

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
MOHAMED KHEIDER UNIVERSITY – BISKRA
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
SECTION OF ENGLISH



**The Role of Formative Assessment in Enhancing EFL
Learners' Writing Skill**
Case of Third Year Students at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for a
Master Degree in Sciences of Language

Prepared by:

Mr. Badreddine **DENCH**

Supervised by:

Dr. Tayeb **BOUHITEM**

Board of Examiners

Dr. Tayeb **BOUHITEM**

(Supervisor)

(University of Biskra)

Dr. Nadia **REZIG BETKA**

(Examiner)

(University of Biskra)

Mrs. Yasmina **BENZIDA**

(Examiner)

(University of Biskra)

Academic Year: 2019/2020

Dedication

I dedicate my work to:

My beloved parents,

My dearest brothers and sisters,

And to all my friends and relatives,

Acknowledgements

*First and foremost, I thank ALLAH for helping me completing my work. Then, I am grateful to my supervisor **Mr. TAYEB BOUHITEM** who provided support and guidance from all the beginning. I would like to thank him for his patience, kindness, encouragements, and motivational speeches.*

*I would like to thank the examiners, **Mrs. YASMINA BENZIDA** and **Dr. NADIA REZIG BETKA** for their acceptance to examine this paper. I appreciate your awareness and careful reading of this dissertation.*

I am also very grateful to all teachers and students who participated on this research, and helped me to complete it.

My thanks also go to all teachers of the department of English at Biskra University whom I shared with the best memories.

Finally, special thanks to all my family members, my friends, and all those who helped me to go through my research and complete it.

Abstract:

Writing is considered to be one of the most complex tasks in foreign language learning. The majority of learners struggle when they intend to produce a good piece of writing. The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness and proficiency of using formative assessment as a technique to enhance EFL students' writing skill at Biskra University. In order to confirm our hypotheses, a descriptive method has been adopted, in which two questionnaires were administrated online, the first one was addressed to third year EFL students, and the second one was addressed to 3rd year written expression teachers. The outcome of this study has shown that most of the teachers adopt formative assessment as an effective technique to assess their students' writing productions. In addition, it has shown positive students' attitudes toward the use of formative assessment in the classroom, as the students prefer to be continuously assessed, and the teachers favor to use formative assessment in order to assess their teaching and their students' performances. Finally, the results have also shown that formative assessment contributes to a great extent in improving students' writing skills. On the basis of the results, our hypotheses are confirmed. Moreover, this study suggested some recommendations for students to practice writing extensively, and take their teachers' feedback into account, and for teachers to engage their students in writing activities continuously, and implement formative assessment in the classroom whenever it is possible due to the fact that it has shown its effectiveness.

List of figures

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|
| Figure 1 Planned formative assessment (1999)..... | Cowie & Bell | 16 |
| Figure 2 Interactive formative assessment | Cowie & Bell (1999)..... | 17 |
| Figure 3 The writing process | | 30 |
| Figure 4 A process for assessing writing achievement..... | | 36 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1 Students' Gender | 41 |
| Table 2 Students' levels in English | 41 |
| Table 3 The skill that most of students have problems with..... | 42 |
| Table 4 The difficulty of writing | 42 |
| Table 5 Students' level in English Writing | 43 |
| Table 6 Students' most difficult aspect when they write in English | 44 |
| Table 7 Reasons behind students weaknesses in writing in English | 45 |
| Table 8 Students' attitudes toward correcting their mistakes when they write | 46 |
| Table 9 Students' preferences of types of correction | 46 |
| Table 10 The teacher's way of assessing his students' writings..... | 47 |
| Table 11 Teachers' feedback | 47 |
| Table 12 Frequency of teachers' feedback provision..... | 48 |
| Table 13 Different forms of feedback used by the teacher | 48 |
| Table 14 Teachers' stages of correction | 49 |
| Table 15 Contribution of teachers' feedback in improving students' written productions..... | 49 |
| Table 16 The implementation of formative assessment in the writing course | 50 |
| Table 17 The frequency of the implementation of formative assessment in the writing course | 50 |
| Table 18 The importance of formative assessment in enhancing students' writings..... | 51 |
| Table 19 The contribution of formative assessment in enhancing students' writings | 52 |
| Table 20 Teachers' situation | 57 |
| Table 21 Teachers' qualifications | 57 |
| Table 22 Teachers' years of experience | 57 |
| Table 23 Teachers' adoption of the writing approaches..... | 58 |
| Table 24 Most common difficulties that most students face when they write..... | 59 |
| Table 25 Teachers' focus when correcting their students' writings..... | 59 |
| Table 26 The purpose of assessing the writing skill | 60 |
| Table 27 The importance of correcting students' writings..... | 60 |
| Table 28 Teachers' feedback about students' writings | 61 |
| Table 29 Frequency of teachers' feedback provision..... | 61 |
| Table 30 teachers' time of correction | 62 |
| Table 31 teachers' main focus when correcting their students' writings..... | 62 |
| Table 32 Teachers' feedback provision form..... | 63 |
| Table 33 Teachers' application of peer feedback..... | 63 |
| Table 34 The most suitable type of assessment | 64 |
| Table 35 Teachers' implementation of formative assessment in the classroom | 65 |
| Table 36 Frequency of the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom by the teachers | 65 |
| Table 37 The degree of the importance of using formative assessment in the classroom..... | 66 |
| Table 38 Problems that may face the teacher from using FA in the classroom..... | 67 |

List of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Dedication | II |
| Acknowledgements | III |
| Abstract: | IV |
| List of figures | V |
| List of Tables | VI |
| General Introduction: | 1 |
| 2. Statement of the Problem: | 1 |
| 3. Significance of the Study: | 2 |
| 4. Aims of the study: | 2 |
| 5. Research Questions | 3 |
| 6. Research Hypothesis: | 3 |
| 7. Methodology: | 3 |
| 8. Literature Review | 3 |
| 9. Structure of the study: | 6 |
| Chapter one: Formative Assessment | 8 |
| Introduction: | 9 |
| 1.1 Definition of Assessment: | 9 |
| 1.2 Types of Assessment: | 10 |
| 1.2.1 Formative assessment: | 10 |
| 1.2.2 Summative assessment: | 10 |
| 1.2.3 Formal Assessment: | 11 |
| 1.2.4 Informal assessment: | 11 |
| 1.3 Assessment, evaluation and testing: | 12 |
| 1.4 Principle of Assessment: | 13 |
| 1.4.1 Practicality: | 13 |
| 1.4.2 Reliability: | 13 |
| 1.4.3 Validity: | 14 |
| 1.4.4 Authenticity: | 14 |
| 1.4.5 Washback: | 14 |
| 1.5 Formative Assessment: | 15 |
| 1.5.1 Definitions of Formative assessment: | 15 |
| 1.5.2 Types of formative assessment: | 16 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.5.2.1 Planned formative assessment: | 16 |
| 1.5.2.2 Interactive formative assessment: | 16 |
| 1.5.3 Stages of formative assessment: | 17 |
| 1.5.3.1 Formative assessment prior to instruction: | 17 |
| 1.5.3.2 Formative assessment during instruction: | 18 |
| 1.5.3.3 Formative assessment after instruction: | 18 |
| 1.5.4 Examples of formative assessment in the classroom: | 19 |
| 1.5.4.1 Discussions: | 19 |
| 1.5.4.3 Questioning: | 19 |
| 1.5.4.4 Think-Pair-Share | 19 |
| 1.5.4.2 Thumbs up, thumbs down: | 20 |
| 1.6 Formative Feedback: | 20 |
| 1.6.1 Definition of formative feedback: | 20 |
| 1.6.2 The importance of formative feedback: | 20 |
| 1.7 Peer Feedback: | 21 |
| 1.8 Developing students' writing through the use of formative assessment: | 21 |
| Conclusion: | 22 |
| Chapter Two: The Writing Skill | 23 |
| Introduction: | 24 |
| 2.1 Various definitions of the writing skill: | 24 |
| 2.2 Writing with other language skills: | 25 |
| 2.2.1 Writing and speaking: | 25 |
| 2.2.2 Writing and reading: | 27 |
| 2.3. Teaching writing: | 27 |
| 2.3.1. The writing approaches: | 28 |
| 2.3.1.1 The Product approach of writing: | 28 |
| 2.3.1.2 The process approach of writing: | 29 |
| 2.3.1.3 The genre approach of writing: | 30 |
| 2.4 The importance of writing: | 31 |
| 2.5 Features of effective writing: | 32 |
| 2.5.1 Organization: | 32 |
| 2.5.2 Clarity: | 32 |
| 2.5.3 Word choice: | 33 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.5.4 Mechanics: | 34 |
| 2.6 Writing difficulties:..... | 34 |
| 2.6.1 Grammar: | 34 |
| 2.6.2 Punctuation:..... | 34 |
| 2.6.3 Vocabulary: | 35 |
| 2.6.4 Spelling: | 35 |
| 2.7 Assessing Writing: | 36 |
| Conclusion: | 37 |
| Chapter Three: Data Analysis | 38 |
| Introduction:..... | 39 |
| 3.1 Research Instruments: | 39 |
| 3.2 Students' Questionnaire: | 39 |
| 3.2.1 Piloting the Questionnaire:..... | 39 |
| 3.2.2 Administration of the Questionnaire:..... | 40 |
| 3.2.3 Description of Students' Questionnaire | 40 |
| 3.2.4 Results of Students' Questionnaire | 41 |
| 3.2.5 Interpretation and discussion of the results: | 54 |
| 3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire: | 55 |
| 3.3.1 Piloting the Questionnaire:..... | 55 |
| 3.3.2 Administration of the Questionnaire:..... | 56 |
| 3.3.3 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire: | 56 |
| 3.3.4 Results of Students' Questionnaire:..... | 57 |
| 3.3.5 Interpretation and discussion of the results:..... | 69 |
| General Conclusion:..... | 72 |
| References..... | 74 |
| Appendices..... | 78 |
| Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire: | 79 |
| Appendix 2: Teachers' Questionnaire:..... | 84 |
| المُلخَص..... | 89 |

General Introduction:

The focus of Teaching English has always been on developing the language four skills, writing, speaking, reading and listening. When we take into consideration writing as productive skill, it needs to be enhanced especially in a university context. Therefore, teachers have been trying to use different methods to improve their learners' academic writing. Despite the fact that the writing skill at the University of Biskra is being taught for five years, students' writings still did not reach the required quality by the teachers yet.

Nowadays, teachers are required to use different techniques in order to raise their learners' motivation in one hand and assess their achievement in another hand. In addition, by providing them with different tasks and activities, teachers can keep in touch with their learners, which will eventually help them to identify gaps and understand what their students' weaknesses are.

Assessment is one of many methods that enable teachers to discover their learners' weaknesses and strengths. It can play a significant role in developing learners' writing production and it is a key component of all educational programs of measuring the learners' success. Formative Assessment is considered as one type of assessment. It can be referred to as a continuous assessment that is used while learning is taking place. Furthermore, it provides teachers with an effective feedback about their students' development in order to improve their writing competence. This research will shed light on formative assessment and its importance in enhancing EFL learners' writing skill.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Unlike the other language skills, writing is a complex process that needs to be developed especially in a university context. Despite the fact that the writing skill is being taught and practiced for five years in the University of Biskra, students still produce low quality of

writing productions. They are facing a remarkable number of difficulties trying to express themselves in more academic and concise manner. In addition, the organization of their ideas and the use of the inappropriate vocabulary are probably some of several deficiencies that face learners when it comes to writing, which may be due to the use of the inappropriate methods by the teacher or the lack of students' practice outside the classroom.

Due to the vitality of assessment, that is considered as a tool of improving students' competencies. Formative assessment seems to be more important in the field of teaching and learning because it refers to the frequent, interactive assessments of students' progress. Therefore, it helps teachers to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately in order to enhance the quality of the learning process especially the writing skill. Thus, throughout this study we attempt to describe the role of formative assessment in enhancing EFL learners' writing skill, case study of third year students at the University of Biskra.

3. Significance of the Study:

The current study is significant in integrating the formative assessment into the learning process through enabling the educators to vary in his methods of assessing students and using such form of assessment in relevance to the writing skill. In other words, this study will first, provide teachers with deeper understanding of their student's weaknesses and needs; second, this study may help teacher to know to what extent are their classroom activities effective to assess their learners. Furthermore, this study may help students to identify their own writing deficiencies, and may serve as a tool to help them improving their writings.

4. Aims of the study:

The current research aims to investigate the effectiveness and proficiency of using formative assessment as a method to enhance the writing skill. Moreover, it tends to determine students and teachers' opinions in using formative assessment technique in the learning process, by highlighting the development of the writing skill.

5. Research Questions

- **RQ1:** How are third year EFL students being assessed?
- **RQ2:** What are teachers and students' attitudes and opinions toward the use of formative assessment as a technique to enhance the writing skill?
- **RQ3:** To what extent does formative assessment contribute in improving the writing skill?

6. Research Hypothesis:

- Third year EFL teachers mostly use formative assessment to assess their students' progress.
- Teachers and students will have a positive attitudes and opinions about formative assessment usage as a technique to enhance the writing skill.
- If the formative assessment is used, the writing skill will be improved.

7. Methodology:

This research will employ the descriptive method as an appropriate way to confirm our hypothesis and to identify the importance of formative assessment that would improve student's writing skill. Also, the descriptive method is the most suitable method to reach our research aims. In order to gather the required data for the current study, an online questionnaire will be administrated to both students and teachers at the University of Biskra. Initially, the students' questionnaire attempts to collect data concerning the formative assessment impact on their writing skill; more importantly, writing essays. As for the teacher's questionnaire which aims to identify their methods of assessing students formatively and to point out the vitality of such approach in teaching writing.

8. Literature Review

Recently, researchers shown a real interest in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, in order to develop learning process and make it more effective.

