

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research



University of Tlemcen
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English

**An Evaluation of Writing Assessment Techniques
The Case of Third- Year Licence Students at the
University of Tlemcen**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Language
Studies

PRESENTED BY :
Ms. Ibtissem MAOUEDJ

SUPERVISED BY :
Prof. Hafida HAMZAOU I

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Naima BOUAKOUB	MA 'A'	Chairperson
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Abderrahmane BASSOU	MA 'A'	Examiner

Academic Year: 2014-2015

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor materials which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution. I also certify that the present work contains no plagiarism and is the results of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Ms Ibtissem MAOUEDJ

17/ 05/2015

Dedications

To my beloved parents whose love always strengthens my will

To my lovely brother and sisters

To my fiancé and his family

*To all my friends with whom I shared the university life with its
lights and shadows.*

Ibtissem

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to provide information concerning the assessment of writing in the English Department of the University of Tlemcen and to know to which extent these assessment practices affect ED students' writing. In other words, the researcher attempted to investigate whether the teachers' ways of assessment improved or hindered the students' writing abilities. To reach this end, a case study of thirty third year EFL students was conducted relying on two research instruments: a questionnaire for students and an interview for teachers. The collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results revealed that, in writing, formative assessment is used more than summative assessment. It also showed that the process of assessment does not hinder the students' writing performance as the majority of the participants claim that the assessment types and techniques adopted by their teachers help them to recognize their writing mistakes and to improve their writing. To conclude, the present work attempted to reveal the extent to which the writing assessment affected the students' writing performance and whether there was a need for remedies as far as its types and techniques is concerned.

Table of Content

Declaration	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Content	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Key to Abbreviations.....	x
General Introduction	1

Chapter One

Theoretical Aspects of Writing and Assessment

1.1. Introduction.....	5
1.2. Writing	5
1.2.1 Definition of Writing.....	5
1.2.2 Importance of Writing.....	6
1.3 An introduction to Assessment.....	6
1.3.1 Definition of Assessment.....	7
1.3.2 Types of Assessment.....	7
1.3.2.1 Formative Assessment.....	8
1.3.2.2 Summative Assessment.....	8
1.3.2.3 Formal Assessment.....	9
1.3.2.4 Informal Assessment.....	9
1.3.3 Principles of Assessment.....	9
1.3.3.1 Practicality	10
1.3.3.2 Validity.....	10
1.3.3.3 Reliability.....	11
1.3.3.4 Authenticity.....	11
1.3.3.5 Washback.....	11
1.3.4 The Purpose of Assessment.....	12
1.3.5 Assessment, Testing and Evaluation.....	12

Table of Content

1.3.6 Assessment of Writing.....	13
1.3.7 Types of Scoring.....	14
1.3.7.1 Holistic scoring.....	15
1.3.7.2 Analytic scoring.....	15
1.4 Conclusion.....	15

Chapter Two

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

2.1. Introduction.....	17
2.2. The Department of English: brief description.....	17
2.3. The module of Writing in the English Department at Tlemcen University ...18	
2.4 Research Methods and Design.....	18
2.5 Sample Population.....	19
2.5.1 Students' Profile.....	19
2.5.2 Teachers' Profile.....	19
2.6. Data Collection Instruments.....	19
2.6.1. The Students' Questionnaire.....	20
2.6.1.1. Design of the Questionnaire.....	20
2.6.1.2 Results of the Questionnaire.....	21
2.6.2. The Teachers' Interview.....	30
2.6.2.1. Design of the Interview.....	31
2.6.2.2. Results of the Interview.....	32
2.7. Discussion of the Main Results	36
2.8. Conclusion	36

Table of Content

Chapter Three

Suggestions and Recommendations

3.1. Introduction.....	39
3.2. Explaining Assessment Criteria to students.....	39
3.3. The Use of Analytic Rubrics to Assess the Writing Skill	40
3.4. Teacher written Feedback	41
3.5 Reducing Assessment Anxiety through Peer and Self –Assessment....	44
3.6. Raising Students Motivation through Portfolio Assessment.....	45
3.7. Conclusion	46
General Conclusion.....	48
Bibliography.....	51
Appendices.....	xi
Appendix A: Students’ Questionnaire.....	xii
Appendix B : Teachers’ Interview.....	xv

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Teachers' profile.....	32
Table2.2 Students' preferences of the assessment types	34
Table 2.3 The Purposes of assessing students' written product.....	35
Table 3.1 Error symbols.....	42

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Techniques used to assess students' writing performance	22
Figure 2.2 Grading students' Written Products.....	23
Figure 2.3 Types of Correction.....	24
Figure 2.4 The emphasis during the teacher correction.....	25
Figure 2.5 Providing students with written feedback.....	26
Figure 2.6 Types of assessment students prefer.....	26
Figure 2.7 Different ways of assessment.....	27
Figure 2.8 Students' feelings during the assessment process.....	28
Figure 2.9 Students' Views on the teacher written feedback.....	29

Key to Acronyms

BA: Bachelor of Art

CBA: Competency- Based Approach

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

LMD: License Master Doctorate

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

General Introduction

General Introduction

Writing is considered as a crucial skill that is used for different purposes: educational, personal and occupational. In the field of language education, researchers study this skill in different ways: how to teach it, how to improve it and how to assess it. As far as writing assessment is concerned, many researchers shed light on some useful types, techniques and activities that teachers use to assess students' writing.

However, after the assessment of students' written products, teachers notice that their writing performance is far from satisfactory. That is to say, students are still unable to express themselves in a coherent manner and they still show a weak performance in their writing.

Thus, this research is an attempt to investigate whether the way of assessing writing, is one of the reasons of the students' weak writing performance. First, it aims to know which type of writing assessment is mostly used for third year LMD students. In addition, it seeks to explore the impact of assessment on students' writing. In other words, it aims to see whether the teacher way of assessment contributes to develop students' writing or hinders it.

This research is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What types of assessment do Algerian EFL university teachers use to evaluate students' writing performance?
- How can assessment practices affect students' writing performance?

The above mentioned questions led to formulate the following hypotheses:

- Algerian EFL university teachers use summative assessment to assess students' writing.
- The assessment practices adopted by teachers of writing at the English Department of Tlemcen University hinder students' writing performance.

To support these hypotheses, a case study of thirty third year EFL university students is undertaken. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected from

General Introduction

different sources relying on two research instruments: a questionnaire for students and an interview for teachers.

The present work is divided into three chapters: the first chapter provides a theoretical overview of the writing skill and assessment. Thus, some definitions related to this skill are discussed. The literature on assessment is also reviewed explaining its types, techniques, activities emphasizing on assessment of writing.

The second chapter consists of two parts: the first part is devoted to the description of the English department of Tlemcen University and the module of writing. The second part tackles the research design and methodology. The description of the research methods, sampling, instrumentation used in this study are also explained. Then, the results of the investigation are analyzed and discussed. This chapter seeks also to answer the research questions by confirming or nullifying the research hypotheses.

The third chapter considers some general guidelines and suggestions to teach and assess writing at university level. Such suggestions focus on the importance of explaining assessment criteria to students. It also sheds light on the benefits of using analytic scoring rubrics, portfolios and teacher written feedback in developing writing instruction and assessment. In addition, this chapter explains the role of peer and self assessment in reducing the assessment fear and anxiety.

Chapter One: Theoretical Aspects of Writing and Assessment

- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Writing
 - 1.2.1. Definition of Writing
 - 1.2.2. Importance of Writing
- 1.3. An introduction to Assessment
 - 1.3.1. Definition of Assessment
 - 1.3.2. Types of Assessment
 - 1.3.2.1. Formative Assessment
 - 1.3.2.2. Summative Assessment
 - 1.3.2.3. Formal Assessment
 - 1.3.2.4. Informal Assessment
 - 1.3.3. Principles of Assessment
 - 1.3.3.1. Practicality
 - 1.3.3.2. Validity
 - 1.3.3.3. Reliability
 - 1.3.3.4. Authenticity
 - 1.3.3.5. Washback
 - 1.3.4. The Purpose of Assessment
 - 1.3.5. Assessment, Testing and Evaluation
 - 1.3.6. Assessment of Writing
 - 1.3.7. Types of Scoring
 - 1.3.7.1. Holistic scoring
 - 1.3.7.2. Analytic scoring
- 1.4. Conclusion

1.1 . Introduction

In the present chapter, we will review the basic components and the key concepts related to the assessment of the writing skill. First, we will provide a definition of writing and its importance. Also, we will deal with the assessment definition, explaining its types, principles and purposes. Then, we will provide a seminal distinction between assessments, testing and evaluation as these terms are used interchangeably in many researches. Finally, it is worth shedding light on the methods of assessing writing as well as the different types of scoring the written product.

1.2. The writing skill

The writing skill has been defined differently in the literature and researchers explain it from different perspectives. Before moving to explain assessment and its related concepts, we need to define writing and explain its role and importance for EFL learners.

1.2.1 Definition of Writing

Writing is one of the productive skills and which is important for foreign and second language learners. It is defined in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary as the act of putting symbols or letters on a surface. In the same vein, Byrne (1972) states that: “When we write we use graphic symbols that are letters or combination of letters which relate to sounds we make when we speak.” In both definitions, writing is described as a collection of graphic representation neglecting its cognitive side.

The previous definitions define writing as a collection of symbols, but Brooks (1960) believes that writing is a collection of expressions that convey meaning and carry a message. Crystal (1999:214) also views writing as more than the collection of graphic symbols but it holds a message and a meaning behind the letters. Furthermore the writing ability is explained from a social perspective. Hamp Lyons

and Kroll (1997:8) claim that this skill is regarded as “an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience”. Thus, writing is used for specific purposes to achieve the goal of communication.

1.2.2 The Importance of Writing

Mastering writing is part of learning a foreign language. It holds a tremendous importance for native, second and foreign language learners. McArthur et al. (2008 qtd in Ghodbane, 2010:35) say that “The power of writing is so strong that writing about one’s feelings and experiences can be beneficial psychologically and physiologically because it can reduce depression, lower blood pressure and boost the immune system”. So the writing importance lies in its power of developing the psychological state of those who write.

