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**EXPLORING WRITING IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT:
THE CASE OF FIRST-YEAR UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**

*Thesis submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in candidacy for the
Doctorat in Applied Linguistics and TEFL*

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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to give a clear picture of the teaching of writing to university students as these students show serious deficiencies in writing. It focused on first-year EFL students at the University of Tlemcen, Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English trying to investigate the teaching of the writing they receive. This work aimed first, at identifying first-year English students' writing difficulties; second, discovering the causes behind these difficulties and finally finding out possible solutions that are hoped to alleviate the problem and help students to improve their writing proficiency level.

Various research instruments were used in this case study: a production task, a teacher's and a student's questionnaire and a teacher's interview which constitute a variety of sources for collecting data.

It has been shown from the results achieved in this work that students' low achievement in writing was affected by inadequate teaching approach used, lack of coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses, lack of teaching materials, inadequate timing and lack of student's practice.

In sum, this project attempted to reveal the extent to which the above mentioned variables were involved in students' failure in writing and tried to suggest remedies or alterations needed to improve students' writing proficiency level.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

A.F: Absolute Frequency

B.E.M: Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen

C.L.T: Communicative Language Teaching

E.F.L: English Foreign Language

E.L.T: English Language Teaching

E.T: Education Technology

F.L: Foreign Language

F.L.1: First Foreign Language

F.L.2: Second Foreign Language

I.C.T: Information and Communication Technologies

L.1: First Language

L.2: Second Language

L.B.A: Language Based Approach

L.M.D: Licence, Master, Doctorate

M.T: Mother Tongue

R.F: Relative Frequency

S.A: Standard Arabic

S.B.A: Strategy Based Approach

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

T.L: Target Language

1°A.M: Première année moyenne (First-year Middle School)

2°A.M: Deuxième année moyenne (Second-year Middle School)

3°A.M: Troisième année moyenne (Third-year Middle School)

4°A.M: Quatrième année moyenne (Fourth-year Middle School)

1°A.S: Première année secondaire (First-year secondary school)

2°A.S: Deuxième année secondaire (Second-year secondary school)

3°A.S: Troisième année secondaire (Third-year secondary school)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The teaching process has been and is still a subject of hot debate and discussion among researchers. Language, as the core of this human and social concern, is apparently constituting the central problematic area to this kind of investigation. It is obvious therefore, that language as a means of communication and a vehicle of information would in all probabilities be a delicate item to deal with, and thus transmit its various and different aspects. Writing as one of its axes reveals some specificities quite complex to grasp and make use of, if not an explicit knowledge and an appropriate approach to the situation at hand is devoted to its teaching. This is why, it has been the study that goes back to the time of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Indians, and from its earliest days has caught the interest of the learned and the wise.

Before attending university, English writing is taught implicitly in the Algerian schools for at least seven years (four years in the middle school and three years in the secondary school). Teachers focus on the development of oral skills. The writing skill is given due heed only in the third year of the secondary school. Yet, in spite of such a long period of English learning, the writing performance of many university entrants is far from satisfactory. It is admitted that many Algerian learners who have completed their seven-year course of English language and begin their first-year course instruction at university are unable to express themselves in English neither fluently nor accurately showing deficiency in both writing and speech.

This low achievement in productive skills after a quite lengthy language learning process leads to question the suitability of the present teaching methodology since the school is largely responsible for producing non-competent language performers and consequently non-effective writers.

The main concern of the present work is to investigate the current teaching of writing in order to locate deficiency or deficiencies in the teaching of writing at the level of first-year students of the English Language Section at Tlemcen University to propose some useful teaching strategies to help the

student improve his writing competence and better cope with university tasks. Then, the present study asks the following questions:

- 1- What is first-year EFL students' writing competence?
- 2- Does the current teaching of writing adequately prepare first-year EFL students to cope with university writing?
- 3- What pedagogic change is needed to achieve successful academic writing?

Basically, the ultimate aim of this dissertation is to uncover the major causes of first-year university students' 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:

- 1- The vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak level in writing.
- 2- The current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation because of the teaching approach used (product approach), lack of materials, inadequate timing, lack of coordination between the different modules and lack of students' practice.
- 3- To achieve successful academic writing, change is needed at the levels of: teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time allotment.

The present research work tries to find out to which extent these hypotheses are true. Thus, in order to evaluate first-year EFL students' competence in writing, the researcher devised a production task (i.e. paragraph writing) to first-year students (the research population). Then, two questionnaires; one for university teachers and another for first-year university students and an interview for teachers of writing of the section in question are administered to investigate the current teaching of writing. Teachers and students were asked to answer a series of questions on their reactions to the teaching of writing at university. Therefore, by means of the collected data, the

present study will try to identify the problems which learners encounter when writing.

This research work is composed of five chapters that are intertwined to enlighten the reader about the field of research. The first chapter provides a theoretical overview of writing. It defines the writing skill, and then displays the historical survey of writing in foreign language teaching. Some teaching tendencies in writing are given such as the traditional method on the one hand and other contemporary teaching methods on the other. Next, the chapter explains the complexity of the writing skill. Besides, it describes the writing process and the different stages learners have to go through in order to achieve successful academic writing. Then, the chapter presents the importance of writing in language learning as well as its importance in relation to the other skills, highlights the relationship between writing and culture and tries to define writing with its related sub-skills, purposes and teaching norms.

The second chapter attempts to give a clear idea about the circumstances that shaped first-year students' writing behaviour. For this purpose, it starts with a general presentation of English language teaching in the Algerian educational system from early schooling (middle school) to university in order to give a clear picture of the learners' educational background, and language proficiency. It also presents the teaching of the writing skill at the different levels of education (middle, secondary schools and university) and reports on the development of this skill across these levels by presenting the teaching methods, the practices and activities used in writing. This chapter ends stating some important observations on the teaching of the writing skill.

The third chapter deals with the empirical phase which aims at finding illuminative data that would guide the research. It first describes the EFL teaching/learning situation at Tlemcen University, explains how writing is taught there and presents the writing syllabus used. This chapter is also concerned with the presentation of the research design and procedure. It states research questions and hypotheses before giving the profile of subject students who participated in the study. Besides, it presents and explains the research

methodology. The research instruments are introduced, their choice is justified and the procedure of data analysis is explained. In fact, this chapter is aimed to provide the qualitative and quantitative results of the undertaken study which permit the identification of the writing difficulties encountered by EFL first-year students and the causes of these difficulties.

The fourth chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. First, students' tests (i.e. the pre-test, the while-test and the post-test) are studied to elicit the type of mistakes produced by the learners and the students' way of writing paragraphs. These tests are analysed in order to describe the students' degree of achievement in writing. Then, the information provided by the questionnaires and the interview are analysed to present a global view about the writing teaching/learning situation. After the analysis of the data obtained from the various instruments, the results are interpreted via qualitative and quantitative analyses of the gathered information. Finally, the main research results are discussed by making reference to the findings and explaining the degree of evidence of the collected data.

The fifth and last chapter provides some suggestions and recommendations related to the teaching of the writing skill. It is concerned with what might be favourable as pedagogical implications to remedy the target situation. It attempts to give some pieces of advice and suggests some possible activities.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce some important concepts in foreign language teaching related to writing. It will not be just a historical survey, but will also deal with some fundamental theoretical issues.

It first starts by explaining the key concepts and defining the key words, then provides a historical overview of the place of writing in foreign language teaching and presents the major approaches and methods used in its teaching. As long ago as 1921, Palmer pointed out the important difference between understanding how a language works (conventions of writing) and learning how to use it. Since then, a great many effective techniques have been developed to enable students to learn a foreign language in general and writing in particular. That is why many theories and methods have been utilized or revised in order to arrive to an adequate way of teaching this skill.

It also explains the difficulty of teaching / learning this skill (i.e. writing skill), restates its importance in language learning as well as its importance in relation to the other skills, displays the writing process and finally reports how it gained importance as a field of research and how it contributed to foreign language areas.

1.2. WRITING DEFINED

Our centre of interest in this study is the teaching of writing to first-year EFL students at university level and its elaboration towards better learning. Writing, seen as a difficult skill to achieve especially for EFL students deserves its fair share of specific attention in language teaching. Writing, in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1996), is explained as "*the activity of writing or the skill of producing linear sequences of graphemes in time*". Likewise, in the Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language, writing is seen as a graphic system used for communication as defined in Crystal (1995:257):

Most obviously writing is a way of communication which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression.

It follows from the above definitions that writing is described as a mechanical activity neglecting the mental processes in which the writer is engaged.

In fact, this cognitive aspect, where writing is not merely seen as making letters or other symbols on paper but as elaborating cognitive processes usually comprising several stages such as: generating ideas, planning, drafting, editing, writing, evaluating and re-writing is highly emphasized nowadays namely in the educational context. In this context Flower and Hayes (1981: 366) pointed out:

Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing.

In this context the term “writing” is usually used synonymously with the term “composing”.

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 organization of ideas according to the conventions of the language. These conventions concern grammar, vocabulary, handwriting, spelling and punctuation (Harmer, 2001).

Writing is then a creative process which enables learners to describe facts, express ideas and impart knowledge to an unseen audience as explained in Badger and White (2000: 157-158):

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

To sum up the aforementioned definitions, one may say that writing requires from the writer the mastery of conventional writing mechanics and of organizational devices in order to write effectively. It is then a creative as well as a discovery process since it involves discovering ideas and ways of organizing them to convey a message to the reader (White, 1987). One of the advantages of the writing activity is that it makes thoughts appear on a piece of paper and permits the revision and restatement of these thoughts as explained in Harris (1993: 12):

It is almost as if 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.

Finally, one may say that it is important to grant greater attention and concern to the development and the social significance of the writing skill as pointed out in Hamzaoui (2006: 12):

The social significance of writing has become increasingly important at all levels of education: from elementary classes where demonstration of writing ability is part of minimum competency exams, to university level where writing is an exit criterion for graduation.

1.3. A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF WRITING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Writing is one of the four language skills taught in foreign language. It has been dealt with differently by the various methods which foreign language teaching has gone through. The following sections describe how writing was taught across these teaching methods.

1.3.1. Writing in Ancient Times

Before the written mode came into wise use, the oral tradition dominated. Composing and reciting orally were the signs of literacy. Writing was

considered a special skill, it was distinct from composing. In ancient and medieval times, rhetoric, including both prose and verse was very important. Medieval rhetoric concentrated on written composition but it also included speaking.

One can notice that even in modern teaching some elements of the classical approach to rhetoric have survived; indeed, the value of rhetoric has not decreased in teaching composition nowadays, since teachers of foreign languages still require this art in their students' composition, as they look more for correctness in the use of sentences.

In the classics' course, familiarity with verse composing was required for students in advanced stages.

In the 20th century, verse composition began to disappear from language classroom. Four types of exercises have characterized the teaching of composition until the twentieth century as pointed out in Kelly (1969: 156):

Transcription and consequent rote learning of models, structural variation of models, imitation, and original writing, each leading on to the other.

Transcription was used as an aid to memory until the beginning of the 19th century. It consisted in reproducing word for word, exactly what appears in a selected passage.

Variation of a source passage reached a peak in the involved various kinds of sentence variation as well as sentence expansion with an obvious consideration of styles.

Imitation of models was popular during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Its aim was to make students aware of certain features of style and prose composition. Sections to be imitated ranged from a complete poem to a stretch of a speech. The value of imitation decreased in the 20th century because

it required a high command level of the language from the teacher and because the new orientation of language teaching began to be oral.

1.3.2 The Grammar Translation Method

The teaching of writing during the first half of the century was dominated by the Grammar-Translation Method. The emphasis in this method is on the organization of language at sentence level in terms of parts of speech, such as verb, and also the types of word, such as noun, verb, adjective, adverb. Its goals were based on the idea that the purpose of learning a foreign language was to read its literature. Translation was as a way of studying and analyzing the rules of the language. Its focus was on rules; and the writing class came to be seen as the class teaching the rules of grammar. Grammar was taught in the form of rules and paradigms to be memorized by students. The basic technique to show understanding of the text was translation. This technique was used in translating from Latin or Greek to native language, or vice versa. The aim was always to train students to read the language.

Writing was not a skill in its own right, but rather a technique to show understanding of texts. Free writing was neglected because it involved no translation as Kelly puts it (1969: 166):

During the 20th century, free prose composition held an ambivalent place. As it does not involve translation, grammar-translation teachers reserved it until the end of the courses, sometimes omitting it altogether.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Grammar Translation Method was largely applied in Europe and the United States in teaching modern languages.

Though this method was aimed to study and analyze the rules of the language, it has proved to be deficient in some respects. Thereafter, another

method has been proposed to help learners make use of their grammar knowledge when writing as explained below:

1.3.3. The Direct Method

The Direct Method was based on the belief that a language could best be taught by its active use in the classroom. There was no translation; and the focus on explaining and analyzing the rules of grammar was replaced by actual use in the classroom.

The main goal in the Direct Method is an active native-like command of a language with an emphasis on oral skills and to the virtual neglect of the written skills. A language was to be taught in natural situations by extensive listening, imitation and speaking.

Writing was an incidental skill and little attention was attached to it. It was treated as a skill that comes out spontaneously from speech. Free composition was neglected. In practice, this method stood for the following principles:

- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
- Grammar is taught inductively.
- New teaching points were introduced orally.
- Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.

1.3.4. The Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method also called Aural-Oral Method began in the 1920's and 1930's and prevailed in language classrooms during the 1950's and the 1960's. The first advocates of this method were behaviorist psychologist like Skinner and structuralists such as Bloomfield and Fries. Their assumption was that language was learned by memorization. The aim of the method was to forge

new habits in students through various kinds of repetition and pattern drills. The teacher was to make students repeat till a near-native speaker's fluency (speed and pronunciation) was achieved, without necessarily understanding the meaning of the drill.

The Aural-Oral Method, as it was sometimes called, did not devote much attention to the skill of writing, considering its very label (aural = listening, and oral = speaking) as well as the classification of the language skills as Silberstein (1987: 28) puts it: *The natural order of language instruction was taken to be listening, speaking, reading, and writing.*

The Audio Lingual Method was very successful in the United States as Prator puts it (1980:33):

This approach enjoyed almost uncontested supremacy in the United States and I believe also in many parts of the world, through the two decades of the 1950's and the 1960's, but not more.

The modification in the language teaching methodology brought by the Audio-Lingual Method is fairly understandable. In fact, it is the purpose of language learning which has changed as pointed out in Newton (1980: 19) *“from a scholarly pursuit to a practical means of oral communication”*.

One could not expect therefore, to see much interest devoted to writing under this method, considering the educational context in which the latter developed.

When this method was the dominant mode of instruction, writing served merely as a means to reinforce aspects of oral skills already acquired. The written language was regarded simply as speech written down. The language was broken down into grammatical structures, which students practiced by means of drills which were concerned with giving students practice in forming correct sentences. An example of such a drill is:

Robert runs ten miles everyday

.....walks.....

Jane.....

.....to work.....

.....to school

According to Huebener (1965: 13-14), this approach was based on the following assumptions:

.....the language is the everyday spoken utterance of the average person at normal speed....the spoken language is purely an instrument of communication, used in given situations. Hence the dialogue should form the basis of every language lesson. In the approach to any language, listening and understanding come first. Almost immediately oral utterance follows. Speech comes first; reading and writing come later.

At the time small books were published which listed situations that could be used with the appropriate grammatical structure. The student was encouraged to produce as many sentences as possible using the form:

They had to have the door repaired

.....the roof.....

.....the garden.....

However, the problem that arose was that grammatical structures did not fit conveniently into anyone situation and the whole exercise became very artificial. What we had very often were little more than rather sophisticated forms of drills, which many learners found boring.

1.3.5. Transformational-Generative Grammar and the Cognitive Approach

Noam Chomsky came with the transformational generative grammar to challenge the view that language was acquired through habit formation. There is some innate capacity in every human being which enables him, among other things, to produce utterances he might not have encountered before; as Diane Larsen Freeman reported (1987: 3):

Overgeneralization errors such as “eated” and “sleped” were common in children’s speech. Such errors suggested that children were not repeating what was said to them, but rather were attempting to induce the rules for the past tense from the language to which they were exposed. And it seems that foreign language learners commit the same sort of overgeneralization errors.

In fact, these types of errors are significant because they give evidence that the learner is not passive but is instead playing an active part in the process of learning by making, for instance, hypotheses and testing their validity with the teacher. This does not imply that the learner acquires a language only through a systematic rule-formation way; in fact, much is learned through imitation as well.

The transformationalist theory did not affect language teaching methodologies at the beginning because the relationship between the linguistic theory and its implications for teaching was not obvious. Yet, as Newton puts it (1983: 19):

However, in the introductory chapter of Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, M.I.T. Press, (1965) Chomsky made it clear that he was challenging behaviouristic theories of language acquisition as well as phrase-structure grammar.

Perhaps, it is not this linguistic theory alone which leads to a change in the assumptions of teaching methodologies but the fact that teachers began to feel

the need for creativity and freedom in the use of language, a need which could obviously not be met by the Audio-Lingual Method.

Another factor which contributed to the relative failure of the Audio-Lingual Method was the de-emphasis on reading and writing.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the very heart of the approach and perhaps its success lies in avoiding the extremes of emphasizing one skill and sacrificing completely another. Instead, this theory suggests that the four skills (speaking-writing-listening-reading) be assigned a priority according to the purpose the teacher has in mind.

Yet transformational grammar did not revolutionize language teaching, despite its success at the theoretical level, because, like the Bloomfieldian structuralism, the Chomskyan grammar is still concerned with form as Johnson explained (1979: 3):

Linguistics in Chomsky as in Bloomfield is by and large the study of language structure. Perhaps this is why transformational grammar, so revolutionary in linguistics, has had such little effect on language teaching.

Though some linguists and didacticians considered this approach as useful, its validity has been questioned with a consequent shift towards a semantically-oriented approach, i.e. the communicative approach.

1.3.6. The Communicative Approach

To make language learning relevant and interesting, at the outset of the communicative approach there was a determined movement away from grammar as the centre of a language-learning course. The aim was that the use of language should be the dominant feature.

This is why there has been growing concern for specifying a language syllabus in terms of the communication needs of the learners. In spite of the fact

that the basic assumption of the structural approach is to teach language for communication in actual situations, teachers tended to aim at the development of linguistic competence in the learners, with reference to the language items specified in the syllabus. It is widely recognized that:

The view of language as communication could not easily be adequately contained in the form-oriented, sentence-based linguistics of the time.

Candlin (1978: vii)

Similarly, Allen and Widdowson (1976: 59) claim that the time has come that: *“The language should be presented in such a way as to reveal its character as communication.....”*

From the above quotations, one may understand that language is more than the knowledge of lexis and grammatical patterns, more than an awareness of how sentences are formed. Language is no longer perceived as a school subject but as a means of communication, so as to meet the demands of present-day society. Learning a language is not just a matter of learning how to fit linguistic forms together to make correct sentences.

Learning a language involves learning to use such forms to perform communicative acts of one kind or another. A learner cannot be said to learn the language until he can manipulate the formal devices for the purpose of conveying messages in real-life situations. In other words, he has to know what variety of language to use in a particular situation and how to vary the style according to whom he is addressing.

It is, of course, of no avail to dismiss the teaching of lexis and grammatical patterns. Language teaching should be viewed as a double-fold objective process:

1. To develop in the learner grammatical competence in the Chomskyan sense, in other terms, the mastery of the formation rules of the language.

2. To inculcate in him what is socially appropriate and accepted, i.e. what Hymes (1972) has labeled “the speaking rules”.

Furthermore, communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real life simulations change from day to day. Students’ motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

Berns (1984: 5), an expert in the field of communicative language teaching writes in explaining Firth’s view that:

Language is interaction; it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light language study has to look at the use (function) of language in context, both its linguistic context (what is uttered before and after a given piece of discourse) and its social, or situational, context (who is speaking, what their social roles are, why they have come together to speak).

Communicative language teaching began in Britain in the 1960’s as a replacement to the earlier structural method, called Situational Language Teaching. This was partly in response to Chomsky’s criticisms of structural theories of language and partly based on the theories of British functional linguistics, such as Firth and Halliday, as well as American sociolinguists, such as Hymes, Gumperz and Labov and the writings of Austin and Searle on speech acts.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a cover term for a number of approaches that developed in the 1970’s in critical reaction to audio-lingual teaching methods and their unsatisfactory results. They all criticize the mechanistic nature of audio-lingual pattern drills which fail to prepare learners

for a productive use of the target language in the many different communicative situations of everyday life.

The common goal of communicative approaches is communicative competence. CLT approaches criticize older teaching methods for being too teacher-centered and form-oriented; they propose, instead, a learner-oriented and meaning-focused approach. Students should be encouraged to say what they want (mean) to say rather than docilely reproducing what the syllabus, textbook prescribe and teachers expect them to say.

This approach states that the main concern of language teaching should no longer be the knowledge an ideal speaker-hearer has about a language but the use of this knowledge in concrete situations to achieve a communicative goal. It suggests ways that enable the learner to communicate in the foreign language instead of simply manipulating language structures. Distinctions between a sentence, a proposition, an illocution; usage and use; form and function, etc. began to appear. Other terms appear in literature such as appropriateness achieved through rhetoric versus correctness achieved through grammar.

This approach contributes much to the teaching of writing because of the new look at sentences from an exemplification of structures to utterances conveying different messages and forming discourse.

The main assumption underlying this approach is that learning how to build simple / compound / complex sentences, for instance, does not directly lead the learners towards being able to use them in communicative acts such as defining, describing, classifying, etc. These rhetorical acts should be taught in the same way as types of sentences.

A new trend has marked research on composition in the 1980's and its main assumption was the study of the process of writing.

1.3.7. The Learner-Centered Process Approach to the Teaching of Writing

Although recent methodologies emphasize different aspects of language learning, most of them agree at least that the learner should be the center of interest. So far, he has been considered as the person who does not know and who has to pick up knowledge, as it were. Now it is commonly admitted that he has an active part to play in the learning process.

As far as modern attitudes towards writing are concerned, more emphasis is put on writing as process and less as product. Zamel (1982: 196) justifies this shift of interest as follows:

Writing involves much more than studying a particular grammar, analyzing and imitating rhetorical models. The process involves not only the act of writing itself, but prewriting and rewriting, all of which are interdependent.

This process is not linear, i.e. the writer is not supposed to select a topic, plan, write and never come backward; instead, when editing, a student can change, rewrite a sentence etc. as explained in Larsen-Freeman (1983: 17):

Composingis a recursive process. Writers begin to write, they stop, go back, re-read what they have written, and usually even revise it before they resume writing....It is a way writers explore and clarify their thoughts and even discover new ideas.

As it has previously been mentioned, modern approaches to language teaching are more concerned with the learner and how he learns. This is particularly true in the teaching of writing, with the shift of emphasis from the written product to the writing process. Indeed, it has been observed that to produce a piece of discourse, successful writers do not follow a linear process, that is, take a pen, make an outline (stick to it) and compose at once; on the contrary, it seems that writing is a complex activity. Zamel (1982) an important

figure in the process approach to composition, studied the strategies used by proficient writers and reported interesting findings concerning the recursive nature of writing. For example, it seems that proficient writers spend more time at the pre-writing stage than poor writers do (Haynes 1978: 87).

Besides, considering the final product only, a misconception about writing is that one has to plan exactly what he is going to write before he starts by making a formal outline to fill in. If this were the case, writing would be a very monotonous activity. Fortunately, when we write we keep on discovering ideas about the subject matter that we may not have previously thought of. We may, likewise delete sentences that perhaps prove not to support our main theme. Writing involves creation throughout the whole process. A written text can hardly be a finished product. Every time we approach written matter, we find something to add or to omit in it. The student should be made aware of these features of the writing process so that they learn to go over what they have written for critical analysis of the content and for revision.

One of the crucial steps in writing is the planning of ideas. Here a major question challenges the use of an outline: to what extent do we need to plan our ideas?

We have always advocated the use of outlines to our students before writing; some of them obey the teacher's advice without much conviction, others admit that they cannot make an outline, except when their composition is finished.

Nevertheless, one can avoid the two extremes and encourage the planning of ideas before writing, for the sake of unity in a piece of writing, provided it is a flexible outline that readily accepts any new idea that contributes topically to the overall content

Writing leads to clarity as the writer keeps on asking himself what he specifically wants to say. Ideas are not ready-made when we begin to write. If it were the case, writing would be a mere translation of ideas into the visual

medium through script. But from our own experience, we know that this is not possible in writing. We keep on discovering ideas all the way through the act of writing.

A major contribution of the process approach to teaching writing is the concern with audience and purpose. Audience no doubt affects the process of writing as we keep on reminding ourselves of our audience, whom our addressee is, whether he is literate, whether he knows about the subject of our writing, etc...So far, EFL students, with their teacher emphasizing usage tend to consider writing as a mechanical task and to see audience as a merciless critic instead of an interlocutor to whom they are supposed to convey meaning.

Here the student writer's behaviour is largely determined by the teacher's position. If the teacher is seen as the person who is interested only in the shape of the text and not in the ideas communicated, the student will experience a kind of inhibition. If, on the other hand, the teacher enacts his role as an authentic reader, the student is more likely to experience his writing task as a meaningful act of communication, which after all, is our main concern.

One of the implications of the process approach to teaching writing is that, instead of simply learning a model and let the student imitate it, the teacher can facilitate the writing task by helping the students at the pre-writing stage, the composing stage and the rewriting stage and perhaps detect the source of difficulty for students at each particular stage.

The process approach is useful to teaching composition. Indeed, it helps make students aware of the interaction that exists between him and the reader, which is important in conveying ideas clearly. Widdowson (1983: 41) sees the necessity of interacting with oneself as "*facilitating the conveyance of information and generating new ideas*" and this is the main assumption underlying the process approach which we have been dealing with.

1.4. WRITING: A DIFFICULT SKILL

Students who learn English as a foreign language often say that writing is more difficult than any other skill. As the fact of the matter, most native speakers of the language have to make their efforts themselves to write accurately and effectively even on what they are well aware of. Needless to say, it is not easy at all for a non-native speaker to do something that an average native speaker usually considers a difficult job to do. Then why is writing found to be difficult to learn?

Writing requires both mental and physical efforts on the part of the writer since it has been defined as the activity of transforming thoughts into language. In effect, Byrne (1988) explains that the difficulty in writing stems from three kinds of problems:

Psychological, caused by lack of interaction and feedback between the reader and the writer.

Cognitive, because the organization framework of our ideas in written communication has to be mastered.

Linguistic, because in writing we have to express ourselves in a clearer and more grammatical manner than in speech, to compensate for the absence of certain features of spoken language such as gestures and facial expression.

In addition the writer has to handle many components at the same time: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, audience, purpose and the writing process. The combination of all these components makes writing a sophisticated and a difficult skill as represented in the following figure put forwards by Raimes (1983:6):

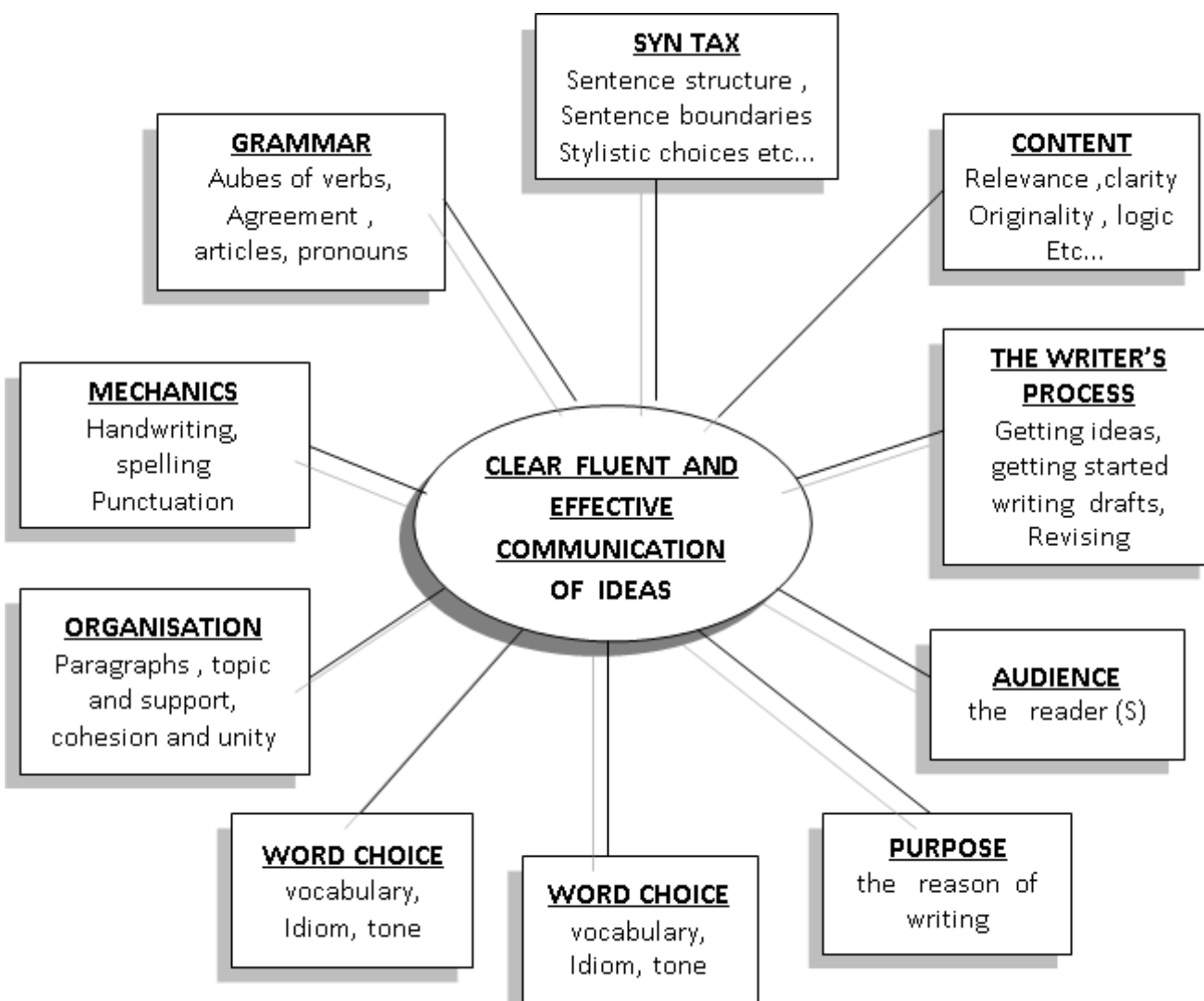


Figure 1.1: Producing a piece of writing.

Raimes (1983: 6)

According to a number of educationalists and linguists, writing is difficult in one's native language requiring formal instruction and conscious mental effort and the matter seems to be more difficult for foreign language learners as pointed out in Schoonen et al (2003: 166):

Writing in one's mother tongue is a demanding task that calls upon several language abilities, as well as upon more general (meta) cognitive abilities. These constituent abilities are in a constant interplay. Writing in a second language is even more demanding, because several of these constituent abilities may be less well developed than in one's first language.

In the same way, Kroll (1990: 140) explains the difficulties encountered by the non-native writer:

For English as a second language (ESL) students, it seems fair to say that writing is particularly difficult. ESL students must learn to create written products that demonstrate mastery over contextually appropriate formats for the rhetorical presentation of ideas as well as mastery in all areas of language.....It is partially the multiplicity of skills involved which contributes to the overall difficulty of writing.

To sum up the aforementioned quotations, one may say that writing is a difficult skill because it appeals for many competences at the same time, and it is even more demanding for foreign language learners as they are faced with the difficult nature of the writing skill itself in one hand and the difficulties inherent to the target language in the other. The difficulties stem not merely from finding out ideas but also from assembling them into coherent discourse, conforming to social conventions underlying written discourse, in order to perform an act of communication. To overcome these difficulties, the student writer needs guidance at the deep level of the writing process.

Writing is a skill that requires sufficient knowledge about the language to produce a written text. It is a difficult task as it involves cognitive processes. When teaching this skill to learners of English as a foreign language, more efforts and techniques are needed since these students often find problems in writing well as pointed out in Weigle (2002: 36)

The process of text generation, or encoding internal representations (ideas) into written text, may be disrupted by the need for lengthy searches for appropriate lexical and syntactic choices. Consequently, the written product may not match the writer's original intention.

Therefore, some students may encounter difficulties in writing compositions because of their limited linguistic knowledge. In addition, the lack of motivation and the cultural differences existing between the mother tongue and the target language may have great effects on the students' writing performance.

To conclude, one may say that writing is the most difficult skill that students of foreign languages may face. To be good at it, students must give much effort.

1.5 WRITING: PROCESS AND PRODUCT

According to Hartley (2008), research about writing processes has proved that the production of written texts involves a hierarchy of overlapping levels. The first level refers to writing as a social process since there is a relationship between the purposes of writing and the way of producing texts. The second one is concerned with writing as a cognitive ability since a composition or a written text is a reformulation of thought. Finally, the process of putting pen to paper is classified as the bottom level of the processes of writing. So, the teacher of English as a foreign language has to take these levels into consideration in order to make the students understand how writing functions.

Another important issue is related to writing as a process versus writing as a product.

1.5.1 Writing as a Product

In the past, the teaching of writing emphasized on the written product more than the writing process. The product writing focuses on the finished written text. It gives more importance to the final construction of the text and the language employed by the students. The product approach urges the students to produce essays or written works by focusing on what they have to write. This approach can be beneficial for the students but it ignores the stages of the writing process.

1.5.2 Writing as a Process

Recently, the concept of writing as a process has been given importance (Harmer, 2004). It links this skill to the thinking process and puts emphasis on how to produce and link ideas. It focuses on training students to become creative writers (Hyland, 2003). The process approach is based on teaching the students the four stages of writing which are: planning, drafting, revising and editing. Likewise, it helps to know about how to generate ideas and organize them to reach the final version of a composition.

The teachers of English as a foreign language should opt for a methodology of teaching writing that is based on the combination of the principles of the two approaches (Richards and Renandya, 2002) so that to make their teaching effective and improve their students' proficiency level.

1.6 THE WRITING PROCESS

Any piece of writing requires some thought before committing pen to paper. Writing was one of the language skills examined as early as the seventies. Researchers were interested in the common steps and strategies undertaken by successful writers. They highlighted a number of them with different appellations. Those steps were grouped under five stages, each comprising several strategies (Frederick 1987): the pre-writing stage, the drafting stage, the revision stage, the editing stage and the publishing or presentation stage.

1.6.1. The Pre-Writing Stage

It is considered to be the most important stage where students brainstorm to select a topic, generate ideas either individually or in groups, gather information, determine the most appropriate purpose and style and develop an outline or a tentative plan. It is worth stressing the importance of this stage because it is usually either neglected or made into a routine of prescriptive

planning or brainstorming. As already mentioned this stage comprises several strategies:

1.6.1.1 Brainstorming: This technique of jotting down words and phrases in a free association manner has become very popular; but there is a danger that this technique can be over-used without any real understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Although it has become popular in a topic or project work at primary level, it is also possible to use it to develop ideas for the plot or details of the setting for a narrative. However, brainstorming can have drawbacks. It is sometimes the case that students have a lot of ideas that do not fall into a pattern which can be inhibiting. Brainstorming, therefore, needs to be used with caution. A second strategy following a brainstorm may well be necessary in the assembling process to ensure a reasonable chance of a successful outcome. This simple but effective strategy is:

1.6.1.2 Planning: At this level, students start planning and organizing the selected ideas. It is a good thing to encourage students to do so since, without an initial plan, their writings can easily become out of balance and out of proportion. Though a focused support can be given through the use of appropriate planning, it is important to stress to students that planning sheets do not require perfectly correct and perfectly formed writing. Studies show that good writers are likely to revise their plans as they proceed and plan more than poor writers, spending more time reflecting, thinking or making notes before creating a first draft. The following stage is then the drafting or actual writing stage:

1.6.2. The Drafting Stage

Students, at this level, start writing a tentative product that will require evaluation and revision later on. They translate plans and ideas into a provisional text. It is often the case that the most difficult part of a piece of writing is the opening. Drafting allows students to start with whatever part of the projected whole comes most easily. It can help to simply say to oneself ‘get something down corresponding to a part of your plan and see how you feel

about it'. This is a way of overcoming that awful sense of paralysis, of staring at a blank piece of paper and not knowing how to begin. It is often the case that as students proceed with creating a text, they come to redefine ideas, perceive a different and more significant way of sequencing their ideas, think of new ideas and new linkages between ideas and, indeed, may even change their minds over a point of view or argument. Drafting is then the technique or the strategy that allows students the flexibility to explore, to make discoveries and to change their ideas. Once students have finished drafting, they have to move the next stage which is revising.

1.6.3. The Revision Stage

The revision stage and the previous one begin nearly at the same time because as they write, students revise and evaluate in order to make changes if necessary in both form and content. Sommer (1982) sees revision as “*a process of making changes throughout the writing of a draft, changes that work to make the draft congruent with a writer’s changing intentions*”. Once a first version has been created, changes and revisions may be needed. Revising means reading and changing with the aim of “improving or correcting”. Revising does not mean that you have failed with the first draft or that you can simply spell-check and call it complete. Revision is one part of the writing process. When you embark on revising, you focus your attention on the global characteristics or larger issues of writing content, organization, and style. Because these issues are common to all types of writing, good revision skills have widespread benefits. In addition to being one of the most creative parts of the writing process, examining the content, organization and style of your writing allows you to examine your audience as well as your approach, your substance as well as your style, your writing as well as your thinking. Obviously then, revising is extremely important.

1.6.4. The Editing Stage

It is sometimes said that a piece of writing is never finished. This is said because we recognize that a text is always capable of further revision and also because a text is recreated with different emphases and interpretations each time it is read. When the draft of a writing task is realized, students review the document in the light of decisions made during the pre-writing stage. Form and structure are given more importance than content. Editing involves then the careful checking of the text to ensure that there are no errors that will impede communication such as errors of spelling, punctuation, word choice and word order. The next and final stage is the publishing or presentation stage.

1.6.5. The Publishing or Presentation Stage

This is the final stage of the writing process. It occurs when a completed text is reworked and edited to the satisfaction of the author. The student here presents a final version of his written text to the intended audience.

Research has proven the writing process to be one of the most effective methods of teaching students to write. The writing process emphasizes student ownership and decision-making. It allows students writing to develop and mature every time the process is utilized.

The composition processes (i.e. the different stages) students undertake when producing a piece of writing were believed to be linear as represented in the following figure:

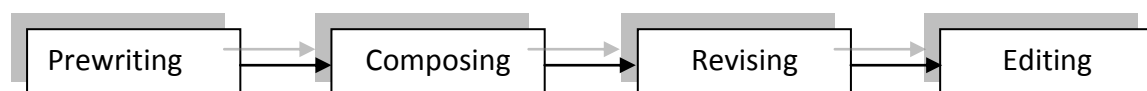


Figure 1.2: Classical view of writing

Hamzaoui (2006: 18)

By the eighties, some studies such as those of (Flower & Hayes) and (Perl) showed that the writing process was not linear but recursive (i.e. the writer comes back to various stages) as shown in the following figure:

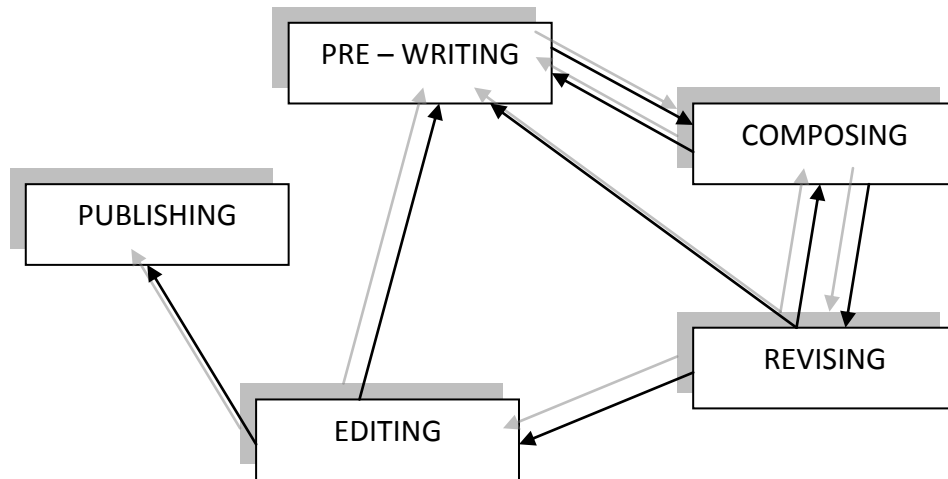


Figure 1.3: The process of writing as viewed by Perl and her successors
(1980: 43)

1.7 WRITING IMPORTANCE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Our writing ability in language learning is probably the most creative ability we have. There is no limit to what we can write, yet all of this potential is controlled by a finite number of rules; hence the importance of writing in language learning.

1.7.1. Writing for Learning

It is a common truth that much of our learning in the most general sense is acquired through language. Language and learning are interrelated and so are writing and learning. It is a process that occurs over a period of time, particularly if we take into account the sometimes extended periods of thinking that precede creating an initial draft. Even in the more immediately focused stage of constructing a text (actually writing the words down) student pause, think, pause, think, revise and so in. This somewhat halting progress reveals the number of decisions that have to be made by the student alone and also the

extent to which reflection is an essential part of the process. These decisions and the reflection together both require and develop ways of thinking that are not the same as those developed through talking. Some of the decisions that have to be made in the course of writing are concerned with the interrelationships between ideas or propositions; some are concerned with revealing as precisely as possible the nature of certain experiences giving them, in fact, a shape; others are to do with the selecting and ordering of ideas, information or experiences. All of these cognitive processes can and do occur in talk, but the way they occur in writing is fundamentally different.

Writing is needed to answer questions after a reading passage, or to summarize a text or to write a composition on a given topic. 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 (2000) and Harmer (1998 and 2004); 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 organize 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.

Writing is thus of paramount importance for learning and from all what has been said, one can deduce that learning to write is interrelated with writing to learn. This skill i.e. writing is not only needed to promote academic learning but it is also needed first and foremost for communicating.

1.7.2 Writing for Communicating

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. This is especially true of writing in English which, in the form of email messages, has become a prerequisite for international communication.

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. So, writing has to convey information according to a certain purpose for a given audience; otherwise it is but a mere graphic symbolization of speech. Writing is then acknowledged worldwide to be a crucial skill learners need to develop.

1.8 WRITING IMPORTANCE IN RELATION TO THE OTHER SKILLS

When we teach writing, we should not be getting our students to learn writing separately, but we should be getting them to learn quite a large number of different, though related, bits of knowledge skills. It is, therefore, well-agreed among didacticians (Ur 1988, Murphy 1985; Thomson and Martinet 1960), that

the teaching writing is in all probabilities related to a systematic knowledge of the four skills. Writing should not be taught separately and in isolation i.e. a module in its own right, but it should go hand in hand with the other different skills.

1.8.1 Writing and Reading

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

There are seven points of similarity or convergence between reading and writing as literacy skills as pointed out by Kern (2000: 16-17). They are summarized as follows:

- *Interpretation*: the writer interprets the world and the reader than 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' 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 relation 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.

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. Educationalists agree that there is a correlation between reading achievement and writing ability, and that efficient reading is a prerequisite for success in writing. Hedge (1988: 11) states 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*”.

Reading is then widely believed to increase proficiency in writing, so it needs to be enhanced by the teacher, by integrating both during each pedagogic unit in the language learning syllabus. Reading and writing, though different, can be considered convergent skills. On the other hand, speaking and writing, though similar, can be considered divergent skills.

1.8.2 Writing and Speaking

Part of the difficulty of learning to write is said to be due to the difference between spoken and written discourse. Both skills represent discourse in its spoken and written modes respectively, but they differ in many aspects. It is known that written language was traditionally given a higher status than speech which was considered as a departure from the standard that language represents. But, linguistics has reevaluated 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.

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 audience, the situation (formal/informal) and the feedback is instantaneous as pointed out by Rivers (1968: 291). “.....*there is an idea of shared knowledge between the sender of the message and the receiver*”.

Brookes and Grundy (1990), Harris (1993), and Harmer (2004) have noted different aspects of divergence between speaking and writing. They are summarized 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 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*: 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

Writing

Biscuit?

Would you like a biscuit?

Harmer (2004: 6)

➤ *Lexical density*: A significant difference between speaking and writing concerns lexical density; that is the proportion of content words to grammatical or function words used. Halliday (1990: 62) shares the idea that “*Relative to each other, written*

language is dense, spoken language is sparse". 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 i.e. in letters, shopping lists and messages. Moreover, 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.

Example: 'J4f' for 'just for fun'

Crystal (2001: 85)

To sum up, one may say that writing is acquired through a thorough and formal instruction and takes time to convey a message effectively and explicitly. Speaking, however, is spontaneous, obeys no strict rules to be meaningful and may be combined with body gestures or facial expressions to convey the message and receive immediate feedback.

1.9 WRITING AND CULTURE

The relationship between language and culture and the introduction of civilization-texts in foreign language pedagogy in general and writing in particular has always been a subject of much discussion among teachers and linguists. Culture is commonly defined as a set of rules and patterns shared by a given community. Specialists claim that every language is rooted in the culture of its speaking community. Thereafter, discourse and writing are believed to be embedded in culture as pointed out in Rivers (1968: 315) "*Language cannot be separated from the culture in which it is deeply embedded*".

The teacher has to draw his/ her students' attention to the cultural implications of language learning, and language using whether in speech or in writing. It is now believed that learning to understand a foreign culture helps students use words and expressions more appropriately. Now, culture in foreign language learning has become an important field of research. Researchers have shown that students from different cultures have different types of background knowledge, which influences communication. As far as English writing is concerned, the following review of research works highlight some important findings.

Cultural differences that exist between languages affect students' interpretation and comprehension of reading texts, and are thus likely to affect their written products.

Since writing is embedded in culture, one might expect to find evidence of cultural barriers or difficulty to cross such barriers in students' data. Galvan's (1985) study of the English writing processes of graduate students born and schooled in Spanish Latin America, attributed their poor performance in English to their uncertainty and oscillation between their L1 thought patterns and culture, and the thought patterns and culture associated with L2/FL. Similarly, Plata (1995) found in his investigation that while Hispanic college students in the USA had the potential to achieve academically in a college setting, their writing performance remained inferior to that of English speaking students. He reported that one possible cause of this deficiency was the culture bounds. In fact, L1 cultural features may cause hindrance in L2/ FL writing because as Kaplan (1983: 150) states:

The non-native speaker brings with him/her the alternatives available in the L1 and applies those alternatives in the L2, thereby creating a tension between the apparent relationship of ideas to topic

and the possibly inappropriate realization of focus through intersentential syntax.

Besides, Reid (1990) in his study tried to examine the impact of the topic task on the writer's response in the assessment process and to investigate and interpret differences between and among native speakers of four language backgrounds (Arabic, Spanish, Chinese and English) writing in English. He found that quantitative differences existed between the two topic types proposed and also differences among the responses of the four language backgrounds studied.

In another study, Nasr and Samadi (1995) found that their Arab students used Arabic structures in English writings. Likewise, Halimah (1991, qtd.in McDonough 1995) in his study observed that Arabic students learning to write for ESP maintained a rhetorical duality i.e. a mixture of Arabic and English expository styles, when he compared their writing on the same topics in English and Arabic. Ostler (1987) also compared English essays written by Saudi Arabian students with ten English paragraphs selected at random from books. He found that the essays written by Saudi Arabians have a higher number of coordinated sentences than the English passages. Moreover, the essays by Arabic-speaking students which contained more supporting ideas than the English passages, frequently began with a subordinate, universal statement, and ended with some proverbial statement. These studies provide evidence of cultural barriers when writing in FL, which may explain the rhetorical and some grammatical errors found in non-native writing.

Contrastive rhetoric has highlighted the fact that there are some native cultural features related to writing. These features may be transferred to FL writing and sometimes create difficulties. Research claims that these writing patterns related to culture are beneficial to FL learners if taught at school and insists that teachers of students coming from different speaking communities

should be aware of their learners' differences of their instructional backgrounds in order to use appropriate teaching approaches. Liebman (1992: 157) highlights this point stating:

If ESL writing teachers want their students to succeed in a variety of academic writing tasks, they must become aware not only of these different forms but also of differences in instructional background.....we must also determine what these students' prior experiences are. Students from different backgrounds will require different approaches.

One may say that the traditional approach to rhetoric did not focus on reasons for cultural differences in writing, but recent research work has shed some light on the role of culture and its inculcation through schooling instruction.

1.10 EFFECTIVE WRITING

The teaching of writing is a vast and complex subject since the writing skill is an extremely complex activity in which the writer has to master different variables simultaneously. Nunan (1991: 37) 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.
- Organizing 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.

Another more structured classification provided by Ourghi (2002:71) posits that effective writing relies on four types of knowledge: linguistic, graphic, syntactic and lexical.

1.10.1 Writing and Linguistic Knowledge

Written language requires in general an accurate writing system and lexico-grammatical knowledge with regard to graphics, mechanics, lexis and syntax. Such knowledge allows the writer to put together the interrelated pieces of the text and choose correct language forms. That is to say, the writer needs to select appropriate vocabulary, use linguistic cohesive devices, punctuate meaningfully, construct sentences and organize them into a well-structured text. In other words, it needs to be taught through formal instruction. So, when assigned a written work, students are expected to be able to:

- Handle the graphic system of the language 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
- 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, improving students' writing strategies, enriching their knowledge of linguistic resources in the foreign language and the ways they may be exploited in writing is of vital importance especially for

“learners whose chances for acquisition of the language through a variety of media such as films, radio, television, contact with native speakers are very limited...., and whose reading activities in English are restricted to the confines of academic textbook”

1.10.2 Writing and Graphic Knowledge

The writing system makes use of a wide range of graphic conventions: spelling, punctuation and handwriting. These conventions help convey the desired meaning and information. Being minimum requirements, they ensure that communication is efficient. They function as clues to teach organization of a paragraph, or of longer compositions. Students need to be made aware of the importance of these conventions, and the way to handle them.

