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**Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages**  
**Department of Language and English Literature**

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**Submitted and Defended by:**

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**Title**

**The Role of Formative Assessment in Improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing**

The Case of Second year EFL Students at Biskra University

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**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Language and English Literature in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Sciences of the  
Language**

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**Academic year: 2024/2025**

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in Improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing**

### **Declaration**

I, **Aya BEN ABDALLAH**, do hereby declare that this submitted work, titled as “The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing” is an original work and has not been submitted by anyone before. This work was certified and completed at Mohammed Khider Biskra University.

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## The Role of Formative Assessment in Improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing

### Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. All the praise is due to Allah,  
the sustainer of the entire world.

I dedicate this work to those who are close to my heart:

- ❖ To the memory of the most beloved person to me, my grandmother, "Zohra". May  
Allah has mercy on your pure soul and grants you Al-Jannah.
- ❖ To my beloved parents, whose unconditional love, constant support, and heartfelt  
prayers, day and night, have guided me towards this success.
- ❖ To my lovely sisters, for their love, constant support, and encouragement.
- ❖ To my dear brother for his support and motivation.
- ❖ To my beautiful little niece "Anfel" whom I adore so much, my baby, you will always  
have a special place in my heart.
- ❖ To all my friends, having you in my life is truly a blessing.
- ❖ To all those who asked Allah to help me.

**Thank you!**

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And to all people who would be interested in reading my work.

**Thank you!**

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in Improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing**

### **Abstract**

The study aims to investigate the role of formative assessment in improving EFL (English as Foreign Language) students' paragraph writing. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions: what challenges do second-year EFL students face in paragraph writing? And how does formative assessment improve second-year EFL students' paragraph writing? The study also tests the hypotheses that second-year EFL students face challenges in paragraph writing related to grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and coherence, which may hinder the quality of their writing. Additionally, it hypothesizes that the use of formative assessment may improve students' paragraph writing. A qualitative approach was adopted, supported by two questionnaires. The first was distributed to 40 second-year EFL students, who were purposively selected due to their relevance to the study's objectives. The second questionnaire was given to five teachers of the Written Expression course in The Department of Language and English Literature at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. The findings reveal that students faced challenges with idea organization, transitions, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Additionally, the findings indicate that students recognize the positive role of formative assessment in improving their paragraph writing, as it enables them to overcome these challenges. They also value teachers' feedback and consider it an opportunity to correct their errors and enhance their writing abilities. Furthermore, the results show that teachers acknowledge the importance of implementing formative assessment strategies in their teaching practices and recognize their role in developing students' paragraph writing skills. Based on these findings, the research questions have been addressed, and the proposed hypotheses confirmed. Overall, the findings demonstrate that formative assessment significantly contributes to the development of students' writing skills over time.

**Key Words:** EFL Students, Paragraph Writing, Formative Assessment.

# The Role of Formative Assessment in Improving EFL Students' Paragraph Writing

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**RQ:** Research Question

**RH:** Research Hypotheses

**FAST SCASS:** Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers State Collaborative on  
Assessment and Students Standards

**FA:** Formative Assessment

**SA:** Summative Assessment

**WE:** Written Expression

**FB:** Feedback

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### ملخص الدراسة

## **General Introduction**

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' Paragraph Writing**

### **Introduction**

In the present day, the English language holds great significance for both academic and career success. As a global means of communication, it is used in various fields. Therefore, learning the four main skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are important for effective communication. Among these, Writing is considered one of the most difficult skills to develop because it involves different components, each with its own rules and structures.

In the academic settings, many students face difficulties in producing well-organized written work, especially at the paragraph level. A well-written paragraph helps students to present their ideas clearly and logically. It also serves as the foundation for more complex forms of writing, such as essays and research papers.

Writing well-structured paragraphs requires not only a solid understanding of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary but also the ability to organize ideas coherently and maintain clarity and unity throughout the text. Weak paragraphs can lead to undeveloped ideas and confusion, making it difficult for readers to grasp the intended meaning, and it preventing students from expressing their ideas clearly.

Writing challenges are common among students and can result from various factors such as limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and lack of organization. One of major challenges can be the absence of ongoing support and feedback from teachers. Providing regular feedback and continuous support are essential elements of formative assessment.

FA is a process that takes place during instruction. It aims to collect information about students' learning and use it to adjust teaching methods to better meet students' needs. It helps teachers identify students' strengths and areas that target further improvement enabling students to overcome their writing challenges.

In paragraph writing, FA allows teachers to address specific issues at each stage of the writing process. It is a valuable tool that aims to support students' writing abilities. When

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applied effectively, formative assessment can help students overcome common writing challenges and enhance their academic performance.

### **1. Statement of the problem**

The Writing skill refers to the ability to express thoughts clearly and effectively in written form, using proper grammar, structure, and vocabulary. It involves organizing ideas coherently and adapting the writing style to suit different purposes and audiences. In the academic field, many students face significant challenges in producing well-structured writing, particularly at the paragraph level.

A well-written paragraph enables students to convey their ideas clearly. However, a number of second-year EFL students at Biskra University, in particular, encounter different challenges, including organizing ideas, maintaining logical transitions between sentences, grammatical errors or misuse of vocabulary and problems with spelling, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes. These issues often diminish the quality of their written work.

Such challenges seem to derive from factors such as lack of feedback and teachers support throughout the teaching process. This kind of instructional support is a core component of formative assessment.

FA is a continuous process that takes place during instruction. It provides teachers with opportunities to assess students' progress, identify their weaknesses, and, based on this evidence the teaching is modified to better meet students' needs and to offer effective feedback. Unlike summative assessment, which focuses on evaluating the final outcome, FA helps students improve their writing by allowing teachers to adjust their strategies and offer guidance based on students' needs.

In this context, teachers emphasize the importance of FA in teaching writing, as it helps students track their progress and focuses on achieving their learning goals for better academic outcomes.



## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' Paragraph Writing**

### **2. Significance of the study**

This study is significant as it sheds light on the importance of implantation formative assessment in addressing students' paragraph writing challenges, and helps them to overcome different challenges students encounter during writing. The findings helps teachers to understand how to effectively integrate formative assessment into their teaching practices, enabling students to overcome their difficulties in writing and help students to understand their progress, track their learning goals and to build confidence in their writing abilities.

### **3. Research Questions**

This current research seeks to answer the following questions:

**RQ1:** What challenges do second-year EFL students face in paragraph writing?

**RQ2:** How does formative assessment improve second-year EFL students' paragraph writing?

### **4. Research Hypotheses**

Based on the above research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**RH1:**Second-year EFL students face challenges in paragraph writing in terms of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and coherence that may hinder the quality of their writing work.

**RH2:** The use of formative assessment may improve students' paragraph writing.

### **5. Aim of the Study**

This study aims at examining the role of formative assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph writing.

\_To explore how formative assessment helps address the challenges students face in paragraph writing.

\_To investigate how teachers can use formative assessment to support students' progress.

\_To identify how formative assessment can help students track their learning goals.

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' Paragraph Writing**

### **6. Research Methodology**

#### **6.1 Research Approach**

In order to achieve the aims of this study a qualitative approach is adopted. This research approach helps in gathering valid and in-depth data for understanding the role of formative assessment on improving EFL students' paragraph writing.

#### **6.2 Population**

The target population of this study is second year EFL students at the department of Language and English Literature at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra. It consists of 460 students divided into 10 groups, and teachers of Written Expression.

#### **6.3 Sample**

We select five teachers who teach Written Expression, and we select two groups among the 10 groups of second year EFL students, at the department of Language and English Literature Mohammed Khider University of Biskra.

#### **6.4 Data Collection Tools**

To address the research problem, this study relies on semi-structured questionnaires targeting both students and teachers as data collection tools.

### **7. Structure of the study**

This study is organized into three chapters:

The first chapter addresses the writing skills, providing a general overview of the writing process, including its main stages: drafting, revising, editing, and writing the final draft. It also explores the primary approaches to teaching writing. The chapter then examines paragraph writing in detail, starting with a definition of paragraph, its structures and its types, it further outlines the characteristics of good paragraphs and discusses the role of teachers in teaching writing.

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' Paragraph Writing**

The second chapter focuses on formative assessment. It begins with a definition of assessment, followed by the detailed explanation of formative assessment, and comparison between formative and summative assessment. The chapter then examines the types of FA and its stages (before, during and after instructions). Additionally, it presents effective strategies for improving formative assessment in the classroom, defines feedback and its types, highlights techniques of formative Assessment and concludes with various methods of writing assessment.

The third chapter presents the fieldwork, where the collected data from both teachers and students questionnaires are analyzed to discuss the findings and draw the conclusion.

# **Chapter One: Paragraph Writing**

## **Introduction**

Writing in English is a skill that requires time and practice to master. However, many students struggle to write well-structured paragraphs. A good paragraph requires proper grammar, a strong vocabulary, and the ability to organize ideas clearly while maintaining unity and cohesion throughout the text. This chapter covers the definition of writing skills, the writing process, and its stages. It also explores the main teaching approaches. Moreover, it discusses paragraph development in detail, including its structure, and the different types of paragraphs. In addition, it examines the characteristics of good paragraph writing, highlights the importance of writing mechanics and emphasizes the teacher's role in guiding and evaluating students' writing

### **1.1 The Writing skill**

Writing is an important skill in higher education. It is the ability to transfer thoughts, ideas, and opinions from the mind to paper. Hertiki and Juliati (2019) described writing as “a means of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas to the others in written signs” (p. 37). Writing is known as a form of communication that relies on graphic symbols, script, and letters to represent language in written form.

The process of forming words involves combining letters, and linking words together to form sentences. Pincas (1982, as cited in Abdelmalek, 2017) defined writing as “a system of graphic symbols, i.e., letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds we produce while speaking” (p. 125). Thus, writing is the process of producing letters in order to convey meaningful messages. However, this process alone is not enough. It should follow certain grammatical rules because it is more than just combining letters and producing graphic symbols, it requires structuring these symbols according to particular grammar rules in order to write clear paragraphs.

## **1.2 The Writing Process**

The process of writing involves a series of steps to produce a well-structured text that effectively expresses thoughts, ideas, and emotions. According to Brown (2000), Writing is considered a complex process that involves thinking, drafting, and revising, and writing the final version. It requires special skills that not all speakers naturally develop, it needs practice and to follow the process step by step to write well-structured pieces of writing. Hogue and Bixby (2014) stated that good writing requires more than simply putting thoughts or ideas on paper; it involves a process. This process includes four main stages:

### **1.2.1 Prewriting Stage**

Prewriting is the process of thinking and coming up with ideas. This can be done through taking notes or free writing. A writer chooses a topic and writes about it for a period of time, without caring for grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence structure. After finishing the free writing, the writer decides on ideas that are relevant and suitable for the topic and excludes any unnecessary information. According to Graves (1983, as cited in Johnson, 2008, p. 179), "The goal here is to generate ideas Listing, brainstorming, outlining, silent thinking, conversation with a neighbor, or power writing are all ways to generate ideas"

### **1.2.2 First Draft Stage**

At this point, the first version of the paragraph is written. The main focus is on expressing ideas without worrying about grammar or errors. This initial version is known as the rough draft. Trimmer (1995, as referenced in Bouregba, 2016, p. 11) explained that drafting is "only a very preliminary attempt at producing a sustained piece of writing."