Writing also deepens the students’ knowledge because through their researches they collect and learn different information, and they use the findings when composing. In addition, writing is an instrument used for documenting the students’ linguistic competence. In other words, their writings such as essays, exam papers, portfolios, help teachers recognize their students’ level. Furthermore, writing ideas down on a paper are good ways for students to revise these ones and reflect upon them. Haris (1993 qtd in Hamzaoui, 2006:12) advocates this when he says “It is almost as the act of writing makes thought visible and tangible; this in turn, provides the opportunity for revision and refinement because the thoughts are there on the page to be worked on”.

1.3 An Introduction to Assessment

Assessment is a term which has received much scholarly attention in recent years and it has been studied by many researchers in different ways. It comprises many types which are used in language classrooms. It also has different principles and it is used for specific purposes. Assessments is used for assessing different skills and in assessing the writing skill, many activities and methods are applied for the purpose of gathering evidence about this skill.

1.3.1 Definition of Assessment

Assessment is regarded as the act of collecting information about learners and their learning. That is to say, it is about knowing the students and the quality of their learning. Assessment is a step in which teachers use to judge whether learners have learned what they have been taught or not and what are their learning needs. In the same sense, it is defined by Koyalik as follows: “classroom assessment provides valuable information that allow teachers to adapt instructional procedures to learning needs of their students” (Koyalik, 2002 qtd in Eggen & Kauchack 2004). To put it differently, assessment helps teachers choose the suitable instructional methods that answer the needs of their learner

Moreover, Angelo (1995:7) gives a more comprehensive definition of assessment:

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving students’ learning. It involves making expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering , analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well performances matches those expectations and standards and using the resulting information to document, explain and improve performances.

In the above definition, assessment is a procedure used throughout the teaching process for the sake of developing the learning situation .It involves gathering information about the students’ learning to see to which extent their performance improves and monitoring their progress.

1.3.2 Types of Assessment

According to Brown (2004), there are four types of assessment that are used in the classroom differently and for different purposes: Formative, summative, formal and informal assessment.

1.3.2.1 Formative Assessment

It is generally defined as an ongoing process that takes place during the teaching/learning situation. The primary purpose of using formative assessment is providing an immediate feedback for the sake of improving the students' learning. Cowie and Bell (1992, qtd in Andraide and Cizek, 2010:23) define it as: "The process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning during the learning". Thus, it is viewed as a collection of activities which are done during the learning process for the purpose of identifying students' level and boosting their learning outcomes. In this type of assessment, teachers do not give a final grade to students' work. Rather, they provide them with feedback about progress in their learning (Irons, 2008:7).

Formative assessment is also called assessment for learning as its purpose is promoting the learning process. Sadler (1998:7) gives details about this type of assessment when he says:

In assessment for learning, the learners' task is to close the gap between the present state of understanding and learning goals. Self assessment is essential if the learner is to do this .The teacher's role is to communicate appropriate goals and promote self-assessment as pupils work towards the goals .Feedback in the classroom should operate from teacher to pupils and from pupil to teacher.

As for the above definition, teachers should encourage their students to assess themselves for successful assessment for learning. Feedback should also be bidirectional between teachers and learners

1.3.2.2. Summative Assessment

Unlike formative assessment, known as assessment for learning, summative assessment is referred to as assessment of learning. It is a kind of evaluating and ranking students' learning, and it is generally done at the end of a project or a semester. It "...aims to measure or summarize what a student has grasped and typically occurs at the end of a course or a unit of instruction". (Brown,

2003:6). This type is generally prepared in advance to give time for learners to be ready for the assessment.

In addition, Miller (2006:7) state different purposes for using summative assessment in the classroom:

- To pass or fail a student
- To grade or rank a student
- To allow progress to further study
- To assure suitability for work
- To predict success in further study
- To signal employability and selection for employment

Furthermore, summative assessment can take many forms that are used in language classroom, for example: term papers, projects portfolios standardize test, etc. All these forms are used for the purpose of monitoring students' progress in a certain field.

1.3.2.3 Formal Assessment

This type of assessment includes systematic and planned techniques that are used to estimate students' level of a language. Brown (2003:6). In formal assessment students are aware that the activities they are doing are going to be assessed. Exams, diagnostic tests are example of formal assessment that are applied in the class to see how much students have improved .These forms are prepared in advance in a standardized way and have special grading techniques.

1.3.2.4 Informal Assessment

Teachers assess their students in many ways and most of the time the assessment is informal. That is to say, it takes place during the flow of the lesson in the form of feedback, praise, an immediate correction of students' mistakes, etc. In using this type of assessment the teachers do not score the students' work and give them a final judgment about what they have produced. Rather they evaluate their progress through commenting on their written work. For example in a writing

activity, as it is the concern of this study, the teachers of writing provide them with the necessary comments and corrections to help them go forward and produce good pieces of writing.

1.3.3 Principles of Assessment

To meet the effectiveness of the assessment activity, certain principles are taken into consideration: practicality, validity, reliability, authenticity and washback.

1.3.3.1 Practicality

This principle means seeing to which extent a test can be put into practice. First a test is practical when it does not take too much time to answer. That is to say, it should not be too short or too long. Also, it should not be too expensive and costly. Another feature of practicality is that it should be easy to score. In other words, the scorer must select the appropriate scoring procedure that suits the type of test. Also, to reach the practicality of a test, the conditions in which a test is administered should be suitable and helpful. (Brown, 2004:19). Finally, the test scores must give clear descriptions of the students' level and abilities so that to help the teachers make decisions about the teaching and the assessment techniques that best suit the students' level.

1.3.3.2 Validity

According to Mc Alpine (2000:11) "A valid assessment is one which measures that which suppose to measure». When the type of assessment used in the class assesses the right skill designed to be measured, then, this method is said to be valid. Also, in order for the assessment to be valid it should focus on the objectives of the lesson. For example a test of oral production should require only the oral ability. Gallagher (1998) distinguishes between different types of validity: content validity, criterion-related validity, constructs validity.

First, Content validity refers to the extent to which a test covers the elements designed in the syllabus. More importantly, the content of a test is valid when it matches the teaching objectives designed by the teacher. Another type of validity is

criterion-related validity which is linked to the extent to which a test predicts the students' performance. For example if a student is tested in a group and he answers the same test in another group, the scores of the two tests should be correlated and as a result the "...test is said to have criterion related validity" (R. Zidane, 2010:24). The third type is construct validity which is defined by S. Meghaghi (2011:45) as follows: "This form of validity is based on the degree to which the items in the test reflect the theory or the construct on which the test is based". For example a test of phonetics is said to have construct validity when the questions in this test relate to the theory of phonetics.

1.3.3.3 Reliability

The assessment tools are said to be reliable when they give the same results in different situations. In other words, "If you give the same test to the same students or matched students on two different occasions, the test should yield similar results." (Brown, 2004:20). For example if the teacher gives his students different tasks to answer and the same tasks are given to the same students after 10 days, the results will be the same.

1.3.3.4 Authenticity

It means that assessment should present real world situation. That is, all types of assessment tools should prepare the learner to function correctly when they are in the target culture. Also, the topics dealt with should be interesting and the items should be contextualized.

1.3.3.5 Washback

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010:38), washback should comprise the following characteristics:

- Positively influences what and how teachers teach
- Positively influences what and how learners learn
- Offers learners a chance to adequately prepare

- Gives learners feedback that enhances their language development
- Is more formative in nature than summative
- Provides conditions for peak performance by the learner.

1.3.4 The Purpose of Assessment

Teachers use different assessment for different reasons. First assessment is used for providing feedback on students' work. (Brown et al, 1997:11).It also helps discovering which part of the lesson students do not understand .In other words, the weaknesses of the course are easily diagnosed through assessment and thus, the lecturer will select the best instructional methods that best suits the learners level and then, the teaching situation improves.

In addition, assessment "...provides data concerning the kind of progress made in achieving the objectives designed for the teaching programme."(Zidane, 2010:13). This means that determining whether the objectives of the course have been reached or not is done through analyzing the data gathered through the different assessment practices. These analyzed data are also helpful for teachers to decide whether students pass or fail. Furthermore, assessment helps learners know to what extent they master a certain concept or skill and thereby motivating them to do better and focus their interests and efforts.

1.3.5 Assessment Testing and Evaluation

The terms testing, assessment and evaluation are sometimes used to mean the same thing. However they are different as there are nuances between them. When doing assessment, the teacher tries to know how well students perform a certain task. It is sometimes used interchangeably with testing and evaluation but it is different in its purpose behind collecting data. The gathered data are used "...for the purpose of improving students learning and development" (Cathrine et al, 1999:3).In other words the collected information are used to see how much students are progressing in their learning.

Testing, on the other hand, is another measuring procedure which is defined by Brown and Kanjee (2006:9) as follows: "Testing refers to the process of

administering a test to measure one or more concepts usually under standardized conditions.” This means that in testing, a series of questions are administered to students for the purpose of “...analyzing the learners level and their degree of success in learning”. (Zidane ,2010:6). Testing is distinguished from assessment in the fact that it is one tool of assessment, while assessment includes, in addition to testing, other methods mainly the interview the questionnaire, etc.

Evaluation is another term that is commonly used in the field of language assessment. Evaluation means making judgment about the program, the curriculum and the teaching approach. That is , it “...goes beyond students achievement and language assessment to consider all aspects of teaching and learning and to look at how educational decisions can be made by the results of alternatives forms of assessment”. (Jabbarifar, 2009:2)

1.3.6 Assessment of Writing

There are different forms of assessing the written language and these forms have been changed by the change of the teaching approaches. In traditional approaches, the focus was on producing grammatically correct pieces of writing neglecting the content and self-expression. (S.Chelli and W.Khouni; 2003:8). In other words, the product approach was adopted to teaching writing and summative assessment, then, was applied to evaluate the students’ products.

However, with the advent of C.B.A changes in assessing the written language have been arisen. The focus in this approach is more on the process of writing rather than the content and continuous assessment activities take place such as portfolios, peer assessment and self-assessment. First, portfolio is defined as “A collection of texts the writer has produced over a defined period of time.” (Hamp Lyons, 1991:2). This means that the portfolio contains series of collected pieces of writing that the student produced during a certain period. The use of portfolio assessment, on one hand, helps teachers pinpointing students’ weaknesses in writing, and on the other hand, reflects students’ progress.