1.10.2.1 Spelling: It is a conscious, deliberate process which requires awareness of linguistic structure of words with a good visual memory. Spelling differs from formal (job application letter) to informal (a short message to a friend) writing. One of the reasons spelling is difficult for students is the absence of complete correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it is spelt, that is the absence of correlation between phonemes and graphemes. The word sheep for example has really one possible pronunciation / i : p/; whereas this form could be written in at least three different ways: sheep, sheap, shepe.

To be able to correctly spell words, there is a need to have both this phonological awareness and a good visual awareness. It seems that poor spellers not only lack this double skill but also fail to grasp the importance of spelling accurately. Some of the most common spelling mistakes are to do with confusions between words that sound the same but are spelled differently and mean different things (homophones). Consider the following words: principal/principle, their/there, practice/practise and two/to. Such difficulties of the English spelling mistakes provide evidence of the fact that spelling is notoriously difficult for native speakers and non-native speakers alike. In sum, one may say that correct spelling is one of the requirements of effective writing and bad spelling is perceived as a sign of carelessness, and may involve a negative impression on the reader. Said differently, students need to ensure that

the spelling is correct so as to avoid any type of bad impression or ambiguity on the part of the reader. Readers generally wish to have the primary meaning readily available to them without serious difficulties in encoding and decoding written symbols. Thus, correct spelling is part of language awareness since it takes into account the need and expectations of the reader of clear and legible writing.

1.10.2.2 Punctuation: In general, punctuation helps the writer to communicate meaning accurately. It also guides the reader to make sense of what the writer intends to convey. This means that in order to develop as a writer, one needs to learn to use punctuation conventions in an accurate and consistent way. Writing is only effective if it is constrained by rules and conventions.

Technically, the punctuation system has two main functions. First, it enables stretches of written language to be read in a coherent way by separating successive units (e.g. sentences by full stops, or a series of items by commas). Second, it specifies language function (e.g. the use of apostrophe for genitive case or question mark for a question). These functions can be divided into three main ones: boundary-marking, status marking and relation markers Halliday (1989: 33-34). The first, boundary marking, serves to separate units of grammar (sentences, clauses, phrases and words) from each other. The writing system makes use of full stops to mark off stronger boundaries (sentences), and colons, semi-colons and commas to mark off weaker boundaries (words, phrases and clauses).

The second function, status marking, indicates the speech functions of sentences (statement, question, exclamation or quotation). The full stop identifies a statement, the question mark a question and the exclamation mark a number of speech functions including commands, suggestions, offers, exclamations, calls and greetings.

The third, relation markers, sets up a close link between units of a sentence. This includes the hyphen which indicates a compound word or a word

consisting of two morphemes; the dash, which signals that the following element is to be taken in apposition with the preceding one; parentheses, which add minor elements to the sentence; the apostrophe, which points to a possessive case or indicates an informal variant through omission of a letter (I won't go). From a functional perspective, the three main functions of punctuation in English as a writing system can be tabulated as follows:

FUNCTION	GENERAL UNIT	SPECIFIC UNIT		NAME	MARK
Boundary Markers	Grammatical Units	Word		Space	#
		Phrase		Comma	
		clause	Closing	Semicolon	; S ;
			Opening	Colon	:
sentence		Full Stop	.		
Status Markers	Speech function	exchange	Statement Question	Full stop Question mark	. ?
		Other functions	Command Offer, suggestion, call exclamation, greeting	Exclamation mark	!
	Projection	Quotation, citation	First order; or meaning	Single quote	' '
			Second order;	Double quote	“ ”
Relation Markers	Any unit	apposition		Dash	—
		digression		Parenthesis	()
	Compound word	linkage		Hyphen	-
	Possessive, negative	omission		Apostrophe	'

Table 1.1: Functions of punctuation in the English writing system

(Adapted from a functional description by Halliday 1989: 35)

Punctuation is then necessary in a writing programme. Students need to develop an awareness of the conventions of writing as a system. The adherence to such conventions gives a clue as to how much the writer cares about what he or she has written. Unattractive writing, where care has not been taken with mechanics, suggests that the writer does not care whether or not his message is received or whether or not the reader finds the decoding of that message a

pleasant or a less than pleasant experience. In other words, the writer does not consider writing as an act of involvement which counts as Winch and Wells (1995: 81) explain:

Neatness and accuracy in writing have an aesthetic value which discloses the extent to which the writer values writing and values the reader.

Students really need to learn the graphic system if they want their texts to be comprehensible and acceptable to the reader. In this respect, the teacher can develop with students a checklist of the most important punctuation marks and their functions, and make them consult it whenever they want to write or revise their written works. This checklist can be done in the form of an activity as proposed by Harmer (2004):

<u>Check your punctuation</u>	
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.	
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 ‘	Anis used when two words are contacted 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!	Anis 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 questions 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/Care used for the first letter of a name a country , nationality or language , days of the week , months .

Table 1.2: A punctuation checklist: an alternative activity about punctuation marks and their common use Harmer (2004: 50)

1.10.2.3 Handwriting: Handwriting is a personal issue. Students have to know that bad handwriting may influence negatively the reader or exam corrector; this is why they should learn how to improve it. Nowadays, communication is more and more taking place through computers; nevertheless, handwriting is still important for personal letters, written assignment 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 students' difficulties from time to time in the form of practice activities as pointed out by Doff (1988). The best way to improve handwriting is through copying activities.

1.10.3 Writing and Syntactic Knowledge

When we teach language structures, we should not be getting our students to learn grammar separately but we should be getting them to learn quite a large number of different, though related, bits of knowledge skills: how to recognize the examples of the structure when spoken, how to identify its written form, how to understand its meaning in context and how to produce meaningful sentences when it comes to its use. Syntax - a sub-division of grammar – refers to the set of rules describing the different ways words are combined in phrases, sentences and clauses. It is commonly held that only when the set of rules governing grammar is known from both the reader and the writer that meaning can be conveyed. So, students 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, reminders of important grammatical notions should be included in the pedagogic units such as:

- Word order in simple, complex, interrogative and exclamatory sentences.
- Comparative and superlative adjectives.

- Regular and irregular verbs
- Parts of speech.
- Cohesive devices.

To be good in writing, students need to know how to write correct and effective sentences, but they have first to be made aware of the distinction between a phrase, a sentence and a clause.

A phrase is a group of related words, without a subject and predicate. It can be joined to a main clause by subordinating conjunctions to form a complex sentence.

A sentence is a group of words that express a complete thought about something or someone. It contains a subject and a verb, and it may be made of one or more clauses. The sentence can stand on its own grammatically.

A clause refers to a group of related words which contains both a verb and its subject. A clause is either dependant or independent. Clauses can be joined by coordinating conjunctions to form a compound sentence or by subordinating conjunctions to form a complex sentence.

Students also have to learn revising their written products by considering consistency and parallelism.

First, consistency means to avoid shifting from one tense to another in the same paragraph. It also concerns the use of verbs and pronouns.

- Example: We were seven miles from shore; suddenly, the sky turns dark. (inconsistent tense)
- We were seven miles from shore; suddenly, the sky turned dark. (consistent tense)

Fawcet and Sandberg (2002: 302)

Second, parallelism means to balance similar words/phrases to express similar ideas.

- Example: He slowed down and came sliding. The winning run was scored.
- He slowed down, slid and scored the winning run.

(Ibid : 310)

If we consider the grammatical knowledge and writing, one may say that this knowledge is recognized as the first criterion and the first prerequisite for effective writing. Integrative teaching (i.e. the teaching of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in conjunction with each other) of grammar and composition (writing) will increase students' motivation and improve performance in writing. This integration will enable students to produce accurate and appropriate various well-formed structures as asserted by Ur (1988: 6) who stresses the importance of grammar for both forms (i.e. production of well-formed examples) and meaning (i.e. the use of the structure to convey meanings) in writing.

It should be mentioned at this level, that the teaching/ learning process of grammar is rather concerned with different aspects of the writing skill at two distinct levels namely, form and meaning.

Therefore, it is well agreed among didacticians (Thomson and Martinet 1960, Murphy 1985 and Ur 1988) that the teaching of the different types of grammar structures is in all probabilities related to a systematic knowledge of the four skills and what they fulfill. As far as the productive skills (i.e. speaking and writing) are concerned, one may say that these skills should be conceived by both teachers and learners as an ability to produce accurately and appropriately various well-formed structures in speech as well as in writing.

To sum up, one may say that the grammatical knowledge is not only important but necessary for students to improve their writing performance and should go hand in hand with the four different skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

1.10.4. Writing and Lexical Knowledge

Lexical knowledge refers to the writer's mental storehouse of information about words and their use to fit the meaning and the message of the text as pointed out by Ourghi (2002: 77):

Writing is primarily conveying meaning and sending a message by selecting relevant lexical items and putting them in a written form.

The lexical items function as units of meaning signaling and unifying the text. As such, vocabulary which has long been neglected after the dismissal of the Grammar Translation Method is undoubtedly the largest single element in tackling a foreign language for learners. 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).

The lack of an adequate amount of words is consonant with a major aspect of difficulty that learners are bound to face in learning to write. To overcome this difficulty, learners need first, to acquire a traditional instruction in word formation and word choice i.e. learning simple words, compound words, complex words and their meanings for these words are the smallest meaningful units in a language, but for the most part, allow writers to communicate successfully in sentences and texts and to understand the function of the different words in sentences. 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 following table:

linguistic relations	Common	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 1.3: Examples of linguistic relations and their common use.

(adapted from Hedge, 2000)

It is also important for teachers to assign and 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 to link sentences and how these sentences relate to each other. For this, the use of coherence and cohesion devices has to be used in paragraph writing tasks, essays and in longer compositions.

Coherence and cohesion: related lexical items across clauses and sentences boundaries in written texts are a major characteristic of coherent discourse. This relation of vocabulary in texts is referred to as lexical cohesion (Halliday and Hassan 1976; Halliday and Hassan 1985; Halliday 1989).

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.

1.10.4.1 Coherence refers to the sense unity that should exist between sentences of the same paragraph. It is usually described in terms of correctedness between

sentences, use of explicit cohesive devices such as pronouns, repetitive structures, and transitional markers.

1.10.4.2 Cohesion, on the other hand 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 parts of a sentence or different sentences themselves. They also act as linguistic signals to help the reader make the transition between preceding and coming ideas or sentences. Lee (2002: 33) suggested 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 organizing ideas in a certain order. For example, old information is given before new ones.
3. To justify an idea or elaborate it with examples; otherwise, it becomes a generalization.
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.
5. The use of metadiscourse¹ markers in texts helps readers organize, interpret and evaluate information. Some examples are *logical connectives* (therefore, but), *sequencers* (firstly, secondly, finally), *certainty markers* (certainly, no doubt).

¹ Metadiscourse: refers to linguistic material in text 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.

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 tasks.

Three other variables are to be taken into consideration for effective writing as maintained by Brookes and Grundy (1990), Harris (1993) and other educationalists: purpose, content and audience.

1.10.4.3 Purpose refers to the communicative function of a text i.e. informing, instructing, entertaining, persuading, explaining, presenting an argument or 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.

1.10.4.4 Content refers to the form and the meaning of the language used. The types of written texts can be stories, essays, plays, letters etc. In addition, the writer has to develop the assigned topic through relevant and well organized ideas, appropriate vocabulary choice and adequate grammar use. Content also refers to the text type dealt with i.e. formal or informal. When writing, our intention is not always made explicit in the text, sometimes, it has to be interpreted or deduced by the reader. Here, one may point out the importance of the audience that the writer has to keep in mind while designing content.

1.10.4.5 Audience: in effective writing, one of the most important elements is to develop a sense of readership. 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 teacher, a classmate 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 examiner, the peer group or a virtual named audience. These three parameters are summed up by Arndt (1981) quoted in Wallace (1998: 92):

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.

1.11 CONCLUSION

From the review of literature, one can deduce that writing is a difficult and a complex skill that requires the mastery of organizational devices and of conventional writing mechanics in order to be effective and successful in writing. Learners have to be taught this skill because of its importance for their language learning, for their language use and their future prospects at university or for their future job and career. This is why writing has to be carefully taught, keeping a balance between accuracy and fluency.

Besides, current research and renewed interest in language use and language learning has provided us with a fundamentally different way of looking at writing and writers. We now know more about what people actually do with language when they write (writing performance). Such knowledge can prove immensely useful for adapting and developing a writing model that fits our own context.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING WRITING IN THE ALGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A SITUATION ANALYSIS

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research work aims at investigating the teaching of writing for first year EFL university students. For this purpose, it is useful to present the educational context in which our targeted students develop starting from a general overview of ELT in the Algerian educational system to a more specific one dealing with the instruction received by our learners from the lower levels of education (Middle and Secondary schools) to the higher one (University).

This contextual analysis is followed by a thorough investigation into the teaching and learning of the EFL writing skill throughout the three levels of instruction (i.e. Middle school, Secondary school and University). It would shed light on the causes of the low proficiency output and would guide efforts towards improvement.

Besides, this chapter includes a description and analysis of students' needs, as perceived by policy-makers. Finally, different variables related to the teaching of the writing skill are considered. First, the chosen approach is illustrated in terms of stated objectives. Second, the teacher's role, training and administrative constraints are dealt with and third, the learners, as the centre of the whole educational system, are described in relation to their proficiency level in the English language in general and the writing skill in particular.

2.2 ELT IN THE ALGERIAN POST-INDEPENDENCE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The teaching of English as a foreign language in the Algerian post independence educational system has witnessed a gradual development with regards to its importance, its role, curriculum goals, syllabus design and objectives, and teaching methodologies. The following sections will describe this development.

2.2.1 A General Presentation of the Algerian Educational System

The Algerian school system was in a very difficult situation after the independence because the majority of the teaching staff and school administration were French who left Algeria at independence. At that time, one of the major concerns of the national development was education. Only two levels existed in the Algerian pre-university educational system: primary and secondary schools. The latter lasted seven years and grouped the actual two school systems middle and secondary schools. After the independence, French prevailed as the language of instruction – an educational heritage left by colonialism. English was introduced in the third year of secondary (named at that time 4ème). The authorities, therefore, designed a new system of education which promoted “Algerianization” and “Democratization” in Secondary schools. Though this educational policy helped provide the country with a good number of specialists needed to start the Algerian economy; it gave rise to less qualified people namely in teaching which was to affect a few generations’ educational growth.

Along the line of “democratization”, the government launched the fundamental school in the seventies which secured the standard norm of nine year schooling (six years in primary school and three years in middle school) for the vast majority of Algerian children starting at the age of six. The purpose of the fundamental school was to develop within the child the material and spiritual elements of socialism by teaching him economics and social sciences based on Arab-Islamic sources and values. However, this system is more likely to hinder the child’s normal educational process. The huge amount of knowledge given at this level and the study of empirical sciences which requires a certain maturity and reasoning goes beyond the child’s abilities who rather needs at this stage to acquire the basic skills of a language.

Since then, the Algerian school has gone through a number of reforms. The government engaged in the process of “Arabization” as early as the seventies. The

objective of this process was to spread the use of Standard Arabic (SA) gradually replacing French. “Arabization” began in the lower levels of education in the seventies to be extended to higher education in the eighties. However, it should be noted that this process was launched without effective preparation: lack of teacher training, lack of teaching materials and resources for learners; this is why the Algerian arabized students found and are still finding difficulties to specialize in some scientific fields.

In addition, the predominance of instruction through standard Arabic and the low subject matter coefficient as well as limited teaching time and resources allocated to French and English language teaching (respectively first and second foreign languages) led the younger generations (those born in the late seventies and eighties) to encounter real learning problems in both foreign languages. This is clearly felt at university level, where the majority of new entrants display serious deficiencies in both speaking and writing. Miliani (2001: 14) explains that the language problems our learners face are namely due to the neglect of the Algerian socio-linguistic reality in language planning stating that:

Language (foreign and national planning), as well as teaching have always responded to considerations or policies imbued with partisanship far from the socio-linguistic reality of the country.

Algeria has carried on and reinforced the teaching of foreign languages. As already mentioned, French was still used as the language of instruction 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: finance, business 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 globalization 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 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.*

To sum up, Arabic has been instituted since the 1970s and generalized to all school levels by the 1980s giving French a second rank as a first foreign language; despite its wide use in everyday life and in higher education. Consequently, English has been considered ever since as a second foreign language. It is taught along the four years of Middle school and in the three years of the secondary school. Thus, by the end of secondary education, the learners will have accumulated an EFL learning experience of seven years.

ELT in the Algerian pre-university educational system consists of two levels: the Middle School and the Secondary School keeping in mind that in 1993/1994 there was an experimental attempt to teach English as a first foreign language (FL1) in the fourth year of the primary school in place of French. However, this experiment was confined to few regions, and ended in failure because neither the sociolinguistic background, nor the human or material resources were available for the success of this enterprise.

2.2.2 ELT in the Middle School

In the 1970s, the government ensured a compulsory schooling of three years in the Middle school for all Algerian children starting at the age of eleven. At that

time, English was introduced in the second year Middle School. The grammar translation method prevailed in Algeria and this could be seen in ELT textbooks existing at that time¹. Language was then taught through the explicit teaching of grammatical rules, their memorization and their application in translation tasks. Reading and writing were the major focus, but little attention was paid to speaking or listening skills. Accuracy was favored over fluency, and teaching was basically teacher-centered. But, the 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 criticized, 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. This stream of thought was deeply rooted in the Algerian school in the 1970s. The structural approach was evident in ELT textbooks, 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 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 'revolutionized' 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-centered, since focus is on communicative needs of learners. In other words, language is taught to enable learners to use it for communicative purposes.

Year	Weakly time load	Coefficient
First	3hs	1
Second	3hs	1
Third	3hs	1
Fourth	3hs	2

Table 2.1: EFL time load and coefficient in the Middle School

The new methodology aims at developing in learners ‘communicative competence’ rather than ‘linguistic competence’ in the Chomskyian sense². Language is no more considered in terms of structures –grammar and vocabulary-, but also in terms of 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. Accordingly, a new series of ELT textbooks has been designed to meet the requirements of the new approach.

However, it should be noted that from October 2003 and according to a new educational reform, the Middle School extends over four years³. After a four-year schooling period, pupils sit for the BEM (Brevet d’ Enseignement Moyen) examination and the scores obtained for this exam added to those obtained during the 4th year of study (4 AM) will allow them to pass to secondary education. English is introduced in the curriculum for the first time in the 1st year of the Middle School and is studied during the four years but its coefficient remains low as illustrated in the following table:

The syllabus objectives tend to be somewhat ambitious. They are based on the premise that Middle School pupils are already proficient in French, and can

therefore transfer initial learned items (Latin phonemes and graphemes, spelling and punctuation rules) to the learning of English.

This is, unfortunately, not always the case for most pupils who either have inadequate command of the basics of French or have not studied it at all due to the lack of teachers, especially in the remote rural and southern areas.

The classroom time is three hours per week for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year for programmes consisting of an average of five teaching files. These files include sequences in which the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are introduced. Basic structures and vocabulary of English are also dealt with at this stage. What is striking is the large number of specialized vocabulary and very few core words at such a beginning level. Similarly, the selected topics and the rather lengthy texts, with a heavy urban connotation are not likely to appeal to beginning pupils whose intellectual transition is still not yet developed. It is therefore very doubtful that a vocabulary of a scientific register is going to be effectively mastered, remembered, and eventually used. In addition, teachers are required in each of the sequences to give pupils some phonological notions. In other words, they try to help them recognize the different sounds especially the vowel sounds before moving to stress and intonation.

The current teaching methodology of English as second foreign language draws on structural, functional, and communicative principles. A greater emphasis is put on oral skills.

Language and words are introduced in a linear way and are rarely reintroduced. What is also noticeable at this level is a kind of discrepancy between the syllabus designers' own theoretical perception and knowledge of the pupils' cognitive and linguistic capabilities and the actual pupils' abilities, needs and rising difficulties in addition to other constraints such as teacher's specific training, pedagogical resources and teaching time.

As a matter of fact, Middle School learners have developed a set of thinking and linguistic skills that allow them to produce only a low performance either in oral or written skills. What is more, teachers are constantly hard pressed to complete the programmes and attain the syllabus objectives, regardless of the pupils' real abilities to comprehend, let alone use and practice the taught items in the foreign language. What seems to matter most is the success in the final institutional examination BEM (Brevet d'enseignement moyen) and certification.

2.2.3 ELT in the Secondary School

Secondary education lasts three years and constitutes a thorough preparation for the Baccalaureat examination held at the end of the third secondary year (3AS) and which is the requirement for university entrance. There were two types of secondary schools before the academic year 2005/2006: technical Secondary Schools which prepared pupils for university technical studies such as electronics, computing, civil engineering; and general Secondary Schools which prepared pupils for all other disciplines. In 2006, a new educational reform was applied. According to this reform, the two types of Secondary Schools combined into a single one: General Secondary School in which all the different disciplines are gathered including English. In the first secondary year, students are either enrolled in a scientific or a literary stream according to their Baccalaureat scores before being oriented to the different specializations of each stream in the second year. 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:

year	Stream	Weekly time load	Coefficient
First (1AS)	Literary streams	4hs	3
	Scientific streams	3Hs	2
Second (2AS)	Letters and foreign languages	5hs	4
	Letters and philosophy	4Hs	3
	Experimental sciences	3hs	2
	Mathematics	3hs	2
	Technique mathematics	3hs	2
	Economy and management	3hs	2
Third (3AS)	Letters and foreign languages	4hs	4
	Letters and philosophy	4hs	3
	Experimental sciences	3hs	3
	Mathematics	3hs	3
	Technique mathematics	3hs	3
	Economy and management	3hs	2

Table 2.2: EFL time load and coefficient in the Secondary School.

The first secondary year (1AS) offers a consolidation of the linguistic items learned at the Middle School. The official syllabus (1999: 2-3) includes three major components: grammar, vocabulary and study skills, and recommends a realistic and communicative way of drilling and evaluating the syllabus components.

The syllabus objectives, though important, appear to be, as is the case with the Middle School level, overambitious and paying little attention to the existing contextual constraints. The planned objective of uncritical enthusiasm for communicative efficiency, meaningful purpose, spontaneous desire to communicate, acceptable grammar and reasonable fluency (ibid: 4) seems to reflect the designers' unawareness of the Algerian school reality. While these objectives are highly useful and desirable, their actual application inside the classroom needs to be based on empirical verification and measured evaluation; otherwise, it may become a far-

reaching goal due to the available teaching time, overloaded curricula, examination pressures and the pupils' growing demotivation (Mellouk: 2000) to spend extra effort on skills whose utility belongs to the long-term rather than the short one.

Another striking characteristic of EFL teaching at the Secondary School level is the use of different method in each of the three years. First year secondary (1AS) is task-based and topic oriented with a clear emphasis on the oral skills; second year (2AS) combines a structural-functional method, and the third year (3AS) follows a content-based method with a focus on the reading and writing skills.

While this balanced conception seems appropriate given the varied aims of the language teaching and, in agreement with the purposes of foreign language learning, its actual implementation in the Algerian situation does not seem to follow a multi-level sequence: focus on structural control (level 1), focus on discourse control (level 2) and focus on language use (level 3).

In first year secondary (1AS), the teacher is given the opportunity to make choices among the set of activities in the text Book. He/she is expected to select learning activities according to specific needs and interests of the given language class. In second secondary year (2AS), the teacher's role is to focus on the development of communication by teaching simultaneously strategies and language structures, and encouraging group work. Finally, in the third year secondary (3AS), having apparently built up a repertoire of necessary communicative skills, the teacher introduces learners to a systematic study of discourse patterns and language functions. The textbook, remains largely functional with authentic texts and a rich lexical density that are more often beyond the learners' comprehension abilities and the teachers' pedagogical explanations.

In sum, pupils in the third year secondary (3AS) 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 such as (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.

To conclude, one may say that secondary education aims to prepare pupils for the Baccalaureat examination which is the requirement for university entrance. It should be noted, however, that pupils learn English for at least seven years before entering university and their knowledge of the English language is in general inadequate due to many factors such as overloaded programmes, insufficient teaching time, and little systematic language practice, fewer writing tasks and limited background knowledge as regards the foreign language culture.

2.2.4 ELT at University

The rapid growth of the Algerian university and its initial orientation towards a mass institution may be said to have had a significant impact on the pedagogical interaction between teachers and students and the learning processes and outcomes. The university, in general, barely keeps up with the increasing number of new Baccalaureat holders. The need to offer a pedagogical place to each entrant is necessarily met at the expense of pedagogical concerns and facilities (adequate teaching time, small and same ability classes, and qualified teachers). Consequently, the newly enrolled university students face serious problems (linguistic, cognitive, social and material). While some of the new entrants manage to adjust to the process of change, the majority of them appear unable to cope with the demands of a new academic context where rising awareness is the key factor to success.

Though the English language in Algeria is witnessing an increased interest for economic reasons i.e. international exchanges, banks, national and foreign

companies, it is only learned at school and at university for further studies, job requirements, visits abroad etc.. without being involved in any societal function.

After independence, the university students who needed to specialize in the English language, enrolled in the English Departments of the Faculty of Letters for a “Licence de Lettres Anglaises” i.e. a BA degree. Before the 1980s, the time spent for a “Licence¹” was three years; the enrolled students were Baccalaureat holders having obtained an overall average of 11/20 and a minimum score of 12/20 in English. Priority was given to literature students i.e. students from “série Lettres”. The motives of English students at that time according to Bouhadiba (2000) were more integrative and cultural than vocational. The former is the desire to achieve proficiency in the target language (TL) in order to take part in the life of the target community. The learner who is integratively motivated shows interest not only in the target language but in the culture as well. He sees himself as a potential member of the target language group. The latter is the desire to achieve proficiency in the target language for utilitarian reasons such as career enhancement or educational goals. The English departments consisted of Algerian teachers and expatriates from UK, USA, Australia and India.

The situation began to change by the mid-eighties. At that time, the Ministry of National Education became involved in the design of new teaching methods based on the communicative approach and by the beginning of the nineties, the advent of computing in Algeria allowed a new system for the registration of university entrants (still in use). The Baccalaureat holders were oriented to the English sections for a “Licence” degree by computer on the basis of the scores obtained in this examination, the choices they made and the Baccalaureat option. The motives became more instrumental than integrative or cultural Bouhadiba (2000).

Regarding the university teaching staff, it consisted of Algerian teachers trained locally. The amount of time to complete a “Licence” changed also; it was

extended to four years. The first year aimed at consolidating the basis of the language already acquired in Middle and Secondary schools. Therefore, the modules students were concerned with dealt mainly with the teaching of the target language system and skills: grammar, written expression, reading comprehension and oral expression, in addition to phonetics, linguistics and the Arabic language and literature. The language based modules were taught until the second year only, except for oral expression which was kept in the third year. Content modules such as literature and civilization were taught in the second, third and fourth years as illustrated in the following table:

Year	Module	Teaching time per week
First	Written expression	3hs
	Oral expression	3hs
	Grammar	3hs
	Reading comprehension	1h30
	Linguistics	1h30
	Phonetics	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
Year	Module	Teaching time per week
Second	Written expression	3hs
	Oral expression	3hs
	Grammar	3hs
	Linguistics	1h30
	Phonetics	1h30
	British literature	1h30
	British civilization	1h30
	American literature	1h30
	American civilization	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
Third	Written expression	1h30
	Oral expression	1h30
	Linguistics	1h30
	British literature	1h30
	British civilization	1h30
	American literature	1h30

	American civilization	1h30
	Phonetics	1h30
	Psychology	1h30
	Third world literature	1h30
	Arabic	1h30
Fourth	Linguistics	1h30
	Psycho –pedagogy	1h30
	Seminars in literature	1h30
	Seminars in civilization	1h30
	TEFL	3hs
	Research methodology	1h30
	TPR teaching practice	1h30

Table 2.3: English ‘licence’ curriculum modules in the classical system.

This educational system extended to the 2000s where a new reform was applied; that of introducing the LMD i.e. (Licence, Master, Doctorate) system in all streams at university except the medical sciences. As far as the English section is concerned, the LMD system was introduced in 2009 at the University of Tlemcen. The time spent for the “Licence” was reduced to three years. Priority is given to literature students as well i.e. students from Letters and Foreign Languages who enrolled following the aforementioned system for registration i.e. the computer orientation based on students scores in the Baccalaureat examination and their choices. It should be pointed out that the majority of EFL students come from “Lettres et Langues Etrangères” (i.e. letters and foreign languages), and “Lettres et Philosophie” (i.e. letters and philosophy) streams as shown on the following table which provides an example of the option and the number of students from each option enrolled in the English section of Tlemcen university during the academic year 2011-2012.

Baccalaureate option	Number of students enrolled
Letters and foreign languages	198
Letters and philosophy	74
Letters and human sciences	12
Experimental sciences	50
Management	10
Letters and Islamic sciences	02
Natural sciences	05
Mathematics	01
Total	352

Table 2.4: First year English students' entry profiles for the academic year 2011-2012

In this system too, i.e. LMD, the motives are more instrumental than integrative or cultural. The first year aims also at consolidating the basis of the language already acquired at the previous levels of education. The modules students are concerned with, deal mainly with the teaching of the language oriented skills i.e. grammar, written production, oral production and discourse comprehension. In addition, other modules like linguistics, phonetics, literary studies, Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization, research methodology, information and communication technologies (ICT), teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) are studied. Students also receive a course of general culture in Arabic as shown in the following table:

Year	Module	Teaching time per week
First	Grammar	6hs
	Written production	3hs
	Oral production	3hs
	Discourse comprehension	3hs
	Phonetics	3hs
	Linguistics	1h30
	Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization	1h30
	Information and communication technologies (ICT)	1h30

	Literary studies	1h30
	Researcher methodology	1h30
	General culture	1h30
Second	Grammar	4hs30
	Written production	3hs
	Oral production	3hs
	Discourse comprehension	3hs
	Phonetics	1h30
	Linguistics	1h30
	Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization	1h30
	Information and communication technologies (ICT)	1h30
	British literature	1h30
	Research methodology	1h30
	Psychology	1h30
	African civilization	1h30
	Third Language studies	Linguistics theories
Phonology		3hs
Academic writing		3hs
Psycho-linguistics		3hs
Socio-linguistics		3hs
Language didactics		3hs
Research methodology		3hs
Psycho-pedagogy		3hs
Project work /TPR (teaching practice).		3hs
Or		
Third literature and civilization	Literature theories	3hs
	Comparative literature	3hs
	Academic writing	3hs
	English speaking writing	3hs
	English speaking literature	3hs
	Anglo-Saxon-civilization	3hs
	African civilization	3hs
	Psycho-pedagogy	3hs
	Project work /TPR	3hs

Table 2.5: English “Licence” curriculum modules in the LMD system.

However, the Algerian English degree student is still found to be lacking in foreign language competence. Bouhadiba (2000: 104) explains that this is due to two factors:

- No adequate responsive educational or pedagogical programmes have been suggested this far. The ‘Licence’ curriculum dates back to the 1980s (perhaps prior to this date) and no substantial change has been brought about in spite of the drastic changes in the social-economic environment.
- The teacher lacks qualified ELT professionalism despite new ELT methodologies and approaches that proliferate in the market. The teaching is often done hastily with no suitable teaching material or adequately trained instructors.

Finally, it should be reminded, that the Algerian learner of English can rarely have the opportunity to practice the language outside the classroom. In fact, direct contact with the language does not exist except through networks via satellite television or the internet and through the written literature available in university libraries and some bookshops. Consequently, except for the possibility of mailing through the internet, the Algerian learner of English has a unidirectional type of contact with the foreign language which is not sufficiently motivating for him to learn English successfully.

2.3 TEACHING THE WRITING SKILL AT THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Since the focus of the present research is writing, it may be fit to outline and discuss its objectives, teaching practices and learning outcomes.

2.3.1 Teaching Writing in the Middle School

Since the last educational reform of 2003, English, the second foreign language is introduced for the first time in the first year Middle School (1AM). At this level, pupils have some knowledge of Latin graphemes, and writing mechanics

as a result of their learning of the French language. This is supposed to help them to learn English. However, English foreign language (EFL) learning is not always successful. At the Middle School, pupils learn basic English structures and vocabulary and most of the time they use ill-constructed sentences containing grammatical mistakes. At the end of each file (there are about five files for a whole year in the different levels), writing is controlled through one or more writing tasks. These tasks are graded in difficulty: they take the form of fill-in-the gaps exercises, scrambled sentences, matching sentences, and sometimes completing dialogues. During the other years i.e. (2AM, 3AM and 4AM), pupils are required to answer comprehension questions related to a studied text using the sentence structures tackled in class. Thereafter, they begin to produce paragraph of six to ten lines on the different modes of discourse such as narrating a story. These writing activities are preceded by a pre-writing session where teachers and pupils try to establish the writing norms of the discourse type required then elicit ideas, provide the necessary vocabulary, draw a plan, organize ideas, draft, revise and write. Finally each composition is followed by a correction session.

It should be noted, however, that the majority of pupils face some difficulties to learn or improve their English writing. This is due to several factors starting from the communicative approach used to teach English and which prevails oral skills over writing. The programme at the different levels is heavy with an average five files a year, where language forms and functions are presented in a linear way. Moreover, being constantly pressed by time constraints requiring them to complete the programmes and achieve the objectives, teachers of English tend to overlook their pupils' real abilities to understand and devote little time to writing practice.

Despite the differences in terms of motivational and methodological aspects in the Middle School level, the vast majority of pupils end the four or more years of EFL instruction with apparent frustrations in trying to craft correct and meaningful sentences into a paragraph, let alone to construct purposeful and coherent discourse. These pupils have had a fair amount of communicative activities and an exposure to

a dense vocabulary, but little language practice and fewer writing tasks. Being content-heavy and practice-light, the textbooks and methodologies tend to confuse the learners and affect somewhat negatively their linguistic, cognitive and learning development. Syllabus designers need to bear in mind four important factors. The first one is limited language ability and ongoing intellectual growth; the second is unfamiliarity with themes and topics that are commonplace in the foreign language culture; third, the text types may not be accessible to all learners at such an early learning stage and fourth, for the functional-communicative principles to be effectively implemented in foreign language learning.

In conclusion, learners in the Middle School educational system are being introduced to so many skills and so much information at the same time. As a result, they accumulate deficiencies and lacunas not only in their writing performance, but also in their performance of the other subjects.

2.3.2 Teaching Writing in the Secondary School

Secondary education lasts three years (1AS, 2AS and 3AS) at the end of which a Baccalaureat examination is held. English foreign language (EFL) is part of the curriculum regardless of pupils' streams and levels with a difference in time load and coefficient.

However, pupils coming from the Middle School, in other words having received four years of formal instruction, and entering the Secondary School have not developed efficient thinking and linguistic skills that allow them to produce a good performance in writing. At this level, English teaching is aimed to consolidate the knowledge of linguistic items and skills acquired in the preceding years. In the first year secondary (1AS), the focus is on grammar, vocabulary and study skills such as how to use dictionaries, cooperate with each other and keep notebooks. The syllabus objectives are to build communicative efficiency in learners through meaningful purpose, spontaneous desire to communicate, correct grammar and

reasonable fluency. In the second year secondary (2AS), the focus is on the development of communication and language structures, whereas in the third year (3AS), according to the English syllabus (2004: 6), 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*”; and the same time to enable these learners to use language as an investigative tool at university or in the job field. In written expression, it is presumed from pupils to “*master different writing skills: note taking, organizing and summarizing; so as to be autonomous in written expression when starting from models learnt in class*”

(ibid: 10) English syllabus

Assuming that these pupils have built up a range of necessary communicative skills, some discourse modes and language structures are introduced. However, what is quite evident is that the difficult aspects of some discourse patterns such as the argumentative or the expository are often skipped by teachers. Writing practice is limited to the usual production and reproduction, controlled, guided and free compositions including expanding notes into a text, transforming a paragraph into a dialogue and rewriting a passage without an awareness of the rationale behind such activities. Yet, one striking observation about English language teaching in pre-university education is the difference in skill focus. While the teachers focus on the development of oral skills in the Middle School and the two first years (1AS and 2AS) of Secondary School, the writing skill is given due heed only in the third year of the Secondary School which is not enough to prepare pupils for formal examination requirements. By the end of secondary education, pupils are supposed to express themselves orally and in writing in fluent, accurate and meaningful English. They 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 civilization of target language societies. However, reality shows opposite results; the outcome, especially in the Baccalaureat examination, is largely disappointing with most pupils achieving low scores in written expression and displaying an inability to get their message across in clear and well-structured texts.

In fact, the pupils' low performance in writing is due to many factors among them: insufficient teaching time, insufficient writing practices and overloaded programmes, leading them develop negative attitudes towards EFL learning in general and writing in particular and finally the over-ambitious syllabus objectives which do not go in line with pupils' real cognitive and linguistic capacities. It seems that the syllabus designers and textbook writers have a strong faith in the learners' motivation and ability to shift from a lower proficiency level to a higher one.

2.3.3 Teaching Writing at University

The new Baccalaureat holders enrolled in the English Sections of the Foreign Language Departments spend a period of three years study to graduate and obtain the English "Licence" degree. Along this period, students are theoretically assisted and trained to become English teachers in the lower levels of education or to carry on post-graduate studies at university.

In the English Sections of the Foreign Language Departments of the Faculties of Letters and Foreign Languages in Algeria , English is used as a medium of instruction for all subjects except for Arabic culture which is taught in Arabic. Many new entrants to university arrive with serious frustrations and deficiencies in English. In spite of their seven years or more of pre-university English learning, the new entrants appear, in their majority, to have difficulties in both oral and written skills.

As far as writing is concerned, it is attributed the fourth position in 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 emerged due to examination requirements as already mentioned (2.3.2) and the necessity of being literate (able to read and write) in English in modern life.

To have a clearer idea about writing performance at university entrance, and from a proficiency-level investigation, carried out in the Foreign Language Department analyzing short texts written by university entrants during the first two weeks of the academic year 1999/2000, Ourghi (2002) distinguished two distinct levels: low intermediate (nearly 80%) and high intermediate (around 20%) describing the learners' entrant abilities, weaknesses and needs as follows:

High intermediate (developing) level	Low –intermediate (basic) level
<p><u>Abilities :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accurate grasp and use of writing mechanics (fair accuracy in punctuation spelling and capitalization) ▪ Correct construction of different sentence patterns, ability write a meaningful text and to convey clear ideas, despite the problem of inadequate vocabulary ▪ Good knowledge of cohesive ties discourse – organizing connections. ▪ Ability to expand short paragraphs into a whole text. <p><u>Lacks :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of contextual knowledge (unawareness of readership) ▪ Insufficient composing strategies (drafting and revising). ▪ A tendency to be prolific (free writing) without monitoring one's performance. 	<p><u>Abilities :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Production of short texts, division of texts into two paragraphs, convey ideas with clean difficulty. <p><u>Lacks :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of control of basic syntactic structures, inadequate knowledge of writing mechanics, limited vocabulary. ▪ Unwariness of useful writing micro- skills and composing strategies.

Table 2.6: Description of students' proficiency levels.

(Ourghi 2002: 42)

In class, teachers report students' inability to construct appropriate error-free sentences. Likewise, when writing they seem to be unaware of the basics of writing such as the conventions and mechanics of writing (e.g. spelling, punctuation, capitalization), grammar (e.g. tenses, subject-verb agreement, use of prepositions, use of pronouns use of articles) and vocabulary (e.g. using anglicized borrowings from French). As a result, their compositions are merely a list of ideas lacking cohesion and coherence.

Training learners to write accurately and meaningfully demands care and attention on behalf of language teachers since the aim of the written expression

course is to prepare EFL students for the class and home assignments they are required to write, the examination they are to sit for in the different modules of their curriculum, the research works they are concerned with during their schooling without losing the objective of preparing a future English teacher.

2.4 OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEACHING OF THE WRITING SKILL

A brief examination of writing instruction received by EFL students during their studies was done in the preceding sections. It included the three stages: the Middle School, the Secondary School and University. It was noted that many variables affected the teaching of writing: teaching methodologies, instructional practices, teachers' competence, the teaching/learning environment and the socio-cultural environment as will be reported below.

In the Middle School, the first stage of EFL instruction, the language policy applied to the 'Fundamental School' in the eighties and nineties, implemented a task-based syllabus to language teaching where learners were given tasks to do expecting that this would lead to language development. This was done under the scope of Communicative Language Teaching CTL which is based on the belief that language is communication and that meaning is primary. Thus, being interested in communication, the learners may neglect language forms and be satisfied with the use of deviated forms since they transmit their messages. The drawback of this approach will namely be reflected in writing where learners will produce pieces of writing full of mistakes and language misconstructions that may hinder comprehension. In fact, the low linguistic ability of our learners stem from this teaching approach which tries to build the learners' communicative competence neglecting their linguistic competence. In addition, while teaching emphasizes the development of learners' fluency, the examination standards still favors accuracy over fluency. The learners find themselves at loss between these orders of priority.

In sum, the task based-syllabus adopted in language teaching should give due attention to language form to enable an appropriate language development. For this purpose Skehan (1998: 4) highlights three important points to be taken into consideration when adopting the task-based approach:

- How tasks are selected to maximize the chances of a focus on form;
- How tasks are implemented through pre-and post-task activities, as well as task adaptation;
- Low performance on tasks can be conceptualized and evaluated.

The first principles of writing are acquired in the Middle School. At this level, writing is based on oral expression activities. Learners are introduced to the topic orally. They acquire the necessary vocabulary and language forms through repeated practice and learning by heart or by breaking down the language into grammatical structures which pupils practice by means of drills, then reproduce the text in writing. Though this practice seems to provide the pupils with the necessary tools to produce a piece of writing, it presents dangers for future written productions. First, learners will confuse between written and spoken discourse as explained by Kennedy (1994: 14):

Topics which have been mentally organized and routinized for spoken discourse would not meet written discourse standards, since written discourse is not merely writing as one speaks.

Second, learners will be used to routinized cognitive processes that do not offer them an awareness of planning, controlling and organizing information which plays a central role in developing the learners' writing abilities.

We have noticed that in the Middle and Secondary Schools, most writing activities are preceded by text reading, comprehension of the text, presentation of the new vocabulary and language structures and a display of the writing type and the discourse mode used. The pupils are thus, familiarized with the type of material they

are required to reproduce as well as the necessary lexis, syntax and discourse patterns needed to fulfill the writing tasks. Moreover, the pupils are guided by their teachers who supervise the different steps the pupils go through when writing i.e. pre-writing, writing and post-writing. This reveals that the teaching methods used neither develop pupils' autonomy, as the teacher does most of the work, nor encourage their creativity. The preparation to the writing task described above has some benefits because it guides and help the learner carry out his writing task but it bears drawbacks of forming assisted writers. Mortad (2000) explains that one of the reasons of pupils' failure in the Algerian pre-university education is their lack of autonomy and teacher dependence. Indeed, they will always expect the teacher to assume responsibility for giving them the needed and adequate vocabulary, providing accurate sentence structures, explaining and initiating them to the writing steps they have to follow. In effect, if provided with ready made sentence structures, the necessary vocabulary and, the steps to follow our pupils can produce a good piece of writing, but if asked to write a composition without any help from the teacher, they will find themselves unable to write or will just produce poor pieces of writing. As a result, the writing instruction our pupils received does not help them develop a personal manner of writing and will let them depend on what is read or said and on the types of writings they have been exposed to.

In a similar way, one should also mention that one of the reasons of pupils' writing deficiencies is lack of practice. In effect, due to the insufficient time devoted to the writing skill, pupils do not have frequently the opportunity to do activities and make use of the points seen in the writing course such as: choice of vocabulary, word order, sentence structure, mechanics (i.e. punctuation, capitalization, spelling), link between sentences and unity of ideas. Moreover, the pupils are not encouraged to participate in the learning process. They seem to be satisfied with teachers dictating lectures and them passively writing, feeling at ease and pleased with this type of instruction. However, this practice will negate the learners' linguistic and cognitive abilities that will be reflected in their writings being unable of producing accurate, coherent and meaningful pieces of writing as well as being unable of

criticizing, analyzing coherently a situation and synthesizing. Noticing this linguistic and cognitive deficiency on the part of students, university teachers will once again emphasize language forms and structures in their teaching paying little attention to the metacognitive aspect. Indeed, without linguistic competence one cannot reach effectiveness in writing, but that students develop their metacognition to achieve writing competence is as important.

With regard to timing, one may say that it is an important factor in the teaching of writing which may either hinder or improve learning and insure a good writing performance. However, we have noticed that the time allocated to the teaching of writing is not enough. Writing is not given priority in both pre-university educational levels i.e. Middle and Secondary schools where the writing tasks are only dealt with at the end of each didactic file. Thus, pupils at these levels have little or no opportunity to attend real writing sessions. Because of the insufficient time, these pupils are neither able to use accurately the sentence structures, the writing mechanics i.e. spelling, punctuation capitalization etc. nor equipped with the writing strategies required when undertaking a writing task i.e. taking notes, planning, organizing, drafting, revising and editing.

Some researches also showed that certain approaches meant to develop the writing competence rather hindered the development of the writing process (Hildenbrand 1985, Jones 1985, Rorschach 1986, qtd. In Krapels 1990). A case in point is the composition length limits imposed on middle and even secondary pupils who are asked to produce pieces of writing not exceeding few lines (e.g. 10). This length limit prevents them from developing their ideas and using their linguistic abilities. This established habit can go with them in their future schooling and will be reflected in their writings at university where they are required to produce long reports in the different subjects. Students, in this case will be found to be short of words (i.e. having a limited repertoire of useful vocabulary), unable to develop their ideas or will produce a piece of writing with excessive repetition and inaccurate use of cohesion. This practice (i.e. length limit), however, will negate even more the

students' linguistic abilities being unable of making use of the different sentence structures (i.e. expanding sentences using modification, coordination, subordination and substitution), and introducing the different types of sentences and clauses dealt with in the writing course such as the noun, adjective, and adverb clauses.

Though the EFL students' lack of composing competence due to lack of linguistic and cognitive strategic knowledge represents an important reason for their writing difficulties, other factors adding to this writing deficiency can also be enumerated: teaching methodologies, instructional practices, teachers' competence, teaching /learning environment and the socio-cultural environment.

First, 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 as cited in the preceding sections, and this is clearly seen in the various approaches adopted in the teaching of EFL at successive periods.

Most educationalists agree that language learning objectives should be geared towards learners' needs. In Algeria, students' needs as well as the way to cater with these needs are determined, beforehand, by syllabus designers via an imposed programme and methodology. But there seems to be a clear discrepancy between the stated objectives and the educational conditions that prevail in EFL teaching settings to accomplish the desired objectives (Benmoussat, 2003).

By and large, classroom practices do not reflect the set objectives or even the CLT principles. This can be seen in the teaching conditions: overloaded programmes, large classes, absence of adequate materials or teaching aids, and insufficient time allotted for the teaching of EFL. For all these, most teachers are eclectic¹ in their teaching methodology, trying to apply any teaching technique, whatever the approach or the method, in order to pursue their task. Nonetheless,

most of the time, teachers tend to focus on the reading skill and on grammatical points, as these two language components constitute the major parts of the examination. This leads to note the striking contradiction in the EFL teaching; the listening and speaking skills that are the hallmark of CLT at the pre-university level are not tested at all and therefore are somehow neglected during class sessions.

In addition, there is a strong assumption that learners have undoubtedly reached the desired objectives in writing at the end of each year, and so there is no attempt at recycling knowledge through repeated practice. In a highly teacher-centered classroom, teaching/learning is done in a linear way, giving as such no chance for consolidation or review. What is more, the official guidelines at the pre-university levels state that *“the various skills will be integrated to move from skill getting to skill using”* (Syllabus 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 file and 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.

In a similar way, the learning conditions offered to students at university level do not aim at promoting any achievement in language learning in general and writing performance in particular because of the lack of appropriate equipment. Also, in large classes with mixed abilities as it is the case of most of our universities, students have fewer opportunities for self-expression or individual help on the part of the teacher.

On the other hand, students’ 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, students find no materials written in English. Besides, they do not see any immediate use of speaking or writing the language. Therefore, students seem to have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation¹ 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. As a result, these students display a low proficiency level in English language in general and writing in particular.

At their entrance to university, students will have accumulated an English learning experience of seven years, during which they have been exposed to a rich programme, and have sat for many formal tests and exams. Students are, then, supposed not only to have mastered the basic components of the English language, but also to have achieved satisfactory mastery in the four language skills, and so have acquired the necessary linguistic and communicative competence.

Unfortunately, the 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 students 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 organizational rules of ideas; thus writing is viewed as an anxiety generating activity for learners, so they do not like it (Tsui, 1996). Many students 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.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has tried to provide a description and analysis of the teaching/learning situation in Algeria. This description has embraced the early EFL school years of the learner till his admission to university to shed light on his educational background. In addition, an examination of the development of the writing skill throughout the different levels of education (i.e. Middle school, Secondary school and University) has also been provided to understand the circumstances that have shaped the writing behavior of the Algerian EFL student. The examination of the teaching/learning situation of writing has revealed that the pre-university writer is always provided with a model, the necessary vocabulary, phrases, patterns and sentence structures to write a composition. Though this teaching procedure presents the short-term benefits of helping the pupil in his composition task, it trains a teacher dependent writer always waiting for the teacher's help. This type of instruction does not allow the linguistic and cognitive growth of the learner. Moreover, the limitation on the length of the composition, on the ideas expressed, and the provided models of sentence structures and patterns that are imposed on the pupil are bound to be an obstacle to the development of his writing competence.

