavily on the teacher's competence in teaching this skill.

### **1.4.3. The Teacher**

Despite the learner-centredness of education, the teacher remains the central pivot of the teaching-learning process. Likewise, the role of the teacher has been expanded to include a number of role specifications. EFL teachers at the secondary level strive hard to accomplish their mission and fulfil the objectives officially set in EFL teaching, though the working conditions are not helpful.

### 1.4.3.1. The Role of the Teacher

The teacher is usually defined as the person who gives knowledge, instructs and trains. The teacher is often asked to be helpful, patient, imaginative, energetic, but first of all competent in his/her subject-matter. It is often maintained that there is no fixed formula for good teaching. However, the EFL teacher must have a good knowledge of the English language, and of the way this language is to be taught, in addition to a set of behavioural traits necessary to get learners involved in the learning process in a constantly changing environment.

In CLT methodology, the task of the language teacher is harder to assume. The teacher is no longer the purveyor of knowledge and the source of authority, but rather *“a facilitator<sup>11</sup> of learning and resource for students to draw on”* (Harmer, 2001: 57). In 3AS, the teacher has to help learners *“reach a certain level of performance when using the foreign language”*, and is supposed to reach the set objectives prescribed by the syllabus which aims at

- *expanding their language acquisition*
- *developing their verbal and graphic communicative skills*
- *exposing the various types of discourse: narrative, descriptive expository, prescriptive and argumentative*

(Syllabuses for English, 2004: 36)

Such an important task requires, however, an adequate teacher-training programme, technically called pre and in-service training, i.e. before and after graduating from the university.



### 1.4.3.2. Teacher Training

Secondary school teachers of English hold a 'Licence' degree in English Studies. During their four-year university instruction, the students have the module of written expression for the first two years, in which they are introduced to this important skill through theoretical and practical lessons. Programme designers assume the students have been given the necessary guidelines in this skill, and are to develop it through practice in other modules, mainly in 'civilisation' and 'literature' modules, where learners have to prepare term papers (commonly called in Algerian universities 'éxposés'). The writing skill is later dealt with in the fourth year, in the TEFL module as part of theoretical lessons about the teaching of the four language skills. Unfortunately, these students have little (or no) opportunity to attend real writing sessions in the secondary school. The place written expression is given in the four-year university level is identified in the table below.

Year	Module	Teaching time per week
<b>First</b>	Oral Expression	3hs
	Written Expression	3hs
	Grammar	3hs
	Reading Comprehension	1h30
	Phonetics	1h30
	Introduction to Linguistics	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
<b>Time load for Written Expression</b>		<b>3hs/15</b>
<b>Second</b>	Oral Expression	1h30
	Written Expression	1h30
	Grammar	1h30
	Linguistics	1h30



	Phonetics	1h30
	British Civilisation	1h30
	American Civilisation	1h30
	British Literature	1h30
	American Literature	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
<b>Time load for Written Expression</b>		<b>3hs/15</b>
<b>Third</b>	Oral Expression	1h30
	Sociolinguistics	1h30
	Phonology	1h30
	British Civilisation	1h30
	American Civilisation	1h30
	British Literature	1h30
	American Literature	1h30
	African Literature	1h30
	General Psychology	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
<b>Time load for Written Expression</b>		<b>0/13h30</b>
<b>Fourth</b>	Seminars in Linguistics	1h30
	Seminars in Civilisation	1h30
	Seminars in Literature	1h30
	Educational Psychology	1h30
	TEFL	1h30
<b>Time load for Written Expression</b>		<b>0/7h30</b>

*Table 1.7. Time load for written expression and other modules at university level*

To become a teacher in the secondary school, the 'Licence' holder has to pass a regional test, and to be a qualified teacher, he/she has to pass a professional examination, the CAPES (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle de l'Enseignement Secondaire). After this crucial step in the teacher's career, the teacher receives a periodical -often irregular- visit from the inspector of English who assesses the

teacher's evolution or regression in teaching performance, and who gives recommendations as well.

Apart from a seminar or a study day held once or twice a year, teachers have few opportunities to develop and improve their teaching practice. They find themselves rather at a loss, since they notice a great difference between their formal pre-service training at university level, and what is actually required from them in the job field. Consequently, they are trapped in an endless number of teaching constraints.

#### **1.4.3.3. Teaching Constraints**

The role of the teacher of English is hard to assume because of administrative constraints. EFL teachers encounter various impediments; they are compelled to finish the programme, write on the classes' log-books, and fill in scores in pupils' correspondence copybooks. Besides, they have to cope with an overloaded curriculum, large classes, few resources, an inappropriate textbook and a low coefficient subject-matter. In addition, the English sessions are usually scheduled in the afternoon (4-5) or in the morning final hours (11-12), when both teachers and pupils are tired. Amidst these conditions, the EFL teachers are asked to make pupils 'score well' in tests and exams (quantitative assessment), and no one would ask them whether they have developed real communicative abilities in learners (qualitative assessment). Moreover, there is a wide gap between curriculum objectives and official examination practices (See 1.4.1.2.), the fact that makes teachers question the necessity to devote time and energy in trying to foster pupils' communicative skills, mainly in listening and speaking. Thus, the EFL teacher has to manage teaching the writing skill, among other skills, to large classes where the number of pupils in many schools exceeds 50! With such an 'extravagant' number, and at this crucial level where pupils need individual help, teachers confront a great challenge: complete the programme



effectively, prepare the pupils for the Bac exam adequately and tackle problems of discipline tactfully. Furthermore, teachers have to deal with pupils of mixed abilities, of different learning strategies and of low motivational drives. These learners have rather low proficiency level in English, and most importantly, they hold negative attitudes towards foreign language learning, mainly towards English.

#### 1.4.4. The Pupils

The pupils are the centre of the teaching-learning process, principally within CLT methodology. The syllabus, the textbook and the teaching method are all to be selected and designed to suit their needs and cope with their proficiency level in each stream accordingly. The focus of study is on third year pupils, more specifically the LSH stream.

##### 1.4.4.1. Profile of the Learners

Third year pupils are generally aged between 17 and 20. As adolescents, one of their main concerns is the search for individual identity. This identity is to be developed among classmates and friends; this is why adolescents consider peer appreciation to be more important than the teacher's attention (Harmer, 2001). They cause problems of discipline because of the anxiety related to the language classroom<sup>12</sup> in general, and because of their lack of motivation in learning as well as their negative attitudes towards the English language in particular.

LSH stream pupils undergo stream orientation twice. The first one takes place at the end of Middle School studies, when pupils pass the BEF exam<sup>13</sup>. The orientation of learners is done on the basis of scores: high-scoring pupils are oriented to the scientific or technological streams, while low-scoring pupils are sent to the literary or the technical streams. The second one is done at the end of 1 AS, where literary stream pupils are oriented to three different branches: LSH, LSI and LLE.



Third-year pupils are in a transitional and decisive learning period leading to graduate studies or to the job field. Although they undergo the same formation (i.e. formal instruction), these learners differ greatly in many respects. In this context, Wilkins admits that ***“Getting educated is a personal matter; in contrast, providing education is a social enterprise.”*** (Wilkins, 1972: 149) Pupils vary from one another because of their differences in motivation, attitudes, learning aptitude, language anxiety and learning strategies. As it has been put forward by Rivers,

***individual students prefer different modalities of learning, through the ear or the eye they learn...at different rates and employ different strategies for understanding or retaining material*** (Rivers, 1968: 89)

Despite all these differences, these learners share many common points. They need to be instructed in a safe learning environment, where their learning and communicative strategies are developed rather than repressed; they need their self-esteem to be enhanced and their anxiety to be lowered so that to cater for an even more urgent need: pass the Baccalaureate exam. Wajnryb states that ***“One can't teach a language- the best one can do is to make the necessary conditions right for others to learn.”***(Wajnryb, 1992: 28); the fact that requires a close consideration of the kind of conditions offered to learners to study EFL.

#### 1.4.4.2. Learning Conditions

According to CLT methodology, a class is usually made of 12 pupils seated in a U shape. These learners are to be initiated to communicative skills through continuous interaction with each other and with the teacher. The syllabus, the materials and the lesson itself are to be selected, graded and adjusted according to the learners' needs and proficiency level, as has already been stated. In Algeria, there is a clear divergence between stated objectives in official guidelines and teaching-learning conditions put forward to achieve these

objectives (See 1.4.1.2.). In addition to the Baccalaureate anxiety, and to the foreign language anxiety, there is a general feeling among pupils that they are studying amid a rigid school system which imposes an inflexible learning model on all learners. The teacher, source of knowledge and authority, is to be respected and never contradicted. Lessons have to be learnt thoroughly for written tests and exams, and not for developing communicative abilities or strategies. Thus, these pupils are passive learners ***“waiting for the teacher's wisdom to be poured into them”*** (Brown, 1994: 174)

What is more, the learning conditions offered to them at school level do not aim at promoting any achievement in language learning, because of the lack of textbooks or of a library, and the lack of appropriate equipment or language laboratories. Also, in large classes with mixed abilities, pupils have fewer opportunities for self-expression or individual help on the part of the teacher. Moreover, pupils' indiscipline, most of the time, hinders the learning process since a lot of time is wasted in tackling problems of discipline and restoring order in class.

On the other hand, pupils' contact with the English language is limited in time and is inexistent beyond the threshold of the language classroom, with the teacher as the only source of instruction in the target language. Outside the classroom, English is a foreign language with no utility in the wider community. Unlike French, pupils find no materials written or broadcast in English. Besides, they do not see any immediate use in speaking or writing the language. Therefore, secondary school pupils seem to have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation<sup>14</sup> to learn English. They tend to hold negative attitudes towards this language as they are unaware of its importance for their future studies and/or their careers. They perceive no necessity in devoting much effort for such a long-term need as learning English. Thus, third-year pupils study English just because it is part of the curriculum and because it is part of the Bac exam.



Likewise, they focus their attention and spend energy on high coefficient subject-matters, such as Arabic Literature, Philosophy or History (See table 1.2). As a result, these pupils display a low proficiency level in English, a fact that is widely noticeable in Baccalaureate results.

#### 1.4.4.3. Proficiency Level

By the time they sit for the Baccalaureate exam, the pupils will have studied for an overall period of 12 years. During this period, the language of instruction in all subject-matters is standard Arabic. In addition to 9 years of French study, learners will have accumulated an English learning experience of 5 years, during which they have been exposed to a rich programme, and have sat for many formal tests and exams. Pupils are, then, supposed to have mastered not only basic components of the English language, but also have achieved 'satisfactory mastery' in the four language skills, and so have acquired the necessary linguistic and communicative competence. Unfortunately, the results -mainly Bac exam results- do not reflect such a satisfaction. Most Algerian learners show little competence in English compared to the amount of instruction they have had. They are mainly weak at productive skills, and are thus unable to express themselves neither fluently nor accurately, both in speech and in writing. These pupils consider English to be a difficult subject-matter, and perceive writing as even more difficult. Writing requires from them knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, as well as organisational rules of ideas; thus writing is viewed as an anxiety generating activity for learners, so they do not like it (Tsui, 1996).

Many pupils do not submit their writing homework, or are reluctant to do the writing activities in class. And even if they do, their written products are of poor quality at all linguistic levels. An alarming situation that appeals to careful thinking and investigation about the source of the problem in the writing skill low achievement so as to arrive at satisfactory solutions.



#### 1.4. Conclusion

So far, this chapter has uncovered many contradictions in what is officially stated as objectives, and what is actually applied in terms of EFL instruction and evaluation. As a result, third-year learners (and mainly those in LSH stream) display a low performance level in English in general and in writing in particular, despite an accumulated learning experience of 5 years.

This chapter has attempted to shed light on the variables related to the teaching of the writing skill, which resulted in the following. The first of these variables, the approach, has underlined the fact that the conditions put forward for its application are not favourable, neither in what concerns classroom practices, nor in textbook design - the second variable discussed in this chapter. Besides, the major 'actors' on the teaching-learning 'scene', teachers and learners, are described with respect to their profile, roles, teaching/learning conditions, competence/performance evaluation; these are the third and fourth variables considered. The teachers have not been adequately trained to teach the writing skill, neither at university level nor while in-service. The pupils, for their part, have negative attitudes towards EFL learning, they arrive to the third year with low language proficiency, and are not offered suitable learning conditions that would foster their learning strategies and enhance their communicative skills through EFL study.

Nevertheless, these outcome observations are the researcher's hypotheses and interpretations. To analyse the situation more objectively, it is then necessary to know first what writing means, and what it involves as teaching and learning practices. Therefore, the researcher will strive to tap into the knowledge and experience of applied linguists, educationalists and concerned teachers in order to cater for learners and teachers' need to learn and improve. So, the following chapter attempts to present a theoretical framework about the writing skill, which would serve as groundwork for the investigative study in the third chapter, and also a basis for remedy suggestions in the fourth chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Baccalaureate examination: entrance exam to university level, held at the end of the third year of secondary education; roughly equivalent in England to O-level.
2. Originally published in Arabic under the following title:  
دليل بناء اختبار مادة اللغة الإنجليزية الأولى و الثانية في امتحان البكالوريا
3. The generalisation of the teaching of the Arabic language in Algeria had the purpose of restoring national identity and culture as completely distinct from the French ones. Politically prompted, Arabisation process spread widely and gradually moved from Primary School to university level.
4. An innovation in ELT has been implemented since 2003. The Fundamental School has been replaced by the Middle School, and English is taught hereafter from 1 AM instead of 8 AF. Pupils will have an EFL learning experience of 7 years before university level, but the first generation of pupils undergoing these changes will not sit for the Bac exam until 2010.
5. P.M.Richards and W.Hall's series in ELT textbooks was used in early independence as a legacy of the colonial period
6. Practice and Progress, Developing Skills and Fluency in English
7. The term 'Communicative Competence' was first coined by the sociolinguist Hymes in the late 1960s to denote the knowledge of the rules of language use in socially and culturally appropriate ways in order to achieve the desired communicative effect. It came as a reaction to Chomsky's 'Linguistic Competence', the speaker's ability to form and interpret sentences. Linguistic Competence stresses on formation rules of language while Communicative Competence stresses on fluency.
8. Eclecticism means to select the best techniques from different teaching methods to meet the demands of a particular teaching situation, or to combine the best elements of traditional methods with those of the new ones.

9. An example of language items provided for pupils to help them do the writing assignment (COMET, 1997:106):

**How To Say it**

We could.....

We can.....

What about.....

How about.....

People should.....

We must.....

10. The writing activities mentioned in the guide for the elaboration of the Bac exam and not covered by COMET are:
- changing from dialogue to prose
  - changing from prose to dialogue
  - expanding a telegram into a letter
  - writing an ending or a different ending to a reading passage
  - completing a dialogue
  - summarizing
11. Facilitating learning is an essential teaching concept. It is part of the teacher role specifications defined by the General Inspectorate of English, and summed up in the acronym P.L.E.F.T.E.R. standing for: Planner, Linguistic model, Evaluator, Facilitator, Team member, Educator, and Researcher.
12. Anxiety is a phenomenon that exists in all classrooms, but the pressure to give the right answer is greater in the language classroom because learners not only have to know the right answer, but also have to express themselves in the target language (in this case English).
13. BEF: (Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental) entrance exam to the Secondary School.
14. Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic motivation: Extrinsic motivation is said to be caused by outside factors, such as the need to pass an exam, to get a financial reward or the possibility of a future travel. While intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual, for the enjoyment of the learning process *per se* for example.



**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

### **2.2. Writing as a Language Skill**

#### **2.2.1. Writing Defined**

#### **2.2.2. Writing Purposes**

##### **2.2.2.1. Writing for Learning**

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2.4.1. Text Types

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## **2.6. Conclusion**

## **Notes to Chapter Two**



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

The first chapter has attempted to give a rough picture of the Algerian educational context with reference to the writing skill. It has led to the conclusion that the situation of the writing skill in EFL teaching/learning has to be reconsidered. The low proficiency level of learners in writing, specifically those in 3AS -LSH- stream, drives us to know more about the writing skill in order to have a theoretical basis on which an objective assessment can be done.

Writing is of great importance in foreign language learning. It is essential for academic success and for many jobs. In addition, in this modern age, where e-mail communication is becoming the main means of communication, an ability to compose an effective written message is an indispensable skill. So, writing must be given its rightful place in the process of language teaching as a whole. For third-year learners, it is a requirement for short-term needs, in written tests and exams, and for long-term needs for further studies at university or in the job field. Associated with other learning skills, it reinforces foreign language learning through repeated practice. It is then essential to know about writing as a skill, and how it could be taught effectively. Therefore, the second chapter of this dissertation tries to define writing with its related sub-skills, purposes and teaching norms, in order to have a theoretical basis which leads to an effective practice that in turn would, hopefully, lead to improvement.

## 2.2. Writing as a Language Skill

To acquire a language, four skills are needed: listening, speaking, reading and writing, ordered in the way they are acquired and taught. Writing is one of these basic language skills; it is taught last, whether in the first or in the second language, because of its relative difficulty and because of its consolidating role in language learning. We need to define what writing is, and what its relationship with learning is, before moving to what it implies to teach writing.

### 2.2.1. Writing Defined

Writing is a productive skill in the written mode. It is often referred to as 'the most difficult skill' even for native speakers of a language. Writing involves not only the graphic representation of speech, but also the expression and organisation of ideas according to the conventions of the language. These conventions concern grammar, vocabulary, handwriting, spelling, layout and punctuation (Harmer, 2001).

Writing is also a creative process which enables learners to describe facts, express ideas and impart knowledge to an 'unseen' audience. The essential idea is that

***Writing involves knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose and skills in using language.***

(Badger and White, 2000: 157-158)

Thus, writing requires from the writer (or the learner) the mastery of conventional writing mechanics and of organisational devices in order to write effectively. What is more, writing is a discovery process which involves discovering ideas and ways of organising them to convey a message to the reader (White, 1987); but most crucially, writing is a thinking process. The importance of writing leads us to use it for different purposes.

### 2.2.2. Writing Purposes

Writing is used for a wide range of purposes: expressing feelings, telling stories or reporting events; it is also commonly used to check whether learning has taken place, as in written exams and everyday lessons. Writing widens learners' chances to think, learn and thus develop, and *“Helping pupils understand the purposes and processes of writing should, therefore, be part of every teacher's aim”* (Harris, 1993: 15).

Writing has a role to play in language teaching, and can be considered as a skill in its own right. It is also an occasion for individualised work in large classes; through writing, pupils can evaluate their own achievements. It is widely agreed that writing is a skill which must be learnt because of its importance as a communicative and as a learning tool.

#### 2.2.2.1. Writing for Learning

Most learning is acquired through language. Language and learning are interrelated and so are writing and learning. Likewise, writing is an essential part in any language teaching course. Rivers maintains that writing plays the role of consolidating learning in other skills and is of paramount usefulness in testing (Rivers, 1968: 293). Moreover, writing is needed to answer questions after a reading passage, or to summarise a text or to write a composition on a given topic. The writing skill serves as reinforcement for the reading skill too. At the intermediate and advanced levels, the purpose of teaching writing is mainly to teach the writing of research papers, reports, essays. Furthermore, writing can be a way to promote academic learning because of many reasons, as has been posited by Kern and Harmer; writing serves to:

- reinforce language use and enhance understanding and memory, mainly when the writing assignment is given shortly after a vocabulary or a grammar lesson;



- allow learners create and modify meaning through the manipulation of forms;
- develop learners' ability to think explicitly how to express thoughts and organise ideas in accordance with the reader's expectations;
- enhance learning strategies through individual, pair or group work;
- urge learners use dictionaries and grammar books as they focus on accuracy while writing;
- develop learning experience as learners go through mental activities in order to write;
- make learners think as they write; they develop their language and resolve problems which writing poses, and so learners learn better.

(Kern (2000), Harmer (1998 and 2004))

From all what has been said, one can deduce that learning to write is interrelated with writing to learn. Writing is thus of paramount importance for learning, and it is also needed first and foremost for communicating. Therefore, the writing skill is important as it enables learners to communicate through written discourse.

#### **2.2.2.2. Writing for Communicating**

Writing is acknowledged worldwide to be a crucial skill learners need to develop. This is especially true of writing in English which, in the form of e-mail messages, has become a prerequisite for international communication. Though the main tenet of the communicative approach is to learn and use a language for communicative purposes whether in speech or in writing, an important aspect that is neglected in writing is communication. Writing is basically a communicative activity. One may have to write a homework assignment or a composition during an exam, but one also needs to write formal or informal letters, applications, e-mail messages, or even keep a personal diary.

Raimes (1983) sustains that writing should be primarily a means of communication. Harmer (2001) notes further that when teaching productive skills, we should do with a communicative goal, and so, activities with no communicative ends are not of productive skill category. Likewise, the writing of sentences to practise a grammar point is not a writing skill activity. So, writing has to convey information according to a certain purpose for a given audience; otherwise it is but a mere graphic symbolisation of speech. In order for learners to communicate effectively, they have to become aware of basic principles of discourse.

### 2.2.3. Writing as Discourse

Different writers use the term discourse in different ways. Usually, the term 'discourse' refers to language that is produced as an act of communication. It is related to the term 'text' which refers to any written record of a communicative event; the event itself may involve spoken or written language (Nunan, 1993). Learners should become aware of how discourse works in English, as well as develop a number of strategies in conversation and in writing. Hedge (2000) notes that "*The various abilities needed to create coherent written texts or conversation, and to understand them, have together been termed discourse competence*" (Hedge, 2000: 51-52). Paying attention to discourse provides a clearer description of discourse units in terms of cohesion, coherence, text structure, rhetorical organisation according to text type and to differences between written and spoken discourse. Thus, it is proper to consider the relationship between writing and other forms of spoken and written discourse, speaking and reading.

### 2.2.3.1. Writing and Speaking

Speaking and writing represent discourse in its spoken and written modes respectively, but they differ in many respects. Traditionally<sup>1</sup>, written language was given a higher status, and speech was considered as a departure from the standard that language represents. But, linguistics has produced a reevaluation of the relationship between speech and writing. As a result, teaching speech has become the primary importance of language teaching methodology. Nevertheless, recent linguistic researches have shown the divergence between patterns used when speaking or writing in a language in terms of form, language structure, as well as in terms of the processes that writers and speakers go through to produce language. These are to be taken into consideration by the teacher when dealing with different writing genres (mainly formal/informal letters and dialogues).