Therefore, a considerable number of studies have been conducted in the sake of describing and investigating the role of formative assessment in enhancing EFL learners' writing skills.

An article entitled "Preliminary Study on Application of Formative Assessment in College English Writing Class" was conducted by Yang Liu Changchun in the University of Science and Technology, China, in which he reviewed the origin of formative assessment, and discusses its application in college English writing class. Furthermore, he attempted to answer two main questions; (1) can formative assessment facilitates the writing ability of college students? (2) Can formative assessment be considered as an alternative to summative assessment? He used the quantitative approach, an experiment, where he selected a sample of 100 sophomores majoring in sociology in a college. In addition, he used an observation and a questionnaire as a data collection tools. Yang Liu Changchun in his article reached a conclusion that the application of formative assessment is beneficial in advancing students' writing ability and cultivating their team spirit.

An article was conducted by three researchers, Steve Graham, Michael Hebert and Karen R. Harris entitled "Formative Assessment and Writing: A Meta-Analysis". This research was conducted in the sake of determining whether formative writing assessment that are directly tied to everyday classroom teaching and learning enhance students' writing performance or not. They use a meta-analysis of true and quasi-experiments method with students in grade 1 to 8. The results of this study have found that feedback to students about writing from adults, peers, self, and computer statistically enhanced the writing quality. Also, the findings from this meta-analysis provided support for the use of formative writing assessment that provides feedback directly to students as part of everyday teaching and learning.

Another research was carried out by an Iranian researcher named Zohre Mohamadi at the English Translation Department in Karaj, Iran entitled "Comparative Effect of Online Summative and Formative Assessment on EFL Students' Writing Ability". He tended to

investigate the effect of online summative and formative assessments on 130 Iranian English as foreign language (EFL) junior university students' writing ability. He used the quantitative approach, in which he relied on the pre-test and post-test where he assessed the interventions in writing performances of participants in 27 sessions using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The interventions included online summative assessment and online portfolio writing assessment conducted individually and online collaborative formative assessment. The gathered data indicated improvement in the writing ability in all interventions and highest significant enhanced writing in online collaborative writing assessment intervention. The findings imply that using appropriate assessment strategies along with engaging technology and techniques is a powerful way of making learning efficient.

A research was conducted by Tony Burner about “Formative Assessment of Writing in English as a Foreign Language”. He focused on the importance of formative assessment in writing, in which he used a mixed-methods approach to investigate how teachers and students respond to the new emphasis on formative assessment in English as a foreign language classes in Norway. His study provided new insights, in which his findings indicated that contradictions are prevalent amongst teachers’ and students’ perceptions of formative assessment of writing. In addition, the identified contradictions suggest the need for developing a mutual understanding of formative assessment in order to make it useful and meaningful.

As was mentioned before, a considerable number of researches shed light on the use of formative assessment in improving the learning process quality especially the writing skill. The first article was conducted by Yang Liu Changchun in china, in which it showed that that the application of formative assessment is beneficial in advancing students’ writing ability and cultivating their team spirit. Moreover, the article entitled “Formative Assessment and

Writing: A Meta-Analysis” showed support for the use of formative assessment, in which it affirmed that providing feedback to students about their writing will eventually help them to improve it.

Furthermore, a research conducted by an Iranian researcher, in which he investigated the effect of online summative and formative assessments; his results showed an improvement in the writing ability of EFL learners. Also his finding showed that using the appropriate assessment strategies along with engaging technology will make learning more efficient. Tony Burner in his research entitled “Formative Assessment of Writing in English as a Foreign Language” found that there are contradictions between students’ and teachers’ perception of formative assessment; he suggested a need of developing a mutual understanding of formative between teachers and students assessment in order to make it useful and meaningful.

According to the pre-mentioned finding of studies undertaken in different contexts that dealt with formative assessment technique in relation to the writing skill. This present study aims to describe the effectiveness of using formative assessment as a tool to enhance the writing skill in an Algerian context, case of third year students of English at Biskra University.

9. Structure of the study:

This research is divided into three main chapters. Chapter one and two will be devoted to the literature review and chapter three to the field work. Chapter one will introduce the term assessment and its types. Also, it shows the difference between assessment, evaluation and testing. It will also shed light on formative assessment, its stages and its strategies. This chapter will also focus on feedback, types of feedback and the relationship between feedback,

and assessment. Finally, chapter one will shed light on the role of teachers and students in formative assessment, and how the latter serve as a tool to improve students' writing skill.

Chapter two will introduce writing. This includes various definitions of writing, the relationships and differences between writing and other language skill (reading, speaking). In addition, it will present approaches to teaching writing, and the importance of the writing skill. Finally, it will discuss students' problems and deficiencies with the writing skill, and the importance of the teachers' feedback.

Finally, the third chapter deals with data analysis. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of students' feedback questionnaire and teachers' feedback questionnaire, and ultimately a summary of the results obtained in this research work.

Chapter one: **Formative** **Assessment**

Introduction:

Assessment can play a significant role in enhancing students' learning especially when the instructors adopt the formative form of assessment. This chapter will shed light on assessment on general and formative assessment in specific. It will start by defining assessment and identifying its types. Then, it will move to differentiate between assessment, evaluation and testing. Moreover, it will focus on formative assessment, its definition, types and stages. Also, it will review formative feedback and its importance in enhancing student's learning. Finally, it will investigate the use of formative assessment in enhancing learners' writing proficiency.

1.1 Definition of Assessment:

Assessment in education must, first and foremost, serve the purpose of supporting learning. According to the Cambridge dictionary, assessment is the act of judging or deciding the amount, value, quality or importance of something, or judgement or decision that is made. Another definition by Brown (2004):

“Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student's performance. Written work-from a jotted-down phrase to a formal essay-is performance that ultimately is assessed by self, teacher, and possibly other students”.

In other words, a teacher should consider many aspects in determining the final scores of the students. He should pay also attention to the students` participation, motivation, presentation, performance, paper, portfolio, presence, homework, etc, and then, provide them with the appropriate feedback.

1.2 Types of Assessment:

According to Brown (2004), there are four types of assessment: Formative, summative, formal and informal assessment.

1.2.1 Formative assessment:

The term formative assessment has been defined by many researchers; for instance, Greenstein (2010) defined it as “a systematic way for teachers and students to gather evidence of learning, engage students in assessment, and use data to improve teaching and learning”. So, it is a tool that helps in collecting data about the learning process such as, the written works or oral presentations...etc, engaging students in the learning process, and improving the teaching/learning process. Thus, formative assessment aims to evaluate students in the process of forming their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process, Brown (2004). Moreover, Irons (2008) refers to formative assessment as any task or activity that crates feedback for students about their learning; in addition, it differs from summative assessment in a way of it does not carry a grade.

1.2.2 Summative assessment:

According to Wikipedia, in contrast to formative assessment, summative assessment refers to the assessment of participants where the focus is on the outcome of a program; its goal is to evaluate students learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard. Also, it usually involves students receiving a grade that indicates their level of performance, be it a percentage, pass/fail, or some other form of scale grade For Brown (2004), summative assessment aims to measure, or summarize what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. Final exams in a course and general proficiency exams are examples of summative assessment. Furthermore, Irons (2008) defined summative assessment as “Any assessment activity which results in a mark or grade which is subsequently used as a judgement on student performance...” and he adds

“Ultimately judgements using summative assessment marks will be used to determine the classification of award at the end of a course or programme”.

1.2.3 Formal Assessment:

According to Brown (2004), formal assessments are “exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and student an appraisal of student’s achievement”; he explained that by adding “To extend the tennis analogy, formal assessments are the tournament games that occur periodically in the course of a regimen of practice”. He also made a distinction between formal assessment and testing. He considered all kinds of tests as formal assessment, but not vice versa because, for him tests are time-constrained which is not always the case of formal assessment. Harris & McCann (1994), on the other hand, used test as a synonym for formal assessment. For them tests are taken in order to understand whether a student is ready to go to next level, know about problematic areas, figure out what the students have learnt, and compare the students.

1.2.4 Informal assessment:

According to Brown (2004), informal assessment is way different than the formal one, it contains occasional and unplanned comments and feedbacks, nothing is prepared in advance, and its results are not recorded and no judgement is based on them. Also, he add that it includes various types of feedback, from saying “Good job!” to giving detailed comments about students’ performance; so, it is more about giving feedback than deciding upon students’ performance. However, according to Harris & McCann (1994), who provided a different definition than Brown’s, referred to informal assessment as a way of collecting information about students’ performance in normal classroom conditions i.e. without establishing test conditions as in formal assessment. They add that, it sometimes referred to

as continuous assessment. This definition of Harris and McCann (1994) sheds light on four major points:

- ✓ Informal assessment is not about scoring students, but about collecting evidences about their knowledge.
- ✓ Teachers their students' performance by direct observation after they perform the task.
- ✓ Informal assessment is done without establishing time limits and formal tests' rules.
- ✓ Informal assessment is a day-to-day observation; teachers are always assessing their students.

1.3 Assessment, evaluation and testing:

The terms assessment, evaluation and testing are used interchangeably in the domain of language learning, but in reality each term differentiate from the other. For instance & McCann (1994), assessment and evaluation are often linked together; however, assessment, for them, is to measure the performance of students, to see the progress they make, to diagnose the problems they have, and to provide them with the appropriate feedback. In the other hand, evaluation includes looking at all the factors that affect the learning process, such as syllabus objectives, course design, materials, methodology, teacher performance and assessment...etc. Additionally, a test or testing, for both Brown (2004) and Bachman (1990), is just an instrument or method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge or a performance in a specific domain and quantifies characteristics of individuals according to explicit procedures. The majority of theories considered testing as part of assessment, a way of collecting evidences about student's performance. Also, Jabbarifar (2009) as cited in Dougat (2017), regarded testing as "the tools used to elicit information that is part of the assessment process". As for Overton (2008) as cited in Kizlik (2012), who claimed that a test is one form of assessment although it is commonly and interchangeably used with assessment and evaluation, in which he defined it as " a method to determine a student's ability to complete

certain tasks or demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. Some types would be multiple choice tests or a weekly spelling test". All in all, although assessment, evaluation and testing differ from each others as concepts, they all work interchangeably. For instance, evaluation makes decisions based on assessment, whereas assessment uses tests as methods in order to collect information about students' performance.

1.4 Principle of Assessment:

Certain principles need to be applied to formal tests in order to make assessment more effective. Brown (2004) has suggested 5 main principles which are as follows: practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback.

1.4.1 Practicality:

According to Brown (2004), a test is practical when:

- **It is not excessively expensive:** it does not cost the writer a remarkable amount of money.
- **It stays with the appropriate time constrains:** it neither takes too much time to answer nor short.
- **It is relatively easy to administrate:** it is impractical to let just one individual proctoring a group of several hundred test-takers, while just a handful number of examiners proctoring a small group.
- **It has scoring procedure that is specific and time-efficient:** it should be easy to score, and the scorer must select the appropriate scoring procedure that suits the type of test.

1.4.2 Reliability:

A test is considered to be consistent and reliable when the results of different situations are similar. Brown (2004) stated that: "A reliable test is consistent and dependable. If you give

the same test to the same students or matched students on two different occasions, the test should yield similar results”.

1.4.3 Validity:

Validity is the most important principle of assessment. A test is considered to be valid when it focuses on the objective of the lesson. Brown (2004) provided an example of a valid test, he stated that: “To measure writing ability, one might ask students to write as many words as they can in 15 minutes, then simply counts the words for the final scores”. That is to say, a test in written production should only require and focus on the writing skill.

1.4.4 Authenticity:

Authenticity is defined by Bachman and Palmer (1996) as cited in Brown (2004) as: “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task”. That is to say a test task is authentic when it is likely to be enacted in the real world. Brown (2004) suggested some of the characteristics in order to make a test authentic, which are represented as follows:

- The language in a test is as natural as possible.
- Items are contextualized rather than isolated.
- Topics are meaningful (relevant, interesting) for the learner.
- Some thematic organization to items is provided, such as through a story line or episode.
- Tasks represent, or closely approximate, real-world tasks.

1.4.5 Washback:

According to Brown (2004), washback are generally refers to the effects the test have on instruction in term of how students prepare for the test. It includes the effects of an assessment on teaching and learning prior to the assessment itself, more likely, a preparation for the assessment. Washback is achieved through the classroom tests which are created by

the teacher in order to serve as learning devices. Students' correct responses need to be praised to support good work, whereas, their incorrect responses can become windows into further work.

1.5 Formative Assessment:

1.5.1 Definitions of Formative assessment:

Since it is an effective tool in enhancing the teaching and learning processes, formative assessment has been the focus of many scholars. As for Cowie & Bell (1999), formative assessment is a process that always includes students to find out about their learning; so, students may receive feedback from their teachers, peers or react to their own learning. They add up to their definition that, formative assessment is not just an important component for learning, but also for teaching; so, it is also a process that enable teachers to gather information about their students' learning, and then respond with feedbacks that will help to enhance learning. For Gipps (1994) as cited in Cowie & Bell (1999), formative assessment was defined as "evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve students' competence.", he add "formative assessment is viewed as occurring within the interaction between the teacher and student(s), it is at the intersection of teaching and learning". Finally, as a last definition, Heritage (2010) defined it as follows:

"Formative assessment, in particular, is something teachers do with and for students.

Teachers involve students with them in the assessment, thus students and teachers are partners, both sharing responsibility for learning. Formative assessment provides evidence for improving student learning"

In another words, Formative assessment is beneficial for both teachers and learners. To be clear more, teachers will use it to provide them with evidences about if their student's performance and producing an appropriate feedback. Students, on the other hand, will benefit from that feedback to improve their learning.

1.5.2 Types of formative assessment:

According to Cowie & Bell (1999) as cited in Hall (2004), there are two types of formative assessment namely planned formative assessment and interactive formative assessment.