- To conclude, one may conclude from this analysis that pre-university education does not pay due attention to the development of the writing competence and therefore, seems to fail to produce a self-reliant effective writer, attaining an adequate mastery of the different writing skills, using different text styles, accurate writing structures, capable of criticizing and presenting coherent arguments; in short a well prepared writer to cope with modern university education requirements. Furthermore, it is also noticed that the educational system in Algeria, namely Middle and Secondary schools rewards memorization and rote learning, whereas, inquiry, reflection, self-dependence are neglected, avoided and sometimes frowned upon.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1 The 'Licence' in Algeria is roughly equivalent to the English/ American B.A.

2 P.M. Richards and W. Hall's series in ELT textbooks was used in early independence as a legacy of the colonial period.

3 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 '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.

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 a learning experience of 7 years before university level.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to deal with the implementation of the research project. It is aimed to present the research design and data collection procedures. It first starts by describing the EFL teaching/ learning situation under consideration, then highlights the research questions, describes the instruments used and gives the profile of the subjects in question.

The research questions have been translated into two different analytical tools: the first one being questionnaires, one addressed to university teachers of writing and the other to first-year EFL university students and the second one the interview addressed only to university teachers of the writing skill. The methodology of each is described in the present chapter. Results of the 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 last chapter.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT EFL TEACHING/LEARNING SITUATION

English in Algeria is a foreign language studied at school (four years in the middle school, i.e. first, second, third and fourth year middle school and three years in the secondary school, 1AS, 2AS and 3AS). It is not involved in societal functions, although it is being used as an international language in diplomacy, international trade and tourism. In a foreign language setting, the learner can rarely have the opportunity to practice the language outside the classroom. Richards (1972: 87), for instance, is in favor of this context because:

In a foreign language setting there is always an effort to acquire an overseas standard form of English and not some local form of English.

Learners of English as a foreign language compared to those of English as a second language are most of the time more motivated and their motivation is generally integrative¹, that is, they want to identify themselves to native speakers. This fact is significant for the language learning process as a whole and the learning of the writing skill in particular, because learners will not be satisfied with their interlanguage² until it becomes as close as possible to that of a native speaker.

At university level in Algeria, the English Section of the Department of Foreign Languages prepares students for a “Licence de lettres Anglaises” degree

in English language. The time spent for this purpose is three years. This degree leads to a teaching career³ in the lower levels of education (Middle and Secondary schools) provided that the graduate students pass a newly introduced regional examination for access to the available teaching jobs. In addition to being a professional qualification, the “Licence” offers opportunities to outstanding students to carry out post-graduate studies.

During the three years the focus is on the four skills. In addition to the teaching of the language oriented skills, i.e. grammar, written production, oral production and discourse comprehension, other subjects like linguistics, phonetics, literary studies, Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization, American, African civilizations, research methodology, psycho-pedagogy, information and communication technologies (ICT), teaching English as a foreign language (henceforth TEFL), are studied. Concurrently, students receive a course of general culture in Arabic.

The English Department of Tlemcen University was first opened in 1988. In 1994, the Institute of Foreign Languages, consisting of French and English sections, became autonomous and by the end of 1999, the Institute of Foreign Languages lost its autonomy and then became part of the Faculty of Arts and Human and Social Sciences. Since 2010, a department of foreign languages made of four sections i.e. French, English, Spanish and Translation has been created and has become part of the faculty of letters and languages. There are forty three (43) permanent and twenty nine (29) part-time teachers in the English language section. However, the teaching situation is not that enviable. The lack of teaching materials, teacher’ training and the rare use of the laboratory and audio-visual aids are factors which hinder the teaching/learning process.

Furthermore, teachers are required to provide their own material, this is why the syllabus has become flexible (within the lines drawn by the national syllabus) to suit the situation.

3.2.1 How Writing is taught at Tlemcen University

In the present teaching setting, writing is taught as a separate module during the three years of graduation. The prevailing writing syllabus and methodology are language-based and accuracy-oriented. There is, in effect, an over-emphasis on language mastery and grammatical accuracy by means of weighty language practice at the sentence level. This type of consensus stems from a largely held belief that the linguistic assets of the majority of new

entrants are limited. The objective of first year syllabus is to spend much of the classroom time equipping them with good language habits (i.e. accuracy) in order to help them meet linguistic and examination standards. First year EFL university students are expected to learn to write short texts types following and respecting the rules and conventions of written English i.e. accurate use of grammatical rules and sentence patterns, appropriate use of vocabulary and good organization of ideas. This is done through a focus on practice of the basics of the writing system, sentence construction and paragraph writing (topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding sentences and transitions). Another objective of the first year syllabus is to prepare students for essay writing introducing some study skills such as outlining and note taking.

In the second year, though the EFL student is assumed to be able to master the sentence structures and paragraph writing, and is exposed to essay writing where different writing techniques and modes of discourse are introduced and dealt with, the principal need for such learners, is to build up a linguistic foundation anew and to practice writing micro-skills like word formation, sentence expansion, and paragraphing. That is why teachers of writing devote much of classroom teaching to linguistic accuracy and writing mechanics and micro-skills. In addition, students at this level are also concerned with the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms in other words the essay development where attention is given to *“larger structural entities (introduction, body and conclusion) and organizational patterns or modes (normally narration, description, exposition and argumentation)”* as reported by Silva (1990: 14):

Coming to third year EFL university education, it is worth noting that writing is a newly introduced module in the English Section. It is labeled academic writing where students are introduced to research methodology and creative writing. They are expected to learn to use academic style and the techniques of summarizing, paraphrasing, and analyzing before moving to learn how to write a thesis. The know-how to write an abstract, a general introduction, a general conclusion and references is necessary at this level. The aim of the academic writing course is to prepare students for self-generated contents.

Observation of the classes shows that the teacher is the main initiator in class, presenting information. For instance, in the teacher-initiated informs, the frequency is high. This reflects the fact that the teacher relies mostly on a monologic lecturing mode. However, in teacher-initiated exchanges, the initiated exchanges are low. This may be explained by the fact that the teacher

does not very often use elicitation techniques, or invites students to participate actively in the learning process.

Some teachers provide their students with the required and relevant information they need before setting the task. They insist on the fact that students' writing should be clear. They also insist on grammar so that the students would not make mistakes.

Other teachers express their strong will to foster their students' independence preferring to guide them in ways of exploring new knowledge instead of simply telling them the facts, stressing the skills of independent research. As an example, they usually set activities which require their students to collect data for their writings. Most of the teachers consider the importance of writing as it would be useful in other subjects or even in their students' careers. All in all, they strive to equip their students with the ability to work independently and apply their writing in real life.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the observation is that the teacher at the University of Tlemcen emphasizes the end product in teaching writing. He expects his students' work to be clear, logical and accurate. Considering the local system and its limitations, the teacher believes that it is inefficient and unwise to let the students explore freely. He concedes that the role of the teacher is actually teaching and leading his students though sometimes they may act as collaborators and helpers in the classroom. Consequently, he provides all the learning materials and information necessary, and allows a monologic mode. At the same time, he sets his class to work in groups because he wants his students to learn from activities apart from lectures.

As far as students' opinions are concerned, they made positive comments and appreciate the teaching way of their teachers. However, some of them express a preference for more interaction so that learning will become an active and attractive process.

3.2.2 The Writing Syllabus used at Tlemcen University

Though the guidelines of the writing course are provided by the official curriculum, the teacher remains free to make decisions concerning content, teaching material, method used and module goals. As a result, what seems to emerge is a class syllabus with distinct principles, practices and different

materials which largely depend on the teacher's field of knowledge, competence, experience and own assessment of students' needs.

As there were no clearly defined syllabus, just broad lines for the teaching of English writing at the University of Tlemcen, the methods of teaching writing varied among different teachers. Some might use a set of routine procedures. First, they taught simple sentences, then compound and complex sentences and then sentence patterns, and sentence structures before moving to narration, description and argumentation. That is, each time they move from the easiest to the most difficult following Mary Finocchiarro's (1974) concept of gradation. Others might use a free method. For example, one teacher might bring a text written by a professional writer, teaches the writing items that are exemplified in that text. After that, he would sort out the major points of discussion and deal with the text functions. Here, the input that is the text is used as a model so that the students would imitate. In short, the teacher starts dealing with the language function that he introduces in the input (the model). After his lesson, he would choose a topic and after a discussion, the students are asked to write and submit their writing.

The only handout that is available is the one written by Serir and Zidane (2010); both senior lecturers at the English section of the foreign department at Tlemcen University. The handout is entitled "Lectures in Written Expression". It aims at giving the students the opportunity to revise the basic points concerning the sentence. The authors' aim is to provide students with the different structural patterns, the different types of sentences, clauses, use of adjectives and adverbs as well as spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

One part of the handout is devoted to the manipulation of the English paragraph. It introduces the paragraph, its structure and various methods to develop it. This part mainly tackles the topic sentence and how to identify it. It also deals with how to develop the topic sentence and how to provide the concluding sentence.

The last part deals with writing essays. This part starts with a brief definition of the different parts of the essay namely, the introductory paragraph which functions as an introduction, the following paragraphs which are used to explain the idea and enlarge the topic and the last paragraph in the essay which functions as a conclusion. In this part, the authors suggest a few essay topics to write on.

While some teachers make a detailed use of the introductory sections of the handout, with the belief that mastering the English sentence is the most important part that would lead to better writing, others skip this section and direct students' attention to either paragraph or essay writing.

In sum, one may say that the teachers exhibit a wide range of postures while using the handout. There are those who adhere closely to it, those who are extremely autonomous from the adopted writing handout and those who stay in between.

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Though first-year English students have studied English for at least seven years (four years in middle school, and three years in secondary school, they still show deficiency when writing.

Writing is an essential skill for university students, mainly for language students preparing an English "Licence" degree because their academic performance is evaluated by means of written examinations. However, students often complain about their difficulties when writing while teachers complain about receiving poor pieces of writing in terms of grammatical correctness, i.e. at the level of subject-verb agreement, plural markers, tense formation, use of prepositions, use of modifiers, etc as well as in terms of coherence, cohesion, organization or style.

These observations indeed reveal that writing is quite problematic for first-year EFL university students. This situation has led us to ask the following questions:

- 1- What is first-year EFL students writing competence?
- 2- Does the current teaching of writing adequately prepare first-year EFL students to cope with university writing?
- 3- What pedagogic change is needed to achieve successful academic writing?

The above research questions have enabled us to formulate the following hypotheses:

- 1- The vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak level in writing.
- 2- The current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation because of the teaching approach used (product approach), lack of materials, inadequate timing, lack of coordination between the different modules and lack of students' practice.
- 3- To achieve successful academic writing, change is needed at the levels of: the teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time load.

With these hypotheses in mind, we have aimed at the following objectives: firstly, identify first-year EFL students' proficiency level in writing. Secondly, explore the teaching of writing received by these students and see whether it corresponds to their academic profile and consequently propose pedagogic change if needed to improve their writing competence and help them cope with university tasks.

3.4 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

In this section, a detailed account of the research method and tools will be presented. In doing so, we will discuss the advantages and the drawbacks of each research instrument, and justify our choice for data collection methods and procedure.

The present research work is a case study involving thirty EFL students at Tlemcen University. Two groups of fifteen students were selected from the first-year students of the English 'Licence' degree. The case study as a research methodology is defined by Adelman and Kemmis (1976: 140, qtd. In Nunan 1992) as a study where "One selects an instance from the class of objects and phenomena one is investigating and investigates the way this instance functions in context". In this respect, the case study is regarded by some researchers as being a limited type of ethnographic research (Bartlett et al., 1982). However, Nunan (1992: 75) states that though the case study can be similar to ethnography in "its philosophy, methods and concern for studying phenomena in context", it differs in three main aspects:

- The case study is generally more limited in scope than ethnography.

- Ethnography is essentially concerned with the cultural context and cultural interpretation of the phenomena under investigation.
- The case study can use quantitative and statistical field methods whereas ethnography utilizes only qualitative methods.

However, according to some researchers (e.g. Bartlett et al., 1982), the major barrier to doing case studies lies in the extent to which a research finding can be generalized beyond the case studied. Consequently, the study of one single case cannot pretend to be representative of other cases. But at the same time it can be said that this research methodology provides a detailed study of the case which can help enhance our understanding of the issues raised by other cases as Nunan (1992: 89) explained:

...one can learn a great deal about one's own students in general through a detailed study of one particular student, in the same way as insights into language classrooms in general can be derived from the intensive analysis of a single classroom.

Finally, as mentioned earlier the case study generally uses a range of methods for collecting and analyzing data and is not limited to a single procedure. This allows a variety in sampling which is an important methodological aspect of the present research.

Thus, being interested in detailed data on students' writing proficiency, we have opted for case study research. The aim has been to investigate in depth the difficulties students encounter when writing in order to gain insights into the way to remedy and overcome these weaknesses.

3.4.1 Research Instruments

One way of ensuring the trustworthiness in the present research is to use triangulation. Burns (1999) states that triangulation is one of the most commonly used and best ways of checking validity. The aim of triangulation is to gather multiple perspectives on the situation being studied.

Triangulation is a term which is being used in different senses by qualitative researchers. R.B. Burns (1994: 272) states that triangulation is a way

of arguing that “*if different methods of investigation produce the same result then the data is likely to be valid*”

According to Silverman (1993: 156), triangulation is:

Comparing different kinds of data (e.g. quantitative and qualitative) and different methods (e.g. observation and interviews) to see whether they corroborate on another....this form of comparison, called triangulation, derives from navigation, where different bearings give the correct position of an object.

Other contemporary researchers have different interpretation of triangulation. Elliot and Andelman (1976: 74), for instance, define triangulation as follows:

Triangulation involves gathering accounts of a teaching situation from three quite different points of view, namely those of the teacher, his pupils, and a participant observer.

Researchers in general, and action researchers, in particular use various methods and the perceptive of different participants so that they would gain a much richer and less subjective picture than they get by relying on a single data gathering technique. Cohen and Manion (1994) admit that using a single method gives the researcher only a partial view of a complex situation. They add stating that: *Any one data gathering technique is not in itself neutral, but a filter through which experiences are sampled.*

By using multiple methods, the researcher will gain confidence. Denzin (1978) mentioned different forms of triangulation⁴ which could be of great value in collaborative action research:

- Time triangulation: data are collected at one point in time (cross-sectional) or over a period of time (longitudinally) to get sense of what factors are involved in change processes.
- Space triangulation: data are collected across different subgroups of people to avoid the limitations of studies conducted within one group.

- Investigator triangulation: more than one observer is used in the same research setting. This helps avoid observer bias and provides checks on the reliability of the observations.
- Theoretical triangulation: data are analyzed from more than one perspective.

Because it is the researcher's belief that triangulation is a valuable tool that enhances validity, the present research has used the following methods to gather data: first, a production task (paragraph writing), second, two questionnaires; one administered to teachers and the other to students and third, the interview to teachers of writing.

Research instruments in the field of language learning are diverse and various. The most widely used ones are the self-report tools. The data obtained from these instruments are reports that were either written or verbal provided by the informants themselves. These instruments may either be introspective research instruments or retrospective ones.

Introspective research instruments: the term introspection is defined by Nunan (1992: 115) as:

The process of observing and reflecting on one's thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning, processes and mental states with a view to determining the ways in which these processes and states determine our behavior.

This data collection approach is suitable for receptive tasks or for writing. *Retrospective research instruments:* the retrospective data are collected sometime after the investigated event has taken place. Faerch and Kasper (1987) distinguish between two types of retrospection:

Immediate retrospection i.e., reporting on the processes undertaken in a task that was just completed. This type of retrospection is widely used in research on speaking strategies.

Delayed retrospection i.e., reporting the processes used in a task long after it has been performed.

The tools used in retrospection are questionnaires, interviews or diaries that can be administered either right after the completion of the task (immediate

retrospection), or a long time after the accomplishment of the task (delayed retrospection) according to the type of information required. Concerning the form of retrospective data, it can be either written as when responding to a questionnaire, or verbal as when answering an interview. In this research we have used delayed retrospection utilizing two instruments: the questionnaire and the interview.

The literature in methodology highlights the importance of multiplying data sources using different types of instruments in order to diversify information sources and analyze the problem from different angles as pointed out by Weir and Roberts (1993: 137):

A combination of data sources is likely to be necessary in most evaluations because often no one source can describe adequately such a diversity of features as is found in educational settings, and because of the need for corroboration of findings by using data from these different sources collected by different methods and by different people i.e. (triangulation). It is now widely held that multiple methods should be used in all investigations.

For this reason, a combination of data sources seems to be useful in this research. Besides the self-report tools, we have used another elicitation technique: a production task. This is commonly used in applied linguistics studies to investigate language learning. It consists in using any type of task to obtain data from learners. We used paragraph writing tasks in the present study.

Then, using a multiple approach to data elicitation can help the researcher to have different insights into the problem and may lead him to develop different conclusions, mainly in a field of research like writing where it is difficult to unveil what learners lack of when doing a task. On this point, O'Malley and Chamot(1990: 95) remark:

Because different types of data collection procedures may lead to different conclusions about the character and use of learning strategies, some investigators have used multiple approaches to data collection.

In sum, to investigate EFL students' writing, we utilized three instruments: paragraph writing (production task), questionnaires and an interview (delayed retrospection). Each of these instruments is described below.

3.4.1.1 Production Task

It is worth mentioning first that the majority of first-year LMD students came with little syntactic and conceptual knowledge, if not unawareness, of the nature and the prerequisite micro-skills, strategies and processing steps for the effective creation of texts that adhere to the norms and conventions of English written discourse.

In this light, the objectives of the experimental classroom action research were twofold: first, to raise the subjects' awareness of the factors that lead to effective text creation (i.e. explicit awareness and mental formulation of effective writing) and second, to train them through a set of carefully designed tasks and authentic texts to become better writers (i.e. more aware of their roles as genuine writers).

In this research work, paragraph writing tasks were employed with a group of first-year students. In other words, three tests (i.e. a pre-test, a while test and a post test) were administered to these students at the beginning, the middle and the end of the academic year.

Tests aim at measuring the skills, aptitudes and behaviours. They can be a valuable source of getting information about the learners, the teaching process and the teaching materials. Bachman (1990) suggests the possibility to use tests as tools for research into the nature of human abilities. This means that the researcher may utilize tests not only as a form of measurement of the learners' performances for the sake of making decisions about their success or failure but also as a kind of analysis of the teaching and testing situation.

According to Scott and Morrison (2006: 245), "*...tests allow researchers to compare the results from their own tests given to a small sample of respondents with the results from a national population*". They can be useful instruments in research about educational evaluation as they can provide various types of information about the learners' abilities, the testing situation and the factors that may influence or hinder the process of assessment. They are usually employed as research tools in experiments and surveys. Sometimes, they are utilised in case studies. Tests may also be used to furnish qualitative or quantitative data Thomas, (2003).

Regarding this research work, thirty students were asked to write in class three paragraphs (i.e. tests) on the same topic (see appendix 4). The paragraphs were not to exceed 150 words, and had to be written within a period of time of twenty (20) minutes. It should be noted that some students went beyond time and length limits. Paragraph writing was chosen as a task because it is an elaborated type of writing and a free one. Besides, paragraph writing and later essay writing is typically used to answer test questions in all the modules of the degree curriculum. The mode of discourse chosen for the three topics was description because students were observed to have a great deal to say when describing.

After the fulfillment of the writing task, the paragraphs (i.e. tests) were graded by university teachers of writing. The aim behind using the paragraph writing task was to identify students' weaknesses and the pedagogical inadequacies and therefore to try to remedy to the situation at hand.

3.4.1.2 The Questionnaire

Richterich and Chancerel (1980: 59) state that: *Questionnaires are structured instruments for the collection of data which translate research hypotheses into questions*

In fact, the questionnaire is a widely used means of collecting data. This structured instrument translates hypotheses into questions and enables the researcher to collect data in field settings; the data themselves are more amenable to quantification than discursive data. It is a written and "one way" (i.e. non interactive) information instrument which has many advantages. First, a questionnaire is a cheaper form of enquiry than interviewing.

Besides, the questionnaire is a retrospective instrument which allows the researcher to determine people' attitudes and beliefs about what they want and what they believe they will do or have done. However, the questionnaire presents some drawbacks such as difficulty of making questions clear and unambiguous, possibility of being affected by low response rates, possibility of being completed in a rush, lack of flexibility and being a one-way instrument not allowing interaction between the researcher and the informant unlike the interview. But at the same time, it presents many advantages calling for its use such as allowing a wider sampling, asking everybody the same questions, giving more time to think about answers, providing anonymity and may be proving easier to analyze and quantify results.

The construction of a valid and reliable questionnaire which tells what one wants to know is difficult and time consuming. It is important, to be very clear about the objectives of the study. Likewise, it is particularly important that the researchers do not reveal their own attitudes through leading questions. The questions should not be complex and confusing, nor should they ask more than one thing at a time. The questionnaire can consist entirely of closed questions, entirely of open questions, or a mixture of both closed and open questions. While responses to closed questions are easier to collect and analyze and can readily be quantified, one often obtains more useful information from open questions. It is also likely that responses to open questions more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say.

The two questionnaires include four types of questions:

Open questions

Closed questions

Mixed questions

Graded questions

As far as the first set of questions is concerned, one can say that such questions (i.e. open questions) give the informants more freedom when expressing themselves. They can decide what to say and how to say it.

Example: After correcting students' writings, do you suggest a remedial work to help them overcome their weaknesses? If yes; which one?

Indeed, as mentioned previously by Richterich and Chancerel (1980: 59): *Open questions do not call in advance for ready-made answers and therefore allow the person questioned more freedom of expression.*

In the second series of questions (i.e. closed questions), the informants are no longer free to suggest anything. Rather, they have to choose from the many possibilities proposed.

Example: Which writing teaching approach do you follow or adopt?

- Process Approach (strategy based approach)
- Product Approach (language based approach)
- Combined Process-Product Approach

Please; justify your answer

As for the third type of questions, it is more a combination of both closed and open questions.

Example: Do you think that coordination between the writing course and the other courses is necessary?

Yes No
Please; justify your answer

The fourth type of questions (graded questions) allows to classify the informants' answers proposed and also to know their point of view and attitudes vis-à-vis the subject matter:

Example: What are the main weaknesses that you have observed in the first year students' writing performance? (Put 1 for the most and 8 for the least, in order of importance).

- Inadequate use of grammar
- Inappropriate choice of vocabulary
- Inappropriate use of word order
- Inaccurate sentence structure
- Lack of coherence (no unity of ideas)
- Lack of cohesion (no link between sentences)
- Others.

The four samples of questions have been taken from the teachers' questionnaire included in this research.

To conduct a questionnaire is not an easy task for two main reasons. The first one is that this activity requires much care and objectivity. The second reason is that the researcher should be as accurate and concise as possible in formulating his/her questions in order to avoid confusion and also not to influence the informants when answering.

3.4.1.3 The Interview

In order to have a clear idea about students' performance in writing, we used a third instrument of data collection, the interview. In fact the use of the interview was incited by the advantage of the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer.

While the questionnaire responses have to be taken at face value, an interview response can be clarified and developed through follow-up questioning. There are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews Nunan (1992), Weir and Roberts (1994).

- Unstructured / Informal interview: it is discovery oriented and guided by the answers of the interviewee rather pre-planned questions of the researcher. This is why the direction of the informal interview is largely unpredictable.
- Semi-structured / Focused interview: in this type of interview, the interviewer has a general idea of the direction of the interview and what should come out of it. The interviewer does not present a list of predetermined questions to be answered, but topics and issues to be treated giving enough flexibility for interviewees to develop areas of concern or volunteer unpredicted content.
- Structured / Formal interview: it is the most formal type of interviews. The list of questions is totally predetermined by the researcher observing the same order.

In the present study, and to identify the needs, we believe that the structured interview to teachers is effective. Besides the fact that no question remains unanswered, some interesting clarifications concerning any badly formulated question can be provided immediately. Likewise, points of interest that we may not have previously thought of may arise during the interview and provide helpful material.

However, this instrument presents some disadvantages that may call into question its reliability. The problem raised is the asymmetrical relationship between participants i.e. the inequitable relationship that may stem from gender, class, status, race or simply personality. In addition, the interview is time-consuming. Nevertheless, we believe that the interview is a valuable research tool to obtain information as it allows clarification and development of answers through follow-up questioning as highlighted by Cohen (1998: 38):

.....research has demonstrated that verbal reports elicited with care and interpreted with full understanding of circumstances under which they were obtained, are, in fact, a valuable and a thoroughly reliable source of information about cognitive processes.

Then, we tried to ensure a carefully elicited and interpreted interview. Research objectives were established and translated into interview questions under the form of open and closed questions. Like the questionnaire, unclear questions were avoided. In addition, the interviewer tried to pay great attention to the interviewee's answers and behaviors.

3.4.2 Informants' Profile

These study participants were EFL students and their teachers of writing. The following sections are devoted to the description of these two groups of participants.

3.4.2.1 Teachers' Profile

The teachers taking part in this study hold either the degree of "Doctorate" or "Magister". Some of them have been recently recruited. They post graduated from different universities and were specialized in different fields. It is worth noting that the majority of the existing writing teachers in the English section of the Department of Foreign Languages at Tlemcen University have prepared their "Magister" in Applied Linguistics. These teachers have received theoretical training but not a practical one. In other words, the gap between what they learn at university and what they actually have to do with the learners is a huge one. Moreover, new teachers are sometimes at a loss because they have to design their own courses. Different situations call for different materials, different methods and different activities. This makes the task of university teachers including writing teachers a difficult one.

3.4.2.2 Students' Profile

The subjects of this study are university students enrolled during the academic year 2011-2012, in the English degree course offered by the English section of the Foreign Language Department of the Faculty of Letters and Languages, at Tlemcen University and count 350 students. In the present research, we dealt with only thirty (30) students chosen at random from different groups of the first year. These students, who are in the age group of seventeen to twenty two years, all come from government schools. They are Baccalaureate holders from literary and scientific streams as well as a number of transferred students from other departments, especially, Exact Sciences and Biology. They have been oriented to the English section in the Department of Foreign Languages according to the grades they obtained in their Baccalaureate exam. What is striking is the high proportion of female students (nearly 80%) compared to that of males (20%).

These students have almost identical learning backgrounds. Their mother tongue (MT) is the western variety of Algerian Arabic, while standard Arabic and French are respectively the first language (L1), and first foreign language (FL1). It should be pointed out that the terms MT and L1 are often used interchangeably in the literature. But the linguistic situation of Algeria compels the researcher to discriminate between these two terms. MT is the term used for the language acquired at home (a spoken form of dialectal Arabic), and L1 is used for standard Arabic that is the national language and the first language learned at school and used as a means of formal instruction. English is the students' second foreign language (FL2).

Before attending university, the subject students have learnt English as a foreign language for at least seven years in Middle and Secondary schools, where teachers follow the communicative language teaching approach principles. These students are oriented to the English Language Section in order to carry on their studies and obtain, normally after a duration of three years a BA degree i.e. "Licence" in English studies.

At university, the programme of first-year students aims at consolidating the basis of the language already acquired in the previous years. This is why the "modules" they are concerned with deal mainly with the teaching of the language: grammar, oral and written production, phonetics, linguistics, discourse comprehension in addition to literary studies, research methodology, Anglo-Saxon culture and civilization, ICT (i.e. information, communication technologies) and general culture which is taught in Arabic. The following table provides the allocation of time over the cited "modules".

Modules	Number of hours per week
Grammar	6 hs
Written production	3hs
Oral production	3hs
Discourse comprehension	3hs
Phonetics	3hs
Linguistics	1h30
Anglo-Saxon culture and civilisation	1h30
Information and communication technologies	1h30
Literary studies	1h30
Research methodology	1h30
General culture	1h30

Table 3.1: First-year curriculum modules

3.4.3 Procedure

To conduct a questionnaire is not an easy task for two main reasons. The first one is that this activity requires much care and objectivity. The second reason is that the researcher should be as accurate and concise as possible in formulating his/her questions in order to avoid confusion and also not to influence the informants when answering. Indeed, it is generally assumed that the manner in which a question is put influences the answer. For this reason the researcher preferred to pilot both questionnaires prior their administration.

3.4.3.1 Piloting the Study

Piloting the study is important to try out the research instrument and find out whether it needs readjustment as stated by Weir and Roberts (1994: 138): *In all methods, the value of piloting instruments before actually employing them in final data collection is paramount...* This will help identify ambiguities, other problems in wording, and inappropriate items, and provide sample data to clarify any problems in the proposed methods of analysis prior to the collection of data in the study proper.

The pilot study leads to the detection of some problems encountered when using the research instrument. The questionnaire should be piloted with a small sample of subjects before being used. This gives the researcher the opportunity to find out if the questions are yielding the kind of data required and to eliminate any questions which may be ambiguous or confusing to the respondent.

Piloting allows the researcher to see whether the method of collecting data is suitable and whether the questions are adequate in terms of clarity, and so on. The efficiency of the instructions, the adequacy of the response categories, and the analysis of the data can all be evaluated.

The students' questionnaire in this study was piloted with ten (10) first-year students from different groups. The teacher questionnaire was also piloted with two (2) teachers. Then, on the basis of pilot results, the investigator refined some questions so they came closer to producing the information required. Reviewing the data produced by the pilot questionnaire helped the researcher omit unnecessary questions and clarify ambiguous ones to obtain the needed information.

3.4.3.2 Data Collection Procedure

This section describes the procedure of data collection with the two instruments used: the questionnaire and the interview.

❖ Teachers' Questionnaire

The researcher designed a questionnaire for teachers (see Appendix 1) in order to find out their opinions and beliefs concerning some points of interest for the present study. It attempted to find out teachers' opinions about the existing writing course and tried to see how teachers assessed first-year university students' proficiency in writing. In other words, it sought to obtain information about teachers' viewpoints concerning the time allocated to the teaching of writing, the approach used for this purpose and the activities that can help the students improve their writing. The questionnaire also asked teachers to identify the difficulties that students encounter when writing and to explain the causes of these difficulties.

The questionnaire was addressed to ten (10) teachers of writing. All the informants are teaching at the English Section of the Department of Foreign Languages at Tlemcen University and three of them are teaching the subject students.

The questionnaire included twenty four (24) questions which aimed at eliciting teachers' opinions, beliefs and perceptions of the current writing course and eventually provide some suggestions to improve students' proficiency when writing. These questions are of four types: open, closed, mixed and graded questions (see Appendix 1).

Part One was labeled background information and included five (5) questions in which the researcher aims at giving information about the teacher, his position in the university, his field of study, the number of years and the level at which he has taught writing, and finally if he has received any training to teach this module.

Part Two dealt with writing in relation to academic needs.

Question six (6) asks about the importance of writing in EFL university studies. It tries to obtain information about teachers' viewpoints concerning the reasons that make writing production important.

Questions seven (7) and eight (8) refer to the relationship between written production and the other modules and will reveal that a correlation between the writing subject and other subjects is felt necessary by the teachers if we want the students to meet the writing demands of all subjects in the curriculum.

Question nine (9) asks whether the current syllabus of writing is adequate for 1st year EFL students.

Question ten (10) asks whether teachers of writing follow the official syllabus

Question eleven (11) asks teachers of writing who have designed their own syllabus about what has been added to or omitted from the official syllabus.

Question twelve (12) asks teachers about the approach they adopt while teaching writing.

Question thirteen (13) displays the skills writing teachers require their students to do most

Part three aimed at giving information about the writing production assessment.

Questions fourteen (14) to seventeen (17) require teachers to assess the writing proficiency of first-year students, relate the weaknesses these students encounter when writing and provide the possible reasons for these weaknesses.

Questions eighteen (18) and nineteen (19) are concerned with the teaching methodology. They ask about the time allocated to the teaching of writing as well as the frequency of writing activities done as homework.

Question twenty (20) asks whether teachers suggest a remedial work after correcting students' writings.

Question twenty one (21) aims at giving information about what teachers focus on while correcting students' writings.

Part four aimed at providing some suggestions.

Questions twenty two (22) to twenty four (24) invite teachers to provide suggestions on how to improve the writing course and help students overcome their writing difficulties.

❖ Students' Questionnaire

The general aim of this questionnaire addressed to the subject students is to identify the difficulties they encountered when writing. The researcher has designed a questionnaire to EFL students in order to have their viewpoints concerning the present teaching of the writing skill, its relation to academic needs, the assessment of this skill, likewise she wanted to know if the writing course helped them in the other courses.

The questionnaire aims also at seeing if the time devoted to writing courses at first-year level is sufficient, as it tries to have some ideas about the frequency of writing activities given to students as homework.

Thereafter, the researcher wanted to identify the weaknesses students had when writing and tried to find out the reasons that made them unable to write accurately and effectively. Finally, this questionnaire invited students to provide some suggestions to modify the present teaching of writing for a better performance.

The questionnaire was submitted to first-year EFL students by the middle of the second term of the academic year 2011 / 2012. In order to avoid misunderstandings, the questionnaire was guided by the researcher; she explained every question carefully using Arabic and French besides English, and clarified every point allowing students to use whichever language they liked in order to answer the questions.

Thirty students from different groups answered the questionnaire which consisted of twenty three (23) questions of different types: closed, open and mixed questions and which were included in four (4) different parts.

Part one: Background information.

Questions one (1) to four (4) aim at giving information about the informants; their sex, age, the stream they belonged to as well as the reasons of the choice of the degree of “licence” in English language. But in fact, it is closely linked to the subsequent part.

Part two: Writing in relation to academic needs.

Question five (5) aims at identifying the reasons that make writing important in EFL university studies.

Question six (6) asks whether the number of modules that require the writing skill is significant. The respondents have to cite three (3) modules.

Question seven (7) aims at knowing if coordination between the writing course and the other courses is necessary.

Question eight (8) seeks to obtain information about the approach adopted by teachers of writing.

Questions nine (9) and ten (10) are intended to ask about the type of writing students are required to do.

Questions eleven (11) and twelve (12) are designed to see whether the present teaching of writing is effective and whether students are satisfied with the topics provided in the writing course.

Question thirteen (13) is intended to see if students prefer the supervision of the teacher when writing or not.

Questions fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) aim at knowing whether students use a draft when writing paragraphs and if they do, which changes and corrections can be made.

Part three: Assessment

Questions sixteen (16) and seventeen (17) aim at identifying the difficulties students have when writing.

Question eighteen (18) is intended to provide the possible reasons for the difficulties encountered by students in writing.

Questions nineteen (19) to twenty one (21) are intended to see whether students are satisfied with the way their teachers assess their papers.

Part four: Suggestions

Questions twenty two (22) and twenty three (23) invite students to give some suggestions on how to improve the writing course so as to overcome their difficulties.

❖ Teachers' Interview

Immediately after analysis of the questionnaire, we provided four (4) teachers with a structured interview to verify our research hypotheses seeking additional information about students' writing performance and clarification about answers to the questionnaire.

The interview exclusively addressed to teachers of writing consists of different parts. We have proceeded to this division for purposes of organization and for guidance to the respondent. We encouraged personal contribution on the part of the informant which, we believe, can be very informative.

The first part includes many details concerning the respondent. We wanted to have as much information as we could, to get a varied point of view on writing from teachers and to reveal whether all teachers of writing share the same feelings about writing. The main background investigated concerns the post-graduate work and the experience in teaching writing.

The second part aims at giving information about skills in relation to the writing course. The second question (2) aims at assessing students' proficiency level in writing.

Question three (3) determines the order of the four skills considered as most suitable in the English curriculum.

Question four (4) demonstrates whether writing teachers prepare their students for short-term or long-term needs. Since no official syllabus exists in the department, teachers aim at different objectives. In fact, it is difficult for a teacher to decide upon a particular purpose. Some students are more gifted for writing and thus want their creative skills to be exploited. Others prefer that emphasis would be laid on writing reports or letters and others may aim at doing post-graduate studies and want the teachers to help them improve the quality of their research projects. The most immediate need students wish to meet is that of simply improving writing skills to respond to the large number of paragraph and essay questions they face in exams.

Question five (5) concerns the skills emphasized in the writing course. This question is linked to the previous one because the purpose in writing determines the skills that need to be stressed. It is also linked to the difficulties encountered when a particular skill is felt to be lacking or when students seem to have a particular problem; teachers tend to remedy it by focusing on that particular point.

Question six (6) is intended to know what teachers think about the time allocated the teaching of writing per week.

Question seven (7) is designed to have the teachers' opinions about the syllabus provided; if they are not satisfied, they are to select among the reasons suggested in the interview and to say what they have added to or omitted from the official syllabus.

Question eight (8) aims at identifying the writing teaching approach the teachers are familiar with and the one they think underlies their teaching.

Question nine (9) requires the informants to identify the most commonly faced difficulties.

Question ten (10) refers to the stages at which students have the greatest difficulty when writing. Here the researcher wanted to know if the difficulties lay at the pre-writing, the writing or the re-writing stage.

Question eleven (11) aims at knowing if writing teachers believe in any kind of cooperation between them and the other subject teachers.

Question twelve (12) aims at knowing if linking the content of written expression to other modules is desirable, this question aims at showing whether such a coordination is feasible and realistic or whether it remains a mere wishful thinking.

Question thirteen (13) is intended to reveal whether writing teachers give activities around a topic before writing and the frequency of such activities.

Question fourteen (14) asks the informants whether they supervise their students' writing in class and contribute to a better quality of writing.

Question fifteen (15) is intended to know if writing teachers write comments on their students' papers.

Question sixteen (16) aims at identifying the most important feature writing teachers look for when correcting and marking their students' papers.

In order to give suggestions as to how we might help students solve their writing problems, three research tools were then used in this study: the production task, the teachers and students' questionnaires and the teachers' interview.

3.4.3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis can be broadly categorized as consisting of qualitative and quantitative analysis. We should bear in mind that these two types of data analysis form different, but not necessary incompatible perspectives on corpus data.

Because of the difficulty of identifying students' writing proficiency and the weaknesses these students have when undertaking a production task, the researcher resorted to the use of two types of analysis. Using more than one type of analysis is believed to provide more reliable research findings. Yet, it should be noted that the researcher had to match appropriately the different types of analysis to the data resulting from the different research instruments as will be explained below.

➤ *Qualitative Analysis*

The aim of qualitative analysis is a complete detailed description. No attempt is made to assign frequencies to the linguistic features which are identified in the data, and rare phenomena receives (or should receive) the same amount of attention as more frequent phenomena. Qualitative analysis allows for fine distinctions to be drawn.

However, the main disadvantage of qualitative approaches to data analysis is that their findings cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance.

In this research work, the qualitative analysis is based on the researcher's observation and interpretation. It is exploratory, descriptive and discovery oriented in purpose. Weir & Roberts state that the data subject to qualitative analysis "*may take the form of verbatim descriptions, interviews, written responses or unstructured observations*"

Then, we used the qualitative method in this work for the analysis of the written production task, the teachers and students' questionnaires and the teachers' interview. The qualitative analysis of students' written production task (i.e. a paragraph) allowed the identification of the weaknesses shown by the subject students when writing and the comparison between their writing proficiency in the three topics dealt with during the academic year. This analysis reveals their grammatical inappropriateness and their unawareness of the use of cohesion and coherence devices.

The qualitative analysis of teachers and students' questionnaires and teachers' interview was undertaken as follows: we collated and interpreted the responses. Then, a key word analysis allowed us to generate categories grouping informants' statements permitting the synthesis of statements. This procedure also allowed to quantify data.

➤ *Quantitative Analysis*

In quantitative research we classify features, count them, and even construct more complex statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed. Findings can be generalized to a larger population, and direct comparisons can be made between two corpora, so long as valid sampling and significance techniques have been used. However, the picture of the data which emerges from quantitative analysis is less rich than that obtained from qualitative analysis. For statistical purposes, classifications have to be of the hard-and-fast (so called "Aristotelian" type). An item either belongs to class "X" or it does not.

The quantitative analysis in the present work relies on quantified data which can tell us what students lack to be successful in their writing activities, the causes behind their weaknesses and the strategies needed to overcome the difficulties they encounter when writing. The data are summarized in tables in which the numerical data are converted into percentages to permit comparison. It was used for the analysis of teachers' questionnaire and interview, and students' questionnaire and scores.

From this brief discussion, it can be appreciated that both qualitative and quantitative analyses have something to contribute to data study. According to Schmied(1993) a stage of qualitative research is often a precursor for quantitative analysis, since before linguistic phenomena can be classified and counted, the categories for classification must first be identified.

To close this chapter, a figure that summarizes the present research design is provided.

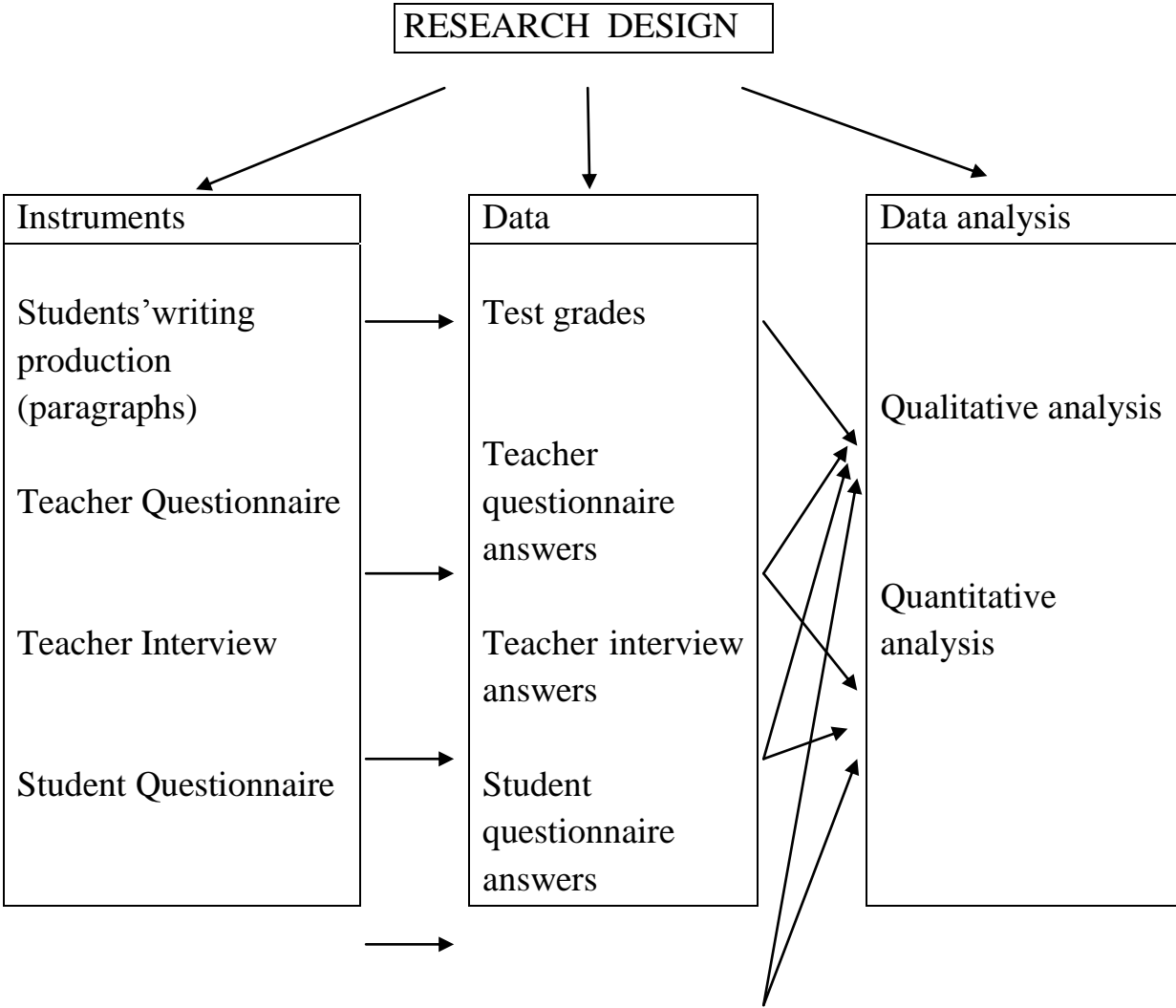


Figure 3.1: Research design

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter was concerned with the description of the research design. It first, described the EFL teaching/ learning situation, restated the research questions and hypotheses then presented the research instruments: the production task, the questionnaires and the interview. The questionnaires were addressed to both teachers and first-year EFL students while only teachers of writing were interviewed. The application of triangulation research tools helped

to uncover and report salient patterns in teachers' beliefs and underlying teaching assumptions, in the subjects' writing performance as well as in the pedagogical inadequacies.

The following chapter proceeds to analyze the data and discuss the problems identified by the teachers and students research tools.

NOTES

1 Integrative motivation: the desire to achieve proficiency in the target language to identify with and take part in the target community. The learner shows interest not only in the target language but in the culture as well.

2 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 L_1 and L_2).

3 The graduate students have to pass an additional newly introduced regional professional examination with a national content in order to have access to available jobs. The examination is organized only in the wilayas where teaching posts are available.

4 Triangulation is the procedure of obtaining more than one aspect of the topic being researched via different sources of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an analysis of the information gathered from three sources of data: the production task (a paragraph writing), the teachers and students questionnaires and the teachers interview. It also presents an interpretation of the results obtained using as a basis the statistics available to supply the arguments with tables and figures to make the explanations clear.

Finally, the main results and conclusions drawn from this study are summarized in this chapter to state to what extent the questions raised by this research work have been answered and make a correlation between the presented hypotheses and the real state of art that is pictured in the obtained results.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF STUDENT' PRODUCTION TASK

This section is concerned with the analysis of the students' production task (i.e. the paragraph writing) in order to see whether students' writing performance is weak, average or good. Then, it examines the aspects of the subjects' writing performance before, during and after the instruction through their papers that are collected, corrected and graded out of 20 points (.../20) by two university teachers in charge of the written production module.

4.2.1 Design

When correcting and grading students' papers, teachers paid attention to both form and content taking into consideration the following criteria:

- Grammatical accuracy.
- Appropriateness of vocabulary.
- Spelling.
- Punctuation.
- Organization of the text (i.e. unity, cohesion and coherence)
- Adequate description.

The objectives of the pre-assessment writing task are to learn about and assess the entrants' proficiency level as well as identify their abilities to complete a written task successfully as summarized in the following table:

Test production		
Objectives	pre-test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the entrants' writing competence • To assess the entrants' writing skills
	While test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note any improvement in their writing proficiency • To note any development in their writing skills and processes
	Post test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess their end year writing proficiency • Evaluate the adequacy of the teaching writing received
Type of task		Paragraph writing
Dates		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class work (November 3rd,2011) (pre-test) • Class work (February 15th, 2012) (while teaching test) • Class work (May 28th,2012) (post test)
Text type (for the three tests)		Description
Text topic (for the three tests)		Write a paragraph where you speak about your favourite hobby
Text length For the three tests)		100 to 150 words
Time allowed (for the three tests)		twenty (20) minutes

Table 4.1: Production task design and administration

With these objectives in mind, the researcher tried to verify her hypotheses which state:

1° The vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak level in writing.

2° The current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation because of the teaching approach used, lack of materials, teaching time, lack of students' practice and lack of coordination between the different modules.

4.2.2 Results

We need to focus our attention on students' writing proficiency and see the extent to which the data obtained corroborate the hypotheses that we formulated earlier. In fact, first-year EFL students displayed a clear inadequate preparation in writing at their entrance to university. They came with inadequate and poor linguistic, syntactic as well lexical knowledge. Accordingly, the researcher has chosen three production tasks on the same topic; one right at the beginning of the year, the second during the instruction, and the last one at the end of the academic year (see 3.4.1.1). The data obtained were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed as will be displayed below.

4.2.2.1 Pre- Test

The qualitative analysis of first-year students' pre-test compositions provided evidence for the existence of problematic areas for subject students in writing. The difficulties they encounter when writing and the observed weaknesses are discussed below with the provision of extracts from students' written tasks.

Grammatical Accuracy

Many students seemed to have serious problems in grammar. The grammatical inaccuracies of these students were so important that they affected the clarity of their sentences. The mistakes that were recorded in their papers were in the use of auxiliaries, the use of tenses, subject-verb agreement, use of articles and prepositions, word order and inappropriate sentence construction. The following extracts from students' paragraphs illustrate these grammatical weaknesses:

- ❖for me I think everyone have hobby he like to do in free time. I playing guitar two hours or one hour in a day. (subject-verb agreement + tenses)
- ❖I play guitar I feel really good rather more of that it give me beautiful and amazing feelings. Actually when I touch the guitar and hear her music

it take me higher and away. It make me forget everything. (use of pronouns + subject-verb agreement)

(extracts from 1st year students' production tasks)

Appropriateness of vocabulary

The inappropriate choice of vocabulary was also recorded with 1st year students in their paragraph writing. Most of the time, this was due to language transfer (from Arabic to English or from French to English) or to ineffective translation. This can be seen in the following students' extracts:

- ❖every weekend I go to the store book in order to search the last ouvrages of the well known authors and I buy it. (language transfer from French to English)
- ❖It is a precieuse fortune because it is the speech of my god, and our prophet write it on the first time.(Ineffective translation)
- ❖I prefer to read books, just read and travel with my lecture far and far. I do sometimes my lecture in the night.(Inappropriate choice of vocabulary)

(extracts from 1st year students' production tasks).