### **1.2.3 The Revising and Editing Stages**

During this, any changes are made to enhance the meaning, flow, and structure of the paragraph. This helps to make ideas clear and easy to understand. Brown and Hood (1989) stated that revising is the most important part of writing. It ensures that ideas are clearly and

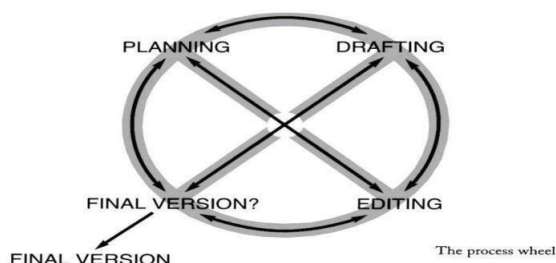
well expressed. It goes beyond grammar and punctuation; it involves rearranging, adding, or omitting written words and requires particular focus to improve clarity and purpose. After that, editing is done to fix any grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes. According to

Starkey (2004), “Editing takes a closer look at your writing through a stronger lens that highlights words and sentences.” (P. 55). Both steps are essential and make the paragraph easier to read and understand.

#### 1.2.4 Write a new draft Stage

At this point, the final version of the paragraph has been written, including all adjustments made during revision and editing stages. This version is clear, correct, and ready for teacher’s correction. Harmer (2004) pointed out that publishing comes at the end of the writing process, following the revision and editing of drafts to produce a final piece intended for a specific audience.

**Figure 1.1** *The Writing Process Wheel*



*Note.* Reprinted from How to Teach Writing (p. 6), by J. Harmer, 2004 Pearson Education. Copyright2004 by Pearson Education.

### 1.3 The Approach of Teaching Writing

When it comes to teaching writing these are main approaches to follow:

### **1.3.1 The Product Approach**

Writing is considered a complex skill that requires time and practice to produce a well-structured piece of writing. One of the widely used methods for teaching writing is the Product Approach. Sarala, Abdul, and Fauziah (2014) described “the product approach as one of the most widely adopted methods in schools around the world.” (p. 790). It is a traditional method of teaching writing that focuses on students' final written product. Abata Checa et al. (2017) explained that this approach guides students to develop final compositions using models provided by teachers. It emphasizes imitation, text modeling, and structuring sentences to follow a specific writing format. According to Hyland (2003, p. 4), there are four stages processes to product approach:

1. Familiarization: Learners are taught certain grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text.
2. Controlled writing: Learners manipulate fixed patterns, often from substitution tables.
3. Guided writing: Learners imitate model texts.
4. Free writing: Learners use the patterns they have developed to write an essay, letter, and so forth.

### **1.3.2 The Process Approach**

As a reaction to the traditional approach that views writing as a final product, a new approach to teaching writing has emerged. This approach allowed students to be creative by writing their ideas and thoughts, expressing their minds, and improving their ability to think clearly and effectively. According to Steel (2004) claimed that Process approaches for writing typically focus more on the different activities in class that foster the development of language use, It consists of different stages, typically following a structured sequence of activities:



Stage 1: students start by generating ideas using brainstorming or discussion to find topics and the quality of the ideas, while the teacher provides minimal support to encourage free idea production.

Stage 2: Students take notes, assess the quality of their ideas, and determine their relevance and usefulness towards the topic. Then they structure their ideas using a mind map, or linear outline to clarify the logical relationships between points.

Stage 3: Students write their first draft, often collaborating in pairs or groups.

Stage 4: Students exchange drafts and read each other's work, to provide feedback.

Stage5: They modify their drafts based on peer feedback, making necessary adjustments.

Stage 6: students write the final draft, then exchange and read each other's final drafts.

**Table 1.1**

*A comparison between the product and process approach*

Process writing	Product writing
Text as a resource for comparison	Imitate model text
Ideas as starting point	Organization of ideas are more important than ideas themselves
More than one draft	One draft
More global, focused on purpose, theme, text type i.e. reader is emphasized	Features highlighted including controlled practice of those features
Collaborative	Individual
Emphasis on creative process	Emphasis on end product

*Note.* Reprinted from Product and process writing: A comparison, by Teaching English,

n.d.(<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowingsubject/articles/product-and-process-writing-comparison>).

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### **1.3.3 The Genre Approach**

The Genre Approach is the third main approach in teaching writing. According to Hyland (2007), genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. This means that various types of writing or communication follow particular patterns and conventions that are understood within a specific social or cultural context. As stated by Martin and Rose (2008), “Genres are a staged, goal-oriented social process.” (p. 6) this definition focuses on three important aspects: first, staged, as a genre often unfolds over different phases in order to develop its meaning; second, goal-oriented, as each phase serves a purpose, and an interruption may leave a sense of incompleteness or frustration. Finally third social; because genres are created and used through interaction with others.

Furthermore, this approach is recognized as an extension of the product approach. Grabe and Kaplan (1996, as cited in Norhidayah et al., 2021) noted that the genre approach is a method that incorporates the product approach (knowledge of the language) while emphasizing its social purpose. The product approach focuses on connecting knowledge of particular genres and their communicative purpose, allowing students to produce writings that effectively communicate with others in the same language community.

### **1.4 Paragraph Development**

A paragraph is a group of related sentences that are logically connected to communicate a single main idea or topic. Wali and Madani (2020) stated, “Paragraph by definition is a group of closely related sentences that develop one single idea.” (p. 44). It helps to organize thought in a structured way. Furthermore, it can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences, as long as it develops the main idea clearly. A paragraph can stand alone or be part

of a longer piece of writing, such as an essay or a book. In academic writing, paragraphs often respond to specific questions, like defining a concept and giving an example. (Oshima &Hogue, 1999)

Each paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. It forms one block discussing one specific idea or content and it is the basic unit in composition.

### **1.5 Structure of Paragraph Writing**

A well-structured paragraph consists of three major components:

#### **1.5.1 The Topic Sentence**

Generally, the topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph; it introduces the main idea and indicates what the paragraph will discuss. It should be clear, concise, and directly related to the content. According to Reid (1982, as cited in Almi, H. 2024), the topic sentence is the most important and most general sentence in the paragraph because it establishes the focus for the rest of the sentences.

#### **1.5.2 The Supporting Sentences**

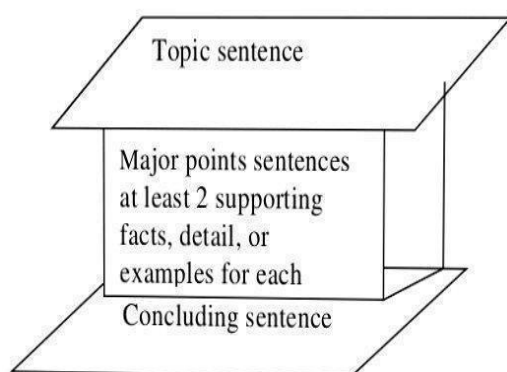
These are the sentences that follow the topic sentence. They are essential because they explain and develop the topic sentence. Robitaille and Connelly (2007, P. 66) stated that “effective supporting sentences are organized logically in order for the paragraph to achieve coherence.” They can be in the form of explanation, evidence, or examples to improve the main idea of the paragraph.

#### **1.5.3 The Concluding sentence**

This refers to the last sentence in the paragraph, which summarizes the main idea or provides a transition to ensure a smooth connection between paragraphs. It restates the main idea without adding new information. Also, it signals the end of the discussion. According to

Robitaille and Connelly (2007), “The conclusion is the last sentence of the paragraph. It either sums up the paragraph by reminding the reader of the main idea or interprets the significance of the supporting ideas” (p. 71).

**Figure 1.2** A Well Developed Paragraph



Note. Reprinted from Robinson (2004, p. 30), as cited in Khelifii (2014).

## **1.6 Types of Paragraphs**

There are four main types of paragraphs; each one has a different purpose in writing which are: descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive.

### **1.6.1 The Descriptive Paragraph**

In this type of paragraph according to Fiderer (1997), “a descriptive paragraph gives a clear picture of a person, place, object, event, or idea. Details for descriptive paragraphs come from the writer’s senses- smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight. These are known as sensory details.” (p. 17), in this type of paragraph, it uses figurative language, such as similes and metaphors, to increase imagery and create a vivid experience for the reader to imagine the situation itself.

### **1.6.2 The Narrative Paragraph**

In this type of paragraph, according to Sam, An. (2014), it tells a story or describes an event, such as a tale, life experience, or social occurrence, arranged in chronological order. It should include a central idea; a character, a plot (with conflict, climax, and resolution),

descriptive details, and a clear setting (time and place). Similarly, Oshima and Hogue (2007) explained that “in a narrative paragraph, the writer used time order to tell what happened first, what happened next, what happened after that, and so on” (p. 24). This type of paragraph includes characters, setting, and action, with the problem introduced at the beginning, reaching a climax in the middle, and being solved at the end.

### **1.6.3 The Persuasive Paragraph**

According to Jocature Interprises (2016), a persuasive paragraph aims to convince the reader to accept a viewpoint or understand the writer's position. This type of paragraph often relies on facts and research to support their claims. Furthermore, this paragraph may use emotions or shared values to strengthen their argument and make it more persuasive. By appealing to the reader's feelings, beliefs, or experiences, the writer can create a stronger connection. The writer might establish a deeper connection with the reader by appealing to their beliefs, opinions, or experiences.

### **1.6.4 The Expository Paragraph**

This kind of paragraph is concerned with explaining and providing information about a topic in a direct way. According to Open School BC (2006), “An expository paragraph gives information about a person, place, or thing. It can explain ideas, give directions, or show how to do something. It is important to present the information in a logical order and to provide enough details so the reader understands your explanation” (p. 6). It includes details, facts, examples, similarities, and differences points to develop the topic effectively. Moreover, this type of paragraph avoids personal opinions and focuses on presenting ideas in well-structured written form.

Paragraphs are an important part of writing, as they help organize ideas in one block and make written work clear and easy to read and understand. A well-structured paragraph keeps ideas focused and connected. Without it, writing can be confusing and hard to follow.

## **1.7 Characteristic of Good Paragraph Writing**

### **1.7.1 Clarity**

One of the main goals students aim to achieve in writing is to communicate their ideas and be understood by others. This can be achieved through clarity. According to Starkey (2004), clarity is expressing ideas in a simple coherent way that is easy to understand the sentences, and it should be directly clear, avoiding unnecessary or complexity vague wording or ambiguity in writing. Students when writing should be precise by choosing the right words and structuring sentences logically to keep the reader on track and to grasp the intended meaning without easily according to Starkey (2004) in order to have a clear writing you should be:

1. Eliminate ambiguity by avoiding words and phrases that have different interpretations.
2. Choose powerful precise adjectives and adverbs that suit the context.
3. Be concise; this means to express the idea from the first time to avoid repetition and wordiness.