1.5.2.1 Planned formative assessment:

For Cowie & Bell (1999), such assessment occasions are semi-formal and may occur at the beginning and end of a topic. It is used to elicit permanent evidence of the thinking of learners. The purpose of this kind of assessment is to improve teaching and learning. In this type, information is elicited through the task and activity, and then it will be interpreted. Teachers and/or learners act on this information with reference to the topic itself, to the learners' previous performance, and how teachers and learners are proposing to take learning forward.

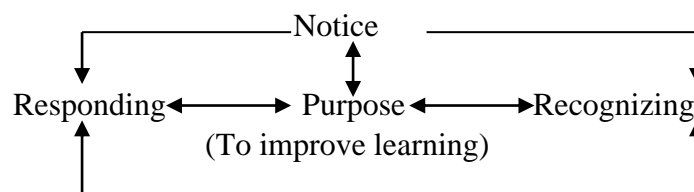
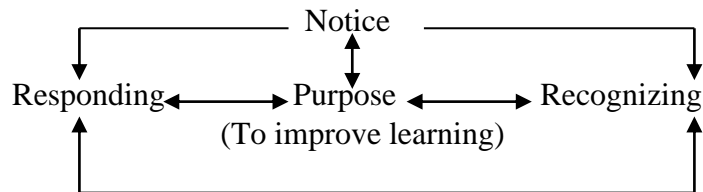


Figure 1 Planned formative assessment
Cowie & Bell (1999)

1.5.2.2 Interactive formative assessment:

This type is described by Cowie & Bell as taking place during the teacher-learner interaction. It cannot be anticipated, and it is an ongoing formative assessment that arises out of a learning activity. Also, it can occur at any time during interaction, and shares the same purpose of planned formative assessment which is to improve learning, but by intervening or mediating in the learners' learning. Therefore, the process of assessing involves the teacher noticing information about learners' thinking and acting, recognizing the significance of that information, and then responding or acting in relation to what is seemed to be worth noticing.

Unlike in the case of planned formative assessment where there is a long time gap in responding to learners' performance, in interactive formative assessment, the teachers' response is immediate.



**Figure 2 Interactive formative assessment
Cowie & Bell (1999)**

1.5.3 Stages of formative assessment:

Teachers continuously keep check in on students to make sure that they are improving every day. According to Greenstein (2010), there are 3 stages of formative assessment: prior, during and after instruction.

1.5.3.1 Formative assessment prior to instruction:

It is also called pre-assessment. It is the initial phase in which teachers need information to make accurate diagnoses and prescriptions for learning. This will eventually help them to identify their students' needs and what their final targets are. In order to engage students in the process of learning, teachers use this stage to:

- Determine students' backgrounds knowledge and reveal depth of understanding.
- Identify students' backgrounds, experiences and beliefs.
- Identify from where they got the information they currently possess about the upcoming topic.
- Guide both teachers and students for pursuing and reaching goals.
- Clarify the goal between their current and desired achievement levels.
- Make them focus and prepare their brains for learning.

Greenstein suggested some of the possible tools that can be used in this stage represented as follows: Entrance Slips, Corners, Gallery, and Sticky Notes.

1.5.3.2 Formative assessment during instruction:

It is also called ongoing assessment for ongoing learning. In this stage, teachers will try to customize their teaching in order to match the status of learning in the classroom. At this level, the information gathered by teachers help them to decide whether to backtrack to address points of confusion or to fast forward in the lesson. Teachers use this stage to:

- Measure the degree of understanding of their students.
- Identify those who are struggling with learning and provide them with feedback and assistance.
- Compare learning outcomes (for a whole-class or individuals) to the selected standards for the purpose of improvement i.e. to spotlight strengths, weaknesses, skills, and knowledge.
- Monitor how deeply students are understanding and thinking about a topic.
- Reveal the degree to which students have changed their minds or beliefs based on new information, research or group discussion. Changes mean students are absorbing and analyzing new information.
- Provide them with feedback and allow self-assessment in order to encourage them to engage in the learning process.

Greenstein suggested some of the possible tools that can be used in this stage represented as follows: Voting Cards, Fingers-Up, Time-Up, Graphic Organizers, Bump in the road, Questioning and the Socratic Method.

1.5.3.3 Formative assessment after instruction:

This is the final stage; it is also called post-instruction assessment. To clarify, its main purpose is to review students learning before summative assessment takes place. Additionally, it is used to identify areas in which students could use a bit more clarification, practice or more reinforcement. Teachers use this stage to:

- Identify the remaining gaps in students' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Select the final customized interventions to support students' learning in identified trouble spot.
- Validate learning progress and gain insights into the learning that has been occurred.
- Provide opportunities for thoughtful reflection. This can be represented through presentations, problem-solving techniques and portfolios...etc.

Ultimately, the teacher is the one who is responsible for making the final judgment. Greenstein suggested some of the possible tools that can be used in this stage represented as follows: Nutshelling, Ball Toss, Q&A Mix-Up and Grab Bag.

1.5.4 Examples of formative assessment in the classroom:

There are plenty of examples about the using of formative assessment in the classroom. Regier (2012) has provided 60 examples of formative assessment; however, we are going to discuss four of them.

1.5.4.1 Discussions: the teacher asks targeted questions and records informally students' responses. This can be done whole group, small group. Later, this information can be transferred to the student's grade pages or can be used for planning further instruction.

1.5.4.3 Questioning: asking questions is a great formative assessment strategy to depth the depth of students' understanding. The teachers challenges is students by asking challenging questions such as asking them to explain, justify, imagine or defend.

1.5.4.4 Think-Pair-Share: it is a great strategy to gather information about students' level of understanding. The teacher asks his students some questions, and then provides them with 20-30 second to think on their own. On a signal, they turn to their partner or group and discuss their ideas for approx one minute, and finally they share with the class for discussion.

1.5.4.2 Thumbs up, thumbs down: it is a quick comprehensive check to see if students understand the information presented. The teacher asks his students to give him thumbs up if they have understood, and thumbs down if they did not and need more clarification.

1.6 Formative Feedback:

1.6.1 Definition of formative feedback:

Formative feedback plays a central role in the process of formative assessment. It should be provided to students in order to improve their learning outcomes. Formative feedback is the information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning (Shute, 2008). Bruner (1970) says about formative feedback that “learning depends on knowledge of results, at a time when, and at a place where, the knowledge can be used for correction”. That is to say, It is not enough to just provide good quality feedback, but we must also provide this in a way that encourages students to use it and benefit from it. In the other hand, Irons (2008) described formative feedback as “any information, process or activity which affords or accelerates students learning based on comments relating to either formative assessment or summative assessment activities”. To clarify, formative feedback enables teachers to collect information about students’ learning and providing comments about their oral or written performance.

1.6.2 The importance of formative feedback:

As we mentioned before, formative feedback is a key element in the process of formative assessment. Race (1995) stated that “One of the most useful benefits of assessment for students can be feedback on their performance, the skills they are expected to develop, and their understanding of theories and concepts”. In addition, according to Raaheim (1991), students must be provided with the necessary information about their performance because even when they are given different forms of assessment to choose from, they find that their own progress is hard to judge because of the lack of feedback. Furthermore, feedback is

essential for learning and can play a significant role in students' development by providing knowledge required for improvement (Gibbs 1991; Hinett & Weeden 2000).

1.7 Peer Feedback:

According to Wikipedia, peer feedback is “a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards”. In other words, peer feedback provides students with opportunities to discuss ideas and issues with each others. As a result, students' motivation can increase, and their anxiety may become lower. As Atay & Kurt stated “In peer feedback sessions, students do not just listen to teacher instructions, but work with their peers and tend to get more practice. Students' anxiety may become lower which can increase learning motivation”.

1.8 Developing students' writing through the use of formative assessment:

Writing in English as a foreign language context is a complex task for both teachers and learners. It requires both intensive practice by the students and effective formal teaching by the teachers. Therefore, to develop their writing skills, learners need to well instructed and provided with the suitable activities. Teachers have the most direct access to information about students' learning, and are thus in a position to interpret and use that information to provide students with timely feedback, and to monitor the effectiveness of their own teaching (Shepard, 2003; Wilson, 2005; National Reseach Council, 2001). In the other hand, students need to recognize, evaluate, and react to their own learning and/or others' assessments of their learning (Cowie & Bell, 2001; Sadler 1989). Traditionally, writing' assessment was regarded as just giving grades to students' final products. According to Lee (2017) the assessment of writing has been influenced by the traditional method of using tests to afford grades. However, by using this method, students were unable to develop their writing, which eventually made the instructors change their focus of assessment from summative to

formative. Moreover, in order for instruction to be effective, teachers must also assess their students while learning is in progress to gain information about their developing understanding so that instruction can be adapted accordingly (Black, 1998). Recent studies have shown positive results about the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment in schools (National Research Council, 2007). Additionally, Black & William (1998) emphasized on the role of formative assessment, reporting that it is a powerful contributor to student learning since it improves standards of learning.

Conclusion:

Formative assessment can be considered to be an effective tool in the processes of teaching and learning. This chapter have defined the term assessment and identified its types. Then, it investigated the difference between assessment, evaluation and testing. Additionally, it reviewed formative assessment, identified its types and stages. Then, it moved to discuss the term formative feedback and its importance for students. Finally, it investigated how formative assessment is used as a tool in order to enhance students' writings.

Chapter Two: The Writing Skill

Introduction:

The process of learning any foreign language requires the mastery of the four skills: writing, speaking, listening and reading. Writing is considered to be a complex process that needs some effort to be fully mastered and acquired. This chapter will shed light on the writing skill. First, it includes various definitions of writing, and its relationship with other language skills (reading and speaking). It will also review how teachers teach writing and the approaches they use to teach it. In addition, this chapter will show the importance of writing in learning a foreign language. Then, it will focus on the main features that make writing more effective. Furthermore, it will also tackle the problems and difficulties that students may face when they write. Finally, it will discuss an important point which is how to assess writing.

2.1 Various definitions of the writing skill:

For decades, writing was considered to be the most complex and difficult skill compared to other skills. Therefore, it was defined from different angles by different scholars. For Crystal (1999) who stated that “writing is not a merely mechanical task, a simple matter of putting speech down on paper. It is an exploration in the use of graphic potential of a language-a creative process- an act of discovery”. In other words, writing is simply the task of putting words together in a piece of paper with the appropriate use of grammatical forms and terminology. According to Harmer 2007 as cited in Ben Sahla (2015) who indicated that “writing is a process that is, the stages the writer goes through in order to produce something in its final form” (p.4). This quote focuses on the steps that the writer follows to produce something complete and meaningful.

Furthermore, Hedge (2000) claimed that writing is a complex process which involves a number of steps such as: setting objectives, gathering information, selecting the appropriate language, drafting, reading, reviewing and finally revising and editing. Moreover, Nunan

(2003) stated that writing is not just about knowing how to organize the grammatical structures and using the correct terminology, but it is also cognitive, an intellectual activity that involves gathering information, finding ideas and knowing how to arrange them correctly. In addition, Widdowson, (2001) demonstrated that “Writing is the transformation of the linguistic rules of language into usage”.

2.2 Writing with other language skills:

The four language skills operate on correlation, each one is related to the others. The writing and speaking skill are productive while the reading and listening are receptive.

2.2.1 Writing and speaking:

Both writing and speaking are productive skills where their main concern is to communicate ideas and information through verbal and non-verbal language to a specific audience. O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba (1996) claimed that writing and speaking are two different language modes, they stated: “Speaking and writing are both different in origin and practice; spoken language is acquired without specific formal instructions, whereas writing must be taught and learnt through deliberate effort...”

That is to say, speaking or learning how to speak is acquired innately without any assistance, while writing is learned through making some efforts and the guidance of an instructor.

Brown (1994) has offered a summary of the differences between writing and speaking as follows:

- **Performance:** Writing is usually permanent and written texts cannot usually be changed once they have been written, while speaking is usually transitory and must be processed in real time.

- **Production time:** speakers generally have no time to plan or revise their speech. In the other hand, writers have more time to draft, plan, review, and revise their words before they produce them.
- **Distance:** involves the absence of a shared context between the writer and readers, there is no immediate feedback. Whereas, between the speaker and listener, the distance is there, and there is an immediate feedback.
- **Orthography:** unlike writing, speaking carries a considerable amount of information and it is rich of devices that allow speakers to enhance a message (for example: stress, intonation, pitch, volume, pressing).
- **Complexity:** written language is generally characterized by longer clauses and more subordinators, while spoken language have shorter clauses connected by coordinators, as well as more redundancy.
- **Formality:** Writing is considered to be more formal than speaking due to the social conventions that govern the language.
- **Vocabulary:** Oral speech contains a narrower variety of words, and an upper frequency words, than written speech.

An article conducted by Jossef Essberger discusses the idea of “Speaking versus Writing”. He argued that there are some differences between speaking and writing which are represented in: status, structure and style, and durability. For instance, by status he means that writing, for centuries, was regarded as superior to writing because almost everybody, in the past, could speak but only few could write. He regarded speaking as an automatic and natural process, in which he defined it as the real language while writing is only the representation of that language, and it is not natural. Moreover, by structure and style he means that, in writing, people usually tend to produce correct grammatical forms, organize the ideas and the information that have been gathered, and be selective when it comes to using the appropriate

vocabulary. Unlike writing, speaking is less structured and formal because it is not prepared in advance. Also the use of vocabulary differ, because in speaking there is no appropriate selection of words, people tend to use more familiar words that may include slangs. Finally, by durability, Essberger identified that writing is as permanent and everlasting; it may last for years or centuries whereas speaking is non-permanent and may live for just few moments.

2.2.2 Writing and reading:

Although writing and reading are two different skills from each other, the former is productive whereas the latter is receptive; however, they go hand to hand and complement each other. For instance, Eisterhold (1990) argued that reading different passages inside or outside the classroom will initially help learners to enhance their writing skill, in which he stated: “reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skill can be learned, or at least inferred”.