Part of the difficulty of learning to write is said to be due to the difference between spoken and written discourse. The goal of written language is to convey information accurately, effectively and appropriately; and to do this, written language has to be more explicit than spoken discourse. Writing is much more difficult than speaking, because when we speak, we know the interlocutor (audience), the situation (formal /informal), and the feedback is instantaneous; *"...there is an idea of shared knowledge between the sender of the message and the receiver"*(Rivers, 1968: 291). Brookes and Grundy (1990), Harris (1993), and Harmer (2004) have noted different aspects of divergence between speaking and writing; these are summed up in three main ways:

- **Situation:** Unlike speakers, writers do not share the immediate environment with their readers and have to compensate for the lack of paralinguistic features<sup>2</sup> -such as intonation, stress and gestures- to convince the reader, by the use of grammatical and stylistic techniques; such as question marks, exclamation marks, underlining and using italics.



In addition, speakers can correct, repeat or add when necessary, since the interaction and the feedback are immediate, while writers need a plan and a careful selection to attain effective communication.

- **Grammatical choices:** Typical grammatical choices are different. In writing, the topic is dealt with by the use of conjunctions and cohesive ties. Moreover, writing generally consists of fully developed sentences, while speech is often made up of words and phrases rather than complete sentences. An example of condensed questions can be:

**Speech**

Biscuit?

**Writing**

Would you like a biscuit?

(Harmer, 2004:6)

- **Lexical Density** Another significant difference between speaking and writing concerns lexical density: that is the proportion of *content* words to grammatical or *function* words used<sup>3</sup>. Halliday (1990) also shares the idea that “*Relative to each other, written language is dense, spoken language is sparse*” ( Halliday, 1990: 62). The written text has more content words than grammatical words. In speech, however, the proportion of content words is significantly smaller; besides, in speech, the information is conveyed in many more words as there is a lot of repetition. In addition, certain grammatical features are less common in writing than in speech; for example, contracted forms and tag-questions are common to speech than to writing.

Nevertheless, writing can be used in an informal way: letters, shopping lists, messages. Furthermore, a lot of modern electronic writing is said to include aspects of both conversation and prose, mainly through the use of numbers and single letters to convey messages.

**Examples:**        ‘cul8r’ for ‘See you later’  
                         ‘J4f’ for ‘just for fun’  
                         (Crystal, 2001: 85)

In short, speaking is spontaneous, obeys no strict rules to be meaningful, may be combined with body gestures or facial expressions to convey the message, and receives immediate feedback. Writing, however, is acquired through a formal and a thorough instruction, and takes time to convey a message effectively and explicitly; if there is any feedback, it is delayed. Speaking and writing are thus interrelated; though similar, they can be considered divergent skills. On the other hand, reading and writing, though different, can be considered convergent skills.

#### **2.2.3.2. Writing and Reading**

Reading and writing are called literacy skills. For centuries, they were focused on as major language skills, either in a mother tongue or in a foreign language classroom. Reading and writing are said to be two skills that 'mirror each other', and they ought to be taught in such a way as to complete each other. The fact is that reading and writing are so complementary skills that one serves the other.

Kern (2000) indicates seven points of similarity or convergence between reading and writing -as literacy skills- that are roughly summarised as follows:

- *Interpretation*: the writer interprets the world and the reader then interprets the writer's interpretation in terms of his own conception of the world.
- *Collaboration*: writers write for an audience even if they write for themselves. Readers in turn contribute their knowledge and experience to make the writer's text meaningful.

- *Convention*: how people read and write is governed by cultural conventions that evolve through use, and is modified for individual purposes.
- *Cultural knowledge*: reading and writing function within particular systems of attitudes, beliefs, customs, ideals and values.
- *Problem solving*: reading and writing involve figuring out relationships between words, between larger units of meaning, and between texts and real or imagined worlds.
- *Reflection and self-reflection*: readers and writers think about language and its relations to the world and themselves.
- *Language use*: reading and writing require knowledge of how language is used in spoken and written contexts to create discourse.

(Kern, 2000: 16-17)

Though reading and writing represent two different language skills, the former is decoding/receptive while the latter is encoding/productive, they are so closely related that many teachers assume that 'good writers make good learners'. All educationalists agree, then, that there is a correlation between reading achievement and writing ability, and that efficient reading is a prerequisite for success in writing. Hedge (1988) claims, however, that "*reading is necessary and valuable but it is not sufficient*" and that "*... in order to become a good writer a student needs to write a lot*" (Hedge, 1988: 11). Nevertheless, reading is widely believed to increase proficiency in writing, and so it needs to be enhanced by the teacher, by integrating both during each pedagogic unit in the language learning syllabus.

#### **2.2.4. L1 and L2 Writing Compared**

In the 1990s there was a renewed concern for theories of L1 and L2 writing. For learners with little or no experience in writing in L1, writing remains a difficult task as it involves much work and practice when trying to put ideas



together. They must think of several things at the same time: ideas, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, handwriting. Yet, for an Algerian (or Arabic) language learner the problem is more difficult; L1 and L2 have different scripts, a different word order, and a different socio-cultural context.

*Firstly*, the difference in scripts makes writing more difficult for learners; they not only have to express themselves in a foreign language, but they also have to master a completely new writing system. A frequently expressed complaint about English orthography is the absence of a one-to-one correspondence between symbols and phonological elements.

### Some problems with English orthography

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Example</b>
- silent letters	-sign -give -thumb /sain/ /giv/ /θʌm/
- the same letter can be used to represent different segments in different words	-hot -bone -more /hot/ /bəʊn/ / mo: /
- the same segment can be represented by different letters in different words.	-/u:/ in rule -moon /ru:l/ /mu:n/

*Secondly*, word order in sentences in Arabic and in English is different. It is usually as follows:

<b>Arabic</b>	<b>English</b>
Verb Subject Object (VSO)	Subject Verb Object (SVO)

The problem might be “*on the organizational level (how to order different elements)*” or “*on the linguistic level (whether to use nominal or verbal style)*...” (Brookes and Grundy, 1990: 39).

Thirdly, L1 rhetorical and cultural preferences influence the organisation of information and the structuring of arguments; Kern (2000: 178) claims that *“rhetorical resources required in one’s native language can also have important facilitative effects on second language writing”*. Thus, teachers need to have a socio-cultural awareness of L2 writing conditions, some of these are:

- cultural socialisation and belief systems,
- functions of L2 writing,
- writing topics,
- L1 knowledge, and
- cross-cultural discourse patterns and contrastive rhetoric<sup>4</sup>

Kern (2000) and Grabe (2001)

So far, English is considered as L2, but in fact in Algeria, **L1** is Arabic, **L2** is French, and English can said to be **L3** (since it is granted the status of second foreign language). The fact that French and English languages share linguistic affinities can not be underestimated, however. Prior knowledge in French does not only help in the introduction of, and practice in, English script, but also facilitates learning and memorising of a significant range of words. Although there are also some differences between English and French concerning mainly word order and false cognates (*faux-amis*<sup>5</sup>). All these similarities and differences between the three languages- Arabic, French and English- are to constitute an important part in learners' interlanguage<sup>6</sup>. Such information would guide the teacher to anticipate the type of errors learners are likely to make, and most importantly the difficulties they might encounter at linguistic and socio-cultural levels.

### 2.2.5. Writing and Culture

The relationship between language and culture has been a topic of debate for many decades. Now, it has become an important field of research in second and foreign language learning, with an ultimate goal to promote international understanding. Since *“language cannot be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded”* (Rivers, 1968: 315), the teacher has to draw his/her learners' attention to the cultural implications of language learning, and language using whether in speech or in writing. It is now maintained that learning to understand a foreign culture helps learners use words and expressions more skilfully and more appropriately.

Researchers have shown that learners from different cultures have different types of background knowledge, which influences communication. Cultural differences that exist between languages affect learners' interpretation and comprehension of reading texts, and are thus likely to affect their written products. Besides, *“Once we accept that learners bring with them a whole range of cultural experiences and first-language skills, then we can begin to build on what they know, instead of incessantly reminding them of what they do not know”* (Prodromou, 1992: 49). Moreover, since learning a language involves more than learning the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, the teacher should, right from the beginning, gear the thinking of the learners so that they become conscious of such differences while listening, reading or writing.

### 2.3. Effective Writing

Writing is an extremely complex activity in which the writer (or the learner) has to master different variables simultaneously. Nunan (1991) posits that successful writing involves:

- Mastering mechanics
- Mastering and obeying conventions of spelling and punctuation
- Using the grammatical system to convey one's intended meaning



- Organising content at the level of paragraph and the complete text to reflect given/new information and topic.
- Polishing and revising one's initial efforts.
- Selecting an appropriate style for one's audience

(Nunan, 1991: 37)

Writing is not a skill that can be picked up by exposure; it needs to be taught through formal instruction. So, when assigned a written work, learners are expected to be able to:

- handle the graphic system of the language (alphabet) and the spelling according to the conventions of the language,
- control the structure of the language so that what they write is comprehensible to the reader, and
- select from possible combinations of words those which convey the ideas they have in mind, and express the intended purpose for a particular audience.

Therefore, the teaching of L2 writing must improve learners' writing strategies, as well as enrich their knowledge of linguistic resources in the foreign language and the ways they may be exploited in writing. This is of vital importance mainly for *"learners whose chances for acquisition of the language through a variety of media - films, radio, television, contact with native speakers - are very limited ....., and whose reading activities in English are restricted to the confines of academic textbook"* (Arndt quoted in Wallace, 1998: 100).

### 2.3.1. Language Conventions Handling

Writing sub-skills -handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and layout- have to go hand in hand with the writing process. They function as clues to teach organisation of a paragraph, or of longer compositions. Learners need to be made aware of the importance of writing sub-skills, and of the way(s) to handle them.

### 2.3.1.1. Punctuation

Punctuation is necessary in a writing programme. Learners need the knowledge of how to punctuate in English to be able to write comprehensibly. Principles of punctuation differ from one language to another; besides, some kinds of writing require more attention to punctuation than others (formal/informal). However, learners will mainly need to practise formal writing, and so the teacher has to insist on accuracy when learners have to hand in a written assignment, or when they are to sit for an exam. Initially, learners have to know that punctuation marks/devices are not decorating the written texts, and are rather bringing in and influencing meaning.

Some punctuation marks indicate the boundaries between sentences (such as a full stop), between the different parts of a sentence (such as quotation marks), or within words (such as an apostrophe). The teacher can think of simple and communicative tasks to teach these features, and make learners deduce their rules before drawing final conclusions. The teacher can also develop with pupils a checklist of the most important punctuation marks and their functions, and make learners consult it whenever they want to write or revise their written products; it will also be a way to promote self-editing and self-correction. This checklist can be done in the form of an activity as proposed by Harmer (2004):

#### Check your punctuation

Make sure you know the right punctuation symbols, and when to use them.

Complete the rules with the right names.

**Brackets capital letters colon comma full stop hyphen  
inverted commas question mark exclamation mark apostrophe**

**Symbol**

**Use**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | . | A.....shows the end of a sentence.  |
| 2 | , | A.....shows a short pause that separates parts of a sentence, e.g. words in a list. |

3	“ ”	.....show words that are spoken (direct speech).
4	()	.....show extra information or an explanation which is not considered essential.
5	‘	An .....is used when two words are contracted, and to show possession, e.g. It’s Jane’s.
6	–	A.....is used when two words are joined together, e.g. some compound nouns.
7	!	An .....is used to show surprise. It comes at the end of a sentence and is often used in dialogue.
8	?	A.....(at the end of the sentence) shows that a direct question is being asked. It is also used in requests, e.g. Could you bring me....?
9	:	A.....tells you that something is coming next, for example a list.
10	A/B/C	.....are used for the first letter of a name, a country, nationality or language, days of the week, months.

*Table 2.1. A punctuation checklist: an alternative activity about punctuation marks and their common use (Harmer, 2004: 50)*

### 2.3.1.2. Spelling

Correct spelling is one of the requirements of effective writing. Bad spelling is perceived as a sign of carelessness, and so may involve a negative impression on the reader or exam corrector. Like punctuation, spelling differs from formal (job application letter) to informal (a short message to a friend) writing. One of the reasons spelling is difficult for learners is the absence of complete correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it is spelt, that is absence of correlation between phonemes and graphemes (see examples in 2.2.4.).



Teaching spelling has also to be carried through short and meaningful tasks, throughout the whole school year: the use of a dictionary, doing guessing activities related to spelling, reinforce spelling through word games. This kind of activities can be introduced at the beginning of a reading or a writing lesson to make learners find key words that are to be found in the reading passage, or that will be used while developing the writing topic.

**Example:**

**Use the dictionary to find out what these words are. Before looking, write down a few possibilities.** (This activity can be done in pair- or group-work)

de..lo..m.nt

a.icu.ltu.e

in..stry

tou.i.m

im.ort

e..ort

w.a.th

p..erty

(adapted from Brown and Hood, 1989: 30)

### 2.3.1.3. Handwriting

Handwriting is a personal issue. Learners have to know that bad handwriting may influence negatively the reader or exam corrector; this is why they should learn how to improve it. More and more communication takes place through computers; nevertheless, handwriting is still important for personal letters, written assignment (homework), and mainly for exams (Harmer, 1998 and 2001). Even when handwriting is not the main focus of writing, the teacher has to point to the importance of a clear -legible- handwriting, as well as deal with learners' difficulties from time to time in the form of practice activities (Doff, 1988). The best way to improve handwriting is through copying activities.

### 2.3.1.4. Layout

The layout differs according to the writing genres: letter, e-mail, newspaper article, or advertisement. Learners must be made familiar with these differences, because Layout knowledge will be significant in composing, as well as in analysing reading passages. The teacher could engage pupils in drawing conclusions about the differences in layout existing between the various text types; an example can be the following activity:

**Complete the table below with words in the list in appropriate boxes.**

article	dialogue	paragraph	letter
<b>Composition type</b>	<b>Layout description</b>		
.....	It has no definite length, but it is often four to twelve sentences long. The first sentence is indented.		
.....	Contains such elements as address, date, signature, and salutation.		
.....	It is organised in columns; it usually includes a title, a date and the name of the writer.		
.....	Two or more interlocutors are involved, taking speech in turn.		

*Table 2.2. Composition types with their layout description*

### 2.3.2. Language Structure Control

In order to write effectively, learners also need to have a certain grammatical and lexical background. They need to have an acceptable lexical luggage with which they would express themselves according to grammatical norms, following principles of coherence and cohesion.

#### 2.3.2.1. Grammatical Knowledge

Grammar is defined as “*An analysis of the structure of a language*” (Crystal, 1992: 35), while syntax - a sub-division of grammar - refers to the set of rules describing the different ways words are combined in phrases, clauses and sentences. It is commonly held that only when the set of rules governing grammar is known from both reader and writer that meaning can be conveyed.

So, learners have to master most of the grammatical rules that apply to arranging words correctly into sentences so that they produce meaningful written prose. Before looking at the rules that apply to arranging words into sentences, it will help to get a clear understanding of the different functions that words can have in a sentence. Therefore, the teacher has to include, in the pedagogic units, reminders of important grammatical notions such as:

- parts of speech
- comparative and superlative adjectives
- regular and irregular verbs
- word order in simple, complex, interrogative and exclamatory sentences
- cohesive devices

Only then can the teacher foster syntactic knowledge into learners to enable them construct and analyse a variety of sentence structures. To write well, pupils need to know how to write correct and effective sentences, but they have first to be made aware of the distinction between *sentence*, *clause* and *phrase*.

**Sentence:** A sentence is a basic unit of all writing; it is a group of words that express a complete thought about something or someone. It can stand on its own grammatically; it contains a subject and a verb, and it may be made of one or more clauses.

**Clause:** It refers to a group of related words which contains both a verb and its subject. A clause can be dependent or independent. Two or more clauses can be joined by coordinating conjunctions to form a compound sentence, or by subordinating conjunctions to form a complex sentence.

**Phrase:** It is a group of related words, without a subject and predicate (often confused with the French word '*phrase*'). It can be joined to a main clause by subordinating conjunctions to form a complex sentence.



Coordinating conjunctions	Subordinating conjunctions
And, but, yet, or, so, for, nor	After, because, before, if, when, while, since, unless, though, whereas, wherever, until, whenever

Table 2.3. Coordinating and Subordinating Conjunctions

Grammatical knowledge is recognised as the first criterion of competence in writing. Learners have to be taught ways of practising this knowledge; they also have to learn revising their written products by considering consistency and parallelism.

- **Consistency** means to avoid shifting from one tense to another in the same paragraph. Consistency concerns the use of verbs and pronouns.

#### Example

(1) **Inconsistent tense:** We *were* seven miles from shore. Suddenly, the sky *turns* dark.

(2) **Consistent tense:** We *were* seven miles from shore. Suddenly, the sky *turned* dark.

Or We *are* seven miles from shore. Suddenly, the sky *turns* dark.

(Fawcet and Sandberg, 2002: 302)

- **Parallelism** means to balance similar words /phrases to express similar ideas.

#### Example

(1) He slowed down and came sliding. The winning run was scored.

(2) He *slowed* down, *slid*, and *scored* the winning run.

(ibid: 310)

Nevertheless, not only accuracy of form is important, but also the ability to use complex grammatical devices. For this reason, pupils equally need to get enough language to complete the task. If they do not have the necessary lexical

luggage, they cannot express their ideas even if they already master writing organisational devices.

### 2.3.2.2. Lexical Knowledge

Vocabulary has long been neglected after the dismissal of the Grammar Translation Method. However, the task of vocabulary learning is found to be very significant for EFL learners since “...*errors of vocabulary are potentially more misleading than those of grammar*” (Hedge, 2000: 111).

Primarily, learners need to understand the function of the different words in sentences, also called word classes. In addition, they need to consider the linguistic relations between words, and the extent to which they can be exploited while doing a written assignment. The most common of linguistic relations relate to synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy, as exemplified in the table below:

Linguistic relations	Common Use	Examples
Synonymy	When a word can be exchanged for, or substituted by, another without changing the meaning of the sentence.	Gorgeous – beautiful Agreement- arrangement Take place – happen
Antonymy	when a word carries an opposite meaning	Private - public Success –failure Amuse – bore
Hyponymy	Refers to the hierarchy that exists between words, in simple terms: 'general' and 'specific' words.	Flower - rose Meal - lunch Computer – keyboard

Table 2.4. Examples of linguistic relations and their common use

(adapted from (Hedge, 2000))

It is equally important for teachers to think of a variety of techniques to help learners develop an acceptable acquisition of the lexical knowledge needed for actual practice in writing activities. Moreover, learners have to know how the sentences relate to each other, in paragraphs and in longer compositions, by using coherence and cohesion devices.

### **2.3.2.3. Coherence and Cohesion**

Coherence and cohesion are closely linked; together they help to achieve linguistic and semantic unity of the written work. Learners need to develop an awareness of these writing conventions in order to write meaningfully. Thus, the teachers themselves must have a thorough understanding of what makes a text coherent and unified.

Coherence refers to the sense unity that should exist between sentences of the same paragraph. It is usually described in terms of connectedness between sentences, use of explicit cohesive devices at the paragraph level, and use of connective devices such as pronouns, repetitive structures, and transitional markers. Cohesion completes the unity of the text. It involves the use of rhetorical devices, which are technically called cohesive markers or linking words. These devices can be logical, grammatical or lexical; they help to establish relationships between different sentences or different parts of a sentence. They also act as linguistic signals to help the reader make the transition between preceding and coming sentences or ideas. Lee (2002: 33) suggests five features to manage coherence in writing:

1. An outline of the main functions of the text and of the ways of expressing them to achieve the intended purpose. For example, when the text is narrative, the events are to be arranged in a chronological pattern.
2. An information structure: that is organising ideas in a certain order; in coherent texts, old information is given before new ones, for example.



3. To justify an idea or elaborate it with examples; otherwise, it becomes a generalisation.
4. Connectivity of the surface text by the use of cohesive devices. Some examples are *pronoun reference* (he, she, it, this, that). *Conjunctions* (but, also, therefore, however), and content *lexical ties* such as repetition, synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy (animals, cats).
5. The use of metadiscourse<sup>7</sup> markers in texts helps readers organise, interpret and evaluate information. Some examples are *logical connectives* (therefore, but), *sequencers* (firstly, secondly, finally), *certainty markers* (certainly, no doubt).

When students understand how these elements of discourse work in texts, they are more likely to use them appropriately to develop coherence in their writing.

### 2.3.3. Considering Purpose, Content and Audience

Brookes and Grundy (1990), Harris (1993), and other educationalists maintain that in order for writing to be effective, three variables are to be taken into consideration by the writer: purpose, content and audience.

**Purpose** refers to the communicative function of a text: informing, instructing, entertaining, persuading, explaining, presenting an argument or just telling a story. Different purposes entail different kinds of writing, and so the writer has to select from a range of alternative of grammatical and lexical choices those which best suit their intended purpose. Keeping the purpose in mind will help learners know what they write and why they write.

**Content** refers to form and meaning of the language used. The types of texts written can be stories, essays, letters, plays, posters, etc. In addition, the writer has to develop the assigned topic through relevant and well organised ideas, appropriate vocabulary choice and adequate grammar use. Content also

refers to the text type dealt with, formal or informal. While designing content, the writer has to keep in mind purpose and audience.

**Audience:** To develop a sense of readership has become one of the most important elements in effective writing. An awareness of the reader's expectations and prior knowledge is important even in the simplest forms of writing. Writing would not be the same if the reader is a classmate, a teacher, or a foreigner; or if the reader already knows something about the topic or not. Thus, there may be various audiences; self, the teacher or the exam corrector, the peer group, or a virtual named audience. These three parameters are summed up by Arndt (1998):

*Such techniques are responsible for matching content with form ... under the control of purpose whereby an intended meaning is successfully conveyed to an intended reader.*

(Arndt quoted in Wallace, 1998: 92)

## **2.4. Text Types and Rhetorical Modes**

Learners should know different types of writing required for different purposes; these are called rhetorical modes of discourse: narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative. It is necessary to choose the mode that corresponds to the text type, in order to develop the given topic.

### **2.4.1. Text Types**

The concept of text type as been given increased attention in ELT, and so, alternative typologies of text types for the writing curriculum have been proposed by several educationalists; one example is suggested by (Hedge, 1988).

Personal writing	Public writing	Creative writing
Diaries Shopping lists Reminders for oneself Recipes	Letters of –enquiry _complaint _request Form filling Applications	Poems Stories Songs Autobiography
Social writing	Study writing	Institutional writing
Letters Invitations Notes _of condolence _Of thanks _Of congratulations Instructions _to friends _to family	Making notes while reading Taking notes from lectures Summaries Essays	Reports Business letters Public notices Advertisements Note-making

Table 2.5. Types of writing as put forward by (Hedge, 1988: 96)

One can notice from the above table that ‘creative writing’ and ‘institutional writing’ require an advanced learner level that is why they are not dealt with in the secondary–school syllabuses.