Spelling

As far as spelling is concerned, many mistakes were found in 1st year students' paragraphs. These mistakes, in some instances, were but careless mistakes because students did not revise their written works. But, in other instances, these mistakes were the results of transfer or ineffective translation as it can be noted in the following excerpt:

- ❖my favourite hoby is witting. When I do it, I feel god. When I was angry I writte. It's my solution to relax and the second hoby which help me to find my privet world is the music.(spelling)
- ❖every weekend I go to the storebook.....(spelling)

Punctuation

Coming to punctuation and capitalization, one can assert that they seemed to be neglected in the students' paragraphs as it is clearly illustrated in the following extract:

- ❖my hobby favorit is football when I play football I feel very good and break the stress of the week when I work hard I need relaxe the one solution organized game of football with my friends in and of the week.
(speeling)

The aforementioned difficulties students encountered when writing their paragraphs led very often to the production of unclear and sometimes meaningless sentences difficult to understand for the reader. In other words, the grammatical inaccuracies such as the inappropriate use of tenses and auxiliaries, the choice of inappropriate vocabulary, the use of inadequate word order, spelling and punctuation affected the clarity of expression of students' writings.

Organization of the text

Considering text organization, it should be pointed out that three problematic areas were detected: cohesion, unstructured paragraphs (i.e. inadequate form of the paragraph) and relevance of the content.

First, students' lack of cohesion recorded in their paragraphs revealed the inappropriate use of transitional expressions (i.e. coordinating and subordinating conjunctions for example) which allow the unity of the text.

Second, the majority of students seemed to be unaware of the logical order of ideas and the adequate form of the paragraph. In their pieces of writing, we noticed that these students did not organize their paragraphs into a topic sentence that comes at the beginning of the paragraph and introduces the overall idea of the topic, supporting sentences that support or explain the topic sentence and supply the reader with arguments and examples, and finally a concluding

sentence that summarizes the information that has been presented. This reveals a misconception of the paragraph writing techniques.

Third, though relevance of content is an important criterion of assessment, first year university students did not seem to take into account its importance and this really posed a problem to some of them. In their written works, the subject students were asked to speak about their favourite hobby, but instead of speaking about the hobby they are in favour of, these students tended to enumerate the activities they undertake during their free time. In doing so, we noticed that there is an ineffective use of writing processes on the part of students. In other words, students seemed to be unaware of the steps they have to follow to write a comprehensible and relevant paragraph. During the act of writing, the researcher remarked that students took their sheets of paper and began writing straight forwardly. This behaviour may lead to think that these students neither read carefully the topic nor tried to brainstorm or plan. Consequently, the majority of these students did not really understand the topic and were unable to write acceptable, relevant pieces of writing.

Regarding the quantitative results, the scores for this pre-test ranged from 04 to 12/ 20 as illustrated in the following table. It should be noted that only nine students out of thirty got the average.

Number of students	Scores
02	12
01	11.50
02	11
04	10
05	09
06	08
03	07
04	06
02	05
01	04

Table 4.2: Students' pre-test scores.

4.2.2.2 While-Test

By the middle of the academic year (i.e. February), a second test about the same topic with the same time and length limits was administered to the same students. The correction of these pieces of writing revealed a slight improvement.

Grammatical Accuracy

As far as certain some grammatical points are concerned. Both teachers of these students noticed that there were fewer mistakes in the use of articles, the use of pronouns and plural markers. However, the remaining grammatical items such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, use of auxiliaries, prepositions, adjectives etc. seem to be more problematic to students. Thus, the evident inappropriacy in the writing of most subjects may be due not only to mistakes in grammar but also to the choice of appropriate vocabulary.

Appropriateness of Vocabulary

First-year students' lexical knowledge is far from satisfactory. The results of the while-test revealed that students have still not acquired an adequate amount of words in the target language; hence the difficulty they are bound to face in learning to write.

Organization of the Text

As far as the organization of the text is concerned, a higher level global unawareness of how tasks are approached and ideas put together in a text type has been noticed. At this level, most of the students do not show a logical development as far as the topic they are dealing with is concerned. Most of them fail in the use of appropriate and logical links to separate ideas and sentences. They also lack in variety in connectors and are confined to write long sentences with excessive repetition (i.e. redundancy of words, clauses and even sentences).

What is most striking is the widespread use of excessive coordination as a means of structural linkage, which resulted in incoherence. This major deviation typified most of the subjects' texts, confirming what has been claimed on EFL writing and rhetoric produced by Arab writers (i.e. whose L1 is Arabic) typically characterized by exaggerated coordination and repetition (Kaplan, 1972; Al jubouri, 1983: 99-117; Dudley-Evans and Swales, 1983: 97; Sa'adedine, 1989; Connors, 1996). The interpretation generally given attributes this norm deviant feature in writing to the learners' first language (i.e. negative transfer from Arabic which is said to favor clause coordination and parallel structures).

Spelling and Punctuation

It has been noticed from the students' while-test that fewer mistakes have been made at this level. Students seem to have acquired a certain syntactic knowledge which made their writing meaningful and more effective. Regarding the scores of the while-test, a slight improvement has been noticed.

4.2.2.3 Post-Test

The last writing task was addressed to the same students on May 28th. It dealt with the same topic following the same instructions that have been given in the previous tasks (i.e. length limits and provided time to achieve the task).

Appropriateness of Grammar and Vocabulary

What has been noticed at this level is that some problem areas are still found in students' writings after a full year instruction such as some grammar points; mainly tenses, limited vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

Organization of the Text

Students seemed to be familiarized with this type of writing. They follow the different stages they have gone through when learning how to write a paragraph. In fact, the researcher has noticed that they have learnt to spend more time reading, understanding and finding out the key words of the topic; what they did not do for their previous papers. Then, they let their ideas flow onto paper before organizing and developing them. However, what has also been noticed is that some problem areas such as the over reliance on translation from L1 (Arabic) and relevance of content remain present in their writing.

As far as content is concerned, it has been noticed from the students' written tasks that they are still unable to produce relevant and comprehensible texts. This may be due to a limited repertoire of useful vocabulary, unclear and not organized ideas, lack of clear purpose and no clear writing strategy (ies) to complete the writing task.

To conclude, it should be noted that the majority of students' scores for the last production task cluster above average indicating that the subjects write better organized texts and learn to spend some time preparing the writing task. As a result, and with increased time and preparation, they are able to increase the incidence of good performance as regards the language-system variables. In contrast, the low scores remained stable in the organization of the text and the relevance of content.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

The present section is devoted to the analysis of the data collected from the teachers' questionnaire. We needed to see how university students undertake and realize their written works to have a better understanding of their writing proficiency. We also needed to know their problematic areas when writing in order to help them and try to remedy the problem. For this purpose, a questionnaire was addressed to teachers of the English section of the department of foreign languages at Tlemcen University.

4.3.1 Design

There were ten teachers in all. Their post graduate fields of specialization differ: six of them were specialized in TEFL and applied linguistics, three in sociolinguistics and the last one was specialized in ESP. Six teachers taught written production at the three levels of the "Licence" degree and four only at the level of 1st year and none of them has received training to teach this skill.

The aim of the questionnaire was to reveal what teachers did in their classes of writing, because as already mentioned in chapter two, the official curriculum at university provides only the guidelines for the objectives of the written production module, but leaves the teacher free to make decisions as to the content of the lessons, the materials and the method. For this reason, the written production course is often taught according to techniques, principles and materials relating to the teachers' field of knowledge, experience, competence or his own analysis of students' needs. The questionnaire was also aimed to see how teachers perceive students' writing. The objectives of the devised questions were as follows:

- Questions 1 and 2: asked about the teachers' status at the university and their field of specialization.
- Questions 3 and 4: asked about the teachers' experience in teaching writing.

- Question 5: asked teachers if they received any training to teach writing.
- Question 6: inquired about the main reason that makes writing important in EFL university studies.
- Questions 7 and 8: asked about cooperation between the teachers of writing and the other teachers.
- Questions 9 to 11: asked about the current syllabus of writing.
- Question 12: asked about the writing teaching approach.
- Question 13: asked about the type of writing first-year students are required to do most.
- Question 14: asked about teachers' assessment of first-year students' writing performance.
- Question 15: asked if first-year students encounter difficulties encounter to write accurately and appropriately.
- Questions 16 and 17: asked about the lacunas that teachers have observed in the first-year students' writing competence and the causes of these lacunas.
- Question 18: asked about the time allocated to the teaching of writing.
- Question 19: asked about the frequency of the writing activities as homework assignment.
- Questions 20 and 21: asked about the way students' papers are corrected.
- Questions 22 to 24: asked about suggestions and proposals of change in the written production course.

4.3.2 Results

- **Questions 1 to 5: Teachers' Profile.**

The respondents are nine full-time teachers and one part-time teacher. Among the ten teachers, three are senior lecturers (*Maitres de Conférences*) and six assistant teachers (Maitres Assistants). The last informant is about to hold the magister degree.

The respondents are specialized in three fields: six teachers in TEFL and Applied Linguistics, three in Sociolinguistics and one in ESP as already mentioned. Their teaching experience is found to be as follows: seven teachers from two to six years and three teachers between ten and fourteen years. Six teachers teach writing at the three levels of the “Licence” degree and four only at the level of first year and none of them has received training.

- **Question 6:** Importance of writing in EFL university studies.

The results concerning the importance of writing in EFL university studies are gathered in the following table. It should be noted that some teachers ticked more than one answer.

Reasons for writing importance	Number of teachers
Aid to learning language skills	06
Reinforcement of language proficiency	07
Requirement for communicative needs	07

Table 4.3: Importance of writing in EFL university studies

As shown in the above table, most teachers stated that writing is important in EFL university studies because it reinforces the learner language proficiency. Seven other teachers believed that writing is important to fulfill communicative needs, while six of them estimated that writing is an aid to learning the English language. Consequently, in the light of the results obtained, one may deduce that according to the concerned teachers, the three reasons suggested to highlight the importance of writing in EFL university studies (i.e. aid to learning the English language, reinforcement of language proficiency and requirement for communicative needs) are almost of equal importance.

- **Question 7:** Cooperation between teachers of writing and the other teachers.

From the results obtained, it is noted that five teachers think that there isn't any effective cooperation between the teachers of the writing course and the other teachers. Yet, the other five teachers claim that effective cooperation between these teachers exists.

- **Question 8:** Coordination between the writing course and the other courses.

All teachers agree on the coordination between the writing course and the other courses and explain that courses should be complementary. They also give some specifications on the way to coordinate the writing course with the other courses; first by designing written activities in the different modules which deal with the points tackled in the writing course. Second, by practicing these points in the other courses.

- **Question 9:** Adequacy of the current syllabus for 1st year EFL students.

The majority of teachers, that is eight out of ten, considered the current syllabus of writing of 1st year EFL students adequate. They think that this syllabus is designed to consolidate the linguistic, syntactic and lexical knowledge acquired in the previous years. The remaining two teachers claimed that the actual syllabus was not adequate for the new entrants to university.

- **Question 10:** Use of the current syllabus.

The current syllabus seemed to be adopted by the majority of teachers since nine of the answers were positive. They think that this syllabus contains the components that help students overcome their difficulties when writing namely: the basic sentence patterns, sentence structures (i.e. simple, compound and complex sentences), punctuation, spelling and paragraph writing. Only one teacher stated that she does follow the official syllabus.

- **Question 11:** Adaptation of the syllabus.

The only one teacher who stated that she is not following the official syllabus asserted that she omits lectures such as sentence patterns which is always dealt with in the grammar course and added lectures where she initiates students to use a rich vocabulary in their compositions.

- **Question 12:** Teaching approach.

This question stove to analyze technical details or information, specifically the approach followed while teaching the writing skill. The majority of teachers that is nine out of ten stated that they are in favour of the adoption of a combined process-product approach in the teaching of writing. According to them, both approaches are helpful: the language-based approach (LBA) or product approach serves to provide the necessary knowledge for their proficiency level and the strategy-based approach (SBA) or process approach to develop their strategies and techniques. Thus, a combination of both approaches is necessary for effective writing. The only one teacher, who stated that she is adopting the process approach when teaching writing, claimed that this approach is more adequate for first-year university students to improve their writing proficiency level. The results have been gathered in the following table:

Approach	Number of teachers
Product approach	00
Process approach	01
Product-process approach	09

Table 4.4: The approach adopted to teach writing

- **Question 13:** Types of writing required from 1st EFL students.

It should be noted that most teachers ticked more than one answer. Eight teachers require their students to focus on sentence construction. According to them, it is the prerequisite for paragraph writing, essay writing and effective

writing in general. Nine other teachers ask their students to write and practice paragraph writing most. Finally, one teacher requires essay writing at an advanced level.

Types of writing	Number of teachers
Sentence construction	08
Paragraph writing	09
Essay writing	01
Others	00

Table 4.5: Types of writing required from first-year EFL students

- **Question 14:** First-year students' writing proficiency level.

This question has been devised to ask teachers on the way they assess their students' writing proficiency. The results have been gathered in the following table:

Students ' proficiency level	Number of teachers
Good	01
Average	03
Weak	06

Table 4.6: First-year students' writing proficiency level

This question aimed at evaluating 1st year students' writing performance. As displayed in the above table, six teachers, assess the writing proficiency of 1st year students as weak (i.e. lacking in accuracy, in organization and unity of ideas, in coherence of content, in style, and in writing mechanics). Three other

teachers evaluate it as average (i.e. acceptable form and content) and only one teacher considers 1st year students' proficiency as good.

- **Questions 15 and 16:** First-year students' writing difficulties.

It should be noted first, that most of the respondents have selected more than one item when identifying the weaknesses first-year students encounter in writing. According to them, the major difficulties displayed by these students are as follows:

Students' weaknesses	Number of teachers
Use of grammar	09
Choice of vocabulary	07
Word order	00
Sentence structure	09
Coherence	06
Cohesion	06
Others	00

Table 4.7: First-year students' writing difficulties

The weaknesses all respondents noticed in first-year students' writing are manifold. First, nine teachers revealed that first year students have difficulties at the level of the sentence structure and the adequate use of grammar (i.e. the use of tenses, use of auxiliaries, subject-verb agreement etc.). Second, seven other teachers noticed that the choice of vocabulary posed problem to first year students. Finally, students' problems related to coherence and cohesion which are believed to affect the quality of writing were reported by six teachers.

- **Question 17:** Causes of 1st year students' writing difficulties.

The following table summarizes the causes of the weaknesses observed in the first year students' performance as reported by teachers:

Causes	Number of teachers
Difficult nature of writing itself	05
Language transfer	09
Insufficient time devoted to writing	05
Inadequate teaching schedule	04
Insufficient writing activities	07
Lack of materials	05
Students' negative attitudes towards writing	05
Others	00

Table 4.8: Causes of first-year students' writing difficulties

According to the above results, language transfer and insufficient writing activities and practice appear to be the main causes of first year students' writing weaknesses since they represent the highest ratios respectively. The time allocated to the teaching of writing, the difficult nature of writing itself, the lack of materials and the students' negative attitudes towards the English writing skill are also reported to be involved in students' writing weaknesses but by only five teachers. As for the item related to inadequate teaching schedule, it also appears to be an important cause of students' failure in writing as it was ticked by four teachers.

- **Question 18:** Time load.

As far as the time allocated to the teaching of writing for EFL first-year students is concerned (3 hours per week), most teachers, that is, eight out of ten

have answered that the time allocated to the teaching of writing is insufficient. These teachers were asked to propose the number of hours that should be devoted to the teaching of this skill to first-year students in order to have better performance. First, five teachers believed that the teaching time allocated to writing should be increased to four hours and a half. Second, three other teachers stated that the time to teach this skill should be between four and six hours a week allowing students to practice more and consequently improve their writing level. Finally, it should be noted that two teachers believed that three hours a week (as drawn by the national curriculum) would be enough for an adequate teaching. They made no proposition concerning the teaching time of writing. They simply said that it was sufficient.

- **Question 19:** Frequency of written assignments.

The teachers' answers about the frequency of writing activities given to students as homework are presented below:

Frequency of homework activities	Number of teachers
Frequently	04
Sometimes	05
Rarely	01
Never	00

Table 4.9: Frequency of writing activities done as homework

Question nineteen was designed to measure the frequency of writing activities done at home. As displayed in the above table, five teachers reported to give sometimes writing exercises at home. Four other teachers answered that they frequently give written works as homework. Finally, only one teacher considered that students should rarely do writing activities at home. According to him, at home students do not have the opportunity to feel involved and to invest themselves in the learning experience.

- **Question 20:** Remedial work.

This question stove to analyze a crucial methodological concept in teaching: remedial work. A great deal of teachers confirmed not organizing any remedial work after the correction phase. They explained that such activities took much time, and that collective correction and writing a model composition for example in class were sufficient enough. Only two teachers reported that they suggested a remedial work after each written work. According to them, this will help students overcome their difficulties and improve their writing competence.

- **Question 21:** Focus of correction.

This question attempted to discover further details about teachers' correction habits in order to have more chances to diagnose students' low achievement. It should be mentioned that some teachers ticked more than one item. First, most of them: nine in all seemed to agree that grammatical accuracy and ideas organization were the criteria on which to base writing correction. Second, seven teachers mentioned meaningfulness as an important criterion. Third, six teachers reported that mechanics are also an important criterion which should be focused on when correcting students' writings. Finally, two respondents asserted that they focused on cohesion and coherence when they correct their students' writing works.

Criteria of correction in writing	Number of teachers
Grammar	09
Meaning	07
Idea organization	09
Mechanics	06
Cohesion, coherence	02
Others	00

Table 4.10: Criteria of correction in writing

The three remaining questions of the teacher questionnaire are concerned with the suggestions the respondents made in order to improve students' proficiency level.

- **Question 22:** Evaluation of the teaching of writing.

Most teachers agreed on the reconsideration of the present way of teaching writing. They provided the following suggestions:

- An alternative way of teaching writing should be adopted i.e. introducing new teaching techniques and materials; especially the ones that motivate the students.
- The writing course should be coordinated with the other courses.
- Teachers should insist more on practice by intensifying exercises during class time. In so doing, students will improve their writing performance.

- **Questions 23 and 24:** Suggestions.

Since teachers are the ones who are permanently in touch with students and their problems, they can be a good source of suggestions concerning the treatment of students' writing difficulties. They made various and interesting suggestions and remarks on the way to cope with students' problems in writing:

- All teachers highlighted the importance of reading to help students improve their writings.
- Practice was also recommended with emphasis on the sentence structures previously learnt.
- Link theory to practice through exercises for each point seen in the lesson.
- Induce students to use the books about writing which are available in the library.
- Ask students to revise their lessons at home on a regular basis.

- Ask students to take notes during the lessons, then try to summarize the most important points once at home.
- Induce students to identify and enrich the structures dealt with through songs, poems and games.
- Encourage students to use the internet and look for web sites containing simplified versions of lessons and theories.

This section has analyzed the teachers' questionnaire and revealed teachers' viewpoints regarding the teaching of writing and the difficulties encountered by first-year students in achieving this skill. However, the teacher is not the only partner who needs to adjust himself/herself to the situation to reach successful results, adjustment from both sides is needed. Thus, the following section presents some students' involvement concerning the teaching of writing in order to overcome their weaknesses and reach a better performance.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

After treatment of the teachers' questionnaire, the present section is devoted to the analysis of the data collected from the students' questionnaire designed and administered to them to clarify some points.

Not only did the questionnaire findings added insightful information on the learners' profile but also identified students' writing weaknesses and needs. The subjects' answers also revealed rising language awareness in terms of clear perceptions towards both the learning and teaching processes of writing that they had so far received.

4.4.1 Design

In all, thirty students answered this questionnaire. In order to prevent any misunderstanding, the questions were explained to students, who could ask for clarifications. It should be noted that the questionnaire was piloted prior to its administration. The questionnaire consisted of twenty three questions (see appendix B) that students could answer in any language they prefer. In what

follows, a detailed analysis of all the answers is carried out so as to pinpoint the most relevant findings and offer reasonable interpretations. It should be noted, however, that regarding the number of students dealt with, fifty questionnaires were submitted, but only thirty were handed in. For methodological convenience, each question will be treated separately.

- Questions 1 and 2: asked about students' sex and age.
- Questions 3 and 4: asked about students' secondary school streams and their choice of the degree of "licence" in English language.
- Question 5: asked about the reasons of the importance of writing in EFL studies.
- Question 6: inquired about the modules that require most the skill of writing.
- Question 7: asked whether coordination between writing and the other courses was necessary.
- Question 8: asked about the approach adopted in the teaching of writing.
- Question 9: asked about the types of writing students are required to do.
- Questions 10 and 11: asked if the current teaching of writing and the types of writing dealt with in class help students improve their proficiency level.
- Question 12: asked students whether they are satisfied with the topics provided for writing or not.
- Question 13: asked students if they prefer the teachers' supervision when writing.
- Questions 14 and 15: asked about the use of draft and the changes that can be made when rewriting the draft.
- Questions 16 and 17: asked whether students find difficulties when writing and tried to identify these deficiencies.
- Question 18: inquired about the reasons of students' writing difficulties.
- Question 19: asked about the writing teachers' assessment.
- Questions 20 and 21: asked about teachers' comments on their students' papers.

- Question 22: asked about the possible changes in the way of teaching writing.
- Question 23: asked about students' suggestions to their classmates in order to overcome their writing deficiencies.

4.4.2 Results

- **Questions 1 to 4:** Students' profile.

It was noticed that the majority of first year EFL students are female (i.e. twenty four out of thirty). This indicates the belief strongly imprinted in people's mind that learning/teaching foreign languages is best suited for feminine sex; men being more devoted to science and technical fields. Their age ranges from eighteen to twenty one years old. Most of the respondents, that is, twenty one (70%) have undertaken literary studies before their entrance to university; they come from letters and foreign languages streams. Seven other students, that is, (23.3%) come from letters and philosophy and only two students (06.6%) have followed science studies. To the question referring to the choice of English language studies, we received the following information: twenty six students, that is, 86.6% explained that their choice was based on their own will while four other students (13.3%) said that this field of study was in a certain way imposed on them by their parents.

- **Question 5:** Importance of writing in EFL university studies.

Question five is merely a stepping stone towards the selection of items for which

writing is considered as important. It should be noted that some students ticked more than one answer. The answers are summarized in the table below:

Reasons for writing importance	A.F.	R.F.
Knowing to write is necessary for a language student to succeed .	15	50 %
It will help you write research papers	01	03.3 %
It is necessary in your future career	06	20 %
Other means	00	0 %

Table 4.11: Importance of writing in EFL university studies

First, half of the students, fifteen, that is, (50.0%) stated that knowing to write is necessary to succeed especially for language students. They need to master this skill in order to ensure better scores in the other academic subjects. The item classified next is the necessity of writing in the future career of EFL students. This item has been reported by six (20%) students who stated that most of them will become teachers, translators or will work in any public relation field and therefore need to master the skill of writing in order to ensure that what they write is clearly expressed. It should be noted that some students ticked more than one item. First, four students, that is, (13.3%) reported that the three items (i.e. knowing to write is absolutely necessary for a language to succeed, writing will help students write research papers and writing is necessary in students' future career) are of equal importance. Second, two other students (06.6%) ticked the first and second items. They believed that writing is necessary to succeed and will help them to write their research papers. The remaining two students reported that writing is important because of its necessity to ensure success in their EFL studies as well as in their future career.)

- **Question 6:** Modules requiring the writing skill.

It is useful to know which modules require mainly the skill of writing. The data collected revealed that all the respondents require more or less writing

in the different modules with linguistics as the one which is most calling for the assistance of written expression; twenty five students, that is, (83.3%) asserted that this module requires most the writing skill. Four other students (13.3%) reported that Anglo Saxon civilization and culture in one hand and Anglo Saxon literature on the other are the modules which needed most this skill. Finally, only one student (03.3%) stated that discourse comprehension and research methodology are the modules that needed most the writing skill.

- **Question 7:** Coordination between the writing course and the other courses.

According to the answers provided, a large number of students, that is, twenty eight (93.3%) stated that coordination between the writing course and the other courses is necessary. They explained that the writing skill is needed in all the other modules and throughout the entire curriculum. Consequently, teachers should work together and consult each other in order to help students improve their proficiency level.

- **Question 8:** Writing teaching approach adopted.

The data collected reveals that students have given different answers regarding the approach their teachers use when teaching the writing skill. These answers are gathered in the following table:

Approaches	A.F.	R.F.
Product approach	10	33.3 %
Process approach	03	10 %
Product-process approach	17	56.6 %

Table 4.12: The approach adopted in teaching writing

This question stove to analyze technical details or information specifically the approach adopted while teaching the writing skill. Seventeen students out of

thirty, that is the proportion of (56.6%), reported that their teachers adopt a combined process-product approach. Ten other students, that is, (33.3%) stated that their teachers of writing adopt the product approach (i.e. language-based approach). Finally, only three students, that is, (10.0%) said that the approach used in the teaching of writing is a process approach (i.e. strategy-based approach).

- **Question 9:** Types of writing required from first-year students.

The students' answers about the type of writing they are required to do are presented below:

Types of writing	A.F.	R.F.
Sentence construction	08	26.6 %
Paragraph writing	17	56.6 %
Letter writing	00	0 %
Others	00	0 %

Table 4.13: Types of writing required from first-year EFL students

This question was designed to identify the type of writing students are required to do. As displayed in the above table, seventeen students, that is, 56.6% confirmed dealing mainly with paragraph writing. To a less extent, eight other students, that is, (26.6%) reported that sentence construction is the type of writing they are required to do most. It should be noted that five students (16.6%) ticked more than one item. According to them, both sentence construction and paragraph writing are the types of writing they are concerned with. Finally, none of the students said that they are required to write letters.

- **Question 10:** Types of writing improving composition

This question attempted to know whether the types of writing dealt with help students improve their writing. All students, that is, (100%) answered affirmatively. According to them, the aforementioned types of writing (i.e. sentence construction and paragraph writing) help them improve their proficiency level.

- **Question 11:** Evaluation of the present teaching of writing

Question eleven probed to know whether the present teaching of writing helps students write accurately and effectively. The majority of the informants that is twenty six (86.6%) seemed to be satisfied with the current teaching of writing; their answers were affirmative. They reported that what is being done during writing courses (i.e. the choice of items dealt with) meet their needs. According to them, they consolidate and reinforce the structures that have been learnt in the Middle and Secondary school. On the other hand, four students, that is, (13.3%) do not share the same opinion. They are not satisfied with the way writing is taught presently. They consider the current teaching inadequate since it does not help them write accurately and effectively. They also reported that they lack practice and are not involved in the learning process.

- **Question 12:** Topics provided for writing.

This question concerns the extent to which students are satisfied with the topics provided to them to write about. It appears from the answers provided that the number of students who seem to be interested in the provided topics represents seventeen that is (56.6%). This degree of satisfaction is not very high which means that there are still thirteen students, that is, (43.3%) who are not satisfied with the topics dealt with in writing and whom we cannot neglect. According to them, the topics are not related to the other modules and suit younger people's interests and concerns. They added saying that topics are not motivating. Moreover, they said that topics are boring. The possible reasons for the dissatisfaction of the topics provided to them are gathered in the following table:

Reasons	A.F.	R.F.
The topics are not related to the other modules	10	33.3 %
The topics suit younger people's interests and concerns	03	10 %
You have difficulty finding something to say about	00	0 %
You cannot find enough vocabulary to express your thoughts	04	13.3 %
Other reasons	00	0 %

Table 4.14: Reasons for dissatisfaction with writing tasks

- **Question 13:** Teacher role in writing.

This question was interested in students' attitudes when writing. Most of the respondents, that is, twenty one (70%) said that they prefer to have their teachers to supervise their act of writing in the classroom. Nine other informants (30%) reported that they do not like teachers' assistance and prefer to write freely and hand in the final product to the teacher.

- **Question 14:** Use of a draft.

In this question, students have been asked whether they use a draft when writing or not. A great majority of the respondents, that is, twenty eight (93.3%) reported that they use a draft when they are asked to produce a piece of writing and only two informants (06.6%) stated that they do not use any draft when writing because of the lack of time.

- **Question 15:** Re-writing behaviour.

This question is intended to identify the types of changes made when students rewrite their drafts. First, it has been noticed from the answers provided that sixteen respondents, that is, (53.3%) stated that they change words, sentences and sometimes longer parts. Second, nine other students (30%) reported that they only correct mechanics (i.e. punctuation, capitals, spelling

etc.) when rewriting their drafts. Finally, five respondents (16.6%) ticked the two items provided i.e. change of words, sentences and longer parts as well as the correction of mechanics before rewriting their drafts.

- **Question 16:** Difficulties in writing.

Students' answers revealed that twenty of them, that is, (66.6%) asserted that they really find difficulties to write accurately and appropriately. On the other hand eight other students (26.6%) reported that they do not encounter any difficulty when they are asked to produce a piece of writing. Finally, two students, that is, (06.6%) stated that they do find difficulties especially when the topics dealt with are not clearly expressed or difficult.

- **Question 17:** First-year students' problems to be successful in writing.

According to the students' answers, the main lacunas they have in writing are indicated in a decreasing order of importance in the following table:

Problems in writing	A.F.	R.F.
Appropriate choice of vocabulary	16	53.3 %
Cohesion	10	33 %
Adequate use of grammar	08	26.6 %
Accurate use of word order	07	23.3 %
Accurate use of sentence structure	02	06.6 %
Coherence	02	06.6 %
Other	00	00 %

Table 4.15: First-year EFL students' problems in writing

The results obtained in the above table revealed that students encounter difficulties in all areas. The appropriate choice of vocabulary (53.3%), cohesion (33.3%), adequate use of grammar (26.6%) and accurate use of word order

(23.3%) seem to be the most problematic areas for students. The remaining items, i.e. coherence and the accurate use of sentence structure (06.6%) seem to be less problematic to students.

- **Question 18:** Causes of the difficulties in writing.

The causes of writing difficulties as reported by students are presented in the following table:

Causes	A.F.	R.F.
Insufficient writing practice	14	46.6 %
Insufficient time devoted to writing	12	40 %
Lack of writing materials	08	26.6 %
Inadequate teaching schedule	02	06.6 %

Table 4.16: Causes of first-year EFL students' writing deficiencies

From the results obtained from the above table, it is clear that fourteen students, that is (46.6%), stated that the main cause of writing difficulties is the insufficient practice. According to them, they do not have enough exercises in class or at home in order to improve their writing proficiency level; hence, the failure in writing. On the other hand, twelve students who represent (40%), believed that the deficiencies in writing are rather due to the insufficient time devoted to its teaching (i.e. three hours per week). Another factor, which is also important since eight students (26.6%) mentioned it, it is the lack of materials; lesson and exercise writing books are generally not available at the department library. Finally, for only two students, that is (06.6%), the teaching schedule of writing is inadequate.

- **Question 19:** Assessment of your writing teacher.

This question intended to know whether students were satisfied with the way teachers assess their papers or not. According to students' answers, the majority of them that is (80%) asserted that they are quite satisfied with their teachers' assessment. But, six students, that is (20%) believed that the way their papers are assessed is not adequate without making any comment or saying what teachers should emphasize.

- **Question 20 and 21:** Teacher feedback.

From students' answers, it has been noticed that sixteen students, that is (53.3%) asserted that their teachers always write comments when correcting their pieces of writing while fourteen others (46.6%) stated that they find only scores on their papers without any comment.

According to the results provided by the respondents, it is clearly stated that students prefer to have more comments on their papers since this item has been reported by twenty five students (83.3%). The students feel more assisted when teachers provide them with criticism and advice; this is why they still search for feedback from the instructors. The five remaining students (16.6%) who want fewer comments on their papers, no doubt, protest against the tone of the criticism.

- **Question 22:** Suggestions to teachers.

This question has been devised to ask students to suggest changes on the way of teaching writing. Three students (10%) have suggested no change on the way to teach writing. They only say that the current teaching of writing satisfies their needs. Two other students (06.6%) have not answered this question and consequently have not made any suggestion. While most of the respondents, that is, (83.3%) put the blame on teachers for the deficiencies students have when producing pieces of writing. They reported that the teaching methodology and techniques presently used are inadequate and do not meet their needs. For this,

they have suggested some changes and given the following proposals to teachers.

- To maintain a friendly atmosphere in class and have a good relationship among students in order to facilitate learning because communication based on mutual respect makes the process of teaching and learning a very fruitful one.
 - To speak and explain slowly.
 - To write all the difficult words and expressions on the board.
 - To give more activities, grade the ones done at home and even take the grade as part of the exam in order to oblige students work more.
 - To design special activities sessions and encourage group work.
 - To use the language laboratory, audio visual aids and the internet.
 - To uses songs and make students identify the sentence structures learnt during the writing course.
- **Question 23:** Suggestions to students.

To improve their writing proficiency, the majority of the students: twenty five, that is, (83.3%) strongly recommended reading to their classmates. Students are aware of its importance to improve their proficiency level whether in writing or in speech. The other five students that is, (16.6%) suggested practice at home and in class with a focus on exercises done in class under the guidance of the teacher. In so doing, students hope to improve their writing competence.

In addition, the informants have made suggestions concerning students' attitudes towards the learning of this skill (i.e. writing). They recommend their classmates to attend all the writing courses, pay close attention to what is being said during the lecture and ask questions whenever they have difficulties. Finally, they recommend their classmates to follow their teachers' instructions in order to improve their writing proficiency and to reach their aims.

After treatment of learners' answers, the following section is devoted to the analysis of the data collected from teachers' interview designed to clarify some points concerning the teaching/learning of the writing skill.

4.5 ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW

The interview addressed to teachers of writing aims mainly at reporting some of the teachers' impressions about the writing approach, the syllabus provided, the most commonly faced difficulties, the cooperation between teachers of writing and the other teachers, the coordination between the writing course and the other courses, the way teachers correct and mark their students' papers as well as their wishes and suggestions to improve the teaching of this module.

4.5.1 Design

In this research work, the structured interview was addressed to four teachers of writing and included the following objectives: identifying first-year students' proficiency level in writing, finding out the difficulties encountered by these students and trying to find out possible solutions to overcome their writing difficulties.

- Question 1: asked about the respondents' postgraduate field of specialization and their experience in teaching writing.
- Question 2: asked about the students' proficiency level in writing.
- Question 3: asked about the place of writing as compared to the other skills in the English curriculum.
- Question 4: inquired about the purpose teachers mainly prepare their students for when teaching writing.
- Question 5: asked about the skills stressed in the writing course.
- Question 6: asked about the time allocated to the teaching of writing per week.

- Question 7: asked teachers whether they are satisfied or not with the syllabus provided.
- Question 8: asked about the writing teaching approach used.
- Question 9: aimed at identifying the students' most commonly faced difficulties when producing pieces of writing.
- Question 10: inquired about the stages where students encounter the greatest difficulties when writing.
- Question 11: asked about cooperation between writing teachers and the other teachers.
- Question 12: asked about coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses.
- Question 13: asked about the frequency of writing activities before the act of writing.
- Question 14: asked whether teachers supervise their students' writing in class or not.
- Question 15: asked whether teachers write comments on their students' papers.
- Question 16: inquired about the important feature(s) writing teachers look for when correcting and marking students' papers.

4.5.2 Results

The questions asked by the interviewer are complementary to those in the questionnaire since they are centered on the types of difficulties the students regularly encounter when writing, the techniques they might use to facilitate task accomplishment and teachers' own opinion on the activity of writing in the learner's current and future life.

The interview consisted of sixteen questions (see appendix C). In what follows, a detailed analysis of all the answers is carried out. It will allow us to define the most relevant findings and offer reasonable interpretations.

- **Question 1:** Teachers' profile.

The four teachers who were interviewed come from two fields of specialization: TEFL and Applied Linguistics on one hand and Sociolinguistics on the other. Their teaching experience in writing is found to be between six and ten years. Apart from writing, these teachers teach other modules such as linguistics, British literature and Anglo-Saxon civilization.

- **Question 2:** Assessment of students' proficiency level in writing.

This question requires from teachers to evaluate their students' performance in writing. Most of them, that is, three admit that their students are rather weak. According to them they encounter difficulties at the level of sentence structure, word order, organization and unity of ideas. They also notice that students' difficulties are also at the level of writing mechanics (spelling, capitals and punctuation). Only one respondent states that the students' proficiency level is average with the exception of few of them whose level is good.

- **Question 3:** Priority assigned to the four skills.

The third question that teachers have been asked concerns the priority they would assign to the various linguistic skills. Here, we have received four types of answers, all logical. There is one combination which may be surprising: speaking as first priority, and reading as a second one; but this combination is explained by the teacher who mentioned the fact that students in the English department will become teachers and hence need to speak first, then read to prepare their courses. The one who has put listening first justified it by the fact that students listen to the English language before anything else.

As far as writing is concerned, the teacher who has given it priority stated that language is only spoken and that written language has its own structure that we must acquire by practicing writing. Finally, the one who has put reading first explained that the reading skill helps to proceed to the other skills.

- **Question 4:** The purpose teachers of writing prepared their students for.

This question aimed at identifying the purpose teachers of writing prepare their students for. Four items are suggested to select from. Here the respondents have answered that they mainly prepare their students for all the purposes mentioned in the instructions of the interview, with a slight emphasis laid on the second item which is, preparing the student to write research papers and final memoirs(if any). Another item has been added by a first-year teacher, which is writing for the purpose of the act of writing itself.

- **Question 5:** Skills emphasized in the teaching of writing.

Concerning the skills emphasized in the writing course, it has been noticed from the teachers' answers that much work is done at the sentence structure level, then text organization and coherence. One of the teachers stated that he emphasizes grammar only, as to neglect the other skills. According to him, grammar should be stressed by all writing teachers if they want to help their students improve their proficiency level.

- **Question 6:** Time load

This question deals with the writing course timing density. Three teachers suggest that writing should be taught for six hours per week not only at the first-year level but in the other levels too; but the other informant thinks that three hours a week is sufficient.

- **Question 7** Assessment of the syllabus provided.

This question assesses the degree of satisfaction of the teachers with the syllabus. Three teachers seem to be unsatisfied with the provided syllabus while only one teacher states that he is quite satisfied. This question is to be supported by stating reasons for their position. Among this we have: the syllabus is too long for the assigned hours, it does not allow the teacher to diversify, it is not

comprehensive enough, it includes things that are too advanced and should be reserved for third year and finally that it includes too much grammar.

- **Question 8:** The approach adopted when teaching writing.

The four informants asserted that they adopt a combined process- product approach. According to them the two approaches are complementary. The product approach, i.e. the LBA provides students with the necessary knowledge and the process approach i.e. SBA develop their strategies for writing i.e. the way they proceed and the techniques to write a piece of writing.

- **Question 9:** Students' most commonly faced difficulties when writing.

According to the informants, students face difficulties in most of the areas when writing. The most frequent ones are at the level of sentence structure followed by grammar (i.e. use of tenses, plural markers, subject-verb agreement, use of auxiliaries etc.), vocabulary limitation then organization of ideas and link between sentences. The word order does not pose problem to students since it has been mentioned as the least frequent difficulty they encounter.

- **Question 10:** The stages of students' greatest difficulty when writing.

Teachers aimed at identifying the stage at which students encounter the most significant obstacles. Two informants believe that the difficulties are encountered at the pre-writing and writing stage. One thinks it is the writing stage itself which is troublesome and one believes that the problem lies in the writing and re-writing stage. These responses indicate at least that the problems do not stem from a mere difficulty at the formal level but are inherent in the whole process, all the way from the pre-writing stage, through the writing to the re-writing stage.

- **Question 11:** Cooperation between teachers of writing and the other teachers.

Teachers' answers reveal the degree of optimism of teachers of writing concerning a potential cooperation between their teaching and that of the other

subjects in the curriculum. Four teachers believe that such cooperation is feasible and desirable in all modules which require essay writing: literature, civilization, linguistics, research methodology. The fourth one is rather sceptical to such a contribution because he thinks it cannot be achieved, as writing teachers cannot know about the content of the syllabus of the other modules.

- **Question 12:** Coordination between the writing course and the other courses.

All teachers agree on the coordination between the writing course and the other courses and explain that courses should be complementary. They also give some specifications on the way to coordinate the writing course to the other courses by designing lessons in the other modules which deal with the points tackled in the writing course and by practicing the points seen in the writing course in discourse comprehension, literature and civilization modules in order to consolidate the writing mechanics and conventions and reinforce their understanding.

- **Question 13:** Writing activities the act of composing.

The respondents state that discussions held prior to writing is a common practice in the writing course. Three teachers use sometimes pre-writing activities before the students begin to write about a topic. As a matter of fact, these activities are useful especially in the first stages of teaching writing to make the students approach the writing task with less apprehension but the student has to show creativity in the product that he gives to the teacher and not merely report the discussion.

- **Question 14 and 15:** Teacher feedback.

The informants' answers reveal that all writing teachers provide assistance to their students in the process of writing. In other words, they supervise all the

students' writing activities in class which is positively perceived by a majority of students.

Question fifteen related to assessing reveals whether there is any feedback on the teachers' side towards written works and under which form this feedback is provided to the students. The four informants write comments on their students' papers: two of them in the form of abbreviations, one in the form of abbreviated phrases and the other one in the form of complete sentences.

- **Question 16:** The most important feature teachers of writing look for when marking their students' papers.

The informants' responses reveal that content seems to affect to a least extent the marking of papers. The number of errors is mentioned as being a minor factor in the assigning of a grade. However, overall organization and coherence between sentences come alternatively before the above mentioned items.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN RESULTS

The production task administered to first-year students, teachers' and students' questionnaires as well as the writing teachers' interview were intended to identify first-year EFL students' proficiency level in writing, explore the teaching of writing provided to these students, discover the causes behind these students' writing difficulties, find out possible solutions to overcome students' weaknesses and help them improve their writing proficiency level and cope with university tasks. With these objectives in mind, the researcher tried to verify her research hypotheses.

With regards to the first hypothesis which stipulates that the vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak proficiency level in writing, interesting results were obtained. First, the results of the production task (i.e. paragraph writing), revealed that first-year students' writing proficiency is weak. It has been noticed that the majority of students encounter real difficulties in writing in

both form and content. Second, most of the informants, that is, three teachers out of four also assessed first-year students' writing proficiency as weak (see question 2 in teachers' interview). Likewise the data obtained from teachers' answers to the questionnaire (see question 14) revealed that six teachers out of ten also estimated their students' proficiency in writing as weak. According to teachers, the reasons of first-year students' low achievement in writing are manifold. They explained that students' most problematic areas in writing lay at the level of sentence structure, grammar use (i.e. use of tenses, use of auxiliaries, subject-verb agreement etc.), choice of vocabulary and idea organization. The data obtained from the students' answers (see question 17 in students' questionnaire) also revealed that the students' weaknesses in writing concern especially the choice of vocabulary, the adequate use of grammar, word order and idea organization. The findings show that the overall informants involved in this study (i.e. teachers and students) reach a common ground on the weak proficiency level in writing which confirms the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis states that the inadequate preparation provided to first-year students in writing is linked to the current teaching of this skill. It should be noted that students' low achievement in writing was affected by the inadequate teaching approach used, lack of coordination between the different modules, lack of materials, the inadequate timing and the lack of students' practice.

As far as the teaching methodology is concerned, it should be noted that all teachers who were concerned with the interview and the majority of those who answered the questionnaire answered using a combined approach to teach writing (i.e. product-process approach). According to them, both approaches are equally important and should be taken into consideration in a very balanced way. It is not enough to know the sentence patterns and a large vocabulary if this fails to equip the learner with the ability to use language for different purposes. This is clearly shown in teachers' answers (see questions 12 and 8 in teachers' questionnaire and interview) where they agree to use both approaches in order to enable students to master the basic structural patterns of the language on the one

hand and develop the processes that help students improve their writing proficiency level on the other. On the other hand, and as already mentioned in the results of the questionnaire, only one teacher reported that the process approach was more appropriate to first-year university students and should be used in the teaching of writing. He seemed to consider writing as a means of communication and not as an end in itself. He believed that this approach might serve the communicative needs of learners, might give them a sense of achievement and might be more relevant to them. However, this approach often emphasizes the “know-how” (use of writing processes) aspect to the detriment of the “know-that” (knowledge of writing). This may lead students to focus on how to proceed when writing without having a practical mastery of what they have been taught in the writing course.

As far as this point is concerned (i.e. the approach used) students’ viewpoints were not different since most of them, that is, seventeen reported that their teachers adopted a combined product-process approach. Ten other students stated that their writing teacher adopted the product-approach (see question 8). But giving priority to this approach might lead students to assume that grammatical accuracy and writing mechanics are far more important than the ability to develop the writing processes and the steps students should follow when undertaking a writing task. To avoid such erroneous view, it should be made clear for students that grammatical correctness and use of adequate mechanics and writing conventions are not enough for successful writing if not coupled with relevance and acceptability of content. The remaining three other students related that their writing teacher adopted the process-approach. These findings seem to join the researcher’ hypothesis which states that the approach used in the teaching of writing affects students’ proficiency.

As far as the teaching methodology is concerned, another important factor is raised in both respondents’ answers i.e. teachers and students: the lack of coordination between the writing course and the other courses. Both respondents (i.e. teachers in questions 7 and 8 and students in question 7) agree that there

should be a coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses by designing, for example lessons in the other modules in which the points tackled in the writing course can be reinforced. This is believed to help students make use of the learned structures and improve their writing proficiency level whether in the discourse comprehension course, in literature, in research methodology or civilization. This is why the lack of coordination between the different courses is believed to affect negatively students' proficiency in writing.

Another factor related to the inadequate preparation of first students' in writing is the lack of practice. It should be noted that the information provided by teachers reveal that four of them have answered frequently giving writing activities to their students (see questions 19 in teachers' questionnaire and 13 in teachers' interview). They also reported giving practice and drill work to help their students improve their proficiency not only in writing but also in speech. Drills are supposed to train the student to write or talk by helping him /her to master the basic structural patterns of the language. Drilling does not mean that teachers spend time explaining grammar, writing conventions and mechanics (i.e. rules) but training students to write and speak appropriately and grammatically.

Five other teachers reported that writing activities do not often occur and consequently they do not have frequently the opportunity to make use of the points seen in the writing course. Finally, only one teacher stated that he rarely gives writing exercises to his students because of the insufficient time allocated to the teaching of this skill. Then, it appears that students lack practice in writing activities which affect their proficiency providing some evidence for the researcher' s second hypothesis.

With regards to timing, most respondents, that is, eight teachers out of ten reported that the time allocated to the teaching of writing is insufficient (see question 18 in teacher questionnaire). According to them, three hours a week are

not enough to learn writing and make use of it appropriately. Teachers have proposed to increase the number of hours allocated to the teaching of this skill to four or six hours a week in order to allow students to practice more and have a better performance. On the other hand, three teachers out of four joined the viewpoints of the teachers who answered the questionnaire and stated that three hours a week to teach writing are insufficient for first-year students (see question 6 in teacher interview) and only one of them reported that three hours a week are enough. Timing is then an important factor in the teaching of writing which may either hinder or improve learning. These findings seem to join the researcher's hypothesis which states that timing affects the teaching of writing and therefore students' proficiency by cause and effect relationship.

As far as lack of materials is concerned, it is reported to be involved in the students' low achievement in writing. Both respondents i.e. teachers and students (in questions 18 in both teacher and student questionnaires) reported that lesson books and exercise books of writing are generally not available at the department library. There is a small number of books for a huge number of students. Consequently, students do not have the opportunity to practice, reinforce and consolidate the structures learnt in the writing course outside the classroom. They are always waiting for their teachers to provide the activities. Moreover, tape recorders and language laboratories exist in the English language section but unfortunately not used in the teaching of writing. Very often, the only accessories a teacher uses are a blackboard and a piece of chalk. This seems to join the researcher's hypothesis stating that lack of materials has also an effect on students' proficiency in writing.

One may deduce that the findings concerning the teaching approach used, the lack of coordination between the writing course and the other courses, the lack of practice, the lack of materials and the inadequate timing seem to confirm the researcher's second hypothesis which states that these factors have an effect on students' proficiency in writing.

Regarding the third hypothesis which states that successful academic writing can be achieved if changes occur at the level of teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time load, interesting results were obtained. As far as the teaching methodology is concerned, the majority of the respondents that is, five teachers and twenty five students answered that writing practice should be intensified especially for first-year students (see questions 22 in teacher and student questionnaires) to improve students' writing proficiency level and help them cope with university tasks. Concerning the syllabus of the first-year university writing course, five teachers reported that it should be adapted to students' needs while most students made no suggestion. Coming to materials, here also most of the informants (see questions 24 and 22 in teachers and student questionnaires) stated that there is an urgent need to equip the department of foreign languages with new and enough writing lesson and exercise books. Moreover, they seem to reach a common ground on the use of new technologies in the teaching/learning of writing. Today the information age has replaced the industrial age, giving way to the supremacy of processed information through computers, and mainly through the internet. This is why students need to cope with the new world requirements by setting about whole programmes for evolution. In the new millennium, there is a persistent call for innovation and change.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, time load for the teaching of writing needs also to be changed. The majority of teachers (see questions 18 in teacher questionnaire and 6 in teacher interview) reported that the writing course timing should be increased to six hours a week in order to enable students to have more activities and practice. This will also allow teachers to re-teach, re-explain the items that seem to pose problem to students and link theory to practice through exercises of the different points seen in the lecture.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Interesting results were achieved in this chapter. It has been shown that the linguistic variables as well as the non-linguistic ones can affect the teaching of writing. From such a discussion, we can understand that such variables can contribute to the success of an EFL enterprise as much as they can contribute to its failure. Writing presents quite a number of problems in the Algerian university classroom. Such factors as time needed to learn, a well-prepared teacher and the method all have to be taken into account by both teachers and administrators.