Furthermore, Johnson (2008) also highlighted that reading and writing are the opposite sides of one coin and both of them are independent, however through reading students will be aware of how words are correctly written, how to produce successful and correct grammatical forms, and it also help them to increase their vocabulary. Therefore, reading is considered to be the appropriate input to the development of the writing skill.

According to Kucer (2005) who stated that “the relationship between reading and writing is that of parallel or complementary processes”. In other words, each process has an impact on the other, for instance, those who tend to read more are expected to produce more meaningful and high quality of writing. Additionally, those who write tend to consider their reader reaction as well as their degree of comprehension of their writings.

2.3. Teaching writing:

Developing students’ competence in writing remains a difficult task for English as foreign language teachers. They have to be sure to select the suitable resources and the appropriate

materials that will be effective in helping their students to learn how to write. In addition, teachers have to develop some techniques in order to make learning easier. Therefore, the writing approaches help in facilitating the task of writing inside or outside the classroom.

2.3.1. The writing approaches:

2.3.1.1 The Product approach of writing:

This approach was used many years ago by English language teachers in the process of teaching writing. Furthermore, it was developed from the earliest views of the behaviourist theory of second language teaching and learning. Nunan (1991) defined the product approach as a product oriented approach that focuses on the results of the learning process in which the learner should be competent and fluent in the use of that target language.

The product approach is a traditional approach, in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage (Gabrielatos, 2002). It focuses on providing learners with samples, written texts, in which it aims to teach learners the surface and deep structure of a language within a specific context.

According to Steele (2004): the product approach comprises of four stages:

Stage one: Familiarization. Learners are asked to study the model texts highlighting grammatical or vocabulary features.

Stage two: Controlled writing. Learners practice the highlighted featured, usually in isolation.

Stage three: Guided writing. It is considered to be an important stage in which learners organize their ideas. For instance, teachers who favour this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves.

Stage four: free writing. In this stage, learners use the features they have developed in order to produce a piece of writing.

2.3.1.2 The process approach of writing:

The process writing approach came as a reaction to the product approach. Fowler (1989) acknowledged that the process approach of writing evolved as a reaction to the product approach, in that it met the need to match the writing processes inherent in writing in one's mother tongue, and consequently allow learners to express themselves better as individuals. That is to say, it allows learners to express themselves freely by using their own language and introducing their own ideas.

According to Tribble (1996) "the writing approach is an approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models". In another words, the writing process focuses on the individual ability in writing and aids him to produce a better quality.

The writing process is also the ability to translate ideas into a written text. According to Harmer (2004), writing has four stages, planning, drafting, editing and final version (publishing).

- **Planning:**

According to Harmer (2004), planning is the first stage of the writing process in which the students have to consider three main issues. First, they have to identify the purpose of writing. Then, they have to regard the language they will use. Finally, they have to select the content.

- **Drafting:**

Drafting is the second stage in the writing process, in which students need be given a considerable amount of time to elaborate the first draft focusing on the development and organization of ideas more than producing correct grammar, punctuation or spelling.

- **Editing:**

After making the first draft, students need to read again their pieces of writing in order to check if there are mistakes. If they found some, they have to correct and revise them. By doing so, the mistakes can be minimize.

- **Final version:**

It is the final stage, the final version of the piece of writing. Since there is much change in the editing stage, the final version can be much different from the first draft. Students, now, are ready to send out their writing to the readers.

These stages might be presented in the following way:



Figure 3 The writing process

2.3.1.3 The genre approach of writing:

Another approach to teaching writing is the genre approach. To define the genre approach, we have to define the term genre first. Swales (1981) as cited in Richard (1993), defined genre as: "... a more or less standardised communicative event with a goal or a set of goals mutually understood by the participants in that event and occurring within a functional rather than a social or personal setting".

Genre, either written or spoken, is often grouped according to its primary social purposes. Derewianka (1990) identified further six main genres according to their primary social purposes: (1) narratives: to tell a story; (2) recount: to tell what happened; (3) information reports: to provide factual information; (4) instruction: to tell the listeners or readers what to do; (5) explanation: to explain why or how something happens; (6) expository texts: to present or argue a viewpoint.

The genre approach is assumed to be an extension of the product approach in which it focuses on integrating the knowledge of a particular genre and its communicative purpose. Eventually, this will help learners to produce speeches to communicate with others in the same discourse community successfully. Terrible (1996) argued that: “writing is seen as an essentially social activity in which texts are written to do things, the assumption being that if the reader cannot recognize the purpose of a text, communication will not be successful”. So if the readers or listeners cannot identify the intentions and purposes of the speech, the communication will be lost.

Despite the fact that the genre approach is beneficial in helping students to produce written texts with confidence, it is less helpful in letting them understand the true message of the text. In addition the focus is more on how language is used and its purpose according to different contexts. Also, the genre approach is blamed for limiting the student’s creativity because writing is writing takes place through exploration and imitation of different kinds of models (Badger & White, 2000).

2.4 The importance of writing:

In the process of learning a foreign language, students’ ultimate objective of is learning how to write and speak. Writing has had always the upper hand on speaking because it is more used in formal and informal testing than speaking. Bacha (2002) stated that “writing is important in student’s academic course since most examinations, reports and research works depend on it”. Moreover, EFL students should learn how to write in order to express themselves effectively as Mc Arthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald (2008) stated “writing provides an importance mean to personal self-expression”. In addition, according to Rogers (2005), writing is a tool of communication that allows human beings to translate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings into language at any time and any place. He stated that: “Writing is one of the most significant cultural accomplishments of human beings, it allows us to record and convey

information and stories beyond the immediate moment. Writing allows to communicate at a distance, either at a distant place or at a distant time”.

2.5 Features of effective writing:

Writing is a crucial element in foreign language learning. Therefore, in order to be well understood by others, students’ pieces of writing need to be more effective. According to Starkey (2004), effective writing is based on four main elements: organization, clarity, word choice, and mechanics.

2.5.1 Organization:

Before writing, learners need to organize their thoughts and ideas. Using techniques such as, brainstorming, free writing, and outlining will eventually help them to make their writings more effective. Organization is a basic element in writing, due to the fact that it provides guidance and directions. In addition, it shows students how they are going to develop their ideas in a framework and clearly maps out any type of production they are going to write. Moreover, according to Shannon (2011) writer may use formal or informal techniques in order to organize their material into a cohesive whole. The informal techniques are represented in: brainstorming, free writing, mind mapping, and generating a list or questions. In the other hand, writers may use formal techniques such as the classic outline.

2.5.2 Clarity:

Clarity means to say exactly what you mean as clearly and concisely as you can. The goal is to make your productions readable and to make your audience grasp the message of your writing. Starkey (2004) has provided five steps in order to make your writings more clear, which are represented as follows.

- Avoid ambiguous language by staying away from words and phrases that have more than one meaning; and correcting word order that conveys a meaning different from the one intended.

- Use modifiers, such as powerful and specific adjectives and adverbs, to clarify your writing. Replace vague words and phrases with ones that are specific.
- Be concise by eliminating unnecessary words and phrases, and using the active voice whenever possible.
- Don't repeat ideas or information in your essay; it is a sign of sloppy writing and wastes valuable time and space.
- Pronouns should be used when the antecedent is obvious and meaningful.

In addition, Shannon (2001) stated that “In revising, authors should look carefully at their word choice and usage. Using the most precise wording and ensuring ideas are communicated clearly result in a more readable work”. In other words, she highlighted the idea of making the words clear will result in making the written work more understandable to the audience.

2.5.3 Word choice:

One of the best ways to ensure that your audience understand what you are writing is to choose the right words. According to Starkey (2004), both the denotative and connotative meanings have to be considered when making word choices. The denotative meaning refers to the literal meaning of words, whereas the connotative one refers to the implied meaning, which involves emotions, cultural assumptions and suggestions. Furthermore, choosing the right words is very helpful in getting a positive message across and avoiding confusion and misunderstanding. In addition, Kane (2000) stated that: “Words, then, are far from being tokens of fixed and permanent value. They are like living things, complex, many sided, and responsive to pressures from their environment. They must be handled with care”. That is to say, if a writer wants to express himself clearly and his writing to be readable, he has to carefully choose his words.

2.5.4 Mechanics:

According to Starkey (2004), mechanics are grammar, punctuation and capitalization mistakes. Therefore, if they want to greatly improve their writings, learners should avoid or correct those mistakes. Also, according to Kane (2000), mechanics refers to the appearance of words, to how they are spelled or arranged on a paper. The mastery of mechanics will make students' writings consistent and clear. Both of the scholars described the rules of mechanics as being complex; however Kane (2000) stressed that punctuation is much more complicated subject.

2.6 Writing difficulties:

Writing among other language skills is considered to be a difficult process. Student who tend to write a good piece of writing, in the target foreign language or even in their mother tongue, face some difficulties when the teacher ask them to write paragraphs or essays. Grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling are some of those difficulties that students struggle with (Seely 1998).

2.6.1 Grammar:

Seely (1998) defined grammar as follows: "A group of rules that determine how language works, and describe things in a practical way. It can be classified into: syntax...and morphology..." to explain, for him, grammar is considered to be the basis of learning any foreign language. Seely also argued that the majority of learners consider grammar to be too difficult to grasp due to the way it has been introduced to them in schools. Thus, the difficulties that they may face with grammar may restrain their achievement in writing.

2.6.2 Punctuation:

Punctuation was defined by Seely to be a group of rules that facilitate reading the written English in which it is used not only for decoration, but to separate text into sections to make it comprehensible for the readers. Many students misuse or do not use at all the punctuation

markers when they are writing, this might be because their lack of recognition that each punctuation mark has its unique function. As a result, their writing will appear poor to the reader, and they may not fully understand the message conveyed in the text.

2.6.3 Vocabulary:

Tosuncuoglu (1973) argued that “any language has its own difficulties concerning word’s mastery”. His claim is that learning the words of a foreign language is not an easy task to do because every word has its form, meaning and usage. For instance, Seely also said that due to the richness and the variation of English language, EFL learners find it difficult to understand the English vocabulary; he stated: “English is not static but dynamic, its vocabulary and grammar continue to develop and change, as they have done for centuries”. Furthermore, Seely (1998) classified the English vocabulary as follows:

- **Active Vocabulary:** includes all the words that we know and use in our daily life
- **Passive Vocabulary:** includes the words that we can grasp when reading, but we do not always remember them when writing.
- **Vocabulary in the Process of Moving from being Passive to being Active (or vice versa):** includes words that we use after a lot of thinking (i.e. we have a doubt about their exact meaning).
- **Vocabulary that is beginning to enter the Passive Vocabulary:** includes words that we are familiar with, but their meaning is not clear.
- **Vocabulary that we have never dealt before:** includes words that we have never seen before.

2.6.4 Spelling:

When writing, spelling is considered to be one of the most difficult tasks that face EFL learners. One reason is that, English language letters do not have a direct relation with their sounds; for instance, English has over forty sounds, but only twenty-six letters in alphabets.

So, in order to produce the missing sound, EFL learners have to combine letters in different ways Seely (1998). Another reasons why spelling is difficult for EFL learners is because many words have been derived from other languages, the majority kept their original spelling, but changed their pronunciation.

2.7 Assessing Writing:

For decades, assessing EFL students' achievement in writing was not an easy task for teachers. Therefore, teachers used different techniques in order to enhance their students' writings. Assessment is "the process of collecting, analysing and recording information about student progress towards achievement of syllabus outcomes" (Writing and spelling strategies, 2007, p.17). A process of assessing students' writing achievement according to writing and spelling strategies (2007, p.18) is as follow:

- Carefully collecting samples of students' writing, to provide evidence of progress.
- Observing students' behaviour and interacting with them as they engage in the process of writing.
- Analysing the students' basic test results.
- Using student self-assessment recorded on self-editing checklists, self monitoring sheets and questionnaires.
- Conducting three-way conferences where the teacher, parent and student meet to discuss the outcomes achieved and address relevant issues; discussing student progress with teaching staff.
- Finally, consulting with outside specialists.

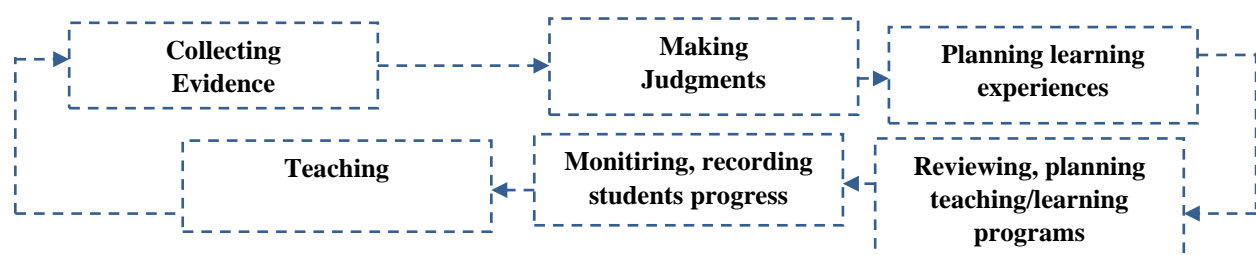


Figure 4 A process for assessing writing achievement

In addition, assessment of students' writings should not only focus on language rules and correctly following the stages of writing, but also the information included with their writings, in order to support their ideas as Mackenzie, Scull and Munsie (2013) claim that "assessment systems should consider content and process". This issue was also supported by Harmer (2004) as he stated "when responding to students' work we are not only concerned with the accuracy of their performance but also – and this is crucial – with the content and design of their writing".