#### 2.4.2. Rhetorical Modes

Rhetorical modes refer to the types of text organisation. The explicit description of each mode will help learners make appropriate grammatical and lexical choices; accordingly, an understanding of writing modes will assist learners achieve an effective writing. Each type has a slightly different structure.

Rhetorical mode	Types and Purposes
<b>Narrative</b>	Tells a sequence of events in a report or a biography. Two types of narration can be distinguished: fiction (imaginary), or non-fiction (true facts/events)



<b>Descriptive</b>	<p><b>Static description:</b> describing a place, a person, a system</p> <p><b>Process description:</b> describing the sequence of steps in how something is done or the operations in how something works.</p>
<b>Expository</b>	<p>It is used to explain, inform, illustrate, or analyse.</p> <p>It can be expressed through different modes:</p> <p><b>definition:</b> defining, explaining, and exemplifying something</p> <p><b>classification:</b> organising a description into a hierarchy of categories</p> <p><b>cause-effect:</b> explaining how events are linked, how one thing leads to another, giving reasons for outcomes</p> <p><b>comparison-contrast:</b> discussing similarities and differences.</p>
<b>Argumentative</b>	<p>It is used mainly to persuade the reader of a given point.</p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> putting forward arguments, evidence, examples, etc.</p>

Table 2.6. *Rhetorical modes: Types and Purposes (adapted from Hedge, 1988:99)*

A paragraph can thus be organised in many different ways. It is also possible to describe ideas from most to least important or just the opposite, and to group ideas deductively (evidence and then a conclusion), or inductively (the conclusion and the supportive evidence). The learners should consider the topic and then choose the most appropriate means of organising the information.

### 2.4.3. Composing Practice

Composition writing refers to writing beyond the sentence level. The teacher has to get pupils write a number of common everyday styles: postcards, letters of various kinds, filling in forms such as job applications, narratives, compositions, reports, and newspaper and magazine articles. The main composition type to be developed is the paragraph, since it is the essential component of most of the other composition types (mainly essays, letters and articles).

### (i) Paragraph Writing

The paragraph is the basic unit of writing. It is a group of related sentences that develop one main idea. It generally follows an outline which is traditionally made up of an introduction, a body and a conclusion; each part has a role to play.

1. The introduction informs the reader of the various aspects of the topic to be discussed. It usually begins with a *topic sentence*. This sentence briefly introduces the main idea to be discussed in the paragraph. The topic sentence comes usually at the beginning of the paragraph, but it can also come in the middle or in the end. It is generally agreed that all the paragraphs should contain a topic sentence; however, some paragraphs do not require a topic sentence. These are when the aim is:

- *to give straightforward description*
- *to report a sequence of events*
- *to explain the steps in a process*

(Chambers, 2004: 242)

2. The Body or Development explains the topic through additional details. The *supporting sentences* provide more details for the idea expressed in the topic sentence, often through illustrations and examples.

3. The Conclusion represents the result of what has been presented in the supporting sentences. The *concluding sentence* finishes the paragraph by stating a personal opinion, a comment or generality.

### (ii) Essay Writing

An essay is a group of paragraphs about one topic. An essay usually expresses ideas in a more complex and more detailed way than a paragraph. The structure of an essay is similar to the structure of a paragraph, it contains three parts. Each of these three parts has a different function and contains different types of information.

1. An introductory paragraph introduces the theme of the essay to the audience and paves the way to the information in the rest of the essay.
2. Supporting paragraphs provide more information about the topic.
3. A concluding paragraph can re-state the main idea of the essay; it may also express a final comment on the information presented in the essay.

Although all these writing principles, types and modes may seem too demanding on the part of the learners, writing is a skill that has to be thoroughly learnt; therefore, it needs to be adequately taught.

### **2.5. Teaching Implications**

When teaching a language, focus should be on the four skills to varying degrees according to the objectives of the course, the level of learners and the working conditions. Writing is a vital skill for native or foreign language learners. Thus, teaching students to write demands the careful attention of language teachers. Nevertheless, learning to write is not a natural process. It does not result from mere exposure to written language; it has to be systematically learnt; for this, Rivers agrees that: “...*writing is a skill that must be taught and practiced...*” (Rivers, 1968: 308)

Various researches have been conducted to investigate the role of writing in the classroom, what writing involves, and the possible roles of teachers and students in developing writing activities. As a result, efforts of different authors are being combined to find ways to teach writing effectively; these efforts concern the following criteria:

- the choice of the appropriate method and approach;
- the careful planning and presentation of the writing lesson, taking into consideration the four skills; and
- the objective and fruitful assessment of the writing performance.



### 2.5.1. The Choice of the Approach

Throughout the different teaching approaches and methods, the writing skill has been given different emphasis. Writing was highly considered in the Grammar Translation Method, as it was an invaluable learning tool and a requirement for the translation of literary texts. Writing was almost neglected in the Audio- Lingual Approach which emphasized speech over writing; the first of its five slogans<sup>8</sup> was 'Language is speech not writing'. Later, writing has been less efficiently dealt with in the CLT, in which focus has been on fluency rather than on accuracy in all skills.

A brief comparison of these three teaching methods would lead us to conclude that the writing skill was most developed in the Grammar Translation Method, in which accuracy was a major requirement. However, though grammar, paradigm and translation are important, they should be considered as means to achieve proficiency in foreign language learning and not an end in themselves. In addition, competence in these skills does not necessarily entail ability to understand and communicate in the language effectively orally or in writing. Therefore, the CLT proponents have advocated the shift to the communicative function of writing, and so, stressed fluency over accuracy; still, the results have been highly unsatisfactory. These two extreme views on the appropriate approach towards the teaching of the writing skill can be summarised by the dichotomy: product versus process. Teachers are consequently often confused whether to focus on the process of writing or on its product.

### 2.5.1.1. Product Approaches

Writing as a product focuses on accuracy, i.e. on lexical and on grammatical correctness rather than on the composing process. In this view, the writing lesson is carried out through controlled and guided activities until learners produce the written product. Badger and White clarify the product approach to teaching writing as follows:

*In short, product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and writing development as mainly the result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher.*

(Badger and White, 2000: 154)

When teaching writing as product, learners would pay much more attention to errors, but would lack originality in self-expression. Within the context of 'product' approaches, some educationalists have recently included the genre approach to teach writing. Genre describes how different purposes are commonly expressed within a discourse community; it describes types of activities such as songs, poems, prayers, seminars, lectures, recipes, advertisements, application letters, novels, short stories, argumentative essays, reports, and summaries. According to this approach, learners study texts in the genre they are going to write in, before they begin to write. At an early stage, they can be asked to imitate a given style in order to be aware of genre rules. Genre approach is thus regarded as an extension of product approaches, since they focus on the linguistic side of writing: the learners are to produce written outputs that exactly follow the studied model texts, and so they are given a passive role. The only difference with the product approach is that the purpose and the social situation of the writing are determined. As a reaction to the limitations of the product approaches, there has been a shift towards the process approach.

### 2.5.1.2. Process Approach

Teaching writing as 'process' means to focus on content, *i.e.* on the communicative ability of learners in the written mode. As a consequence, less emphasis is put on grammatical accuracy, and “*Writing is thus seen as a process of creating, discovering and extending meaning rather than a process of putting down preconceived and well-formed meaning.*” (Tsui, 1996: 97) With the process approach, the teacher spends more time with learners generating ideas, organising information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reviewing, revising and editing (Hedge, 2000). There is a lot of interaction between teachers and learners, and between learners themselves. But the process approach is time consuming, and this constitutes a major disadvantage (Harmer, 2001). In addition, learners are free to express their ideas without worrying much about making errors, but they write carelessly, and this might promote bad writing habits as the errors would be 'fossilised' in learners.

New attempts at improving the teaching of the writing skill suggest integrating insights from both product and process approaches in the writing activities. Although the approaches are sometimes presented as opposed to each other, they are complementary and are to be exploited by the teacher at different levels of the pedagogic unit. The teacher has then to strike a balance between the two kinds of approaches by giving equal importance to form, content, purpose and audience during teaching and testing practices. This balance can be achieved only through the efforts of a skilful teacher.

### 2.5.2. The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is harder in learner-centred education. The teacher has to be first and foremost a needs analyst, selecting and grading the materials according to learners' level and interests. The point for the teacher is to be flexible and sensitive to learners' weaknesses, mainly in writing, in order to devise appropriate teaching techniques and procedures.



As “*there is no right way to teach writing*” (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987:2), it is up to the teacher to manage the writing lesson in a supportive learning atmosphere which gives learners opportunities for free expression, and where teachers act “... *not as assessors but as facilitators who help develop strategies for generating ideas, revising, editing*” (Tsui cited in Freeman and Richards, 1996: 98). Neither as a spoon-feeder nor as an authoritarian, the teacher should respond positively to his/her learners' communicative needs, select and grade materials and learning activities accordingly. By so doing, the teacher would be in a better position to develop communicative competence in learners.

When learners are assigned a writing task, the teacher has to be *'a motivator, a resource and a feedback provider'* (Harmer, 2001: 261-262)

- The teacher as a *motivator* encourages learners by creating appropriate learning conditions so that they are able to generate ideas.
- The teacher as a *resource* supplies information and necessary language points, and is ready to help and advise learners while progressing in their writing.
- The teacher as a *feedback provider* gives feedback on writing assignments, which is a task of great importance.

To sum up, what teachers should keep in mind is to respond positively and encouragingly to learners' written products so that not to inhibit them. Most crucially, they have to act as 'facilitators' of learning, through carefully planned writing lessons.

### **2.5.3. The Writing Lesson**

According to learners' needs and interests, the teacher selects materials and topics that suit their age and their programme, as stated in the official EFL syllabus. The writing lesson has to be planned carefully in a way to make learners move from guided to free writing. Two important principles have to be

respected by the teacher: striking a balance between accuracy and fluency, and sequencing the activities from the easiest to the most complex.

There are some key concepts the teacher should pay attention to while preparing the writing lesson:

1. There are three stages in teaching writing in the classroom: prewriting, writing, and post-writing.
2. The writing process is recursive, not linear.
3. Writing should be integrated into other skills in classroom teaching.
4. Teachers should give writers creative writing tasks.
5. Writing is different from speaking; learners need specific instruction to develop good writing skills even if they speak well.
6. Decisions on time allotted for writing depend on importance of writing for the particular group of learners.

#### 2.5.3.1. Steps and Procedures

Fawcett and Sandberg (2002: 4) state that *“Good writing is the result of a writing process, a series of steps the writer has taken”*. They explain that the writing process consists of steps like: pre-writing, writing and rewriting.

##### (i) Pre-writing

It consists of thinking about possible information related to the subject; deciding which ideas to include and arranging ideas in a plan or outline. This stage prepares learners to write; it can be organised in the following order:

- presenting or discussing the topic of the writing
- giving necessary language skills (about lexis and grammar)
- helping learners develop the ability to write effectively by
  - identifying the audience for the writing
  - identifying the format of the writing ( paragraph, letter,...)
  - generating ideas via different methods: mapping, listing, outlining or freewriting (see Appendix H)

- selecting information and organising them in an order
- Giving or reviewing composition skills (about sentence, paragraph, essay or composition and about connecting ideas using appropriate tools).

### **(ii) Writing**

In this stage, learners produce the first draft of their composition considering audience and purpose. The teacher can introduce different types of activities: guided, controlled or free (Baker and Westrup, 2000)

. **Controlled writing** consists of such activities as copying sentences, matching beginnings with endings of sentences, substitution drills, or reordering jumbled words into sentences. This type of activities has a number of advantages: it makes sequencing and grading of patterns possible, it gives the learner maximum practice in writing correct forms of the language, and serves to improve handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

. **Guided writing** comprises gap-filling, transformation of sentences (from active to passive and vice versa, or from direct to reported speech and vice versa) and completing sentences. The focus is generally on grammar.

. **Free writing** concerns writing about pictures, planning and organising a paragraph or an essay in which learners express personal messages by using their own words and structures.

(Adapted from Baker and Westrup, 2000: 70-75)

### **(iii) Post-writing**

This stage principally concerns rethinking, rearranging and revising; it may also mean writing one or more new drafts. It should check the following aspects:



- the content or information of the writing is correct,
- the writing is appropriately structured and considers audience, and
- spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalisation are correct.

It is maintained that to ensure successful writing, learners should be habituated to write and re-write their works as necessary. In addition, they should focus first on the ideas to be expressed, and ways of organising them before moving to spelling, punctuation and accuracy in grammar. Furthermore, learners would write better if they were made familiar with principles of rhetoric as coherence and cohesion, and with the various types of discourse: expository, descriptive, narrative and argumentative. Aware of all these details, and after a successful writing lesson, learners produce written work. However, this written work is a waste of time and energy if it is not systematically corrected.

#### **2.5.4. Assessing the Writing Performance**

Assessing learners' writing and providing them with feedback is part of the learning process. The aim is to make learners aware of their mistakes and of possible ways of correcting them. With the advent of the Communicative Language Teaching, error is seen as an inevitable and positive aspect in the teaching/learning process, and no more something to avoid at all expense (Hedge, 2000). But, the dilemma for language teachers is how to deal with writing errors; emphasize on fluency or on accuracy? consider the form or the content? put grades or write comments?, and who should provide the feedback?

Error correction is typically done at the level of the end-product, and the response is made at the language mastery level rather than at the composing level, resulting thus in *“a kind of conspiracy –the student writes and the teacher corrects.”*(Grundy and Li, 2002). Nevertheless, educationalists like

Rivers (1968), White (1987) and Harmer (2004) suggest that while correcting written work, the teacher has to strike a balance between accuracy and fluency, in a manner not to emphasize one over the other; in addition to correcting one aspect each time: spelling, grammar, punctuation or ideas organisation. The appropriate solution is to allocate grades for both accuracy (correct grammatical forms and spelling) and for expressions variety; likewise, accuracy and the ability to communicate will be equally considered.

On the other hand, feedback does not only mean telling learners where they made mistakes, it also means offering them an assessment of how well they have done, making comments at various stages of the writing process (Harmer, 2001). Besides, Allwright and Bailey (1990) argue that the correction of an error does not necessarily prevent the error from occurring, and that when learners have not reached a stage in interlanguage development where they will benefit from the correction or feedback provided by the teacher, the best thing is to ignore the error. What is important is to agree on a correction code<sup>9</sup> right from the beginning of the school year; learners' errors may be underlined, with the use of that code in the margin. It is equally significant to have learners know in advance the criteria being used for assessing their written products.

Moreover, the teacher has to respond positively to learners' efforts at writing through useful comments and remarks. They should also keep in mind that too much correction demotivates learners and prevents them from risk-taking in future writing assignments (Wajnryb, 1992). Therefore, the teacher should never treat learners' writings as 'final products', but rather help them redraft their written work. One way to make them correct their compositions is that the teacher does not score or grade the composition until they have corrected their errors, which the teacher has underlined. White (1987) suggests a writing evaluation scheme in which a piece of writing is given marks in each category, so that they provide a more detailed form of feedback to learners than a simple mark or grade.

Categories	Mark allocation out of 100%		
Content	13	to	30
Organisation	7	to	20
Vocabulary	7	to	20
Language use	5	to	25
Mechanics	2	to	5

Table 2.7. *A possible correction grid* (White, 1987: ix)

The teacher traditionally corrects the mistakes, but it is also important to make learners correct their own errors individually or in pairs. Brookes and Grundy argue that in writing *“self-correction is preferable to peer correction and peer correction to teacher correction”* (Brookes and Grundy, 1990: 54). Finally, it is necessary for teachers, especially for those who have many large classes, to assign pupils short writing activities at frequent intervals, so that to carefully correct and discuss learners’ errors and difficulties.

## 2.6. Conclusion

From the review of the literature, one can deduce that writing is a complex productive skill that requires the mastery of conventional writing mechanics and of organisational devices in order to write effectively. Learners have to be taught this skill because of its considerable importance for their language learning, and for their future prospects at university or in the job field. For such a reason, writing has to be carefully taught, keeping a balance between accuracy and fluency during teaching and testing practices. Besides, a writing lesson can be successful only if the teacher takes into consideration selecting and grading the materials according to age, level, needs and interests of learners. No less important is the fact that assessment is fruitful provided it aims at making learners rewrite or redraft their writings.



The first chapter has tried to give a systemic picture of the Algerian educational context. It has come to a partial conclusion that failure in writing is linked to failure in EFL teaching/learning in general. The chapter has not unveiled, however, the real causes underlying such a failure. So, in order to assess the writing skill teaching/learning objectively, it is of paramount importance to carry out an investigative study that would lead, from different viewpoints, to practical evidence about the source of the problem and ultimately to alternative remedies. This is what will be attempted in the following chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Prior to the advent of modern linguistics, traditional approaches to language study (T.A.L.S) focused on the written form. Writing was considered as the primary medium of expression, while speech was seen as an imperfect copy of writing.
2. Paralinguistic devices: they are called so because they are used alongside or in parallel with words.
3. Content and function words: some examples  
     Content words (also called open-ended word class): house, create, possible  
     Function words (also called close-ended word class): can, while, a
4. Contrastive rhetoric is the area of linguistic study which concerns itself with the relationship between culture and writing. Contrastive analyses of rhetoric have shown that different cultures have different expectations of how to organise writing, and that knowledge of conventions in the first language will influence the organisation of texts in second language writing.
5. Faux Amis: words having the same form in the two language systems, but different meanings, some examples are

French	English
lecture	lecture
attend	attend
grave	grave

6. Interlanguage: It is a term first coined by Selinker (1972). It refers to a learner's second language system; this system is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two (contains aspects of L1 and L2). The interlanguage hypothesis has opened up new horizons in second language learning and teaching. The most obvious approach to analysing interlanguage is to study the speech and writing of learners, what has come to be called *learner language*.  
     (Brown, 1994: 204)
7. Metadiscourse: refers to linguistic material in texts that is intended to help the reader interpret and evaluate the information given. It guides the reader through the text, linking individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and a coherent whole.

8. The Audio-Lingual Approach was advocated after the Second World War, as the synthesis of two leading psychological and linguistic theories: Behaviourism and Structuralism. Its five slogans were:

- Language is speech not writing
- A language is a set of habits
- Teach the language and not about the language
- A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say
- Languages are different

9. One of the correction codes commonly used is:

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
S	A spelling error	<i>The <u>asnwer</u> is <u>obvius</u>.</i>
WO	A mistake in word order	<i>I <u>like very much</u> it</i>
G	A grammar mistake	<i>I am going to buy some <u>furnitures</u>.</i>
T	Wrong verb tense	<i>I <u>have seen</u> him yesterday.</i>
C	Concord mistake (e.g. subject and verb agreement)	<i>People <u>is</u> angry.</i>
Λ	Something has been left out	<i>He told <u>Λ</u> that he was sorry.</i>
WW	Wrong word	<i>I am interested <u>on</u> jazz music.</i>
{ }	Something is not necessary	<i>He was not { <u>too</u> } strong enough.</i>
?M	The meaning is unclear	<i>That is a <u>very excited</u> photograph.</i>
P	A punctuation mistake	<i>Do you like London<u>.</u></i>
F/I	Too formal or informal	<i><u>Hi</u> Mr Franklin, Thank you for your letter ...</i>

Table 3.8. An alternative correction code, as proposed by (Harmer, 2004: 111)



**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

Chapter Three is devoted to the empirical phase, which strives to arrive at a more consistent analysis of the EFL teaching/learning situation, with reference to the writing skill. It is based, in addition to the researcher's eight-year teaching experience in the Secondary School, on different analytical tools. It has required the contribution of three partners in the teaching/learning context: learners, teachers and EFL inspectors. Research in this chapter seeks to investigate real causes underlying learners' low achievement in writing. It aims at highlighting different facts about teachers' training, teaching practice and constraints, learners' proficiency level and motivation, writing skill in the EFL curriculum, and many other concerns. Results of this investigative study would pave the way to a thorough diagnosis of the problem, and would serve as groundwork for alternative remedies that will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter.

#### 3.2. Analytical Tools: Aims and Procedures

The investigative phase is conducted through different analytical devices: two questionnaires and an unstructured interview as well as a semi-structured interview<sup>1</sup>. The 'questionnaire' is chosen as a research instrument because it is less time-consuming, than an interview for example. It allows the analysis of a large number of informants in a relatively short period of time anonymously (Wallace, 1998). The interviews, on the other hand, are conducted to elicit different facts in a relatively relaxed atmosphere (ibid).



The two questionnaires were distributed in different secondary schools in two cities, Blida and Tlemcen. The first questionnaire was intended to 3AS pupils, and the second to Secondary-School EFL teachers. In both questionnaires, the hypotheses of the research were translated into questions of three types: close-ended, open-ended, and combined questions (See Appendices D and E). As follow-up to the teachers' questionnaire, the researcher conducted an unstructured interview with some EFL teachers, while distributing the questionnaires in the different lycées and on the occasion of EFL seminars held in Tlemcen (September, 2005) and in Blida (December, 2005).

Teachers and learners constitute two major poles in any teaching/learning context; however, increasing the reliability of this research required the viewpoint of a third partner: EFL inspectors. To this end, another inquisitive means was selected; a semi-structured interview was held with three inspectors of Middle and Secondary-School levels. The inspectors were asked to give their point of view as 'observers' and 'evaluators', mainly of teachers and learners, in the teaching/learning process.

Data gathered via this triangulation<sup>2</sup> procedure was interpreted quantitatively and qualitatively. Partial conclusions were then drawn at the end of each investigative procedure, before proceeding with concluding remarks derived from the results of the three poles of the study. The findings would, hopefully, illuminate the path to be followed to tackle the problem and ultimately propose alternative solutions.

### **3.3. Learners' Questionnaire**

The 150 informants were third-year pupils from different secondary schools in Blida and Tlemcen. The age of these pupils, 53 males and 97 females, ranged from 16 to 21. The questionnaire was explained and given to pupils as homework so that they could think more about the questions, or even discuss answers with their peers. This was done with the intention of lowering their

anxiety, and making them believe the questionnaire was not a test but a way to express their personal ideas, and an opportunity to make their difficulties known. As they had the choice to answer in any language, most of them responded in Arabic, few of them answered in French and even fewer in English.

The learners' questionnaire was meant to elicit from pupils, as the centre of the teaching-learning process, information about the causes of their low achievement in EFL and in writing particularly. The learners were invited to give insights into their motivational drives and attitudes towards English, to shed light on their own weaknesses and to propose solutions that would fit them best.

### **3.3.1. Learners' Questionnaires Analysis**

Learners' Questionnaire comprised six questions which were studied individually. The results are summed up in (Appendix F).