With regard to writing, the study has revealed that the linguistic factors affect negatively the teaching process. Writing being taught in isolation, the learners do not have the opportunity to make use of it frequently. Besides, it was found that even the non-linguistic variables are, to a great extent, involved in learners' failure in writing such as the method, time constraints, learners' motivation etc.

Thus, on the basis of the results obtained in the present chapter, the next and last chapter will be entirely devoted to suggestions and recommendations which are hoped to contribute to improve students' writing proficiency.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter is entirely devoted to some possible recommendations and suggestions regarding the teaching of writing which are hoped to help to overcome the problems identified in this study. The results of this research work indicate that the learning of the writing skill at university level is affected by different factors: inadequate teaching methodology, lack of students' practice, insufficient time devoted to the teaching of writing and lack of coordination between the writing course and the other courses. Therefore, the present recommendations and suggestions will focus on these aspects. The first section will deal with some recommendations regarding the teacher as an agent of change, his roles as well as his training.

Then, in the hope to eradicate or at least minimize most existing problems encountered in writing by first-year English students, the researcher will endeavour to suggest a more adequate way of teaching writing. She will try to give some proposals regarding the teaching methodology and techniques such as eclecticism, cyclical teaching, concord of modules and other related aspects.

Further recommendations concerning teacher-learner relationship, classroom management, and time load will be provided in the second section. Finally, in the third section, some suggested activities such as keeping journals, university magazine and net exploring which might be of help to teachers of writing to bring positive change in their teaching process are proposed.

5.2 TEACHER PREPARATION

Although the emphasis in education today is on the learner as the focus of learning, it must be remembered that the teacher is still the person especially trained to guide the learner and create a positive classroom environment. The teacher, however, is a facilitator of learning in the sense that today's writing teacher must manipulate much more information in different areas of knowledge. In other words, he must know how to use his knowledge of writing,

psychology, sociology and pedagogy to help his students learn the writing skill and make use of it appropriately and effectively.

In fact, the teacher is an important element in the whole process of teaching/learning; indeed, he is highly involved in the teacher-learner scheme. Therefore, some considerations such as teacher as an agent of change, teacher training, his role and techniques should be highlighted.

5.2.1 Teacher as Agent of Change

Everything is bound to change around teachers who are to work for a period of thirty-two (32) years: the learners, the educational policy, and the teaching methodology at national and international levels. Therefore, language teachers have to be trained to cope with any change that might occur, and to be able to cause change. At university, the teacher has to assume different roles depending on students' needs and the type of activities. 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, skill(s) to be focused on as well as the type of interaction that should exist in the classroom.

As far as writing is concerned, the teacher has to explore his teaching practices to identify problems, and seek adequate solutions. He has to make a profile of learners' needs and difficulties in this skill and devise a teaching approach to writing accordingly (Hedge 2000). He should raise learners' awareness about writing, its importance in language learning as well as in relation to the other skills. He has to train students in learning to write; one main procedure for this is to build in them the writing habit and to think of a set of parameters to introduce positive change into their classroom such as the learner-centeredness, the appropriate writing environment, the integration of writing assignments in the other modules and the introduction of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural EFL learning.

5.2.2 Teacher Training

Today, although the process of teaching is more learner centered (i.e. the learner is the first element involved in the process and therefore deserves much attention), the teacher plays a crucial role in the whole process. It is worth mentioning first, that in order to prepare prospective teachers adequately, it may be time to create and organize teacher training programmes during the of “Magister” training because these would be teachers at university level with no teaching experience and no training at all. Students will have to choose a content module and a language skill module. Training will encourage them to adopt a developmental perspective and will enable them to improve their teaching as well as their social skills, attitudes and self-awareness.

In addition, the extent, nature and quality of the teacher training will crucially affect the quality of teaching. Teacher training should focus its attention on classroom practice because one of the main causes of students’ failure in writing is lack of practice. So, in order to build students’ confidence and enthusiasm to write, and in order to review students’ reluctance and anxiety when having a writing assignment, teachers need to spend more time building the writing habit (Kern, 2000 and Harmer, 2004). They need to engage their students into continuous practice until they acquire the habit of writing. This can be attained if students are trained to write on a regular basis throughout the lectures and during the whole academic year(s). Teacher training needs also to have as its primary goal the improvement of the teacher’s practical efforts to bring about effective learning on the part of students. Practical techniques need to be developed. Such techniques are both those common to all branches of teaching and those that are specific to the teaching of writing. These techniques include an adequate command of the “module” (writing course), a teacher will have to teach. Also, information component, in which the teacher draws in the very considerable body of knowledge about education, teaching sociology, psychology, etc, (Strevens 1980). When there is some form of teacher preparation, there should be a relationship between the nature of the programme

and the real needs of future teachers. Therefore, the researcher recommends that initial training programmes should be obligatory and have a strong bias towards the practical side.

Finally, it is important to stress the teacher's crucial role in society. This can be demonstrated by, for instance, supplying in-service help, providing incentives such as scholarships, travel grants or else. Also sending encouraging circulars to teachers from time to time, as reminders that they are not forgotten, would be a good way to make them retain a sense of commitment to their profession.

5.2.3 Teacher's Role

Using the audio-lingual method, the teacher's role was that of: *Combination drill sergeant and orchestra conductor*, as was ironically expressed by (Silberstein 1984).

It was a relatively easy role to play since most activities were prepared and well programmed beforehand. Today, however, at university level and taking into account first-year writing courses, neither the lectures nor the activities are programmed and prepared in accordance with a prescribed syllabus. The teacher of writing has to design his own syllabus and activities.

It would be clearer, first of all, to consider the role of the teacher as being an essential component in the teaching / learning process. The teacher of writing today needs to be aware of the students' needs which constitute a major source of information for his course design. What do students want and need to get from the writing course? Have they chosen to have the course or are they here simply because it is required? Do they need writing to learn, to communicate or both?

These are all important questions the teacher has to discuss with his students at the beginning of the course for two main reasons. First, this will help him select and present materials in the most appropriate way. Second, by

voicing their needs, students will clarify them in their own minds and be able to formulate concrete goals to work towards. Then, being aware of the learning preferences of his students, and having his own preferred way of instructing, the teacher can make adjustments to accommodate the students needs (Boylan 1984). The more a teacher knows about the students' personal approaches and personal concepts, the better he will adapt his teaching strategies to his students. In so doing, teachers can promote and foster successful learning.

To achieve an atmosphere of interest, confidence, enthusiasm and mutual support in ones' classes is not easy. It is energy and time-consuming. It involves failures and successes, and an acceptance of each individual strengths and weaknesses, including one's own. But before all, the teacher must be willing and eager for learning to be an exciting and creative experience. This means that he must show respect for all the students' ideas, encourage them to think for themselves and make their ideas essential to the lesson. He must promote positive learning interactions among students.

Besides, it is advisable for a teacher of writing to be aware of individual differences among the students such as age, sex and attitudes. Since the students differ in the value they place upon education, in their aspirations and the response they make to particular teachers and methods, it is thus recommended to the teacher to take the responsibility of reconciling these attitudinal variations among the students.

It is also important for the teacher of writing to attempt to create a positive attitude towards himself by showing some fairness, friendliness, firmness and a strong belief in teaching. Indeed, it is generally assumed that a student who develops a negative or a positive attitude towards the teacher will inevitably develop the same attitude towards the taught subject; which either deters or promotes the learning process.

The teacher of writing has also to be a needs analyst, selecting and grading the materials according to the students' level and interests. The point for

the teacher is to be flexible and sensitive to students' writing weaknesses 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 students 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 students needs, select and grade materials and learning activities accordingly. By so doing, the teacher would be in a better position to develop his students' writing competence.

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

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

To sum up, the role of the writing teacher is to employ the adequate teaching strategies in order to raise students' awareness of the target language. In addition, his role is also to use the appropriate processes (i.e. the way to plan, organize, manage and carry out a writing teaching programme) in order to have motivated students on the one hand, since motivation goes hand in hand with the positive attitudes towards a good and successful learning (Harmer 1984), and successful results on the other.

5.3 TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES

Regarding writing considerable importance for student's language learning and for their future prospects at university or in their job field, some implications concerning the teaching methodology and techniques will be provided in this section.

If we consider writing to be an important part of the language learning process, the question that arises is the following: what is the methodology which has the best fit, the closest match with all the variables (mainly the learner himself, his profile, his level of proficiency, his motivation and attitudes to learning)? It is worth mentioning first, that the individual teacher needs to acquire the widest and deepest understanding of all these variables he is likely to encounter in the teaching/learning situation of writing. The teacher needs to select, devise and operate for any given situation. In this context Finocchiaro (1982: 11) posits: "*Language teaching will always remain an art in the hand of enthusiastic, competent, caring teachers*".

It is impossible to decide what appropriate method in writing teaching is. This highly depends on the relationship which exists between the teacher and the learner and also how the classroom is organized. Therefore, it is the teacher who can decide on the model to follow and how to structure his/her course having in mind a number of parameters such as the learner's age, interest and objectives of the course to be achieved.

It is generally agreed that students learn a subject at different rates and with quite different levels of completeness. The teacher is not held responsible for the differences in ability students bring with them into the classroom. He is, nonetheless, responsible for motivating them and ensuring that they become involved in learning EFL.

All persons have preferences for ways of learning. These preferences are called individuals' learning styles¹. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to be aware of his/her students' different learning styles, and their preferred way of

getting instruction. For this, the teacher needs to select from among a wide range of possible techniques and courses of action, precisely those which are appropriate to the circumstances of the teaching/learning situation. Indeed, it is very important that teachers learn to adapt. In so doing, they can offer their students not a single technique which may or may not be effective, but the best possible choice of instructional mode for the particular variables that operate in each individual learner.

Furthermore, it may be necessary to abandon the day' lesson plan because of unforeseen difficulties raised by the students. The principle is that if, at any point during the lesson, the teacher's pre-arranged lesson and the students' needs are in conflict, it is the learner's needs which should have priority. It may also be necessary to study first the basic patterns (i.e. the simple sentences) because students will not produce satisfactory sentences unless they first master the simple sentence, hence the importance of going from easy to more difficult and simple to more complex when teaching. When the teacher feels the students have gained some mastery over the basic patterns, he then can move to more complex activities where the students are asked to expand those patterns.

More importantly of all, it may be necessary to prepare additional practice on particular points and to study again and again the same item for consolidation, hence the importance of the cyclical teaching process.

5.3.1 Cyclical Teaching

Nowadays, it is believed that the teaching of writing should be cyclical. The repetition of items at different levels is highly recommended for the consolidation and mastery of conventional writing mechanics and organizational devices. In other words, the same item needs to be studied again and again throughout a course. There are at least three reasons for this:

- Learners forget, so straight forward revision is necessary from time to time.
- Additional uses of a structure need to be studied.

- More importantly, and yet the most frequently overlooked reason, is that as learners advance, they need to deepen their understanding of the writing skill since it is required in all the other modules at university level and later for their jobs and future career and if teaching is to reflect this, it is recommended to teachers to be prepared to return again and again to examining certain fundamental problems of writing.

In addition, teachers and learners are well aware that doing exactly the same thing twice is boring. It is therefore of particular importance that teachers recognize that the repetitions within any cyclical teaching are not exact repetitions. Each repetition is rather a development, expansion of previous learned items. Such a procedure can actually facilitate the learning process and also help solve some of the writing difficulties encountered by students at a previous stage. Thus it is the teacher' responsibility to set up lessons that can hopefully promote the success of learning.

Though cyclical teaching is aimed to reinforce acquired structures and patterns, it may fail to do so. Thereafter, another technique is proposed below to help students overcome their weaknesses.

5.3.2 Eclecticism

It is worth explaining first what eclecticism is. According to Mackey (1965) eclecticism or 'Méthode Active' as it was labeled in France is:

....a compromise between the Direct Method, with its many demands on the teacher coupled with its alleged inaccuracy for the learner, and the more formal methods based on grammar rules and translation. The language skills are introduced in the following order: speaking, writing, understanding and reading. Activities include oral practice, reading aloud, and questions and answers.

There is a certain amount of translation with some deductive grammar, and some audio-visual aids.

(Quoted in Miliani 2003: 57)

An eclectic approach allows the teacher to range freely over approaches and methods in order to find or devise techniques appropriate to the often unique nature of a particular class. Indeed, it is generally admitted that there is no one type of lesson appropriate for teaching, and for teaching all the different classes. A teacher should feel free to develop the style of teaching with which he himself feels most at ease, for it is only by feeling at ease himself that he can make students feel motivated.

Besides, it is only the classroom teacher who is experiencing daily the interaction with his students. Consequently, only the teacher can actually decide the most appropriate method/approach to teaching in the local situation according to his students. The teacher like the method should be flexible. In this context Palmer (1964) notes that: “***teaching needs some kind of balance***”. So, this new kind of teaching selects and adopts what is good from other methods and rejects what presents difficulties. As far as writing is concerned eclecticism helps students understand the difficult structures and patterns. In this context Miliani (2003: 58-59) writes:

Eclecticism makes provision for grammatical explanation and short definitions or paraphrases in the native language to make the meaning of the difficult words and structures clear.

In addition, eclecticism² ought not to be random; it has to be effected on a principled basis to cater for students’ needs in order to attain the desired objectives. Prodromou (1992: 10-11) 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 students 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.

Finally, 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 metalanguage³ 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).

It is also recommended to bridge the gap between writing and the other “modules”. Writing should not be taught separately, but there should be a coordination between the writing course and the other skill-oriented modules. Hence, the importance of concord of modules.

5.3.3 Concord of Modules

Students consider writing as a complex and difficult skill to acquire and sometimes even develop a certain fear towards it. This may be due to the non-use of the items and structures that have been taught on one hand, and the absence of concord of the language skills modules on the other. To have appropriate writing knowledge with first-year students, it is highly advisable not to teach writing in isolation and to incorporate this skill and make use of it in all the other modules (i.e. discourse comprehension, linguistics, literature, civilization, TEFL etc.). On the one hand, it will serve as a consolidation in

vocabulary, grammar or new items and structures learnt, 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, (1993: 44) maintains that: *“Developing an understanding of how texts are organized is an important aspect of the teaching of writing.”*

Since developing reading strategies is proved to be useful for the improvement of students’ writing, teachers should encourage intensive and extensive reading⁴ so that students 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 students have to reorder phrases, sentences, paragraphs and so become aware of the overall coherence.

In sum, one may say that the teaching of writing in relation to the other skills (synchronic progression) and in concord of the other “modules” (diachronic progression) enhances students’ motivation, helps them to make use of their knowledge and enables them to communicate effectively their messages. This is why the relationship between writing and the other ‘modules’ lies in designing items and structures dealt with in the writing course to be introduced in the other language related courses.

5.3.4 Useful Techniques and Activities to improve Writing

Writing is a difficult skill that needs to be guided. To improve the writing skill, students have first to know and respect writing conventions, overcome the

lexical barrier, master the necessary grammatical structures and reinforce mechanics (i.e. spelling and punctuation).

5.3.4.1 Mastering Writing Conventions

The results of the data analysis in the fourth chapter have revealed that much of the writing failure is due to students' lack of mastery of writing conventions and mainly lack of vocabulary luggage. So, teachers have to help students overcome the lexical as well as the structural barriers before engaging in writing activities.

(i) The lexical barrier

Teachers should suggest easy and purposeful activities to enhance learners' understanding and memorization of a big number of vocabulary items. This can be done by keeping a notebook of difficult words, holding lists of synonyms, opposites and useful expressions, and ultimately using a dictionary. In addition, teachers should help students build word paradigms. In other words, the teacher writes a word that is in relation to the theme studied in the writing session on the board and asks students to think of as many related words as possible. What may enhance vocabulary learning further is to get students use the studied words/ vocabulary in a meaningful context. It is also worth noting that games and fun can facilitate initial practice and periodic revision of vocabulary in an enjoyable context. As far as word choice is concerned, it is very important to let students know the appropriate use of each word. To know, for instance, when to use 'I heard him' and when to use 'I listened to him'. For this purpose many exercises can be practiced, like a 'fill in the blank exercise' or the one suggested below. In fact, this one has two objectives: in addition to dealing with word choice, it gives the opportunity to students to negotiate the meaning.

Exercise 1: Link the nouns with the verbs you think are normally used together.

a bicycle a horse a promise good bye
a train drive plane a lie say yes
a bus a ship a story the truth

your patience an opportunity a house a detective
weight lose a game a boat rent car
the bus your temper a cleaner a dress

Exercise 2: a) Reorder the letters to form words, all of them end in 'ic'.

brAa gMa tAorcba nPa PtolI oLg

b) Use the words you have found to fill in the blank.

1. Theflute 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)

c) Use some of the words in sentences of your own.

(ii) The Structural Barrier

Integrating grammar with writing would be of great help for students to learn writing. This is why teachers should assign meaningful and purposeful grammar activities and should never teach grammar for its own sake. The activities may consist of: substitution drills, writing or correcting sentences using recently learnt grammatical structures, transformations of sentences. Examples of these activities could be as follows:

Exercise 1: Substitution Activity

Write as many sentences as you can, using the following table.

He	travelled by	sea	because	she	did not have a car.
She		train		they	could not afford an air ticket.
They		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 Taultston and Neewton Bruder (1976: 207)

This is a controlled writing activity, which is not void of meaning since students have to make the right choice of words both lexically and structurally.

Exercise 2: Correcting Sentences

- a) Spot the mistake in these sentences and correct it.
1. Though he managed to got a good job.
 2. Later, he went at St George' school.
 3. Sylvester Monroe were brought up in Chicago.
 4. He was not very happy.
 5. Which he attend until the age of fourteen.

(Adapted from Examiner' s Guide, ONEC 2000)

b) Reorder the above sentences to make a coherent paragraph

Although it is only a matter of reordering, the grammar activity is transformed into a narrative paragraph.

Exercise 3: Transformation Activity

Work in pairs to rewrite each sentence, changing the verb from the passive to the active voice. Make the necessary changes.

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

Harmful or fatal medical errors make newspaper headlines.

1. His patient' 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, 44000 to 98000 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)

5.3.4.2 Reinforcing Mechanics

As already mentioned, 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 focusing on the appropriate use of spelling, punctuation and text organization before assigning a writing task. He should also devise varied activities in which students in pair or group work have to draw spelling and punctuation rules by themselves. Nevertheless, students should not worry too much about spelling and punctuation while drafting but should pay close attention to them while revising the final draft.

(i) Spelling

Spelling constitutes a real challenge for students. Teachers should help them develop their own strategies to remember problematic or difficult spellings. For this, various techniques can be used such as extensive reading, dictation and dictionary use. Doubling the final consonant in words of one syllable is one example of spelling activity:

First, the teacher writes a set of words on the board and asks students to deduce the rule.

e.g.: knit + ed = knitted
 permit + ing = permitting
 thin + est = thinnest

Second, students should think about the rule and discuss in pairs or with the rest of the class, and then the teacher helps for the formulation of the rule.

When you add a suffix or ending that begins with a vowel like ('ed', 'ing', 'est') to a word of one syllable, the final consonant is doubled when the preceding is stressed and spelled with a single vowel letter.

Then, students further practice the deduced rules with other examples.

Double the final consonant if necessary; then add the suffixes 'ed' and 'ing'.

Word	'ed'	'ing'
stop	stopped	stopping
knit	knitted	knitting
boil	boiled	boiling
drop	dropped	dropping

(ii)Punctuation

Punctuation is a set of symbols used in writing to help indicate something about the structure of a sentence and using the correct punctuation helps you convey your ideas exactly as you intend them. 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 capitalisation.

First, notice the use of capital letters in the following expressions:

- 1- Mrs. Ashley, Mr. Brown, Lady Grey, Dr James, Pr 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- English, French, Englishmen, etc.

(Coe et al, 1983: 5)

Second, deduce the rules in a class work, with the help of the teacher.

Capitalise professional titles only when a person is named.
Capitalise geographic locations, but not directions
Capitalise specific countries, states, cities, and buildings
Capitalise months, days and holidays, but not seasons
Capitalise nationalities, languages, races and religions

(Fawcett and Sandberg, 2002: 327)

Then, practice the deduced rules in the following 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, 31st 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

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)

Teaching writing remains a difficult task for the teachers who have to take decisions concerning the techniques they can employ to teach writing in an effective manner. Many techniques can be employed in order to enhance the instruction of this skill as mentioned earlier. One of these techniques is to use assessment as a means of teaching writing.

5.3.4.3 Assessment in Teaching Writing

The students can learn more when being assessed as they have the possibility to display the amount of knowledge they acquired about the target language. Urquhart and Mciver (2005: 27) refer to “.....*assessment as writing - to- learn*”. During teaching sessions, certain teachers do not have time to make their students practice writing. Thus, the essay examination is an opportunity for these students to produce pieces of writing.

The students will have the possibility to practise writing during composition examinations. After having seen the results of the composition examination, these students may produce a different draft concerning the same task and compare between their performance in the two situations. In this context, Nation (2008: 137) explains: “*Feedback on the content of learners’ writing can do a lot to increase the amount of writing that learners do and to improve their attitude to writing*”.

The results of the composition examination will give the students an idea about their degree of performance and lead them to think about improving their level. In addition to this, the teacher can use assessment as a tool to diagnose students’ difficulties in writing so that to make remedies and adjust the teaching of writing to the students needs.

Assessing students' writing and providing them with feedback is part of the learning process. The aim is to make students aware of their mistakes and of possible ways of correcting them. But, 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).

Moreover, the teacher has to respond positively to students' efforts at writing through useful comments and remarks. They should also keep in mind that too much correction demotivates students and prevents them from risk-taking in future writing assignments (Wajnryb, 1992). Therefore, teachers should never treat students' writings as final products, but rather help them redraft their written work.

Effective assessment should be based on four traits including clarity, variety, sound pedagogy and reliable research as stated by Urquhart and Mciver (2005). Clarity means understanding what is being assessed. Variety refers to the use of multiple samples for assessment that involve different types of writing including descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative writing. Sound pedagogy means the use of strategies that leads assessment to reinforce the teaching practices. The teacher asks students to reflect on their own writing by asking them to complete a goal sheet as the one that is provided in the following figure:

<p>In this writing assignment, I wanted to.....</p> <p>I believe that I met (did not meet) this goal because.....</p> <p>One thing that I might do differently is.....</p> <p>While writing this assignment, I was surprised to learn....</p>

Figure 5.1: Student's goal sheet

(Adapted from Urquhart and Mciver, 2005)

The use of such a tool will help the students to think about their writing by encouraging them to monitor their performances. Finally, reliable research enables teachers to perceive the importance of assessment by urging the students to write and reflect on their own writing. In fact, the instruction of writing can be developed through the assessment results.

To sum up, one may say that the techniques and strategies employed by the teachers to teach writing may have a great impact on the students' writing performance.

5.4 FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

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.

5.4.1 Teacher- Learner Relationship

It is important for a language teacher and especially for a writing teacher to be fair, democratic but not authoritarian. While being fair, however, he has to be firm. In other words, the teacher has to impose a certain measure of control over the class, according to the type of activity and the size of the group.

It is also advisable for a writing teacher not to be indifferent or distant in interest or feeling. On the contrary maintaining a friendly atmosphere in class is strongly recommended. Providing opportunities for mutual, open, free and emphatic communication between the learners and himself seems to be of great interest. To do this, the teacher needs to have genuine trust and acceptance of the other person (i.e. the student) as a valuable individual.

Furthermore, writing is used for a purpose. Consequently it has a place in all courses (see 1.7). Yet, it is the democratic teacher who can actually give equal opportunities to each individual in class (i.e. providing the best as well as the weakest students with the chance to express themselves). This means that the

aim of a writing teacher must be to try and make the weak learner realize his potential (i.e. reaching a good level of proficiency), without doing the learner an injustice. In other words, in such instances, the writing teacher is expected to find ways of making the task more manageable for the weak student. However, this must not be done to the detriment of the good learner. Said differently, the latter has not to be neglected on account of his good level, he, too, has to be helped and trained by the teacher.

In addition, it is recommended to the writing teacher not to assume superiority and omniscience, i.e. the quality of possessing complete knowledge. This assumption of superiority is unfair to the learners. Today knowledge of the writing conventions is only one of the requirements of a good writing teacher. More importantly, it proves indispensable that teachers also have a broad background knowledge of the social environment that influences their students. Writing is much more than sets of conventions. It is not simply a matter of acquiring the writing conventions but it is the way how to apply and respect these conventions, the way to overcome the lexical barrier and to master the necessary grammatical structures and have effective communication among individuals in a specific social context. This increased responsibility of learning the writing skill does not fall entirely on the teacher. The student will also assume some part of responsibility for the learning process.

Nowadays, the learner is no longer a passive receptacle into which the teacher pours knowledge. On the contrary, he is required to participate actively in the learning process, assimilate the writing structures and conventions and allow them to become involved in the other skills and 'modules'. Teachers can only facilitate this process, using ways to stimulate the learners (such as games, songs, poems, tapes, films etc.) and other various techniques to enhance students' motivation. Unfortunately nothing is done. First, in their environment, students have no opportunity to use the writing structures they have acquired. Once they are outside the classroom, they speak either French or Arabic with their classmates and even with their English language teachers. Another cause

which enhances their motivation is the way writing is taught. Apart from the structures and items prescribed by the teacher and some activities to illustrate them, the students do not have the opportunity to use other techniques to learn writing (laboratories, songs, films etc.). Students will certainly enjoy the learning of the writing skill if such a material is used because it will serve their communicative needs as well as it will give them a sense of achievement.

5.4.2 Classroom Management

The classroom can be defined as a place where more than two people gather together for the purpose of learning. A good classroom management is one of the keys to success in any teaching situation. The teacher has certain perceptions about his role in the classroom. This perception, of his role as the key player, results in him, dominating the classroom talk. Teachers also have certain expectations about how business should be conducted in the classroom. In other words, they have certain ideas about how the lesson should proceed, what kinds of question to be asked, what kinds of activity they want students to do, and what they expect students to get out of the lesson. Lessons are judged as good or bad on the basis of whether they turn out the way they were planned and whether the expected outcome is achieved. As far as writing is concerned, the teacher has to keep in mind students' potential writing difficulties while preparing any lesson. This will involve choosing the right kinds of activity as already mentioned, starting with familiar topics, and providing students 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 students' mastery of previous lessons. Most importantly, the teacher has to raise students' 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 students generate ideas such as dictionaries, grammar books or

simplified books containing writing models. Moreover, teachers have to strike a clear line between teaching and testing, and keep criticism to the minimum to encourage students 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.

However, all teachers know there is often a gap between what they want to achieve and what actually happens; because there are many factors that affect classroom interaction. Besides, one may say, that students’ expectations of the teacher are as important as the teachers’ expectations in determining the way a lesson proceeds. In addition, students who see the teacher as the giving end of knowledge and themselves as the passive receiving end may not welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. Such expectations cannot be ignored since they impinge on the classroom atmosphere which systematically affects classroom interaction as Allwright and Bailey (1991: 18) point out:

The success of the interaction between the elements in the classroom cannot be taken for granted and cannot be guaranteed just by exhaustive planning.

This is because classroom interaction is a co-operative enterprise among participants. Each participant has as much to contribute as every other participant in determining the direction and outcome of the interaction. Allwright and Bailey (1991: 19) further point out:

Interaction, in class or anywhere, has to be managed, as it goes along, no matter how much has gone into it beforehand.....it has to be managed by everyone taking part, not just by the teacher, because interaction is obviously not something you

just do to people, but something people do together, collectively.

In sum, one may say that the role of the teacher is as important as the role of the learner in the classroom interaction in that nothing can be achieved without the existence of these two salient elements (i.e. the teacher and the learner).

5.4.3 Suggested Activities

The implementation of developmental activities such as journals, magazines, portfolios, surveys and projects is primarily intended to favour the ongoing development of learners by providing them with tools and experiences that are relevant to their current and future lives. An activity can be qualified as *‘developmental if it takes on a real personal value for the people involved’* as pointed out by (Head and Taylor, 1997: 5).

To achieve authenticity in writing, students should be given the opportunity to *‘control their own topics by writing about themes in which they are interested, and to become colleagues or novice teachers in the writing class’* as (Johns, 1997: 130) stated. Writing can be improved at three complementary levels: individually by keeping journals, collaboratively through pair, group and project work, and universally through the internet. The following are some activities that foster student development and autonomy.

5.4.3.1 Keeping Journals

Journal writing can be encouraged as part of the learning and writing process. It is an occasion to develop students’ 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. Journals offer a number of substantial benefits to both student and teacher being by nature student-centered, they allow the former to express himself individually, and the latter to assess student’s ability to think

about topics and express them freely. Genessee and Upshur (1996: 121) sum up the main objectives of journals:

- They provide useful information for individualizing instruction, for example, writing skills and strategies, students' experiences in and outside the classroom, learning processes, attitudes and feelings about themselves, their teachers, schooling, and their expectations, interests, and goals.
- They increase opportunities for functional communication between teacher and student: real, genuine, functional written communication.
- They give students opportunities to use language for personalized reading.
- They promote student involvement in an ownership of learning.
- They allow getting to know their students better.

In these diaries, students may record their daily or weekly learning experiences, reflecting on their lessons, investigating in this way their strengths and weaknesses. Students can be advised to note down where they encounter difficulties or problems and how they manage to solve these problems, increasing as such metacognitive understanding of their own thinking processes (Chamot, 1999). Therefore, keeping journals are found to serve a three-fold purpose: learners monitor their own progress, teachers analyze 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 students' 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 students' diaries is very important. The teacher should not correct students' mistakes, but rather discuss the content of their writings and make suggestions about how to improve. In other words, in order for journals to be sincere and language-use oriented, teachers should naturally avoid the temptation to provide direct evaluative feedback to students about the language form or specific

writing skills. Evaluation can be used subsequently in case there is firm evidence of recurrent writing difficulties to plan writing activities of a more formal nature to individual students.

Furthermore, many authors have alluded to the fact that keeping journals would be more beneficial if students came to share them with their peers. The fact is that sharing ideas and difficulties is believed to promote collaborative learning and writing.

5.4.3.2 Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing, in pairs or in groups lessens students' anxiety and promotes their risk-taking (Tsui, 1996: 98). It is then of great affective and cognitive help for students. Students have to be encouraged to share their writing with each other, both at draft and final product stage; they can brainstorm ideas, organize content and then edit and revise together. Self and peer-editing encourages independence from the teacher and enhances students' self-confidence and self-reliance. Besides, while discussing their writing difficulties and strategies used to overcome these problems, students are likely to learn from each other in the group or in class discussion more than with the teacher. Moreover, numerous educationalists suggest gathering students' writings in a same book (a portfolio), where students select their best products during the whole academic year.

5.4.3.3 Student Portfolio

A portfolio represents a purposeful collection of the students' best work during the academic year; it displays to students and others (parents, friends, etc.) their efforts, progress, and achievements. The portfolio could be a file folder or a computer-typed document with texts, illustrations and pictures. Students should choose from texts they have written and revise them at the end of the academic year (June), applying the knowledge of writing they have accumulated and the cognitive changes they have undergone as they revise their selected texts. Johns (1996: 132-134) considers portfolios as an important

element in students' academic lives, an attractive document showing where they have been and where they may be going.

The primary value of portfolios lies in the provision of a continuous record of students' writing progress. Besides, portfolios enhance students' involvement in learning. They become actively involved in monitoring their learning. The success of portfolios depends on the students' awareness of their benefits as well as the teachers' conscientious efforts to use portfolios as a collaborative learning strategy and assessment process. That is why, they should be used actively and interactively, and they should be an integral aspect of instructional planning. As with any innovation, the implementation of portfolios takes time and a willingness to explore alternatives before the optimal strategy emerges. Students will clearly need guidance and negotiation to set up portfolios.

Genesse and Upshur (1996: 103-104) suggest the following guidelines to promote students' involvement in learning:

- Students choose the pieces of writing to be included in their portfolios.
- Negotiation with students determines how the work will be assessed.
- Encouraging students to review and share their portfolios with other students.
- Students should be taught how to provide positive, constructive feedback to one another.
- Ensure that discussions of students' portfolios are positive, collaborative, and under the control of the students.
- Always adopt a positive, collaborative, and supportive attitude.

Johns (1997: 132-134) recommends two types of portfolios: one is a selection of favourite reading texts and the other is for one's own writing.

A Reading Portfolio

A Writing Portfolio

Two texts from the same genre	A timed piece: argumentative, Expository, or reflective.
. Two textbook entries	A research based-project
. Summaries	A summary
. A reader's choice	A writer's choice
. A difficult (or easy) reading	Overall reflection
Each entry is followed by reflection	Each entry is followed by reflection

Figure 5.2: Literacy portfolios basic features

(Based on Johns 1997: 149)

To prepare students to reflect on the works they intend to include in their portfolios (writing assignments, projects or book reviews), the following questionnaire may be provided at the beginning of the course:

- What makes this a good or an interesting project?
- What is the most interesting part of this project?
- What was the most difficult part of this project?
- What did you learn from doing this project?
- What skills did you practice when doing this project?
- How is this project better than the other ones?
- What resources did you use to complete this project?
- How would you make this project better?

Such reflective questions encourage students to discuss and analyse through their reflections, their successes, and problems in approaching different tasks.

A portfolio may thus become an invaluable source of writing inspiration for learners, as they learn by comparing their writings with those of other students. These writings may be displayed on a classroom board or in the university magazine.

5.4.3.4 University Magazine

The most enthusiastic students can be chosen and encouraged to be responsible for the university magazine. They will work on it as a special project. The magazine gives students the opportunity for writing reports, stories, reviews, poetry, etc. It also provides varied audience; the class itself or the university as a whole. Students make decisions on the responsibility for the work: interviews, advice columns, jokes, quotes, fashion, books and selected students' texts and poems. They can form a committee that will type and lay out the magazine in the computer laboratory. Each pair or small group organizes itself around a task (gathering information, drafting, revising and publishing the final draft). Students should learn to work to meet a deadline. For this, they 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, students write in pairs, groups or individually. Fourth, all the students are to make suggestions about the layout of the final product. Finally, once the magazine is typed, it will let all students of the university read and share knowledge. The university magazine is an invaluable learning procedure since it draws on students' talents and interests, and motivates them to engage in writing activities enthusiastically.

5.4.3.5 Net Exploring

Because of the progress in technological communication and education technology, Algeria has recognized the need to equip foreign language departments with computer laboratories and universities with internet links. Increasingly, the challenge is not the availability of hardware and associated software, but how it can be effectively exploited to enhance the teaching and learning of English in general and writing in particular. EFL students worldwide are designing and exchanging electronic documents via the World Wide Web (www). Such an enterprise does not seem unlikely for the Algerian students.

With the availability of a computer laboratory and internet access, our students, too, can engage in a wide range of web publication projects. In so doing, the students' experience of the internet will not be confined only to just surfing websites and chatting but searching for autonomy of learning. These technological devices provide help for students to develop as learners and as writers. It is widely required for students 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 students. Furthermore, the internet provides access to an expanding body of published information (Crystal 2001), and is an occasion for students to communicate with people from all over the world in English. Besides, students 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, students 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 students can bring forth change and take part in the development of a global education.

In sum, the traditional definition of literacy has been rapidly reshaped to include the ability to exploit the new education technology (i.e. internet) and make it part of the curriculum goals. What follows, then, is a set of practical suggestions for introducing the new technology in language teaching/learning.

- A student's experience of the internet should be more than just surfing websites or chatting. Teachers and students should be encouraged to create their own websites and to collaborate in international teams.
- Initiating collaborative research projects of ET and language teaching.
- Organizing workshops on teaching with technology: offering basic advice on the effective use of computers and the internet.
- Plan how students will find the text they are looking for (where on the internet do they think there are texts on a special topic?).
- Organize their search (what search engines or data bases can they use? what key words are going to be most useful?)
- Evaluate how effective their strategies for finding texts have been and discuss how they could improve them for other projects in the future.

To conclude, one may say that there is no doubt that the new technology particularly computers and the internet constitutes a growing and significant force in all language education, including English language education; hence the concept education technology (ET). At present, the impact of the internet and other information and communication technologies can be clearly shown in the actions taken by education institutions to perform a radical review of the delivery and support of learning throughout the world. This means that Algeria should follow and introduce reforms that make room for the implementation and use of education technology (i.e. internet). The rationale that should guide its use in this regard is one of benefit to the learner, the teacher, and the society as a whole. Technology should not be adopted for its own sake as used to be the case before, but, rather, should have some demonstrable benefit to the key factors in the learning process.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is a sum of recommendations and suggestions regarding the teaching of writing to first-year university students. It is intended to help writing teachers bring hopefully some positive changes in their methodology with respect to the teaching of writing.

Since the writing teacher is considered as a key variable in the whole teaching/learning process, some recommendations have been proposed such as the teacher's role and teacher training. Furthermore, to overcome writing problems the target learners encounter, a number of different techniques have been put forwards to enhance the teaching/learning of writing such as the cyclical teaching process which is concerned with writing conventions and grammatical structures consolidation, eclecticism which makes learning more interesting and takes into consideration learners' needs, concord of modules and other useful techniques.

Finally, some suggested activities have been given to enhance collaborative learning, inculcate students' autonomy, promote project work and help students improve their writing proficiency level.

NOTES

1 Individual learning style: All persons have preferences for ways to learn called their individual learning style. It is believed that when an individual participates in a learning task, the learning is accomplished more rapidly and retained longer if it is presented in ways that the individual prefers.

2 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.

3 Metalanguage: the term metalanguage refers to the language used by the teacher to explain things, answer questions, give instructions, etc.

4 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

In the present study, our objective was to explore and give a clear picture of the current teaching of English writing to first-year EFL students at the Department of Foreign Languages (English Section) of Tlemcen University.

It is easily noticeable among Algerian university learners that after many years of English learning (four years in the middle school and three years in the secondary school), they still find themselves unable to use the English language, let alone make an effective use of its writing. As they engage in writing, students find real difficulties to make use of the structures and patterns they have learnt. This is problematic because being lexically and grammatically inaccurate may prevent them from conveying effectively their messages. This situation led the investigator to ask the following research questions:

- 1- What is first-year EFL students writing competence?
- 2- Does the current teaching of writing adequately prepare first-year EFL students to cope with university writing?
- 3- What pedagogic change is needed to achieve successful academic writing?

Multiple data sources (students' production task, questionnaires and interview) were used to support the hypotheses that:

- 1- The vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak level in writing.
- 2- The current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation because of the teaching approach used, lack of materials, inadequate timing, lack of coordination between the different modules and lack of students' practice.
- 3- To achieve successful academic writing, change is needed at the levels of: teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time load.

We started by defining writing and reporting findings in the related field of research in chapter one. Then, we presented the Algerian educational system and explained the development of the teaching of writing to EFL students in chapter two. The research method and design were fully described in chapter three. Chapter four dealt with the data analysis and interpretation. The researcher analysed the data obtained from the instruments used in the present study: the students' production task (paragraph writing), the teachers and students questionnaires and the teachers' interview. Finally, on the basis of the results obtained, chapter five tackled some recommendations and suggestions concerning the teaching of English as a whole before focusing on the writing skill. The perspectives pointed out to in this chapter suggest that in order for educational change to be conducive to better results, the EFL teaching/learning setting has to be reconsidered.

The results emerging from this study provided interesting insights into the EFL students' writing competence and enabled us to draw the following conclusions as far as our three research hypotheses.

With regards to the first hypothesis, the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the production task, the questionnaires and the interview revealed that the majority of first-year EFL students display a weak proficiency level in writing. These students encounter real difficulties in writing namely in the use of writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization etc.), the inappropriate choice of vocabulary, the inaccurate grammar use and text organisation (i.e. cohesion, coherence and relevance of content). In other words, students' difficulties in writing lie in linguistic, graphic, syntactic as well as lexical knowledge.

As far as the second research hypothesis is concerned, we noted that the reasons for first-year students' low achievement in writing are manifold. Most of the informants involved in this study (i.e. teachers and students) seem to reach a common ground on the inadequate teaching methodology, lack of teaching

materials, insufficient writing practice, and insufficient time devoted to the teaching of this skill.

The results obtained in the questionnaires and the interview revealed that students' writing deficiency was affected by inadequate teaching methodology. Most teachers opted for a mono-approach. While some of them thought that the approach used to teach writing should focus on the end-product and the grammatical accuracy because grammatical correctness is indispensable at first-year university level, the others tended to highlight the advantages of the process approach and believed that this approach may give students a sense of achievement. In fact, both approaches are equally important for a successful learning situation. The former serves to provide the necessary knowledge for students' proficiency level and the latter to develop their techniques and strategies. Thus, both approaches should be taken into consideration in a balanced way. Regarding lack of materials, both teachers and students complained about insufficient or even unavailable writing books at the English library of the faculty. This was seen by both informants to affect students' proficiency in writing.

Moreover, the insufficient time devoted to the teaching of English writing (three hours a week) shares also a part in students' failure in writing. According to the results obtained, we found that apart from the three hours a week allocated to writing, students do not have the opportunity to practise writing and make use of what has been learnt in the writing course. In addition, because of time constraints, teachers and students do not have the opportunity to use new techniques and strategies in their writing courses such as songs, games, the language laboratory or the internet where they can look for web sites containing the writing lessons dealt with in class. Thus, all informants, i.e. teachers and students thought that the number of hours allocated to the teaching of writing should be increased in order to improve students' proficiency.

The results obtained also revealed that all respondents agreed on the lack of coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses. Yet, this is important to help students make use of the learned structures and have better performance in writing. In addition, it should be pointed out that another important factor affects the teaching of writing; that is the lack of students' practice which is often due to time constraints. All these results seem to confirm the second hypothesis which states that the current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation to first-year EFL students.

Regarding the third research hypothesis, which relates successful achievement in writing to change at different levels i.e. teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time load, we noted that all respondents agreed on a reconsideration of writing as a major learning skill. To this end teachers' and learners' roles have to be redefined in the light of the significant changes that have occurred worldwide. Therefore, reform should be introduced from the lower levels of education in order to resolve the problem.

Then, what emerges from the present study is that the current teaching of writing needs to be reconsidered. Teachers should not remain reluctant to revise their own methods. There is nearly always an opportunity for new ideas, attitudes and techniques. Therefore, it is always worthwhile to try new methods and keep pace with the results of educational research. For this purpose, it is hoped that the suggestions and recommendations made in the last chapter will encourage teachers to try any idea which they think is new or efficient, and to develop their teaching and in turn their students' learning. Yet, it is worth adding that the activities suggested in the last chapter are, but a part of a wide range of many others. They are an attempt to lead the students develop a positive attitude towards the learning of the writing skill and raise their motivation in the classroom. Such a proposal does not claim to offer an ideal solution to the existing problems in the teaching of writing at the level of first-year university students, but it constitutes a necessary preliminary step towards the process of setting up more suitable techniques in the teaching of writing.

Besides, it is essential that the teacher raises students' awareness to both language criteria: accuracy and fluency and explains the importance of both aspects in linguistic productions. In fact, having dealt with the teaching of writing in this dissertation does not mean that teachers should be obsessed with the way writing is taught. Teachers need also to develop pedagogy for success which opens doors to creativity, or at least allow learners to try to quench their thirst for knowledge.

To conclude, the present doctoral dissertation has tried to explore the teaching of writing; to identify first-year university students' writing difficulties and to find out the reasons behind these difficulties. The present work cannot give a one-for-all solution to the problem, but hopefully aims at re-evaluating 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 and helping learners to become more effective writers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear colleague

I am presently conducting a research work to identify the problems that first-year teachers and students encounter in teaching/ learning writing in the English Section of the Department of Foreign Languages at Tlemcen University. I would be grateful if you could help me by completing the following questionnaire.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Naima BOUYAKOUB

English Section

Department of Foreign Languages

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Instructions: Please answer the following questions. If a choice needs to be done, put a cross in the appropriate box (es) which best fit (s) your opinion. From time to time, you may be required to justify your choice.

Part One: Background Information

1- What is your position in the university.....

Part-time teacher

Full-time teacher

Maitre Assistant

Maitre de Conferences

Other; please specify.....

2- What is your post graduate field of specialization?.....

3- How many years have you taught writing?

4- What level (s) have you taught writing?

5- Did you receive any training to teach writing?

Yes

Part Two: Writing in Relation to Academic Needs

6- What is the main reason that makes writing important in EFL university studies?

Aid to learning the English language

Reinforcement of language proficiency

Requirement for communicative needs

7- Is there any effective cooperation between the teachers of writing and the other teachers?

Yes

No

8- Do you think that coordination between the writing course and the other courses is necessary?

Yes

No

Please; justify your answer.....

9- Do you think that the current syllabus of writing is adequate for first-year EFL students?

Yes

No

10- Are you following this syllabus?

Yes

No

11- If no; what have you added to or omitted from the official syllabus?
.....
.....

12- Which writing teaching approach do you follow or adopt?

Product Approach (language-based approach)

Process Approach (strategy-based approach)

Combined process-product approach

Please; justify your answer.....

13- What type of writing do you require your students to do most?

Sentence construction

Paragraph writing

Letter writing

Other; please specify.....

Part Three: Assessment

14- How do you assess the writing proficiency of first-year EFL students?

Beginner

Elementary

Low intermediate

Intermediate

Upper intermediate

Advanced

15- Do first-year EFL students find difficulties to write accurately and appropriately?

Yes

No

16- What are the main weaknesses that you have observed in the first-year students' writing performance?

- Inadequate use of grammar
- Inappropriate choice of vocabulary
- Inappropriate use of word order
- Inaccurate sentence structure
- Lack of coherence (no unity of ideas)
- Lack of cohesion (no link between sentences)
- Other.....

17- Are the causes of the aforementioned weaknesses due to:

- The difficult nature of writing itself
- Language transfer
- Teaching time devoted to writing
- Inadequate teaching schedule
- Insufficient writing activities and practice
- Lack of materials (lesson books, exercise books etc...)
- Students' negative attitudes towards the English writing skill
- Other.....

18- Do you think that the time allocated to the teaching of writing for first-year students (three hours per week) is:

- Sufficient
- Insufficient

If insufficient, how many hours would you propose?

19- How often do first-year students have writing activities as homework assignment?

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

20- After correcting students' writings, do you suggest a remedial work to help them overcome their weaknesses?

Yes

No

If yes; which one.....

21- What do you focus on while correcting first-year students' writings?

Grammar

Meaning

Ideas organization

Mechanics: punctuation, capitalization, handwriting

Others.....

Part Four: Suggestions

22- Do you think that the current way of teaching writing should be reconsidered?

Yes

No

If yes; how?

23- If you were asked to change something in your teaching of writing, what would you do?

.....

24- What do you suggest to your students to overcome their writing difficulties?.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX 2:
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire aims at collecting data concerning the teaching of English writing at the University level. Thus, you are kindly requested to answer all the following questions.

Thank you for your collaboration

Instructions: Please put a cross in the appropriate box when there is a choice to make; otherwise, answer freely.

Part One: Background Information

1. Sex.....
2. Age.....
3. Secondary School Stream.....
4. Choice of the degree of "licence" in English language
 - Personal
 - Parents' desire
 - Orientation

Part two: Writing in Relation to Academic Needs

5. Do you think that writing is important in EFL university studies because:
- Knowing to write is absolutely necessary for a language student to succeed
 - It will help you write research papers
 - It is necessary in your future career
 - Other means; please specify.....

6. Which modules other than writing require most the skill of writing in your curriculum? Specify three of them in decreasing order of importance

-
-
-

7. Do you think that coordination between the writing course and the other courses is necessary?

Yes

No

Please; justify your answer.....

8. What is the approach adopted by your writing teacher?

Product Approach (language-based approach)

- Process Approach (strategy-based approach)
- Combined process-product approach

9. What type of writing are you required to do?

- Sentence construction
- Paragraph writing
- Letter writing
- Other; please specify.....

10. Do you believe that the aforementioned types of writing help you improve your writing?

- Yes No

11. Does the present teaching of writing help you write accurately and effectively?

- Yes No

12. Are you satisfied with the topics provided for writing?

- Yes No

If no; say why

- Because the topics are not related to the other modules
- Because the topics suit younger people's interests and concerns
- Because you have difficulty finding something to say about
- Because you cannot find enough vocabulary to express your thoughts
- Other reasons; please specify.....

13. Would you prefer:

- To have your teacher to supervise your act of writing in the classroom
 - Your teacher to have the final product only
- Why?

14. Do you use a draft when writing your paragraph?

- Yes No

15. What do you do when you rewrite your draft?

- Change words, sentences and longer parts
- Correct mechanics only i.e. punctuation, capitals, spelling etc.....

Part three: Assessment

16. Do you find difficulties to write accurately and appropriately?

- Yes No

17. What do you mostly lack to be successful in your writing activities?

- Adequate use of grammar
- Appropriate choice of vocabulary
- Accurate use of word order
- Accurate use of sentence structure
- Coherence (unity of ideas)
- Cohesion (link between sentences)
- Other.....

18. Are the causes of the difficulties you encounter when writing due to:

- Insufficient writing practice
- Lack of writing materials (lesson books, exercise books etc..)
- Insufficient teaching time devoted to writing
- Inadequate teaching schedule

19. Are you satisfied with the way your writing teacher assesses your papers?

- Yes No

If no; what do you think they should emphasize?

.....