### **1.7.2 Organization**

Organization refers to the arrangement of ideas and presenting them in a logical order to maintain the flow of writing. Students have to ensure smooth transitions of their ideas. For instance, between sentences or from one paragraph to another, this will lead the reader naturally. Al-Mansour (2015) emphasized that organization refers to structuring content in a logical sequence. A good piece of writing should follow an organized format and consist of an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introduction is to present the main idea, which will be addressed in the writing body paragraph that will provide supportive details and a conclusion to summarize the key points.

### **1.7.3 Cohesion**

Another important element in paragraph writing is cohesion. According Tanskanen (2006), “Cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical elements on the surface of a text that can form connections between parts of the text.” (p. 7). In other words, it involves the use of grammar and vocabulary to link between sections of the text, making it easier to understand and to follow. Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1976, as cited in Mustafa 2024, p. 17) Stated that “Cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another” It helps to link ideas together, making the text easier to follow and understand. This will help to make reading easy and prevent the writing from appearing inconsistent or fragmented.

### **1.7.4 Coherence**

Coherence is the overall clarity, organization, and flow smoothly of ideas within a text. It ensures that the information is presented in an organized way, making it easier for the reader to understand the message without confusion. Murray and Hughes (2008) defined coherence as the organization of ideas clearly so the reader can easily follow them. A good writer connects their ideas like links in a chain, making sure each one leads smoothly to the next. If any links are missing, the text becomes confusing. Furthermore, coherence is achieved through a clear thesis statement, well-organized paragraphs, and logical connections between ideas. Each paragraph should focus on a single central idea, supported by relevant details and explanations.

### **1.7.5 Word Choice**

During the process of writing a paragraph, choosing appropriate words that are relevant to the topic is essential to convey meaning clearly. Nickelsen (2001) explained the word choice as the use of specific, clear, and accurate words in order to convey the intended meaning. It enhances the quality of writing by making it simpler to read, interesting, and easy to

understand. Glatch (2025) highlighted four main elements that contribute to effective word choice:

1. **Specificity:** Choose words that are clear rather than vague, to help readers understand and grasp the intended meaning easily.
2. **Meaning:** choosing words that have exact meaning (denotation) or for the feelings and ideas they suggest (connotation).
3. **Audience:** Use language that is suitable for the reader, it can be age, gender, culture. This means the words should fit who will read the work.
4. **Style:** Word choice helps create a unique and recognizable writing style, allowing readers to know who the writer is according to their style.

#### **1.7.6 Unity**

Unity is an essential element in paragraph writing. According to Checkett and Checkett (2014), “unity means that all the information in your body paragraph should act as “one unit” to help the reader understand what you are telling him or her about the subject.” (p. 140) Moreover, Oshima and Hogue (1981) indicated that unity means a paragraph should discuss one and only one main idea from beginning to end. Every supporting sentence must directly explain or prove the main idea. Sometimes, it is possible to discuss more than one aspect of the same idea in one paragraph if they are closely related to each other.

#### **1.8 Writing Mechanics**

In academia writing mechanics are crucial for clear written work. According to Nordquist, R. (2020), Writing mechanics encompass the fundamental rules that guide the correct use of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in written communication. These rules help writers to correct sentences and maintain consistency. The proper use of language mechanics allows writing to be clear, simple, and free of confusion. Errors in writing may hinder the flow of writing and make it difficult for readers to fully understand the message.



### **1.8.1 Spelling**

Spelling is the correct structure of letters in a word. It is an essential part of writing that ensures clarity. According to Bakshi, S. (2014), spellings are important because they build connections between letters and sounds and then between words and sentences. Proper spelling helps readers understand the message, while spelling errors can cause confusion. Common errors include misplacing letters, adding or omitting letters, and mixing up similar sounding words, for instance, write and right. In order to improve spelling, writers should proofread their work, ask for peer feedback or teacher feedback,

### **1.8.2 Punctuation**

Punctuation refers to all graphic marks that are used in a language. According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), Punctuation is “the use of graphic marks such as commas, semicolons, dashes and periods to clarify meaning in written sentences or to represent spoken sentences in writing.” (p.434). Proper punctuation ensures clear and effective communication in writing, as it enables the reader to know where and when the sentence stops and when to move to the other one. Misusing punctuation can lead to misunderstandings and affect the overall quality of writing.

### **1.8.3 Capitalization**

Another key element of writing mechanics is capitalization, which helps to maintain clarity and proper structure in writing. According to Pathan (2021), “Capitalization refers to the use of a capital/uppercase letter at the beginning of a word while the rest of the letters in the word remain small/lowercase. It is an indispensable part of written English.” (p. 65) Understanding capitalization rules is important for mastering writing in English, as it ensures clarity and proper sentence structure.

## **1.9 The Role of Teachers in Teaching Writing**

Teachers have an important role in helping to improve student's ability to write. During the writing process, they offer students with significant support, guidance, and strategies that influence their ability to develop their writing. According to Harmer (2004), teachers play several key roles in guiding students through the process of writing. These roles include:

### **1.9.1 Demonstrating**

Teachers are supposed to assist students in learning the different rules and types of writing by providing clear examples and making students pay attention to specific writing features.

### **1.9.2 Motivating and Provoking**

To encourage students to come up with ideas, teachers use various classroom activities to help them overcome challenges such as limited vocabulary and creativity.

### **1.9.3 Supporting**

Teachers play the role of mentors, giving guidance and reassurance to students while they write, particularly when they struggle with ideas or the structure.

### **1.9.4 Responding**

Instead of simply grading, teachers provide positive and constructive feedback on students' writing based on the content and organization Rather than just writing ability. This approach enables students to improve gradually and steadily.

### **1.9.5 Evaluating**

Teachers assess students' writing by identifying the strengths and weaknesses points, correcting the errors, and using evaluation as learning tool rather than merely a grading tool.

Another important role a teacher plays in the classroom is an assessor; a teacher evaluates students' writing performance. For example, teachers assess their students' paragraph writing on draft paper to understand their level in writing and what needs to change. Assessment for

learning, or formative assessment, is used to collect information about students' performances in order to identify their strengths and areas that target improvement

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter had discussed the aspects of paragraph writing. It started by defining the writing skills and explaining the writing process and its stages. Moreover, this chapter explored the main teaching approaches and characteristics of a good paragraph. It also discussed paragraph development, its structure, and the different types of it. In addition, the chapter highlighted the importance of writing mechanics, Emphasized common challenges students face in writing, and addressed the teachers' role in supporting and assessing students' writing. Overall, writing a good paragraph is essential for academic success.

## **Chapter Two: Formative Assessment**

## **Introduction**

Assessment plays an important role in education, as it shapes how teachers teach and helps them adjust their lesson plans or strategies based on students' needs, to improve learning and student outcomes. This chapter explores the definition of assessment, formative assessment, and how formative assessment, as an ongoing process, supports teaching and enhances students' development. It also examines the difference between formative assessment and summative assessment, explaining their various purposes in evaluating student progress. Moreover, it discusses the types and stages of formative assessment, as well as effective strategies for classroom use. This chapter also highlights the definition of the term formative feedback and its types. Additionally, it discusses techniques of formative Assessment and writing Assessment Methods.

### **2.1 What is Assessment?**

Assessment is an important component in teaching, as it enables teachers to gather information to understand how well students are doing. According to Huba & Freed (2000, as cited in Zaounche & Ben Zaid, 2017), assessment is the process of collecting information from different sources to understand students' knowledge, skills, and understanding. The purpose is to use the results to enhance and support future learning.

In addition to Palomba and Banta (1999, p. 4, as cited in Ohia, 2011, p. 25), assessment is defined as “the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs for the purpose of improving student learning and development.” This means that assessment helps teachers to gather useful information to understand how well students are learning and to make improvement when needed.

According to Kellough and Kellough (1999, as cited in Kalagiakos, 2008, p. 110) these are seven purposes of assessment:

- a. To assist students' learning.
- b. To identify students' strengths and weaknesses.
- c. To assess the effectiveness of a particular instructional strategy.
- d. To assess and improve the effectiveness of curriculum programs.
- e. To assess and improve teaching effectiveness.
- f. To provide data that assist in decision making.
- g. To communicate with students and involve, if necessary, their families.

These are common types of assessments: diagnostic, formative, summative assessments.

### **1. Diagnostic Assessment**

A diagnostic assessment is designed to determine students' abilities, including their strengths, areas that target further improvements, to understand their level and skill. Its questions aim to uncover misconceptions the students may have. This type of assessment is not to grade students, its results help enable teachers to guide and modify instructional plans and strategies. (Benjamin, 2025)

### **2. Formative Assessment**

Another type of assessment is formative assessment; Heritage (2007) explained that Formative assessment is a structured procedure for regularly collecting information about learning progress.

### **3. Summative Assessment**

A further assessment type is summative assessment According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), Summative assessment is designed to measure what a student has learned, usually at the end of a course or unit. It reviews how well the student met learning goals, but it does not focus on guiding future improvement.

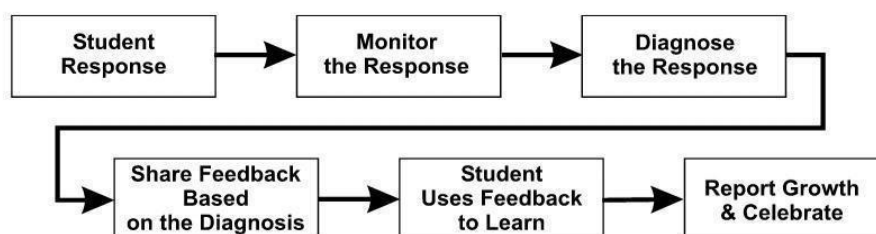
## 2.2 Definition of Formative Assessment

Over the years, many researchers have explored and discussed the concept of formative assessment. Carlson (2003) defined Formative assessment as; the continuous process of gathering information about students' understanding and skills during their learning.

Teachers use this information to decide on their future teaching methods. Similarly, Regier (2012) stated that "Formative assessment is a process that uses informal assessment strategies to gather information on student learning. Teachers determine what students are understanding and what they still need to learn to master a goal or outcome." (p. 5)

According to FAST SCASS (2018, p. 2), formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers. During learning and teaching, elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners. Using this information, teachers can give feedback to the students to overcome their errors.

**Figure 2.1** *Formative Assessment process*



*Note.* Reprinted From Formative Assessment: Responding to Your Students (p.4), by H.G.Tuttle, 2009, Eye on Education. Copyright 2009 by Eye on Education.

## 2.3 Formative Assessment Vs Summative Assessment

Instructional assessment may occur during the course, known as formative assessment, while summative assessment takes place at the end of the unit. According to McManus (2008), formative assessment is a means of providing data for both students and teachers to enhance instruction and learning all while the course is ongoing. It improves teaching by

allowing teachers to adjust their strategies to meet students' needs and addressing gaps before the final examination of academic performance.

According to Clark (2003), Summative assessment is aimed to evaluate how well students have achieved the learning goals. An example of summative assessment is final grades given at the end of the unit, semester, or course. This type of assessment is designed to assess the overall achievement without allowing any chance for improvement or revision. Unlike formative assessment, which supports continuous learning and improvement, summative assessment focuses on assessing outcomes rather than improvement.