#### **Question One: How long have you been studying English?**

The question concerned learners' EFL learning experience in order to have an idea about the amount of formal language instruction the target population had been exposed to. There were differences because of two main reasons: some of the pupils had studied English as a first foreign language since Primary-School level; others had repeated some years (retaken courses) at different stages of their schooling, mainly in 3AS. Their EFL learning experience, then, oscillated between 5 and 8 years. Such a piece of information permits to determine what kind of learner third year pupils are.

#### **Question Two: Do you like studying English?**

This question was interested in the attitudes towards EFL study. Most of the respondents (84%) said they liked studying English, even those who admitted they were not good at it. They gave different arguments for their positive attitudes explaining that English was an essential subject-matter in the Baccalaureate exam, and important for their future studies and careers.



English was also described as an international language needed in communication, travelling and tourism. They also reported the necessity of learning English to understand notices and technical equipment, or simply to understand their preferred songs. A few learners recalled the Prophet's (MPBH) citation "*He who learns a community's language is safe from their evils.*" The rest of the respondents (12%) affirmed they didn't like English because they couldn't speak it. Others found English rather boring or even useless since there were many channels in Arabic in which English programmes were translated.

**Question Three: Do you think it necessary to your success? Why?**

**Or Why not?**

This question further explored pupils' motivational drives in learning English. Most of the informants (83%) assumed that English was necessary; they referred to its importance as a subject-matter in the school curriculum and in the Baccalaureate exam. While others perceived EFL utility in the future, mainly in further studies or in the professional domain. However, (4%) of the respondents expressed their carelessness about English because they foresaw a failure in the Baccalaureate exam or a future unemployment. Besides, some learners considered the coefficient (2) very low to grant English subject-matter much importance.

**Question Four: Which skill appears to you most difficult?**

This question inquired about the skill that posed the greatest difficulty for learners. As predicted, (57%) of the pupils confirmed that writing was the most difficult among the four skills, followed by listening (38%), speaking (37%), and reading (10%). To note here, learners' difficulties did not lie principally in productive skills only, but in receptive skills as well. It is then a question of input before being a question of output.



**Question Five: How do you assess your level in writing?**

This question explored learners' self-assessment in writing proficiency, by evaluating their level as good, average or bad. Of the total number of respondents, (51%) honestly admitted they were weak, while (44%) presumed they were rather average, but only (2%) thought they were good. At the level of this question, some learners pointed to their fear of making mistakes, and also made allusion to their poor lexical luggage/background.

**Question Six: What do you suggest to your teacher to help you learn writing?**

The last question gave learners an opportunity to express their ideas, as well as suggest possible solutions that would enable their teachers to help them learn how to write. Some learners had, by the same token, analysed the causes and aspects of their failure in writing stating the following reasons:

- bad teaching of writing
- learners' misuse of vocabulary and grammar resulting in a bad style
- influence of Arabic and French languages
- inability to write a correct sentence, what about a whole paragraph?

To alleviate the problem, most learners gave invaluable propositions that should be really taken into consideration.

**3.3.2. Learners' Suggestions**

To begin with, many pupils expressed their happiness and gratitude for being asked their viewpoint, and being able to have their say. Though they were required to propose solutions to be implemented by their teachers, a great deal of informants included recommendations for pupils as well.

First of all, most respondents expressed their great difficulty in understanding the meaning of words. Such a problem prevented them from grasping the writing topic, from expressing their ideas in English, and even from

comprehending the teacher when he/she spoke. So, they suggested to their teacher(s) to use Arabic or French to explain the meaning of difficult words. They also asked for the explicit teaching of grammar, vocabulary and writing rules. In like manner, they believed they would be able to express and organise ideas in their written prose. Many pupils pointed to the necessity of devoting more time to learn English, and intensifying writing activities in class, under the teacher's guidance. In addition, they affirmed the writing lesson should be completely guided and preceded by a speaking or a reading phase. They thought of the use of translation of texts, using Arabic or French, the use of dictation to learn spelling, and the use of summarizing as a writing technique. Furthermore, many learners made allusion to the correction of writing assignments in class, with pupils. Some respondents proposed remedial sessions to help weak pupils, as well as supplying them with model paragraphs. What is more, many pupils expressed their boredom vis-à-vis the topics suggested in their textbook, and preferred to deal with recent themes of close interest to their young age.

On the other hand, some learners included some advice for both teachers and pupils. They noted the good relationship that should exist between teachers and learners, and the fact that both must help each other to achieve success in writing. Some informants mentioned the necessity for teachers to acknowledge differences between pupils in terms of learning capacities. Finally, they advised pupils to improve their English and their writing performance by reading short stories and watching programmes broadcast in English.

### **3.3.3. Results Interpretation**

Most learners hold positive attitudes towards the English language and are aware of its importance at personal, national and international levels, the fact that strikingly contradicts a former assumption (See 1.4.4.2.). These pupils are conscious of their weaknesses and are willing to study this language, provided it is made easy for them to understand. They know perfectly that writing is a



difficult skill which requires a lot of practice under the teacher's supervision. Despite their young age and lack of any teaching experience, they pinpointed crucial principles of language teaching, giving as such valuable suggestions.

Their proposals fell into three main fields:

- classroom management
- EFL teaching/learning
- Writing skill teaching and development

What can be deduced from the first category is that learning differences in mixed-ability classes are not acknowledged by teachers, teacher/learner relationship is not satisfying because of prevalence of teacher-centredness, and teachers' metalanguage<sup>3</sup> prevents learners from understanding and thus from achieving any progress. In addition, teachers' incompetence in teaching writing (which is clearly felt by pupils) may be due to an inadequate teacher-training. As to EFL teaching/learning, the second category, more concern should be given to all skills, mainly to listening and writing as these two major language skills hinder pupils' progress in language learning. Besides, sources of input should be varied via adequate and authentic materials (media for example). The third category relates to the writing skill explicit teaching; with enough time, a lot of practice, adequate correction and feedback. It also refers to the promotion of complementary skills, such as speaking and reading; in addition to the mastery of lexical and syntactic knowledge through vocabulary and grammar study. Analysis of the results of the first research part has to be compared with those of the second part concerned with teachers.



### **3.4. Teachers' Questionnaire and Interview**

#### **3.4.1. The Questionnaire**

The 50 informants, 14 males and 36 females, hold a Licence degree in English Language Studies. They have a teaching experience that ranges from 2 to 30 years. The questionnaire was meant to be administered to teachers of varying teaching experiences in order to gather information from different types of informants: novice and experienced. Data of that kind would enable us to have an idea of the type of teachers, and so the kind of teaching, third year pupils have.

The teachers' questionnaire aimed at investigating teachers' viewpoint about learners' attitudes and involvement in the English learning process, their level of proficiency in writing skill, and the causes of their difficulties. It also strove to shed light on teachers' teaching practices, evaluation procedures and improvement suggestions.

##### **3.4.1.1. Questionnaires' Analysis**

The teachers' questionnaire contained fourteen questions, the results of which are summed up in (Appendix G).

##### **Question One: In which skill(s) are your pupils most involved?**

The first question intended to check teachers' evaluation of learners' motivation to learn English, by depicting the skill in which pupils were most involved. According to the teachers, learners are most involved in reading and least in writing, while listening and speaking skills seem to have approximately equal status. So, involvement in the four skills is ordered as follows: reading (75%), speaking (37%), listening (33%) and writing (8%).

**Question Two: In which skill are they least performing?**

This question concerned the skill in which learners displayed the lowest performance. Teachers reported that pupils were worst in writing and best in reading. To note here, teachers reported that learners' production tended to be better in receptive skills (reading 10% and listening 12%) than in productive skills (speaking 32% and writing 82%); the fact that contradicts results in learners' questionnaire ( Question Four).

**Question Three: How would you assess your pupils' level of performance in writing?**

This question required from teachers to evaluate their pupils' performance in particular. Most of the informants (62%) admitted that their pupils were rather weak at writing, while the remaining respondents (37%) thought their level was average. Questions 4 to 7 were concerned with teachers' teaching practices.

**Question Four: How much time do you devote to the teaching of writing? Do you think it is enough?**

This question considered teaching time devoted to the writing skill activities according to each pedagogic unit. Most respondents (57%) confirmed devoting 2 hours. Knowing that 3AS learners have five (5) pedagogic units in the English programme, the amount of time allocated to writing is then 10 hours for the whole year! This reveals a lack of practice that might certainly underlie low achievement. A small minority of teachers (8%) said they devoted more than 3 hours to teach writing, while (26%) of them revealed they allotted 3 hours. In addition, more than half of the informants were satisfied with the amount of time allocated to teach writing. The remaining ones were not, and thought writing skill needed more time to be fostered.

**Question Five: Which approach do you follow/adopt while teaching the writing skill?**

This question strove to analyse technical details or information, specifically the approach followed while teaching the writing skill. The first remark to make is that many teachers did not answer this question, while the others inquired about the meaning of the terms 'process' and 'product'. They reported that they mostly advocated a combined process-product approach.

**Question Six: What type of discourse do you usually deal with in writing?**

This question investigated the type of discourse dealt with in writing. A great majority of informants said they usually dealt with 'cause-effect' and 'comparison-contrast' or with 'problem-solution' and 'argumentative composition'. To a lesser extent, they mentioned 'descriptive' or 'narrative' discourse.

**Question Seven: What are the different types of composition dealt with?**

This question further explored teaching details. Most respondents confirmed dealing mainly with essays, paragraphs and dialogues at equal rates. To a lesser extent, teachers reported they dealt with letters, and a few dealt with articles. Questions 8 to 11 investigated teachers' assessment practices.

**Question Eight: Do you ask your pupils to do homework related to the writing skill?**

This question probed to know whether homework related to writing was assigned to pupils, and at which frequency. (91%) of the informants asserted they assigned writing homework to their pupils regularly, either at the end of each unit or each fortnight. Some respondents confirmed the rate of 3 or 4



writing assignments per month. Do pupils really have that amount of writing practice? If so, the problem may lie elsewhere, in the correction phase for example.

**Question Nine: How do you correct your pupils' writings?**

This question considered the mode of correction most applied by teachers. Results of this question showed that most teachers (55%) preferred to underline the mistakes and use a code indicating the type of mistake. Many teachers (37%) affirmed correcting every mistake, while no teacher handed back the writing work without any correction.

**Question Ten: What do you focus on while correcting pupils' writings?**

This question attempted to discover further details about teachers' correction habits in order to have more chances to diagnose pupils' low achievement. Most teachers seemed to agree that grammatical accuracy, mechanics and ideas organisation were the criteria on which to base writing correction. Other teachers (70%) mentioned meaningfulness as an important criterion. Very few respondents (20%) focused on rich vocabulary.

**Question Eleven: What type of errors do your pupils generally make?**

This question drove teachers to assess the type of errors commonly made by their pupils. Teachers believed learners made errors of all kinds, but stressed on grammatical mistakes (80%), while in the last position they put word choice and word order (44%); the fact that showed teachers' concern with form over content.

**Question Twelve: After correcting pupils' writings, do you suggest a remedial work to help pupils overcome their weaknesses?**

This question strove to analyse a crucial methodological concept in teaching: remedial work. A great deal of teachers (70%) confirmed not organising any remedial work after that correction phase. They explained that such activities took too much time, and that collective correction and writing a model composition in class were sufficient enough.

\* **Question Thirteen: According to you, what are the main reasons behind pupils' writing weaknesses?**

The question attempted to know teachers' point of view, by giving their own interpretations and perceptions concerning the reasons behind pupils' writing weaknesses. A great majority of respondents (75%) believed their pupils' lack of motivation/interest was the primary cause of their failure in writing. Then, they attributed this failure to lack of materials or of necessary time to foster this skill into learners. Many teachers (42%) pointed to the difficulty of the writing skill itself; just a few opted for the inadequacy of the textbook to teach or help pupils learn writing. Many informants mentioned other reasons that seemed of great relevance:

- pupils do not read and do not speak enough ( or at all) in English.
- pupils' educational background and social level influence their language proficiency
- pupils are unable to recognise different parts of speech, how could they write accurately or meaningfully?
- texts are of no interest to pupils socially or culturally.
- lack of a supportive English linguistic environment
- writing skill is not taken into consideration since Middle-School level.
- absence of new techniques in teaching writing

**Question Fourteen: What do you suggest to improve your pupils' writing weaknesses?**

This question gave teachers an opportunity to express their ideas and suggestions freely. And at the same time, it helped the researcher build up a remedial work phase later on. To this question, (15%) of the informants did not propose any alternative solution. But the rest of respondents suggested many proposals concerning methodology, classroom practice, lesson plan, and ways in enhancing motivation as well as building the writing habit in learners.

All teachers agreed on the fact that writing was a major language skill that had to be reconsidered. Teachers' proposals fell into three broad categories:

- what learners should do to improve in writing
- what teachers should do to help learners improve, and
- what policy-makers should do to alleviate the problem

**3.4.1.2. Teachers' Suggestions**

A great deal of the suggestions considered principally what teachers should do to remedy pupils' failure in writing. Most of the respondents alluded to the close relationship between the reading and writing skills. Likewise, they proposed to promote reading as an effective means to enrich learners' vocabulary, feed into their imagination, and prepare them to the composition phase. As classroom practices, teachers suggested devoting more time to teach writing. In addition, they believed writing should be taught gradually: from simple to complex and to compound sentences until pupils are able to generate whole paragraphs. Some informants advocated the explicit teaching of writing rules in addition to recycling basic knowledge about grammar, vocabulary and writing, even for advanced learners. Other respondents advised to encourage pair/group work, as well as motivate pupils by selecting writing activities and topics that would suit their age and interests. Furthermore, many teachers



recommended correcting and grading writing homework, and organising collective correction sessions of pupils' written products.

As to what concerns pupils, most (if not all) informants advised learners to read more in order to develop as good writers. They also recommended them to use dictionaries, keep a notebook of difficult or interesting words and expressions. On the other hand, they urged pupils to learn English outside the school by listening to people speaking in English, on T.V or on the radio. Finally, one of the respondents made allusion to the benefits of diary-keeping. About other reforms, the teachers suggested

- to devote more time to EFL teaching;
- to avoid overcrowding classes;
- to reconsider EFL teaching since Middle-School level;
- to set up a writing curriculum since 1AM; and
- to improve ELT textbooks in terms of texts and topics to cope with the new generation requirements.

These invaluable suggestions and recommendations can be partially interpreted as preliminary data towards solving the problem.

### **3.4.2. The Interview**

The informal interview was chosen as an investigative technique in order to “*tap into the knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences*” (Wallace, 1998: 124) of EFL teachers. It was used to elicit from colleagues and fellow teachers ideas about what makes EFL teaching/learning (and particularly writing) successful or unsuccessful.

The interviewees were informed of the research topic, and were required to contribute by answering some of the following questions:

- What difficulties do you usually encounter while teaching the English language, and particularly the writing skill?

- What are the different steps of a writing lesson?
- What particular writing strategy did you teach and found it successful?
- What do you notice when pupils are doing a writing assignment in class, in terms of procedures and difficulties?
- What do you await from seminars or study days?

Teachers expressed their reflections, by exposing their point of view according to their day-to-day teaching practice and encountering with learners' problems.

#### 3.4.2.1. Data Collection

Concerning the difficulties encountered while teaching, many teachers reported different aspects. Some noted the absence of materials and equipment at school to help EFL teachers in their task, the insufficient time load and low coefficient. Others made reference to learners' low level in English in general and in composing skills in particular. They explained that these pupils were not adequately formed in the Middle-School level, and that teaching/learning methodology (and even evaluation) relied heavily on rote-learning, a fact that contradicted Secondary-School teaching procedures and objectives. The respondents further added that pupils arrived to the Secondary-School level with poor lexical luggage in English, incomplete mastery of simple grammatical structures and ineffective learning strategies; during tests and exams, most pupils depended on cheating tricks in order to pass. Some other teachers confirmed that EFL evaluation, and mainly the Bac exam was not fair, and that each year, it was made even more difficult. They maintained that English Bac exam topics were 'challenging' learners in the degree of their difficulty; that there was no correlation between pupils' level and the kind of exams they are compelled to pass; as a result, teachers and pupils were just shocked when seeing the results at the end of the year. One of the informants noted that EFL could never compete with French (subject-matter); English Bac exam was much



more difficult than that of French, though English was a second foreign language, and French was almost a second language for most Algerians.

On what concerns writing skill, a great deal of teachers reported the fact that pupils were equally weak in French and even their native language, Arabic. According to them, a writing lesson generally proceeded as follows: first of all, the chosen topic had to be related to the theme of the pedagogic unit being dealt with. Then, the writing topic was written on the board, and key words were underlined and discussed with pupils. The second step was brain-storming; pupils were asked to think of or recall any idea related to the topic, and the teacher wrote all the suggestions on the board, whether they were relevant or not. After that, the teacher asked pupils to select the relevant ideas only and organised them into a plan, which was principally constituted of: Introduction, Development and Conclusion. Next, learners were asked to work individually, and write a first draft using ideas on the board. The teacher passed around, checked and helped when necessary. When time was over, the pupils were required to elaborate their writings at home, as homework to be submitted on the following session. On correction day, the topic and the discussed ideas were restated in a collective class work, individual pupils suggested sentences, and finally a model composition was written on the board and taken up by pupils. This description of the process of a writing lesson does not insinuate that it is the only form of teaching the writing skill, but it represents one of the most common methods usually followed by teachers.

The writing strategies which 'worked' according to teachers consisted mainly of short and guided activities. Learners did not proceed with the composing phase until they had completed a series of tasks, such as gap-filling, information transfer (from tables and graphs), or writing individual sentences, commenting on pictures for instance. One or two teachers made allusion to the relevance of using translation or dictation as writing techniques.



The informants also reported that while doing a writing assignment, learners displayed different strategies. Some pupils stick to the plan agreed on in class with the teacher and expressed the ideas in written prose, while others wrote whatever idea came to their minds without caring much about the plan or about the accuracy of their sentences. Many pupils had a strong desire to write, but were impeded each time basically with vocabulary problems, and so they overwhelmed the teacher with endless questions. Other pupils, however, just could not get started and waited for the correction phase so that they wrote down the model composition, without understanding a word!

All the teachers agreed that seminars represented a vital part of an in-service development, and that they were an occasion to learn from the inspector and the model lessons presented as well as from the workshops. On the other hand, during seminars, teachers from different schools met and exchanged ideas. The teachers hoped that seminars would be held more frequently, and that they would deal with practical problems teachers often met while pursuing their task.

### **3.4.3. Results Interpretation**

Teachers are, willingly or unwillingly, responsible for their pupils' success or failure, as they have a central role in the teaching/learning process. Although the results of the questionnaire were not contradiction-free, they abundantly provided, however, facts about the teaching of EFL in Algerian schools. According to their responses, the teachers-informants seemed to be aware of their learners' low-achievement in EFL in general, and in writing in particular. But most of them believed the primary cause lied in learners' lack of motivation; a fact that was proved wrong according to learners' questionnaires, and providing, hence, negative evidence to a former hypothesis (See 1.4.4.2). What can be noticed so far is that little time is devoted to the teaching of writing, in addition, few writing and correction strategies are made use of. Most important is the fact that remedial work for the writing skill is neglected. Teachers' focus

on grammatical correctness, while giving little importance to content, leads pupils to believe that writing means error-free composition, and so, they are unwilling to take risks.

On the other hand, no teacher spoke of differences existing between pupils in terms of learning abilities or strategies. Also, most teachers assumed that pupils were good at receptive skills, and so they seemed not to be aware of learners' low level in listening comprehension. Therefore, teachers neglect learners' difficulty in understanding their metalanguage, taking for granted that pupils must accept English as the only language of instruction. Furthermore, teachers knew perfectly that all formal examination was written; nevertheless, they devoted little time to teach writing or to correct learners' products. In addition, many teachers believed writing was a difficult skill that required a lot of time and energy to be taught and fostered. But, they also believed that such a problem could be solved only with the contribution of teachers, learners and education policy-makers.

Teachers and learners' proposals and recommendations have to be synthesised together with those of the third part of this investigative study: EFL inspectors.

### **3.5. EFL Inspectors' Interview**

The third pole of this investigative study is conducted via a semi-structured interview held with three EFL inspectors of Middle and Secondary-School levels. It was meant to extrapolate data from these two-level-informants for two main reasons. First, inspectors are 'observers' of both teachers and learners with a scrutinizing eye; and as posited by (Scovel, 1998: 3), "*it [distance] also fosters observational objectivity*". Inspectors attend writing lessons and take notes of teachers' methodology and competence, as well as of learners' involvement and level of output. They were asked in the interview to give their point of view as 'observers' and not as former practitioners. Second, the choice



of inspectors of two levels stems from the fact that EFL teaching/learning begins first at Middle-School level, before continuing in the Secondary-School. So, the researcher strives to know causes of writing failure for 3AS pupils, by investigating conditions of teaching and learning from the very beginning of their schooling. Besides, EFL teaching/learning can not be divided into two separate periods; both Middle and Secondary-School levels constitute one whole period, at the end of which everybody's effort is portrayed in the Baccalaureate results.

The inspectors' contribution was aspired for a threefold purpose: observation, evaluation and suggestions. Thus, the semi-structured interview included four open questions which centred on the assessment of EFL writing skill at the two school levels. These questions were fairly formulated as follows:

- What is the state of the art of EFL at Middle- (or Secondary-) School level?
- As an observer, how do you evaluate the teaching of writing skill?  
(in terms of methodology, practice, assessment)
- What is the cause of failure in writing?  
(teacher-training, pupils' motivation or other)
- What do you suggest to remedy the problem?

### **3.5.1. Data Collection**

#### **Part One: Middle-School Level**

The first EFL inspector reported that pupils showed difficulties basically in handwriting, and in recalling and mastering English alphabet because of difference between Arabic and English scripts. In other words, the first difficulty lied in the graphic representation of the language. On the part of teachers, the respondent affirmed that they were not qualified to teach writing since they had not been adequately trained in pre-service stage. He explained that at university



level, writing was taught to them only theoretically. In schools, he added, the teaching of writing was not done appropriately; focus was on 'reproduction', practice was insufficient and writing as a 'skill' was neglected. He advised to give more attention to this vital skill, and teach the 'composing' skill, not just reproduction.

The second informant maintained that EFL in Algeria was below the average because of a number of methodological problems. He assumed that concentration was still on '*teaching*' and on learners' '*products*'. Besides, the teaching of writing was done uniformly for all pupils; learning styles and strategies were not, as such, taken into account. The respondent confirmed that failure in EFL was essentially due to a mismatch between teachers' teaching style and learners' learning styles. He further pointed to reasons of weakness in writing as follows:

- learning styles and learner needs are neglected.
- learners are not motivated by the topics suggested to them.
- a crucial element in writing is disregarded: the audience.
- insisting on grammatical correctness inhibits learners.
- teacher-training is very insufficient (at university level).