20. Does your teacher write comments on your papers?

- Yes No

21. Would you like to have:

- More comments made on your papers
- Fewer comments made on your papers

Part Four: Suggestions

22. If your writing teacher had to change something in his teaching, what would it be?

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

23. Are there any suggestions you can make to your classmates to overcome their writing difficulties?.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX 3:

TEACHER INTERVIEW

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Dear Colleague

This interview is part of the research I am conducting in the field of the teaching of writing at university level. I would be grateful for the contribution that you may provide as teacher in the field. I would be pleased to provide any clarification that you think is necessary. You are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

1. What is your post-graduate field of specialization?
For how many years have you taught writing?
2. How do you assess first-year students' writing proficiency?
3. What is the order of the four skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) you think is the most suitable in the English curriculum?
4. What purpose do you mainly prepare your students for when you teach them writing; (writing exam papers, writing research papers, their future career or creative writing)?
5. What skills in writing do you emphasize in your teaching?
6. What do you think of the time allocated to the teaching of writing per week?
7. To what extent are you satisfied with the syllabus provided? If unsatisfied, what are your reasons?
8. Which writing teaching approach do you adopt?
9. What are students' most commonly faced difficulties when producing pieces of writing; (grammar, vocabulary, word order, sentence structure, organization of ideas or link between sentences)?
10. At which stage do you think students have the greatest difficulty when writing; (the pre-writing stage, the writing stage or the re-writing stage)?
11. Do you believe in any kind of cooperation between teachers of writing and other subject teachers?

12. Do you think that there should be coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses?
13. Do you give activities around the topic before the act of writing in order to facilitate it?
14. Do you supervise your students' writing in class?
15. Do you write comments on your students' papers?
16. What is the most important feature you look for when correcting and marking students' papers; (number of errors, overall organization, content or coherence between sentences)?

Thank you for your collaboration

APPENDIX 4:
TEST TOPIC

The topic of the three tests was:

Speak about your favourite hobby.

يعتمد هذا البحث إشكالية عدم تمكن الطلبة من تطوير جاد وفعلي لمستوى الكتابي عندهم. كما يصب اهتمامه على طلبة السنة أولى بجامعة تلمسان- قسم اللغات الأجنبية، فرع اللغة الانجليزية. ومن أهم مراحل البحث كان أولا تبيان الصعوبات في الكتابة وثانيا توضيح الأسباب وراء ذلك ثم محاولة إعطاء بعض الحلول لتحسين مستوى الكفاءة عند الطلبة. وتبين عند نتائج البحث أن ضعف المستوى يعود لمناهج تعليمية غير مناسبة والمراجع التربوية وعدم كفاية المدة الزمنية ونقائص في الإسهام الميداني عند الطلبة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليمية الكتابة، مستوى الكفاءة، طلبة السنة أولى للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المنهج التعليمي.

Résumé:

Une grande importance a été donnée à l'enseignement de l'anglais en tant que langue étrangère en Algérie depuis l'indépendance. Mais en dépit de tous les efforts visant l'amélioration de l'enseignement / l'apprentissage de cette langue, les apprenants algériens font preuve d'une faible compétence quant à l'utilisation de cette langue plus spécialement lors de la production écrite. Cette recherche tente alors d'explorer l'enseignement de l'expression écrite au niveau universitaire étudiant le cas des étudiants en première année à l'Université de Tlemcen, département des langues étrangères- section d'anglais. Elle vise à identifier les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants, à découvrir les causes de ces difficultés, et à trouver des solutions possibles pour améliorer les compétences langagières notamment celle de l'écrit des étudiants algériens.

Mots clés: L'enseignement de l'écrit, compétences de l'écrit, étudiants universitaires d'Anglais - langues étrangères, méthodes d'enseignement,

Summary: This study attempted to give a clear picture of the teaching of writing to university students as these students show serious deficiencies in writing. It focused on first-year EFL students at the University of Tlemcen, Department of Foreign Languages, the Section of English trying to investigate the teaching of the writing they receive. This work aimed first, at identifying first-year English students' writing difficulties; second, discovering the causes behind these difficulties and finally finding out possible solutions that are hoped to alleviate the problem and help students to improve their writing proficiency level. It has been shown from the results achieved in this work that students' low achievement in writing was affected by inadequate teaching approach used, lack of coordination between the writing course and the other language skills courses, lack of teaching materials, inadequate timing and lack of student's practice. In sum, this project attempted to reveal the extent to which the above mentioned variables were involved in students' failure in writing and tried to suggest remedies or alterations needed to improve students' writing proficiency level.

Key words: Teaching writing, writing competence, EFL university students, teaching methods.

SUMMARY

The teaching process has been and is still a subject of hot debate and discussion among researchers. Language, as the core of this human and social concern, is apparently constituting the central problematic area to this kind of investigation. It is obvious therefore, that language as a means of communication and a vehicle of information would in all probabilities be a delicate item to deal with, and thus transmit its various and different aspects. Writing as one of its axes reveals some specificities quite complex to grasp and make use of, if not an explicit knowledge and an appropriate approach to the situation at hand is devoted to its teaching. This is why, it has been the study that goes back to the time of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Indians, and from its earliest days has caught the interest of the learned and the wise.

Before attending university, English writing is taught implicitly in the Algerian schools for at least seven years (four years in the middle school and three years in the secondary school). Teachers focus on the development of oral skills. The writing skill is given due heed only in the third year of the secondary school. Yet, in spite of such a long period of English learning, the writing performance of many university entrants is far from satisfactory. It is admitted that many Algerian learners who have completed their seven-year course of English language and begin their first-year course instruction at university are unable to express themselves in English neither fluently nor accurately showing deficiency in both writing and speech.

This low achievement in productive skills after a quite lengthy language learning process leads to question the suitability of the present teaching methodology since the school is largely responsible for producing non-competent language performers and consequently non-effective writers.

The main concern of the present work is to investigate the current teaching of writing in order to locate deficiency or deficiencies in the teaching of writing at the level of first-year students of the English Language Section at Tlemcen University to propose some useful teaching strategies to help the

student improve his writing competence and better cope with university tasks. Then, the present study asks the following questions:

- 4- What is first-year EFL students' writing competence?
- 5- Does the current teaching of writing adequately prepare first-year EFL students to cope with university writing?
- 6- What pedagogic change is needed to achieve successful academic writing?

Basically, the ultimate aim of this dissertation is to uncover the major causes of first-year university students' 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:

- 4- The vast majority of first-year EFL students display a weak level in writing.
- 5- The current teaching of writing does not provide adequate preparation because of the teaching approach used (product approach), lack of materials, inadequate timing, lack of coordination between the different modules and lack of students' practice.
- 6- To achieve successful academic writing, change is needed at the levels of: teaching methodology, techniques, materials as well as time load.

The present research work tries to find out to which extent these hypotheses are true. Thus, in order to evaluate first-year EFL students' competence in writing, the researcher devised a production task (i.e. paragraph writing) to first-year students (the research population). Then, two questionnaires; one for university teachers and another for first-year university students and an interview for teachers of writing of the section in question are administered to investigate the current teaching of writing. Teachers and students were asked to answer a series of questions on their reactions to the teaching of writing at university. Therefore, by means of the collected data, the

present study will try to identify the problems which learners encounter when writing.

This research work is composed of five chapters that are intertwined to enlighten the reader about the field of research. The first chapter provides a theoretical overview of writing. It defines the writing skill, and then displays the historical survey of writing in foreign language teaching. Some teaching tendencies in writing are given such as the traditional method on the one hand and other contemporary teaching methods on the other. Next, the chapter explains the complexity of the writing skill. Besides, it describes the writing process and the different stages learners have to go through in order to achieve successful academic writing. Then, the chapter presents the importance of writing in language learning as well as its importance in relation to the other skills, highlights the relationship between writing and culture and tries to define writing with its related sub-skills, purposes and teaching norms.

The second chapter attempts to give a clear idea about the circumstances that shaped first-year students' writing behaviour. For this purpose, it starts with a general presentation of English language teaching in the Algerian educational system from early schooling (middle school) to university in order to give a clear picture of the learners' educational background, and language proficiency. It also presents the teaching of the writing skill at the different levels of education (middle, secondary schools and university) and reports on the development of this skill across these levels by presenting the teaching methods, the practices and activities used in writing. This chapter ends stating some important observations on the teaching of the writing skill.

The third chapter deals with the empirical phase which aims at finding illuminative data that would guide the research. It first describes the EFL teaching/learning situation at Tlemcen University, explains how writing is taught there and presents the writing syllabus used. This chapter is also concerned with the presentation of the research design and procedure. It states research questions and hypotheses before giving the profile of subject students who participated in the study. Besides, it presents and explains the research

methodology. The research instruments are introduced, their choice is justified and the procedure of data analysis is explained. In fact, this chapter is aimed to provide the qualitative and quantitative results of the undertaken study which permit the identification of the writing difficulties encountered by EFL first-year students and the causes of these difficulties.

The fourth chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. First, students' tests (i.e. the pre-test, the while-test and the post-test) are studied to elicit the type of mistakes produced by the learners and the students' way of writing paragraphs. These tests are analysed in order to describe the students' degree of achievement in writing. Then, the information provided by the questionnaires and the interview are analysed to present a global view about the writing teaching/learning situation. After the analysis of the data obtained from the various instruments, the results are interpreted via qualitative and quantitative analyses of the gathered information. Finally, the main research results are discussed by making reference to the findings and explaining the degree of evidence of the collected data.

The fifth and last chapter provides some suggestions and recommendations related to the teaching of the writing skill. It is concerned with what might be favourable as pedagogical implications to remedy the target situation. It attempts to give some pieces of advice and suggests some possible activities.

An examination of writing instruction received by EFL students during their studies included the three stages: the Middle School, the Secondary School and University. It was noted that many variables affected the teaching of writing: teaching methodologies, instructional practices, teachers' competence, the teaching/learning environment and the socio-cultural environment as will be reported below.

In the Middle School, the first stage of EFL instruction, the language policy applied to the 'Fundamental School' in the eighties and nineties, implemented a task-based syllabus to language teaching where learners were given tasks to do expecting that this would lead to language development. This was done under the scope of Communicative Language Teaching CTL which is based on the belief that language is communication and that meaning is primary. Thus, being interested in communication, the learners may neglect language forms and be satisfied with the use of deviated forms since they transmit their messages. The drawback of this approach will namely be reflected in writing where learners will produce pieces of writing full of mistakes and language misconstructions that may hinder comprehension. In fact, the low linguistic ability of our learners stem from this teaching approach which tries to build the learners' communicative competence neglecting their linguistic competence. In addition, while teaching emphasizes the development of learners' fluency, the examination standards still favors accuracy over fluency. The learners find themselves at loss between these orders of priority.

In sum, the task based-syllabus adopted in language teaching should give due attention to language form to enable an appropriate language development. For this purpose Skehan (1998: 4) highlights three important points to be taken into consideration when adopting the task-based approach:

- How tasks are selected to maximize the chances of a focus on form;
- How tasks are implemented through pre-and post-task activities, as well as task adaptation;
- Low performance on tasks can be conceptualized and evaluated.

The first principles of writing are acquired in the Middle School. At this level, writing is based on oral expression activities. Learners are introduced to the topic orally. They acquire the necessary vocabulary and language forms through repeated practice and learning by heart or by breaking down the language into grammatical structures which pupils practice by means of drills, then reproduce the text in writing. Though this practice seems to provide the pupils with the necessary tools to produce a piece of writing, it presents dangers for future written productions. First, learners will confuse between written and spoken discourse as explained by Kennedy (1994: 14):

Topics which have been mentally organized and routinized for spoken discourse would not meet written discourse standards, since written discourse is not merely writing as one speaks.

Second, learners will be used to routinized cognitive processes that do not offer them an awareness of planning, controlling and organizing information which plays a central role in developing the learners' writing abilities.

We have noticed that in the Middle and Secondary Schools, most writing activities are preceded by text reading, comprehension of the text, presentation of the new vocabulary and language structures and a display of the writing type and the discourse mode used. The pupils are thus, familiarized with the type of material they are required to reproduce as well as the necessary lexis, syntax and discourse patterns needed to fulfill the writing tasks. Moreover, the pupils are guided by their teachers who supervise the different steps the pupils go through when writing i.e. pre-writing, writing and post-writing. This reveals that the teaching methods used

neither develop pupils' autonomy, as the teacher does most of the work, nor encourage their creativity. The preparation to the writing task described above has some benefits because it guides and help the learner carry out his writing task but it bears drawbacks of forming assisted writers. Mortad (2000) explains that one of the reasons of pupils' failure in the Algerian pre-university education is their lack of autonomy and teacher dependence. Indeed, they will always expect the teacher to assume responsibility for giving them the needed and adequate vocabulary, providing accurate sentence structures, explaining and initiating them to the writing steps they have to follow. In effect, if provided with ready made sentence structures, the necessary vocabulary and, the steps to follow our pupils can produce a good piece of writing, but if asked to write a composition without any help from the teacher, they will find themselves unable to write or will just produce poor pieces of writing. As a result, the writing instruction our pupils received does not help them develop a personal manner of writing and will let them depend on what is read or said and on the types of writings they have been exposed to.

In a similar way, one should also mention that one of the reasons of pupils' writing deficiencies is lack of practice. In effect, due to the insufficient time devoted to the writing skill, pupils do not have frequently the opportunity to do activities and make use of the points seen in the writing course such as: choice of vocabulary, word order, sentence structure, mechanics (i.e. punctuation, capitalization, spelling), link between sentences and unity of ideas. Moreover, the pupils are not encouraged to participate in the learning process. They seem to be satisfied with teachers dictating lectures and them passively writing, feeling at ease and pleased with this type of instruction. However, this practice will negate the learners' linguistic and cognitive abilities that will be reflected in their writings being unable of producing accurate, coherent and meaningful pieces of writing as well as being unable of criticizing, analyzing coherently a situation and synthesizing. Noticing this linguistic and cognitive deficiency on the part of students, university teachers will once again emphasize language forms and structures in their teaching paying little attention to the metacognitive aspect. Indeed, without linguistic competence one cannot reach

effectiveness in writing, but that students develop their metacognition to achieve writing competence is as important.

With regard to timing, one may say that it is an important factor in the teaching of writing which may either hinder or improve learning and insure a good writing performance. However, we have noticed that the time allocated to the teaching of writing is not enough. Writing is not given priority in both pre-university educational levels i.e. Middle and Secondary schools where the writing tasks are only dealt with at the end of each didactic file. Thus, pupils at these levels have little or no opportunity to attend real writing sessions. Because of the insufficient time, these pupils are neither able to use accurately the sentence structures, the writing mechanics i.e. spelling, punctuation capitalization etc. nor equipped with the writing strategies required when undertaking a writing task i.e. taking notes, planning, organizing, drafting, revising and editing.

Some researches also showed that certain approaches meant to develop the writing competence rather hindered the development of the writing process (Hildenbrand 1985, Jones 1985, Rorschach 1986, qtd. In Krapels 1990). A case in point is the composition length limits imposed on middle and even secondary pupils who are asked to produce pieces of writing not exceeding few lines (e.g. 10). This length limit prevents them from developing their ideas and using their linguistic abilities. This established habit can go with them in their future schooling and will be reflected in their writings at university where they are required to produce long reports in the different subjects. Students, in this case will be found to be short of words (i.e. having a limited repertoire of useful vocabulary), unable to develop their ideas or will produce a piece of writing with excessive repetition and inaccurate use of cohesion. This practice (i.e. length limit), however, will negate even more the students' linguistic abilities being unable of making use of the different sentence structures (i.e. expanding sentences using modification, coordination, subordination and substitution), and introducing the different types of sentences and clauses dealt with in the writing course such as the noun, adjective, and adverb clauses.

Though the EFL students' lack of composing competence due to lack of linguistic and cognitive strategic knowledge represents an important reason for their writing difficulties, other factors adding to this writing deficiency can also be enumerated: teaching methodologies, instructional practices, teachers' competence, teaching /learning environment and the socio-cultural environment.

First, 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 as cited in the preceding sections, and this is clearly seen in the various approaches adopted in the teaching of EFL at successive periods.

Most educationalists agree that language learning objectives should be geared towards learners' needs. In Algeria, students' needs as well as the way to cater with these needs are determined, beforehand, by syllabus designers via an imposed programme and methodology. But there seems to be a clear discrepancy between the stated objectives and the educational conditions that prevail in EFL teaching settings to accomplish the desired objectives (Benmoussat, 2003).

By and large, classroom practices do not reflect the set objectives or even the CLT principles. This can be seen in the teaching conditions: overloaded programmes, large classes, absence of adequate materials or teaching aids, and insufficient time allotted for the teaching of EFL. For all these, most teachers are eclectic¹ in their teaching methodology, trying to apply any teaching technique, whatever the approach or the method, in order to pursue their task. Nonetheless, most of the time, teachers tend to focus on the reading skill and on grammatical points, as these two language components constitute the major parts of the examination. This leads to note the striking contradiction in the EFL teaching; the

listening and speaking skills that are the hallmark of CLT at the pre-university level are not tested at all and therefore are somehow neglected during class sessions.

In addition, there is a strong assumption that learners have undoubtedly reached the desired objectives in writing at the end of each year, and so there is no attempt at recycling knowledge through repeated practice. In a highly teacher-centered classroom, teaching/learning is done in a linear way, giving as such no chance for consolidation or review. What is more, the official guidelines at the pre-university levels state that *“the various skills will be integrated to move from skill getting to skill using”* (Syllabus 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 file and 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.

In a similar way, the learning conditions offered to students at university level do not aim at promoting any achievement in language learning in general and writing performance in particular because of the lack of appropriate equipment. Also, in large classes with mixed abilities as it is the case of most of our universities, students have fewer opportunities for self-expression or individual help on the part of the teacher.

On the other hand, students’ 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, students find no materials written in English. Besides, they do not see any immediate use of speaking or writing the language. Therefore, students seem to have neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation¹ 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. As a result, these students display a low proficiency level in English language in general and writing in particular.

At their entrance to university, students will have accumulated an English learning experience of seven years, during which they have been exposed to a rich programme, and have sat for many formal tests and exams. Students are, then, supposed not only to have mastered the basic components of the English language, but also to have achieved satisfactory mastery in the four language skills, and so have acquired the necessary linguistic and communicative competence.

Unfortunately, the 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 students 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 organizational rules of ideas; thus writing is viewed as an anxiety generating activity for learners, so they do not like it (Tsui, 1996). Many students 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.

This description has embraced the early EFL school years of the learner till his admission to university to shed light on his educational background. In addition, an examination of the development of the writing skill throughout the different levels of education (i.e. Middle school, Secondary school and University) has also been provided to understand the circumstances that have shaped the writing behavior of the Algerian EFL student. The examination of the teaching/learning situation of writing has revealed that the pre-university writer is always provided with a model, the necessary vocabulary, phrases, patterns and sentence structures to write a composition. Though this teaching procedure presents the short-term benefits of helping the pupil in his composition task, it trains a teacher dependent writer always waiting for the teacher's help. This type of instruction does not allow the linguistic and cognitive growth of the learner. Moreover, the limitation on the length of the composition, on the ideas expressed, and the provided models of sentence structures and patterns that are imposed on the pupil are bound to be an obstacle to the development of his writing competence.

- In sum, one may conclude from this analysis that pre-university education does not pay due attention to the development of the writing competence and therefore, seems to fail to produce a self-reliant effective writer, attaining an adequate mastery of the different writing skills, using different text styles, accurate writing structures, capable of criticizing and presenting coherent arguments; in short a well prepared writer to cope with modern university education requirements. Furthermore, it is also noticed that the educational system in Algeria, namely Middle and Secondary schools rewards memorization and rote learning, whereas, inquiry, reflection, self-dependence are neglected, avoided and sometimes frowned upon.

TRADUCTION DE LA CONCLUSION GÉNÉRALE

Notre objectif dans cette étude était d'explorer et de donner une image claire de l'enseignement actuel de l'anglais écrit pour les étudiants de première année en langues étrangères à la section d'Anglais du département des langues étrangères de l'Université de Tlemcen.

Il est facilement perceptible chez les apprenants de l'université algérienne qu'après plusieurs années d'apprentissage de l'anglais (quatre années à l'école moyenne et trois années à l'école secondaire), ils sont toujours incapables d'utiliser la langue anglaise, encore moins à faire un usage efficace de son écriture. À l'écrit, les étudiants trouvent des difficultés réelles pour utiliser les structures et les modèles qu'ils ont déjà appris. C'est problématique parce qu'étant lexicalement et grammaticalement inexacte peut les empêcher de transmettre efficacement leurs messages. Cette situation a emmené le chercheur à poser les questions de recherche suivantes :

1- Quelle est la compétence des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères à l'écrit?

2 – Est-ce que l'enseignement actuel de l'écrit prépare convenablement les étudiants de première année en langues étrangères pour faire face à l'écrit au niveau universitaire?

3 - Quel changement pédagogique est nécessaire pour atteindre un niveau de l'écrit adéquat au niveau universitaire?

Les sources multiples de données (production écrite des étudiants, questionnaires et interviews) ont été utilisées pour appuyer les hypothèses suivantes :

1 - La grande majorité des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères présentent un faible niveau à l'écrit.

2 - L'enseignement actuel de l'écrit ne fournit pas une préparation adéquate suite à l'approche pédagogique utilisée, au manque de matériel pédagogique, au temps inadéquat alloué à l'enseignement de ce module, au manque de coordination entre les différents modules et au manque de pratique.

3 - Pour atteindre un bon niveau à l'écrit, un changement est nécessaire au niveau de la méthodologie, des techniques, des matériaux pédagogiques ainsi que du temps d'enseignement.

Nous avons commencé par définir l'écrit et reporter les différents travaux de recherche dans ce domaine dans le premier chapitre. Ensuite, nous avons présenté le système éducatif algérien et expliqué le développement de l'enseignement de l'écrit pour étudiants de langues étrangères dans le chapitre deux. La méthode de recherche et la conception ont été entièrement décrites dans le troisième chapitre. Le chapitre quatre traite l'analyse des données et l'interprétation de ces données. Le chercheur a analysé les données obtenues par les instruments de recherche utilisés dans la présente étude : production écrite des étudiants (élaboration d'un paragraphe), les questionnaires des enseignants et des étudiants et l'interview des enseignants. Enfin, en se basant

sur les résultats obtenus, le cinquième chapitre a donné certaines recommandations et suggestions concernant l'enseignement de l'anglais dans son ensemble avant de se concentrer sur les compétences de l'écrit. Les perspectives élaborées dans le présent chapitre indiquent que pour un changement éducatif propice à de meilleurs résultats, l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère doivent être reconsidérés. Les résultats de cette étude ont donné une vue importante quand à la compétence de l'écrit des étudiants de langues étrangères et nous ont permis de tirer les conclusions suivantes concernant nos trois hypothèses de recherche.

En ce qui concerne la première hypothèse, les analyses qualitatives et quantitatives de la production écrite, les questionnaires et les interviews ont révélé que la majorité des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères présentent un niveau faible à l'écrit. Ces étudiants rencontrent des difficultés réelles à l'écrit : orthographe, ponctuation, majuscules, choix inapproprié de vocabulaire, utilisation inexacte de la grammaire et organisation du texte inappropriée. En d'autres termes, les difficultés des étudiants à l'écrit se trouvent dans les connaissances syntaxiques, lexicales, linguistiques et graphiques.

Concernant la deuxième hypothèse de recherche, nous avons noté que les motifs de la faible performance des étudiants de première année à l'écriture sont multiples. La plupart des informateurs impliqués dans cette étude (c'est-à-dire, les enseignants et les étudiants) semblent atteindre un point de vue commun sur la méthodologie inadéquate de l'enseignement, le manque de matériel pédagogique d'enseignement, le manque de la pratique de l'écrit chez les étudiants et le manque de temps consacré à l'enseignement de cette compétence.

Les résultats obtenus dans les questionnaires et les interviews ont révélé que la carence à l'écrit des étudiants était affectée par la méthodologie d'enseignement inadéquate. La plupart des enseignants ont opté pour une approche mono. Alors que certains d'entre eux croyaient que l'approche utilisée pour enseigner l'écrit devrait se concentrer sur le produit final et l'exactitude grammaticale car la grammaire est indispensable au niveau de la première année universitaire, les autres ont tendance à mettre en évidence les avantages de l'approche communicative et croient que cette approche peut donner aux étudiants un sentiment d'accomplissement. En fait, les deux approches sont tout aussi importantes pour une situation d'apprentissage réussie. La première sert à fournir les connaissances nécessaires pour le niveau de compétence des élèves et à élaborer leurs stratégies et techniques. Ainsi, les deux approches devraient être prises en considération de manière équilibrée. Concernant le manque de matériel, les enseignants et les étudiants se sont plaints de l'insuffisance et de l'indisponibilité des livres à la bibliothèque du département de langues étrangères. Ce qui influe sur l'amélioration de la compétence des étudiants à l'écrit.

En outre, le manque de temps consacré à l'enseignement de la production écrite (trois heures par semaine) est aussi en partie l'échec des étudiants à l'écrit.

Selon les résultats obtenus, nous avons constaté qu'en dehors des trois heures par semaine, affectées à l'écrit, les étudiants n'ont pas la possibilité de pratiquer et d'utiliser les structures qui ont été apprises pendant les cours de l'expression écrite. Donc, en raison des contraintes de temps, les enseignants et étudiants n'ont pas la possibilité d'utiliser les nouvelles techniques et stratégies dans leurs cours de l'écrit comme les chansons, les jeux, le laboratoire de langues et l'internet où ils peuvent rechercher les sites web contenant les leçons sur la production écrite traitées en classe. Ainsi, tous les intervenants, c'est-à-dire les enseignants et les étudiants pensaient que le nombre d'heures alloué à l'enseignement de l'écrit doit être augmenté afin d'améliorer les compétences des étudiants.

Les résultats obtenus ont révélé également que tous les répondants ont été d'accord sur le manque de coordination entre le cours de la production écrite et les autres cours de compétences linguistiques. Pourtant, ceci est important pour aider les étudiants à se servir des structures apprises et par conséquent à avoir de meilleures performances à l'écrit. En outre, il est à noter qu'un autre facteur important concerne l'enseignement de l'écrit ; C'est le manque de pratique des étudiants qui est souvent relié aux de contraintes de temps. Tous ces résultats semblent confirmer la seconde hypothèse qui stipule que l'enseignement actuel de l'écrit ne fournit pas une préparation adéquate aux étudiants de première année en langues étrangères.

Concernant la troisième hypothèse de recherche, qui suggère un changement à différents niveaux c.-à-d. méthodologie d'enseignement, techniques, matériaux pédagogiques mais aussi volume horaire, nous avons constaté que tous les répondants ont convenu sur un réexamen de l'écrit comme une compétence importante d'apprentissage. À cette fin les rôles des enseignants et des apprenants doivent être redéfinies compte tenu des changements importants survenus dans le monde entier. Par conséquent, la réforme doit être introduite aux niveaux inférieurs de l'éducation afin de résoudre le problème.

Ensuite, ce qui ressort de cette étude est que l'enseignement actuel de l'écrit doit être reconsidéré. Les enseignants ne doivent pas rester peu enclins à changer leurs propres méthodes. Il y a presque toujours une occasion pour de nouvelles idées, attitudes et techniques. Par conséquent, il est toujours intéressant d'essayer de nouvelles méthodes et de suivre le rythme avec les résultats de la recherche en éducation. À cette fin, il est à espérer que les suggestions et recommandations formulées dans le dernier chapitre encouragera les enseignants à essayer n'importe quelle idée qui soit nouvelle et efficace, et à développer leur enseignement. Il convient encore d'ajouter que les activités proposées dans le chapitre précédent ne sont qu'une partie d'une vaste gamme de beaucoup d'autres. Elles constituent une tentative de diriger les étudiants à développer une attitude positive envers l'apprentissage de l'écrit et augmenter leur motivation dans la salle de classe. Une telle proposition ne prétend pas offrir une solution idéale aux problèmes existants dans l'enseignement de l'écrit au niveau des

étudiants de première année universitaire, mais elle constitue une préalable et nécessaire étape vers le processus de mise en place des techniques plus appropriées dans l'enseignement de l'écrit. En outre, il est essentiel que l'enseignant sensibilise les étudiants à ces deux critères linguistiques : précision et maîtrise, et explique l'importance de ces deux aspects dans les productions linguistiques. En effet, ayant traité avec l'enseignement de l'écrit dans ce projet de recherche ne signifie pas que les enseignants devraient être obsédés par la façon dont est enseignée la production écrite. Ils doivent aussi développer la pédagogie qui ouvre les portes à la créativité, ou au moins permettre aux apprenants d'essayer d'étancher leur soif de connaissance.

En conclusion, la présente thèse a essayé d'explorer l'enseignement de l'écrit pour identifier les difficultés de l'écrit des étudiants universitaires de première année et de découvrir les raisons de ces difficultés. Le présent ouvrage ne peut pas donner une solution radicale au problème, mais a pour but de réévaluer l'enseignement et l'apprentissage de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère. L'objectif ultime étant de faire de l'écrit d'une fructueuse et une agréable pratique pour les enseignants et les apprenants et aider les apprenants à devenir plus efficaces à l'écrit.

TRADUCTION DE L'INTRODUCTION GÉNÉRALE

L'enseignement a été et est encore l'objet de chauds débats et discussions parmi les chercheurs. Les langues étant le noyau de cette préoccupation humaine et sociale, constituent apparemment la problématique centrale à ce genre d'investigation. Il est donc évident que les langues comme un moyen de communication et un véhicule d'information seraient dans toutes les probabilités, un point délicat à traiter et donc à transmettre ses différents aspects. L'écrit, un des axes de l'enseignement des langues révèle quelques spécificités bien complexes à saisir et à en faire usage si une connaissance explicite et une approche appropriée ne lui soient consacrées. C'est pourquoi, l'étude des langues remonte à l'époque des anciens Grecs, des Romains et des Indiens et dès ses débuts, a attiré l'intérêt des savants et des sages.

Avant d'arriver à l'Université, l'écrit en langue anglaise est enseigné implicitement dans les écoles algériennes pendant au moins sept ans (quatre années dans l'école moyenne et trois années à l'école secondaire). Les enseignants se concentrent sur le développement des compétences orales. La performance de l'écrit n'est prise en considération que dans la troisième année de l'école secondaire. Pourtant, malgré une si longue période d'apprentissage de l'anglais, les performances de l'écrit de nombreux entrants à l'Université sont loin d'être satisfaisantes. Il est à noter que de nombreux apprenants algériens qui ont terminé leurs sept années de cours en langue anglaise et commencent leur instruction en première année à l'Université ne parviennent pas à s'exprimer en anglais couramment montrant une carence en écriture et en discours.

Ce faible rendement en compétences productives après un processus d'apprentissage d'une langue assez longue conduit à s'interroger sur la méthodologie d'enseignement présente puisque l'école est en grande partie responsable de la formation d'utilisateurs de langue non compétent et par conséquent d'écrivains inefficaces et médiocres.

La principale préoccupation de ce travail de recherche est d'étudier l'enseignement actuel de l'écrit afin de localiser l'insuffisance ou les lacunes dans l'enseignement de l'écrit chez les étudiants de première année de la section de langue anglaise à l'université de Tlemcen et de proposer un enseignement adéquat des stratégies pour aider l'étudiant à améliorer ses compétences d'écriture et de mieux faire face aux tâches de l'Université. Ensuite, la présente étude pose les questions suivantes :

1 - Quelle est la compétence des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères à l'écrit?

2 - Est-ce l'enseignement actuel de l'écrit prépare convenablement les étudiants de première année en langues étrangères et leur permet de faire face à l'écrit au niveau universitaire ?

3 - Quel changement pédagogique est nécessaire pour arriver à un niveau de l'écrit adéquat au niveau universitaire ?

Fondamentalement, le but ultime de cette thèse est de découvrir les principales causes du faible rendement des étudiants universitaires de première année à l'habileté de l'écrit. Par conséquent, cette recherche tentera de fournir des arguments pour les hypothèses suivantes :

1 - La grande majorité des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères ont un niveau faible à l'écrit.

2 - L'enseignement actuel de l'écrit ne fournit pas une préparation adéquate aux étudiants. Ceci est du à l'approche pédagogique utilisée, au manque de matériel pédagogique, au temps inadéquat alloué à cet enseignement, au manque de coordination entre les différents modules et au manque de pratique des étudiants.

3 - Pour arriver à un niveau de l'écrit académique approprié, un changement est nécessaire au niveau de la méthodologie, des techniques, des matériaux pédagogiques ainsi que de la charge du temps d'enseignement.

Le présent travail de recherche cherche à savoir dans quelle mesure ces hypothèses sont vraies. Ainsi, afin d'évaluer les compétences des étudiants de première année en langues étrangères à l'écrit et d'étudier l'enseignement actuel de ce module, le chercheur a administré une production écrite (élaboration d'un paragraphe) aux étudiants de première année (la population de recherche), deux questionnaires : un aux enseignants universitaires et un autre aux étudiants de première année, et une interview pour les enseignants de l'expression écrite de la section en question. Les enseignants et les étudiants devaient répondre à une série de questions sur leurs réactions à l'enseignement de l'écrit à l'université. Par conséquent, suite aux données recueillies, la présente étude tentera de cerner les problèmes que les apprenants rencontrent lors de la production écrite.

Ce travail de recherche se compose de cinq chapitres qui sont reliés pour éclairer le lecteur sur la présente recherche. Le premier chapitre donne un aperçu théorique de l'écrit. Il définit les compétences de l'écrit et affiche ensuite l'enquête historique de l'écrit dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères. Certaines tendances de l'enseignement de l'écrit sont donnés tels que la méthode traditionnelle d'une part et les autres méthodes d'enseignement contemporain d'autre part. Ensuite, le chapitre explique la complexité de la production écrite. En outre, il décrit le processus d'écriture et les différentes étapes les apprenants ont à parcourir pour parvenir à une écriture académique réussie. Ensuite, le chapitre présente l'importance de l'écrit dans la langue d'apprentissage ainsi que son importance en ce qui concerne les autres compétences, il met en évidence la relation entre l'écrit et de la culture et tente de définir l'écrit par rapport à ses connexes secondaires, ses buts et ses normes d'enseignement.

Le deuxième chapitre tente de donner une idée claire sur les circonstances et les attitudes des étudiants de première année vis-à-vis de l'écrit. À cette fin, il commence par une présentation générale de l'enseignement de l'anglais dans le système éducatif algérien : à savoir du moyen à l'université et donne une image

claire du niveau de formation des apprenants et de la maîtrise de la langue. Il présente l'enseignement de l'écrit à différents niveaux de l'éducation (moyen, secondaire et universitaire) et les rapports sur le développement de cette compétence dans l'ensemble de ces niveaux en présentant les méthodes d'enseignement, les pratiques et les activités utilisées par écrit. Ce chapitre se termine déclarant certaines observations importantes sur l'enseignement de la production écrite.

Le troisième chapitre porte sur la phase empirique qui vise à trouver des données devant guider la recherche. Il décrit tout d'abord la situation de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de l'Anglais comme langues étrangère à l'université de Tlemcen, explique comment l'écrit y est enseigné et présente le programme d'écriture utilisé. Ce chapitre est également préoccupé par la présentation de la conception de la recherche et de la procédure. Il énonce les questions de recherche et hypothèses avant de donner le profil des étudiants de sujets ayant participé à l'étude. En outre, il présente et explique la méthodologie de recherche. Les instruments de recherche sont mis en place, leur choix se justifie et explique la procédure d'analyse des données. En fait, ce chapitre est destiné à fournir les résultats qualitatifs et quantitatifs de l'étude menée, qui permettent l'identification des difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants de première année en langues étrangères et les causes de ces difficultés à l'écrit.

Le quatrième chapitre traite l'analyse et l'interprétation des données recueillies. Tout d'abord, les productions écrites des étudiants (c.-à-d. le premier test, le deuxième test et le test final) sont étudiés pour obtenir le type d'erreurs produites par les apprenants dans l'élaboration d'un paragraphe. Ces tests sont analysés afin de décrire le degré de compétence des étudiants dans la réalisation des productions écrites. Ensuite, les informations fournies par les questionnaires et les interviews sont analysées pour présenter une vue globale sur la situation de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de l'écrit. Après l'analyse des données obtenues de divers instruments, les résultats sont interprétés par des analyses quantitatives et qualitatives de l'information recueillie. Enfin, on discute des résultats principaux de recherche en faisant référence aux conclusions et en expliquant le degré de preuve des données collectées.

Le cinquième et dernier chapitre fournit quelques suggestions et recommandations relatives à l'enseignement de la production écrite. Il se préoccupe de ce qui peut être favorable aux implications pédagogiques pour remédier à la situation cible. Il tente de donner quelques conseils et suggère quelques activités.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERAL ENGLISH TEACHING AND BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING

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Abstract:

With the accelerating rate of globalization, business exchanges are carried out across the border, as a result there is a growing demand for talents professional both in English and Business. We can see that at present Business English courses are offered by many language schools aiming at meeting the need for Business English talent. Many researchers argue that no differences can be defined between Business English teaching and General English teaching. However, Business English is different from General English at least in such aspects as the role of teacher, course design, teaching models, etc....thus different teaching methods should be applied in order to realize expected teaching goals.

Key words: Business English, General English, ESP, Teaching methods, Teaching models, course design

الملخص:

الفوارق بين اللغة الانجليزية المدرسة العامة والخاصة بالتعامل التجاري
مع تطور العولمة ارتفع معدل التبادلات التجارية بشكل ملحوظ ونتج عن ذلك ازدياد الطلب لخبراء متخصصين في مجال اللغة والتعامل التجاري، وعليه يمكن القول أنه لوحظ تكثيف في إعطاء دروس في لغة التعامل التجاري في عدة مدارس لغوية خاصة تهدف لتغطية النقص في حاجيات هذه اللغة. لقد أكد الباحثون على عدم وجود فرق في تدريس اللغتين الانجليزية العامة والخاصة ولكن لغة التبادل التجاري تتباين مع الانجليزية العامة في بعض النقاط منها: دور المدرس، نوع الدروس، ومناهج التدريس... وأخيرا يجب تطبيق عدة مناهج تعليمية لبلوغ الأهداف المرجوة في التعليم.

Introduction

With the globalization process of trade and economy and the continuing increase of international communication in various fields, the enormous expansion in science and technology has engendered an urgent need for a global means of communication. Such a task was accredited to the English language which imposed itself, as a "lingua franca". All these demands have promoted the expansion of a particular field in English Language Teaching (ELT) namely English for Specific Purposes (ESP). And with the growing demand for English courses tailored to specific needs, new ideas began to emerge in the study of language. Traditionally the aim of linguistics had been to describe the rules of English usage; however, the new studies shifted focus away from defining the formal features of language usage to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication, i.e. use. This phenomenon, along with the new developments in educational psychology, contributes to the rise of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Business English is an area of ESP, and must be seen in the overall context of ESP, as it shares the important elements of needs analysis, syllabus design, and materials selection and development which are common to all fields of work in ESP. In this context Ellis and Johnson (2002:37) state:

Business English differs from other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content (relating to a particular job area or industry), and general content (relating to general ability to communicate more effectively, especially in the business situations.

There have been many developments in the ways in which teachers and course designers look at Business English. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, special vocabulary was considered as what distinguishes Business English (BE) from General English (GE). A second approach placed a greater emphasis on training "the skills of communication in English speaking, writing, listening and reading within a business context". In the mid 1970s and 1980s, following the trends in GE, BE teaching began to focus more and more on functional areas-formulaic language for recommending, giving opinions, showing agreements, and so on. During the 1980s the development of company training programmes began to provide

employees with opportunities to attend courses in presentation techniques, negotiating, and effective meeting skills. As a result, Business English began to replace General English.

1. Differences between GE teaching and BE teaching

Many researchers argue that no differences can be defined between BE teaching and GE teaching. However, BE is different from GE at least in such aspects as the role of the teacher, the course design the teaching models and the teaching skills.

1.1 Differences in the Role of the Teacher

The role of a language teacher has developed from a director and model in traditional language teaching to a facilitator in contemporary language (Shulin Liu *et al* 2004). To a large extent, the function and the methodology or approach the teacher performs in different teaching activities determines the role of the teacher. Both GE and BE teachers should be able to identify the current language level of the learner and select materials and set tasks that are appropriate in terms of level as well as context. They also need to be able to set course objectives and devise course programmes. In order to achieve this, it is essential for the teacher to have an in-depth knowledge of the language system in terms of skills functions, structures and vocabulary.

Business English teacher, as a language teacher should perform the basic functions required for a language teacher, specifically as organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, controller as well as knowledge-resource. However, to be a qualified Business English teacher more is needed. Swale (1985) prefers to use "ESP practitioner" rather than ESP teacher in order to reflect the difference for being an ESP teacher from being a GE teacher. In BE we tend to use the term BE trainer, because some BE trainers come from a business background, who have worked in companies themselves and have useful knowledge of the way in which companies are organized and run. However, whatever the background, it is of great importance that the trainer should be seen as an expert in presenting and explaining the language, in diagnosing the learners' language difficulties, and in providing them with certain knowledge of Business English.

Besides the qualifications and a sound background in business, a right balance of personal skills carries the same weight of importance. For a BE trainer, it is preferable to have an outgoing

personality, to be interested in interaction with people of a wide variety. It is important for the trainer to establish his or her credibility and professionalism to be able to discuss with the learners about the course. Furthermore, BE trainers need to be curious about and interested in all aspects of business, because one of the best ways to unlock the learners motivation and learning potential is to show that he or she can relate to the questions of learners, such as how the companies work, the organization procedures, marketing strategies, financial planning, problem-solving, and new technical developments.

1.2 Differences in Course Design

Course design is the process by which the raw data about a learning need is interpreted in order to produce an integrated series of teaching-learning experience, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge. In general, the course design for GE focuses on subjects related to culture, literature and linguistics, while that of BE focuses on courses related to the application of language in business communication. According to Hutchinson and Waters (2002), there are three main approaches to ESP course design, respectively called language-centered course design, skills-centered course design and learning-centered course design.

- Language-centered course design, the simplest and most familiar one, aims to draw as direct connection as possible between the analyses of the target situation.
- Skills-centered course design is an approach founded on two fundamental principles, one theoretical and the other pragmatic. It aims to get away from the surface performance data and look at the competence that underlies the performance. Comparatively speaking, this approach claims to take the learners more into account than the language-centered approach.
- Learning-centered approach gives the most concern to the learners.

BE, as a sort of developed ESP, can undoubtedly adopt the way of course design for ESP. With reference to what has been said above, the learning approach may be the best to assist in BE teaching activity since it is the most learner-centered. So it is important and necessary to take the learners' practical need into consideration in BE teaching to make them benefit most from the class.

2. Differences in Teaching Models

Traditionally, teaching and learning were thought of as an “*instructional paradigm*” in which the teacher is as a dispenser of information and the student as a passive receiver, container and repeater of the transmitted information. Teaching and learning were viewed as a linear process of information transfer and reception. For GE teaching, there are several teaching models frequently applied (Liu Yumei & Xiao Bang, 2007).

2.1 Presentation-Practice-Production Model

It refers to the “presentation-practice-production” paradigm. At the presentation stage, new grammatical structures are presented in meaningful contexts. At the practice stage learners are given a variety of practice tasks to reinforce what has been learnt. At the production stage, learners are given practice tasks less controlled by the teacher to link what is newly learnt with what has been learnt before. In this model, the teacher plays a dominating role.

2.2 Engage-Study-Activate Model

Harmer (1998) refers to the “engage-study-activate” paradigm. During the engage phase, the teacher tries to arouse the learners’ interest and engage their emotions. During the study phase, activities are carried out to focus on language or information and how it is constructed. In the activate stage, the exercises and activities are designed to get students to use the language as communicatively as they can. This model seems to place more stress upon the learners’ cognitive and affective factors such as interest, curiosity and attention.

2.3 Presentation-Practice and Testing Model

According to Ur (1996), the process of teaching a foreign language can be roughly broken down into three components: Presentation, Practice and Testing. The function of the first and second stage of this model is more or less the same to PPP Model. In the third stage, a test may be designed to check what has been mastered and what still need to be learned.

In comparison, in BE teaching three different models are usually applied. In the first model, BE is taught as a type of ESP and a model of English for Occupational Purposes henceforth EOP is adopted. This model starts with the learners’ need, and cultivates the students’ basic ability, both in language and in behavior, required by the target business circumstance.

The second model can be characterized as “content-based language instruction”. Basically it has two stages. In the first, English is used as a tool to teach general business topics. In the process, business communication

skills training is offered, including how to write business correspondences. In the second stage, English international trade courses are offered.

The third model is a model of real-life situation planning, in which business material is adopted as the course content. The students are supposed to gain competence in the language used in those business communications.

3. Differences in Teaching Skills

Traditionally, language teaching is viewed in terms of skills, listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and interpretation, and different teaching skills are applied in teaching each skill. However, BE cannot be treated in the same way because BE learners are supposed to gain a comprehensive mastering of English required by business communication.

Suggested by Ellis and Johnson (2002), basically there are two methods of planning the course in BE teaching. The first is to take each of the main performance areas and break it down into constituent parts: skills components, language functions and the grammatical and lexical constituents. The second is to analyze the language used taken from real life situations. The two methods can be illustrated respectively along with the teaching skills desired as follows.

3.1 Breakdown Planning and its Teaching Skills

Breakdown method functions much similarly to the teaching method used in GE, as it stresses on language, and its grammatical components, but its skills components and the lexical components bear differences from GE. With regard to the difference at the lexical level, GE words are widely used in business with another meaning in BE. BE teacher should spend more time on this point to cultivate the basic skills for the learners and make the business meaning of the lexical components clear to the learners.

3.2 Real-Life Situation Planning and its Teaching Skills

This method of planning the content of course, using the language used in samples taken from different real-life situation is widely applied in BE content planning. Real-life situation planning undoubtedly is a preferable way in BE teaching as it gives the learners the most direct impression on how BE language is different from GE language. This method helps the student manage BE usage better and faster. BE teachers

are required to arouse learners' interest and attention to the special usage of BE and to encourage them to practice for the purpose of mastering BE.

Conclusion

BE is used to cover the English taught to a wide range of professional people. Attention should not only be paid to language, but equally to the importance of skills-training in the teaching activity. This presents a tough challenge for BE teachers as they are required to not only be professional in language, but also to develop awareness of the needs and concerns of business people and to become flexible enough to respond to those needs.

However, there is no best methodology. Any teaching situation is an interaction between the learner, the trainer and the activity itself. As a general rule, methodologies which put the learner at the center of the learning process are likely to be the most effective. In BE teaching activity, methodologies which combine language and real situation together would be more favorable. Emphasis on the application of language in business communication can assist in the teacher carrying out the course more successfully and help the learners learn more quickly and more effectively.

Abstract

Once dived into the deep waters of ESP teaching, ESP practitioners in general, encounter serious problems, one of which is the shortage of teaching materials. To help overcome such a difficulty, the present work suggests an EST course design process upon which the design of teaching units can be based.

Key words: English for specific purposes (ESP), English for Science and Technology (EST), Needs Identification and Analysis (NIA), Course Design.

1- Introduction

The present work investigates into a particular ESP teaching / learning situation, namely that of first year Master students of Physics at Abou Bakr Belkaid University, Tlemcen (Algeria).

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Approaches and Methods in Grammar Teaching

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Abstract:

Throughout the history of language teaching, many theories, methods and approaches have been utilized or revised in order to arrive to an adequate and successful way of teaching. Grammar has generally been perceived and practiced as a highly serious subject of study with the aim of continuing the tradition which began with Classical Greek Grammarians. However, the teaching of grammar involves criticism and seems to create a controversial issue among teachers, applied linguists and syllabus designers. This controversy gives rise to different approaches in teaching grammar: the Traditional Approach on the one hand and other Contemporary Teaching Approaches on the other.

Key-words: Theories, approaches, methods, grammar, teaching.

الملخص

مقاربات ومناهج في تعليم النحو

تبين من خلال تاريخ تعليم اللغة ظهور نظريات، مناهج ومقاربات متداولة و مجددة بهدف الوصول إلى النحو الصحيح والمناسب للتعليم،
اعتبر النحو عموما من منظور تطبيقي موضوعا هاما للدراسة للمواصلة قدما نحو الدرب الذي سار عليه العلماء النحويون الأوائل، والمثير للانتباه هو أن تدريس النحو يستلزم رؤية نقدية

لوجود اختلافات كبيرة بين المعلمين والدارسين اللسانيين ومعدّي المناهج، هذا الاختلاف في حد ذاته أعطى تبايناً في منهج تعليم النحو بين المنهج الكلاسيكي والمنهج التعليمي المعاصر.

Introduction

Throughout the history of language teaching, many theories, methods and approaches have been utilized or revised in order to arrive to an adequate and successful way of teaching. First, a brief idea about what an approach and what a method is. An approach is the sum of assumptions course designers make about language. This term gives a description of the many ways psychologists and linguists look at language.

On the other hand, a language teaching method is a set of techniques or procedures that usually follow a systematic scheme. Unlike an approach, a method needs not be tied to a particular theory about language or learning, but may simply be claimed as successful in practice. This term describes the way of presenting language materials to students. Besides it lists the strategies derived from a particular approach.

Grammar has generally been perceived and practiced as a highly serious subject of study with the aim of continuing the tradition which began with Classical Greek Grammarians. However, the teaching of grammar involves criticism and seems to create a controversial issue among teachers, applied linguists and syllabus designers. This controversy gives rise to different approaches in teaching grammar: the Traditional Approach on the one hand and other Contemporary Teaching Approaches on the other.