Conclusion:

Although writing is a difficult skill, it is significant for students in the process of learning the target language, and it is one of the basic elements in the curriculum of foreign language teaching. To conclude, this chapter have provided a theoretical background about the writing skill. It started by presenting different definitions of writing from different aspects. Then, it moved to describe the relationship with writing and other language skills which are speaking and reading. Next, it reviewed the point of teaching writing and the three writing approaches that are mostly used by teachers. After that, it covered the importance of the writing skills and some of the main features that make writing more effective. Additionally, it shed light on the major difficulties that EFL learners may face when they are engaged in the process of writing. Finally, it discussed a crucial element which is the assessment of the writing skill.

Chapter Three:

Data Analysis

Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the data collection and analysis. It provides a description of the research tool used in this research. The analysis of data gathered by students and teachers' online questionnaires as well as its interpretation is also presented in this chapter. Data analysis will be reported in tabular presentations so that the results will be clearer. By the end of the chapter, the researcher suggested some recommendations.

3.1 Research Instruments:

For the purpose of finding out the aims of the present research, answering our research questions and confirming or rejecting our hypotheses and due to the corona virus, an online questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool. We have administered two online questionnaires for both, third year students and written expression teachers.

3.2 Students' Questionnaire:

There are many reasons why we used the online questionnaire. First, classes were cancelled due to the corona virus; as a result we could not make any type of direct contact with students. Also, the online questionnaire can be used with a large number of subjects; giving them time to answer the items, the data gathered will be more reliable. Finally, this questionnaire is mainly designed to answer three questions, How are third year EFL students being assessed? What are teachers and students' attitudes and opinions toward the use of formative assessment as a technique to enhance the writing skill? To what extent does formative assessment contribute in improving 3rd year EFL students' writing skill?

3.2.1 Piloting the Questionnaire:

It is important to pre-test the questionnaire on a group of students similar to the intended sample before administering it. Piloting the questionnaire helps in discovering possible weaknesses in some items or deleting others which are inappropriate and unrelated to the subject. Unfortunately, due to the corona virus again, we could not pilot or pre-test the

questionnaire. However, it was checked by the supervisor. As a result, some items were reformulated and some were deleted.

3.2.2 Administration of the Questionnaire:

Students' online questionnaire was distributed on 18 May 2020. The questionnaire was randomly distributed online to third year students at the department of foreign languages, English division, Biskra University on their Facebook group. The total number of third year students is 369, but only 31 of them have answered this questionnaire.

3.2.3 Description of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of 18 items. These items are required to be answered either in (yes/no) questions , or in picking-up the most appropriate answer from a series of options , and ask students to provide their opinions , and justifications. This questionnaire involves three parts: the first one includes general information consists of items from 1 to 3 about students' gender, their level in English, and which language skill do they have the most problems with. The next part consists of items from 4 to 9 which investigate students' attitudes towards the writing skill and their major writing difficulties. The last part includes items from 10 to 18 aiming at gathering information about students' preferences concerning the way to be assessed. Besides, it seeks to find out their attitudes towards the role of formative assessment in improving their writing skill. Also, they have been asked about how can the teacher' usage of formative assessment help in improving their writing productions.

3.2.4 Results of Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Item 1: Gender

| Gender | Number | Percentages |
|--------|--------|-------------|
| Male | 12 | 38,7% |
| Female | 19 | 61,3% |

Table 1 Students' Gender

The participants of answering this questionnaire are 31 students. The table shows that 19 of them (61,3%) are females while 12 of them (38,7%) are males. It is noticed that the number of females is higher than males which may be due to the fact that females are more interested in studying foreign languages in general and English in particular.

Item 2: How can you describe your level in English?

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| Excelent | 3 | 9,7% |
| Good | 22 | 71% |
| Average | 6 | 19,4% |
| Weak | 0 | 0 |

Table 2 Students' levels in English

This item was asked in order to know the students' level in English language. According to the statistics above, most of students (71%) have a good level in English, while (19,4%) have an average level, and only (9,7%) have an excellent level. From the results we can infer that all the participants in answering this questionnaire have an acceptable level in English language.

Item 3: Which skill do you have the most problems with?

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|-----------|--------|-------------|
| Writing | 14 | 45,2% |
| Speaking | 13 | 41,9% |
| Reading | 0 | 0% |
| Listening | 4 | 12,9% |

Table 3 The skill that most of students have problems with

This question was asked in order to know do students found mostly difficult. The results shows that 14 students (45,2%) have a problem with the writing skill, while 13 student (41,9%) have problem with the speaking skill, and only four students (12,9%) have a problem with the listening skill. That is to say, the majority of students have problems with the productive skills, writing and speaking, and that might be due to some reasons such as: the lack of linguistic competence, lack of practice for reading, and lack of participation in the classroom...etc.

Section Two: The writing skill

Item 4: In your opinion, is writing an easy task?

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| Yes | 10 | 32,3% |
| No | 21 | 67,7% |

Table 4 The difficulty of writing

This question was asked in order to investigate the difficulty of the writing skill according to students. Most of the students (67,7%) think that it is not an easy task, whereas ten students (32,3%) think that it is an easy task. In other words, students are may be facing some problems preventing them from producing a good pieces of writings.

The justifications of “yes” answers were summarized as follows:

- Yes it is, because the writing process relies on ideas and information which means that the students are asked to have a background, of course that come from reading, so that they could write perfect paragraph, essay...etc. (4 students)

- Yes it is, because if you follow the rules of how to write correctly, it will be an easy task. (5 students)
- Yes it is, because if you were acquainted with proper vocabulary, grammatical structure, and communicative competence it may be an easy task. (1 student)

The justifications of “no” answers were summarized as follows:

- Writing is not an easy task because it needs extensive practice. (5 students)
- Writing is not an easy task due to the fact that it requires the mastery of grammatical rules, using proper vocabulary, and to know how to plan and organize your ideas. (12 students)
- Writing is not an easy task because it requires the knowledge of enough information about certain topic. (2students)
- Writing is difficult because it requires the mastery of other skills such as: critical thinking, planning, brainstorming...etc. (2 students)

Item 5: How do you assess your level of writing in English?

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------------|--------|-------------|
| Good | 13 | 41,9% |
| Average | 18 | 58,1% |
| Weak | 0 | 0% |

Table 5 Students' level in English Writing

This question was asked in order to investigate the students' level of writing in English. As the table have shown, 18 students (58,1%) have picked “average” as an answer, and 13 students (41,9%) have picked “good” as an answer. We can conclude that students were able to produce acceptable pieces of writing, but still they cannot demonstrate a mastery of the writing aspects.

Item 6: Which aspect do you find the most difficult when you write? (you can choose more than one answer)

- a. Grammar
- b. Vocabulary
- c. Mechanics (Punctuation, capitalization and spelling)
- d. Lack of ideas
- e. Organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion)

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------------|--------|-------------|
| a+b+c+e | 1 | 3% |
| a+b+c | 1 | 3% |
| a+b+d | 1 | 3% |
| a+b+e | 1 | 3% |
| a+c+e | 1 | 3% |
| a+d+e | 1 | 3% |
| b+c+d | 1 | 3% |
| c+d+e | 1 | 3% |
| a+d | 3 | 10% |
| a+e | 1 | 3% |
| b+c | 1 | 3% |
| b+d | 2 | 7% |
| b+e | 3 | 10% |
| c+d | 1 | 3% |
| d+e | 2 | 7% |
| A | 1 | 3% |
| B | 2 | 7% |
| C | 1 | 3% |
| D | 2 | 7% |
| E | 4 | 13% |
| Total | 31 | 100% |

Table 6 Students' most difficult aspect when they write in English

This question was asked in order to know which aspect is the most difficult for students when they write in English. It is noticed that students' choices are multiple. It seems like all the mentioned above difficulties equally have an impact on students' writings. However, the

lack of ideas and the organization of ideas are the major problems that prevent students from producing good pieces of writing.

Item 7: Your weaknesses in writing in English are due to? (you can choose more than one answer)

- a. Lack of reading
- b. Lack of ideas
- c. Lack of practice
- d. Lack of motivation
- e. All of them

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------|--------|------------|
| a+b+c | 2 | 7% |
| E | 4 | 13% |
| a+b | 1 | 3% |
| a+c | 9 | 29% |
| a+d | 1 | 3% |
| b+c | 2 | 7% |
| b+d | 1 | 3% |
| c+d | 3 | 10% |
| A | 1 | 3% |
| C | 4 | 13% |
| D | 1 | 3% |
| e+others | 1 | 3% |
| Others | 1 | 3% |
| Total | 31 | 100% |

Table 7 Reasons behind students weaknesses in writing in English

Other suggestions:

- Sometimes it's just not a interesting topic to deal with.
- I lack some spelling due to the fact that some words are difficult to spell somehow, also when I use words that not well known for reader.

This question was displayed to students in order to know reasons behind their weaknesses in writing in English. It is noticed that students' choices are multiple. We came to the

conclusion that the participants suffer from all the mentioned above reasons; however, the lack of reading (books, articles, stories...etc) and the lack of practicing writing in the classroom seem to be the major reasons behind the students' failure to produce a good pieces of writings.

Item 8: When you commit a mistake in writing assignments, do you like to be corrected?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 30 | 96,8% |
| No | 1 | 3,2% |

Table 8 Students' attitudes toward correcting their mistakes when they write

This question was asked in order to know students' attitudes towards correcting their assignments by the teacher. The table show that (96,8%) of the students like to be assessed by the teacher while (3,2%) do not. From the results, we can understand that the majority of students like to be give feedback about their written works in order to improve their skills in writing.

Item 9: Do you prefer?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|--------|------------|
| Self-correction | 4 | 12,9% |
| Peer correction | 6 | 19,4% |
| Teacher's correction | 21 | 67,7% |

Table 9 Students' preferences of types of correction

This item was asked in order to know what type of correction students prefer. The table shows that the majority of them (67,7%) prefer the teachers' correction, some students (19,4%) prefer peer correction, while the remaining others (12,9%) prefer self-correction. That is to say, the majority of students take into account the written or oral feedback given by the teacher in order to improve their performance.

Section Three: The use of Formative Assessment

Item 10: in order to assess your writing, which type of assessment does your teacher use?

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

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| A | 22 | 71% |
| B | 9 | 29% |

Table 10 The teacher's way of assessing his students' writings

This question was addressed to the students in order to know which type of assessment is used by teachers in order to assess their students' writings. As it is shown in the table, the majority of students (71%) have stated that their teachers use formative assessment most of the time, whereas the other students (29%) stated that their teachers stick only to summative assessment. That is to say, most of the teachers adopt formative assessment as an effective tool of assessing students writing. Also, we can understand that formative assessment is a crucial element of the teaching/learning process that helps the teachers tracking their students' progress.

Item 11: Does your teacher of written expression provide you with feedback about your writings?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 23 | 74,2% |
| No | 8 | 25,8% |

Table 11 Teachers' feedback

This question was asked to know if students are getting provided with feedback about their writings by their teachers or not. As the results have shown, 23 students (74,2%) have responded with "yes" answer, whereas in the other hand, 8 students (25,8%) have responded

with no answer. From the results, we can conclude that students most of the time receive feedback about their writings from their teachers.

-If yes, how often does he provide you with it?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------------|--------|------------|
| Always | 2 | 6,9% |
| Sometimes | 17 | 58,6% |
| Rarely | 10 | 34,5% |

Table 12 Frequency of teachers' feedback provision

This item was added to the previous question in order to know the frequency of teachers' feedback provision. As the table shows, the majority of students (58,6%) answered with "sometimes", while (34,5%) answered with "rarely", and only (6,9%) answered with "always". That is to say, due to the overcrowded classes, teachers are unable to respond to all pieces of writing of his students.

Item 12: Which form of feedback does he/she provides you with?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------------|--------|------------|
| Oral feedback | 9 | 29% |
| Written feedback | 8 | 25,% |
| Both | 14 | 45,2% |

Table 13 Different forms of feedback used by the teacher

This question was raised in order to know which form of feedback the teacher uses in order to provide his students with it. Most of the students (45,2%) answered with "both". This means that the majority consider both the written and oral feedback as equally important and using both of them is crucial in order to help the student improving his skills.

Item 13: At which stage does the teacher of written expression correct your mistakes?

- a. During the course
- b. At the end of an instructional unit

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| A | 21 | 67,7% |
| B | 10 | 32,3% |

Table 14 Teachers' stages of correction

This item was asked in order to know at what time teachers of written expression correct their students' mistakes. As it is show at the table, 21 students (67,%) have voted with "during the instructions", while ten students (32,3%) voted with "at the end of an instructional unit". From the results, we can conclude that the majority of teachers are trying to keep in touch with every student' written work in the classroom in order to track their progress. This eventually will help the students to develop their writing skills.

Item 14: Does the teacher's feedback help you to improve your writing production?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 29 | 93,5% |
| No | 2 | 6,5% |

Table 15 Contribution of teachers' feedback in improving students' written productions

This question was added in order to know if the teachers' feedback helps students to improve their written productions. The majority of students (93,5%) answered with "yes". From the results, we can understand that students take into consideration their teacher's feedback because it helps them to improve their writing skills.

The justifications of "yes" answers were summarized as follows:

- The teacher is kind of an expert, so his feedback should be seriously taken. (6 students)
- Feedback is an essential part of the teaching process; it promotes learning to another level in which learners will be able to find a room to define their gaps, lacks, and mostly the difficulties they face during any language skill including writing. (8 students)
- It helps the students to be aware of their mistakes, so they will not repeat it again. (10 students)

- Yes the teacher's feedback help us to enhance our writings. (5 students)

The justification of “no” answers were summarized as follows:

- No it does not, he/she should give a good explanation about how to write in a perfect way instead of just give a task and asks for the papers and never corrects them or just picking the best one and read it to us this is an ineffective technique. (2 student)

Item 15: Does your teacher of written expression implement formative assessment during the writing course?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 24 | 77,4% |
| No | 7 | 22,6% |

Table 16 The implementation of formative assessment in the writing course

This question investigates the use of formative by the teachers during the writing course. Most of the student (77,4%) admit that their teachers implement formative assessment during the written course. That is to say, most of the teachers use formative assessment during the written course as a useful tool in order to help them improve their writings.