Another activity used in the assessment of writing is peer assessment. Students in this type exchange their pieces of writing, give their views and comment about each other's 'product and provide correction. (Coffin et al, 2003:93). This activity encourages group work and gives students the opportunity to know new ideas and information. (Maryam, 2013:3). More importantly, peer assessment is of a great importance since it is considered as another source of giving feedback to students' outcomes. Peer feedback helps learners know what are their strengths and what still need to be worked on and developed. This feedback should be constructive and supportive to help students develop their writing. Furthermore, encouraging learners to get involved in the process assessment help them handle their own learning .In more clear words students become more active in the class and more autonomous.

Self-assessment is another technique used for assessing the written ability in which students assess their own work and reflect on them. This activity is not done in isolation but with the help of peers and teachers to ensure success. (Boud, 1995:15). Self-assessment is beneficial in the sense that it motivates students and encourages them to handle their own learning and be autonomous. It also develops students' critical thinking as they step back and see what they wrote, they specify their mistakes and they try to find the appropriate solutions and makes the class more learners –centered.

1.3.7 Types of Scoring

Teachers follow different approaches to score students' composition. Among the widely used types are analytic scoring and holistic scoring.

1.3.7.1 Holistic Scoring

This approach "...involves a general judgment that is based on a single score mark which is awarded to the learner concerning his performance as a whole." (Zidane, 2010:42). In holistic scoring, teachers read quickly the students' compositions without emphasizing on specific abilities and then, they give a single grade for each product. It is helpful for teachers especially when they have many

writings to correct as grading these students' products will not take too much time. That is to say, this approach to writing assessment is fast and saves time.

Also, in this type of scoring, teachers emphasize on students' strengths in writings. Besides the advantages holistic rating scale has, it has also several disadvantages. On one hand, it does not help students to develop their writing ability as no details are given about their weaknesses in writing. On the other hand, it "...provides little washback into the writer's further stages of learning". (Brown, 2004:243).

1.3.7.2 Analytic Scoring

In analytic scoring the teacher analyses the students' writings taking into account different features such as grammar, cohesion and vocabulary. These features are graded separately and the separate grades are collected together to get a general mark for the students' pieces of writing. This approach to writing assessment is advantageous in the fact that it allows students to be aware of the areas of weaknesses they have and show them the right way for improving performance. Some experts in the field regards that analytic scoring has also shortcomings. They believe that it is time consuming. That is to say this type of scoring is not practical. (ibid, 2004:246).

1.4. Conclusion

The present chapter dealt with different explanations of concepts related to writing and assessment. An overview of writing and its importance were discussed. Furthermore, the researcher explained the meaning of assessment as well as its types, principles and purpose. The differences between assessment, testing and evaluations were also highlighted in this chapter. Then, the researcher explained types of scoring writing mainly holistic and analytic scoring. At the end of the chapter, the researcher explained the methods of assessing writing with their benefits. In the next chapter, the researcher will shed light on the situation under investigation. The collected results will also be analyzed and discussed and the hypotheses will either be confirmed or nullified.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology and Data Analysis

2.1. Introduction

2.2. The Department of English: brief description

2.3. The module of Writing in the English Department at Tlemcen University

2.4 Research Methods and Design

2.5 Sample Population

2.5.1 Students' Profile

2.5.2 Teachers' Profile

2.6 Data Collection Instruments

2.6.1. The Students' Questionnaire

2.6.1.1. Results of the Questionnaire

2.6.1.2 Design of the Questionnaire

2.6.2. The Teachers' Interview

2.6.2.1. Design of the Interview

2.6.2.2. The results of the Interview

2.7. Discussion of the Main Results

2.8. Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the situation under investigation as well as the research design and instruments. In the present work, two research instruments are used and the methodology of each one are explained. The data gathered in this chapter are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Finally, the main results drawn from this research are summarized and related to the research question put by the researcher to check its validity.

2.2. The Department of English: brief description

This research is held in the Department of English at the University of Tlemcen. Before 2014, it was a section and part of the Department of Foreign Languages. The latter was founded in 1988. Since 2014, the section of English became a department.

To obtain the degree of ‘Licence’, (the equivalent of the BA in the Anglo Saxon system of education in the classical system), students used to study four years. After 2009, a new system was adopted in the department which is the LMD system (Licence, Master, Doctorate) and the four years were reduced to only three years to obtain the “Licence” degree. The objective of using this new system is to develop the students’ linguistic competence and the ability to express themselves orally and in writing. On the other hand, this system helps students build a wide knowledge concerning the literature and the civilization of the target culture.

During the years of studies in the English department, students attend different courses like grammar, oral expression, written expression, study skills, linguistics, phonetics and other subjects like TEFL, Arabicinguistics, educational psychology and research methodology. These courses help students do a professional carrier in teaching.

2.3. The Course of Writing in the English Department at Tlemcen University

In the English Department, writing is taught as a separate module from first to third year. The teachers of writing depending on their competence, their teaching experience and their students' needs decide freely the content of this module. The objective of the writing syllabus is different from first to third year. The objective of the first year syllabus is to help students write accurate paragraphs of different types. At this level teachers also guide their students to organize their ideas in a logical way so as to produce coherent pieces of writing.

In the second year, teachers devote much of time to teaching micro skills like sentence expansion and word formation. Second year students learn how to write the different parts of an essay (introduction, body and conclusion) using different modes of discourse.

In the third year, the module of writing is labeled "Academic Writing" and its main objective is to make students' writing more academic. The third year syllabus makes students know the techniques of paraphrasing and summarizing, and helps them use these techniques to write their extended essays. The syllabus also describes all the steps students should go through to write an academic paper (abstract, general introduction, general conclusion, etc.)

2.4 Research Methods and Design

The present research work is a case study involving 30 third year Licence students and 5 teachers of writing in the English department of Tlemcen University. As it is defined by Yin (1994:13), a case study is "An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...[and] relies on multiple sources of evidence". Therefore, a case study studies a certain entity, group, organization or a phenomenon using different sources of information. In this research, the researcher chose to use a case study. The aim behind this choice is to provide an in-depth understanding of the ways

teachers assess the students' writing performance and the impact of assessment practices on the writing skill.

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2.5 Sample Population

The sample population in this research was selected randomly which means that the whole population had the chance of being selected to participate in this research work. They are third year EFL university students and teachers of Academic Writing module who were targeted to respond to the research instruments addressed to them.

2.5.1 Students' Profile

Informants of this study were third year EFL university students. They study in the Department of English at Tlemcen University and there are from the two specialties: Language studies and literature and civilization. They are enrolled during the academic year 2014-2015. The 30 selected students in this research work are between 19 and 23 years. In addition, they come from literary and scientific streams as well as a number of transfer students from other department.

2.5.2 Teachers' Profile

This study also concerns five teachers of writing at the English Department of Tlemcen University. They all hold either the degree of 'Magister' or 'Doctorate'. These teachers are specialized in three fields: three of them are specialized in TEFL and Applied Linguistics and two in ESP

Their experience in teaching English ranges from 4 to 20 years and they teach the three levels: first, second and third year.

2.6 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection refers to the act of gathering information for a research work. In this study, two research instruments are used for data collection; a questionnaire that was addressed to third year EFL university students and an interview which was

designed for teachers of writing. The purpose of using more than one instrument of research is to gather information from diverse sources and study the problem from different angles.

2.6.1. The Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is a research instrument that researchers use for the collection of data. Richard (2005:60) speaks about the utility of the questionnaire when he says the following:

Questionnaires are one of the most common instruments used. They are relatively easy to prepare, they can be used with large numbers of subjects and they obtain information that is relatively easy to tabulate and analyze. They can also be used to elicit information about many different kinds of issues, such as language use, communication difficulties, preferred learning styles, preferred classroom activities and attitudes and beliefs.

The questionnaire consists of written questions that are of different types. The first type is close-ended question which require answers with 'yes' or 'no'. Multiple-choice question is the second type which involves a set of responses and the respondents are required to select one answer or more. Both close-ended questions and multiple choice questions provide quantitative data. The third type is open-ended question, which requires a long answer. That is to say, the respondents express their ideas freely without being restricted to select a certain option as in multiple-choice questions. This type of questions provides qualitative data.

2.6.1.1 Design of the Questionnaire

In order to have a better understanding of writing assessment in the English Department at Tlemcen University, the researcher administered thirty questionnaires to third year EFL students. The questionnaire consists of fourteen questions divided in two rubrics (see appendix A) and they were explained for the

students in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. The objectives of the devised questions were as follows:

Question 1, 2 and 3: asked about the types of assessment as well as the activities and techniques teachers use to assess their students' writing performance.

Question 4 and 5: asked to know whether teachers grade their students' writings or not and the correction types they adopt.

Question 6: asked about the areas of emphasis during the teacher correction of students' papers.

Question 7: asked students if their teacher provides them with written feedback

Question 8: asked to explore the students' preferences about the type of writing assessment their teachers use.

Question 9: This question is intended to see whether students like being graded by their teachers, by their peers or assess themselves.

Question 10: asked about the students' feelings during the process of assessment.

Question 11: asked about the students' views concerning teachers' correction of students' written products.

Question 12: asked about the students' points of view towards the teacher's written feedback.

Question 13: For the sake of obtaining information on whether or not the teacher's ways of assessment help students improve their writing skill, students were asked to answer this question.

Question 14: In this question students were asked to express their propositions and suggestions to implement new techniques to assess the writing skill.

2.6.1.2. Results of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into three rubrics and the results of the questions are summarized as follows:

- Question 1: How does your teacher assess your writing?

From the results obtained, it is noted that 70% of students chose formative assessment while the remaining (30%) said that their teacher used summative assessment.

- Question 2: What does your teacher use to assess you writing performance?

