

**The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**Mohammed Kheidher University of Biskra**  
**Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages**  
**Department of English**



**The Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning in Improving  
Students' Writing Skills.**

**The case of second year students at Biskra University.**

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree in  
Language sciences.

**Submitted by:**

**Soudani Wiaam**

**Supervised by:**

**Mr. Smatti Said**

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## Dedication

*I thank Allah for finishing my research.*

*For whom the paradise is under her feet, my dear mother.*

*For whom encourage and help me for finish my studies, my dear father.*

*To my brothers and sisters (Saber, Houcine, Solef and Raoia).*

*To all my family and near friends (Rokia, Khadouj, Asia....) and special thank to Zizo.*

*For all who know and love Wiaam.*

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## **Abstract**

The present study focuses on applying cooperative learning on second year students of English at Biskra University and the effectiveness of this learning as a technique to facilitate writing. Because writing is significant, teachers' techniques to teach this skill were investigated, and more precisely the extent to which they incorporate elements of Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) which is a new approach that is supported by research because of its positive effects on the learner. Moreover, students' attitudes to group work were explored. There are two hypotheses were put. The first one states that teachers' awareness of CLL will improve students' abilities in writing and create an affective learning environment through classroom participation in the writing tasks. The second one states that the students' positive attitudes towards the use of group work could positively correlate with their affective side. To carry out this work study, two questionnaires were used for the teachers and students which have been analyzed. The findings of the teachers' questionnaire show that second year teachers are interested with the affective side of the learner and try to create a good atmosphere of learning. Students questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of second year students have a positive attitudes towards group work in teaching writing. In addition, CLL pushes teachers to involve students in decision making, and give them more opportunities. For helping students to improve their abilities in writing skill, we have suggested some recommendations in which teachers need to expose their students to the language learning materials and resources for each group to meet the objectives which provide each group with case study and list of questions to address related to each. These resources can help them to solve their learning problems. On the other hand, they may to set a timeline for the activity for each group and finally, make sure that all the groups comprehend the task.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

- 1- CL:** Cooperative Learning
- 2- CLL:** Cooperative Language Learning
- 3- EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- 4- L2:** Second Language
- 5- CW:** Collaborative Writing.

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## **General introduction**

### **Introduction**

Teaching a foreign language is a vast complex field. In English we have four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This latter is one part in the teaching of English which is necessary especially in the foreign language classroom, where the learners are producing their written discourse.

For many researchers, teaching writing depended on the teachers' familiarity with subject as well as his/ her own creativity. Sometimes the course was merely limited to reading a passage and asking comprehension questions, assigning a topic to write about, without any power guidelines. We believe that teachers are now aware that teaching writing involves much more than the above activities, although many of them still use large chunks of grammar exercises hoping vainly that it would help improve the writing skill.

### **1-Literature Review**

Recent teaching methods like CLT, often recognized as learner-centered, have emerged in opposition to the more traditional methods (Grammar Translation Method, Audio-Lingual Method...etc) in which the teacher plays a major role in the classroom. CLL is a learner-centered approach of teaching and is said, when effectively used by teachers, to create an affective learning classroom. In general, this topic is discovered by reading many books related to cooperative learning as technique to improve students writing skill ( Slavin, Baloch; in Richard and Rodgers, 2001), (Harmer. J, (2001), (Flowers, L. S, and J. R. Hayes, (1977) and Hedge (2000).

## **2-Statement of the Problem**

There is no one probably objects if we say that writing is a subject which should be given a great deal of attention in a curriculum. Despite of its importance, writing seems to be difficult process to deal with; because it needs many of activities, practices. Hedge (2000,p.302) asserts that *“it involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas; organization information; selecting appropriate language, making draft; reading and reviewing it, then revising and editing. It is a complex process which is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second language writers.”* Many students are facing difficulties related to how to produce a meaningful piece of writing due to lack of good knowledge of English vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

The motivation of this topic come from the hypothesis that the use of cooperative learning in the language classroom especially in teaching writing, can offer the opportunity for students to explore the language, vocabulary and expressions.

## **3-Aim of the Study**

The present study aims at exploring how teachers of writing expression on the department of English at Biskra University teach writing to second year students ,and whether their teaching incorporates elements of CLL which would correlate positively to improve their abilities to write well.Moeover, this study investigates students’ attitudes towards group work .Generally ,this work study aims at suggesting some recommendations to develop the way of teaching writing skill in order to create a good learning atmosphere and enhance students’ participation in writing classes through developing some affective benefits including increased self-esteem and lowering anxiety.