To treat the problem, the respondent recommended a reconsideration of teacher-training and development, beginning with university-level students. He affirmed that professional development was crucially important and essential to level up teaching, and thus learning. He also added that teaching had to be varied according to pupils' styles, with an emphasis on group work.

### **Part Two: Secondary-School Level**

The third inspector reported that teachers did not usually devote much time on teaching the writing skill. He observed that writing was generally dealt with at the end of a lesson for 10 or 15 minutes, though both formal and informal evaluation were done in the written mode (tests, quizzes, essays, end of

term exams and Baccalaureate/BEF exams). He added that failure in written expression was due to many reasons: first of all, not enough sessions (time load) were devoted for teaching English at school in the present educational system. In addition, the methodology used in class required from teachers to devote more time to speaking/reading skills. Moreover, learners did not have opportunities to write or even read in English outside class. Though reading would prepare pupils to write, there is a lack of reading material in the surrounding environment: easy readers, stories, books in general, newspapers, magazines, etc. As a possible remedy, the informant suggested the following:

- devote more time for the teaching of foreign languages,
- avoid crowding the classes; groups of 15 to 20 pupils enable the teacher to correct their written products (paragraphs, essays, letters, articles, projects, dialogues...) more often.
- classify the learners in terms of levels (beginners, advanced) rather than in terms of classes (1 AS, 2 AS, 3 AS),
- make learners read authentic material so that they develop their writing skill,
- include library sessions in the weekly time-table,
- give learners opportunities to correspond with foreign learners,
- at an advanced level, make learners familiar with the different types of discourse: narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository, and prescriptive.

### **3.5.2. Results Interpretation**

The three inspectors agreed on the fact that EFL teaching/learning situation was not satisfying. They also agreed that though all formal evaluation was done in the written mode, writing skill was neglected either during the pre-service training at university level, or as a teaching practice at school level. Thus, the informants blamed mostly the inadequate teaching practices and the unsuitable

teaching methodologies. According to these inspectors, the educational system did not promote the teaching of EFL, since little time was devoted to teach English, and even less time was devoted to teach writing. In addition, teacher-centredness and the focus on grammatical accuracy and on learners' end-products left few chances for the promotion of learners' competence in written expression. Consequently, they advised to reconsider the importance of writing skill in foreign language learning by first reconsidering pre- and in-service teacher-training and development programmes. They also advised to acknowledge differences in learning styles and strategies and make of them a basis for teaching practices. In addition, the interviewees proposed some classroom management procedures, such as avoiding crowded classes and classifying pupils in terms of level (though this seems quite difficult because learners' level in English -or in foreign languages in general- does not correlate with their overall level in other subject-matters), and the emphasis on group-work. What is more, the informants suggested the promotion of the reading skill and emphasising the role of libraries in schools.

### **3.6. Pedagogical Implications**

The investigative procedures (the questionnaires and the interviews) have uncovered many facts about EFL teachers, learners and about the writing skill. They have revealed some contradictions in learners', teachers' and inspectors' viewpoints, but the results also converge towards some common implications that will be taken into consideration while trying to devise alternative remedies to the studied problem.

#### **3.6.1. Writing: A Neglected Skill**

Writing is one of the four language skills; it is attributed the fourth position in first language acquisition and in second or foreign language teaching/learning. Writing, as a skill, has been neglected for many years, mainly



after the adoption of the Communicative Approach to language teaching, which claimed the supremacy of the spoken word over the written one. A renewed concern to writing has emerged, however, since being literate (able to read and write) has become a necessity in modern life. Training learners to write demands care and attention on behalf of language teachers; thus, many researches have been conducted to investigate the link(s) between writing and success in second or foreign language learning.

Many educationalists note the fact that writing is difficult even for native speakers, and that a large number of native speakers never achieve a high level of expressiveness in writing their first language. In the context of education, most exams often rely on learners' writing proficiency to measure their knowledge; but, as Rivers (1968) posits,

*Examination papers in composition the world over are, with few exceptions, disappointing ...only a minority of speakers of any language acquire the skill of writing it with any degree of finesse, and only after years of training in school and practice out of school*

(Rivers, 1968: 291)

Causes of low achievement in writing are manifold. Some applied linguists have noted the existence of a writing anxiety from which learners suffer deeply. Not only learners are deprived from help and encouragement, but also *“teachers expect them to write accurately and meaningfully about an imposed topic in a limited amount of time”* (Tsui, 1996: 97). So, causes of anxiety mainly concern grammatical and lexical accuracy; learners are afraid of making mistakes and so getting low grades, as a result they find it difficult to get started or to finish a paragraph. In this context, Hedge argues that *“The process of marking with its traditional focus on error-correction by the teacher needs review and modification”* (Hedge, 1988: 10). In addition, learners are worried by organising the ideas into a well-structured outline comprising: introduction, body and conclusion. What also adds to their anxiety is to write about a topic of no

interest to them, and so they do not find much to say/write about. Another cause is the absence of a supportive environment; writing is a lonely activity which has to be done in a very short period of time, and teachers are often critical and unsympathetic.

On the other hand, less time is devoted to writing because teachers believe that writing is time consuming; another reason is that much work needs to be corrected. As a result, writing is often relegated to a homework activity (and thus an out-of class activity), because many teachers think that there is not much time to be devoted to writing and prefer to deal with reading, grammar and vocabulary tasks. However, learners would benefit from classroom practice in writing with the teacher in class, and receiving the necessary feedback.

Failure in writing may be a learning phenomenon which has causes and aspects that are common to all language learners at the international level, but it has also some causes and aspects that are specific to the local or national level. Writing in English as a foreign language for learners whose mother tongue is Arabic implies writing in a completely different script, different word order, and a different culture; the fact that represents great challenges for teachers and learners. Nonetheless, failure in writing cannot be diagnosed in isolation from EFL teaching/learning context.

### **3.6.2. EFL Teaching/Learning: Problem Areas**

Many educationalists all over the world investigate the causes of low achievement in foreign language teaching/learning. They argue that the factors influencing success or failure are: the soundness of the teaching method, learners' attitudes and motivation, availability of time and opportunities to teach/learn the language, adequacy of resources and materials, and suitability of evaluation methodology.



Observing the EFL educational context in Algeria, one would notice contradictions of major impact on the teaching/learning path. Among the main contradictions is that all tests are written even the homework -despite the communicative objectives of the syllabus- even so, writing is neglected. As a result, there is no conformity between students' needs, and the requirements of the Baccalaureate exam, which is based on an evaluation of written skills only. In addition, there are too many teaching/learning constraints (See 1.4.3.3.) which hamper success in teaching/learning English.

### **3.6.2.1. EFL Teaching/Learning Limitations**

The issue of large classes and mixed ability groups, for example, has been extensively dealt with in TEFL literature. The fact is that big class size represents an impediment to language teaching particularly. In large classes, there may be big differences in learners' levels, learning skills, learning speeds, and interests. It is commonly agreed that "*no class is completely homogeneous in terms of level.*" (Wajnryb, 1992: 36); nevertheless, large classes with mixed abilities constitute challenges for both teachers and learners. Baker and Westrup (2000) and Prodromou (1992) state a number of aspects related to large and mixed ability classes. There is little space for the teacher to turn around, and not enough space for the learners to move or interact with their mates during the lesson. Teachers have difficulties keeping every one's attention; they do not have enough opportunity to help weaker students -mainly at this crucial period (3AS). In addition, they can have too much correction to do; and above all, they may have more problems of discipline to tackle.

On the other hand, the ELT textbook COMET seems to require a level of proficiency that is beyond our pupils' level and capacities. It appears to be designated to pupils who have mastered basic tenets of language, and are thus ready to move from skill-getting to skill-using. But pupils at this level are not ready for such an input.



Learners, for their part, differ greatly in terms of learning styles and learning strategies, but they can be similarly affected by foreign language anxiety. The pressure may be exerted on them by the teacher, the peers or parents and older siblings; to whom Harmer (2001) refers as 'the significant others'. Besides, anxiety in language learning may be worsened by the teacher's persistent focus on correctness of form and content. Moreover, when the mother tongue or L1 is banished in class or when learners are asked to perform only in English, they feel they are deprived from their natural way of speaking or expressing themselves (Tsui, 1995). This type of anxiety inhibits learners' use of the target language and deprives them from opportunities of language use. Many pupils, then, withdraw from the rest of the class or even become trouble-rousers. Most of all, ***“the quality of teaching has the greatest effect upon the quality to education.”*** Cross (1995: 34); teachers seem not to be trained for the type of teaching they will be compelled to perform. Neither are they trained to teach writing skill -among other skills- properly, a fact that engenders serious consequences on teaching, on learning, and on education as a whole.

### 3.6.2.2. Major Consequences

Teacher-centeredness is still prevailing as a teaching mode; everything is done under the teacher's control. And so, pupils as products of a rigid school system remain passive consumers. They rely heavily on the teacher to make everything clear for them, and unwilling to seek knowledge from sources other than the teacher. Teachers tend to teach an exam English: knowledge is directed towards exams instead of developing communicative abilities of learners. Because of many administrative constraints, they are compelled to lead a passive teaching in which the image of the teacher as source of authority and knowledge still prevails. Wilkins further adds ***“Foreign language learning in many countries does not get beyond the stage of progressive accumulation of linguistic knowledge. The language teacher is the only person to provide***

*exposure to the language.*" (Wilkins, 1972: 156). Furthermore, there is little relationship between teacher-training programmes and the real needs of future teachers (and learners), and inspectors' pedagogic visits do not suffice to help them with all their teaching difficulties.

Moreover, there is an absence of complete correlation between Middle- and Secondary-School teaching objectives and methodologies. In this context, Allen and Widdowson (1979) posit that there is a wide gap in EFL teaching between elementary level and intermediate or advanced levels; explaining that pupils move rapidly from basic English knowledge to complex use of that knowledge, with no materials to help them make a transition between the two extremes. What is more, despite the importance of evaluation as a learning tool in the teaching/learning process, *"too little time and too few resources are generally budgeted for evaluation in language programme development"* (Richards, 1985: 9-10). Besides, all language assessment is written, though the very essence of the communicative approach is the reconsideration of oral skills. The ultimate side effect is that the kind of education offered to pupils in secondary education does not prepare them for higher studies nor for future job prospects.

So, for effective EFL teaching/learning to take place, different variables have to be reconsidered: learners' learning styles and strategies, teacher training and development, textbook elaboration, approach choice, objectives setting, and evaluation practices modification; but all these are beyond the scope of this research. The researcher will attempt to centre attention on one facet of the problem through the reconsideration of the writing skill teaching/learning. The central belief guiding this work is that writing is not only composing, it is also communicating, thinking and learning. What is needed then, is changing attitudes and adjusting beliefs about what constitutes successful EFL teaching/learning, and hence convincing teachers' and learners' of their new roles, and of the need for change.



### 3.7. Conclusion

The investigative study concerned three omnipresent partners in the teaching/learning process: learners, teachers and inspectors. Learners' questionnaire revealed facts about their motivation and attitudes towards English as a language and as a subject-matter. It also gave insights into their language and writing difficulties. Teachers' questionnaire and semi-structured interview, on the other hand, highlighted teachers' difficulties encountered while teaching writing, in addition to details about their teaching practices. EFL inspectors, for their part, assessed the teaching and learning of EFL writing skill, and gave invaluable guidelines towards solutions. The analysis and interpretation of the different results have led to the following conclusions. Writing cannot be dissociated from learning English and from learning in general, and failure in EFL writing skill is due to many reasons. The most important of these causes consist in the lack of coherence between teaching objectives, classroom practices and evaluation norms, in addition to learners' dependence on the teacher and the inadequacy of teacher training programmes. Consequently, writing is ignored by both teachers and learners despite its great importance in EFL learning, and in learning in general. Success in writing, then, depends on a reconsideration of EFL objectives, curriculum, learner training and teacher development. Nevertheless, writing cannot be developed in isolation from other language skills, or from other teaching/learning variables. It becomes teachers' responsibility to draw pupils' attention on the importance of writing for language learning, so that they become fluent writers and thus better learners. Therefore, the following chapter will attempt to tackle some perspectives on writing skill development, on the basis of learners and teachers' needs portrayed so far, and in accordance with national and international pedagogic changes in ELT and in education as a whole.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Observation is an invaluable research approach, but often considered as an intrusive method (Wallace, 1998). Since both teaching and learning (i.e. teachers and learners) can be negatively affected by the presence of an intrusive observer in class, observation was avoided and replaced by other methodological instruments.
2. Triangulation is the procedure of obtaining more than one aspect of the topic being researched via different sources of data.
3. The term *metalanguage* refers to the language used by the teacher to explain things, answer questions, give instructions, etc.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Notes to Chapter Four**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PERSPECTIVES ON WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT

#### 4.1. Introduction

The empirical phase has helped shed light on some important causes of learners' failure or low achievement in EFL writing skill. It has also enabled the analysis of learner needs as far as the writing skill is concerned through learners', teachers' and inspectors' suggestions. Thus, the present chapter attempts to propose alternative and, hopefully, useful recommendations to tackle the problem. Since failure in writing is found to be closely related to the teaching/learning of EFL in general, it seems relevant to reconsider some of the teaching and learning parameters before moving on the writing skill issue. The recommendations relate to new teacher and learner roles in the light of significant educational changes that have occurred at the national and international levels; namely, the coming in force of learner-centred education, the advent of the competency-based approach, and the advocacy of learner autonomy and teacher education development.

The remedial proposals are concerned with building the writing habit in learners through continuous practice and reinforcement, and through the explicit teaching of writing rules. But primarily, learners need to be provided with a supportive learning and writing environment in order to improve. Besides, they have to be made aware of their own learning and writing strategies, and to be given opportunities to learn and write collaboratively. Moreover, pupils should be trained in using the technological devices at hand to get in touch with the wider learning community within an intercultural framework.



## 4.2. The Need for Change

As we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, global scientific, technological, and political changes contribute in the emergence of intercultural contact at local and international levels. In addition, today, the information age has replaced the industrial age, giving way to the supremacy of processed information through computers, and mainly through the Internet. As an underdeveloped nation, we need to cope with the new world requirements not only by keeping abreast all development forms, but also by setting about whole programmes for evolution. In the new millennium, there is a persistent call for innovation and change, and there is *“...a confident belief that progress in learning inside and outside the school is the key to the future”* (Sultana, 2001: 4).

In order to be able to introduce change effectively, some relevant parameters ought to be defined: the rationale of EFL study, the place writing as a literacy skill sustains, and the new learner and teacher roles within recent modifications at the national and international levels. There is an urgent need to build language awareness and learning awareness into learners; it is teachers' first duty, then, to draw pupils' attention to the importance of foreign language learning, and mainly of the global importance of English.

### 4.2.1. English : A Global Must

Rivers (1968: 8-9) mentions a number of frequently cited arguments in favour of foreign language teaching. It is important for pupils to study foreign languages because it aids their intellectual and cultural development; it enriches their personalities and deepens their understanding of the way in which foreign language and their native language work; it enables them to communicate with speakers of a different language in speech or in writing; and it contributes to better international relations. Foreign language teaching is believed to develop a sense of tolerance vis-à-vis others' differences to promote intercultural and

cross-cultural understandingly inasmuch as “*The generation of students in our schools is internationalist and interculturalist in its aspirations*”

(Rivers, 1968: 19)

Expansion and progress which characterised the second half of the 20th century led to the need for an international language, and because of the economic and political influence of the United States, the role has fallen to English. Therefore, for more than 50 years, English has come to be considered as a *lingua franca*<sup>1</sup> with a widespread use in scientific research, business, politics, and above all, in computer software. Richards (1985) states that

*Increasingly, English is becoming the major international language of printed information. A great deal of the world's scientific, commercial and technological knowledge is written and published in English... English is also an important language for the dissemination of news around the world.*  
(Richards, 1985: 2)

In addition, “...about 80 per cent of the world's electronically stored information is currently in English” (Crystal, 1997: 105). Therefore, English has become the *sine qua non* of global communication, and thus its status in education systems and settings is a big one. Algeria, like the rest of the world, is well aware of such a key role, and strives to introduce significant modifications in her school syllabuses in the light of momentous global requirements. For such an aim, it seems relevant to try to depart from the traditional classroom by reframing accordingly teacher and learner roles and needs.

#### 4.2.2. Learner Needs

There are many things we need to know about our pupils. They do not come to class empty headed; they come with their own talents, personalities, cognitive and language abilities. In addition, pupils learn differently, at different rates. What is important is to believe in the fact that the 'bad learner' is just a myth,

and that all learners are willing to learn and do not like to fail (Prodromou, 1992).

In 3AS, and after 5 years of EFL learning, the pupils can be said to have an 'elementary' rather than an 'intermediate'<sup>2</sup> level. Harmer (2001) puts the distinction as follows:

*Elementary students are no longer beginners and are able to communicate in a basic way. They can string some sentences together, construct a simple story or take part in predictable spoken interactions. However, they have not yet achieved intermediate competence which involves greater fluency and general comprehension of some general authentic English*

(Harmer, 2001: 12)

Therefore, teaching methodology has to be adjusted in line with their level and needs. According to Wilkins *et al*, learner needs consist of

- learning in an interesting, motivating and supportive environment where their self-image is enhanced;
- developing their communication strategies;
- being made aware of their learning strategies and ways of promoting them;
- developing skills and strategies which go beyond their lexical and grammatical competence;
- changing roles from passive to active;
- knowing the importance of developing a writing competence in order to develop into good language learners; and
- learning rules of social appropriacy and relationship and interdependence that exist between language and culture;

Most of all, pupils need to acquire the necessary qualities of learners of the third millennium.



### 4.2.3. Teacher Roles

Teaching learners how to learn, how to identify their own needs and how to cater for these needs through their learning strategies has come to be central to education methodology. To be a teacher requires more than linguistic and pedagogic competence; it also requires a teaching practice that draws on learners' needs and interests to cope with constant changes occurring at various levels: educational, socio-economic or political, national or international. The teacher, then, needs to be equipped with a set of qualities so that to be able to assume his/her role(s) in the most effective way; acknowledging first that the varied needs of learners must be determined before making decisions about the content and the method.

In order to be effective, the EFL teacher has to manage teaching his subject matter defying the school constraints, namely the crowded classes, the amount and scheduling of the time allotted to teaching English, and the lack of textbooks as well as of appropriate materials. Third year learners, mainly those in LSH stream, display a low achievement in English, and mainly in writing. To alleviate the problem, the teacher has to be aware that writing is a skill that cannot be dissociated from the teaching of English as a whole. Therefore, the primary concern of the teacher is to modify their teaching methodology into an eclectic and flexible practice that is based on the constant analysis of learners' needs, interests, aptitudes and learning strategies. Teachers have to be convinced that the Licence degree is just the beginning of their teaching career, which is in fact a life-long learning process. Day after day, they are to accumulate knowledge to develop their teaching experience into an expertise. For this reason, they have to strive to acquire the profile of the teacher of the third millennium. Teachers ought to be agents of change; moreover, they should have the necessary qualities to challenge change.

#### 4.2.4. Challenging Change

In Algeria, the teaching method is always imposed on teachers, often without any prior training. Some ministerial modifications have been introduced in the teaching/learning of EFL; a new approach has come to replace the Communicative Approach: the Competency Based Approach. Accordingly, new ELT textbooks have been designed for the different school levels, with a different time load and coefficient<sup>3</sup>. As far as secondary education is concerned, a textbook entitled *At the Crossroads* has been introduced in the current school year (2005-2006), for 1AS pupils; though the preamble of the book states clearly that

*It is assumed that these students have completed the four years of English provided by the new Middle School EFL syllabus. Therefore, they should be already familiar with the competency-based teaching and the learner-centred approach on which this book is based.* (At the Crossroads, 2005-2006: VIII)

Neither 1AS pupils nor Secondary-School teachers are ready for this approach or for this textbook; the pupils have completed only two years of EFL study in the Middle-School, with a Fundamental-School education. Such practices can but affect negatively and seriously the quality of teaching, learning and education in general. A successful education programme depends on many factors; one of these is the degree of preparation of teachers for change since *“Time and money invested in new syllabuses and curricula may be wasted if teachers are not convinced of the need for change nor prepared for the different expectations made of them by a new method or curriculum policy”* (Richards, 1985: 13). On the other hand, the shift towards 'individualisation' of learning has led to the need for a developing teacher and an autonomous learner. For that reason, EFL teachers must be alert to changes happening at all levels, and must be flexible enough to cope with any teaching situation. They should



lead a recyclable teaching practice, in which knowledge is constantly recalled by teachers and learners alike. There should be, however, a sound theoretical framework which opens opportunities for a continuously adjustable practice; a practice that is moulded according to varied pupils, at varied teaching situations. This manageable teaching procedure would help teachers to develop, and thus be able to inculcate autonomy into learners.

### 4.3. Pedagogical Implications

Teaching and learning have long been considered separately, although *“Teaching cannot be defined apart from learning”* (Brown, 1994: 7). In addition, teacher variables and learner variables are not taken into consideration by syllabus designers or decision makers: EFL teachers are to teach a given syllabus, using a given book, and following a given approach to pupils. These teachers take no part in the decisions about content choice, methodology or evaluation practices. Learners for their part are considered as being uniform in cognitive abilities, learning strategies and potential needs. They are to take the knowledge poured on them by the teacher, memorise it and reproduce it faithfully during exams, this is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the problem also relates to the fact that English subject-matter is taught with an overloaded programme, an insufficient time load, a low coefficient and an unsuitable evaluation. One should not forget, however, that English is a foreign language for learners, with all the connotations the term 'foreign' might have<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the teacher should devise a content, a teaching methodology, and foresee an outcome that are appropriate to the EFL status in Algeria, and to learners' background knowledge, learning abilities and learning strategies. In what follows, three of the main teaching/learning variables are to be considered: the teaching methodology, the learner and the teacher.



### **4.3.1. Teaching Methodology**

Methodology is what relates theory and practice; it refers to the procedures and activities that are used to teach the content of the syllabus (Richards, 1985). Within methodology, a distinction is often made between methods as fixed teaching systems, and approaches as language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in different ways in the classroom. The first chapter of this dissertation has dealt with the different teaching approaches and methods that have marked foreign language teaching in Algeria (See 1.4.1.). It has been noted that though the principles of CLT do originally prescribe more interaction between pupils and teachers, more freedom and more responsibility, even so the traditional passive roles of teachers and learners prevail. The communicative approach still dominates, however, with different applications but with a common belief that learners' difficulties are not due to a defective knowledge of the system of English, but to unfamiliarity with English use, and that the course should be designed to meet the communicative needs of learners (Allen and Widdowson, 1979). Therefore, there emerges the need to provide learners with the necessary conditions for language learning, and guide them to shift from knowledge acquisition to knowledge use. For such objectives the Competency-Based Approach (henceforth CBA) has come to be seen as the 'best' means for providing more effective education and training for learners.