2. Grammar and the Traditional Approach

The Traditional Approach is the oldest approach. It was advocated in the sixteenth century. At that time, the most taught foreign language was Latin. The aim of this approach is to make the students understand the grammar. The emphasis is made on accuracy not fluency. In thinking about the teaching of grammar according to this approach, two areas should be mentioned: grammar as rules, and grammar as form. If we consider, first of all, grammar as rules, we will notice that learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar. Learners are required to have an intellectual knowledge of grammar. The definite article, for example, is not only used to mark the phrase it introduces as definite, but it has also other uses related to some particular rules.

- The definite article used to specify that is **the** man I saw at the museum
- The definite article used for something unique.....Men have walked on **the** moon.
- The definite article used with superlatives.....He is **the** funniest teacher.
- The definite article not used before names of counties.....We travel to Spain.
- The definite article not used before abstract nouns.....Men fear death. For many students, therefore, prescribed rules give a kind of security.

On the other hand, considering grammar as form, many see it as the form of the structure. This includes the ordering of words, the correct addition of suffixes and prefixes and the correct use of the article. Many people can, in fact, make sense of what is said even if there are mistakes in the form used. As far as simple information is concerned, this can be the case. The student saying, for example, "I *hitted* him" will have communicated information successfully, albeit grammatically incorrect. The danger is that in identifying grammar with form, the recognition of what is right and what is wrong stays at the level of subject-verb agreement, plural markers, possessive markers, tense formation etc..

This approach has proved to be deficient in some respects. The results of such grammar learning has been an obvious inability of the learners to make sensible use of the grammar knowledge they have acquired until the communicative approach took hold in 1970s. Grammar was at the core of foreign language learning/teaching. Views of grammar teaching were not the same in different methodologies. The main concern, however, was to consider what methodology would be appropriate for helping students to understand and use grammar effectively to communicate their messages. No method or approach should be considered to be completely wrong or completely right. Each of the different methods we are going to deal with below has its strengths and weaknesses.

3. Grammar and the Contemporary Teaching Approaches

➤ *The Grammar Translation Method*

The teaching of grammar during the first half of the century was dominated by the grammar-translation method. The emphasis in this method is on the organization of language at sentence level in terms of parts of speech, such as verb, and also the types of word, such as noun, verb, adjective, adverb. Its goals were based on the idea that the purpose of learning a foreign language was to read its literature. Translation was as a way of studying and analyzing the rules of the language. Its focus was on rules; and the grammar class came to be seen as the class teaching the rules of grammar.

Though this method was aimed to study and analyze the rules of the language, it has proved to be deficient in some respects. Thereafter, another method has been proposed below to help learners make use of their grammar knowledge.

➤ *The Direct Method*

The direct method, sometimes known as the natural method, was based on the belief that a language could best be taught by its active use in the classroom. There was no translation; and the focus on explaining and analyzing the rules of grammar was replaced by actual use in the classroom. In this way, learners would be able to induce the rules of grammar. The emphasis was on spoken language.

The purpose in this method was to focus on the use of grammar in communication. This method was very similar to the following one where educationalists attempted to situationalize the grammatical structures.

➤ *The Oral Approach*

The oral approach may seem to be very similar to the direct method in that the emphasis was on the spoken language but it was based on a much more systematic view of language. In the work of applied linguists such as Palmer and Hornby, there had been attempts to analyze English and classify its major grammatical structures into sentence patterns. These structures were often situationalized to provide a context to help the learners, but even so the exercises stood alone and the only relevance was that they presented a pattern for students to practice. The organization for a lesson would be:

Presentation.....Practice.....Consolidation.....

Testing.....Free stage

This method, too, has not proved very efficient; this is why another method has been proposed where learners were required to practice and

form correct sentences by means of drills through the audio-lingual method.

➤ **The Audio- Lingual Method**

The audio-lingual method was based on a behaviorist approach to language learning. The language was broken down into grammatical structures, which learners practiced by means of drills which were concerned with giving students practice in forming correct sentences. An example of such a drill is:

Robert runs ten miles every day

.....walks.....

Jane.....

.....to work.....

.....to school

According to T. Huebener this approach was based on the following assumptions:

.....the language is the everyday spoken utterance of the average person at normal speed....the spoken language is purely an instrument of communication, used in given situations.....In the approach to any language, listening and understanding come first. Almost immediately oral utterance follows. Speech comes first; reading and writing come later.

Initially, the problem here was that all the grammar work was done out of context. Attempts were made to overcome this by putting the practice into situations.

The main points put forwards by this approach were that:

- The language skills should be presented in the following order: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
- Use of intensive pattern-practice and oral drill was advocated.
- The learners should try to practice the language as much as they can in order to develop automatic speech habits through memorization of dialogues.
- The learning by heart of entire sentences should be encouraged.

- The emphasis should be put on habit formation through conditioning analogy.

However, the problem that arose here was that grammatical structures did not fit conveniently into anyone situation and the whole exercise became very artificial. What we had very often were little more than rather sophisticated forms of drills, which many learners found boring.

Though some linguists and didacticians considered this method as useful, its validity has been questioned with a consequent shift towards a semantically-oriented approach, i.e. the communicative approach.

➤ **The Communicative approach**

To make language learning relevant and interesting, at the outset of the communicative approach there was a determined movement away from grammar as the centre of a language-learning course. The aim was that the use of language should be the dominant feature.

This is why there has been growing concern for specifying a language syllabus in terms of the communication needs of the learners. One may understand that language is more than the knowledge of lexis and grammatical patterns, more than an awareness of how sentences are formed. Language is no longer perceived as a school subject but as a means of communication, so as to meet the demands of present-day society. Learning a language is not just a matter of learning how to fit linguistic forms together to make correct sentences. Learning a language involves learning to use such forms to perform communicative acts of one kind or another. A learner cannot be said to know the language until he can manipulate the formal devices for the purpose of conveying messages in real-life situations. It is widely recognized that:

The view of language as communication could not easily be adequately contained in the form-oriented, sentence-based linguistics of the time.

(Candlin 1978)

Similarly, Allen and Widdowson claim that the time has come that: ***"The language should be presented in such a way as to reveal its character as communication..."***

It is of course, of no avail to dismiss the teaching of grammar. This is to state that grammar deserves its fair share of specific attention in language teaching. Language teaching should be viewed as a double-fold objective process: (1) to develop in the learner grammatical competence in the Chomskyan sense, in other terms, the mastery of the formation rules of

the language, and (2) to inculcate in him what is socially appropriate and accepted, i.e. what Hymes (1972) has labeled "the speaking rules."

A communicative teaching of grammar is a new kind of grammar. It is a fresh departure in grammar writing in that it employs a communicative rather than structural approach. The emphasis is made on fluency rather than accuracy. The communicative approach avoids terms like rules, system, and structure speaking about speech, discourse and communication. It is then a new perspective on the subject since it relates grammatical forms and structures systematically to meanings, uses and situations. In this context Wilkins (1976) states: **"What people want to do through language is more important than the mastery of language as an unapplied system"**.

In this approach, we speak about grammar as resource which helps us to communicate, and choosing the correct form is as important as choosing the most appropriate lexical item. While form is important here, we are looking at how grammar relates to what we want to say and how we expect our listener or reader to interpret what we are saying and the focus of what we are saying.

So, where are the parameters of grammar? In written language, the organization of the sentence is possibly more important than in the spoken language. In spoken language the full meaning of the message can be promoted by the manner in which it is said. The pitch and stress used in utterances are also important in conveying meaning or intention, and that is why some grammarians would include phonology within the sphere of grammar. In this respect Leech and Svartvik (1975) state: **"You will need some knowledge of English intonation patterns, if you are to understand English grammar"**.

So, grammar incorporates all aspects of language; and while most people would probably separate phonology from grammar in the same way they do with vocabulary, all three clearly integrate to give meaning to utterances and to our interpretation of the utterances. Such an approach presents a number of advantages.

- It serves the communication needs of the learners.
- It is more realistic and more relevant to the learners.
- It gives the learners a sense of achievement.
- It views the grammar learning as a means of communication and not as an end in itself.
- It focuses on function rather than on form and communication rather than grammaticality.

- It stresses value rather than signification.

So, the role of the teacher is that of responding to the developing communicative needs of the learner and to help the learner relate the structures learnt to the communicative functions a language performs.

4. Conclusion

If we consider grammar to be an important part of the language learning process, since it enables the learner to improve his written and spoken skills, the question that arises is the following, what is the methodology which has the best fit, the closest match with all the variables (mainly the learner himself, his profile, his level of proficiency, his motivation and attitudes to learning). It is worth mentioning first, that the individual teacher who is considered as a key variable in the whole teaching/learning process needs to acquire the widest and deepest understanding of all these variables he is likely to encounter in the grammar teaching /learning situation. It is also impossible to decide what appropriate method in grammar teaching is. This highly depends on the relationship which exists between the teacher and the learner and also how the classroom is organized. Therefore, it is the teacher who can decide on the model to follow and how to structure his course having in mind a number of parameters such as the learner's age, interest and objectives of the course to be achieved.

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SENTENCE ELEMENTS

1. DEFINITION:

A sentence may alternatively be comprising five units called elements of a sentence structure: Subject (S), Verb (V), Complement (C), Object (O), adverbial (A).

e.g.: She/ cleans/ the black board/ everyday.

S / V / O / A

I/ am/ a student

S/ V/ C

1.1. Subject: Is the word or words that represent the person or thing that is doing the action expressed by the verb (the doer).

1.2. Verb: What people and things do, and what happens to them.

1.3. Object: of a verb is the word or phrase which completes the structure begun by the verb. There are two types of objects:

Direct object (O^D): e.g. He / is eating / an apple.

S / V / O^D

Indirect object (O^I): e.g. He / gave / the girl / an apple.

S / V / O^I / O^D

1.4. Complement: It provides additional information about either the subject or object of the verb. There are two types of complements.

Subject complement (C^S) when it is related to the subject

e.g. The girl / is / now / a student / at university.

S / V/ A/ C^S/ A

Object complement (C^O): when it is related to the direct object of the sentence.

e.g. They / make / him / the chairman / every year.

S / V/ O^D / C^O / A

1.5. Adverbial: It is a simple adverb functioning on its own or a group of words of which the main word is an adverb. There are adverbs of manner, place, time ...

2. VERB PATTERNS

2.1. The verb pattern SV: It consists of *subject + verb (intransitive)*

e.g. It / is raining.

S / V

2.2. The verb pattern SVO: It consists of **subject + verb (transitive)+object (direct)**

e.g. I / broke / the window.

S / V / O^D

2.3. The verb pattern SVOC: It consists of *subject + verb (transitive) + object (direct) + complement (object)*.

e.g. They / considered / the car / too expensive.

S / V / O^D / C^O

This verb pattern can often be expanded by a “to be” clause or paraphrased by a “that clause”

e.g. They considered the car to be too expensive

They considered that the car was too expensive.

2.4. The verb pattern SVOO: it consists of *subject + verb (ditransitive) + object (indirect) + object (direct)*.

e.g. I / gave / Ali / my book.

S / V / O^I / O^D

This construction can be replaced by:

a) *a direct object + to + noun phrase (NP)* with the following verbs:

give, bring, grant, hand, offer, owe, read, promise, send, show, take, teach, write etc.

e.g. I / gave / my book / to / Ali

S / V / O^D / Prep / N.P

b) *a direct object+ for+ noun phrase (NP)* with the following verbs:
buy, cook, find, get, leave, make, order, peel, save, spare, etc.

e.g. I / bought / a dress / for / my sister .

S / V / O^D / Prep / NP

When both objects are pronouns, it is common to put the indirect object (O^I) last .

e.g. I / lend / them / to / her

S/ V/ O^D / prep/ NP

NB:

- The verbs *strike* and *ask* have two objects and cannot be replaced by the preposition construction “to” or “for”.

e.g. He asked me a question. (not *he asked a question to/for me*)

- The verbs *explain*, *suggest* and *describe* take always the preposition “to” construction.

e.g. Can you suggest a good dentist to me? (not *can you suggest me a good dentist?*)

2.5. The verb pattern SVC: It consists of *subject + verb + complement (subject complement)*. The verb of this pattern is called a linking verb. There are two groups of linking verbs.

a. *Current linking verbs/ verbs of appearance and sensation* such as: appear, lie, remain, seem, stay (young), smell (sweet), sound, taste, look, feel.

e.g. You/ look/ nice.

S / V / Cs

We/ felt/ annoyed/ at their behaviour.

S/ V/ Cs / 'A

b. Resulting linking verbs/verbs of becoming such as:

be, become, grow(tired), fall (sick), run (wild), turn (sour),
get(tired).

e.g. They/became/good friends.

S / V/ Cs

She / soon/ got/ tired

S / A/ V/ Cs

N.B.:

Some of the above linking verbs can also be ordinary verbs.

Compare:

The driver/ turned / the corner / too quickly.

S/ V / OD/ A

The weather / is turning / warmer.

S / V / Cs

2.6. The verb pattern SVA: It consists of *subject + verb + adverb*.

e.g. The house / is / nearby.

S / V / A

ARTICLES

1. THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE: (A/AN)

The indefinite articles are *a* and *an*. The form *a* is used before a word beginning with a consonant or a vowel with a consonant sound.

e.g. a man, a hat, a one way street, a useful thing.

The form *an* is used before words beginning with a vowel or words beginning with a mute "h".

e.g. an apple, an hour, an honorable man, an SOS

1.1. Use of the indefinite article a/an:

A/ An is used before:

A. A singular noun which is countable when it is mentioned for the first time and represents no particular person or thing.

e.g. A house has a roof.

They live in a flat.

B. A singular countable noun which represents a class of things.

e.g. A cow has horns. → All cows have horns.

A child needs love. → All children need love.

C. A noun complement (subject complement) including names of professions.

e.g. It was an earthquake.

She'll be a dancer.

D. Certain expressions of quantity.

e.g. a lot of, a couple of

a dozen (one dozen is also possible).

E. Certain numbers

e.g. a hundred, a thousand, a million

F. Half, when half follows a whole number.

e.g. 3 ½ Kg: three and a half kilos.

G. In expressions of price, speed etc.

e.g. Five dinars a kilo.

Sixty kilometers an hour.

H. *Few* and *little*.

A few: a small number

e.g. A few friends came to see him.

A little : a small amount

e.g. A little time was given to examinees.

Few and *little* can also be used without the indefinite article.

e.g. We had little time to see each other. → implies that we were always busy.

Few people know this. → It is almost unknown.

I. Singular countable nouns in exclamations.

e.g. What a mess !

What a pretty girl !

J. Mr./Mrs./Miss + surname

e.g. A Mr. Smith/ a Mrs. Smith /a Miss Smith is looking for you.

It means a man called Mr. Smith and implies that he is a stranger to the speaker.

Mr. Smith without *a* implies that the speaker knows Mr. Smith or knows of his existence.

1.2. Omission of the indefinite article a/an:

A/An is omitted:

A. Before plural nouns. The indefinite article a/an has no plural form.

e.g. A dog → dogs

An egg → eggs

B. Before uncountable nouns (see lesson of nouns).

C. Before abstract nouns: beauty, happiness, fear, hope, death, etc...except when they are used in a particular sense.

e.g. He was pale with *fear*.

Some children suffer from *a fear* of the dark.

D. Before names of meals unless preceded by an adjective.

e.g. We have breakfast at eight.

She gave us a good breakfast.

The article is also used when it is a special meal given to celebrate something.

e.g. I was invited to a dinner given to welcome the new ambassador.

2. THE DEFINITE ARTICLE (THE):

The definite article is *the*, used for singular and plural nouns and for all genders.

e.g. The boy/ the boys, the girl/ the girls, the door/ the doors

2.1. Use of the definite article:

The definite article is used:

A. When the object or group of objects is unique or considered to be unique

e.g. The earth, the sky, the equator, the stars.

B. Before a noun which has become definite as a result of being mentioned a second time

e.g. His car struck a tree; you can still see the mark on the tree.

C. Before a noun made definite by the addition of a phrase or clause

e.g. The boy that I met.

The girl in blue.

The place where I met him.

D. Before a noun which by reason of locality, can represent only one particular thing

e.g. She is in the garden. (The garden of this house).

He sent for the doctor (his own doctor).

E. Before superlatives, only, and first, second, third etc. when used as adjectives or pronouns

e.g. Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in Europe.

The first week of a holiday is always pleasant.

F. Before an adjective used to represent a class of persons

e.g. There is no peace for any but *the dead*.

The old and *the young* should be able to live together.

G. Before certain proper names of seas, rivers, groups of islands, chains of mountains, deserts and plural names of countries

e.g. the Atlantic, the Thames, the Alps, the USA, the USSR

The Sudan and *the Mali* are the only names of countries which take the definite article.

H. Before proper names consisting of 'adjective + noun' or 'noun + of + noun'

e.g. The National Gallery

The Tower of London.

I. With names of people, '*the + Plural surname*' can be used to mean '*the family*'

e.g. We invited the Simpsons. → We invited the Simpson family.

J. Before musical instruments used with the verb *play*.

e.g. She learnt to play the flute.

2.2. Omission of the definite article:

The definite article is not used:

A. Before names of places and people except as shown before.

e.g. Amina is my friend.

We travel to Spain.

B. Before abstract nouns except when they are used in a particular sense, compare:

e.g. Men fear death.

The death of the prime minister left his party without a leader.

C. Before names of games

e.g. He plays golf.

D. Before *home* when it is not preceded or followed by a descriptive word or phrase.

e.g. He went home.

We arrived at the bride's home.

E. Before *bed, church, court, hospital, prison, school, college, and university* when these places are visited or used for their primary purpose.

e.g. I go to bed to sleep.

He was kept in prison for the crimes he committed.

But when these places are visited or used for other reasons, the definite article *the* is used.

e.g. I put my dress on the bed.

He goes to the prison sometimes, to give lectures.

F. Before *sea* when we go to sea as sailors.

Also to be at sea = to be on a voyage (as passengers or crew).

But we say *to go* or *to be at the sea* meaning *to go* or *to be at the seaside*.

We can also live by/near the sea.

G. Before *work* when it means place of work.

e.g. He is on his way to work.

H. Before *town* when speaking about the subject's or speaker's own town that is the city center.

e.g. We were in town yesterday.

NOUNS

1. KINDS OF NOUNS

There are four kinds of nouns in English:

- ❖ Common nouns: dog, man, table.
- ❖ Proper nouns: France, Mrs. Smith, Tom.
- ❖ Abstract nouns: beauty, courage, fear, joy.
- ❖ Collective nouns: Crowd, group, team.

2. GENDER

There are two genders in English: masculine and feminine, however we can also find some words which are neuter.

Masculine: men, boys and male animals. The pronouns used are *he* and *they*.

Feminine: women, girls and female animals. The pronouns used are *she* and *they*.

Neuter: inanimate things, animals whose sex is unknown and sometimes babies whose sex is unknown. The pronouns used are *it* and *they*.

Exceptions: Countries and vehicles such as ships and cars when regarded with affection or respect are sometimes considered feminine instead of neuter.

e.g. A: How is your new car?

B: *She* is running beautifully

Algeria lost many of *her* bravest men in the war of independence.

2.1. Masculine / Feminine Nouns Denoting People

Different Forms

Male	Female	Male	Female
Boy	Girl	Gentleman	Lady
Bachelor	Spinster	Husband	Wife
Bridegroom	Bride	Nephew	Niece
Father	Mother	Widower	Widow
Duke	Duchess	King	Queen
Prince	Princess	Lord	Lady
Heir	Heiress		

Same form

The following words can carry both male and female meanings:
 baby, child, cousin, infant, parent, relation, relative, spouse, teenager.

2.2. Masculine/Feminine Nouns Indicating Occupation

The majority of nouns indicating occupation have the same form.

e.g. artist, cook, dancer, driver etc.

Different forms

Male	Female	Male	Female
Actor	Actress	Manager	Manageress
Conductor	Conductress	Steward	Stewardess
Salesman	Saleswoman	Waiter	Waitress
Host	Hostess	policeman	policewoman

For some words which carry the suffix *man/ woman, person* can be used instead.

e.g. salesperson

2.3. Masculine/ Feminine Nouns Denoting Animals

Different forms

Male	Female	Male	Female
Bull	Cow	Gander	Goose
Cock	Hen	Lion	Lioness
Dog	Bitch	Ram	Ewe
Drake	Duck	Stag	Doe

The majority of the other animals have the same form for both genders.

3. PLURALS

The plural of a noun is usually made by adding 's' to the singular.

e.g. day → days

□ 'S' is pronounced /s/ after /p/, /k/, /f/ and /t/ sounds otherwise it is pronounced /z/.

When "s" is placed after *ce*, *ge*, *se*, or *ze* an extra syllable /iz/ is added to the plural of the spoken word.

e.g. age → ages

place → places

□ Nouns ending in *o*, *ch*, *sh*, *ss* and *x* form their plural by adding 'es' and pronounced /iz/ at the end except with *o*, it is pronounced /-z/.

e.g. tomato → tomatoes

church → churches

But words of foreign origin or abbreviated words ending in 'o' add 's' only.

e.g. kimono → kimonos

photo → photos

kilo → kilos

□ Nouns ending in 'y' following a consonant form their plural by dropping the 'y' and adding 'ies'.

e.g. baby → babies lady → ladies

But when the 'y' is preceded by a vowel, the plural noun takes an 's' at the end.

e.g. boy → boys donkey → donkeys

□ The following nouns ending in 'f' or 'fe' replace the 'f' or 'fe' by 'v' in plural: calf, half, knife, leaf, life, self, sheaf, thief, wife, loaf, shelf, elf.

e.g. wife → wives wolf → wolves

The nouns *dwarf*, *hoof*, *scarf* and *wharf* take either 's' or 'ves' in plural.

e.g. hoofs or hooves scarfs or scarves

The remaining words ending in 'f' or 'fe' add 's' in the ordinary way.

e.g. cliff → cliffs safe → safes

□ A few nouns form their plural by a vowel change or have an irregular form.

e.g. foot → feet mouse → mice

man → men loose → lice

tooth → teeth goose → geese

child → children ox → oxen

□ Names of certain creatures, such as *fish*, do not change in the plural. In fact, *fishes* is uncommon.

e.g. carp, pike, salmon, trout, cod, plaice, squid, turbot, deer, sheep

But if used in a plural sense these words would take a plural verb.

□ A few words do not change whether in singular or plural.

e.g. aircraft, craft, quid (£1), counsel (barrister working in court).

□ Collective nouns, crew, family, team etc. can take a singular or plural verb: singular if we consider the word to mean a single group or unit,

e.g. Our team is the best.

or plural if we use the collective noun to mean a number of individuals.

e.g. Our team are wearing their new jerseys.

□ Certain words are always plural and take a plural verb.

e.g. clothes - police

Are also plural garments consisting of two parts

e.g. breeches ,pants ,pyjamas.

and tools and instruments consisting of two parts

e.g. binoculars, pliers, scissors, glasses etc.

□ A number of words ending in 'ics', such as acoustics, ethics, athletics, hysterics, mathematics, which are plural in form, normally take a plural verb.

e.g. His mathematics are weak .

But names of sciences can sometimes be considered singular.

e.g. Mathematics is an exact science.

□ Words plural in form but singular in meaning

e.g. No news is good news.

Some diseases such as: mumps, rickets, shingles.

Some games such as: draughts, bowls, dominos, billiards, darts.

□ Some words which retain their original Greek or Latin forms make their plurals according to the rules of Greek and Latin.

e.g. crisis → crises
phenomenon → phenomena
oasis → oases
erratum → errata
radius → radii
terminus → termini

But some other words follow the English rules :

e.g. dogma → dogmas
gymnasium → gymnasiums

Sometimes there are two plural forms for the same singular noun with different meanings.

e.g. appendix → appendices or appendixes (medical term)
appendix → appendices (addition (s) to books)
index → indexes (in books)
index → indices (in maths)

□ In compound nouns, normally, the last word is made plural.

e.g. travel-agents

But where *man/ woman* is prefixed both parts are made plural.

e.g. men-divers, women-drivers
menservants, gentlemen-farmers

The first word is made plural with compounds formed of:

nouns (verb +er) + adverbs.

e.g. hangers-on

passers-by

runners-up

4.1. Names of substances

bread	cream	gold	paper	tea
beer	wood	ice	sand	water
cloth	dust	jam	soap	wine
coffee	glass	oil	stone	

4.2. Abstract nouns

advice	death	information
beauty	experience	knowledge
courage	fear	relief

4.3. Also considered uncountable in English

Baggage	damage	luggage	weather
Camping	furniture	parkingshopping	

4.4. Some properties and uses of uncountable nouns

□ Uncountable nouns are always singular and are not used with a/an. These nouns are often preceded by *some, any, no, a little* etc. or by nouns such as *a bit of, a piece of, a slice of* etc.

e.g. a bit of news a grain of sand a pot of jam
a drop of oil a pane of glass a sheet of paper

□ Many of the nouns in the above group can be used in a particular sense and are then countable.

e.g. Her *hair* is black. (uncountable)

Whenever she finds a grey *hair* she pulls it out. (countable)

We drink coffee/ tea. (uncountable)

e.g. But we can ask for *a (cup of) coffee / a tea / two coffees* etc.(countable)

Or we can walk in a wood / woods. (countable)

□ Some abstract nouns can be used in a particular sense with a/an.

e.g. a help, a relief, a knowledge of,

a horror / dislike / hatred / love of .

a mercy / pity / shame / wonder, used with 'that'

a fear / fears

e.g. He had a good knowledge of mathematics.

He had a love of music.

He had a hatred of violence.

It's a pity / a shame you were not here .

There is a fear / there are fears that he has been murdered.

5. CASES AND FUNCTIONS OF NOUNS

There are four cases of nouns in English: possessive, nominative, accusative and dative according to the function of nouns in a sentence. It should be pointed out that except for the possessive case, English nouns have no case endings.

5.1. Nominative case

A noun is in the nominative case when it is:

the subject of a sentence

e.g. *Ali* drove the car.

the complement of a linking verb (refer to sentence elements 2.5)

e.g. It is *Ali*

5.2. Accusative case

A noun is in the accusative case when it is:

The direct object of a verb

e.g. I saw *Ali*

Or follows a preposition

e.g. I spoke to *Ali*

5.3. Dative case

A noun is in the dative case when it stands for 'to + noun' or 'for + noun', it is, therefore, the indirect object of a verb.

e.g. I gave *Ali* a book.

5.4. Possessive Case (the genitive)

5.4.1. Case Endings for the Possessive

□ 'S is used with singular nouns and plural nouns not ending in 's'.

e.g. Ali's book. The boy's room
 The man's hat. The men's hats.

□ A simple apostrophe (') is used with plural nouns ending in 's' and proper names ending in 's'.

e.g. The girls' school.
 This is Anas' book.

□ Compounds are generally treated as one word.

e.g. My mother -in- law's house.

5.4.2. Use of the Possessive Case

□ When the possessor is a person or animal, possession is normally indicated by putting the possessor in the possessive case, not by using the preposition 'of'.

e.g. The cat's bowl. not ~~the bowl of the cat.~~

but when the possessor noun is immediately followed by a phrase or a clause the 'of' construction is used.

e.g. Novels are a waste of time, was *the opinion of my friend* who had never read a novel in his life .

□ When the possessor is a thing , 'of' is normally used.

e.g. The walls of the room.

The legs of the table .

but with many well-known combinations it is usual to put the two nouns together using the first noun as a sort of adjective. This is often done to indicate the position of something.

e.g. The hall door.

The dining room table.

Similarly with some names of towns, districts and places.

e.g. London Cathedral.

Or when there is a connection with time.

e.g. summer holiday.

autumn colours.

Or to indicate the use of clothes, equipments etc.

e.g. tennis shoes, coffee cup, tea pot, world cup.

And with kinds of stories

e.g. crime stories, detective stories, adventure stories.

□ The possessive form is used with expressions of time such as: second, minute, hour, day, night, week, month, year, etc.

e.g. a day's work

a week's holiday

□ The nouns *pound* and *money* preceded by a possessive adjective can be used in the possessive case when they are followed by the word 'worth'.

e.g. To get your money's worth.

VERBS

1. CLASSES OF VERBS

There are two classes of verbs in English:

1.1. Auxiliary Verbs: be, have, do, can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, ought to, will, would, to need, to dare and used to.

This class is divided into two sub-classes:

Primary auxiliaries: be, have, do

Modal auxiliaries: The remaining auxiliaries

NB

It should be noted that be, have, do, need and dare have infinitives and participles like ordinary verbs, while the other auxiliaries have not.

1.2. Lexical / Ordinary verbs: All the other verbs belong to this class.

e.g. to sing, to work.

This class is also divided into two sub-classes: regular and irregular verbs according to the form of the verb as explained below.

2. LEXICAL / ORDINARY VERBS

2.1. Verbal Forms

All ordinary verbs have five basic forms:

Verb Form	Base/ Infinitive	Past simple	Past Participle	Present Participle	'S' Form
Regular	Walk	Walked	Walked	Walking	Walks
Irregular	Write	Wrote	Written	Writing	Writes

As mentioned earlier there are two categories of lexical verbs: regular and irregular.

In regular verbs the past simple and past participle are both formed by adding (d) or (ed) to the infinitive; therefore, from the base of such verbs we can predict the other forms. Whereas the past forms of irregular verbs cannot be predicted from the base, they should be learnt (see the list of irregular verbs).

N.B.

In all verbs the 's' form and the present participle can be obtained by adding 's' / 'es' and 'ing' to the base respectively .

2.2. Some Inflectional Spelling Rules

2.2.1. Doubling of Consonant

Final base consonants of a verb, except *w*, *x* and *y*, are doubled before inflections (suffixes) beginning with a vowel letter when the preceding is stressed and spelled with a single vowel letter.

e.g. hit + ing = hitting
knit + ed = knitted
permit + ing = permitting
begin + ing = beginning

There is no doubling when the vowel is unstressed or written with two letters.

e.g. enter + ing = entering
answer + ed = answered
defeat + ed = defeated

Exceptions

Bases ending with certain consonants are doubled also after single unstressed vowels:

-g - - gg-
-c - - ck-

e. g: traffic trafficking trafficked

In British English bases ending in 'l', 'm', and 'p' are also doubled when they come after a single vowel.

- l - - ll-
- m - mm-

- p	-pp-		
e. g. signal		signalling	signalled
program(me)		programming	programmed
worship		worshipping	worshipped

These consonants (*l*, *m*, *p*) are not doubled in American English unless they come after a single stressed vowel.

2.2.2. Verbs Ending with 'y'

Bases ending with 'y' following a consonant, change the 'y' to 'i' before any suffix except 'ing'

e.g. carry + ed = carried - carry + ing = carrying

hurry + ed = hurried - hurry + ing = hurrying

When the verb is in the 's' form, that is the third person singular, the following change occurs:

e.g. carry + s = carries

hurry + s = hurries

In bases ending with 'ie', the 'ie' is replaced by 'y' before the 'ing' inflection

e.g. die + ing = dying

lie + ing = lying

2.2.3. Omission of Final 'e'

Final 'e' in a verb is regularly dropped before the 'ing' and 'ed' inflections.

e.g. shave shaving shaved

Verbs with bases ending in 'ee', 'ye', 'oe' and often (but not always) 'ge' are exceptions to this rule in that they do not drop the 'e' before 'ing', but they do drop it before 'ed'.

e. g. agree agreeing agreed

dye dyeing dyed

hoe hoeing hoed

singe singeing singed

The final 'e' of verbs ending in 'ie' is also dropped before 'ed'

3. AUXILIARY VERBS

Auxiliaries help to form a tense or an expression. They combine with present or past participles or with infinitives to form the tenses of ordinary verbs.

- e. g. I am coming
- He has finished.
- I didn't see him.

They also combine with infinitives to indicate permission, possibility, obligation, deduction etc.

- e. g. He can speak French.
- You may go .
- We must hurry.

Auxiliaries are divided into two classes: principal / primary auxiliaries and modal auxiliaries.

3.1. Principal Auxiliaries: be , have , do

Be, have, do have the Following Forms:

Infinitive	Present tense	Past simple	Past participle	Present participle
Be	am, is, are	was, were	been	being
Have	have, has	had	had	having
Do	do, does	did	done	doing

Be and have are used as auxiliaries to form tenses.

e.g. He has just arrived. (present perfect)

He is writing a letter. (present continuous)

They are also used to express negation and interrogation in such statements.

Do as an auxiliary is used with the present and past simple of ordinary verbs in negative and interrogative sentences.

e.g. It didn't matter.

e.g. Does she see us?

Be, have, do require a participle or infinitive when used as auxiliaries, but in answers, comments etc. this is often understood but not mentioned.

e.g. A: Have you heard that?

B: yes, I have (heard that).

Be, have, do are also used as ordinary verbs with independent meanings. *Be* can denote 'existence', *have* can mean 'take', *do* can mean 'perform' etc.

e.g. The cat *is* in the kitchen.

He *had* his breakfast.

She *does* her homework.

In this case:

□ *Be* follows the auxiliary verb pattern.

e.g. He is here.

He isn't here.

Is he here?

□ *Have* normally follows the auxiliary pattern when having the state sense of possession.

e.g. I haven't any books.

Have I any books?

With this meaning, the informal form *have got* can be used especially in British English as an alternative to *have* in negative and interrogative sentences.

e.g. I haven't (got) any books.

Has he (got) to go?

Have uses the *do-construction* when used in dynamic senses (receive, take, experience, etc.).

e.g. Did he have his breakfast?

□ *Do* follows the ordinary verb pattern.

e.g. Did she do her homework?

She didn't do her homework.

3.2. Modal Auxiliaries

There are two categories of modal auxiliaries: modals and semi-modals.

3.2.1. Modals: They are as follows:

Present form	Past form
Can	Could
May	Might
Will	Would
Shall	Should
Must	
Ought	

Modals have no final 's' in the third person singular.

e. g. He can

He must

They always form their negative and interrogative according to the auxiliary pattern that is without *do*.

e. g. A: will he come?

A: Can I open the door?

B: No, he will not.

B: No, you cannot.

They have no proper past tenses. Only four past forms exist: *could*, *might*, *should* and *would*, but they have a restricted use.

All modal verbs except *ought* are followed by the bare infinitive i.e. infinitive without 'to'.

e. g. You should pay.

You ought to pay.

3.2.2. Semi-modals

Need, *dare* and *used* are considered as semi-modals because they can have different forms. When used as auxiliaries, *need* and *dare* can either conform to the modal auxiliary pattern i.e. take the bare infinitive, or to the ordinary verb pattern i.e. use the *do construction* and, then, take the full infinitive.

It should be mentioned that in the affirmative, *dare* is conjugated like an ordinary verb i.e. *dare/ dares* in the present and *dared* in the past. Observe the following examples:

Auxiliary pattern	Ordinary verb pattern
He needn't wait.	He doesn't need to wait.
He dared not interrupt.	He didn't dare to interrupt.
Dare he criticise my arrangements?	Does he dare criticise my arrangements?
	She dares coming to my house.

Need and *dare* can also be used as ordinary verbs and are then inflected and have the usual participles.

e. g. He needs help.

They dared me to jump.

Used, also referred to as *used to*, is used only in the past. For its negative and interrogative forms used in formal English, it usually follows the auxiliary pattern.

e. g. I used not / usedn't to go there.

Used you to live in London?

Though technically *used* has no infinitive, the forms *didn't use to* and *did he use to?* are quite often heard.

4. USE OF AUXILIARIES

4.1. Auxiliaries in Short Answers

Auxiliaries are used in short answers to yes/ no questions.

e. g. A: Do you smoke?

B: Yes, I do/ No, I don't.

If there is more than one auxiliary in the question, the first should be used in the answer.

e. g. A: Could he have bought it ?

B: Yes, he could/ No, he couldn't.

4.2 Disagreements with Remarks

We use auxiliaries to disagree with someone's remark.

e. g. A: He worked too hard.

B: Oh no, he didn't.

A: Ali gets up too early.

B: No, he doesn't.

A: Why did you travel first class?

B: But I didn't.

A: I won't pay you

B: yes, you will.

4.3 Question Tags

Question tags are short additions to sentences asking for agreement or confirmation and in which auxiliaries are used.

- After negative statements we use affirmative interrogatives.
e. g. You didn't see him, did you?
- After affirmative statements we put negative interrogatives.
e. g. Ali was there, wasn't he?

NB :

Negative auxiliaries in the tags are usually contracted.

The subject of the tag is always a pronoun.

The same tense of the statement is kept in the tag.

- Statements containing words such as : *neither, no (adj), none, no one, nobody, scarcely, barely, hardly, hardly ever and seldom* are treated as negative statements and followed by affirmative interrogative tags.

e. g. No salt is allowed, is it?

Amina hardly ever goes to parties, does she?

- When the subject of the sentences is: *anyone, anybody, no one, nobody, none, neither, everybody, everyone, somebody or someone*, we use the pronoun *they* as subject to the tag.

e. g. No one would object, would they?

Neither of them complained, did they?

Someone had recognised him, hadn't they?

- Negative interrogative tags without contractions are very rarely used but possible with a different word order.

e. g. You saw him, did you not?

Irregularities:

e. g. I 'm late, aren't I?
let's go, shall we?

- After affirmative imperatives we use:
'*Won't you?*' to invite people to do things
'*Will you?*', '*Would you?*', '*Can you?*', '*Could you?*', '*Can't you?*' to tell people to do things.

e. g. Do sit down, won't you?
Open the window, would you?
Give me a hand, will you?
Shut up, can't you?
Ask her to come, can you?

- After a negative imperative we use '*will you?*'
e. g. Don't forget, will you?

4.4. Additions to Remarks

- Affirmative additions to affirmative remarks are made by:

Subject + auxiliary + too / also
or
so + auxiliary + subject

If there is an auxiliary in the remark it is repeated in the addition, otherwise the auxiliary *do* is used.

e. g. Amina has finished her work and Sarah has too / so has Sarah.
Djawad enjoyed the party and Ali did too / so did Ali.

The additions can be spoken by another person.

e. g. A: The boys cheated.
B: The girls did too.

- Negative additions to affirmative remarks are made with:

but + subject + negative auxiliary

e. g. He likes pop music but I don't.

- Affirmative additions to negative remarks are made with:

but + subject + auxiliary

e. g. The horse wasn't hurt but the rider was.

- Negative additions to negative remarks are made with:

neither/ nor + auxiliary + subject
or
subject + negative auxiliary + either

e. g. He never goes to concerts neither does his wife / his wife doesn't either.

She didn't like the book nor did I / I didn't either.

5. MEANING OF AUXILIARIES

5.1. Principal Auxiliaries: Be, Have, Do

5.1.1. Be

Be + *infinitive* is used to convey orders or instructions.

e. g. No one is to leave this building without the permission of the police.

Note the difference between:

a) Stay here, Ali.

And

b) You are to stay here, Ali.

In (a) the speaker himself is ordering Ali to stay, while in (b) he may be simply conveying to Ali the wishes of another person.

The above distinction disappears in indirect speech where the *Be* + *infinitive* expresses indirect commands.

e. g. He says, "wait till I come".

Reported speech : He says that we are to wait till he comes.

It is also used in reporting requests for instructions.

e. g. "Where shall I put it, sir?" he asked.

Reported speech: He asked where he was to put it.

Be + infinitive is also used to convey a plan.

e. g. She is to be married next month.

The expedition is to start in a week's time.

Was / Were + infinitive can express an idea of destiny.

e. g. They said goodbye, knowing that they were never to meet again.

Be about + infinitive expresses the immediate future.

e. g. They are about to start.

If *just* is used, the future expressed is even more immediate.

e. g. They are just about to leave.

Be about + infinitive = Be on the point of + gerund

e. g. They are on the point of starting.

5.1.2. Have

The construction *have + object + past participle* can be used to express sentences of the type 'I employed someone to do something for me'

e. g. I had my car cleaned.

This sentence means: I employed someone to clean my car.

NB:

The word order *have + object + past participle* should be kept otherwise the meaning will be changed, compare:

She had her hair cut.

***She had cut her hair.**

When *have* is used in this way, the negative and interrogative of its present and past tenses are formed with *do*.

e. g. Do you have your windows cleaned every month?

Get can be used in the same way as *have* but is more colloquial.

e. g. I got my car cleaned.

Had better + bare infinitive has a present or future meaning, *had* in this

construction is an unreal past.

e. g. Affirmative: I'd better ring him at once.

Negative: you'd better not miss the last bus.

Had is usually contracted after pronouns

The construction *had better + bare infinitive* is not normally used in the ordinary interrogative, but is sometimes used in the negative interrogative.

e. g. Hadn't you better ask him first?

The construction *have + object + present participle* is often used with a period of future time.

e. g. I'll have you driving in 3 days.

It can also be used in the past.

e. g. He had them all dancing.

This construction can be used in the interrogative form but is not often used in the negative.

5.1.3. Do

Do / Did + infinitive is used in affirmative statements when we wish to add special emphasis on the verb in the infinitive. It is mainly used when another speaker had expressed doubt about the action referred to.

e. g. A: You didn't see him.

B: I did see him.

Do + imperative makes a request or invitation more persuasive.

e. g. Do come with us.

Do can be used as an approving or encouraging affirmative answer to someone asking for approval.

e. g. A: Shall I write to him?

B: Yes, do.

5.2.1. Can / Could

Ability

Can and *could* are used to express general ability or knowing how to do something. In this case they can be replaced by *be able to*.

- e. g. I can type a telex
I am able to type a telex

Both *can* and *be able to* are possible in the present, but *can* is more commonly used. Similarly, both *could* and *be able to* are possible in the past, but *could* is more commonly used.

- e. g. He can speak French.
He is able to speak French
- e. g. He could run 100 meters in 13 seconds
He was able to run 100 meters in 13 seconds

Only *be able to* is used in all other forms and tenses such as the future simple, present perfect, infinitive ... etc.

- e. g. I've been able to swim since I was three.
I would love to be able to swim.

Could has a conditional use both in the second and third conditionals.

- e. g. If I had taken the exam I could have passed it.

Could + *perfect infinitive* is used to express a past ability that was never proved.

- e. g. I could have stopped the bank robbers as they were escaping.

Possibility

Can is used to express a theoretical possibility.

- e. g. How many people can a land-rover hold?

Could can express a weak possibility.

- e. g. It could be a UFO¹, but it looks like a plane.

Could + *perfect infinitive* is used when we think it is possible that something has happened, but we don't really know.

- e. g. She is still not here; she could have got lost.

¹ Unidentified Flying Object

Permission

Can and *could* are used to ask permission. "*Could I?*" can express both formal and informal requests, whereas "*can I?*" is more colloquial.

- e. g. Can I bring a friend to the party?
Could I have another cup of coffee, please?

Can is used to give or refuse permission for both "*can I?*" and "*could I?*"

- e. g. A: Can I open the door?
B: Yes, you can / No, you can't.
A: Could I open the door?
B: Yes, you can / No, you can't.

Offers and requests

Can and *could* are used to offer to do something for someone

- e. g. Can I do the shopping for you?
I could give you a lift to the station.

Can and *could* are also used to ask or tell someone to do something.

- e. g. Can you draw the curtains, please?

5.2.2. May / Might

Possibility

May and *might* express either a present or future possibility.

Might slightly increases the doubt.

- e. g. He may be at home, now.
He doesn't work hard, but he might succeed in his exams.

May / Might + perfect infinitive is used in speculations about past actions.

- e. g. He may / might have gone = it is possible that he has gone.

When the main verb is in the past only *might* is used.

- e. g. He thought that she might have missed the plane.

Might, not *may*, must be used when the uncertainty no longer exists.

- e. g. He came home alone, he might have got lost. (But he didn't get lost.)

Might, not *may*, is also used when the matter was never put to test, as in:

- e. g. Perhaps we should have taken the other road. It might have been quicker.

Sentences of this kind are similar to the 3rd conditional.

- e. g. If we had taken the other road it might have been quicker.

May / Might can be used in conditional sentences instead of *will / would* to indicate a possible rather than a certain result. Only *might* is used in the 2nd and 3rd conditional

Permission

May and *might* are used to ask formally for permission. *Might* is less common and a rather tentative way of asking permission i.e. it indicates a greater uncertainty than *may* about the answer.

e. g. May I write you a cheque?

I wonder if I might borrow \$5 from you.

May is used to give or refuse permission for both “*may I?*” and “*might I?*”.

e. g. A: May I stay out late tonight?

B: Yes, you may. / No, you may not.

5.2.3. Must

Obligation

Must is used to give command (when the command is at the wish of the speaker) or strong advice. It can also be used to express personal obligation.

e. g. You must be home early.

I must clean the house.

When the command is made because of external circumstances, *have to* is used.

e. g. We have to be at work at 8:00 everyday.

Have got to can also be used. It is usually contracted and it is used for more specific actions, whereas *have to* is used for more habitual actions.

e. g. I've got to work late tonight.

Only *have to* can be used in the past simple, perfect tenses, gerund, infinitive and after modals.

e. g. I don't like having to repeat myself all time.

Absence of obligation

Don't need to, *needn't*, *don't have to* and *haven't got to* are used to say that something is unnecessary. They express absence of obligation, which is not expressed by *mustn't*. In fact, *mustn't* is used to give strong negative advice or command.

e. g. You don't have to wear a tie to work, but you mustn't wear jeans. (Wear a tie or not as you like, but no jeans allowed)

Deduction / Assumption

Must is used to express a logical deduction, that is when we are certain about something but have no concrete evidence.

e. g. Someone is knocking at the door. It must be Amina.

In questions and negative statements, we use *can* and *can't* / *couldn't* with this meaning not *must* and *mustn't*.

e. g. There is somebody at the door. Who can it be?

It can't be the postman. It's only seven o'clock.

Must + *perfect infinitive* is used to express a logical deduction about the past.

e. g. You must have been terrified when the curtains caught fire.

In questions and negative statements *can* and *can't* / *couldn't* are used.

e. g. He can't / couldn't have missed the bus.

N.B.:

Only *couldn't* is used when the negative or interrogative deduction is introduced by a verb in the past.

e. g. He said that it couldn't be an aeroplane.

§.2.4. Ought to / Should

Obligation, duty or giving advice

Ought to and *should* are used to express obligation or duty and to give advice to people about what to do.

e. g. They should / ought to forbid parking here; the street is too narrow.

Ought to / should + perfect infinitive expresses the speaker's view of past obligation or duty, and can also express regret or disapproval.

e. g. We should / ought to have gone with them. They had a lovely time.

NB:

The difference between *ought to / should, must* and *have to* is that *must* expresses the speaker's authority, *have to* external authority, whereas with *should* and *ought to* it is more a matter of conscience or good sense.

e.g. Someone suffering from an incessant cough went to the doctor. The doctor told him: "You must stop smoking".
When he came back home and after telling his wife about the cause of his illness he said "I have to stop smoking".
His wife answered "Yes indeed, you should stop smoking".

A second difference between the above mentioned auxiliaries is that with *must* and *have to* we have the impression that the obligation is or will be fulfilled. With *ought* and *should*, it is uncertain that the obligation is being or will be fulfilled.

e.g. A driver: I ought to / should go slowly here. (He isn't really going to drive slowly otherwise he would say : I must / have to go slowly)

Probability / Assumption

Ought to / Should is used when we think it is probable that something is the true situation.

e. g. My glasses ought to/ should be here somewhere.

Ought to / Should + perfect infinitive is used when we think it is probable that something has happened, but we do not know definitely.

e. g. Ali ought to /should have arrived to Oran by now.

5.2.5. Will/ Would

Requests

Will/ Would can express requests. "*Will you*" is more authoritative and therefore less polite than "*would you*".

e. g. Will / Would you please count your change?

Would you mind moving your car?

“*Would you*” can have the same meaning of request as “*could you*”.

e.g. *Would / Could you open the window, please?*

Offers

Both *will* and *would* can express offers, but *would* is more formal.

e. g. *Will you have lunch with me tomorrow? (Informal)*

Would / Could you have lunch with me tomorrow? (Formal)

Probability / Assumption

Will is used for assumptions about present or future actions.

e. g. *Ring his home number, he will be at home now .*

They will have plenty of time to get to the station.

Will + perfect infinitive is used for assumptions about past actions in the future.

e. g. *Phone him at 9: 00, he will have finished his supper.*

The following table summarises the meaning that can carry each modal auxiliary.

Modals	Can	Could	May	Might	Will	Would	Must	Should
Meaning								
Ability	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>						
Possibility	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>				
Permission	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>				
Offers & Requests	<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>			<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>		
Obligation							<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
Deduction/ Probability/ Assumption					<u>X</u>		<u>X</u>	<u>X</u>
Advisability								<u>X</u>

5.3. SEMI -MODALS

5.3.1. Need / Needn't

Needn't is used to express an absence of obligation or necessity
e.g. You needn't bring any food, lunch is provided.

Needn't + perfect infinitive is used to express a past action that was unnecessary but which actually happened.

e.g. You needn't have made me supper, I 'm not hungry.

5.3.2. Dare

In affirmative state

ments, *dare* is conjugated like an ordinary verb.

e.g. For a long time no one dared even to whisper.

But in negative and interrogative statements it can be conjugated either like an ordinary verb or like an auxiliary.

e.g. He doesn't dare to say anything. /He daren't say anything.
Do we dare interrupt? / Dare we interrupt?

In the negative *dare* as an auxiliary can have the following forms: *dare*, *dares* and *dared*

e.g. They dared not move.

She dares not move.

Dare is not much used in affirmative statements except in the following expression:

'I dare say' meaning 'I suppose' or 'I accept what you say'. It is used only with the first person singular 'I'.

e.g. I dare say there'll be a restaurant car on the train.