The results of this questionnaire illustrated in the following figure:

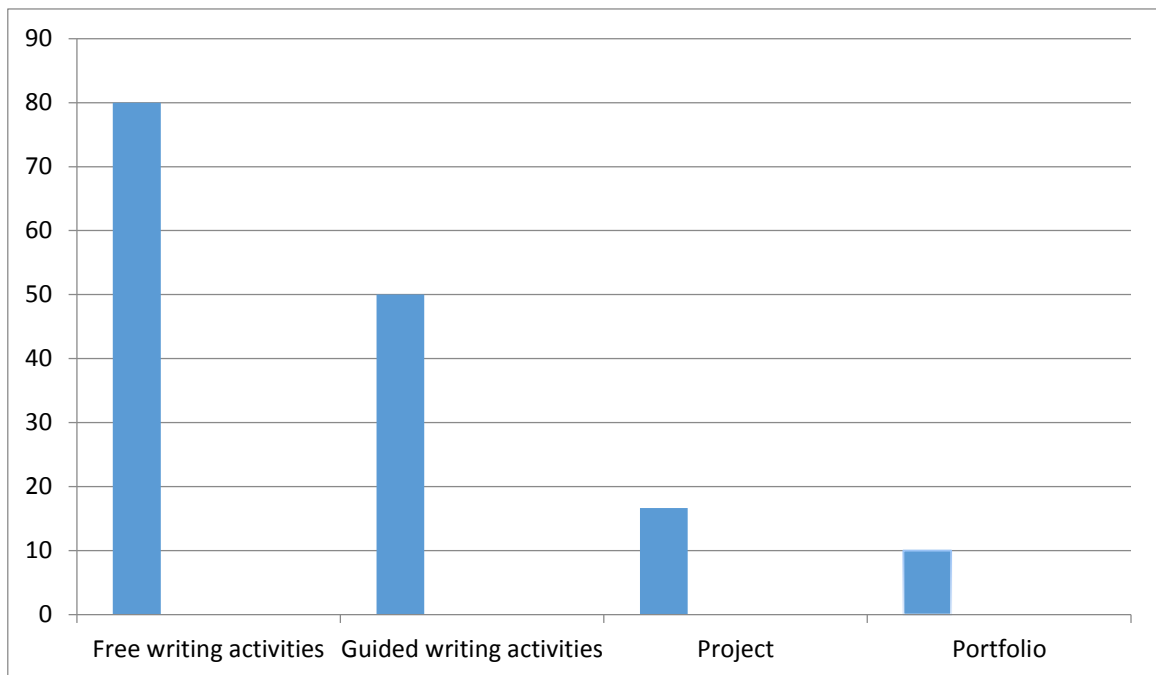


Figure 2.1 Techniques used to assess students' writing performance

The largest number of students (80%) indicated that free writing activities were very much used by their teachers. 15 students (50%) picking out that their teacher used for guided writing activities to assess them. 16.66% of students answer that their teacher asks them to prepare projects for the sake of assessing their writing. Only 3 students (10%) their answers showed that portfolio is rarely used by their teacher of writing. Some students elicited other activities which are used for the purpose of writing assessment such as online activities and book reports

- Question 3: What are the assessment techniques that your teacher uses in the classroom?

The results revealed that 24 students (80%) said that it was the teacher who corrected their writings, 30% out of the total number of students said that their teachers gave them the opportunity to correct their peers' writings and only 11 students (13.33%) chose self-assessment.

- Question 4: Does your teacher grade your writing?

Answers to this question are reported in figure below:

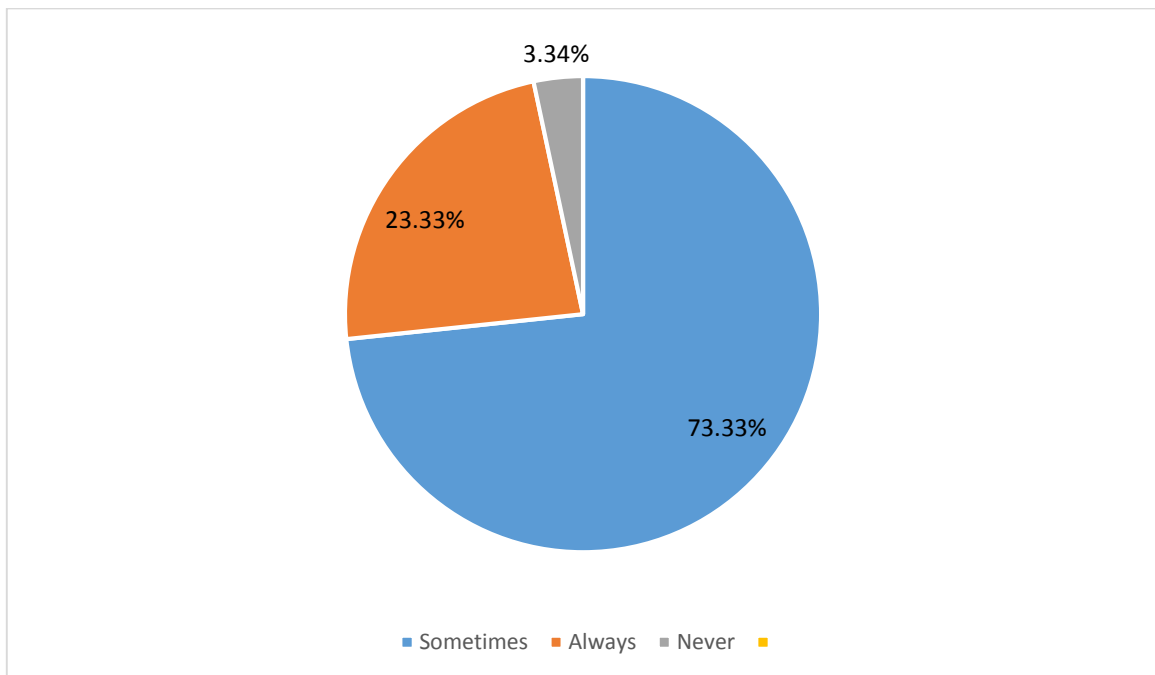


Figure 2.2 Grading Students' Written Products

The results of this question showed that the students' pieces of writings are most of the time graded by the teachers as only one student showed a negative answer to this question.

- Question 5: What type of correction procedures does your teacher use?

The results of this question are represented in the figure below:

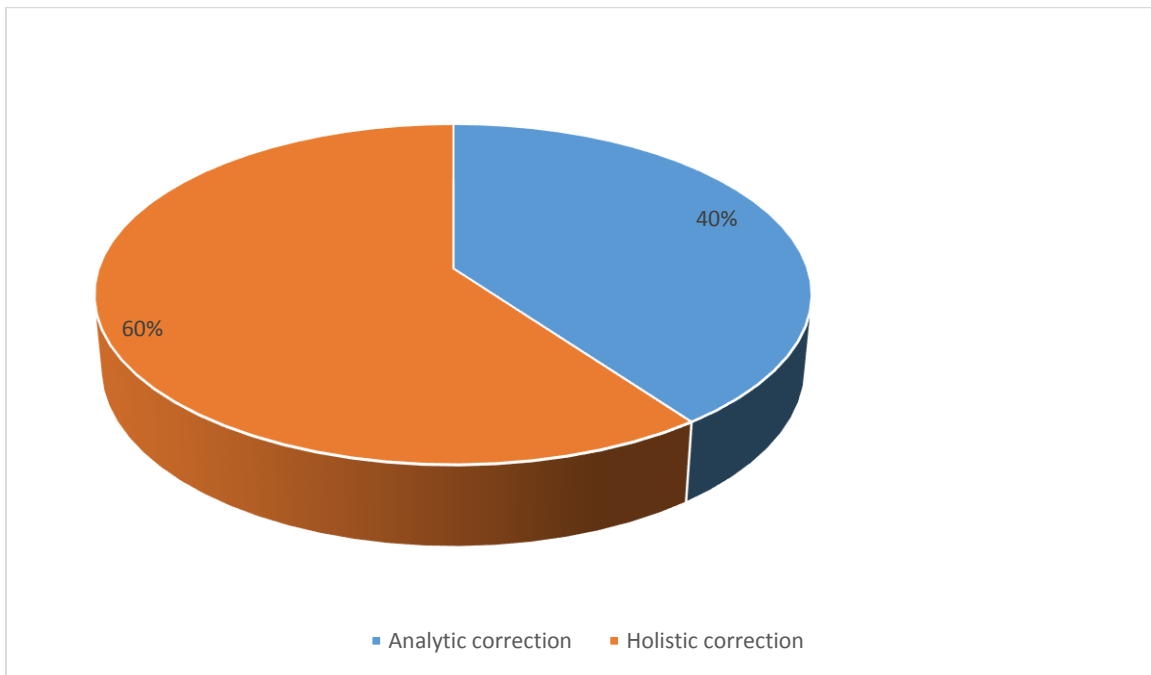


Figure 2.3 Types of Correction

As the figure shows, 60% of the total number of students confessed that their teacher used a holistic correction while the remaining students (40%) stated that analytic correction is sometimes used.

- Question 6: When the teacher corrects your writing, is he interested more in the form, the content or both of them?

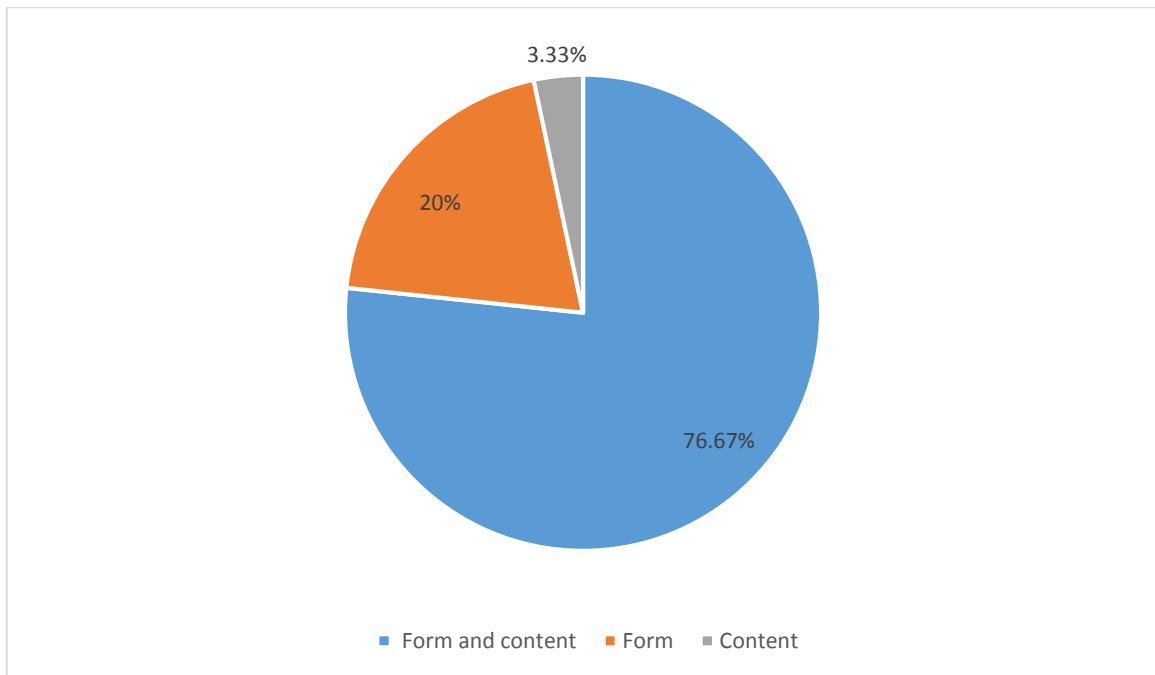


Figure 2.4 The emphasis during the teacher correction

The results revealed that 76.67% of students answered that their teacher gave importance to both form and content. 6 students representing 20% of the total number of students believed that the form is more emphasized than the content and only 2 students representing 3.33% said that the teacher is more interested in the content of students' writings.