**Table 1.1**

*Comparison of Formative and Summative Assessments*

<b>FIGURE 1.1</b>	<b>Comparison of Formative and Summative Assessments</b>	
	<b>Formative Assessments</b>	<b>Summative Assessments</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	To improve instruction and provide student feedback	To measure student competency
<b>When administered</b>	Ongoing throughout unit	End of unit or course
<b>How students use results</b>	To self-monitor understanding	To gauge their progress toward course or grade level goals and benchmarks
<b>How teachers use results</b>	To check for understanding	For grades, promotion

*Note.* Reprinted from Douglas and Nancy (2007, p.4) from permission.



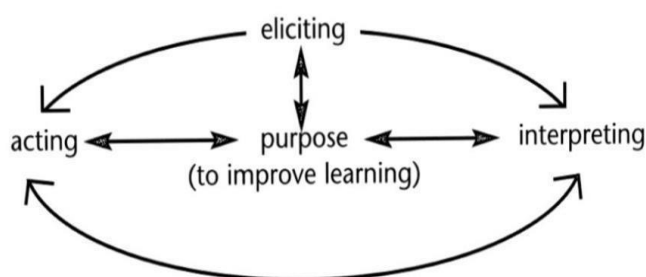
## 2.4 Types of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to the process of collecting evidence about students' performance during instruction, with the aim to enhance and support their ongoing learning process. According to Cowie and Bell (1999, as cited in Hall and Burke, 2004), there are two types of formative assessment:

### 2.4.1 Planned Formative Assessment

It is a structured method used to gather information about students' thinking, specifically through semi-formal tasks in the classroom; it can be at the beginning or at the end of instruction. This information is interpreted by the teacher depending on students' understanding and performance on the lessons. As shown in the figure, it is a continuous cycle of gathering, interpreting, and applying information. (Cowie and Bell, 1999, as cited in Hall and Burke, 2004).

**Figure 2.2** *Planned formative assessment*



*Note* Adapted from Cowie and Bell (1999), as cited in Hall, K., & Burke, W. M.

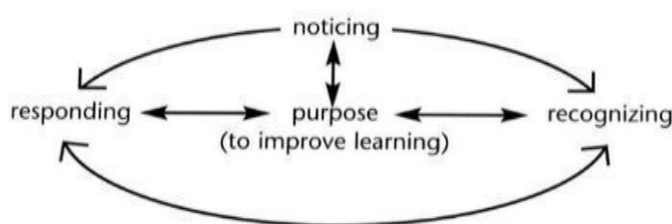
(2004). *Making formative assessment Work: Effective Practice in the primary classroom* (p. 15). Open University Press.

### 2.4.2 Interactive Formative Assessment

It is an ongoing, unplanned procedure that takes place during teacher-student interaction, throughout the learning period. This interaction can include small-group, whole-class, and individual interactions. This type of formative assessment includes three important stages: the

teacher observes, recognizes, and responds to a student's thinking and behavior. While this assessment is challenging to structure, teachers should encourage dialogue and provide opportunities for interaction, to improve both teaching and learning. (Cowie and Bell, 1999, as cited in Hall and Burke, 2004)

**Figure 2.3** *Interactive formative assessment*



*Note* Adapted from Cowie and Bell (1999), as cited in Hall, K., & Burke, W. M. (2004). *Making formative assessment Work: Effective Practice in the primary classroom* (p. 15). Open University Press.

## **2.5 Stages of Formative Assessment**

As previously described, formative assessment is an essential aspect for effective teaching practice, occurring throughout various stages of the lesson plan. The following sections will examine its application before, during, and after instruction.

### **2.5.1 Formative Assessment: Before Instruction**

According to Greenstein (2010), pre-assessments are an important part for effective teaching because it enables teachers to understand what their students already know before starting the lessons and to identify the level of challenge for each student to set a learning target. During this stage, teachers have an important role in designing instruction based on pre-assessment tasks such brainstorming allows students to share ideas and to show teachers their level of knowledge. Diagnostic tests are another example of pre-assessment tasks, which are short quizzes that check what students already understand. These tasks help teachers to

collect insights about students' knowledge of the subject matter, enabling teachers to identify any gaps or misconceptions before the lesson begins.

### **2.5.2 Formative Assessment: During Instruction**

Formative assessment during instruction is another essential element for effective learning. That is continuous assessment conducted during the instruction helping teachers in assessing student improvement along with making necessary changes. According to Green Stein (2010, as cited in Zaouache & Ben Zaid, 2017), assessment during instruction helps teachers identify students who struggle with particular concepts or applications.

Formative assessment is crucial to obtaining information about students' learning and understanding. (McMillan, 2014; Ozan&Kıncal, 2018, as cited in Kausar & Haroon, 2022) teachers do ask questions, to determine whether or not students learn the essential ideas of the course of study.

### **2.5.3 Formative Assessment: After Instruction**

Formative assessment, also known as post-assessment, focuses on evaluating students' understanding after the instructional period or learning period is completed. McMillan (2007, as cited in Benzoughbi & Attik, 2016) elaborated that formative assessment has a significant role in improving learning outcomes even after the instruction period ends. This kind of assessment is used to assign final grades, providing students with a summative judgment based on their performance or work. This type of assessment provides teachers the opportunity to address remaining areas of confusion or gaps before the final evaluations period takes place.

## **2.6 Effective Formative Assessment Strategies for Classroom Use**

Various formative assessment strategies can be used to enhance student learning in the classroom. Regier (2012) identified 60 strategies. However, we will discuss four of them.

### **2.6.1 One Minute Essays**

One Minute Essays are a quick assessment strategy in which students answer a question in one minute. The questions should encourage reflection and a personal connection while using Bloom's Taxonomy's higher-level thinking skills.

### **2.6.2 Peer Assessments**

The teacher allows students to evaluate each other's work based on specified criteria or a checklist given by the teacher. This strategy helps students to understand better while also improving their own skills, particularly in writing, through feedback.

### **2.6.3 Quick Writes**

Quick write is a formative assessment strategy where students engage in short timed writing exercises (2-5 minutes) where students respond to an open-ended question that focuses on ideas rather than writing mechanics. This strategy helps teachers to assess students' understanding and activate prior knowledge.

### **2.6.4 Questionings**

One of the strategies that serve to assess student understanding is asking lower-level questions that focus on recalling facts, while higher-level questions require deeper thinking and reflection. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, teachers can structure questions to guide students from basic knowledge recall to higher-order thinking, such as analysis and evaluation.

## **2.7 Formative Feedback**

In education, formative assessment and formative feedback are essential components of effective teaching and learning. Formative Assessment aims to collect information about students' level, using this information teachers provide formative feedback. As Sadler (1989) elaborated, "Feedback is key element in formative assessment." (p. 120). According to Shute (2007), stated "Formative feedback represents information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving

learning.”(p. 1), this definition highlights the role of formative feedback in helping students improve by providing information that guides them to identify and correct their mistakes.

### **2.7.1 Types of Feedback**

Feedback plays an important part in helping students improve their writing. According to Hyland (2007), the way feedback is given depends on the teacher's preferences, the nature of the writing task, and the desired outcome. Common types of feedback are:

#### **2.7.1.1 Constructive Feedback**

Constructive feedback is aimed at guiding students towards improvement, particularly in writing. Maryama (2022, as cited in Jansen et al., 2024) argued that constructive feedback, when students find it useful, makes them aware of their lack of knowledge on a specific topic. Thus, instead of simply pointing out errors, this type of feedback is designed to help students understand and correct their errors. These errors can be on the level of grammar, punctuation, spelling, or coherence.

#### **2.7.1.2 Oral Feedback**

Oral feedback is the process of providing beneficial comments through spoken communication on an individual's performance or group performance in the form of dialogue, questions, or discussion between teacher and students. According to Frey and Fisher (2011, pp. 77-78), supporting effective learning requires oral feedback to be well-structured, delivered in an appropriate setting, and conveyed to clarify misconceptions between teacher and students, exchange ideas, correct mistakes, and discuss each other's perspective for better correction and learning outcomes.

#### **2.7.1.3 Written Feedback**

Written feedback has an essential role in students' writing; it offers students clear guidance on how to improve their work. Written feedback allows students to review and reflect on the teacher's comments at their pace. This makes it helpful for better improvement.

According to Hyland (2003, p. 180), "A variety of techniques have been proposed to provide teacher feedback to students, the most common being commentary, cover sheets, minimal marking, taped comments, and electronic feedback." Most teachers tend to prefer to write comments on students' papers to provide them with written feedback on their work, where they can show students their errors and mistakes.

## **2.8 Techniques of Formative Assessment (Westwood 2008)**

In classroom instructions teachers should apply different techniques to collect information on students' performances and improvements, aiming to help students to overcome their difficulties and enhance their abilities. In this context, Westwood (2008) suggested a variety of formative assessment techniques that teachers can use to assess their students' learning more effectively.

### **2.8.1 Observation**

Observing students in the classroom is an effective method to understand their attitudes toward learning. It also helps teachers to determine whether the teaching methods they use are met with the students' needs or not. According to Puspita and Suyatno (2020, p. 78), "Teacher observation as one of the tools in assessment has been accepted as a source of information for recording and reporting student demonstrations of learning outcomes in

education." Teachers here can use that data to help students overcome their obstacles that they face and to enhance their abilities and skills. For example, in the classroom during a written expression session, the teacher can go around their students and observe each one's work to assess their progress and identify areas of difficulty and to adjust his teaching strategies accordingly.

### **2.8.2 Appraising Students' Work Samples Homework and Portfolios**

One of the teacher's roles is to provide students with additional extra activities to work on, either alone or in groups, inside or outside the classroom. This kind of assignment, which can

be given daily or weekly, enables teachers to determine whether students have made any progress or not. According to Westwood (2008), assessment can be divided into two types: single sample and different sample assessments. The first one involves assessing students' work at a particular moment, indicating whether they have met the lesson's objectives or not.

The second one involves different sample assessments reviewing various pieces of a student's work over time, allowing for the tracking of progress and identifying any improvement. This type of assessment refers to "portfolio assessment" (Forster & Masters, 1996, as noted in Westwood, 2008, p. 75)

Portfolios are defined by Clark (2003) as "collections of student papers usually chosen by the student that will then be graded or assessed at the end of the course. The portfolios allow students to revise over the entire course rather than just during the process for the individual paper." (p. 214) it enables students to revise and enhance their work over time, instead of focusing on one assignment.

### **2.8.3 Interviewing Students**

This type of assessment is a one-on-one conversation where the teacher reviews the students' progress, including their classroom work and results from tests on their performance. According to Westwood (2008, p. 76), "The assessment interview involves discussion between a student and the teacher, usually focusing upon work the student has been doing in the classroom and on test results." The aim is to understand how well students are doing and discuss any areas that target improvement.

### **2.8.4 Quizzes and Informal Tests**

According to Westwood (2008), teachers often use short quizzes or tests to encourage students and review what they have learned. While it can be difficult to assess every student's response, teachers can choose some papers to review and to monitor. Quizzes, on the other hand, help students by allowing them to listen to the corrected answers in class. However,

this type of assessment mainly checks if students remember information and knowledge they studied; if not, they can still use or change the information

## **2.9 Writing Assessment Methods**

In the process of assessing students' writing teacher should apply some methods to collect information, Liu (2024) identified the main writing assessment methods which are: teacher assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, automated assessment, and combined feedback assessment.