#### **4.3.1.1. CBA and Task-Based Learning**

CBA is a modern approach introduced in TEFL, though it does not represent a complete change from the Communicative Approach. It advocates the shift from memory-based to problem-solving learning, taking into consideration learners' communicative needs and learning strategies. According to the At the Crossroads (Teacher's Book), CBA is characterised by the following:

1. It is *action-oriented* in that it guides language learning to the acquisition of know-how allowing the learner to become an effective language user in real-life situations outside the classroom.
2. It is a *problem-solving* approach in that it engages learners in situations where they have to overcome obstacles and solve problems through language use.
3. It is *social-constructivist* in that it regards learning as occurring through social interaction with other people, and not only within the pages of the copybook or the walls of the classroom.

(At the Crossroads (Teacher's Book)(2005: 17-18)

The affective domain is considered equally important; this is shown particularly in the adoption of the pedagogy of the project, which aims at inculcating such values as autonomy, creativity, initiative, and responsibility through problem-solving activities. CBA is then learner-centred.

The methodology adopted in CBA is task-based. The skills appear in the syllabus in the form of meaningful tasks, engaging the learner in authentic language use, and resulting in a shift from acquiring to using knowledge. The mother tongue is tolerated even if only half of the work is done in the target language, and the teacher plays the role of monitor, providing help when necessary.

Willis (1996) has suggested a Task-Based Learning framework made up principally of three major stages: pre-task, task cycle and language focus, which include themselves some sub-stages (See Appendix I). Learners prepare for the task, report back after the task and then study the language used in the task cycle. According to this framework, meaning is paramount while concern for grammatical accuracy is delayed until the report stage; therefore, fluency is required but accuracy is not neglected. The four language skills are equally valued in all stages, besides the report stage provides learners with opportunities for both spontaneous and planned speaking and writing, since in this stage, groups report briefly in spoken or written form to the whole class on how they solved the problem(s). As



they explain metacognitively the steps they have gone through, the rest of pupils listen and are thus likely to transfer from metacognitive strategies (See 4.3.2.1.) to memory. This would result in a rich repertoire of learning strategies for learners to draw on. The tasks engage learners in language analysis activities<sup>5</sup>, and so, learning becomes generative in that *“the instructional process [is] productive in a mathematical sense such that it teaches both content and a way of thinking which can continue to generate solutions beyond that specific context”* (Freeman 1989 quoted in Wajnryb 1992: 15). Learners are as such hoped to transfer the knowledge and the strategies acquired in class into real life (out-of-class) situations.

#### 4.3.1.2. Writing in Task-Based Learning

In a Task-Based Approach, writing constitutes a natural part of the cycle; the end product has to be first introduced orally or through reading in the pre-task phase, then discussed in the task stage, drafted collaboratively at the planning stage and completed in the report stage. Willis illustrates the task cycle in the following table:

<p><b>Pre-task</b></p> <p>Discuss topic and situation.</p> <p>Teacher sets the written task, which could be based on a reading text.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Task cycle</b></p> <p><b>Task:</b> Students discuss task orally in pairs or in groups, to decide content.</p> <p><b>Planning1:</b> Pairs draft notes, discuss outline, write first draft. Exchange drafts with another pair and ask them to suggest improvements.</p> <p><b>Planning 2:</b> Redraft, check, improve, make final checks. Final draft ready for audience.</p> <p><b>Report:</b> Pieces of writing read by all, for a set purpose. Class discussion of findings. Summing up.</p>

Figure 4.1. Writing in the Task Cycle, as put forward by (Willis, 1996: 62)



The core principle of CBA is that learners use whatever language at their disposal to solve interrelated writing problems, and so become more likely to retain what they have learnt and at the same time use language in an authentic way. When they are unable to reformulate their own work, the teacher gives help, by breaking up the tasks and allowing peer discussion. Moreover, learners are helped to recognise and exploit writing patterns to improve their reading and listening comprehension and help them to organise texts clearly and logically. The teachers have to train pupils to use different writing and learning strategies, and so they have to draw on different teaching methods and approaches to achieve satisfactory results. Relying on the various classical and present methods drives teachers to be eclectic in their teaching practices.

#### **4.3.1.3. Towards a Principled Eclecticism**

There are a set of advantages and a set of limitations to CBA. On the one hand, through the training process learners build confidence because they know what level of performance is expected from them, and how knowledge and skills will be evaluated. Also, they are continuously provided with feedback concerning progress, resulting in almost continuous reinforcement. In addition, CBA is based on specific job requirements which ensure that students are taught the relevant and current skills required for employment. The best thing in favour of CBA is that it is applied for all subject-matters, and so puts EFL on equal basis with all the disciplines; this would make learners perceive English as just any other subject-matter. In addition, a better coefficient is given and more time is devoted to the teaching of English -at least for the literary stream, according to the new reforms. All these reasons would, hopefully, increase the chances to see better results in EFL, quantitatively and qualitatively. But on the other hand, there is a lack of appropriate evaluation methodology and instrumentation, and this represents the major drawback in this approach. It is widely recognised that

*“The degree to which tests relate to course content and program objectives is crucial in successful program development”* (Richards, 1985: 15), but the prevailing of communicative objectives together with structural evaluation compels teachers to include some structural teaching practices to bridge a potential gap between teaching and testing. Therefore, the EFL teacher has to adopt an eclectic approach to their teaching. However, eclecticism ought not to be random; it has to be effected on a principled basis to cater for learners’ needs in order to attain the desired objectives. Prodromou (1992) suggests ways to draw on the rich tradition of language teaching methodologies as follows:

- we can draw from the Grammar Translation approach that the mother tongue is a deep reservoir for learners to draw on.
- from the direct method, we learn to use the target language wherever possible.
- from the structural and audio-lingual approach, we have learnt to be more systematic about the formal properties of language and to give learners plenty of controlled practice.
- the communicative approach has reminded us of the obvious, that language is a tool for exchanging feeling and ideas and for getting people to do things.

(Prodromou, 1992: 10-11)

Besides, using different approaches makes learning more interesting and gives all learners an opportunity to make progress. The most important principles that have to be kept in mind are: learner-centredness, the use of an accessible metalanguage<sup>6</sup> to facilitate both language comprehension and learner production (Richards and Lockhart, 1996), collaborative teaching and learning, inculcating autonomy, promoting project work, and ultimately inculcating critical multiculturalism (Sultana, 2001: 26).



### 4.3.2. The Learner

Learners differ enormously in needs, lacks and affective dimensions. Nevertheless, they can be made more responsible and interactive if they are provided with a clear statement about the curriculum, syllabus, objectives, and evaluation. Moreover, they should not be looked at as 'empty vessels', but as a resource (Wajnryb, 1992) and as participants in the making of lessons. For this, the teacher has first to be attentive to differences among learners concerning their personalities, learning styles and language aptitudes, mainly since modern teaching methodologies revolve around learner-centredness.

#### 4.3.2.1. Learner-Centredness

In recent years, emphasis has been put on learner-centred teaching, focusing on learners as a drive for the syllabus design. This involves a constant learners' needs analysis, since it is believed that *"The successful implementation of a language program may depend on how well it matches the expectations, learning styles, and values of the learners"* (Richards, 1985: 14). However, in a learner-centred classroom teacher and learners share responsibility: the teacher takes the role of model and facilitator, while learners increase their role as active participants, who are aware of their learning processes and who are consequently responsible for their learning. In this context, Chamot *et al* (1999) argue that *"Learners whose learning abilities and strategies are acknowledged and encouraged will embrace strategies instruction as a way to further their own independence as active thinkers"* (Chamot *et al*, 1999: 53).



#### 4.3.2.2. Learning Styles and Strategies

Second language learning researchers have pointed that language is closely related to human behaviour and personality and that “**Learners differ in their cognitive styles or learning styles as well as in their learning strategies**” (Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 56). Some learners are said to be ‘extroverts’, and so they are active and more willing to take risks with language. Others are ‘introverts’, silent in class, they listen well, think hard and learn much. Some learners are more tolerant at ambiguities, while others are more anxious. ‘Analytic’ learners prefer a deductive approach; they are given the rule and are let to deduce other examples. ‘Holistic’ learners prefer an inductive approach; they are given the examples and are let to induce the rule (Willis, 1996). The recognition of different characteristics has led to the necessity of exposing learners to a variety of approaches in order to broaden their learning styles.

A learning strategy is a technique that learners learn and remember more effectively. Different learners have different types of strategies for successful learning, and it is agreed that good learners have more strategies than weaker ones. O’Malley and Chamot (1990: 42-45) identify three main types of strategies:

1. **Metacognitive:** they are skills used for planning, supervising and assessing the learning activity. Some of these strategies are directed for selective attention, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement. The Metacognitive Model of Learning consists of four metacognitive processes: Planning, Monitoring, Problem solving, Evaluating (Chamot *et al* 1999: 11).

2. **Cognitive:** They involve manipulating information in ways that enhance learning. Learners may use any of these strategies: repetition, resourcing (using dictionaries or other materials), translation (use of the mother tongue), note-taking, deduction, transfer or inferencing.

3. **Social:** in which learners ask for help and interact with other people.

Research in second and foreign language learning has claimed the importance of acknowledging learner styles and strategies, but also the need for a learning strategies instruction to assist learners in developing awareness of and control of their learning (Chamot *et al*, 1999: 4). Learning strategy instruction should be a regular part of class activities, as part of the curriculum. It is widely agreed that *“while it is not necessary to put learners into boxes labeled according to learning styles, it is useful to try to identify which approaches to learning they favor and how teaching can accommodate their learning preferences”* (Richards and Lockhart, 1996: 59); as a result, an important aspect of teaching is to promote learners’ awareness and control of effective learning strategies. Equally important is the fact that these learning strategies are best promoted when learners work collaboratively.

#### 4.3.2.3. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning refers to pair, group and project work. It has become a common feature of contemporary classrooms because of the belief that *“interaction pushes learners to produce more accurate and appropriate language, which itself provides input for other students”* (Hedge, 2000: 13). Educationalists claim that this interaction reduces learners’ dependence on the teacher, and establishes communication between the teacher and learners and between learners themselves. Numerous benefits are attributed to group work: the promotion of learners’ learning strategies, the affective involvement leading to a better self-awareness, and the development of social attitudes such as cooperation and mutual respect. The groups can be organised on the basis of similar ability group where the teacher can then spend more time with weaker pupils or on the basis of mixed-ability where stronger pupils help weaker ones. As large group activities may be less effective, because there is less responsibility for each learner, the teacher should monitor learners to be sure



they understand the task and that they are really working, by setting a time limit for each task and by assigning roles for each pupil in the group.

Besides, the project has been devised as a collaborative learning procedure, mainly according to CBA. This process pushes learners to make personal researches, work in a group, learn to communicate effectively, and resolve problems in real social contexts. The project work can be made an opportunity for learners to work with other learners from around Algeria or the world using the Internet (See 4.4.4.4.). Thus, project work is likely to enhance their sense of achievement, as well as increase their sense of responsibility, self-esteem, and autonomy in learning.

#### **4.3.2.4. Longing for Learner Autonomy**

Within the context of learner-centred teaching/learning, the concept of learner autonomy has gained much importance, giving learners a central role in the learning process. In large mixed ability groups, students have to develop a certain level of autonomy, first because the teacher can accord only a limited degree of attention to individual learners, and second in order to ensure a more effective learning. Autonomous learners are expected to take in charge their own learning and become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses; *“Furthermore, many writers have pointed out the importance of preparing learners for a rapidly changing future, in which independence in learning will be vital for effective functioning in society”* (Cotteral quoted in Wallace, 1998: 172). In order to achieve a desirable degree of autonomy, we have to acknowledge the determining role of the teacher as well as that of the educational system. Learner autonomy can be fostered in class through appropriately designed classroom tasks and materials: collaborative learning and problem-solving tasks. Pupils have also to be encouraged to keep learning diaries/journals to reflect on their learning experiences, successes and failures and thus arrive at a greater understanding of language learning (See 4.4.4.1.).



It is by depicting sources of their failure that they are likely to devote necessary efforts to find adequate solutions. Out of class, learners should be assigned homework that would cater for their individual needs and interests, and that would encourage their interaction. Besides, self-access centres, where learners can be provided with the necessary materials and instruments, such as books, computers and the Internet, would be an invaluable source of autonomy out of school. Learners would consequently get rid of the traditional view of the teacher as the fount of knowledge.

Nevertheless, learner autonomy in Algeria may be a new notion, and may be difficult to inculcate simply because learners are not used to be responsible and rely heavily on their parents for everything. As a result, learner autonomy may be resisted at the beginning; however, success in inculcating it would hopefully lead to success in forming autonomous citizens. It takes a long time to be accomplished, and it is up to the teacher to guide learners towards autonomy by helping them become aware of their learning strategies, taking into account their individual learning habits, interests, needs and motivation. Therefore, learner autonomy does not mean the suppression of the role of the teacher. It is an ideal that can be achieved only with the goodwill and shared responsibility of learners and teachers (Scharle and Szabo, 2000). Learner autonomy requires, then, a skilled teacher who is likely to gear learners towards different sources of knowledge to learn independently during and after the course. A Chinese proverb emphasising the teacher's central role in education states that "*the teacher says: the pupil does*"; likewise, in an education age that claims learners the have their *say*, teachers have to *do* their job.

### 4.3.3. The Teacher

Learners' growth depends greatly on teachers' growth. In addition, teachers who embody the personal and professional characteristics cannot but help learners involve in the learning process enthusiastically and productively. As teachers have the major role of providing appropriate conditions for learning to take place, they have to be trained in communicative and learner-centred methodology in order to get rid of the traditional teacher-fronted teaching cycle in their classrooms. To this end, teachers should be trained adequately to cope with the changes of the modern age, taking into consideration learners' individual differences, learning habits, interests and attitudes towards language learning and towards learning in general. Teachers, then, should lead an exploratory teaching, reflecting on their behavioural traits, their teaching methodology and on the possible routes to development.

#### 4.3.3.1. Teacher Education Development

One of the major causes of failure in writing skill and EFL teaching/learning is the inadequate training of teachers. Chapters One and Three have provided evidence that pre-service training does not provide teachers with the necessary tools to pursue their tough task successfully. The university students should then be better prepared to assume the great responsibility of teaching. To this end, teacher training has to be reviewed, and *“Initial teacher education programmes should be based upon an ideal teacher profile, if they are to be functional”* (Cross, 1995: 34). Moreover, when trainees become teachers they should be required to continue their professional education in service via different procedures. Individually, they may keep teaching journals to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, prepare lesson reports to supervise regularly the processing of that lesson, or lead an action research<sup>7</sup>. In addition, and since *‘No teacher is an island’* (Wallace, 1998: 207), teachers can develop with colleagues through cooperative work and peer observation, which serves as



a mutual reflective assessment. Besides, seminars and study days are an occasion for teachers to exchange ideas, successful writing lessons and activities and thus feed into one another's experience. Moreover, teachers have to adhere to the larger teaching community through the Internet. With such an autonomous formation, the teacher is free and responsible for introducing innovation in his teaching so that to inculcate autonomy into their learners, and become a culture interpreter rather than a simple source of knowledge (Richards and Lockhart, 1996). Ultimately, no teaching recipe is good for all times, this is why teaching should be flexible, based on a constant needs analysis and striving to introduce change.

#### **4.3.3.2. Teachers as Agents of Change**

Teachers are to work for a period of 32 years; that is for three decades! Everything is bound to change around them during this period: the learners, the educational policy, and the teaching methodology at national and international levels. Therefore, the language teacher has to be trained to cope with any change that might occur, and to be able to cause change. In a CLT classroom, the teacher has to assume different roles depending on the type of activities and the needs of the pupils. According to the learners' educational, cultural, social and long term needs, the teacher should be skilful enough to take appropriate decisions in terms of objectives to be attained, methodology to be followed, the skill(s) to be focused on, as well as the type of interaction that should exist in the classroom. Furthermore, they should have an accurate knowledge about the culture of their own country and that of the target language to impart an intercultural language learning, through which a prejudice-free picture of the target language is conveyed.

As far as writing is concerned, teachers have to explore their teaching practices to identify problems, and seek adequate solutions. They have to make a profile of learners' needs and difficulties in this skill and devise a teaching



approach to writing accordingly (Hedge, 2000). They should raise learners' awareness about writing and its importance in language learning and in learning in general. They have to train pupils in learning to write; one main procedure for this is to build in them the writing habit.

#### **4.4. Building the Writing Habit**

One of the main causes of writing failure is the lack of practice. So, in order to meet learners' reluctance, and anxiety when having a writing assignment, and in order to build learners' confidence and enthusiasm to write, we need to spend some time building the writing habit (Kern, 2000 and Harmer 2004). The EFL teacher has to engage pupils into continuous practice until they acquire the habit of writing. This can be attained if learners are trained to write on a regular basis throughout the units and during the school year(s). But, in order to succeed in this alternative, the teacher has to think of a set of parameters to introduce positive change into their classroom.

##### **4.4.1. Parameters for Change**

One way of introducing change in the way English is taught is to encourage learners to participate more in the learning process (Baker and Westrup, 2000). In a learner-centred classroom, the teacher should plan the class activities in a way to give learners an opportunity to work collaboratively and independently. The teacher has to engage the interest and personal involvement of the learner by building on learner past experience and present knowledge. Learners need to be guided to achieve satisfactory competence in writing by providing them with an appropriate learning and writing environment, by integrating writing into the different parts of the pedagogic unit, and by introducing interdisciplinary and cross-cultural EFL learning.

#### 4.4.1.1. Writing Environment

Learning would never take place without a warm teacher-learner relationship and a supportive, relaxed environment where learners communicate with each other, and do not feel under continuous pressure of an authoritarian teacher. Likewise, learners need a 'safe' learning environment for writing. A good classroom management is one of the keys to success in any teaching situation. While preparing any lesson, the teacher has to keep in mind learners' potential writing difficulties. This will involve choosing the right kinds of activity, starting with familiar topics, and providing them with enough language and information to complete writing tasks. In addition, the teacher has to proceed with the explicit teaching of writing rules, and not to take for granted learners' mastery of previous lessons. Most importantly, the teacher has to raise learners' awareness of their own learning and writing strategies, so that they reinforce successful strategies and avoid bad or ineffective ones.

What is more, the teacher has to promote collaborative writing, not to focus on accuracy at the expense of fluency, and use adequate materials that would help learners generate ideas. In addition, a school- or a class-library, where learners could find dictionaries, grammar books or simplified books containing writing models would be of great help for learners. Moreover, teachers have to strike a clear line between teaching and testing, and keep criticism to the minimum to encourage learners feel good about themselves; *“This implies global, qualitative evaluation of learner achievement as opposed to quantitative assessment of discrete linguistic features”* (Savignon, 2002: 3). Above all, teachers should be committed to make writing enjoyable (Tsui, 1996), and competence in writing attainable, by integrating writing into the different sections of the unit, as well as in the different disciplines in the course.

#### 4.4.1.2. Integration of the Skills

In order to achieve a successful foreign language teaching/learning, the four skills have to be considered altogether in every lesson. Likewise, it is of great significance not to teach writing in isolation, and to incorporate the writing assignments at every step of the pedagogic unit. On the one hand, it will serve as a consolidation of work in vocabulary or grammar, and on the other hand, integration of the skills will lead to build the writing habit in learners. Writing can be integrated into each lesson as follows:

- In the listening phase, the writing task may consist of reconstructing the text, using information from former activities.
- In the speaking phase, the discussion would provide learners with enough material to generate ideas for a paragraph or a composition.
- In the reading phase, learners are provided with texts and can so develop an awareness of writing techniques used in different writing modes: narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. Harris maintains that: *"Developing an understanding of how texts are organized is an important aspect of the teaching of writing."* (Harris, 1993: 44)

Since developing reading strategies is proved to be useful for learners, teachers should encourage intensive and extensive reading<sup>8</sup> so that learners become familiar with the way native speakers express themselves, for various purposes in writing. This requires the use of strategies related to reading, such as the use of scrambled texts, in which pupils have to reorder paragraphs and so become aware of the overall coherence. The teaching of writing should be integrated into the different parts of the unit; moreover, it could be linked to the different disciplines of the course and expanded to relate to different cultures.



#### **4.4.1.3. Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Writing**

Language teachers teach more than just linguistic information, they also teach history, literature, arts, and sciences. Likewise, it is up to the teacher to make learners see the connection between disciplines other than English and the writing and reading they do. So, learners would achieve a better understanding of the English subject-matter by linking it to the other disciplines in the school curriculum, such as history, geography, Arabic literature or philosophy (as far as the LSH stream is concerned). Therefore, teachers have to involve learners in interdisciplinary projects, by assigning them writing topics where they have to resort to other subject-matters (and other teachers). This is likely to enhance their learning interaction, their proficiency in writing, and their overall acquisition of English. Furthermore, it is vitally important to offer students a wide range of relevant topics, and expand the reading and writing assignments to include comparisons of foreign countries and cultures with their own country and cultural values, and thus feed into the process of cross-cultural development. The main goal is to help learners accept others' differences, and achieve (or at least try) cultural competence (Lavery, 2001). By so doing, teachers help students turn such a cross-cultural learning experience into one of cultural and self-awareness (Brown, 1994), increasing international understanding and promoting world peace. (a sample writing lesson in Appendix K offers an example for cross-cultural writing)

#### **4.4.2. Developmental Procedures**

Writing is a difficult skill that needs to be guided so as to cater for learners' need to ameliorate their proficiency level in English. To improve the writing skill, learners have first to overcome the lexical barrier, master the necessary grammatical structures, and know and respect writing conventions.

#### 4.4.2.1. Reinforcing Mechanics

Writing consists of several sub-skills that need to be taught separately and recursively so as to achieve the desired proficiency level. Consequently, the teacher ought to prepare lessons about meaningful practice of punctuation, spelling and text organisation before assigning a writing task or homework. Also, the teacher should devise varied activities in which learners have to draw spelling and punctuation rules by themselves, especially in pair/group work. Nevertheless, learners should be advised to look closely at their spelling or punctuation while revising the final product, but not to worry about them too much while drafting (Harris, 1993).