#### **4-Research Questions and Hypothesis**

- 1- How can a cooperative learning technique helps teachers in teaching writing skill?
- 2- What attitudes and opinions do second year students have about group work as a way to teach writing?
- 3- Does CLL create a supportive learning environment?

#### **5-Hypotheses**

The hypotheses state that

- 1- Teachers' awareness of CLL would lead to create an affective learning environment through classroom participation in writing task.
- 2- Students' positive attitudes towards the use of group work could positively correlate with affective side (self-esteem and self- confidence...etc).

#### **6-Research Methodology**

##### **6-1 The Sample of the Study**

The sample is made up of 06 teacher of written expression, who have grade of License and Magister at Biskra University and I have chosen randomly about 45- 50 students from second year LMD because of the number and the time of study.

##### **6-2- The Research Method and Tools**

The population of the present study consists of the teachers of written expression at Biskra University and the second year LMD students. The research tool adopted is a questionnaire to teachers and student. Since my research studies directly local students at Biskra university; we have administered questionnaire together data and access to the respondents attitudes and opinions which comes to be the most useful and effective technique; two questionnaire one of

them to teachers and the other one to the students. In addition, any researcher has a number of methods in which he/she should opt for their right one. To do this, it has been relied on questionnaires as a descriptive method where we have administered questionnaire for both teachers of written expression and second year students of English at Biskra University.

### **7- Structure of the Study (organization of the Study)**

Our research is divided into three chapters: In the first chapter, we have discussed theoretical issues on writing like, the nature of writing, its relationship to speaking skill, the ability to write and how these skills (writing) can be considered as a cognitive process. Then, we have discussed the major approaches in teaching writing such as: the product approach, the process and the genre approach. After that, we have explained some points of teaching writing techniques like: planning, drafting, editing and how can you develop and create text. At the end of this chapter, we have discussed the use of collaborative writing and some of the learners' problem in writing.

In the second chapter, our research shed light on cooperative learning. First, we have discussed how can we teach writing skill individual and in cooperative work. Then, we have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of group work. After that, we have shown the types of group work (informal and formal).

At the end, we have discussed how can we use groups in class and what is the role of teacher and students in the classroom.

In the third chapter, we do a questionnaire to the teachers and students. Then, we have analyzed them according to their respondents.

## **Chapter One: Theoretical Issues on Writing**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses some technical aspects of writing skills in English. Then, it proposes a definition of writing and its nature. The chapter also shows the new model elaborated by Hayes (1996) in the restricting of the notion of cognitive process in writing research.

The aim of discussing those points is to get in overall idea of what theorists in that field of education have highlighted as far as writing skills in the foreign language is concerned. In fact, this chapter will serve as a national terminological reference in the whole subject. After that, I have discussed a number of approaches which have emerged to develop practice in writing skills like: The product approach, the process approach and the genre approach, and at the end I have explained such ways that help students in writing (Planning, drafting, editing, creating and developing the text). Finally, I have discussed some of these problems that are facing the learner in writing.

## **1-The Writing Skill**

### **1-1- Nature of writing**

Most of teachers probably agree that in order to study language, we should tend to concentrate on spoken language rather than written one. While the earliest needs to communicate have always been oral, the written form has remained for most of its history a minority occupation, because all human being grow up speaking their first language (innately), writing has been taught "Spoken language, for a child, is acquired naturally as a result of being exposed to it, where as the ability to write has to be consciously learnt" (Harmer, 2004). For instance, Brookes and Grundy (2001, 01) have stated that

The study of language in the twentieth century has tended to concentrate on spoken language, many linguists from the Saussure through to Chomsky, for what seemed like good reasons at the time, neglected the written mode in favor of the spoken. This, however, contributed to the fact that writing was for a long time a neglected area in language teaching

There are some of researchers who argue that writing is graphic symbols not valid any more and that it is defied by a major theme in the field of ESL writing, that of "*The composing process of writing*" (Brown, 2001, p335).

On the other hand, there are researchers who have seen writing as social process or social nature because it is carried out in social setting. Hayes (1996), (Chandler,1995).

### **1-2 The Relationship Between Writing and Speaking**

Writing and speaking are two receptive skills which referring to linguistic borders. There are many researchers have studied and discussed the relationship



between those two skills. The fact is that everybody learns to speak at least one language fluently, but many are unable to write with confidence. For that reason, the relationship between writing and speaking is important for language testing, among other reasons because of the question to what extent writing can be seen as a special case of L2 language use and to what extent has represented a distinctly different ability from speaking, drawing on many of the same linguistic resources but also relying on distinctly different mental process.