### **2.9.1 Teachers Assessment**

Writing means giving feedback and advice to students about their writing work. It is a traditional and popular method. The advantage of this kind of assessment is that students have a trust in their teachers because of their expertise and their qualifications, which enable students to accept feedback and use it. According to Cui Ying (2019, as cited in Liu, 2024), teachers' assessment can have drawbacks, such as being rigid, unclear, or delayed, this may hinder students' writing outcome, also having too much work can make teachers less patient when reviewing students' writing, so they might focus only on the superficial errors.

### **2.9.2 Peer Assessment**

Peer assessment, or peer feedback, helps students to improve their writing abilities.

Students can understand and obtain more knowledge about their writing and modify it through assessing peers' writing. At the same time, they can learn from others' mistakes or ideas. Peer feedback benefits students' cognitive ability because, during the peer feedback process, students play more active roles in learning and writing as they think about what is correct and what needs more work.



### **2.9.3 Self-Assessment**

Self-assessment is when students take a look at their own work and evaluate it based on criteria set by their teachers. This method of assessment enables students to have the main role in teaching and enhancing their writing as they are able to correct their own work and recognize some mistakes. But not all students have the ability to do self-assessment. Some students cannot recognize their own errors and mistakes.

### **2.9.4 Combined Feedback Assessment**

Combining both feedback and assessment is a widely used method for evaluating students' writing performance nowadays. Using one single assessment method can present disadvantages in addressing various aspects of students' writing. For instance, one method may focus on grammar while neglecting the organization of the work, whereas another method may prioritize coherence and pay less attention to grammatical structure. The disadvantages of single assessment methods can be overcome by employing a combination of both methods.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, assessment is an important component for effective teaching and learning. This chapter has highlighted the important role of formative assessment in shaping teaching and learning in order to support students' academic progress and help teachers to adjust their teaching strategies and lesson plans according to students' strengths and points that target further improvements. This chapter defined formative assessment and showed differences between FA and SM and explored FA types, stages, and effective classroom strategies to use.

It became clear how ongoing assessment improved both teaching practice and student outcomes. Moreover, the chapter discussed formative feedback as a term. Discussing its types, it also addressed Technique of Formative Assessment and Writing Assessment Method. Finally, formative assessment, when effectively implemented, serves as a strong tool that supports continued learning and growth.

## **Chapter three: Field Work**

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the process of data collection tools and analysis. It outlines the research instruments employed in this study. The chapter also includes an analysis of the data obtained from both the students' questionnaire and the teachers' questionnaire, along with their interpretation. In addition, the summary of the data analysis for both questionnaires are included.

### **3.1 Research methodology**

In the process of doing any research work having a well planned methodology is essential. Research methodology is a structured, scientific approach used to gather, analyze, and interpret data to address research questions or test hypotheses. The choice of methodology depends on the research question, resources, and objectives. (Mehta, 2023)

According to Marhasova et al. (2022), "research methodology is a scheme of research or study." (p. 328)

### **3.2 Research Approach**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) there are three main research approaches which are: qualitative approach, quantitative approach and mix method approach.

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups give to social or human problems. This approach involves asking open ended questions, data collection in real life settings, looking for patterns, and the researcher's interpretation of the findings. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) In other words, research in this approach focuses on gaining deep insights and interpreting the meaning of the situation and data. The most common qualitative methods are: observations, interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

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### **3.2.2 Quantitative Research**

This type of research approach, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is used to test objective theories by examining relationships between measurable variables. It involves collecting numerical data, analyzing it with statistical methods, and following a structured format. This approach aims to avoid bias, test theories deductively, and produce results that can be generalized and repeated. The Most common quantitative methods are: Experiments, correlation research, causal- comparative/ quasi-experimental and systematic observations.

### **3.2.3 Mix Method Research**

Mix method research is an approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data in one study. It involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating these two types of data using specific research design. The main idea is that combining both forms of data provides deeper insight than using either method alone. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

In this regard, the present research adopts the qualitative approach, because it serves the nature of the study and it is believed to be appropriate for investigating the research aim.

This approach supports the collection of valid and in-depth data to understand the role of formative assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph writing.

## **3.3 The Research Design**

Since the main aim of this study is to obtain in-depth information about the role of formative assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph writing, a qualitative research design has been adopted to achieve these aims.

## **3.4 The Population and Sample**

This study was conducted on second-year EFL students and teachers of written expression at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. This category of students was selected because they still face challenges with paragraph writing, despite studying written expression in their first year and having prior knowledge. Therefore, it is important to improve their writing

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proficiency and receive the necessary support to overcome their writing difficulties. A sample of 40 students was purposively selected because they were currently studying written expression. Additionally, five teachers of WE were also purposively selected to provide insight into the instructional practices and formative assessment strategies used to guide and improve students' paragraph writing. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where participants are intentionally selected because they meet certain criteria relevant to the study.

In this study the sample size was selected based on feasibility and the need to collect in depth responses, rather than aiming for large-scale statistical generalization, as the purpose of this study is not to generalize findings to the entire population. Hilton and Burnett (2005) explained "Qualitative methods are particularly strong at attaining deep and detailed understandings about a specific group or sample, but at the expense of generalizability". (p. 30). In other words qualitative methods provide in-depth insight about a specific group but the findings cannot be applied to a large population.

### **3.5 Data Collection Tools**

To collect data, a questionnaire was used for both students and teachers. According to Kabir (2016), "A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents" (p. 208) a questionnaire can be structured, unstructured, and semi-structured.

In this study we used a semi-structured questionnaire, as they are typically used in qualitative research. According to Jordan, Clarke, and Coates (2021, as cited in Khan et al., 2024), "semi-structured questionnaires are widely embraced in qualitative research across various fields, including social sciences, market research, and healthcare studies. They are particularly advantageous in situations where understanding participants motivations and experiences is paramount." (p. 3225). Similarly Nicolas (2024) further explained that

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Semi-structured questionnaires in qualitative research are commonly used to collect information in depth and open-ended responses, they include mix of prepared questions and the flexibility to explore ideas further; allowing participants to share their perspectives, attitude, and experiences related to specific topic in depth.

The data collected from the close-ended questions were manually calculated and displayed in tables while the open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to gain deeper insights into students' and teachers' perspectives. Each response was carefully read, all points were coded, and similar codes were grouped into categories due to their similarities. This analysis helped to better understand their opinions and experiences related to our study.

### **3.6 Description of the Students' Questionnaires**

The questionnaire was carefully structured and divided into three main sections. The first section focused on general information about the students including gender, age, and motivation for studying the English language, in order to identify their background and category. The second section focuses on paragraph writing, including questions about the writing course, students' confidence, specific challenges in paragraph structure, and overall difficulties when writing.

The third section is concerned with formative assessment, examining the implementation of FA by teachers. In addition to exploring whether teachers provide feedback, how and when it is given, and students' suggestions for improving paragraph writing.

The questionnaire included a total of 14 questions, combining both closed and open-ended formats. Closed-ended questions required students to choose to appreciate answers or respond with yes/ no options. Open-ended questions were designed to allow students to freely express their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives on paragraph writing, formative assessment during instructions.

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The students' questionnaire was distributed on 5 March 2025. It was addressed to the sample of 40 second year EFL students at the department of the department of Language and English Literature at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra and they give it back on the same day as they have finished answering all the questions.

### **3.6.1 Aim of the Students' Questionnaires**

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about the effect of formative assessment in enhancing EFL students' paragraph writing. It studies students' perceptions of how the implementation of formative assessment strategies in the classroom and teachers' feedback in helping them improve their capacity to write a well-structured paragraph. Additionally, it seeks to identify students' paragraph writing challenges, as well as the suggestion to overcome these difficulties.

### **3.6.2 The Analysis of Students' Questionnaires**

#### **Section One: General information**

#### **Item 1: What is your gender?**

**Table 3.1**

*Students' Gender*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Female</b>	32	80%
<b>Male</b>	8	20%
<b>Total</b>	40	100%

The results from Table 1 show that most students are females, while only a few are males.

The results indicate females are more interested and willing to take part in this study.



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### Item 2: What is your Age range?

**Table 3.2**

Students' Age

Options	Number	Percentage%
<b>18-24</b>	38	95%
<b>25 and above</b>	2	5%
<b>Total</b>	40	100%

The data set in the table shows that the majority of students are between 18 and 24, with only a small number being 25 or older. The outcomes from Table 2 suggest that most of the students are in their early academic years.

### Item 3: What motivated you to study English at university?

**Table 3.3**

*Motivation for study English at university*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
<b>Personal interest</b>	24	60%
<b>External influence</b>	12	30%
<b>Other</b>	4	10%
<b>Total</b>	40	100%

According to the table above, most students are motivated to study English at university due to personal interest. At the same time, some are influenced by external factors such as career opportunities or family expectations, while a small number mention other reasons for their motivation. The findings from Table 3 confirm that motivation plays a significant role in

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students' decision to study English, although external factors can also impact some individuals' decisions.

### Item 4: Which skill do you find most difficult to develop?

**Table 3.4**

*Skill students find most difficult to develop*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Listening	6	15%
Speaking	10	25%
Reading	4	10%
Writing	20	50%
Total	40	100%

The data above indicate that many students view writing as the most challenging language skill to develop. Some also struggle with speaking, while fewer students report difficulties with listening. Reading appears to be the least problematic skill. The results of this question suggest that writing is perceived as the most difficult skill to develop among students, indicating a need for additional support. Students should be encouraged to practice writing exercises regularly to improve this skill. Moreover, speaking also requires focused attention to enhance fluency. In contrast, listening and reading seem to be less challenging for most students.

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### Section Two: The Writing Skill

#### Item 5: How would you describe the “written expression” course?

**Table 3.5** *Descriptions of the “written expression” course*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Very interesting	16	40%
Interesting	16	40%
Not interesting	8	20%
Total	40	100%

An analysis of table 5 reveals that students generally have positive perceptions of the Written Expression course. A significant number of respondents describe the course as either “very interesting” or “interesting”, indicating that they find it engaging and helpful for improving their writing skills. However, a smaller group considers it “not interesting,” which may suggest that the course does not fully meet their expectations or interests. Although most students view the Written Expression course as interesting, some improvements could be made to better address the needs of all students.

#### Item 6: Which part of paragraph writing do you find most challenging?

**Table 3.6**

*Students' Most Challenging Aspects of Paragraph Writing*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Writing a clear topic sentence	12	30%
Organizing and supporting ideas	24	60%
Writing a good concluding sentence	4	10%
Total	40	100%

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The table above illustrates the various difficulties students face in paragraph writing. The majority reports that organizing and supporting ideas is the most challenging aspect. Some students find writing a clear topic sentence difficult, while only a few struggles with writing an effective concluding sentence. Based on these responses, it can be inferred that most students may need additional support in improving the clarity and organization of their paragraph writing.