- Question 7: How frequently does your teacher provide you with written feedback?

For knowing whether the teacher of writing provides their students with written feedback, this question was formulated. The results are represented in the figure below:

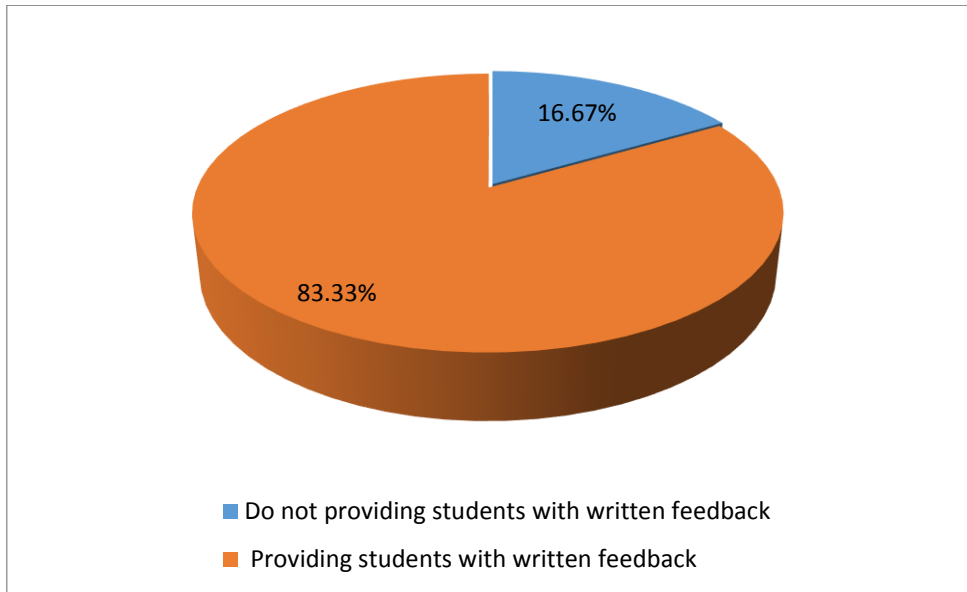


Figure 2.5 Providing students with written feedback

As it is mentioned in the graph, only 5 students (16.67%) claimed that their teachers never provided them with written feedback but the other students (83.33%) confessed that written feedback is sometimes or usually present in the students' papers.

- Question 8: How do you like to be assessed?

The following figure provides an illustration about the type of assessment students prefer:

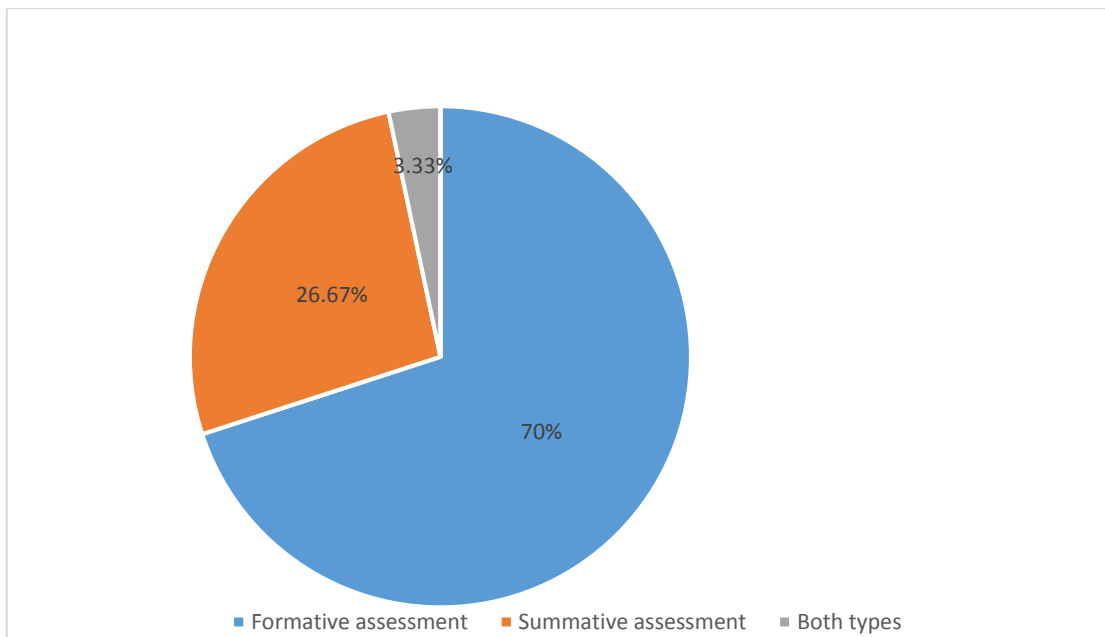


Figure 2.6 Types of assessment students prefer

The students' responses revealed that 21 of them (70%) like to be assessed using formative assessment due to many reasons: They like it, as they believe it helps them know the mistakes they do when writing. They added that the fact of being tested several times during the semester scaffolds their writing skill and makes them ready for the final test. On the other hand, 26.67% out of the total number of students prefer summative assessment, they confessed they are not ready to be assessed during the semester, and that they do not want to be put in a stressful situation several times. Finally, only one student (3.33%) likes both types and he explains that the two types are beneficial and helpful.

- Question 9: Do you prefer self- assessment, peer-assessment or teacher-assessment?

The result of this question is illustrated in the figure below:

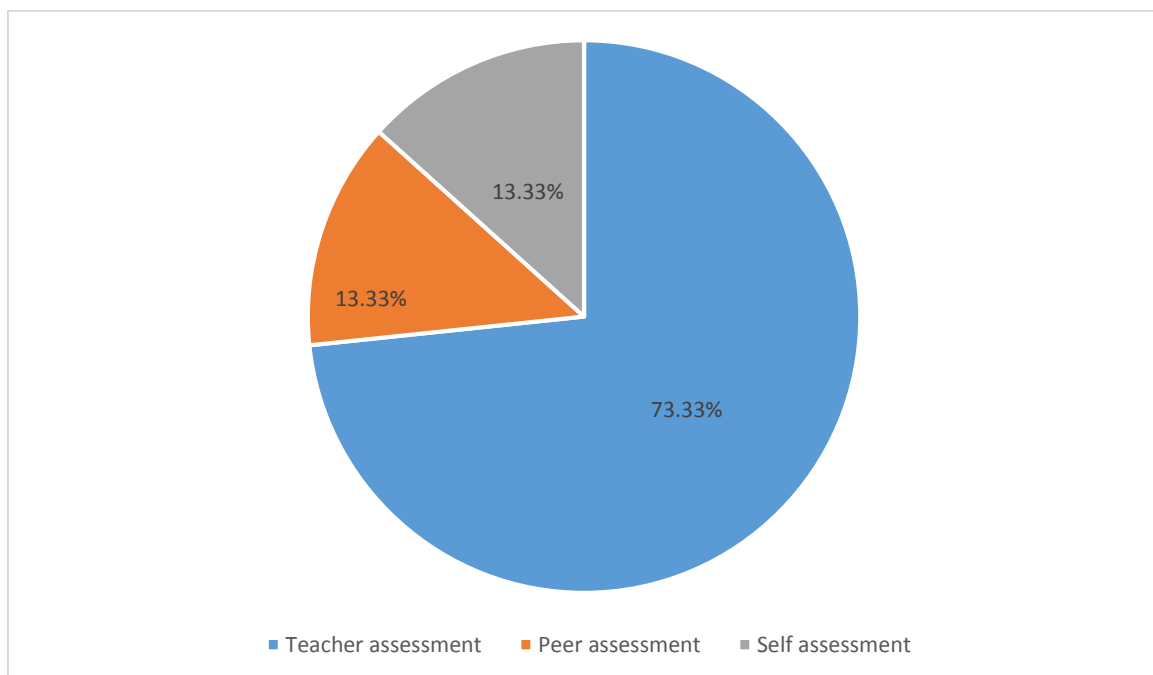


Figure 2.7 Different ways of assessment

From the results obtained, a large number of students (73.34%) preferred teacher assessment because they consider him as a model and he will correct can in the right way. They also believed that they still need to be guided by the teacher, that is to say, they are not ready to handle their own learning. More importantly, they said that

through teacher assessment they can know their weaknesses in writing and work hard to better their skill. Only 4 students (13.33%) like peer assessment because they admit that their peers' advice can be easily applied to better their writing.

- Question 10: How do you feel when you are assessed?