Harmer (2001) draws attention to another valuable issue who states: "*Writing devices can be compared with the different stress and intonation patterns. But when we write, not all of us use scripts*". Moreover, he states that "*Writing can make use of visual devices in a way which speech is innate nature to enable speakers use their oral phonetic to express their ideas and thoughts*".

On the other hand, there are many researchers who argue that those two skills are complex. Halliday (1985) quoted in Nuan (1991) says that "*Writing is complex at the sentence level, while speech is also complex and structured; but its complexity lies in the way clauses are put together*".

There are other differences between speaking and writing that have been summarized by Brown (1994), who provides the following characteristics that differentiate written language from spoken ones:

-**Permanence:** Oral language is transitory and must be processed in real time, while written language is Permanent.

- **Production time:** Writers have much time to review, plan and revise their words before they are finalized, while speakers must plan, formulate and deliver their utterances within a few moments.

- **Distance:** Between the reader and writer the same time and space, which the context is present between speaker and listener face to face contact.
- **Orthography:** Which carries a limited amount of information compared to richness of devices available to speakers to enhance a message (Stress, intonation, pitch...etc)
- **Complexity:** Written language tends to be characterized by longer clauses and more subordinators, while spoken language tends to have shorter clauses connected by coordinators, as well as more redundancy .For example: repetition of nouns and verbs).
- **Formality:** Because of the social and cultural uses to which writing is ordinarily put, writing tends to be more formal than speaking.
- **Vocabulary:** Written texts tend to contain a variety of words, and more lower – frequency words, than oral texts.

In particular speaking and writing are frequently used in different settings, for different reasons, and to meet or find several goals.

### **1-3 The Ability to Write**

The ability to write effectively is becoming progressively and increasingly important field in our global community. The traditional view in language classes that writing functions primarily to support and reinforce patterns of oral language use, grammar, and vocabulary, is being supplanted by the notion that writing in second language is a worthwhile enterprise in and of itself.

It is enough and clear to know that each one has to possess a certain ability to write as a necessary means of integration in the wider world of communication because it is not easy for one to perform so eloquently in writing, therefore, the

ability to write is difficult to be built within the individual, and even if after it exists, it will be depended on the level of what they are asked to write.

For instance, in first language settings, the ability to write well has a very close relationship to academic and professional success. The value of being able to write effectively increases as students' progress through compulsory education on to higher education.

Harmer (2001) states: *"The ability to write down that some one else says is quite different from the ability to write a persuasive argument"*. There is another side where we find that people are good in speaking but they can not know how to express it through writing even in their native language. On this turn, the individual's ability to express idea, organize them and use them to generate notions is regarded to grammar rules and social demands of the written message.

In education, the goal of learning to write is to be able to participate and contribute fully in many aspects of society beyond school matters mainly in literary and law fields. This implies that the one can't write in a second or foreign language without knowing at least something about vocabulary and grammar because they are most good ability to write

*"The ability to write in a language closer to L1 in terms of grammar, vocabulary and writing systems is clearly easier than writing in a language that is vastly different"*.

Brooks and Grundy (1995).

At University level, in particular teaching writing skills is not only standardized system of communication, but also as an essential tool for learning. For that reason, we have a lot to do in given language.

#### **1-4 Writing as a Cognitive Process**

There are a number of researchers who have proposed models of the writing process. While models of complex cognitive activities such as writing can never be completely accurate (or proven), they are useful for considering the various factors that influence the process. One of these models is Flower and Hayes Model (1980) which was seminal to this approach. It suggested that the process of writing is influenced by environment and the writer's long term memory. Its main features are

- Writers have goals.
- They plan extensively
- Planning involves defining rhetorical problem, placing it in context and making it operational by exploring its parts, and translating ideas on the page.
- All works can be reviewed, evaluated and revised, even before any text has been produced.
- Planning, drafting, editing, interactive and potentially simultaneous.
- Plans and texts are constantly evaluated in feed back loop.
- The whole process is overseen by an executive control called a monitor.

Hayes (1996) has asserts that

The writing process is consisting of two parts: The task environment and the individual. The task environment can be divided into the social environment and the physical one. The social environment consists of the audience (Real or Imagined) for one's writing, as well as any collaborators in the writing process. The physical environment includes the text written so far, which influences and shapes the writer's further efforts, and the composing medium, e.g., handwriting or word processing.