### Item7: How does your teacher address errors in your written work?

**Table 3.7**

*Students' perceptions on how teachers address errors in written work*

Options	Number	Percentage%
<b>Provides the correct form directly</b>	28	70%
<b>Points out errors and asks for self correction</b>	12	30%
<b>Total</b>	40	100%

The table above presents students' perceptions of how their teachers correct errors in written work. Most students report that their teachers provide the correct form when mistakes are made. However, a smaller number state that their teachers prefer to point out the errors and encourage them to make corrections independently. This suggests that teachers adopt different correction approaches: some emphasize direct correction, while others aim to foster students' problem-solving skills to enhance their ability to self-correct and improve future writing.

### Item 8: What are the difficulties you encounter when written a paragraph?

The students' responses to the question difficulties they face when writing a paragraph, reveal several difficulties they encounter in writing. Starting with coherence as a major difficulty students' face, they often find it difficult to organize their ideas logically as one

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student's response, "I know what I want to say, but I don't know how to arrange the sentences together." This shows that while students may have ideas, they don't know how to structure them effectively. Coherence is a major difficulty students' face.

Another common difficulty is limited vocabulary, as one student responds "I can't always find the right or suitable words, so my paragraph sounds boring or repetitive." This means they don't have enough vocabulary to express their ideas clearly, which affects the quality of their writing. Moreover, Another common difficulty students face is incorrect grammar use, as one of the students mentions "in writing I make a lot of grammar mistakes, like using wrong verb tenses because sometimes I mix between past and present" This explained that grammar as a major challenge students face. They make errors when using the wrong verb form, for example saying "she go to school" instead of "she goes to school". Another mistake is mixing verb tenses, such as starting a sentence in the past and ending it in the present. She woke up late early and goes to school quickly.

Ideas devolvment is another challenge. As one student explains "I start writing, but then I don't know how to continue or add an example or further explanation of my ideas." This shows they have trouble in developing and supporting their ideas. Furthermore, Spelling problems are also a concern students' face in writing. It happens when they write words the way they sound, like writing "hear" instead of "here". Also words that sound the same but have different meanings and spelling, such as "there," "their", and "they're". Or "too", "to", and "two". As a few students claim that "when writing my paragraph sometimes, I forget how to write words with silence later like know, write, and honestly, that is why I lose a lot of marks in the exam". Students sometimes struggle with words that have silent letters, like "know", "write" or "honest", where the k, w, or h is not pronounced. Another common mistake when they make and may the reader get confused is using words that are spelled the same but having different meanings, such as "watch" (to look at or a device that tells time).

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Another common spelling mistake is missing or extra letters like: “accidentally” instead of “accidently” “As one student highlights it, “I often make mistakes, especially with long or difficult words. And I forget how to write some words” This issue affects how clear and correct the paragraph is.

Cohesion appears to be difficult for some of the students, as one said, “When I write I have different ideas but I don’t know how to connect between sentences.” This means that students have ideas but linking them smoothly is difficult, which affects the overall quality of the writing. In addition, Punctuation is another difficulty students often face in writing. Run-on sentences and comma splices are other common mistakes students often make; it happens by joining sentences without proper punctuation. For example, “I woke up I go to gym” should be separated into correct sentences. Forgetting periods, commas, or question marks, or using them in the wrong can lead to confusion and hinder the quality of the writing.

Lastly, Capitalization mistakes are other Common mistakes students often make in their writing. For example, they forget to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences or for proper nouns like names of people, places, or days, or forget to capitalize the letter after a period. As one the students mentions. “I always forget to do capital letters after a period in writing and my teacher always mentions these mistakes I do” another student reports:“ in writing capitalization is forgotten in my writing, and I always lose marks for it because sometimes I forget its rules”. The results of students’ responses indicate that many students struggle with both content and structure of paragraph writing, these difficulties reveal the need for the teacher's support and to pay more attention to these important aspects of writing, to produce high-quality or effective writing.

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### Section Three: The use of Formative assessment

#### Item 9: Do your teachers implement formative assessment during writing lessons?

**Table 3.9**

*The implementation of formative assessment*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Yes	27	67.5%
No	13	32.5%
Total	40	100%

The table above shows that the majority of teachers implement formative assessment during the Written Expression course, while fewer students report that their teachers do not. The analysis of this question reveals that most teachers recognize the importance of incorporating formative assessment into their teaching practices, although a few do not.

#### Item 10: When does your teacher usually provide feedback on your writing?

**Table 3.10**

*Timing of Teacher's Feedback on Students' Writing*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Right after each writing task	25	62.5%
At the end of the lesson	15	37.5%
Total	40	100%

The data presented in the table reveal timing of teacher's feedback on students' writing; most students report that they prefer receiving feedback right after each writing task. However, some students share that their teachers provide feedback only at the end of the

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lesson. The analysis of this question reveals that while most teachers offer timely feedback, a few students experience delays, which could impact their ability to apply teachers' feedback to correct their writing errors.

### **Item 11: When do you prefer receiving feedback?**

Students shared their preferences regarding the timing of receiving feedback. Many expressed that immediate feedback helps them recognize and correct their mistakes effectively. As one student stated, "To recognize the mistake and correct my writing." They also noted that receiving feedback right away allows them to address issues promptly and continue with other tasks without interruption, as reflected in comments like, "It helps to fix the problem very soon," and "To move to other task." This type of feedback supports writing improvement by helping students clearly remember and apply comments to correct issues such as spelling and punctuation. One student explained, "I prefer receiving feedback immediately because I do a lot of mistakes in spelling or in punctuation."

In addition, students reported feeling more focused and motivated when feedback is provided immediately, as it helps them understand what is strong or weak in their writing and how to enhance it. However, some students prefer receiving feedback at the end of the lesson, as it allows them time to reflect and process the information. They believe that receiving critical feedback during writing could negatively impact their motivation. One student highlighted this by saying, "So I don't receive feedback that can lead me to lose motivation in writing." Others expressed that being corrected immediately may discourage them and reduce their passion for writing. As one student noted, "I don't like to be corrected, and I will lose my passion to try it."

In conclusion, while most students appreciate timely feedback for its role in improving writing performance, a few prefer delayed feedback due to psychological factors, such as maintaining motivation and confidence



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**Item 12: Do you think that writing skills can be developed through teachers'**

**Feedback?**

**Table 3.11**

*Students' perception on teachers' feedback can develop the writing skills*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Yes	30	75%
No	10	25%
Total	40	100%

Table 12 clearly indicates that the majority of students believe their writing can be improved through teachers' feedback, while some think that such feedback does not contribute to their development. This suggests that most students recognize the value of teachers' feedback in enhancing their writing, whereas others do not. This difference may be due to various reasons, such as difficulties in understanding the feedback or in identifying the errors they made in their writing.

**Item 13: Do you think that the use of formative assessment by the teacher helps you to improve your writing?**

**Table 3.12**

*Impact of Formative Assessment on Writing Skills*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Yes	33	82.5%
No	7	17.5%
Total	40	100%

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Table 13 results indicate that most students believe the use of formative assessment by teachers helps them improve their writing. However, a few students claim that it does not. These results suggest that the majority of students believe formative assessment can have a positive effect on improving their writing.

### **Item 14: What are your suggestions to develop the paragraph writing?**

In response to the question about how to improve paragraph writing, the students share several helpful suggestions. They emphasize the importance of daily writing practice and regular reading. For example one of the students notes "To improve writing, you must also improve your reading skills" also "reading helps you to discover how good writing is structured". Furthermore, they report learning new vocabulary and using it in writing, to strengthen expression. As mentioned by one of the students "Read regularly and learn new vocabulary to express your ideas better" and "Write short paragraphs using the new vocabulary you have learned".

In addition, they mention the need to focus on correct spelling and grammar, as these are essential elements of clear writing. Moreover, one of them explains "focus on grammar "and "learn more grammar rules to improve your writing ". Another suggestion is getting feedback from teachers or classmates to correct writing mistakes. As references by one of the students

"Keep practicing and ask you're your teachers to correct your work" and "ask your classmates or teachers for feedback".

Finally, they recommend writing on different topics and continuing to practice for further progress, as most of them report "keep practice" and "practice makes perfect". These suggestions show that the students believe regular practice, reading, learning from mistakes, and feedback are key elements for becoming better writers.

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### **3.6.3 Summary of the Analysis of the Data**

The study offers a clear view of how students experience and perspective on formative assessment and paragraph writing in their English classes. One important finding is that female students show more interest in taking part in the current study.

Most students are at their early academic journey, which means they may need specific support and encouragement to overcome the challenges they face as younger learners.

Motivation is another important factor that influences students' decisions to study English. However, there are external factors that can hinder their motivation. Yet many students still consider writing to be very interesting or interesting.

Among the language skills, writing is often viewed as the most challenging, which explains the need for further support to develop this skill. Starting by coherence as being the most difficult students encounter when writing a paragraph. They struggle to connect their ideas logically, leading to disconnecting thoughts and confusing texts. Another common difficulty is limited vocabulary, which restricts students from expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly, leading them to repeat the same words.

Grammar issues are also considered a common challenge, where students struggle, they make grammatical mistakes such as errors in sentence structure, verb tense and subject-verb agreement. These errors lead to losing the clarity of text and make the reading task difficult and unpleasant.

Beyond grammar, students face challenges in developing ideas, like adding extra details, examples or explanations which lead to undeveloped content.

Spelling is another area of concern; it happens when students forget letters or add extra ones, making the text unclear and incorrect. Cohesion is equally important, but many students fail to use appropriate linking words and phrases to connect their ideas smoothly.

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Punctuation is another difficulty, where incorrect or missing punctuation marks can hinder sentence meaning and overall writing quality. Finally, capitalization errors are also common, as students often misuse capital letters, which can affect the clarity and correctness of their writing. Additionally, the majority of students encounter difficulties when writing supporting sentences and topic sentences of their paragraphs. This highlights the importance of teacher support and focuses on these areas to enhance the quality of the writing.

Furthermore, most teachers use formative assessments as they recognize its importance and how it allows them to provide feedback that enables students to correct their mistakes. Some students prefer to receive feedback during the writing process, so they can benefit the most, while others prefer it at the end of the lesson, as they may fear losing passion when receiving feedback, which is the opposite direction of their plan. Most students see feedback as a helpful tool to the enhancement of the written work, although a small number may not feel the same about it.

Overall these findings highlight the need for targeted support, and to raise awareness on the usefulness of the implementation of formative assessment strategies in the classroom, as well as providing target feedback to avoid obstacles students may face during the process of writing. By addressing these challenges teachers can enhance student's overall writing proficiency.

### **3.7 Description of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

The teachers' questionnaire was carefully designed to gather information about how teachers teach paragraph writing and how they use formative assessment strategies to help their students improve writing abilities. It included sixteen questions. Some of the questions were closed-ended, such as multiple choices or yes/no, while others were open-ended, allowing teachers to give more detailed answers. The questionnaire consists of three sections,

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the first section focuses on teachers' background, with questions about their gender, qualifications, and teaching experience.

The second section covers paragraph writing, includes questions about common challenges students face in writing, what makes a good paragraphs according to teachers, how often they use the stages of writing, what they focus on when correcting students' writing, the challenges they face when teaching writing, and their opinions about the most important element of well-written paragraph.