The results of this question are represented in the figure below:

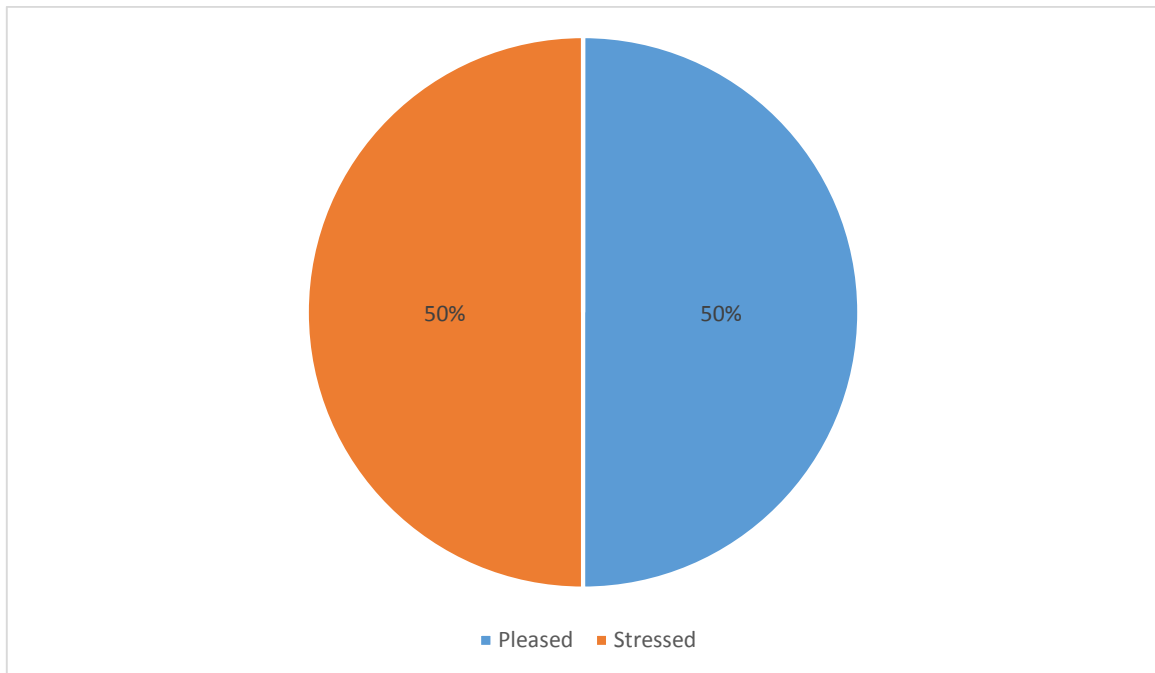


Figure 2.8 Students' Feelings during the assessment process.

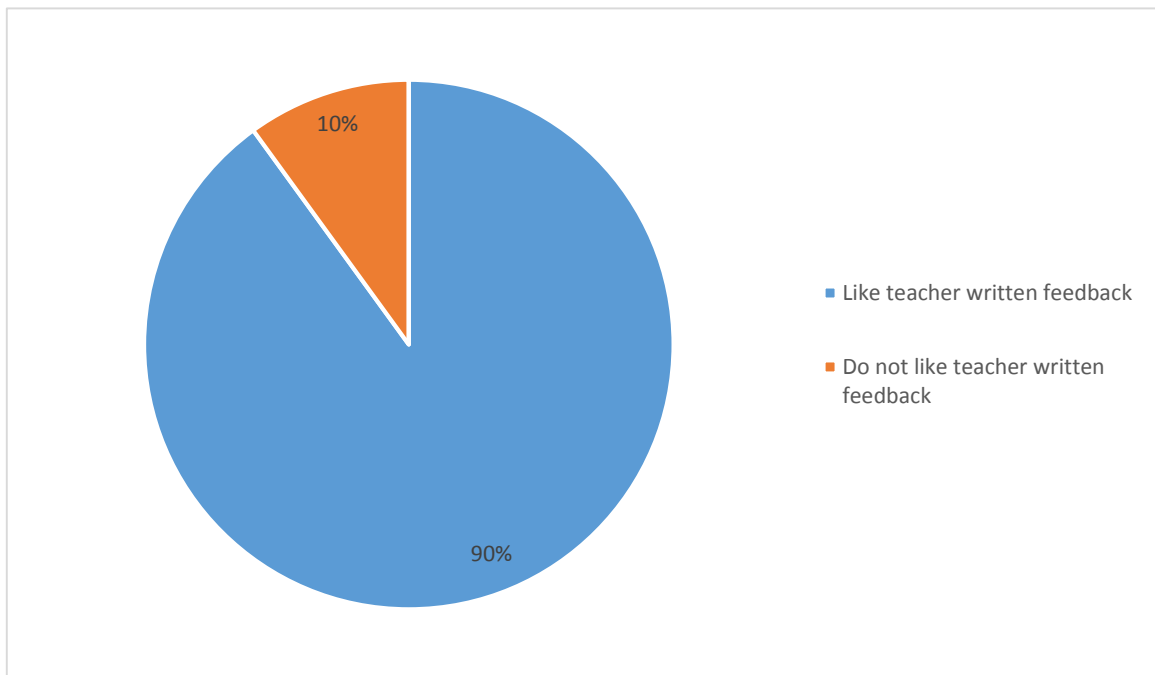
As the figure shows, half of students (50%) said that they feel pleased during assessment while the remaining students (50%) determined that it makes them stressful.

- Question 11: would you like your classroom assignments be marked or unmarked?

From the students' answers, it has been noticed that 73.33% out of the total number of students liked their assignments to be marked for different reasons. They believed that the mark denotes the level of students in writing. 26.67% of students did not prefer that the teacher mark their assignments. According to those students, marks do not reflect their real level and if the teacher provides them with a bad mark it will demotivate them.

- Question 12: Do you like your teachers' written feedback on your paper?

Generally, when teachers correct students' products, they provide them with written feedback. The aim behind asking this question was to determine students' point of view about their teacher feedback. The following figure gives an idea about the different responses of the informants



2.9. Students' Views on the teacher written feedback

As it is shown in the table above, the majority of students (90%) likes the teacher feedback because it helps them recognize their mistakes and show them the way to correct these mistakes. They also added that they need to know the teacher impression about their written products. 10% of the total number of students showed a negative attitude toward teacher's feedback because the feedback do not always reveal to the students' level as it is declared by 3 students.

- Question 13: According to you, does your teacher assessment improve your writing?

The results revealed that nearly all students (96.67%) admitted that teacher assessment helps them in one way or another to develop their writing skill and only one student showed a negative attitude to this type of assessment.

- Question 14: What do you suggest to your teacher as new techniques to use for assessing your writing?

Students suggested different techniques that are summarized as follows:

- ✓ Teachers should ask students doing homework activities and correct them in the classroom.
- ✓ Teachers should increase the number of exercises in the class.
- ✓ Teachers should base their assessment on the difficulties students have in writing
- ✓ Teachers should involve students in online assessment
- ✓ Teachers should encourage self-assessment
- ✓ Teachers should use technological tools for assessing students' writing

2.6.2 The Interview

The interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the participants. It is a method of data collection that is used by many researchers. Cohen et al (2000:267) define it as follows:

Interviews enable participants –be they interviewers or interviewees to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live in, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

There are three types of interviews: structured interview, semi- structured interview and unstructured interview. First, structured interview takes the form of an oral questionnaire. It requires all the informants to answer the predetermined questions with no change in the wording of questions. Second, in a semi-structured interview, the researcher asks questions to the participants without following a specific word order. Finally, the unstructured interview is like a general discussion in which the researcher explains the research topics and the participants have the

freedom of expression. In addition, the researcher can ask a question that was not prepared in advance for clarification.

2.6.2.1. Design of the Interview

This structured interview addressed to teachers of writing aimed at knowing whether there is diversity in using assessment types and techniques to assess writing performance to LMD3 students. This instrument of research attempted also to display the teachers' views concerning the impact of assessment on the students writing skill. The last part of the interview provided a room for teachers to suggest new assessment techniques and activities that they believe are important in developing the writing skill.

- Question 1,2 and 3 asked about the teachers' degree, their field of specialty and their experience in teaching writing.
- Question 4, 5 and 6 asked about the types of assessment, activities and techniques teachers use to assess the students' writing skill respectively.
- Question 7 was asked to know how often the teacher grade their students written products.
- Question 8 was asked to know whether the form, content or both of them are taken into consideration during the teacher correction of students' papers.
- Question 9 was asked to see if the teacher provides his students with written feedback or not.
- Question 10 and 11 were asked to know which assessment type and techniques teachers observe that their students like.
- Question 12 was asked to know if the students like to be assessed or not.
- Question 14 was asked to see if students like to be graded or not.
- Question 15 was asked to know whether students like the teacher comments on their writing or not.
- Question 16: asked teachers about their purpose behind assessing the students' writing skill.

- Question 17 asked teachers to suggest new techniques to assess the writing skill.

2.6.2.2 Results of the Interview

The results of the interview are summarized as follows:

- Question 1, 2 and 3: Teachers' Profile

In these three questions, teachers were asked to give details about their teaching profile. The answers are summarized in the following table:

Table 2.1 Teachers' profile

Number of teachers	Degree	Field of specialty	Experience
2	Magister	ESP	4
1	Magister	TEFL and applied linguistics	10
2	Doctorate	TEFL and applied linguistics	20

- Question 4: what type of assessment do you use to evaluate students' writing?

When asked about the type of assessment they use, three teachers said that they used both summative and formative assessment. Two other teachers said that they use formative assessment. They believed formative assessment helps students know the mistakes they do as well as the rules they should follow when writing. They also claimed that they use summative assessment for administrative constraints.

- Question 5: Do you use the following to assess your students' writing performance: portfolios, free-writing activities, guided writing activities, projects?

As far as the assessment activities teachers use during writing assessment, all the teachers used free-writing and guided-writing activities. Only one teacher used portfolio assessment and one teacher used project-assessment.

- Question6: What are the assessment techniques you use in the classroom?

When asked about the assessment techniques they use, three teachers said that they used both peer and teacher assessment. One teacher chose teacher assessment, and one opted for the three choices. They claimed that peer assessment enhanced collaborative learning; motivated students and it gave the opportunity clearing up ambiguous points for one another. Those who chose teacher' assessment confess that the teacher was the best person who can judge students' writing.

- Question7: Do you grade your students' writing?

When asked whether they grade their students' writings or not, the five teachers opted for "yes".

- Question8: What type of scoring procedure do you use?

The purpose of this question was to know the type of correction that teachers use. The results revealed that three teachers used both holistic and analytic correction. The fourth teacher corrected his students' writing using only holistic correction and the fifth one used analytic correction. They confessed that holistic correction was used for rhetorical and ideational focus. Analytic correction, on the other hand was used for language focus. It also helped students understand the reasons for the grade obtained because this type provided them with detailed correction.

- Question9: when correcting students' writings, are you interested more in the form, content or both of them?

When asked about their focus when correcting students' writing, they all claimed that they focus on the form and the content. That is to say, they corrected the ideas as well as the structure of the sentences that holds these ideas.

- Question10: How often do you provide your students with written feedback?

The results of this question revealed that all teachers provided their students with written feedback as they all picked of either for "sometimes" or "usually".

- Question11: How do your students like to be assessed?