**(i) Spelling:** Spelling constitutes a real challenge for pupils; therefore, the teacher has to help learners develop their own strategies to remember problematic or difficult spellings. Besides, different techniques can be attempted: extensive reading, dictionary use and dictation. An example of spelling activity could be the following, (about doubling the final consonant in words of one syllable).

**Step 1:** The teacher writes a set of words on the board and asks pupils to work in pairs to deduce the rules,

**E.g.:**

mop	+	ed	=	mopped
Swim	+	ing	=	swimming
thin	+	est	=	thinnest
burn	+	er	=	burner

**Step 2:** Pupils discuss the rules with the rest of the class, and then the teacher helps for the formulation of the rules.

When you add a suffix or ending that begins with a vowel like (-ed, -ing, -er, -est) to a word of one syllable, double the final consonant *if* the last three letters of the word are consonant-vowel-consonant, or *cvc*.

**Step 3:** Pupils further practise the deduced rule with other examples.

**Double the final consonant if necessary; then add the suffixes -ed, and -ing.**

Word	Last three letters	-ed	-ing
Drop	cvc	dropped	dropping
Boil	vvc	boiled	boiling
Dip			
Sail			
Stop			
Peel			

(Adapted from Fawcett and Sandberg, 2002: 365-366)

**(ii)Punctuation:** What is important when teaching punctuation is not to teach more than one thing at a time. The following activity is an alternative example (about capitalization).

**Step 1: Notice the use of capital letters in the following expressions:**

1. Mrs. Ashley, Mr. Brown, Lady Grey, Dr James, Professor Ayers, etc.
2. the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Finance, etc.
3. Oxford Street, Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square, etc.
4. Lake Windermere, the River Thames, Mount Everest, etc.
5. Monday, Tuesday, January, Christmas Eve, New Year's Day, etc.
6. French, English, Englishmen, Spaniard, etc.

(Coe *et al*, 1983: 5)

**Step 2:** Rules deduction in a class work, with the help of the teacher.

<p>Capitalise nationalities, languages, races and religions</p> <p>Capitalise specific countries, states, cities, and buildings</p> <p>Capitalise months, days and holidays, but not seasons</p> <p>Capitalise professional titles only when a person is named</p> <p>Capitalise geographic locations, but not directions</p>
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(Fawcett and Sandberg, 2002: 327)



**Step 3:** Pupils practise the deduced rules in a meaningful activity.

**In this extract from a job application letter, the capital letters are left out. Insert them where necessary.**

i wish to apply for the clerical position advertised in the canberra times, saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> january. at present i am working for the department of finance. although i have only been there since november, i have gained a wide variety of l experience in clerical duties. in addition, i worked for the abc for one year as a pay clerk in 1984.

(Brown and Hood, 1989: 36)

As can be noticed, this activity combines teaching punctuation with the introduction of a writing genre: a formal/application letter.

#### **4.4.2.2. Mastering Writing Conventions**

The research procedures in the third chapter have revealed that much of writing failure is due to pupils' lack of mastery of writing conventions, and mainly lack of vocabulary luggage. So, teachers have to help learners overcome the lexical as well as the structural barriers before engaging in writing activities.

##### **(i) The Lexical barrier**

Easy and purposeful activities might be chosen to enhance learners' understanding and memorisation of a big number of vocabulary items. This can be done by developing in learners strategies of vocabulary study and improvement such as: keeping a notebook of difficult words, holding lists of synonyms, opposites and useful expressions, and ultimately using a dictionary. In addition, some teachers suggest helping learners build word paradigms: the teacher writes a word on the board –in relation to the theme studied in the listening, reading, or writing sessions- and asks pupils to think of as many

related words as possible. What may enhance vocabulary learning further is to get pupils use the studied words/vocabulary in a meaningful context. It is also worth noting that games can facilitate initial practice and periodic revision of vocabulary in an enjoyable context. An example of vocabulary study could be as follows:

**Step 1: Reorder the letters to form words, all of them end in ‘-ic’.**

brAa

gMa

tAorcba

-ic

nPa

Ptoli

oLg

**Step 2: Use the words you have found to fill in the blank.**

1. The .....flute was composed by Mozart.
2. The Prime Minister knows a lot about .....s.
3. Keep cool \_ don't .....
4. It is not .....al to put ice cream in the oven.
5. The most common language spoken in Jordan is.....
6. An .....person can put his feet on his shoulders.

(Shemesh and Waller, 2000: 47-48)

**Step 3: Use some of the words in sentences of your own.**

### **(ii) The Structural Barrier**

The teacher should also assign grammar activities that are meaningful and purposeful, and never teach grammar for its own sake. Moreover, integrating grammar with writing would be of great help for learners to learn writing. The activities may consist of: substitution drills, transformations of sentences, writing or correcting sentences using recently learnt grammatical structures. Examples of these activities could be:

**Example 1: Correcting sentences****Step 1: Spot the mistake in these sentences and correct it.**

- a. Though he managed to got a good job,
- b. Later, he went at St George's school
- c. Sylvester Monroe were brought up in Chicago.
- d. He was not very happy.
- e. Which he attend until the age of fourteen.

(Adapted from Examiner's Guide, ONEC 2000)

**Step 2: Reorder the above sentences to make a coherent paragraph**

So, the grammar activity is transformed into a narrative paragraph. Although it is only a matter of reordering, it provides learners with a simple model to follow.

**Example 2: Substitution Activity****Write as many sentences as you can, using the following table.**

He		sea		She	did not have a car.
She	travelled	train	Because	they	could not afford an air ticket.
They	by	air		he	could not go there by train.
		car			knew the ships were all full.
		lorry			wanted to get there quickly.
		bus			did not want to pay too much money.

(Bratt Taulston and Neewton Bruder, 1976: 207)

This is a controlled writing activity, but it is not void of meaning since pupils have to make the right choice of words both lexically and structurally. At the end of this activity, the learners can be asked to write sentences following the same model.



**Example 3: Transformation activity**

**Step 1: Work in pairs to rewrite each sentence, changing the verb from the passive to the active voice. Make all necessary changes.**

**Example:** Newspaper headlines are made by harmful or fatal medical errors.

*Harmful or fatal medical errors make newspaper headlines.*

1. His patient's healthy leg was amputated by a surgeon in Florida.
2. Instead of an anesthetic, a seven-year-old was given Adrenalin by a doctor.
3. A journalist in Boston was killed by an overdose of a chemotherapy drug.
4. In fact, from 44,000 to 98,000 Americans are fatally injured every year by medical errors.
5. Because of unreported mistakes, even higher numbers are estimated by experts.

(Fawcett and Sandberg, 2002: 156-157)

**Step 2: Relate the sentences into a meaningful paragraph, using appropriate connectors.**

After correcting the sentences, this activity can be expanded to paragraph writing, making as such of a mere grammar activity into an expository paragraph developed with examples. The teacher lets the pupils find the connectors themselves; if they fail, the teacher helps them (see Appendix J).

Once learners have overcome these two important barriers (lexical and structural), they are more likely to receive input concerning writing conventions. It is equally important to train pupils in writing by introducing some useful techniques.

**4.4.2.3. Useful Techniques**

Note-taking and note-making, dictation and summarising are among the techniques most acknowledged to improve proficiency in writing. These techniques, done individually or in groups, can be introduced at any section of the unit. Note-taking is regarded as a valuable learning tool, since it allows learners to organise, manage and monitor their own learning more easily. It also involves learners to take appropriate decisions about what to note and how to make use of the notes. There is no best way for taking or making notes. This depends on the topic to be dealt with. What is important is that the notes are organised in a way that shows links between ideas.

On the other hand, Doff (1988) identifies advantages and disadvantages of dictation, as a controlled writing activity, as follows:

Disadvantages	Advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It takes up a lot of time in the class, especially if the dictation is corrected word by word afterwards.</li> <li>- It does not really develop writing skills - students do not have to express ideas in a written form, or find ways of constructing sentences. The main skill practiced is spelling.</li> <li>- It is an unrealistic activity - listening is 'word by word' and at an unnaturally slow speed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is an intensive activity, which makes students concentrate.</li> <li>- The teacher can keep good control of the class, so it is a suitable technique for large classes.</li> <li>- It helps develop listening as well as writing.</li> </ul>

*Table 4.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Dictation (Doff, 1988: 152)*

Summarising equally has a great learning and composing value, this is why it requires special attention from teachers. It is a complex skill, since it involves not only reducing the length of a text, but also discriminating main ideas and supporting details. Summarising is an activity which aims at evaluating pupils' ability at analysing and synthesizing.

### 4.4.3. Promoting the Composing Practice

Hedge (2000) maintains that pupils need more than mere practice in sentence structure, grammar, or pieces of paragraph development, arguing that *“These activities have their place as students need to be accurate in their writing, but they are not sufficient in themselves”* (Hedge, 2000: 25). Therefore, the teacher has to guide learners towards improvement in writing through gradual steps. They are to master writing sentences first, before engaging in writing longer pieces.

#### 4.4.3.1. Sentence Writing

Learners have to be urged to write sentences at every step of the pedagogic unit. Many activities can be suggested: finishing given sentences, matching beginnings with endings, or writing about a given topic. Combining sentences is also a technique designed to increase the syntactic complexity of students' expressions. It involves taking two or more simple sentences and combining them through the use of relative pronouns, conjunctions, or other devices. An example of a combining activity could be as follows:

**Working in groups of two or three, decide which of the words given would be possible. Note that in some cases more than one of the words given may be possible. Then compare your answers with those of other groups.**

1. We are writing to you.....clarify certain confused points.  
a) to      b) in order to      c) so as to      d) for
2. Our replay has been delayed.....the recent postal strike.  
a) because of      b) owing to      c) for      d) by
3. These matters are difficult to deal with in writing. ....we feel that it would be better for us to have a meeting.  
a) This is why      b) That is why      c) This is because      d) Consequently,



4. ....you are an import-export company, you will no doubt be pleased to know that I speak several foreign languages.  
 a) For      b) Since      c) As      d) Because of
5. Most companies take their holidays in August. ....there is little chance of much work being completed then.  
 a) So      b) Therefore      c) Thus      d) So that

(Coe *et al*, 1983: 18)

#### 4.4.3.2. Paragraphing Strategies

A paragraph is essentially made of three main parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence (See 2.4.3.). It is up to the teacher to raise pupils' awareness of these parts, and of the importance of such criteria as purpose, audience, range of cohesive devices that are used to develop paragraphs (See 2.3.3.). Moreover, the teacher has to introduce different paragraph patterns, and train learners to master them through continuous practice in activities ranging from controlled to free. Some of these writing patterns can be summed up on the following table:

Paragraph pattern	Common Use/Development
Situation – problem – solution – evaluation/conclusion	suggesting solutions to a given problem
Sequential	narrating events or describing a process
Main facts- supporting details	developing a topic with examples or details
Hypothesis –evidence –conclusion	reporting research; proposing a hypothesis, elaborating with evidence and then arriving at a conclusion

*Table 4.2. Paragraph Patterns and their Common Use/ Development*

(Adapted from Willis, 1996: 73-75)

Hedge (2000) provides an example for the first pattern, as a development of a text which discusses the phenomenon of *Seasonal Affective Disorder* as follows:

Situation→ High incidence of depression and suicide in northern climates in winter.

Problem→ Doctors have diagnosed a condition known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) caused by decreased exposure to light and the effects of this on certain hormones.

Solution → Increased exposure to light will alleviate symptoms.

Conclusion/→ Patients should sit in front of special lamps or increase time outside  
Evaluation in natural light

(Hedge, 2000: 322-323)

Building an awareness of these patterns would be of great help for learners' proficiency in writing as well as in reading skills. It should be reminded that these patterns can be examined during the reading phase (See 4.4.1.2.). What all educationalists equally agree on is the necessity for learners to reread and rewrite their drafts. To be able to do so, learners need to be analytical and critical, and care not only about mere formal accuracy, but also about issues of content organisation and development. This can be achieved only through the teacher's and the peers' insightful comments on initial drafts. Likewise, proficiency in writing can be attained; moreover, it can be improved through different procedures.

#### **4.4.4. Improving Writing**

Writing can be improved at three complementary levels: individually by keeping journals, collaboratively through pair, group and project work, and universally through the Internet.

##### **4.4.4.1. Keeping Journals**

Journal writing can be encouraged as part of the learning and writing process. It is an occasion to develop learners' competence by writing regularly to self, to teacher or to peers, as this practice can be individual, guided by the teacher or shared with others. In these diaries, learners may record their daily or weekly learning experiences, reflecting on their lessons, investigating in this way their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils can be advised to note down where they encountered difficulties or problems –in writing for example, and how they managed to solve these problems, increasing as such metacognitive understanding of their own thinking processes (Chamot, 1999). Therefore, learning journals are found to serve a three-fold purpose: learners monitor their own progress, teachers analyse learners' needs, and both teachers and learners keep in continuous contact. Above all, keeping journals is estimated to be the first step towards autonomy in learning and writing; it allows a self-assessment process, as well as improves learners' understanding of writing as a way of exploring, developing, and sharing ideas (Kern, 2000). It is worth reminding that the way the teacher responds to learners' diaries is very important. The teacher should not correct pupils' mistakes, but rather discuss the content of their writings and make suggestions about how to improve. Furthermore, many authors have alluded to the fact that keeping journals would be more beneficial if learners came to share them with their peers. The fact is that sharing ideas and difficulties is believed to promote collaborative learning and writing.



#### **4.4.4.2. Collaborative Writing**

Collaborative writing, in pairs or in groups, is of great affective and cognitive help for learners, as this lessens their anxiety and promotes their risk-taking (Tsui, 1996: 98). Also, pupils have to be encouraged to share their writing with each other, both at draft and final product stage; they can brainstorm ideas, organise content and then edit and revise together. Self- and peer-editing encourages independence from the teacher and enhances learners' self-confidence and self-reliance. Besides, while discussing their writing difficulties and strategies used to overcome these problems, learners are likely to learn from each other in the group or in class discussion more than with the teacher. Moreover, numerous educationalists suggest gathering pupils' writings in a same book (a portfolio), where learners select their best products during the whole school year. A portfolio may thus become an invaluable source of writing inspiration for learners, as they learn by comparing their writings with those of other pupils. Furthermore, these writings may be displayed on a classroom-board or in the school magazine.

#### **4.4.4.3. The School Magazine**

The school magazine can be considered as an example of project work. It gives learners the opportunity for writing of many different kinds, such as reports, stories, reviews, poetry, etc. It also provides varied audience -the class itself or the school as a whole. The teacher, whose role is to advise, assist, and monitor, has to guide learners through the different stages necessary for project-work writing to be successful. Pupils have first to plan the overall format of the magazine and suggest ideas for content. Second, they have to assign roles for each group, and each member of the group, to do the tasks inside and outside the classroom, such as library research on a topic, interviewing or doing a survey. Third, pupils write in pairs, groups, or individually. Fourth, all the pupils are to make suggestions about the layout of the final product. Finally, the magazine is

displayed on a wall in a way to let all pupils of the school read and share knowledge. The school magazine is an invaluable learning procedure since it draws on learners' talents and interests, and motivates them to engage in writing activities enthusiastically.

#### **4.4.4.4. Net Exploring**

Because of the progress in technological communication, learners have to be introduced to computer using and Internet exploring to inculcate in them autonomy of learning. These technological devices provide help for pupils to develop as learners and as writers. It is widely required for learners to use the computer as a device to learn writing, because of the availability of a grammar corrector or a spell-checker which offer instant corrections for pupils. Furthermore, the Internet provides access to an expanding body of published information (Crystal, 2001), and is an occasion for learners to communicate with people from all over the world, in English. Besides, with the introduction of computing as subject-matter in our schools, learners are more likely to adhere to the wider 'learning community' via e-mail. (Kern, 2000) perceives a number of potential benefits of e-mail exchanges:

- contact with real people, and exploring cultural differences
- motivation because of interaction with native speakers
- metacognitive awareness: analysis of how e-mail messages are interpreted, with the help of the teacher
- better understanding of one's own culture: responding to questions about their lives and their world forces learners to reflect and think about their ordinary experience in relation to the other group's reality.

(Kern, 2000: 257)



Most importantly, learners develop their vision of learning from the narrow borders of the classroom to the wider society, and to the whole world. It is by so doing that our learners can bring forth change, and take part in the development of a global education.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has tackled alternative solutions, or rather recommendations, concerning the teaching of English as a whole before focusing on the writing skill. First of all, in order for teachers to introduce change in their classrooms and yield learners to improve in writing –and in learning, they have to consider learners' needs, their learning styles and strategies. They also have to frame their teaching practices according to the requests of learner-centred education, and collaborative learning and teaching. The point for teachers is then to accomplish their roles as needs analysts in order to identify their learners' writing problems, and seek appropriate solutions to alleviate them. The fundamental objectives would be to make learners improve their language knowledge and at the same time enjoy their written products.

The remedial proposals and suggestions are concerned with building the writing habit in learners through the reinforcement of mechanics, the purposeful teaching of vocabulary and grammar, and the explicit teaching of writing rules. But primarily, the teaching of EFL should be improved on the basis of language and writing awareness in a supportive learning and writing environment, the integration of the skills, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural learning dimensions. Such procedures will be achieved only when learner autonomy is promoted and teacher education development is fully implemented; therefore, teachers have to master the concept of development in order to bring about learner autonomy. The ultimate aim would be not only to improve the teaching/learning of the writing skill, but also to introduce cross-cultural learning, and so contribute to a global education.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Lingua franca: a language used for communication between speakers (or groups) whose native languages are different from each other's and where one or both speakers (or groups) are using it as a foreign language.
2. Harmer (1998: 12) makes a distinction between three main learner levels as follows:  
*Beginners* are those who do not know any English  
*Intermediate* have a basic competence in speaking and writing and an ability to comprehend fairly straightforward listening and reading.  
*Advanced* are those whose level of English is competent, allowing them to read unsimplified fact and fiction and communicate fluently with native speakers
3. For 3 AS –LSH- stream, the time load will be 4 hours instead of 3, and the coefficient will be 3 instead of 2.
4. Foreign: *adj.* Alien, borrowed, distant, exotic, external, extraneous, extrinsic, imported, incongruous, outside, overseas, remote, strange, uncharacteristic, unfamiliar, unknown. (Chambers, 2004)
5. These language analysis activities are sometimes called consciousness-raising activities, language awareness activities or even meta-communicative tasks.
6. What Krashen (1985) has referred as “comprehensible input” (input which is finely-tuned to the learner’s level of comprehension and learner production).
7. Action Research: A series of procedures teachers can engage in to solve classroom problems, adopting and developing appropriate methodology so that to improve the quality of the classroom practices, and ultimately cause positive change.
8. Intensive reading is more analytical, it aims at extending knowledge of vocabulary and developing control of the language in speech and writing; while the purpose of extensive reading is to train students to read directly and fluently in the target language for enjoyment without the teacher’s aid (Richards and Rodgers, 1985).

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## General Conclusion

The technological expansion in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century has called for educational reforms on a multi-level scale. Likewise, the world importance of English on political, economic and communicative grounds has led Algeria to reform her educational policies in order to reconsider EFL curricula at different school levels. English language teaching has to be improved to enable Algerian learners to learn this universal language. On the one hand, they will need it for short and long term goals, in their further studies or in their job careers. On the other hand, Algerian learners have to be well prepared to contribute in the development of their country, on the path of the globalisation process.

This dissertation has tried to analyse the EFL writing skill teaching/learning at secondary-school level, for 3AS -LSH stream-. It has aimed to investigate causes of these pupils' low performance in EFL writing, despite an accumulated learning experience of 5 years. This issue has been dealt with into four chapters.

Chapter One has attempted to give a global picture of the Algerian educational context, with an aim to examine the variables which directly or indirectly influence learners' achievement in EFL, and more precisely in writing. This chapter has consequently revealed many contradictions in what is officially stated as objectives, and what is actually applied in terms of EFL instruction and evaluation. First of all, the approach has not been applied according to its true principles. Second, the design and content of the official textbook are inappropriate for third-year level. As for teachers, they have not been adequately trained to teach the writing skill –or EFL in general-, neither before nor during their professional career. The pupils, for their part, have negative attitudes towards EFL learning, and are not offered suitable learning



conditions. To sum up, this chapter has come to a partial conclusion that failure in writing is linked to failure in EFL teaching/learning in general. Nevertheless, this assumption has required investigation through different procedures, but first, it has called for consulting specialized literature.

Chapter Two has attempted to present a theoretical framework about the writing skill. It has described its related sub-skills, purposes and importance as a learning and as a communicating tool. In addition, writing is examined with reference to discourse and to culture. This chapter has concluded that writing is a complex skill that needs to be thoroughly taught and assessed, according to learners' level and learning abilities, keeping a balance between accuracy and fluency during teaching and testing practices

Chapter Three has described the investigative study; it has called for the contribution of three partners in the teaching/learning process: learners, teachers and inspectors. This empirical phase has been conducted through two questionnaires, a semi-structured and an unstructured interview. The results of this triangulation process have been synthesized to arrive at the following concluding remarks: failure in EFL writing skill is due to the lack of coherence between teaching objectives, classroom practices and evaluation norms, in addition to learners' dependence on the teacher and the inadequacy of teacher training programmes. Nevertheless, writing cannot be developed in isolation from other language skills; it should be improved on the basis of learners and teachers' needs portrayed so far, and in accordance with national and international pedagogic changes in ELT and in education as a whole.

Chapter Four has tackled alternative recommendations, concerning the teaching of English as a whole before focusing on the writing skill. First of all, teachers have to lead a needs' analysis-based teaching process which acknowledges learners' learning styles and strategies. Learners for their part have to be trained to identify their weaknesses and be able to cater for their learning needs through their own strategies. Besides, the remedial suggestions

are essentially concerned with building the writing habit in learners. To this end, learners need to be provided with a supportive writing and learning environment. In addition the teaching of writing should be made explicitly and purposefully through continuous and reinforced practice. What is more, writing can be best improved within the framework of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural learning.

The perspectives pointed to in the last chapter suggest that in order for educational change to be conducive to better results, the EFL teaching/learning setting has to be reconsidered. The ultimate aim would be not only to improve the teaching/learning of the writing skill, but also to introduce cross-cultural learning, and so contribute to a global education

Algeria faces changes at all levels; educational challenge is not the least important. For this reason, what is needed is a sound education policy that takes into consideration syllabus design, textbook elaboration, learners' needs analysis and teachers' training and development. Writing should be regarded as a means that would enable learners to get in touch with the world of knowledge; a skill in which they would develop their creativity at linguistic, cognitive and cultural levels. Amidst these challenges, teachers, as agents of change, should be better trained during and after their professional life. In addition, they should be committed to drive their learners towards success by conducting a day-to-day analysis of their learners' needs, aptitudes and interests. With such a commitment, third-year learners would be in a position to monitor their own progress, and thus become self-reliant learners and ultimately self-reliant citizens. Consequently, these learners would improve in the writing skill, in the English language as a whole, and in learning in general.