The third section focuses on the use of formative assessment in classroom teaching; it includes questions about whether or not they implement FA, the type they use, and how important it is in teaching writing. Also asked about the feedback they provide, and its types.

In addition, the difficulties they face when applying formative assessment and its strategies, make it effective in writing instruction.

The questionnaire was distributed on 5 March 2025. It was addressed to the sample of five teachers of WE at the department of foreign languages, the department of Language and English Literature at Mohammed Khider University of Biskra and they gave it back on the same day as they had finished answering all the questions.

### **3.7.1 Aim of Teachers' Questionnaire**

The aim of the teachers' questionnaire is to understand the importance of using formative assessment to help students improve their paragraph writing challenges. It explores how teachers implement FA in the classroom and their opinions about its role in writing instruction. By collecting this information, the study aims to gain a clearer understanding of how students' paragraph writing can be improved through effective use of formative assessment.

### **3.7.2 The Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaires**

#### **Section One: General information**

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### Item 1: what is your Gender?

**Table 3.13**

*Teachers' Gender*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Female	4	80%
Male	1	20%
Total	5	100%

The findings from the table above highlight that the Written Expression course is mostly taught by female teachers, while only a small number of male teachers are involved. These results suggest that female teachers tend to be more involved in teaching WE at this level.

### Item 2: What is your Qualification?

**Table 3.14**

*Teachers' Qualifications*

Options	Number	Percentage%
Magister (M.A)	1	20%
Doctorate (Ph.D.)	4	80%
Total	5	100%

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of teachers hold Doctorate degrees (Ph.D.), while only one teacher holds a Magister degree (M. A). This demonstrates that the differences in academic qualifications of the teachers may bring various perspectives and approaches to the classroom. This can enhance the quality of teaching instruction.

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### Item 3: Teachers' Years of Experience?

**Table 3.15**

*Years of Experience*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
1-5 years	1	20%
6-10 years	1	20%
More than 10 years	3	60%
Total	5	100%

The results obtained from table 3 show that one teacher has a few years of experience in teaching; another teacher has several years of experience, while the majority of the teachers have extensive experience. These ranges of experience level reveal a mix of both newer and highly experienced educators, which can bring a variety of teaching styles and methods to the classroom.

### Section two: Paragraph Writing

#### Item 4: What are the most common challenges noticed in your students' writing?

The results represent the most common challenges students face, beginning with grammar, as mentioned by one teacher. This is followed by vocabulary, as notes by another teacher. Then, language mechanics (punctuation, capitalization and spelling) are highlighted by one teacher. Lastly, the organizations of ideas (coherence and cohesion) are mentioned by other teachers, as one of the challenges students face in paragraph writing. This highlights the common challenges that reflect the areas where students may need more support and targeted instruction, this suggests that focusing on these aspects could greatly enhance students' writing.

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**Item 5:** What does a good paragraph mean to you?

The results highlight that from the teachers' perspective on what a good paragraph is. According to them, it involves correct grammar, as mentioned by one teacher, followed by vocabulary, as another teacher notes, and then the organization of ideas (coherence and cohesion), as one teacher reports. Most of the teachers selected all of these aspects as important. This reveals that teachers recognize paragraph writing as a complicated task, where students must focus on correcting grammar, using proper vocabulary and organizing their ideas logically in order to write a well-structured paragraph.

**Item 6:** How often Do you follow the writing stages (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, final draft) when teaching writing?

**Table 3.16**

*Teacher Frequency in Using Writing Stages*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Always	2	40%
Sometimes	2	40%
Rarely	1	20%
Total	5	100%

The data presented in the table reveal how often teachers use the different stages of writing (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and final draft) when teaching writing. Some teachers mention that they always follow these stages, while others said they sometimes use them. Only one teacher notes that they rarely apply these writing stages. This means that while some teachers follow the full writing process regularly, others apply it only when they feel it is necessary.



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**Item 7:** When correcting students' writing, what do you focus more on?

**Table 3.17**

*Teachers' Main Focus When Correcting Students' Writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Form	2	40%
Content	1	20%
Both	2	40%
Total	5	100%

The table above illustrates that two teachers focus mainly on form when correcting students' writing, such as grammar and sentence structure, another teacher focuses more on correcting the content of the writing. However, most teachers pay attention to correcting both form and content. This signifies that most teachers try to help students improve both the accuracy of their language and the clarity of their ideas, which contributes to more effective written work.

**Item 8: What challenges do you face when teaching paragraph writing?**

The results obtained from this item show the challenges teachers face when teaching paragraph writing, according to two teachers the first challenge is lack of students' motivation. Another two teachers note limited time for writing instruction. While one teacher mentions other challenges which are overcrowded classrooms. The responses indicate that teachers face challenges during instruction that can hinder their teaching.

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**Item 9: In your opinion, what is the most important element for a well-written paragraph?**

The results reveal the teachers' opinion on the most important element for a well-written paragraph. One teacher states that a clear topic sentence is the most important, while another teacher emphasizes the importance of relevant and organized supporting ideas. However, the majority of teachers believe that all of these elements are important for a well-written Paragraph. These highlight that teachers value both the structure and development of ideas in paragraph writing.

### Section Three: Formative Assessment

**Item 10: Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?**

**Table 3.18**

*The implementation of formative assessment in the classroom*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%

The results explain that most teachers use formative assessment in their classroom to monitor and support students' progress. However one teacher states that they do not use formative assessment. This suggests that although formative assessment is commonly used, its implementation may vary from one teacher to another. Emphasizing its importance in the classroom may encourage more teachers to adopt it to the enhancement of both teaching and learning.

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### Item 11: Which type of assessment do you use in writing instruction?

**Table 3.19**

*Types of Assessment teachers used in writing instruction*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Formative Assessment	1	20%
Summative Assessment	1	20%
Both	3	60%
Total	5	100%

An analysis of the table demonstrates the results concerning the types of assessment used by teachers during instruction, one teacher reports using only formative assessment while another mentions relying only on summative assessment. While most teachers state they use both FA and SA in instructional. These findings reveal that while there are different preferences in assessment, many teachers recognize the value assessment to enhance students' learning process.

### Item 12: How important is formative assessment in teaching writing?

**Table 3.20**

*Teachers' opinion on the important is formative assessment in teaching writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Very important	4	80%
Important	1	20%
Not important	---	---
Total	5	100%

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The results from table 12 reveal teachers' opinions regarding the importance of FA in teaching. Majority of teachers consider formative assessment to be very important in teaching, and one teacher considers it important. While none of the teachers view it as not important. This suggests that they have a positive attitude toward the role of formative assessment in supporting students' writing development.

### Item 13: Do you give feedback on students' writing?

**Table 3.21**

*Teachers' Use of Feedback in Students' Writing*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Yes	4	80%
No	1	20%
Total	5	100%

The findings as presented in the table above indicate that all teachers provide feedback on their students' writing. This indicates that there is a strong commitment among teachers to support students' writing development through consistent feedback.

### Item 14: What type of feedback do you provide?

**Table 3.22**

*Types of Feedback Provided by Teachers on Students' Writing.*

Options	Numbers	Percentage%
Oral feedback	2	40%
Written feedback	1	20%
Both	2	40%
Total	5	100%

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

The results from the table above highlight the type of feedback teachers provide on their students' writing, some claim using oral feedback and others use written feedback. And some use both. This suggests that different types of feedback teachers' use are aimed to collect information from their students to help them in improving student's weak points and to teaching strategies.

### **Item 15: What difficulties do you face when applying formative assessment in writing instruction?**

Challenges teachers face when applying formative assessment in writing instruction:

One major difficulty mentioned is related to students' lack of motivation and engagement.

As one of the teachers explains "the difficulties are related to students' motivation and engagement. They are not willing to learn from their mistakes. More than half of the students ignore my feedback, especially if it is only written". These show that some students do not benefit from teachers' feedback, especially when they see writing tasks as something to complete quickly rather than to learn from. Another teacher notes that: "students tend to overuse ChatGPT in generating their texts", which limits their learning and development.

Another important point is students' lack of knowledge about formative assessment. One teacher says: "The reluctance of students / lack of knowing FA strategies in the classroom. After explanation they are able to use it. Also the results are positive". These suggest that although students may struggle with knowing and understanding FA. Once they are trained and guided properly, they can understand and apply them effectively. Finally, one teacher reports facing no challenges, indicating that some classroom environment may be more supportive or manageable. Another challenge was the large number of students in class, which makes it difficult to provide quality feedback. As another teacher mentions, "With such a big number of students, I can't provide effective and immediate feedback". This indicates that time and overcrowded classrooms can affect the teacher's ability to apply FA properly.

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

Moreover another teacher claims that limited time for writing activities is a challenge. As one of them states, "Time allocation for writing" is a problem, showing that instructional time may not always be enough for teachers to use FA strategies or to assess students' writing.

The results reveal that the main challenges in applying FA in the classroom, including students' motivation, class size, time limitations and students' unfamiliarity with formative assessment methods, however, some teachers also observed positive results when students were guided and supported in using these strategies.

### **Item 16: What strategies do you use to apply formative assessment in writing instruction?**

One of the important strategies is providing feedback. As one teacher mentions, "By the end of the session, I collect their paragraphs with written and sometimes oral feedback on their Writing performance, and on things they need to improve". This act shows the importance of "correcting common mistakes and correcting them", which helps students to become aware of the errors they made and learn how to avoid them.

Another important strategy is student involvement in the assessment process. The teacher applies "self assessment", allowing students to reflect on their own writing. Another teacher states that "discussion/ peer assessment/ conferences" are strategies used to engage students in giving feedback to each other and discussing their ideas, which supports collaborative learning, peer interaction, and group work.

Instructional support is also clearly evident in the teacher's response. They explain, "I try to move from one group to another to check their writing process and outline ideas", which shows that the teacher provides continuous guidance during the writing task. Furthermore, "conferences" with students offer a chance for more direct or one-on-one discussion and feedback. The results highlight that teachers use different formative assessment strategies, including timely feedback, peer and self-assessment, one-on-one discussion or conference.

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

These strategies help to support students throughout the writing process and guide them toward further improvement.

### **3.7.3 Summary of the Analysis of the Data**

The results show that female teachers are more involved and interested in teaching writing at this level. In addition, the differences in their qualifications and years of experience lead to the use of different teaching methods and approaches, which can help to improve the learning process. Teachers also report that students find paragraphs writing a difficult task, as many of them face problems in doing it. This written task requires regular practice and to pay attention to grammar, vocabulary, and organization of ideas, in order to produce well-written work. In teaching writing, most teachers follow all the stages of the writing process, from prewriting to writing final draft, while a few apply it when necessary. Teachers focus to help students improve the content of their writing by expressing clear and meaningful ideas, and the form by using correct grammar, vocabulary, and structure. However, teachers face various challenges, such as large class sizes, limited time, low student motivation, and students' lack of knowledge about formative assessment practice. Despite these challenges, they are of the importance of teaching paragraphs and focusing more on the writing of topic sentences and supporting sentences as main parts of well-structured paragraphs.