In this question, teachers were asked about their students' preferences of the types of assessment. The results are represented in the table below:

2.2. Students' preferences of the assessment types.

Teachers	Formative assessment	Summative assessment	I do not know
5	2	2	1

As it is shown in the table, two teachers said that their students like to be assessed formatively because students believed that being assessed several times develop their writing skill and help them know their mistakes.

Also, two teachers chose summative assessment and they said that their students preferred this type because it is not tiring as formative assessment.

- Question 12: What do your students prefer: teacher, self or peer assessment?

When teachers were asked about what their students like, peer, self or teacher assessment, two of them said that their students liked both peer and teacher assessment. One teacher claimed that his students liked to be assessed by their peers and one teacher said that his students preferred his way of assessment. Finally, one teacher said that he did not know the type of assessment his students prefer.

- Question 13: Do your students like to be assessed?

When asked about whether their students like to be assessed or not, three of them opted for "yes" and two others claimed that their students do not like the process of assessment.

- Question 14: What do your students like: give them grades or do not give them grades?

The results revealed that four teachers noticed that their students preferred to give them grade to their work. Only one teacher confessed that his students did not like to be graded.

- Question 15: Do your students like the comments you give to their work?

As far as the answers of this question are concerned, all teachers (5 teachers) said that their students liked the comments they wrote on the students' papers. As it was claimed by the five teachers, their students believed that the teachers'

comments helped them understand their mistakes, readapt their writing strategies and improve their writing abilities.

- Question16: What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?(you can choose more than one answer)

The results of this question are represented in the following table:

Table 2.3 The Purposes of Assessing the Students' Written Product

Purpose Teachers	Monitoring students' progress	Providing feedback	Comparing between students and groups	Planning the course based on the students' proficiency level
5	3	3	1	3

As it displayed in the table, three teachers assessed their students' writing for monitoring their progress. In addition, three teachers assessed them for giving them feedback .Furthermore, other three teachers believe that the assessment of students' writing help them to plan the course and decide its content. Only one teacher said that the purpose of assessing students' writing is comparing between students and groups.

- Question17: What do you suggest for an efficient assessment of writing skill at university level?

Teachers suggest different activities and techniques which they believed can be important in developing students' writing performance and they are summarized as follows:

- ✓ Define the assessment criteria for both students and teachers.
- ✓ Encourage analytic correction
- ✓ Assessment should be monthly (not weekly or every day) as you give time to students to be ready for the next assessment
- ✓ Using online assessment with the help of computing materials.
- ✓ The use of portfolio assessment

- ✓ Immediate correction of students' mistakes
- ✓ Provide student each time with marks to make them aware of their level
- ✓ Reduce from the general mark 0.5 each time a student makes a mistake. This strategy makes students aware of the mistakes they do and encourage them to avoid them

2.7 Discussion of the Main Results

In the beginning of this research, it was suggested as a first hypothesis that summative assessment is used by teachers of writing to assess the writing performance to third year EFL students at Tlemcen University. After the collection of data through two research instruments, the research work revealed that formative assessment is used more than summative assessment (see question 1.2 and 3 in Students' Questionnaire and questions 4 and 6 in Teachers' Interview). These results nullify the first hypothesis.

In the second hypothesis, the researcher suggested that the process of writing assessment hinders the students' writing performance. That is to say, the types and the techniques of assessment used by the teacher of writing do not help students develop their skill and produce good writing performance. However, what was not expected in the results is that the majority of teachers and students claimed the importance of assessment in stimulating students and improving their writing. Students confessed that being assessed formatively helped them recognize their mistakes and scaffold their writing. They also claimed that they preferred their teacher give them a grade for their assignment as the marks motivate them to do better next time. In addition, both participants said that teacher assessment helped students improve the writing skill. All these above-explained results nullify the second hypothesis put by the researcher.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the analysis of the collected data both qualitatively and quantitatively. The main findings related to the research hypotheses were also discussed. The results revealed that formative assessment is largely used by teachers

of writing for assessing the students' writings. At another level, the results showed that the assessment practices motivate students better their writing and help them reach a good writing level. This chapter also involved a collection of suggestions given by both teachers and students. The participants believed that these suggested techniques can be beneficial ways of assessment and help students to be good writers. Based on these suggestions, the third chapter will be devoted to the researcher own suggestions and techniques in the field of writing assessment.

Chapter three: Suggestions and Recommendations

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Explaining the Assessment Criteria to the students

3.3. The Use of Analytic Rubrics to Assess the Writing Skill

3.4. The Teacher Written Feedback

3.5 Reducing Assessment Anxiety through Peer and Self -Assessment

3.6. Raising Students Motivation through Portfolio Assessment.

3.7. Conclusion

3.1. Introduction

The present chapter aims at providing some suggestions and recommendations to improve the assessment and the teaching of the writing skill. First, it discusses the importance of explaining the assessment criteria for students. Next, it explains the necessity of using analytic rubrics in writing assessment. Then other suggestion like the teacher written feedback, peer and self assessment are provided for the purpose of teaching and assessing writing.

3.2. Explaining Assessment Criteria to students

As it is explained by Danster (2008:37), “An assessment criterion referred to the required task, knowledge and/or skill that the assessment instrument was constructed to measure and sample. The level of performance required declares the candidate competence is also encompassed within the term definition”. The assessment criteria are a set of statements that prescribe clearly what students are asked to perform in a particular task. These statements show the students the steps they should go through to accomplish a certain task.

In writing activities, since it is the focus of this study, providing students with clear and understandable assessment criteria helps them know what is required from them to write and thus, they will show a good level in written expression. Lado (1962:248) explains the assessment criteria that should be taken into consideration by both teachers and students during writing lessons. “ There are things which can be measured in connection within the content, the point of information to bring out, the organization and sequence in which these points are, the formal signals given to the reader to guide him in understanding the topic fully”.

According to Lado, during the process of assessment teachers have to take into consideration some components such as the content and see if the written ideas are relevant to the topic or not. They should also see whether these ideas are organized in a logical manner and following the parts of an essay and answering the required task. Grammar, vocabulary and mechanical skills are also valued. That is to say, the

teachers examine the students' product in terms of word choice, the structure of sentences and punctuation.

3.3. The Use of Analytic Rubrics to Assess the Writing Skill

Rubrics are one of the assessment tools that consist of a set of criteria upon which the students' performance are valued. Richardson & Fenstermacher (2005) regard rubrics as a means of scoring a performance assessment where multiple criteria are being assessed and quality or product is important. In the same vein, Zidane (2010:216) explains, "A rubric is a scoring scheme that employs a set of rubrics for the evaluation of the students' performance. It provides a description of each level of performance that the learner is assumed to achieve". Therefore, Rubrics are tools used for evaluating and assessing students through a set of rules and standards.

Analytic scoring is a type of rubrics that is widely used in the assessment of the written product. It consists of categories that indicate the students' performance and each of these ones are evaluated separately. Among the features that constitute this type of rubrics are content, fluency, relevance grammar and mechanics. The scores given for each category are combined together to obtain a general mark for the students' written product. This type helps students receive more feedback concerning their performance because each aspect of their writing are evaluated separately and thus, they will be aware about their writing strengths and weaknesses.

The following is an example of an analytic rubric which is explained by Brookhart(1999:48), and that includes three criteria with their grading.

Analytic Rubrics (Three Criteria)

Thesis and organization

4. Thesis is defensible and stated explicitly; appropriate facts and concepts are used in a logical manner to support the argument.
3. Thesis is defensible and stated explicitly; appropriate facts and concepts are used in a logical manner to support the argument, although support may be thin in places or logic may not be made clear
2. Thesis is not clearly stated; some attempt at support is made

1 No thesis or indefensible thesis; support is missing or illogical

Content knowledge

4. All relevant facts and concepts included; all accurate

3. All or most relevant facts and concepts included; inaccuracies are minor

2. Some relevant facts and concepts included; some inaccuracies

1. No facts and concepts included, or irrelevant facts and concepts included

Writing style and mechanics

4. Writing is clear and smooth; word choice and style are appropriate for the topic; no errors in grammar or usage

3. Writing is generally clear; word choice and style are appropriate for the topic; few errors in grammar or usage, and they do not interfere with meaning

2. Writing is not clear; style is poor; some errors in grammar and usage interfere with meaning

1. Writing is not clear; style is poor; many errors in grammar and usage

As it is illustrated in the above analytic rubric, teachers give the full score (4) when students follow the criterion in the right way and apply what is required from them. The score decreases whenever students cannot follow the criterion.

Besides the explained advantages, Moskal (2012:21, qtd in Chelli, 2012:132) sheds light on other positive points of analytic rubrics:

- It helps instructors keep the full range of writing features in mind as they score.
- It allows students to see areas in their own essays that need work when accompanied by written comments and a breakdown of the final score. Its diagnostic nature provides students with a road map of improvement.

3.4. Teacher Written Feedback

Feedback is an activity that has been defined by different researchers in various ways and many advocate its importance in EFL classroom. UR(1996)says:“In context of teaching in general, feedback is information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of the learning task, usually with the objective of

improving their performance”. In the same vein, Roger (2001) explains that “Feedback is not just about weaknesses. Students will respond if teachers are encouraging as well as allowing mistakes, emerging capabilities and give ideas for directing further learning.”

As it is explained in these two definitions, feedback is a technique that helps students know their strengths and weaknesses as well as motivating them to improve their learning. There are different ways of giving feedback to students. That is to say, the teacher feedback on the student’s writings can be in different ways. The teacher-written feedback is one of these types and many researchers believe in its importance in helping learners know their mistakes and develop their writing.

There are many techniques used for that purpose as coding, comments and electronic feedback. Coding refers to using symbols or codes to refer to the students’ mistakes and errors. These codes are written under the mistake or in the margin and they help students know the type of mistakes they do. For example, the code ‘S’ means that the student makes a spelling mistake. ‘T’ implies that she/ he uses the wrong tense. Nott (2008) explains some symbols that are used to indicate the students’ errors. They are explained as follows:

Table 3.3 Error Symbols

M	should be masculine (gender of noun and/or form of adjective)
F	should be feminine (gender of noun and/or form of adjective)
SG	should be singular (number of noun and/or form of adjective)
PL	should be plural (number of noun and/or form of adjective)
AG	make verb ending agree with subject or make adjective ending agree with no

	can be used in conjunction with one of the symbols above
SP	error of spelling, including verb forms, and accents
V (or VOC)	error of vocabulary
T	error of tense
G	error of grammar, e.g. wrong relative pronoun, wrong verb ending
WO	error in wordorder
R (or REG)	error of register, e.g. slang or informal construction in formal piece
ME	error of meaning other than VOC; meaning not clear
()	omit bracketed words; can be used in combination with other symbols, such letters or lines
^	words missing; this symbol can be used in combination with other symbols, suggested words can be written above text
?	(After a symbol). not clear what the student intended the word/phrase to mean

Another way of providing feedback is writing comments on the students' products. Sommers (1982) believes that these comments should help students revise and rewrite their written work. They should also point clearly the weaknesses students have in writing and provide suggestions for improvement.