This dissertation does not pretend to be exhaustive; it certainly needs elaboration. But, it is hoped to be a positive contribution to the improvement of EFL teaching/learning in Algeria. It is also intended to stimulate further research in the domain of foreign language teaching and learning by designing materials for the teaching and improvement of the writing skill, and by exploring the vital role of teachers' training and development as well as the necessity for a learning strategies instruction. It is in the hands of this generation of students and researchers that lays the responsibility for introducing change in foreign language teaching/learning, and for promoting intercultural understanding for a global education.



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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

A survey of EFL Syllabus, Objectives and Suggested Writing Activities for 3AS -LSH-, according to Syllabuses for English (2004)

	<b>3 AS –LSH- Stream</b>
<b>Syllabus</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Modern Life in English Speaking Countries</li> <li>2- Trade and Development</li> <li>3- Media</li> <li>4- Human Rights and Racial Problems</li> <li>5- Great Challenges to Mankind</li> </ol>
<b>Objectives in Writing Comprehension</b>	Master different writing skills, note-taking, organizing, summarizing, so as to be autonomous in written expression when starting from models in class.
<b>Suggested Writing Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Filling close test passages</li> <li>- Reporting and rewriting with/without changing meaning</li> <li>- Writing a paragraph from a model</li> <li>- Transferring from non-verbal to verbal and vice-versa</li> <li>- Writing reports about projects, discussed in group</li> <li>- Developing a narration from pictures survey</li> <li>- Writing sentences</li> <li>- Copying outline from a lesson</li> <li>- Paraphrasing</li> <li>- Completing phrases</li> <li>- Filling tables</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX B

**Units and their Distribution According to Streams in COMET**

- Unit One** Modern Life in English Speaking Countries  
**Unit Two** Inventions and Discoveries  
**Unit Three** English in the World  
**Unit Four** Humour and Leisure  
**Unit Five** Trade and Development  
**Unit Six** Computing  
**Unit Seven** Media  
**Unit Eight** Automation  
**Unit Nine** Human Rights and Racial Problems  
**Unit Ten** Business Correspondence  
**Unit Eleven** Great Challenges to Mankind

<b>STREAM</b>	<b>UNIT NUMBER</b>						
Lettres & Langues Etrangères:	1	3	4	5	7	9	11
<b>Lettres &amp; Sciences Humaines</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>		
Lettres & Sciences Islamiques :	1	5	7	9	11		
Sciences de la Nature et de la Vie :	1	5	7	9	11		
Sciences Exactes :	1	5	7	9	11		
Economie & Gestion	5	6	7	10			
Comptabilité :	1	5	6	7	10	11	
Filières Technologiques :	2	6	7	8			
Filières Techniques :	2	6	7	8			

## APPENDIX C

## A sample Baccalaureate examination paper

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية		
الديوان الوطني للامتحانات والمسابقات	وزارة التربية الوطنية	
<b>امتحان بكالوريا التعليم الثانوي</b>		
<b>﴿ دورة جوان 2005 ﴾</b>		
الشعب : آداب وعلوم إسلامية، آداب وعلوم إنسانية.		
المدة : ساعتان		
<b>اختبار في مادة الإنجليزية (لغة أجنبية ثانية)</b>		
<p><b>Section One : reading Comprehension (07 pts)</b></p> <p>Read the following text carefully and do the activities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Human Population Growth</b></p> <p>Population growth is not simply due to an increase in births but to the excess of births over deaths. Improvements in public health and medicine around the world encourage population growth by enabling people to live longer.</p> <p>Many economists say that economic development is the key to slowing population growth. In developing nations, where many people farm for a living, there is an economic advantage to having several children. When societies become economically and technologically advanced, however, modern agricultural techniques enable the production of the same amount of food using the labor of fewer people. In such societies, large families are unnecessary. As a result, family size drops. This so-called demographic transition has helped reduce the growth of populations in the wealthier, industrialized nations.</p> <p>Unfortunately, a rapidly expanding population can by itself prevent a developing nation from improving its economy. A nation's people can become poorer when its population growth is higher than its economic growth.</p> <p>1 – How many indirect quotations are there in the above passage ?</p> <p>2 – Are these statements true or false? On your answer sheet write T or F next to the sentence letter.</p> <p>a) The population increases because the birth rate is lower than the death rate.</p> <p>b) People live longer thanks to progress made by public health and medicine.</p> <p>c) Many economists believe that economic development will increase population growth.</p> <p>d) Large families are not needed in developed countries.</p> <p>3 – In which paragraph is it mentioned that mechanized farming has helped to produce more food with less farmers ?</p> <p>4 – Answer these questions according to the text.</p> <p>a) Why does the number of births exceed the number of deaths ?</p> <p>b) How can economic development help slow population growth ?</p> <p>5 – Find in the text words or phrases that are closest in meaning to the following :</p> <p>a) caused by (§ 1) b) motivate (§ 1) c) decreases (§ 2) d) quickly (§ 3)</p> <p>6 – Find in the text words or phrases opposite in meaning to the following :</p> <p>a) decline (§ 1) b) drawback (§ 2) c) poorer (§ 2) d) lower (§ 3)</p>		
أقلب الصفحة	الصفحة 1 / 2	



### Section two : Mastery of language ( 08 pts )

- 1 – Supply punctuation and capitals where necessary.  
overpopulation continues to deplete croplands fisheries water resources and energy supplies.
- 2 – Which verbs can be derived from these nouns ?  
production – excess – industry - starvation
- 3 – Give the correct form of the verbs in brackets.
  - a) Couples (desire) to have children since antiquity.
  - b) They have agreed that when they get married, they (practise) family planning.
- 4 – Rewrite sentence (2) so that it means the same as sentence (1) :
  - a) 1 – “ The population of the industrialized nations is ageing,” an expert says.  
2 – An expert says .....
  - b) 1 – We must draw a clear dividing line between contraception and abortion.  
2 – A clear dividing line .....
  - c) 1 – Children are seen as a blessing in the Third World.  
2 – People .....
  - d) 1 – An economist said the medical advances had considerably lowered the mortality rate.  
2 – An economist said, “ .....
- 5 – Fill in each gap with ONE word so that the text makes sense.  
The human population is .....(a)..... in many regions simply .....(b)..... people lack awareness of .....(c)..... control or the ability to limit the size of their .....(d)..... .
- 6 – Classify the following words according to the pronunciation of final “ ed ”.  
developed – improved – limited – advanced.

/d/	/t/	/Id/

### Section three : Written expression ( 05 pts )

Choose ONE of the following topics :

**Either One:** This is a conversation between A and B. Complete what B says.

- A : I think getting many children is a gift from God.  
B :  
A : But the economic crisis is not going to last for very long.  
B :  
A : I don't agree. When I get older, they will help me.  
B :  
A : If they don't get any job, God will help.  
B :

**Or two :**

In about 80 words, write a summary of the reading passage on page 1 .



APPENDIX D

Third Year Learners' Questionnaire

You are kindly requested to answer the questions, and tick in the right box (es)  
 First name ..... Age.....

1. How long have you been studying English? number of years .....

2. Do you like studying English?

YES  NO

Why? or Why not?

3. Do you think it necessary to your success?

YES  NO

Why? or Why not? .....

4. Which skill appears to you most difficult?

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

5. How do you assess your level in writing?

Good

Average

Weak

6. What do you suggest to your teacher to help you learn writing?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

## APPENDIX E

## Secondary School Teachers' Questionnaire

The following questionnaire aims at assessing the writing skill teaching and learning in the secondary school, for third year pupils.

You are therefore kindly requested to answer the questions, putting a tick in the appropriate box (es), and making comments when necessary.

Male

Female

Teaching experience: number of years .....

1. In which skill(s) are your pupils most involved?

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

2. In which skill are they least performing?

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

3. How would you assess your pupils' level of performance in writing?

Good

Average

Weak

4. How much time do you devote to the teaching of the writing skill according to each unit?

1 hour

3 hours

2 hours

more than 3 hours

Do you think it is enough?

Yes

No

5. Which approach do you follow or adopt while teachin writing?

Process approach

Product approach

Combined process-porduct approach

If other, please specify.

.....  
 .....

6. What type of discourse do you usually deal with in writing?

Nrrative

Cause- effect

Descriptive

Contrast-comparison

Argumentative

Problem-solution

7. What are the different types of composition dealt with?

Paragraph

Essay

Dialogue

Letter

Article

8. Do you ask your pupils to do homework related to the writing skill?

YES

NO

If yes, how often ?.....



9. How do you correct your pupils' writings ?

- correcting every mistake
- underlining the mistakes and using a code indicating the type of mistake
- underlining the mistake without using a code
- giving the mark or the observation without any correction

If there is another way, please specify

.....

10. What do you focus on while correcting pupils' writings?

- Grammatical accuracy
- Meaningfulness
- Ideas organisation
- Machanics:punctuation, capitalization,  
Handwriting

11. What type of errors do your pupils make?

- |             |                          |                                |                          |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Spelling    | <input type="checkbox"/> | word order                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Grammatical | <input type="checkbox"/> | ambiguous sentences            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Punctuation | <input type="checkbox"/> | lexical ( vocabulary choice )  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|             |                          | interference (French / Arabic) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. After correcting pupils' writings, do you suggest a remedial work to help pupils overcome their weaknesses?

- Yes**  **No**   
 Why, or Why not?

.....  
 .....

13. According to you what are the main reasons behind the pupils' writing weaknesses?

difficulty of the writing skill itself

lack of pupils' motivation / interest

lack of time to foster the pupils' writing ability

lack of appropriate teaching materials ( visual aids, computer labs ....)

Inadequacy of the textbook (COMET) to teach / help pupils learn writing

If other, please specify .....

.....

14. What do you suggest to improve your pupils' writing performance in English ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

## APPENDIX F

## Frequency of Answers in Learners' Questionnaire

Questions	Respondents' Answers	AF	RF
1) How long have you been studying English?	5 to 8 years		
2) Do you like studying English?	- Yes - No	127 8	84 % 12 %
3) Do you think it is necessary to your success?	- Yes - No	125 7	83 % 4 %
4) Which skill appears to you most difficult?	- Writing - Listening -Speaking -Reading	86 58 56 15	57 % 38 % 37 % 10 %
5) How do you assess your level in writing?	- Weak - Average - Good	77 66 4	51 % 44 % 2 %
6) What do you suggest to your teacher to help you learn writing?	- good teacher/learner relationship - interesting topics - graded writing lessons - enriching vocabulary and facilitating grammar rules mastery - class correction of writing assignments - encouraging reading - watching programmes in English		

**AF: Absolute Frequency**

**RF: Reference Frequency**



## APPENDIX G

## Frequency of Answers in Teachers' Questionnaires

Questions	Respondents' Answers	AF	RF
1) In which skill(s) are your pupils most involved?	-Reading	38	76 %
	- Speaking	19	38 %
	- Listening	18	36 %
	- Writing	4	8 %
2) In which skill are they least performing?	-Writing	41	82 %
	- Speaking	16	32 %
	- Listening	6	12 %
	-Reading	5	10 %
3) How would you assess your pupils' level of performance?	-Weak	32	64 %
	- Average	18	36 %
	- Good	0	0 %
4) How much time do you devote to the teaching of writing?	- 2hours	28	56 %
	-3 hours	13	26 %
	-1 hour	8	16 %
	- more than 3 hours	4	8 %
5) Which approach do you adopt while teaching writing?	-Combined Process-Product Approach	36	72%
	-Process Approach	14	28%
	-Product Approach	0	0%
6) What type of discourse do you usually deal with in writing?	-cause-effect	40	80%
	-contrast-comparison	40	80%
	-problem-solution	35	70%
	-argumentative	30	60%
	-descriptive	20	40%
	-narrative	10	20%

7) What are the different types of composition dealt with?	-essay	35	70%
	-paragraph	35	70%
	-dialogue	35	70%
	-letter	30	60%
	-article	5	10%
8) Do you ask your pupils to do homework related to writing skill? How often?	- Yes	46	92 %
	- No	4	8 %
	( - at the end of each unit		
	- each fortnight		
	- each month		
	- sometimes		
9) How do you correct your pupils' writings?	- Underlining mistakes + using a code	27	54 %
	- Correcting every mistake	19	38 %
	- Underlining mistakes ( with no code)	10	20 %
	- Giving the mark directly	0	0 %
10) What do you focus on while correcting pupils' writings?	-Grammatical accuracy	40	80%
	-Mechanics	40	80%
	-Ideas organisation	40	80%
	-Meaningfulness	35	70%
	-Rich vocabulary	10	20%
11) What type of errors do your pupils usually make?	- Grammatical mistakes	41	82 %
	- Interference	38	76 %
	- Spelling	37	74 %
	- Punctuation	31	62 %
	- Ambiguous sentences	29	58 %
	- Word choice	24	48 %
	- Word order	22	44 %
12) After correcting pupils' writings, do you suggest a remedial work to help pupils overcome their weaknesses?	- No	35	70%
	-Yes	15	30%

APPENDICES

13) According to you, what are the main reasons behind pupils' weaknesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of motivation</li> <li>- Lack of teaching of material</li> <li>- Difficulty of the writing skill</li> <li>- Lack of time devoted to writing</li> <li>- Inadequacy of the textbook</li> </ul>	38 27 23 21 18	76 % 54 % 46 % 42 % 36 %
14) What do you suggest to improve your pupils' writing performance in English?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers' giving suggestions</li> <li>- Teachers who did not give any suggestion</li> </ul> <p><b>Suggestions</b></p> <p><b>(I) To Pupils</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- read more</li> <li>- watch TV programmes</li> <li>- diary writing</li> <li>- keep a notebook</li> </ul> <p><b>(II) To Teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- devote more time to teach writing</li> <li>- vary topics and activities</li> <li>- encourage pair/group work</li> <li>- class correction of writing assignments</li> <li>- recycle pupils' knowledge about grammar and vocabulary</li> </ul> <p><b>(III) Policy reforms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- less pupils in class</li> <li>- more time to teach English</li> <li>- textbook reform</li> <li>- raise coefficient of English</li> </ul>	41 9	82 % 18 %



## APPENDIX H

Different methods of generating ideas in the prewriting stage; here is an example about endangered animals.

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### Freewriting

Endangered means in danger. Some examples of endangered animals are tigers, lions, elephants, pandas and some kinds of whales. There are a lot of others, but I think those are the most famous. Animals get endangered for a lot of reasons: sometimes people start living on their habitat so that they don't have any place to live. That's happening in Australia to koalas. They only eat one kind of eucalyptus tree and people have built their houses where a lot of those eucalyptus trees live. Sometime people kill animals to eat for food. That's happening with some kinds of whales. Sometimes people kill animals so they can sell part of their body for money. That's happening to elephants and gorillas in Africa. People kill gorillas so they can sell their hands for money because some people believe that gorilla hands are magic. Rhinoceros horns too. Sometimes animals get killed because people kill them for fun. Extinct means that all of an animal are dead. Like dinosaurs are extinct, but tigers are only endangered. About 50,000 things become extinct every year, but not all of them are the fault of people. When something becomes extinct it changes the whole ecosystem.

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### Listing

- endangered and extinct animals
- if one animal in an ecosystem dies it effects other animals in ecosystem
- tiger, lions, elephants, pandas, koalas, whales, rhinoceroses
- people kill them for money/food/fun
- people live on their habitat - no place to live.
- people kill them to protect domestic animals (wolves)
- people capture them for circuses (bears, chimpanzees)
- they die because they can't adapt to new situations
- some animals can live in many places (like mice can live everywhere)
- some animals can only live in one place (Siberian tigers only live in Siberia)
- some animals can eat anything (mice again)
- some animals can only eat specific foods (koalas only eat one kind of eucalyptus)
- 50,000 species become extinct every year - plants and animals and insects and fish too.
- becoming extinct is natural process - like dinosaurs all died
- people make extinction faster

**APPENDIX I**

**3L framework as proposed by Willis, 1996**  
**The TL**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pre-task</b></p> <p>Introduction to topic and task</p> <p>The teacher explores the topic with the class, highlights useful words and phrases, helps students understand task instructions and prepare. Students may hear a recording of others doing a similar task.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Task cycle</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Task</b></p> <p>Students do the task, in pairs or in small groups. Teacher monitors from a distance.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Planning:</b></p> <p>Students prepare to report to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or discovered.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Report</b></p> <p>Some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results.</p> <p>Students may now hear a recording of others doing a similar task and compare how they all did it.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Language focus</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Analysis</b></p> <p>Students examine and discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Practice</b></p> <p>Teacher conducts practice of new words, phrases and patterns occurring in the data, either during or after the analysis.</p>

(Willis, 1996: 38)

## APPENDIX J

## Necessary words and expressions

Cause/effect	As As a result Because Consequently Hence Since So Thus therefore	Comparison	Like Similarly	Contrast	Although And But Besides However Nevertheless While In contrast And yet On the contrary	Addition	Also And In addition Moreover Too	examples	For example For instance In other words In effect In this case Specifically In particular	Conclusion	Accordingly In brief In short In conclusion On the whole To sum up	Time	As soon as At the same time As long as Meanwhile First of all Finally
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(Waters and Waters, 1995: 48)



APPENDIX K

A Sample Writing Lesson

This sample lesson is adapted from different authors/applied linguists: Hedge(2000: 324), Lavery(2001:110-111), Willis (1996: 62), and principally from (Prodromou, 1992: 55-58)

Grade level	Third year
Unit	Modern Life in English Speaking Countries
Lesson Focus	Writing
Class layout and organisation	Individual, pair- and group- work
Intermediate objective	provide practice in comparing and contrasting.
Objective of this lesson	by the end of this lesson, pupils should be able to compare aspects of their life and culture (in Algeria) with those of the United Kingdom, in the form of a paragraph.

**Sequence 1: warm-up task** the teacher introduces the topic through a challenging question:  
**Would you like to live abroad?**

**Aim:** to make the students more aware of differences between their own country and the UK.  
**Step 1** (pair work) Pupils are asked what they would like about living abroad and what they wouldn't like. They build up a list like the following one from their suggestions.

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | the food  |
| 2   | the weather   |
| 3   | the language  |
| 4   | not seeing my parents                                   |
| 5   | running out of money                                    |
| 6   | making new friends                                      |
| 7   | leaving my bedroom behind                               |
| 8   | transport_nervousness about how to get around           |
| 9   | mixing with people from different nationalities         |
| 10  | different customs e.g. ignorance about visiting routine |
| 11? |   |
| 12? |   |
- (Prodromou, 1992: 55)

**Step 2** Pupils classify the suggestions into 'like' and 'dislike' columns. They may add more items if they wish (11-15). An example could be:

LIKE	Food	Mixing with different nationalities	Not seeing my parents	Transport	Making new friends
DISLIKE	Different customs	The money - worries about running out	The weather	The language	Leaving my bedroom

(ibid: 56)

**Step 3** Pupils compare their answers with a partner and report back on any differences of opinion.

The teacher introduces here controlled writing tasks where the pupils practise writing sentences using appropriate words and expressions (see Appendix J), to express comparison and contrast.

For example:

*'George says he would like the food, but I know I wouldn't.'* (ibid)

**Step 4** As follow-up, the pupils write a summary of the answers they gave, adding reasons where appropriate.

For example:

*Summary: living abroad*  
*I would like to live abroad, but there would be some things I wouldn't like about too. One thing I would like is eating different food; it gets very boring eating the same food day after day, year after year...*

(ibid)

**Sequence 2** The teacher introduces the second sequence of the writing phase:

**Living abroad also means facing cultural differences.**

**Aim:** to make pupils more aware of differences in social behaviour between their culture and that of the UK.

**Task:** Write a paragraph comparing aspects of life in your country with those of the UK.

**Step 1** Pupils work in pairs or in groups and discuss how they would complete the following chart. (as a preparation for this activity, the teacher makes copies of the list for the different groups)

Topic	United Kingdom	My Country
1 Invitations	More often invited to someone's home than to a restaurant. When visiting someone's home, it's customary to take flowers or a box of chocolates with you. When invited to a party, you often need to take a bottle of wine or even a pack of beer.	
2 Getting to know people	At an informal party, you don't have to wait to be introduced: introduce yourself. People usually stand at informal parties, and chat to a lot of people. People shake hands when they meet someone for the first time they see them. Men and women friends may kiss (on the cheek) if they have known each other for some time. Dinner is usually between 6.30 and 7.30, though this varies.	
3 Kissing		
4 Dinner	People usually try to arrive at meetings and appointments on time, neither too early nor more than, say, 15 minutes late. The pub is the most common place for informal meetings at lunchtime and in the evening.	
6 Drinking		
7 Buying drinks	A group of friends often take it in turns to buy drinks.	
8 Women in pubs	Both men and women go to pubs. It is fairly common for women to go to a pub without men.	
9 Noise	People invited to dinner do not eat and drink noisily.	

(ibid, 57)



- Step 2** Groups exchange lists to compare ideas, and make further sentences expressing comparison and contrast. Teacher encourages peer-editing and the use of a dictionary. Pupils then draft an outline for the paragraph to be written.
- Step 3** Pupils work in pairs to write the first draft by writing sentences expressing comparison and contrast. Teacher encourages peer-editing and the use of a dictionary. Pupils then draft an outline for the paragraph to be written.
- Step 4** Pupils work individually to write a paragraph, linking the (previously-written) sentences with appropriate connectors, and following the initial outline.
- Step 5** Pupils work in pairs again, exchange drafts and work collaboratively to improve them for a final version of the paragraph.
- Step 6** Pupils exchange paragraphs, discuss findings with the whole class. Pupils end up gaining in many respects: they practise their language knowledge into sentences and paragraphs, they learn about another culture through comparison, and learn about (and express) facts about their own culture by the same token.

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**Outlining**

I. Key words

- A. Extinct - when all of one kind of animal dies
- B. Endangered - only a few of one kind of animals are left

II. The causes of extinction/endangerment

- A. Natural process
  - 1. Climate changes.
  - 2. Animals affected with some kind of sickness
- B. Human causes
  - 1. Hunting
    - a. for food
    - b. for money
    - c. for fun
    - d. to protect domestic animals
  - 2. Living on habitat of animals or plants
  - 3. Pollution
    - a. Changes the water temperature
    - b. Kills animals or plants

III. The effects of endangerment or extinction of species

- A. Ecosystems change.
  - 1. Hard to predict the effects when one part of ecosystem disappears

**Concept Map**