-If yes, how often does he implement it?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------------|--------|------------|
| Always | 3 | 11,5% |
| Sometimes | 16 | 61,5% |
| Rarely | 7 | 26,9% |

Table 17 The frequency of the implementation of formative assessment in the writing course

This item was added in order to know the frequency of the implementation of formative assessments in the classroom by teachers. The table shows that (61,5%) have answered with “sometimes”, (26,9%) have answered with “rarely”, and (11,5%) have answered with “always”. From the results, we can understand that in most of the time, teachers assess their students formatively.

Item 16: Do you think that it is important to be assessed formatively by the teacher in order to enhance your writing?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 30 | 96,8% |
| No | 1 | 3,2% |

Table 18 The importance of formative assessment in enhancing students' writings

This question was asked to students in order to know if it is important to be assessed formatively by teachers in order to enhance their writings. It is noticed that most of the students (96,8%) answered with “yes”. That is to say, the majority of students agree the formative assessment is a crucial element of the learning process, and it is an effective tool that helps them to improve their writing skills.

The justifications of “yes” answer were summarized as follows:

- Yes it is important, because students will be motivated and consequently perform better. (5 students)
- Yes, being assessed formatively by the teachers is important because it will help me to know my mistakes, and avoid repeating them in the future. (11 students)
- Stepping up your writing productions by the teacher is a great way to improve at a faster rate. (4 students)
- Frequent assessment is always a successful strategy to foster students’ skills especially the writing skill. (6 students)
- Formative assessment is the idea to focus on the immediate and to correct the content over everything. It is a crucial element of the learning process and cannot be separated from it even with technological development. (1 student)
- Having someone who keep assessing you formatively and tracking your progress will certainly enhance your writing skill. (2 students)

The justifications of “no” answers:

- It would lead to inhibition and anxiety in which continuous or formative assessment may do. (1 student)

Item 17: To what extent do you think that the use of formative assessment by the teacher helps you to improve your writing?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|--------|------------|
| A very great deal | 9 | 29% |
| A lot | 19 | 61,3% |
| Very little | 3 | 9,7% |
| Not at all | 0 | 0% |

Table 19 The contribution of formative assessment in enhancing students' writings

This question was added in order to know the degree of usefulness of the implementation of formative assessment by teachers to improve their students' writings. Well, the table show that the majority (61,3%) thinks that it is helpful a lot, and some of them (29%) thinks that it is helpful to a very great deal, while only a few number of them (9,7%) thinks that it is helpful to a very little extent. From the results, we can conclude that the majority of students agree formative assessment contributes in enhancing their writing skills, and using it by the teacher in the classroom is, indeed, important.

Item 18: In few words, say how can the teacher's usage of formative assessment helps in improving your writing productions?

This is an open-ended question, in which students have been asked to state their opinions about how can the teachers' usages of formative assessment helps in improving their writing productions. All of them have responded to this question. So, their answers were summarized as follows:

- When the teacher frequently use formative assessment, students feels they are well connected with the teacher, they feel motivated, hard workers and comfortable with the teacher to keep writing and develop the skill. (6 students)

- Formative assessment takes place during instruction. It provides assessment-based feedback to students. The function of this feedback is to help students make adjustments that will improve students' achievement of intended curricular aims. (1 student)
- Formative assessment plays an important role in order to not make the same mistakes and to acquire knowledge and to develop our writing skill. (10 students)
- The teacher's must provide positive feedback to the students as a key component to improve their writing performance and to overcome their deficiencies, also to get more tasks to do in order to improve your writing. (3 students)
- Formative assessment should be used in every session for any language skill, its way to promote learning. In addition, formative assessment enables teachers to know where they stand in their process of teaching, the quantity and the quality that they provide to their learners. All in all, formative assessment will always go first, as well as this will take the lead in every class English or any other, "assessment doesn't know any field it occurs in all especially formative assessment". (1 student)
- Students need teacher's guidance and feedback. The teacher should not delay correcting students' pieces of writing. Students like to have the teacher by their side in every session. This will give students motivation and self confidence to practice writing more and eventually enhance their writing skill. (4 students)
- It is an important part of education in which the teacher must use it to support his students to write. (3 students)
- Because teachers are more experienced. Their use of formative assessment will help their students to enhance their writing skills. (4 students)

This question was asked in order to know students attitudes toward the use of formative assessment in the classroom by their teachers. From the results, we can conclude that the

students have shown a positive attitude toward the use of formative assessment in the classroom. In addition, all of them agree that being assessed formatively by the teacher will not only help them to improve their writing skill but will also raise their motivation to learn more.

3.2.5 Interpretation and discussion of the results:

Section One: General Information:

In the first section, the analysis of the data gathered shows that the majority of participants (61,3%) are females. In addition, it shows that a considerable number of them (71%) have a good level in English. So, most of them are well familiar with the English language. Writing and speaking are the most difficult skills that students have problems with as the results have shown. That is to say, this difficulty might be due to the lack of practicing the language either in written or oral activities inside or outside the classroom.

Section Two: The Writing Skill:

In this section, the majority of participant (67,7%) admitted that writing is a difficult task due to the fact that it requires the mastery of the target language and extensive practice. The majority of students stated that they have an average level in writing in English. However, they do face some difficulties which are represented in the lack of ideas and the ability to organize them. Beside the difficulties, students also stated that the lack of ideas and lack of practice of the writing skill inside or outside the classroom are the main reasons behind student's failure in producing high level pieces of writing. Furthermore, the majority of participant (67,7%) prefer teachers' correction, in which most of them (96,8%) like to be corrected by teachers whenever they commit mistakes in their writing assignments. From the result, we can conclude that the teacher is an expert whose feedback is seriously taken into consideration by students.

Section Three: The Use of Formative Assessment:

Concerning this section, the majority of the students (71%) stated that their teachers do use formative assessment in order to assess their writings. In addition, most of the students (74,2%) declared that their teachers are sometimes providing them with both written and oral feedback. This shows that feedback is a crucial element of teaching and learning, and its delivery is related to the number of students in the classroom and time. A considerable number of students (93,5%) admitted that teachers' feedback is really helpful for them in order to improve their writing skill. Besides, they reported that most of the teachers do correct their mistakes during the course. Moreover, the majority of students confirmed that their teachers do use formative assessment in the classroom; however, due to the overcrowded classes and time, teachers cannot always use it. Additionally, students have shown positive attitudes toward being assessed formatively by their teachers, in which most of them (61,3%) are well aware of its usefulness in improving their writing skills. Finally, all the students agree that formative assessment is a crucial element of the teaching/learning process, and using it in the classroom will eventually help them in developing their writing skills.

3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire:

We use the online questionnaire with teachers due to the fact that we could not make any type of face to face contact with them. Also, it is a much quicker way to collect reliable data. This questionnaire attempts to answer the research main three questions, and to confirm or reject our hypotheses.

3.3.1 Piloting the Questionnaire:

This online questionnaire was checked by the supervisor. As a result, some items were reformulated and some were deleted. The piloting stage of the questionnaire is important;

however, as we mentioned before in the students' questionnaire, due to corona virus we could not pre-test the questionnaire.

3.3.2 Administration of the Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was distributed on 18th May 2020. It was administered online to written expression teachers at the department of foreign languages, English division, Biskra University. Seven (7) teachers participated in answering this questionnaire.

3.3.3 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire:

The questionnaire consists of twenty items (20). These items are required to be answered either in (yes/no) questions , or in picking-up the most appropriate answer from a series of options , and ask teachers to provide their opinions , and justifications. This questionnaire involves three parts: the first one includes background information consists of items from 1 to 3 about teachers' situation, their qualifications, and years of experience. The next part consists of items from 4 to 8 which investigate teachers' attitudes towards the writing skill, the approaches they use, and the most common mistakes they found when correcting pieces of writings. In addition, it investigates the purpose of assessing the writing skill, its importance, and which part do teachers focus on when they correct. The last part includes items from 9 to 20 aiming at gathering information about teachers' feedback provision, when and how they correct their students' writings. Furthermore, it seeks answer about which type of feedback and assessment do they use to assess their students' writings, general information about the use of formative assessment and if they implement it in their classrooms. Besides, it seeks to find out if there are any problems preventing them from using formative assessment in classrooms and to what extent it is useful to enhance their students' writings. Also, they have been asked to add any ideas or comments on the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writings.

3.3.4 Results of Students' Questionnaire:

Section One: Background Information:

Item 1: Situation

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Part-time teacher | 7 | 100% |
| Permanent teacher | 0 | 0% |

Table 20 Teachers' situation

The results show that all teachers whom contributed in answering this questionnaire are permanent teachers at the University of Biskra. That is to say, they are high level teachers with enough experience, in which we can depend on their answers to this questionnaire.

Item 2: Qualifications

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------|------------|
| Master/Magister (MA) | 4 | 57,1% |
| Doctorate (PHD) | 3 | 42,9% |

Table 21 Teachers' qualifications

From the results above we can say that our sample is qualified for teaching. Four of them (57,1%) have master/magister degree while the other three (42,9%) have the doctorate degree.

Item 3: Experience

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------|--------|------------|
| 1-5 years | 2 | 28,6% |
| 5-10 years | 0 | 0% |
| More than 10 years | 5 | 71,4% |

Table 22 Teachers years of experience

From the results, we can notice that five teachers (71,4%) have been teaching at the University for more than Ten years which means they are well experienced in teaching English in EFL classes. However, just two teachers (28,6%) have a short teaching experience. The results show once again that our sample is highly qualified.

Section Two: The writing Skill:

Item 4: Which approach do you adopt in teaching writing?

| Response | Number | Percentages |
|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| The product approach | 0 | 0% |
| The process approach | 0 | 0% |
| The genre approach | 0 | 0% |
| All of them | 7 | 100% |

Table 23 Teachers' adoption of the writing approaches

This question was asked in order to investigate which approach do teachers of written expression adopt when they teach the writing skill. All of them agree on the idea of the diversification in using the approaches and not to stick just to one, as the result have shown.

The justifications of this question were summarized as follow:

- The adaptation of the right approach in teaching the writing skill depends on the type of the writing activity.(4 teachers)
- The adaptation of the right approach depends on the level of the student. The process approach is used with low level students, those who are beginners in writing, whereas, the other two approaches are used with more advanced level students.(2 teachers)
- To fulfil the aims of the writing skill learning, diversification is important.(1 teacher)

Item 5: What are the most common difficulties that your students face when they write?

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Mechanics (Punctuation, capitalization and spelling)
- Lack of ideas
- Organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion)

| Response | Number | percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| A+b+c+d+e+others (generating ideas) | 1 | 14% |
| A+b+c+d+e | 1 | 14% |
| A+b+c+e | 2 | 29% |
| A+b+d+e | 1 | 14% |
| A+b+e | 2 | 29% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |

Table 24 Most common difficulties that most students face when they write

This question was asked in order to know the common difficulties that students face when they write. It is noticed that teachers' choices are multiple. This means that there are many difficulties that face the students when they write. As the table shown, all the difficulties mentioned above made an impact; however, grammar, vocabulary and the organization of ideas are the most common difficulties that prevent students from producing good pieces of writing.

Item 6: When correcting your students' writing, are you interested in?

| Response | Number | percentage |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Form | 0 | 0% |
| Content | 0 | 0% |
| Both | 7 | 100% |

Table 25 Teachers' focus when correcting their students' writings

This item was raised in order to know which aspect of correcting do teachers focus on more. All the teachers agree that both the form and the content are important when correcting their students' writings, in which all of them (100%) answered with "both".

The justifications of this answer were summarised as follow:

- They are complementary and interrelated. Students should produce a correct writing in terms of spelling, grammar and mechanics as well as generating good ideas with respecting their organization and coherence.(5 teachers)
- Both the form and the content are important.(2 teachers)

Item 7: What is your purpose in assessing the writing skill?

- a. Providing feedback
- b. Planning the course based on students' proficiency level
- c. Monitoring students' progress
- d. Others

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| A | 3 | 42,9% |
| B | 0 | 0% |
| C | 3 | 42,9% |
| D | 1 | 14,3% |

Table 26 The purpose of assessing the writing skill

Others:

- Developing students' writing through making them practice.

The objective of this question was to figure out the purpose of assessing the writing skill. The results show that three teachers (42,9%) assess their students' writing in order to provide them with feedback, whereas the other three (42,9%) assess their students' writings in order to monitor their progress. Additionally, just one teacher provided another purpose of assessing writing which is "developing students' writing through making them practice".

Item 8: Do you think that correcting your students' writing is important?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 7 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |

Table 27 The importance of correcting students' writings

This question was asked in order to know if the correction of students' writings is important. The results show that all the teachers agree that correcting the students' productions is important, in which seven of them (100%) answered with "yes".

The justifications of this answer were summarized as follow:

- Correcting students' writing will help their providing them with feedback. Feedback is essential in helping students to know their weaknesses and be aware of them. Also, the teacher's correction serve as a guideline for students in order to evaluate their work progress.(7 teachers)

Section Three: The Use of Formative Assessment

Item 9: Do you provide your students with feedback about their writings?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 7 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |

Table 28 Teachers' feedback about students' writings

This question was asked in order to know whether teachers provide their students with feedback about their writings or not. As the table have shown, all the teachers (100%) answered with “yes”, which means that providing students with any kind of feedback is essential.

-If yes, how often do you provide them with it?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|------------------|--------|------------|
| Always | 6 | 85,7% |
| Sometimes | 1 | 14,3% |
| Rarely | 0 | 0% |

Table 29 Frequency of teachers' feedback provision

This item was added to the previous question in order to know the frequency of teachers' feedback provision. As the results have shown, most of the teachers (87,7%) always provide their students with feedback. That is to say, teachers agree that feedback provision is crucial in order to make students aware of their mistakes and to improve their writings.