The challenge we face as teachers is to develop comments which will provide inherent reason for students to revise; it is a sense of revision as discovery, as a process of beginning again, as starting out new, that our students have not learned. We need to show our students how to seek, in the possibility of revision the dissonances of discovery- to show them through our comments why new choices would positively change their texts, and thus, to show them the potential for development implicit in their writing. (Sommers, 1982:156).

Electronic feedback is another type. It is done using computers in which teachers respond to the students writing using email or text editing programs. This technique is beneficial in the sense that it motivates students and help them better their writing abilities.

3.5. Reducing assessment anxiety through peer and self -assessment

According to Scovel (1987:137), anxiety "...is the feeling of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt and apprehension or worry". In educational setting, one of the reasons of anxiety is the assessment and the testing process. It means, being stressful and nervous before a test or an exam. The way the teacher grades and responds to his students' written product also raises their anxiety. Though it is natural to have this feeling before a test, however, too much anxiety can affect negatively the students' performance. That is to say, if the teacher does not take the right procedures to reduce his students' anxiety, it will have a negative effect on the students' results.

To overcome this problem or at least reduce it, teachers of writing can adopt peer and self-assessment. Besides the role of these two techniques in encouraging group work, raising students' motivation and autonomy, using them can help students reduce their assessment anxiety (Brown and Hudson, 1998). Peer assessment means having students correcting and responding to their peers' writings following the guidance of the teacher. That is to say, peer assessment means involving students in the assessment process and this raises their self-confidence and autonomy. In

addition, when their peers correct their written products, they receive their comments in a positive way, as they believe that “peer review... is less authoritarian than the teacher review and help students to view both colleagues and teachers as collaborators rather than evaluators” (Harmer, 2004:116).

On the other hand, self-assessment is another activity that involves students in the assessment process and reduces their anxiety.

Self-assessment is a process of formative assessment during which students reflect and evaluate the quality of their work and their learning, judge the degree to which they reflect explicitly stated goals or criteria, identify strengths and weaknesses in their work and revise accordingly. (Andrade and Du, 2007 :16).

In more clear words, this technique implies that the students correct and reflect upon their work, setting clear assessment criteria and judging their work based on the criteria set before. Self-assessment is beneficial in the sense that it makes students more responsible of their own learning. It also raises in them the feeling that they are part of the assessment process and not just passive participants applying what is imposed on them.

3.6. Raising Students’ Motivation through Portfolio assessment

Writing portfolio is one of the non-traditional ways of assessment that has been studied by many researchers. It has been defined by Genessee and Upshur (1996:99) as “A purposeful collection of students’ work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress and achievement in given areas”. In other words, portfolio contains the students’ writings output that they have chosen to be assessed, and that show to the teacher the progress of his students in their writing development.

Many researches are made on the importance of writing portfolio on raising students’ motivation. Many experts believe that involving students in the selection of the topics discussed in the portfolio, makes them feel that they are important

element and not just passive participants applying what is imposed on them. This raises their self-confidence, autonomy and boosts their motivation (Angel Monsalve Sanchez, 2010). Generally, students select the topics that have relations with their daily lives and that they want to know more about. This raises their motivation to do research about them on the web and know more details and information. (ibid). In addition, using portfolio as an assessment technique helps in creating a supportive learning environment where students and teachers do not work in isolation and where teacher feedback and peer feedback are used. (Lam and Lee, 2010:62).

3.7. Conclusion

The current chapter has provided some suggestions and recommendations that help improving the teaching and the assessment of the writing of third year EFL university students. Indeed, the chapter has emphasized on the importance of explaining the assessment criteria for students as a way to facilitate the writing task for them. Also, other techniques like peer assessment, self assessment and portfolio assessment have been explained in relation to their role in developing the writing assessment.

General Conclusion

Showing a good writing performance is becoming important for students and it is considered as a crucial skill in different domains. At university level, third year EFL students are required to master this skill as they are asked to submit a written research at the end of this year. However, it was noticed that some students face difficulties in expressing and communicating their ideas correctly, which in turn makes writing a hard task for them.

Thus, the objective of this research was to explore whether the way of writing assessment was one of the reasons of students' writing weaknesses or not. To find an answer to this problematic, the following research questions were put forward:

- What types of assessment do Algerian EFL university teachers use to evaluate students' writing performance?
- How can assessment practices affect the students' writing performance?

Two data sources (a questionnaire and an interview) were used to support the following hypotheses:

- Algerian EFL university teachers use summative assessment to assess the students' writing.
- The assessment practices adopted by teachers of writing in the English Department at Tlemcen University hinder students' writing performance.

This investigation started with dealing with a theoretical overview on writing and assessment. In the second chapter, the researcher provided details about the module of writing and the department of English. In addition to the situation analysis, the data were collected and analyzed in this chapter. The last chapter proposed some useful suggestions based on the results found in the previous chapter.

As far as the results are concerned, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of students' questionnaire and teachers' interview revealed that EFL university teachers relied on their assessment of students' writing on formative more than

General Conclusion

summative assessment. That is to say, they provided their students with ongoing feedback to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing. The study also concluded that the process of assessment did not hinder students writing performance as the researcher suggested. Rather, Most of students confessed in its role in developing the quality of their written production.

There were a number of limitations which marked the current research, for instance: the researcher was limited by time and therefore, this work could not tackle other aspects of writing assessment. The researcher also dealt just with two groups which make generalizability limited at the end of research.

As mentioned above, this research does not involve all aspects of the assessment of writing skill .This can open the door to other researchers to consider aspects that were not discussed in this work such as online assessment of writing, the impact of analytic assessment on students' writing skill and the use of peer assessment to assess students writing performance.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teachers' Interview

This interview is intended to gather data about assessing the writing skill at university level. We will be very grateful if you could answer the questions below since your answers are very important for the validity of this research work.

Thank you for your cooperation

Profile

1. What is your degree ?
2. What is your field of study?
3. For how many years have you been teaching writing?

Level	Years

Assessment practices

4. What types of assessment do you use to evaluate students' writing ?

✓ Formative assessment

✓ Summative assessment

Why.....

.....

.....

5. Do you use the following to assess your students 'writing performance'?(you can choose more than one answer)

✓ Portfolios

✓ Free-writing activities

✓ Guided writing activities

✓ Projects

Other.....
.....

6. What are the assessment techniques you use in the classroom?

- ✓ Self-assessment
- ✓ Peer-assessment
- ✓ Teacher-assessment

Why.....
.....
.....

7. Do you mark your students' writing?

- ✓ never
- ✓ Sometimes
- ✓ Always

8. What type of scoring procedures you use?

- ✓ Holistic
- ✓ analytic

Why.....
.....
.....

9. When correcting students' writing, are you interested more in:

- ✓ form
- ✓ content
- ✓ Both of them

10. How frequently do you provide your students with written feedback?

- ✓ Always
- ✓ Sometimes
- ✓ Never

The impact of assessment practices on students' writing performance

11. How do your students like to be assessed?

- ✓ Using formative assessment
- ✓ Using summative assessment

Why.....
.....
.....

12. What do your students prefer most?

- ✓ Self-assessment
- ✓ Peer-assessment
- ✓ Teacher-assessment

Why
.....
.....
.....

13. Do your students like to be assessed?

- ✓ Yes
- ✓ no

Why.....
.....
.....

14. What do your students like?

- ✓ Give marks to their work
- ✓ Do not give them marks

15. Do your students like the comments you give to their work?

- ✓ Yes
- ✓ No

Why.....
.....
.....

16. What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?

- ✓ Monitoring students' progress
- ✓ Providing feedback
- ✓ Comparing between learners
- ✓ Planning the course based on the students 'proficiency level

Other.....
.....
.....

• **Suggestions**

17. What do you suggest for an efficient assessment of writing skill at university level?

Thank you

Appendix B: Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at collecting data concerning the assessment practices used in teaching writing at university level. Thus, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions. Thank you for your help

Assessment practices

1. How does your teacher assess your writing?
 - He gives you a test at the end of the semester (summative assessment)
 - He continuously evaluates your writing by testing you and giving you assignments during the semester.(formative assessment)
2. What does your teacher use to assess your writing ability?(you can choose more than one answer)
 - Portfolios
 - Guided writing activities (fill-in the gap, reordering exercises, open dialogues.,etc.)
 - Projects
 - Free-writing activities (writing essays and paragraphs of different types,etc.)
 - Other.....
.....
3. What are the assessment techniques that your teacher uses in the classroom?(you can choose more than one answer)
 - Self-assessment
 - Peer-assessment
 - Teacher-assessment
4. Does your teacher mark your writing?
 - never
 - Sometimes
 - Always
5. What type of correction procedures does your teacher use?
 - Holistic correction (the teacher gives you a single mark)
 - analytic correction(the teacher gives you detailed marks for each element of writing like vocabulary,grammar,etc)
6. When the teacher corrects your writing, is he interested more in :

- The form
- The content
- Both the form and content

7. How frequently does your teacher provide you with written feedback?

- always
- Sometimes
- never

The impact of assessment practices on the students' writing performance?

8. How do you like to be assessed?

- He gives you a test at the end of the semester (summative assessment)
- He continuously evaluates your writing by testing you and giving you assignments during the semester.(formative assessment)

Why.....

9. Do you prefer

- Self-assessment
- Peer-assessment
- Teacher –assessment

Why.....

10. How do you feel when you are assessed?

- Pleased
- stressed

11. Would you like your classroom assignments be:

- Marked
- Unmarked

Why.....

12. Do you like your teacher's written feedback on your paper?

- Yes
- No

Why.....
.....
.....

13. According to you, does your teacher assessment improve your writing?

- Yes
- No

Why.....
.....
.....

Suggestions

14. What do you suggest to your teacher as new techniques to use for assessing your writing?

Thank you ☺