Hayes conceptualizes in the working of memory on three (03) components: Phonological memory, which stores auditory, Verbal information (i.e. speech), the visual Spatial sketchpad, which stores visually or spatially coded information

(Written words or graphs), and a semantic memory, which stores conceptual information.

Finally, the cognitive processes in the Hayes model include text interpretation, reflection, and text production. The first one (interpretation), which includes listening, reading, and scanning graphics, is the process by which internal representations are created from linguistic and graphic input. Reflection is a process by which new internal representations are created from existing internal representations. These three processes are involved not only in drafting a piece of writing but in revising one's writing as well.

## **2- Current Approaches and Key Solutions in Teaching Writing Skills**

The teaching of writing has long been a central element in all educational systems, and there are many, often conflicting, views of the best ways to follow.

For that point, a number of approaches have emerged to develop practice in writing skills. Applying one approach or another depends on what we want our learners to do, whether we want them to focus more on the product of writing than its process, whether we want to encourage creative writing, either individually or cooperatively.

### **2-1 The Product Approach**

This approach lays heavier weight on the final product of the writing process. It focuses on the production of well produced composition "... *a product oriented approach, as the title indicates focuses on the end result of the learning process, what is that the learner is expected to be able to do as a fluent and component user*

*of the language*" (Nuan, 1991, 86). Its results are central concern. As a consequence, there exists a high level sensitivity to errors seeing the importance of linguistic accuracy. In fact, for some teachers, the most important is a clear accurate piece of writing since language competence is the aim of this approach.

The most common activity required is copying and imitation, carrying out sentence expansions from cue words and developing sentences and paragraphs from models of various sorts. Nevertheless, Nuan (1991) states that "*learning by imitation was thought to be appropriate at the sentence level. The structure is somehow relevant; however, imitation doesn't match with more recent views of language learning at the level of discourse*".

Flowers and Hayes (1977) analyzed through the product approach and have noticed that there are three main aspects of product approach:

- Learners are exposed to the formal descriptive categories of rhetoric (modes of argument, definition, cause one effect, etc, modes of discourse, description and persuasion, etc)
- Learners are encouraged to absorb the features of socially approved style with emphasis on grammar and usage leaving to process of writing (inspiration).
- Learners are offered good examples usually professional ones and bad examples (usually their own).

This approach sees writing as strictly a solitary action. In that, it is individual task for most of its stages. According to Zamel (1987) quoted in Nuan (1991) pupils get very few opportunities to write, and when they do so, there is still a tendency to look at texts as a final product for evaluation.

Finally, the goal of the product approach is shaped on the language accuracy rather than communication, which is irrelevant to the widest appeal.

As a result, the final products will encompass a collective linguistic social and psychological goal, going beyond the traditional aim of mere linguistic improvement.

## **2-2 The Process Approach**

The process approach has had such a widespread influence on the teaching of writing throughout the English speaking world and it had been criticized by a number of teachers and researchers as not giving a full picture of what successful writers actually do (like Zamel 1983; Raimes 1985), they described the process of writing. Zamel (1982, p.196-9) states that " *Writing involves much more than studying a particular grammar, analyzing and imitating rhetorical models, or outlining what it is one plans to say*" .Writing, then, is an exploratory collaborative during which the finished product emerges after a series of drafts rather a linear route to a pre-determined product and to discover what writers do when they write. There are a number of researchers have emerged, the most of them is white and Arndt's (1991), including six steps of writing: generating ideas, focusing on, structuring, drafting, evaluating, and reviewing. These stages generally involve different forms of brainstorming, selection, ordering ideas, planning, drafting, redrafting and reviewing.

In process approach, the common practice includes free writing, writing extended narratives through cyclical process, and publishing student writing.

In the nineties, a variety of writing research was applying and criticizing both the product and process traditions such as (Sliva; 1990, Leki; 1995). These research studies and research projects have investigated central issues of form.

### 2-3 The Genre Approach

The Genre Approach to teaching writing attempts to get learners aware of the different elements of writing: The topic, conventions, style of the genre and the context in which their writing will be read and by whom. This approach proposes deconstructing dominant genres, analyzing them from a linguistic point of view.