Dare is also used to express indignation

e.g. How dare(d) you/ he/ they?

8.3.3 Used

Used to expresses a discontinued habit or a past situation which contrasts with the present.

e.g. I used to smoke cigarettes; now I smoke a pipe.

She usedn't to like Ali, but she quite likes him now.

Used to also expresses a past routine or pattern.

e.g. Every evening Ali used to visit his uncle.

Since *used* has no present form, we use the simple present tense to express present habits or routines.

e.g. He visits his uncle every Friday.

PRESENT TENSES

1. THE SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

1.1. Form

In the affirmative the simple present has the same form as the infinitive but adds an "s" for the third person singular.

Affirmative : I / you / we / they work, he / she / it works.

Negative : I / you / we / they do not work, he / she / it / does not work.

Interrogative : Do / I / you / we / they work ? , Does he / she / it work?

Negative interrogative : Don't I / you / we / they work ? , Doesn't he / she / it work ?

1.2. Use

A. The main use of the simple present tense is to express habitual actions.

e.g. He smokes.

Dogs bark.

It is often used with adverbs or adverbial phrases such as : always, never, occasionally, often, sometimes, usually, every week, on Mondays, twice a year etc...

e.g. Christians go to Church on Sundays.

It rarely rains here.

It is also used with time clauses to express routine or habitual actions.

e.g. Whenever it rains the roof leaks.

As soon as he earns any money he spends it.

B. The simple present is used with the verb say, when we are asking about or quoting from: books, notices or very recently received letters.

e.g. I see you've got a letter from Ann, what does she say ?

She says.....

Shakespeare says, " Neither a borrower nor a lender be".

C. The present simple can be used in newspaper headlines.

e.g. PEACE TALKS FAIL.

D. It can be used for dramatic narratives. This is particularly useful when describing the action of a play, opera etc... It is also often used by commentators at sport events, public functions etc...

e.g. When the curtain rises, Juliet is writing at her desk, suddenly the window opens and a man jumps in ...

E. It is used in conditional sentences type 1

e.g. If I see Amina I will ask her about the exam date.

F. The simple present is also used for a planned future action or a series of actions, particularly when they refer to a journey. Travel agents generally use it.

e.g. We leave Tlemcen at 10:00 next Tuesday and arrive to Oran at 12:00. We spend three hours in Oran and leave again at 15:00...

G. To express a general truth we also use the present simple

e.g. The earth moves round the sun.

H. The present simple is used instead of the present continuous with verbs which cannot be used in the continuous form such as see, love, believe etc... (see section 3 below)

e.g. I see you. (not I'm seeing you)

2. THE PRESENT CONTINUOUS / PROGRESSIVE

2.1. Form

The present continuous is formed with *the present tense of the auxiliary verb 'be' + the present participle.*

Affirmative: I am working, you / we / they are working, he / she / it is working

Negative: I am not working, you / we / they are not working, he / she / it is not working

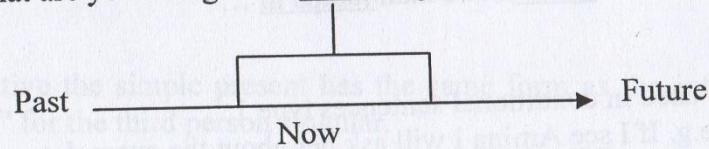
Interrogative: am I working ? Are you / we / they working? Is he / she / it working?

Negative interrogative: aren't I/you/we/they working? Isn't he/she/it working?

2.2. Use

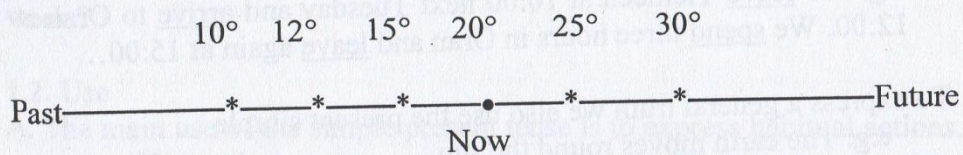
A. We use the present progressive to talk about actions and situations that are going on 'around now' i.e. before, during and after the moment of speaking.

e.g. "What are you doing?" "I'm reading".



B. We also use the present continuous to talk about developing and changing situations

e.g. The weather is getting warmer.



C. The present continuous is also used for a definite arrangement in the near future.

e.g. I' m meeting Ali tonight.

Are you doing anything tomorrow afternoon?

In this case, the time of the action should always be mentioned in order to avoid confusion between present and future meanings. *Come and go* however, can be used in this way without a time expression.

e.g. I'm going to Paris. (Future action)

3. VERBS TAKING AND NOT TAKING THE PROGRESSIVE

There are two types of verbs: dynamic and state verbs.

3.1. Dynamic verbs

These verbs usually take the progressive aspect i.e. they can be conjugated in any continuous tense. They are put under three groups:

3.1.1. Verbs denoting activities

Such as walk, read, drink, write, work, etc.

3.1.2. Verbs denoting processes

Such as change, grow, widen, improve, etc.

3.1.3. Verbs denoting momentary events

Such as knock, jump, nod, kick, etc.

If used with the progressive, these verbs suggest repetition.

e.g. - He knocked at the door. (one knock on the door)

- He was knocking at the door. (repeated knocks on the door)

3.2. State verbs

These verbs often cannot be used with continuous tenses, because the notion of something in progress cannot be easily applied to them. The verbs which normally do not take the progressive include:

3.2.1. Verbs of perceiving

Such as feel, hear, see, smell, taste.

-The verbs *look* and *sound* can be included in this group when used as liking verbs.

e.g. She looks nice.

-Verbs referring to internal sensation such as *hurt*, *feel*, *ache*, can be used either with the progressive or the simple tense.

e.g. My back hurts.

My back is hurting.

3.2.2. Verbs referring to a state of mind or feeling

Such as believe, adore, desire, detest, dislike, doubt, forget, hate, hope, imagine, know, like, love, mean, prefer, remember, suppose, understand, want, wish, etc.

e.g. I forget his name.

The verbs *seem* and *appear* may also be included here :

e.g. He seems /appears to be enjoying himself.

3.2.3. Verbs referring to a relationship or a state of being

Such as be, belong to, concern, consist of, contain, cost, depend on, deserve, equal, fit, have, involve, matter, owe, own, possess, remain, require, resemble, suffice, etc.

e.g. This carpet belongs to me.

3.3. Exceptions

Although *state verbs* may be labeled *non – progressive*, there are special circumstances in which they are used with the progressive. In this case, we can say that *the state verb* has been changed into *an activity verb*, i.e. a

verb referring to an active form of behaviour. In place of *see* and *hear*, we have the equivalent activity verbs *look (at)* and *listen (to)*

e.g. I am looking at your drawings.

He was listening to the news when I entered.

But for *smell*, *feel* and *taste* there is no special corresponding activity verb, so these verbs have to do the duty for the state meaning and the activity meaning.

e.g. The doctor is feeling her pulse. He says it feels normal.

e.g. we've been tasting the soup. It tastes delicious.

In the same way *think*, *imagine*, *remember*, etc. can sometimes be used as mental activity verbs.

e.g. I'm thinking about what you said. I think you're right.

4. THE PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE.

4.1. Form

The present perfect is formed with *the present tense of have + past participle*

Affirmative: I/ you/we/ they have worked, he / she/ it has worked.

Negative: I/ you/we/ they have not worked, he / she/ it has not worked.

Interrogative: have I/you /they worked? Has he / she /it worked?

Negative-interrogative: haven't I/you/we/they worked? Hasn't he /she /it worked?

4.2. Use

We use the present perfect simple to say that something in the past is connected with the present in some way. If we say that something has happened, we are thinking about the past and the present at the same time. It is often used in conversations, letters, newspapers, and television and radio reports.

e.g. I've broken my leg. (My leg is broken now.)

A. The present perfect is used for recent actions when the time is not mentioned.

e.g. I have read the instructions but I don't understand them.
≠ I *read* the instructions last night.

B. Recent actions in the present perfect often have results in the present time.

e.g. He has had a bad car crash. (He is still in hospital.)
≠ He *had* a bad car crash. (He recovered by now).

C. The present perfect can also be used for actions which occur further back in the past, but there is still a connection with the present.

e.g. Nagib Mahfouz has written a big number of novels. (He is still alive and can write more)
≠ William Shakespeare *wrote* a big number of plays. (He is dead now)

D. The present perfect used with 'just' expresses a recently completed action.

e.g. He has just phoned me.

E. The present perfect is also used for actions occurring in an incomplete period of time.

e.g. This afternoon will end at about 17:00.
(at 16:00) I haven't seen Ali this afternoon.
≠ (at 18:00) I *didn't see* Ali this afternoon.

But if we know that an action usually happens at a certain time of our incomplete period we use the simple past.

e.g. My alarm clock *didn't ring* this morning.

F. The present perfect can be used with *lately*, *recently*, *ever*, *never*, *always*, *occasionally*, *often*, etc.

e.g. Has he been here lately?

They have always answered my letters. (A habitual action)

G. We use the present perfect to talk about actions, states, and situations which started in the past and still continue in the present.

e.g. He has been in the army for two years. (He is still in the army.)

We have waited all day. (We are still waiting.)

He has lived here all his life. (He still lives here.)

Sometimes the action finishes at the time of speaking.

e.g. I haven't seen you for ages. (But I see you now.)

H. The present perfect used with *for* and *since*

- *For* used with the simple past denotes a terminated period of time; whereas, when used with the present perfect tense it denotes a period of time extending into the present.

e.g. We *lived* there *for* ten years. (but we don't live there now)

We have lived there *for* ten years. (We still live there.)

- *Since* is used with a point in time or a clause and means 'from that point to the time of speaking'. It is usually used with a perfect tense.

e.g. She has been a teacher *since* 1985.

I've worked here *since* I left school.

I haven't seen him *since* November 1998.

Has he written *since* he left home?

5. THE PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS

5.1. Form

This tense is formed with *the present perfect of 'be' + the present participle*.

Affirmative: I/you/ we /they have been working; he/she/it has been working.

Negative: I /you /we/ they have not been working, he/she /it has not been working.

Interrogative: Have I/ you/ we/ they been working? Has he/ she/it been working?

Negative-Interrogative: Haven't I/you/we/ they been working? Hasn't / he/she/it been working?

5.2. Use

The present perfect continuous is used for an action which began in the past and is still continuing or has only just finished.

e.g. I have been waiting for an hour and he hasn't come yet.

Here I am, have you been waiting long?

PAST TENSES

1. THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE

1.1. Form

The simple past tense in regular verbs is formed by adding 'ed' to the infinitive, whereas, with irregular verbs this varies considerably and should be learnt.

Affirmative: I / you / he / she / it / we / they worked.

Negative: I / you / he / she / it / we / they didn't work.

Interrogative: did I / you / he / she / it / we / they work?

Negative-interrogative: didn't / you / he / she / it / we / they work?

1.2. Use

A. The simple past is used for actions completed at a definite time in the past.

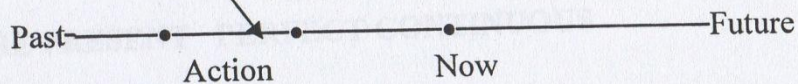
e.g. I met him yesterday.

Pasteur died in 1895.

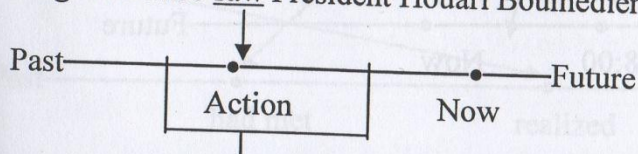
B. The simple past is also used for an action whose time is not given but which:

- Occupied a period of time now terminated.

e.g. He worked in that bank for four years. (but he doesn't work there now.)



- Or occurred at a moment in a period of time now finished.
e.g. She once saw President Houari Boumediene.



The period of Houari Boumediene's presidency

- C. This tense is used for past habits too.
e.g. He always carried an umbrella.
They never drank wine.
- D. The simple past is used in conditional sentences type 2.
e.g. If I had money I would buy a car.

2. THE PAST CONTINUOUS/ PROGRESSIVE

2.1. Form

The past continuous is formed with the past tense of *the auxiliary be* + *the present participle*.

Affirmative: I/ he/ she/ it was working, you / we/ they were working.

Negative: I/ he/ she/ it was not working, you/ we/ they were not working.

Interrogative: Was I /he/ she / it working? Were you / we/ they working?

Negative-interrogative: Wasn't I /he/she / it working? Weren't you /we /they working?

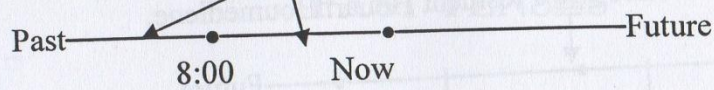
2.2. Use

A. The past continuous is used for past actions which continued for sometime but whose exact limits are not known and are not important. Used without a time expression it can indicate gradual development in the past.

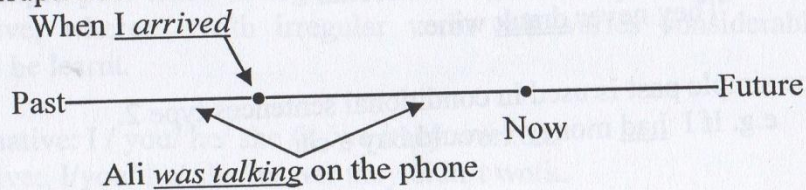
e.g. It was getting darker.

B. When used with a point in time, the past continuous expresses an action which began before that time and probably continued after it .

e.g. At eight he was having breakfast.



C. We often use the past progressive with a simple past tense. The past continuous refers to a longer action or situation; the simple past refers to a shorter action or situation that happened in the middle of the long action, or interrupted it.



3. PAST PERFECT SIMPLE

3.1. Form

This tense is formed with *had* + *the past participle*. It is, therefore, the same for all persons.

Affirmative: I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they had worked.

Negative: I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they had not worked.

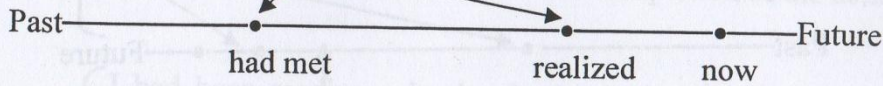
Interrogative. Had I/ he/ she/ it worked?

Negative-Interrogative: hadn't I/ he/ she/ it worked?

3.2. Use

A. The basic meanings of the past perfect simple are 'earlier past' and 'completed in the past'. A common use is to go back to earlier past when we are already talking about the past, so as to make clear that something had already happened at the time we were talking about it.

e.g. I *realized* that we had met before.



B. The past perfect is common after past verbs of 'saying and thinking', to talk about things that had happened before the 'saying or thinking' took place.

e.g. I told her that I had finished.

I wondered who had left the door open.

C. The past perfect is used in conditional sentences, type 3.

e.g. If I had gone to university I would have studied medicine.

4. PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS / PROGRESSIVE

4.1. Form

This tense is formed with *had been* + *the present participle*. It is, therefore, the same for all persons.

Affirmative: I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they had been working.

Negative: I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they had not been working.

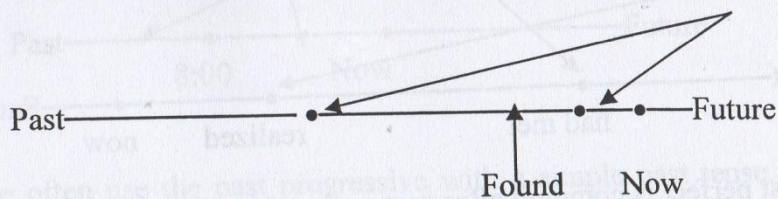
Interrogative: had I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they been working?

Negative-interrogative: hadn't I/ he/ she/ it/ you / we/ they been working?

4.2 Use

The past perfect continuous is used to talk about longer actions or situations which had continued up to the past moment that we are thinking about, or shortly before it.

e.g. When I found Amina, I could see that she had been crying.



5. SIMPLE AND CONTINUOUS/ PROGRESSIVE TENSES

A. Continuous tenses are often used to talk about more temporary actions and situations. When we talk about longer, lasting or permanent situations we prefer simple tenses.

e.g. { I've lived in Tlemcen since my birth.
I've been living in Tlemcen for the last month.

{ She had lived with her parents till they died.
She had been living with her parents for sometime before she moved to her new flat.

e.g. { My sister is living at home for the moment. (around now)
You live in Tlemcen, don't you?

{ Why is that girl standing on the table?
My grandparents' house stands on a hill outside the town.

B. We can use the progressive tenses to talk about repeated actions and events if the number of repetitions is not mentioned; otherwise, we use the simple tenses.

e.g. { I've been playing football a lot recently.
I have played football three times this week.

{ He had been trying to get her on the phone.
He had tried five times to get her on the phone.

C. There is an important difference between the simple and continuous aspects of the present and past tenses: the continuous tenses focus on the action looking at it as a continuous extended activity; whereas the simple tenses look more at the idea of completion and result.

e.g. { I've been reading this novel. (focus on the length of the action)
I've read three novels. (focus on the completion of the action)

{ I had been reading a book of science fiction and my mind became full of strange images. (focus on the length of the action)
I had read all my magazines and was beginning to get bored. (focus on the completed action)

D. We can use *always* with the present progressive to mean 'very often', we use this structure to talk about things which happen very often (perhaps more often than expected), but which are not planned. Compare:

e.g. { I'm always meeting Ali in the supermarket. (Accidental unplanned meetings)
When Amina comes to see me, I *always meet* her at the station. (a regular planned arrangement)

FUTURE TENSES

1. THE SIMPLE FUTURE: WILL+ INFINITIVE

1.1. Form

The simple future is made of *will+ bare infinitive*. *Shall* can be used instead of *will*, but only with the first persons i.e. *I* and *we*.

Affirmative: *I/we will/shall work, you/he/she/it/they will work.*

Negative: *I/we will not / shall not work; you/he/she/it/they will not work.*

Interrogative: *Will/shall I/we work? Will you/he/she/it/they work?*

Negative-Interrogative: *Won't/ Shan't I/we work? Won't you/he/she/it/they work?*

1.2. Use

A. The simple future is used to predict future events i.e. to say what we think, guess, or calculate will happen.

e.g. Tomorrow will be warm, with some clouds in the afternoon.

B. The simple future is also used to express the speaker's opinions, assumptions, speculations about the future.

e.g. (I suppose) They will sell the house.

They will probably wait for us.

C. The simple future is used for future habitual actions which, we assume, will take place.

e.g. Spring will come again.

D. For unpremeditated actions we use the future simple to express intention at the moment of decision.

e.g. (The telephone is ringing) I will answer it.

E. In newspapers and news broadcasts, the simple future is used for formal announcements.

e.g. THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER WILL VISIT ALGERIA SOON.

F. The future simple is also used in sentences containing clauses of condition, time, and sometimes purpose.

e.g. If I drop this glass it will break.

When it gets warmer the snow will start to melt.

2. THE FUTURE CONTINUOUS

2.1. Form

This tense is formed with the simple future of *be* + *present participle*.

Affirmative: I/you/he/she/it/we/they will be working.

Negative: I/you/he/she/it/we/they won't be working.

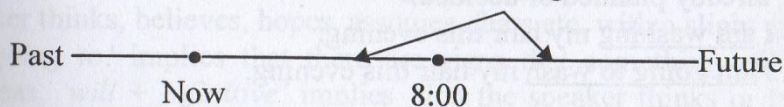
Interrogative: Will I/you/he/she/it/we/they be working?

Negative-Interrogative: Won't I/you/he/she/it/we/they be working?

2.2. Use

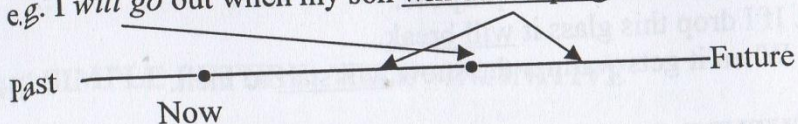
A. Like the other continuous tenses, the future continuous is normally used to express an action which starts before a point in time and probably continues after it in the future.

e.g. Tomorrow at 8.00, they will be sitting in their classroom.



B. The future continuous can also be used in a time clause, with a verb in a simple tense to express a longer action.

e.g. I will go out when my son will be sleeping.



C. The future continuous usually emphasises an action which will occur in the normal course of event.

e.g. The train will be arriving soon.

3. THE 'BE GOING TO' FUTURE

3.1. Form

It consists of the present continuous of the verb *go* + *the full infinitive*.

e.g. I'm going to write a letter.

3.2. Use

A. The 'be going to' form, like the present continuous, is used for the near future to talk about future actions or events that have some present reality i.e. they are already planned or decided.

e.g. I am washing my hair this evening.

I am going to wash my hair this evening.

B. The 'be going to' form expresses the subject's intention to perform a certain future action. This intention is always premeditated and there is usually the idea of an already planned or prepared action.

e.g. I am going to meet my friends this afternoon.

C. 'be going to' can be used without a time expression to refer to the immediate future.

e.g. I am going to buy a house.

However, it is not very usual to put the verbs *go* and *come* into the 'be going to' form; instead the present continuous is generally used.

e.g. I am going to Algiers.

I am coming soon.

D. The 'be going to' form is also used for predictions; it expresses the speaker's feeling of certainty about a future event. The time is usually not mentioned, but the action is expected to happen in the near or immediate future.

e.g. Look at those clouds! It's going to rain.

How pale is that girl! I think she is going to faint.

3.3. Comparison between the 'be going to' and the 'will + infinitive' future

A. The 'be going to' future always implies a premeditated intention and often intention + plan; whereas, 'will + infinitive' implies intention alone which is generally unpremeditated i.e. the action is not pre-planned.

e.g. - She has bought some wool; she is going to knit a jumper.

- A: This is a terribly heavy box.

B: I will help you to carry it.

When the intention is neither premeditated nor clearly unpremeditated either 'be going to' or 'will + infinitive' future can be used.

B. The simple future and the 'be going to' form can express what the speaker thinks, believes, hopes, assumes, fears etc. with a slight difference 'be going to' implies that there are signs that something will happen, whereas, 'will + infinitive' implies that the speaker thinks or believes it will happen. Compare the following examples:

e.g. { - The lift is going to break down. (It is making a strange noise.)
- The lift will break down. (Some time in the future, because it is an XYZ lift company whose lifts don't last long).

{ - She is going to have a baby. (She is pregnant.)
- She will be happy and will have a lot of children. (This is my hope for my friend on her wedding day. She is not pregnant but I assume that she will follow the normal course of events for any married woman and have children.)

4. THE FUTURE PERFECT SIMPLE

4.1. Form

It is formed with *will/ shall+ perfect infinitive* for first persons i.e. *I* and *we* and *will+ perfect infinitive* for the other persons.

Affirmative: *I/ we shall/ will have worked. You/ he/ she/ it/ they will have worked.*

Negative: *I/ we shall not /will not have worked. You/ he/ she/ it/ they will not have worked.*

Interrogative: *Shall/ Will I/ we have worked? Will you/ he/ she/ it/ they have worked?*

Negative-Interrogative: *Shan't/ Won't I/ we have worked? Won't you/ he/ she/ it/ they have worked?*

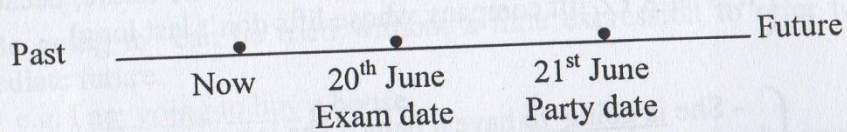
4.2. Use

It is normally used with a time expression beginning with '*by*' such as '*by then*', '*by that time*', '*by the 25th of June*' etc.

e.g. By the end of next month he will have spent ten years here.

This tense is used for an action which at a given future time will be in the past or will have just finished. Imagine that we want to organise a party next month on the 20th of June but our friend Ali is going to sit for his exam on the same day, so we decide to postpone the party and organise it on the 21st of June saying: `

e.g. We'd better wait till the 21st of June. Ali will have had his exam by then, so he will be able to enjoy himself.



5. THE FUTURE PERFECT CONTINUOUS

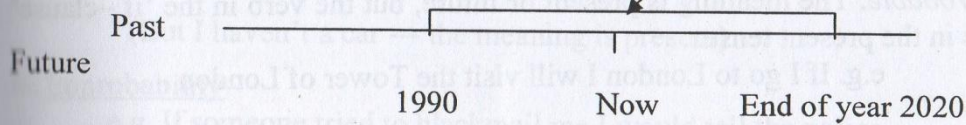
5.1. Form

It is formed with the future perfect of 'be' + *present participle*.

5.2. Use

Like the future perfect, it is normally used with a time expression beginning with 'by'. It is used when the action is continuous.

e.g. By the end the year 2010 he will have been working for 30 years.



CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES: TYPE 1

1.1. Form

If + present + will + infinitive

e.g. If we play tennis I will win.

1.2. Meaning

This type of sentences implies that the action in the 'if-clause' is quite *probable*. The meaning is present or future, but the verb in the 'if-clause' is in the present tense.

e.g. If I go to London I will visit the Tower of London .

1.3. Variations of the main clause

A. If + present + may/might + infinitive.

e.g. If I live in a big city I may/might be happier .

This type of sentences expresses *possibility*.

B. If + present + may/can + infinitive

e.g. If your documents are in order you may/can leave at once .

This type of sentences expresses *permission*.

C. If + present + must/should + infinitive

e.g. If you want to lose weight you must/should eat less bread .

This type of sentences expresses *command, request or advice*.

D. If + present + another present tense.

e.g. If you heat ice it turns to water.

This type of sentences is used to express *automatic or habitual* results.

2. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES : TYPE 2

2.1. Form

If + past + would + infinitive

e.g. If we played tennis I would win.

2.2. Meaning

The meaning of the second conditional is present or future, and the past tense in the 'if-clause' is not a true past but a subjunctive which indicates:

A. Unreality

e.g. If I had a car I would lend it to you.

(But I haven't a car --- the meaning is present)

B. Improbability

e.g. If someone tried to blackmail me I would tell the police .

(But I don't expect that anyone will blackmail me – the meaning is future)

Sometimes there is a confusion of whether the meaning is present or future, this is why in formal English the construction '*were + infinitive*' is used with all persons, and in colloquial English '*was + infinitive*' is used with the third person singular, this is done to obtain a future meaning. Yet, the past tense as shown above is more usual .

e.g.- If he were to leave his bicycle outside someone would steal it.
(formal English)

- If he was to leave his bicycle outside someone would steal it.
(colloquial English)

2.3. Variations of the main clause

A. If + past + might/could + infinitive

e.g. If you tried again you might succeed.

While a 'certain result' is expressed by *would* a 'possible result' is expressed by *might*.

Could expresses either ability as in the first example or permission as in the second example.

e.g. 1) If I knew her number I could ring her up.

2) If you finished your work you could go with them .

B. If + past tense + another past tense

e.g. If anyone interrupted him he got angry.

This type of sentences is used to express automatic or habitual actions in the past. Note that the past tenses here have a past meaning.

3. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES : TYPE 3

3.1. Form

If + past perfect + would + perfect infinitive

e.g. If I had played tennis I would have won.

3.2. Meaning

The time is past and the condition cannot be fulfilled because the action in the 'if-clause' did not happen.

3.3. Variations of the main clause

If + past perfect + could/might + perfect infinitive

e.g. If we had found him earlier we could have saved his life.(ability)

If we had found him earlier we might have saved his life.(possibility)

PREPOSITIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to learn to use prepositions correctly in a foreign language. Most English prepositions have several different functions and these may correspond to several different prepositions in another language. At the same time, different prepositions can have very similar uses (e.g. in the morning, on Monday morning, at night). Moreover, many nouns, verbs and adjectives are used with particular prepositions (e.g. the reason for, arrive at, angry with). Often the correct preposition cannot be guessed and one has to learn the expression as a whole. In some expressions English has no preposition where one may be used in another language, in other expressions the opposite is true. All these factors lead to a difficulty in learning prepositions in English.

Prepositions are words, which as their name implies, are placed before a noun phrase. The most common prepositions are simple i.e. consist of one word.

e.g.	about	before	for	on	to
	above	below	from	over	under
	after	beside	in	past	until
	along	between	into	since	up
	around	by	of	till	with
	at	down	off	through	without

Other prepositions consisting of more than one word are called complex prepositions.

e.g.	according to	due to	by means of
	along with	except for	in comparison with
	as for	out of	in front of
	away from	owing to	in relation to
	because of	up to	on top of

Prepositions often connect two things: a noun (N), an adjective (Adj), or a verb (V) that comes before it and a prepositional object: a noun phrase (NP) or pronoun (Pro) that comes after the preposition.

I've seen him somewhere before. (adverb)

2.3. At, by, till / until

- e.g. Dinner will be served at 7.00 (exact time)
Dinner will be served by 7.00 (before or at that time)
Dinner will be served till/ until 7.00 (from a certain time to 7.00)

2.4. On time, in time, in good time

- On time : at the time (planned arranged, not before, not after, punctual, not late)
e.g. The 8.15 train started on time. (it started /left the station at 8.15)
The conference was very well organized .Everything began and finished on time .
- In time : (for something / to do something) soon enough, not late
e.g. I've sent Jill her birthday present. I hope it arrives in time. (for her birthday, soon enough for her birthday).
- In good time (for) : with a comfortable margin.
e.g. I arrived at the concert hall in good time for the concert (The concert began at 7.30 and I arrived at 7.15)

2.5. At the beginning/end, in the beginning, at first /at last

- At the beginning (of) /at the end (of) = literally at the beginning /end.
e.g. At the beginning of the book there is often a table of contents. At the end there may be an index.
- In the beginning/ at first = in the early stage. It implies that later on there was a change
e.g. In the beginning /At first people used hand tools, later we had machines.
- In the end / at last = eventually / after some time.
e.g. At first he opposed the marriage, but in the end he gave his consent.

2.6. After, afterwards

- After is a preposition, it must be followed by a noun, a pronoun or a gerund.
e.g. She left after the film.

- Afterwards is used as an adverb, meaning "after that or then"
e.g. She left afterwards.

2.7. From, since

- From can be used for time and place.
e.g. I walked from 9.00 in the morning to midday.
We drove from London to Oxford.

- Since is used for time, never for place, meaning "from that time to the time referred to". It is often used with a present perfect or a past perfect tense.
e.g. She's been in London since the 1st of August.

2.8. Since, for

- Since is used with a point in time.
e.g. She's been talking on the phone since 7.30.

For is used with a period of time.

e.g. She's been talking on the phone for half an hour.

2.9. For, during

- For is used with a period of time when the action continues for the whole period.
e.g. For five years, for a month, for an hour.

- For is also used when there is an idea of purpose and when the action occupies the whole period.
e.g. They stayed with us for Ramadhan.

I hired a car for July.

In the above examples during is possible. But in the first example we would lose the idea of purpose and in the second example we would lose the idea that it was for the whole of July.

- During is used when an action takes place at some point within a given period .

e.g. Someone phoned during the evening.

During may also be used when the action continues for the whole period, when it is named or defined

e.g. During the war, we lived outside the city.

3. PREPOSITIONS OF POSITION AND MOVEMENT

In the following table the prepositions indicating position, movement or both are listed and the use of each is illustrated.

POSITION EXAMPLES	POSITION ONLY	POSITION OR MOVEMENT	MOVEMENT ONLY	MOVEMENT EXAMPLES
Your pen is on the table. Note: we use also on the wall, and on TV.		on	on to	The cat jumped on/ on to the table.
She is in the kitchen.	in		into	She came into the room.
It is in /inside the box.	inside		out of	She went out of the room.
I'll meet you outside the cinema.	outside			
It is under the table.		under		We sailed under the bridge.
It is below the surface.	below			
It is above the surface	above			
The picture is hanging over the fire place.		over		The dog jumped over the fence.

POSITION EXAMPLES	POSITION ONLY	POSITION OR MOVEMENT	MOVEMENT ONLY	MOVEMENT EXAMPLES
We stood round the piano.		round		We walked round the building.
We stood round /around in groups.		round/ around		They walked round/ around the market.
The road runs through the town.		through		The train went through the tunnel.
Among the guests there was a famous man.		among		He wandered among the crowd.
Cambridge is near London.		near		Don't go too near the bridge.
He hid behind the tree.		behind		The mouse ran behind the bridge.
My car is parked in front of the hotel.		in front of		He ran straight in front of the car.
			past	He walked straight past me.
The town hall is just along the road.		along		It's nice to walk along the river.
There was a barrier across the road.		across		She ran across the road.
He is up on the roof.		up		We climbed up the mountain.
She is down in the cellar.		down		He ran down the hill.
She sat next to /by/ beside me.	next to by/ beside			

POSITION EXAMPLES	POSITION ONLY	POSITION OR MOVEMENT	MOVEMENT ONLY	MOVEMENT EXAMPLES
			from	We' ve come all the way from Bechar.
			to to Tlemcen.
The post office is opposite the hotel.	opposite			
He is leaning against the wall.		against		The wind is blowing against me.
			towards	He came towards me.
Remchi is between Tlemcen and Oran.		between		He came between us.

4. PREPOSITIONS EXPRESSING TRAVEL

4.1. ...Fromto

The expression is used with go / travel / drive / fly / cycle etc...

e.g. We traveled from London to Edinburgh.

4.2. Arrive in/at, get to

e.g. We arrived in London.

I arrived at the hotel /at the airport /at the cross-roads.

“get to “ can be used with any destination.

e.g. He got to the station just in time for his train.

I want to get to London before dark.

Get in (*in* is an adverb) can mean arrive at destination. It is chiefly used for trains.

e.g. What time does the train get in? (reach terminus)

4.3. Home

We can use a verb of motion + *home* without a preposition.
e.g. They went home by bus.

But if *home* is immediately preceded by a word or phrase, a preposition is necessary.

e.g. She returned to her parents' home.

We can be /live / stay /work etc at *home*, but when the preposition *in* is used, it cannot be followed directly by *home*.

e.g. You can do this sort of work at home/ at your own home.
You can do this sort of work in your own home.

4.4. Transport: by, on, get in /into /on /onto /off /out of

• We can travel *by* car, but we travel *in* the /my / Tom's car. However, we always travel *by* bus / train /plane and *by* sea /air.

We can also travel *by* a certain route, or *by* a certain place .

e.g. We went by N4. (The fourth national route)

• We can walk or go *on* foot. We can cycle or go *on* a bicycle

• We get *in / into* and *out of* a car /a taxi .

• We get *on / onto* and *off* a bus /train /plane / boat /ship

• We can also get *in / into / out of* buildings, institutions, and countries instead of go / come / return etc., when there is some difficulty in entering or leaving these places.

In /out here are used as adverbs.

e.g. I've lost my keys! How are we going to get *into* the flat/ to get *in* the flat? (*in* -- adverb)

It's difficult to get *into* a university nowadays.

5. WORDS USED AS PREPOSITIONS AND ADVERBS

Many words can be used as either prepositions or adverbs

e.g. He got *off* the bus at the corner. (preposition)

He got *off* at the corner. (adverb)

The most important of these are: above, about, across, along, before, behind, below, besides, by, down, in, near, off, on, over, past, round, since, through, under and up.

e.g. They were here *before* six. (preposition)

He has done this sort of work *before*. (adverb)

It's *near* the hotel. (preposition)

Don't go too *near*. (adverb)

She climbed *over* the wall. (preposition)

You'll have to climb *over* too. (adverb) .

Many of these words are used to form phrasal verbs.

e.g. The plane took *off*. (left the ground)

The preposition remains next to the verb with noun and pronoun objects.

e.g. She must look after him.

The adverb comes either next to the verb or at the end of the clause or sentence when the object is a noun. If the object is a pronoun, verbs must be separated.

6. VERB + PREPOSITION, VERB + ADVERB COMBINATIONS

6.1. Verb + preposition

This combination usually has a literal meaning.

e.g. We *climb up* that mountain in four hours.

We had to *sit on* hard seats.

The preposition in each case refers to the noun and usually remains next to the verb and before the noun. Sometimes the combination *verb + preposition* produces an idiomatic meaning.

e.g. Take after = resemble.

He *takes after* his father in looks.

6.2. Verb + Adverb

This combination usually has an idiomatic meaning. The adverb need not remain directly connected to the noun or pronoun, but can go independently to the end of the clause or sentence.

e.g. Get across = communicate, convey.

He managed

}	To get across his message.
	To get his message across.

6.3. Verb + Adverb + Preposition + Object

Some *verb + Adverb* combinations are followed by a preposition to form a compound verb. Both parts remain next to the verb with noun and pronoun objects.

e.g. We have *run out of* $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{bil.} \\ \text{it.} \end{array} \right\}$

7. PREPOSITIONS FOLLOWED BY GERUNDS OR NOUNS

- *Be keen on*: He's keen on fishing. (Gerund)
He's keen on class. (Noun)
- *Be fond of* (like): I am fond of listening to pop music. (Gerund)
I am fond of pop music. (Noun)
- *Be good at*: She's good at playing tennis. (Gerund)
She's good at tennis. (Noun)
- *Be interested in*: I'm interested in collecting stamps. (Gerund)
I'm interested in stamps. (Noun)
- *Be used to*: I'm used to getting wet. (Gerund)
I'm used to the rain. (Noun)
Used to + gerund / noun should not be confused with *Used to + infinitive* which is quite different and which describes a past habit.
e.g. I *used to play* tennis everyday in the past, but now I am no more able to do so.
- *Be afraid of*: She's afraid of going out in storms. (Gerund)
She's afraid of storms. (Noun)
- *A method / Way of*: That's a good way of earning money. (Gerund only)
- *Insist on*: I insist on seeing the manager (Gerund)
I must insist on absolute silence (Noun)
- *Accuse someone of*: She accused him of stealing her purse. (Gerund)
She accused him of robbery. (Noun)

PASSIVE VOICE

1. FORM

- The passive voice of an active tense is formed by putting the verb *to be* into the same tense as the active verb and adding the past participle of the active verb.

Examples of present, past and perfect passive tenses.

Active: We keep the butter here.

Passive: The butter is kept here.

Active: They broke the window.

Passive: The window was broken.

Active: People have seen wolves in the streets.

Passive: Wolves have been seen in the streets by people.

- The *subject* of the active verb becomes the *agent* of the passive verb and is preceded by 'by'. It is generally omitted.

e.g. The thieves were caught by the police.

The thieves were caught.

- The passive of continuous tenses require the continuous forms of *to be*

Examples of present and past continuous passive tenses

Active: They are repairing the bridge.

Passive: The bridge is being repaired.

Active: They were carrying the injured player.

Passive: The injured player was being carried.

Other continuous tenses are rarely used in the passive, so that sentences like:

They have/had been repairing the road

They will/would be repairing the road

are not normally put into the passive voice.

- *Auxiliary + infinitive* combinations are made passive by using a passive infinitive.

Active: You should keep these papers.

Passive: These papers should be kept.

Active: They should have told him. (perfect infinitive)

Passive: He should have been told.

- The passive gerund is **being + past participle**

Active: I remember my father taking me to the zoo.

Passive: I remember being taken to the zoo by my father.

- Here is a table of active tenses and their passive equivalents

Tense/Verb form	Active voice	Passive voice
Simple present	keeps	is kept
Present continuous	is keeping	is being kept
Simple past	kept	was kept
Past continuous	was keeping	was being kept
Present perfect	has kept	has been kept
Past perfect	had kept	had been kept
Future	will keep	will be kept
Conditional	would keep	would be kept
Present infinitive	to keep	to be kept
Perfect infinitive	to have kept	to have been kept
Perfect conditional	would have kept	would have been kept
Present participle/Gerund	keeping	being kept
Perfect participle	having kept	having been kept

2. USE

- The passive voice is used in English when it is more convenient or interesting to stress the thing done than the doer of the action, or when the doer is unknown.

e.g. My watch was stolen.

- A sentence containing a direct and an indirect object can have two passive forms:

e.g. Active: Someone gave her an apple.

Passive: She was given an apple. Or

Passive: An apple was given to her.

The first sentence is much the more usual i.e., the indirect object becomes the subject of the passive verb.

3. PREPOSITIONS WITH PASSIVE VERBS

- In a passive sentence the agent or doer of the action is very often not mentioned. When the agent is mentioned, it is preceded by “by”:

e.g. Active: Ann saw him.

Passive: He was seen by Ann

- When dealing with materials, the preposition “with” is used:

e.g. Active: Smoke filled the room.

Passive: The room was filled with smoke.

- When a *verb + preposition + object* combination is put into the passive, the preposition will remain immediately after the verb.

e.g. Active: We must write to him quickly

Passive: He must be written to quickly.

Similarly with *verb + preposition/ adverb* combination

e.g. Active: They threw away the old newspapers.

Passive: The old newspapers were thrown away.

4. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS AFTER PASSIVE VERBS

- After: acknowledge, assume, believe, claim, consider, estimate, feel, find, know, presume, report, say, think, understand etc. and sentences of the type “People consider/know/think etc. that he is ...” we have two possible passive forms

1- It is considered/known etc. that he is.....

2- He is considered/known etc. to be.....

The infinitive construction (i.e. sentence 2) is the neater of the two. It is chiefly used with “to be” though other infinitives can sometimes be used.

e.g. He is thought to have information.

- After suppose:

□ Suppose in the passive can be followed by the present infinitive of any verb but this construction usually conveys an idea of duty and is not therefore the normal equivalent of suppose in the active.

e.g. You are supposed to know how to drive = It is your duty to know/You should know how to drive.

It can also keep its meaning as in the active
e.g. She is supposed to have had her baby.

□ Suppose in the passive can similarly be followed by the perfect infinitive of any verb. This construction very often does not convey the idea of duty.

e.g. - He is supposed to have escaped disguised as a woman =
People suppose that he escaped etc.

- You are supposed to have finished = You should have finished.

• Infinitives placed after passive verbs are normally full infinitives.

e.g. Active: We saw them go out.

Passive: They were seen to go out

With "let" we do not use "to"

e.g. Active: They let us go.

Passive: We were let go.

• The continuous infinitive (and also the perfect form of the continuous infinitive) can be used after the passive of believe, know, report, say, suppose, think, understand:

e.g. He is believed /known/said/supposed to be living abroad.

He is believed to have been waiting for a message.

REPORTED SPEECH

1. DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH

There are two ways of relating what a person has said: direct and indirect.

- In direct speech, we repeat the original speaker's exact words and place them between inverted commas plus a comma or colon placed immediately before the remark.

e.g. He said, "I have bought a new car."

- In indirect speech, we give the exact meaning of the remark or speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words.

e.g. He said (that) he had bought a new car. (No comma after 'say')

'That' can usually be omitted after 'say' and 'tell' + *object*. But it should be kept after other verbs.

2. STATEMENTS IN INDIRECT SPEECH: TENSE CHANGES

When we turn direct speech into indirect, some changes are usually necessary.

- When the introductory verb (say, tell, remark etc.) is in the present, present perfect or future, direct statements can be reported without any changes of tense.

e.g. He says, "the train will be late" = He says the train will be late.

- But when the introductory verb is in the past tense, the following tense changes are necessary:

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Simple present "I never drink tea," she replied	Simple past She replied that she never drunk tea
Present continuous "I am looking for Amina," she explained	Past continuous She explained (that) she was looking for Amina
Present perfect "I have found my bag", she said	Past perfect She said (that) she had found her bag
Present perfect continuous He said, "I have been waiting for ages.	Past perfect continuous He said he had been waiting for ages.
Simple past "I bought it yesterday," he said	Past perfect He said he had bought it yesterday
Future They said, "they will travel abroad"	Conditional They said they would travel abroad
Future continuous "I will/shall be using the car tomorrow," She said.	Conditional continuous She said she would be using the car tomorrow.
Conditional She said, "I would/ should buy a car"	Conditional She said she would/ should buy a car. (No tense change)

3. UNCHANGED TENSES

- In theory the past tense changes to the past perfect, but in spoken English it is often left unchanged.

e.g. Direct speech: He said, "Ann arrived on Monday".

Indirect speech: He said (that) Ann arrived (had arrived) on Monday.

- In written English past tenses do change to past perfect but there are some exceptions.

Past/ past continuous tenses used in time clauses do not normally change.

e.g. Direct speech: He said, "When we were living in Paris..."

Indirect speech: He said that when they were living in Paris....

The main verb of such sentences can either remain unchanged or become the past perfect.

e.g. Direct speech: He said, "when we were living /lived in Paris, we often saw Paul"

Indirect speech: He said that when they were living/ lived in Paris they often saw/ had seen Paul.

- A past tense used to describe a state of affairs which still exists when the speech is reported remains unchanged.

e.g. Direct speech: She said, "I decided not to buy the house because it was on a main road"

Indirect speech: She said that she had decided not to buy the house it was on a main road.

- Might, ought to, should, would, used to, could and must do not normally change In indirect speech.

- Conditional sentences types 2 and 3 remain entirely unchanged.

4. OTHER CHANGES WHEN TURNING DIRECT SPEECH INTO INDIRECT SPEECH

- In indirect speech the conjunction 'that' can be placed immediately after the introductory verb. It can usually be omitted after *say*, *think* and *tell* + *object*, but it should be kept after other verbs such as *complain*, *explain*, *shout*, *reply*, etc.

e.g. I think (that) she is right.

She shouted that she was busy (Not ~~She shouted she was busy.~~)

- Pronouns and possessive adjectives normally change from first or second person to third person

e.g. Direct speech: Ali said, "I like my new house"

Indirect speech: Ali said he liked his new house.

This change does not occur when the speaker is reporting his own words.

e.g. Direct speech: I said, "I like my new house"

Indirect speech: I said that I liked my new house.

NB: Sometimes a noun must be inserted to avoid ambiguity.

e.g. Direct speech: Ahmed said, "He came in through the window"

Indirect speech: Ahmed said that the man had come in through the window.

- Expressions of time change in indirect speech except when the speech is made and reported on the same day

e.g. Direct speech: "I saw her the day before yesterday," he said.

Indirect speech: He said he had seen her two days before.

Direct speech: This morning he said, "I'll be very busy today"

Indirect speech: This morning he said that he would be very busy today

The following table gives the change of some adverbs and adverbial phrases:

Direct speech	Indirect speech
Today	That day
Yesterday	The day before
The day before yesterday	Two days before
Tomorrow	The next day/ the following day
The day after tomorrow	In two day's time
Next week/ year etc.	The following week/ year etc.
Last week/ year etc.	The previous week/ year etc.
A week/ year etc. ago	week/ year before/ the previous week/ year etc.

This is usually replaced by **that** when used in time expressions.

e.g. Direct speech: He told me, "I'll come this week"

Indirect speech: He told me that he would come that week.

- **Here** is usually replaced by a phrase

e.g. Direct speech: He said, "You can sit here, Ali"

Indirect speech: He said to Ali that he could sit next to him.

Here can be replaced by **there** when it is clear what place is meant.

e.g. Direct speech: At the café he said, "I'll be here tomorrow"

Indirect speech: At the café he said that he would be there the next day.

5. QUESTIONS IN INDIRECT SPEECH

When direct questions are turned into indirect speech, in addition to the changes seen above occurring in statements, the following changes are necessary

- The interrogative form of the verb changes to the affirmative form and the question mark (?) is omitted.
e.g. Direct speech: "When did he travel to England?" he said
Indirect speech: He asked when he had travelled to England.
- If the introductory verb is say or tell, it must be changed to a verb of inquiry such as ask, inquire, wonder, want to know etc.
e.g. Direct speech: She said, "Where is the station?"
Indirect speech: She wondered where the station was.
- For *yes/ no questions* **if** or **whether** are used in indirect speech.
e.g. Direct speech: "Did you see the accident?" the policeman asked.
Indirect speech: The policeman asked if/ whether I had seen the accident.

6. COMMANDS, REQUESTS, ADVICE IN INDIRECT SPEECH

- In indirect speech commands, requests and advice are usually expressed by *a verb of command/ request/ advice + object + infinitive*.
e.g. Direct speech: "You had better hurry, Ali!" she said.
Indirect speech: She advised Ali to hurry.
- Negative commands, requests and advice are generally reported by *not + infinitive*.
e.g. Direct speech: "Don't play far from the house, boys," she said.
Indirect speech: She warned the boys not to play far from the house

LIST OF IRREGULAR VERBS

This is a list of some irregular verbs in English. Of course, there are many others, but these are the more common irregular verbs.

Infinitive/ Base Form	Past Simple	Past Participle
awake	awoke	awoken
be	was, were	been
beat	beat	beaten
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bet	bet	bet
bid	bid	bid
bite	bit	bitten
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
broadcast	broadcast	broadcast
build	built	built
burn	burned/burnt	burned/burnt
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught

choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
cut	cut	cut
dig	dug	dug
do	did	done
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed/dreamt	dreamed/dreamt
drive	drove	driven
drink	drank	drunk
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	got (<i>sometimes</i> gotten)
give	gave	given

go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung	hung
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hit	hit	hit
hold	held	held
hurt	hurt	hurt
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
learn	learned/learnt	learned/learnt
leave	left	left
lend	lent	lent
let	let	let
lie	lay	lain
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean	meant	meant

meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
show	showed	showed/shown
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
spend	spent	spent
stand	stood	stood
swim	swam	swum

take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
tell	told	told
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
understand	understood	understood
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
win	won	won
write	wrote	written

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This book is a synthesis of many years of grammar teaching. It covers the main points of English grammar. It has very clear examples and explanations that are at the reach of both intermediate and advanced learners of English. It also constitutes a good reference book for English teachers. You may read it back to back, you may also jump directly to the topic of interest, because each section is self contained. Written in plain English without extensive grammatical jargon, the book is an easy read and its organization makes it simple to browse any given topic.

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