Item 10: When do you correct?

- a. When the students are writing
- b. Correct the final draft

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| A | 0 | 0% |
| B | 7 | 100% |

Table 30 teachers' time of correction

By asking this question, we attempt to know the time when do teachers correct their students' writing. The results show that all the teachers (100%) correct the final draft, which might be due to the fact that classes are overcrowded or it is time consuming to correct each student individually.

Item 11: Do you correct?

- a. All the mistakes
- b. Concentrate on a specific aspect or point

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| A | 3 | 42,9% |
| B | 4 | 57,1% |

Table 31 teachers' main focus when correcting their students' writings

From this question, we want to know the focus of the teachers when correcting pieces of writings. The results were close to each others, four teachers (57,1%) focus on correcting specific aspect or points, while three teachers (42,9%) correct all the mistakes. We can summarize that teachers' correction may vary due to some reasons such as time, number of students, and the purpose of the writing activity...etc

The specific points that were mentioned were as follow:

- Correcting all mistakes is a time consuming process and a task of no clear objective.(2 teachers)
- Correct all mistakes, but grammar mistakes.

Item 12: Which form of feedback do you provide your students with?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Oral | 0 | 0% |
| Written | 2 | 28,6% |
| Both | 5 | 71,4% |

Table 32 Teachers' feedback provision form

This item was raised in order to know which form of feedback do teachers provide their students with. The results show that five teachers (71,4%) use both, the oral and written feedback. In the other hand, only two (28,6%) use just the written feedback. That is to say, both forms of feedback are equally crucial in the process of helping students to improve their levels.

The justifications of “written feedback” answer:

- Students generally remember better written feedback. (2 teachers)

The justifications of “both” answer:

- It depends on time, importance, and the nature of the mistake. (2 teachers)
- Generally the oral feedback is provided during the writing process, while the written one is provided after the students submit their final works.(3 teachers)

Item 13: Do you apply peer feedback?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-----------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 2 | 28,6% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| Sometimes | 5 | 71,4% |

Table 33 Teachers' application of peer feedback

This question was intended to investigate the use of peer feedback by the teachers in the classroom. As it is shown in the table, all the teachers use peer feedback, five teachers (71,4%) picked up “sometimes” as an answer, and the two remaining teachers (28,6%) picked up “yes” as an answer. From the results we conclude that the application of peer feedback in

the classroom is beneficial and crucial for the students; also, it may contribute in enhancing their levels and raise their motivation.

Item 14: In your point of view, which type of assessment is more suitable in order to assess your students' writing?

- a. Formative assessment
- b. Summative assessment
- c. Formal assessment
- d. Informal assessment
- e. All of them

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| a | 4 | 57,1% |
| B | 2 | 28,6% |
| C | 0 | 0% |
| D | 0 | 0% |
| E | 1 | 14,3% |

Table 34 The most suitable type of assessment

This question was put in order to investigate the most suitable type of assessment that is used by the teachers in order to assess their students' writings. The results show that most of the teachers (57,1%) are using formative assessment in order to assess their students' writings, whereas two of them (28,6%) are using summative assessment, and only one (14,3%) is using all of them. From the results we can infer that formative assessment is a crucial element in the process of assessing students writing and enhancing the levels. However, summative assessment is as important as formative assessment, and its role cannot be neglected.

Item 15: What does formative assessment means to you?

This item is an open-ended question through which teachers are going to define formative assessment according to their views. Their answers were summarized as follows:

- It provides accurate information on recurring mistakes.(3 teachers)
- Feedback which is not counted in marks.(1 teacher)
- It is an ongoing method of giving many activities and quizzes that enables the teacher to evaluate and assess the quality of learning that is taking place in the classroom. In addition, it tracks students' progress and encourages them to make the necessary adjustments for the sake of improvement.(3 teachers)

Item 16: Do you implement formative assessment in the classroom?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 7 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |

Table 35 Teachers' implementation of formative assessment in the classroom

This question was raised in order to know if teachers implement formative assessment in their classrooms or not. The results show that all the teachers (100%) agree on using formative assessment in the classroom. From that we can understand that fusing formative assessment is beneficial for both teachers and learners, and it is a crucial element in the teaching/learning process.

-If yes, how often do you implement it?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-----------|--------|------------|
| Always | 2 | 28,6% |
| Sometimes | 5 | 71,4% |
| Rarely | 0 | 0% |

Table 36 Frequency of the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom by the teachers

This item was added to the previous question in order to know the frequency of the implementation of formative assessment in the classroom. It is noticed that all the teachers are using it in the classroom. However, most of them (71,4%) are sometimes using it, and that may be due to some reasons (time, overcrowded classes...), whereas the others (28,6%) are always using it. All in all, our sample agrees on the use of formative assessment in the classroom due to its effectiveness in improving the teaching/learning process.

Item 17: Do you agree with this statement: "the use of formative assessment in the classroom is crucial".

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| A | 2 | 28,6% |
| B | 3 | 42,9% |
| C | 2 | 28,6 |
| D | 0 | 0% |
| E | 0 | 0% |

Table 37 The degree of the importance of using formative assessment in the classroom

This question was asked in order to know to what extent teachers agree with the statement of "the use of formative assessment in the classroom is crucial". The results show that most of them agree with this statement, in which (42,9%) of them picked "B" as an answer, (28,6%) picked "A" as an answer, and (28,6%) where neutral whereas none of them disagreed with it. To explain, it is clearly noticed that using formative assessment in the classroom makes a positive influence in improving the quality of learning as well as developing the students' writing skills.

Justifications for "strongly agree" answer:

- It is crucial because it helps to evaluate both the teaching activities and students' progress in the classroom. Also, students prefer to be continuously evaluated in order to develop their writing skills.(2 teachers)

Justifications for “agree” answers:

- It is crucial to the teaching/learning process as it helps in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of learners and following their progress as well as improving the quality of learning.(3teachers)

Justifications for “neutral” answers:

- Students give more importance to evaluations in which they gain marks otherwise they are less interested. (2answers)

Item 18: Do you face any problems preventing you from using formative assessment in the classroom?

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 4 | 57,1% |
| No | 3 | 42,9% |

Table 38 Problems that may face the teacher from using FA in the classroom

This question was added in order to know if teachers are facing some problems preventing them from using formative assessment in the classroom or not. The table shows that four teachers (57,1%) answered with “yes” while three teachers (42,9%) answered with “no”. The results show that there are some problems preventing teachers from using formative assessment in the classroom which need to be treated.

-If yes, would you please say what these problems are?

This item was added to the previous question in order to know what problems teachers are facing when they are using formative assessment in the classroom. The answers of this item were summarized as follows:

- Lack of time, overcrowded classes, and students’ lack of motivation.(2 teachers)
- Students give more importance to marks rather than being continuously corrected.
(2teachers)

Item 19: To what extent do you think formative assessment contributes to enhancing students' writing?

It is an open-ended question through which teachers are going to describe to what extent formative assessment does contribute in enhancing students' writings. Their answers were summarized as follows:

- To a very great extent.(4 teachers)
- Formative assessment is considered as an important part of learning; it simplifies the writing process and provides students with feedback that will eventually help them to improve their writing performance.(3 teachers)

The results show the degree of importance of using formative assessment in the classroom. All the teachers agree that using formative assessment in the classroom will not only make students identify their mistakes, but also how can they treat them.

Item 20: Feel free to add any ideas or comments on the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writing.

It is an open-ended question in which teachers will provide to express their opinions about the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writings. Five teachers have answered this item. Their responses were summarized as follows:

- For better results in writing, formative assessment needs to be seriously considered by the students as well as by the teachers.(3 teachers)
- Formative assessment is indeed an effective technique that contributes in enhancing students' writings. Not only it helps in making students be aware of their mistakes, but also it helps teachers to track their students' progress and plan the next step in the lesson.(2 teachers)

The results of this question show that formative assessment is a crucial element of the teaching/learning process. By providing them with continuous and positive feedback about their written works, students will be aware of their mistakes which will make them consequently improve their writings.

3.3.5 Interpretation and discussion of the results:

Section One: Background Information:

In the first section, the analyses of gathered data shows that all the teachers participated in answering this questionnaire are permanent teachers, in which most of them are experts, and highly qualified to teach English. In addition, most of them (71,4%) have an experience of more than ten years in teaching at a high level. From the results, we can understand that our sample consists of highly qualified teachers.

Section Two: The Writing Skill:

In this section, the majority of teachers agree on the idea of diversification when using the writing approaches due to its importance in fulfilling the aims of the writing skill. According to teachers, grammar, vocabulary and the organization of ideas are the most common difficulties that face the student when they attempt to write. This shows that the students need to practice more in order to obtain the required skills. Moreover, all the teachers agree that correction is crucial, in which they focus on both form and content whenever they correct their students' pieces of writing. In addition, teachers have stated that the purpose of assessing the writing skill is to provide feedback and to track their students' progress. That is to say, correction is part of feedback, and this latter is one of the crucial elements that help in developing students' performance.

Section Three: The Use of Formative Assessment:

Concerning this section, the majority of teachers have declared that they provide feedback to their students for most of the time, in which they use both forms, oral and written. The

results show teachers are doing great efforts in order to provide their students with feedback due to its importance in enhancing their language skills. Also, teachers do apply peers feedback in their classrooms from time to time due to its significance in raising their students' motivation. Furthermore, all teachers declared that they correct only the final draft, in which they concentrate only on specific points that needed to be corrected such as grammar, vocabulary, organization of ideas...etc. Moreover, most of the teachers (57,1%) reported that formative assessment is the most suitable type of assessment that is used to assess students' writings, in which all the teachers use it from time to time in their classrooms. However, the overcrowded classrooms and time shortage are the main reasons that hinder teachers from using formative assessment. According to teachers, formative assessment is feedback which is not counted on marks; it is a crucial element of the process of adjusting teaching and enhancing learning and its usage in the classroom is highly valued, in which it is considered as an effective tool in enhancing students' performance.

Conclusion:

This chapter has provided the analysis of both teachers and students' online questionnaires. The students' questionnaire shows that the reasons behind students' poor writing quality are mainly due to the lack of reading and the lack of practicing the writing skill. Also, they have shown a positive attitude toward teachers' correction and feedback, in which they admitted its importance in enhancing their writings. Moreover, they are well aware of the importance of formative assessment in enhancing their writing skill, and support its usage in the classroom. The teachers' questionnaire shows that the teachers are doing their best in order to provide their students with feedback about their performance. Also, they have shown positive attitudes toward the use of formative assessment in the classroom; however, using it always is not possible, but that does not deny the fact that it is an effective tool that contributes in enhancing their students' writing performances.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are suggested by the researcher:

For teachers:

- ✓ Teachers should engage their students in writing activities inside and outside the classroom. Students should have more practice of writing. It is clear that the more student practice writing the more they write better.
- ✓ Teachers should provide their students with immediate and accurate correction about their writing assignments.
- ✓ Teachers have to adopt formative assessment as a tool to assess their students' progress due to its effectiveness.
- ✓ Teaching grammar in context is much more effective than teaching it out of context.
- ✓ Explicit teaching lessons of the basics of grammar.
- ✓ Teachers should look for remedies to get rid of the most common students' writing difficulties.

For students:

- ✓ Students should read more and practice writing extensively. As it is said, good readers are always good writers.
- ✓ In order to improve their writings, students should take their teachers' correction seriously.
- ✓ Students need to be aware of the importance of formative assessment and take the formative feedback that is provided by the teacher into account.

General Conclusion:

This study was attempted to investigate the role of formative assessment in enhancing EFL learners writing skill. This research has dealt with third year EFL students at Biskra University. Throughout this research, we have hypothesized that third year EFL teachers mostly use formative assessment to assess their students' progress; teachers and students will have a positive attitudes and opinions about formative assessment usage as a technique to enhance the writing skill, and if formative assessment is used, the writing skill will be improved. In order to collect data, a descriptive method adopted where two questionnaires were used; for both teachers and students.

This research is a total of three main chapters. Chapter one and two were devoted to the literature review and chapter three to the field work. Chapter one introduced the term assessment and its types. Also, it has shown the difference between assessment, evaluation and testing. It had also shed light on formative assessment, its stages and its strategies. It had also focused on feedback, types of feedback and the relationship between feedback, and assessment. Finally, it had shed light on the role of teachers and students in formative assessment, and how the latter serves as an effective tool to improve students' writing skill.

Chapter two introduced writing, in which it included various definitions of writing, the relationships and differences between writing and other language skill (reading, speaking). In addition, it presented the approaches to teaching writing, and the importance of the writing skill. Finally, it discussed students' problems and deficiencies with the writing skill, and the importance of the teachers' feedback.

Finally, the practical part dealt with data analysis. It was composed of detailed analyses of students and teachers' feedback questionnaires. The findings of this research show that our hypotheses were confirmed. First, student stated that their teachers use formative assessment to assess their progress. Similar to the students, teachers also declared that they depend on

using formative assessment to assess their students' progress. Second, both teachers and students have shown positive attitudes about the use of formative assessment in as a technique to enhance the writing skill, and support its use in the classroom. Finally, both teachers and students confirmed that the use of formative assessment in the classroom will help to improve the writing skill.

All in all, this study shows that formative assessment is a key element in the learning/teaching process; its usage in the classroom will help to adjust teaching and improve learning. Furthermore, both teachers and students show positive attitude toward the implementation of formative assessment in the writing course, so using it will guarantees the enhancement of the writing skill.