Furthermore, most teachers use formative assessment, but the way they apply it differs from one teacher to another. Most teachers suggest that using both types of assessments are capable of helping students learn more efficiently. They also consider providing feedback as a key strategy to help students improve their writing ability. In the classroom, they use different strategies such as peer assessment, self-assessment, one-on-one conference, discussion and guiding students through the writing stages, as effective ways to produce well-written paragraphs. Even with some obstacles, using formative assessments properly can really help

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

improve students' paragraph writing since most teachers have a positive attitude toward using it during instructions.

### **3.8 Discussion of the Results**

The findings of this study indicate that both students and teachers recognize the importance of formative assessment in improving paragraph writing. Students face many challenges, such as poor coherence, weak organization of ideas, grammar errors, limited vocabulary, and incorrect use of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Many also struggle to write clear topics and supporting sentences. This supports the findings of Almi (2024), who reported that EFL students face several challenges in paragraph writing, such as weak organization of ideas, poor coherence, and limited use of linking words. Their writing is often affected by grammar mistakes, limited vocabulary, and repetitive sentence structures. They also struggle with punctuation and tend to skip proofreading. Dench (2020) also noted that students commonly struggle with grammar, vocabulary, and organizing their ideas when writing. These challenges highlight the need for more practice to help students develop the necessary writing skills. Despite these problems, most students remain interested in writing and see feedback as useful, though their preferences about when to receive it vary. Teachers use different formative assessment strategies, such as peer and self-assessment, one-on-one support, and guiding students through writing stages. However, they face challenges like large class sizes and limited time. These practices reflect the findings of Mahmood et al. (2020), who found that formative assessment is effective in improving academic writing skills. Their study highlights that strategies such as assignment writing, teacher feedback, classroom activities, and proper guidance positively contribute to writing development. Similarly, Zahaf (2020) emphasized that formative assessment helps students address writing difficulties and develop their skills. Overall, the results highlight the need for better support,



## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

more time for writing instruction, and consistent use of formative assessment in the EFL classroom to improve students' paragraph writing challenges.

Although teachers implement formative assessment in their teaching practices, the fact that students still face challenges in writing does not necessarily mean that the teaching strategies or methods used are ineffective. In some cases, these difficulties may result from students not fully engaging with or applying the feedback and corrections provided by their teachers. Therefore, it is essential for students to take their teachers' guidance seriously and make an active effort to apply the strategies taught in class. By doing so, they can address their writing weaknesses, benefit more and gradually improve their writing skills for future academic success. Based on these findings, the research questions have been addressed, and the proposed hypotheses confirmed.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the data collection tools used in the study and explained how the data were analyzed. It included the results obtained from both students' and teachers' questionnaires. Furthermore, it highlighted the analysis and discussion, which aimed to explore the use of formative assessment in improving student's paragraph writing.

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### **General Conclusion**

The present research explored the role of formative assessment in improving students' paragraph writing. This study dealt with second-year EFL students and teachers of written expression at the Department of Language and English Literature at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. Throughout this research, we hypothesized that students face different challenges in writing a paragraph, that may hinder the quality of their writing, and the use of formative assessment may improve students' paragraph writing. To collect data, we used a qualitative approach, followed by a semi-structure questionnaire for both students and teachers, to provide valuable insights into how the use of formative assessment strategies and methods could enhance students' paragraph writing. Additionally, it enabled teachers to adjust their teaching practice for better student outcomes. To investigate this topic, the study was divided into three chapters. The first chapter, titled an overview of the writing skills, covered the writing process, approaches to teaching writing, and a detailed focus on paragraph writing. The second chapter explored formative assessment and its types, stages strategies, techniques and methods. Finally, the third chapter presented the fieldwork, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Based on the findings from the questionnaires, the hypotheses was confirmed, as most students faced various challenges, such as organization of ideas, maintaining logical transitions between sentences, grammar structure, misuse of vocabulary, difficulties with spelling words, misuse of punctuation marks, and capitalization mistakes. These challenges could diminish the quality of their written work. Therefore, the implementation of formative assessment strategies, such peer assessment, self-assessment, one-on-one discussions, and conferences, as well as methods like observation, interviews, tests and quizzes in the classroom, is essential for helping students to overcome their challenges and enables teachers to adjust their teaching practice for better academic outcomes.

## **The Role of Formative Assessment in improving EFL students' paragraph Writing**

### **Recommendations**

#### **For EFL University Teachers**

1. Teachers should change their instructional methods to meet students' needs when necessary.
2. Reducing class size can help teachers teach paragraph writing more effectively and create a comfortable learning environment for students.
3. Teachers should use technology in their teaching to make it easier to check and give corrections on students' writing performance without wasting time or effort.

#### **For EFL University Students**

1. To improve the writing quality and to overcome the challenges students face during
2. Paragraph writing tasks, they must take their teachers' corrections seriously to enhance their abilities in writing.
3. Students should evaluate their own writing to identify and correct their weaknesses.
4. Peer Assessment is also important in helping students to correct each other and to enhance classroom interaction.
5. Reading is an essential skill to improve writing so students should read daily. In addition to the habit of writing paragraphs daily in order to improve their writing abilities over time.

#### **For Future Studies**

Future studies should consider factors like lack of motivation and psychology issues as challenges students may face during the writing instruction.

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## **Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire**

This study seeks to investigate the role of teacher's formative assessment on enhancing students' writing skills. By gathering insights from your perspectives, the research aims to understand how ongoing feedback during the writing process contributes to skill development. Please answer the following questions by selecting the appropriate box (✓) and providing additional comments or explanations when necessary. Your responses will be valuable in helping to assess the role of formative assessment in writing improvement.

**Thank you!**

### **Section one: Background information**

**1. What is your gender?**

Female ☐

Male ☐

**2. What is your age range?**

18-24 ☐

25-and above ☐

**3. What motivated you to study English at University?**

Personal interest ☐

External influence (family, career, etc.) ☐

Other ☐

**4. Which skill do you find most difficult to develop?**

Listening ☐

Speaking ☐

Reading ☐

Writing ☐

## Section Two: Paragraph Writing

5. How would you describe the “Written Expression” course?

Very interesting ☐

Interesting ☐

Not interesting ☐

6. Which part of paragraph writing do you find most challenging?

Writing a clear topic sentence ☐

Organizing and supporting ideas ☐

Writing a good concluding sentence ☐

7. How does your teacher address errors in your writing?

Provides the correct form directly ☐

Points out errors and asks for self-correction ☐

8. What are the difficulties you encounter when writing a paragraph?

.....  
.....

## Section Three: The use of Formative Assessment.

9. Does your teacher implement formative assessment during writing lessons?

(Formative assessment is the process of collecting information and evidence about your current level to highlight your strengths and areas that need improvement.)

Yes ☐

No ☐

**10.** When does your teacher usually provide feedback on your writing?

Right after each written task ☐

At the end of the lesson ☐

**11.** When do you prefer receiving feedback?

.....

.....

**12.** Do you think that writing skills can be developed through teachers' feedback?

Yes ☐

No ☐

**13.** Do you think that the use of formative assessment by the teacher helps you to improve your writing?

Yes ☐

No ☐

**14.** What are your suggestions to develop the paragraph writing?

.....

.....

.....

## Appendix B: Teachers' Questionnaire

This study seeks to investigate the impact of a teacher's formative assessment on enhancing students' writing skills. By gathering insights from your experiences, the research aims to understand how ongoing feedback during the writing process contributes to skill development. Please answer the following questions by selecting the appropriate box (✓) and providing additional comments or explanations when necessary. Your responses will be valuable in helping to assess the role of formative assessment in writing improvement.

**Thank you!**

### Section one: Background Information

1. What is your Gender?

Female ☐

Male ☐

2. What is your Qualification?

Magister (M.A) ☐ Doctorate (Ph. D.) ☐

3. Years of Experiences?

15 years ☐

10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

### Section two: Paragraph Writing

4. What are the most common problems you notice in your students' writing?

.....

.....

5. What does good Paragraph Writing mean to you?

.....

.....

6. How often do you follow the writing stages (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, final draft) when teaching writing?

Always ☐

Sometimes ☐

Rarely ☐

7. When correcting students' writing what do you focus more on?

Form ☐

Content ☐

Both ☐

8. What challenges do you face when teaching Paragraph writing?

.....

.....

9. In your opinion, what is the most important element of a well-written paragraph?

.....

.....

### **Section Three: Formative Assessment**

10. Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?

Yes ☐

No ☐



**11. Which type of assessment do you use in writing instruction?**

Formative assessment ☐

Summative assessment ☐

Both ☐

**12. How important is formative assessment in teaching writing?**

Very important ☐

Important ☐

Not important ☐

**13. Do you give feedback on students' writing?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

**14. What type of feedback do you provide?**

Oral feedback ☐

Written feedback ☐

Both ☐

**15. What difficulties do you face when applying formative assessment in writing instruction?**

.....

.....

**16. What strategies do you use to apply formative assessment in writing instruction?**

.....

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## ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في دور التقييم التكويني في تحسين مهارة كتابة الفقرة لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية. وبشكل خاص، تُعالج الدراسة السؤالين التاليين: ما التحديات التي يواجهها طلبة السنة الثانية في كتابة الفقرة؟ وكيف يُساهم التقييم التكويني في تحسين كتابتهم للفقرة؟ كما تختبر الدراسة الفرضيتين التاليتين: أن طلبة السنة الثانية يواجهون صعوبات في كتابة الفقرة تتعلق بالقواعد النحوية، والمفردات، والإملاء، والترابط بين الأفكار، مما قد يعيق جودة كتاباتهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تفترض الدراسة أن استخدام التقييم التكويني قد يُحسن من كتاباتهم. تم اعتماد منهج نوعي في هذه الدراسة، مدعومًا باستخدام استبيانين. وُزِع الاستبيان الأول على 40 طالبًا من طلبة السنة الثانية تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية، وقد تم اختيارهم عمدًا نظرًا لصلتهم بأهداف الدراسة. أما الاستبيان الثاني، فقد وُجِه إلى خمسة أساتذة لمادة التعبير الكتابي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يواجهون صعوبات تتعلق بتنظيم الأفكار، والربط بين الجمل، والقواعد النحوية، والمفردات، والإملاء، وعلامات الترقيم، واستخدام الحروف الكبيرة والصغيرة. كما أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يُدركون الدور الإيجابي للتقييم التكويني في تحسين كتاباتهم، إذ يُساعدهم على تجاوز هذه التحديات. وقد عبّر الطلبة عن تقديرهم لتعليقات الأساتذة، واعتبروها فرصة لتصحيح أخطائهم وتحسين مهاراتهم الكتابية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت النتائج أن الأساتذة يُقرّون بأهمية تطبيق استراتيجيات التقييم التكويني في ممارساتهم التعليمية، ويعترفون بدوره في تطوير مهارات كتابة الفقرة لدى الطلبة. وبناءً على هذه النتائج، تمّت الإجابة على أسئلة البحث، وتأكيد الفرضيات المطروحة. بشكل عام، تُظهر نتائج الدراسة أن التقييم التكويني يُساهم بشكل كبير في تطوير مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلبة بمرور الوقت.