References

- Atay, D. & Kurt, G. prospective teachers and L2writing anxiety. *Asian EFL Journal* , 8 (4), 100-118.
- Bacha, N. N. (2002). *Developing Learners' Academic Writing Skills in Higher Education: A Study for Educational Reform*.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University press.
- Badger, R., & White, G. (2000). *A process genre approach to teaching writing*. *ELT journal*.
- Black, P. (1998). Formative Assessment: Raising standards inside the classroom. *School Science Review* , 90 (291), 39-46.
- Black, P., & William, D. (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning, Assessment in Education:Principles, Policy & Practice. *School of Education* , 5 (1), 7-73.
- Brown. (1994). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language*. Engle wood Cliffs, N.J, Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. USA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Burner, J. S. (1970). Some theories on instructions. (E. Stones, Ed.) *Reading in educational psychology* , 112-124.
- Cowie, B., & Bell, B. (1999). A model of formative assessment in science education. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* , 6 (1).
- Crystal, D. (1999). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of language*. London: Cambridge University press.
- Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring How Text Works*. Sydney: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Dougat, B. (2017). *Improving EFL students' academic writing through formative assessment*. Biskra: Biskra University.
- Eisterhold, J. C. (1990). *Reading-writing connections: toward a description for second language learners*. New York: In B. Kroll (Ed), *Second Language Writing. Research*, Cambridge University Press.
- Essberger, J. (2011). *Speaking Versus Writing*. Retrieved from EnglishClub : Learn English : ESL Articles: <https://www.englishclub.com/esl-articles/200108.htm>

Gibbs, G. (1999). Using Assessment Strategically to Change the Way Students Learn. In S. Brown, & A. Glasner (Eds.), *Assessment Matters in Higher Education: Choosing and Using Diverse Approaches*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.

Gipps, C. (1999). Socio-cultural aspects of assessment. *Review of Research in Education* , 24, 355.

Greenstein, L. (2010). *What Teachers Really Need to Know About Formative Assessment*. USA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Hall, K. (2004). *Making formative assessment work: Effective practice in the primary classroom* *Making formative assessment work: Effective practice in the primary classroom*. England: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*.

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. Harlow: Longman.

Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach for exams*. Pearson Education Limited.

Harris, M., & McCann, P. (1994). *Assessment*. Scotland: Handbooks for the English classroom.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. London: Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heritage, M. (2010). *Formative Assessment: Making it happen in the classroom* . USA: Corwin Press.

Hinett, K., & Weeden, P. (2000). How am I doing?: Developing critical self-evaluation in trainee teachers. *Quality in Higher Education* , 6 (3), 245-257.

Irons, A. (2008). *Enhancing learning through formative assessment and feedback*. USA and Canada: Routledge.

Jabbarifar, T. (2009). The Importance of Classroom Assessment and Evaluation in Educational System. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference of Teaching and Learning* , 1-9.

Johnson, A. P. (2008). *Teaching Reading and Writing: A Guidebook for Tutoring*. USA: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Kane, T. S. (2000). *The Oxford essential guide to writing*. USA: New York: OXFORD University Press.

Kucer, S. B. (2005). *Dimensions of literacy: Conceptual base for teaching reading and writing in school setting*(Ed 2). New Jersey: Laurence Association; Inc.,

Lee, I. (2017). *Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts*. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Mackenzie, Scull, & Munsie. (2013). Analysing writing: the development of a tool use in the early years of. *Issues in Educational Research* , 375-393.

Mc Arthur, A. G. (2008). *Hand book of writing a research*. New York: The Guildford Press.

National Research Council. (2001). Classroom Assessment and the National Science Education Standards. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

National Research Council; Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Center for Education; Board on Science Education; Committee on Science Learning; Kindergarten Through Eighth Grade. (2007). *Taking science to school: Learning and teaching science in grades K-8*. Washington, D.C: National Academies Press.

NSW Board of Studies (2000). *Focus on literacy: Writing*. Sydney: NSW: Board of Studies.

NSW Department of Education and Training (2007). *Writing and spelling strategies*. Darlinghurst: NSW.

Raaheim, K. (1991). From School to University. In K. Raaheim, K. Raaheim, J. Wankowski, & J. Radford (Eds.), *Helping Students to Learn. Teaching, Counselling, Research* (2nd ed., pp. 19-32). Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Designing Tasks for the communicative Classroom*. London: Cambridge University press.

Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. Singapore: Singapore: Mc Graw-Hill Company.

O'Grady, W. D. (1996). *Contemporary linguistics: An*. (3rd ed.). CoppClarck Pitman Ltd.

Race, P. (1995). The Art of Assessment. *The new academic* , 4 (3).

Richard, T. (1993). *A genre approach to writing in the second language classroom : The use of direct mail letters*. Langues et littératures modernes — Moderne taal- en letterkunde.

Rogers, H. (2005). *Writing system: a linguistic approach* . Blackwell publishing.

Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *18* (2), pp. 119-144.

Sahla, B. (2015). *Linguistic Factors Affecting Students' Written Paragraphs Case Study: Second Year Students of English Department*. Biskra: Biskra University.

Salam, F. I. (2015). Evaluating Product Writing Approach in the Context of Malaysian Classrooms: A Conceptual Paper. *LSP International Journal* , 3.

Seely, J. (1998). *Guide to effective writing and speaking* . oxford: oxford universiti press.

- Shannon, S. L. (2011). *A guide to academic and scholarly writing*. USA: Oveido, FL: Baldwin Book Publishing.
- Shepard, L. A. (2003). Reconsidering Large-Scale Assessment to Heighten its Relevance to Learning. In J. M. Atkin, & J. Coffey (Eds.), *Everyday Assessment in the Science Classroom* (pp. 41-59). Arlington, VA: NSTA Press.
- Shute, V. J. (2008). focus on formative assessment. *Review of educational research* , 78 (1), 153-189.
- Starkey, L. B. (2004). *How to write great essays*. USA: New York: Learning Express Llc.
- Steele, V. (2004). *Product and process writing*.
- Steve Graham, Michael Hebert, Karen R. Harris. (2015). *Formative Assessment and Writing: A Meta-Analysis*.
- Swales, J. (1981). *Aspects of articles introductions*. Brimengham : Aston ESP research reports, Aston University.
- Terrible, J. (1996). *writing*. cambridge: cambridge university press .
- Tony Burner. (2015). *Formative Assessment of Writing in English as a Foreign Language*. Norway. Chicago.
- Tosuncuoglu, I. (1973). *Teaching Vocabulary for Active Use*. Kyrgyz: Turkish Manes.
- Tribble, C. (1996). *Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tuffs, R. (1993). *A genre approach to writing in the second language classroom : The use of direct mail letters*. Moderne taal- en letterkunde.
- Widdowson, H. (2001). *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: OUP.
- Wilson, M. (2005). *Constructing measures: An item response modeling approach*. California: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Yang Liu Changchun. (2013). *Preliminary Study on Application of Formative Assessment in College English Writing Class*. Finland.
- Zohre Mohamadi. (2017). *Comparative Effect of Online Summative and Formative Assessment on EFL Students' Writing Ability*. Iran.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire:

This study attempts to shed light on the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writing. Therefore, you are kindly asked to answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) on the appropriate box and expressing your comments when necessary.

Definitions of some concepts:

***Formative assessment:** it is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.[2] It typically involves qualitative feedback (rather than scores) for both student and teacher that focuses on the details of content and performance. Common formative assessments include quizzes, games, presentations, projects, group activities.

***Summative assessment:** it refers to the assessment of participants where the focus is on the outcome of a program. it is used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. Common summative assessments include a midterm exam, a final project, a paper, a senior recital.

***Feedback:** it is the teacher's information about the students' performance.

Candidate: BADREDDINE DENCH

Supervisor: TAYEB BOUHITEM

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLLABORATION.

Section one: Background Information

1. Gender:

a- Male

b- Female

2. How do you describe your level in English?

a- Excellent

b- Good

c- Average

d- Weak

3. Which skill do you have the most problems with?

a- Writing

b- Speaking

c- Reading

d- Listening

Section Two: The writing Skill

4. In your opinion, is writing an easy task?

a- Yes

b- No

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

5. How do you assess your level of writing in English?

a- Good

b- Average

c- Weak

6. Which aspect do you find the most difficult when you write? (You can choose more than one answer)

- a- Grammar
- b- Vocabulary
- c- Mechanics (punctuation, capitalization and spelling)
- d- Organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion)

7. Your weaknesses in writing are due to? (You can choose more than one answer)

- a- Lack of reading
- b- Lack of ideas
- c- Lack of practice
- d- Lack of motivation
- e- All of them

8. When you commit a mistake in writing assignments, do you like to be corrected?

- a- Yes
- b- No

9. Do you prefer?

- a- Self-correction
- b- Peer correction
- c- Teacher's correction

Section Three: The Use of Formative Assessment

10. In order to assess your writing, which type of assessment does your teacher use?

- a- The teacher continuously evaluates your writing by testing and giving you assignments

(formative assessment)

- b- The teacher gives you a test at the end of the semester (summative assessment)

10. Does the teacher of written expression provide you with feedback about your writings?

a- Yes

b- No

*If yes, how often does he provide you with it?

a- Always

b- Sometimes

c- Rarely

11. Which form of feedback does he/she provides you with?

a- Oral feedback

b- Written feedback

c- Both

12. At which stage does the teacher of written expression correct your mistakes?

a- During the course

b- At the end of an instructional unit

13. Does the teacher's feedback help you to improve your writing productions?

a- Yes

B- No

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

14. Does your teacher of written expression implement formative assessment during the writing course?

a- Yes

b- No

*If yes, how often does he implement it?

a- Always

b- Sometimes

c- Rarely

15. Do you think that it is important to be assessed formatively by the teacher in order to enhance your writing?

a- Yes

b- No

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

16. To what extent do you think that the use of formative assessment by the teacher help you to improve your writing?

a- A very great deal

b- A lot

c- Very little

d- Not at all

17. In few words, say how can the teacher's usage of formative assessment helps in improving your writing productions?

.....

Appendix 2: Teachers' Questionnaire:

This study attempts to shed light on the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writing. Therefore, you are kindly asked to answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) on the appropriate box and expressing your comments when necessary.

Candidate: BADREDDINE DENCH

Supervisor: TAYEB BOUHITEM

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLLABORATION.

Section One: Background Information

1. Situation:

a- Part-time teacher

b- Permanent teacher

2. Qualifications:

a- Master/Magister (MA)

b- Doctorate (PHD)

3. Experience:

a- 1-5 years

b- 5-10 years

c- More than 10 years

Section Two: The Writing Skill

4. Which approach do you adopt when you teach writing?

a- The product approach

b- The process approach

c- The genre approach

d- All of them

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

5. What are the most common difficulties that your students face when they write?

a- Grammar

b- Vocabulary

c- Mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling)

d- Lack of ideas

e- Organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion)

Others:

6. When correcting your students' mistakes, are you interested in?

a- Form

b- Content

c- Both

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

7. What is your purpose from assessing the writing skill?

a- Providing feedback

b- Planning the course based on students' proficiency level

c- Monitoring students' progress

Others:

.....

8. Do you think that correcting your students' writing is important?

a- Yes

b- No

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

Section Three: The Use of Formative Assessment

9. Do you provide your students with feedback about their writings?

a- Yes

b- No

*If yes, how often do you provide them with it?

a- Always

b- Sometimes

c- Rarely

10. When do you correct?

a- While the student are writing

b- Correct the final draft

11. Do you correct?

a- All the mistakes

b- Concentrate on a specific aspect or point

*Would you please mention these specific points?

.....

12. Which form of feedback do you provide your students with?

a- Oral

b- Written

c- Both

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

13. Do you apply peer feedback?

a- Yes

b- No

c- Sometimes

14. In your point of view, which type of assessment is more suitable in order to assess your students' writings?

a- Formative assessment

b- Summative assessment

c- Formal assessment

d- Informal assessment

Others:

15. What does formative assessment means to you?

.....

16. Do you implement formative assessment in the classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

*If yes, how often do you implement it?

a- Always

b- Sometimes

c- Rarely

17. Do you agree with this statement: "the use of formative assessment in the classroom is crucial"?

a- Strongly agree

b- Agree

c- Neutral

d- Disagree

e- Strongly disagree

*Would you please justify your answer?

.....

18. Do you face any problems preventing you from using formative assessment in the classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

*If yes, would you please mention these problems?

.....

19. To what extent do you think formative assessment contributes to enhancing students' writings?

.....

20. Feel free to added any ideas or comments on the effectiveness of the use of formative assessment to improve EFL students' writing skills?

.....

المُلخَص

تعتبر الكتابة واحدة من أكثر المهام تعقيداً في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية، حيث يعاني غالبية المتعلمون عندما يريدون كتابة نص جيد. لذا تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من فعالية وكفاءة استخدام التقييم المستمر كأسلوب لتعزيز مهارات الكتابة لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة بسكرة.

من أجل تأكيد فرضياتنا، تم اعتماد طريقة وصفية، حيث تم تقديم استبيانين عبر الإنترنت، الأول موجه إلى طلاب السنة الثالثة من اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، والثاني موجه إلى أساتذة التعبير الكتابي في السنة الثالثة. لقد أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن معظم الأساتذة يقومون بتبني التقييم المستمر كأسلوب فعال لتقييم كتابات طلابهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، لقد أظهر الطلاب سلوكاً إيجابياً تجاه استخدام التقييم المستمر في الفصل الدراسي، حيث يفضل الطلاب أن يتم تقييمهم باستمرار، ويفضل المعلمون استخدام التقييم المستمر من أجل تقييم التدريس وأداء طلابهم. أخيراً، أظهرت النتائج أيضاً أن التقييم المستمر يساهم إلى حد كبير في تحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب. على أساس هذه النتائج، تم تأكيد فرضياتنا.

علاوة على ذلك، اقترحت هذه الدراسة بعض التوصيات للطلاب لممارسة الكتابة على نطاق واسع، وأخذ ملاحظات معلمهم في عين الاعتبار، وللمعلمين لإشراك طلابهم في أنشطة الكتابة بشكل مستمر، وتنفيذ التقييم المستمر في الفصل الدراسي كلما كان ذلك ممكناً لما أظهره من فعالية.