There are different definitions of genre. John Swales (1990) begins an extended definition thus: "*A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which that some set of communicative purposes*" (Swales 1990, p.58), which means that this approach provides us with a way for looking at language in use which differs in many respects from that inherent in process approaches. We mean by communities events comprises, the role of that discourse and the environment of its production and reception, including its historical and cultural associations." *In a genre approach to writing learners study texts in the genre they are going to be writing before they embark on their own writing*" (Harmer, 2001, p. 258). Harmer means that after their writing, they are going to reproduce them from an analysis of their structural and linguistic features, and generate their own texts that conform to the conventions of each genre.

Genre can be defined both in terms of the form and function. I mean by form, written product as letter, laboratory report, or essay and function can be thought of in terms of communicative functions, as is traditional in language teaching. For example: describing, inviting, apologizing), or in terms of discourse mode, as is traditional in writing instruction (narration, description, exposition, argumentation). For Harmer, analyzing a certain written genre in order to be able to write within that genre is an integral part of planning stage in a process approach



even if that analysis encourages students and other writers to "disobey" some of the genre conventions. In the same way re-drafting for example when they are writing within a genre. (Harmer, 2001).

Writing, then, is perceived as a form of production rather than as a creative act. In the first stage, learners might be asked to imitate to enforce adherence to strict genre rules. Later, at an advanced stage, they might be free to decide what to do with data they have collected.

### **3- Teaching Writing Process**

Perhaps the most important insight that writing research has given us is that writers seem to go through certain techniques which lead to successful pieces of written work. From these writing processes, I have discussed planning, drafting editing and how the writing can be developed and created.

#### **3-1 Planning**

Planning is one of the most important processes in writing. Experienced writers are going to plan what they are going to before writing and they try to decide what they will say. For other writers, they don't make a plan because they prefer to keep their ideas on their heads. *"But they will have planned, nevertheless, just as the shopping list writer has thought – at some level of consciousness about what food is needed before writing it on the piece of paper"* (Harmer, 2005).

In each process of writing, we find that every writer has three main issues like in planning. The first one, they have to consider the purpose of their writing which can be influenced by what they wish to produce, the language they use, and the information they choose to include. Secondly experienced writers think of audience they are writing form since this will influence not only the shape of writing (i.e. how

it is paragraphed and structured), but also the choice of language (i.e. whether it is formal or informal). Thirdly, we have the content structure of the piece that is, how best to show the facts, ideas or arguments which they have decided to include.

### **3-2 Drafting**

The second activity is the writing itself, and with good writers this consists of making a first draft. But writing the first draft is often interrupted as the writer stops to read over and review, to get an idea of how the text is developing to revise plans, and bring in new ideas or rearrange those already expressed.

There is a good deal of recycling in the process from planning to drafting, reviewing preplanning, revising, etc. "*Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar until later*" (Hedge, 2000). According to Hedge, drafting should be repeated as many times as necessary until reaching a good draft in the view of the teacher who plays an important role by taking part in the writing process. In this process, we may include adding information activities (either from a given worksheet or prepared by the students themselves).

In drafting, the students are encouraged to work individually; however, group composition is a very important technique of drafting, especially for poorer students in writing, because we believe such a technique helps them to avoid such difficulties of writing through collaborative work where they are going to discuss structures and language uses.

### **3-3 Editing**

Editing is the final step before the students submit the final draft to the reader. It is the phase in which there is a great emphasis on language in terms of grammatical accuracy and correctness of form as well as focus on surface points such as punctuation and spelling. Harris (1995) argues that when the decision is made that the draft is finished there remains the task of editing and publishing. Editing involves the careful checking of the text to ensure that there are no errors that impede communication errors of spelling and punctuation...etc.

In the classroom, editing can be assigned as a pair work or group work to enhance and improve self-correction by recognizing and pointing to the errors on the draft of the partner. For the students, they require a checklist of guidelines which will make it possible for them to edit their work. They also need to realize that editing is an integral part of the process of writing and not something that can be tacked on as an optional extra. There are many examples of editing checklists in published materials suggested by Hedge. After and during the composition, the writer should ask him/herself the following questions (*Am I sharing my impressions clearly enough with my reader? Have I missed out any important points of information? Are there any points in the writing where my reader has to make a "Jump" because I've omitted a line of argument or I've forgotten to explain something? Does the vocabulary need to be made stronger at any point?*) (Hedge 2000, 23).

### **3-4 -Creating and Developing Writing**

#### **3-4-1- Creative Writing**

It allows learners (students) to write from their own experience,(i.e by their mental abilities where the imagination has chance to run free).

In the book of "*Process writing*", the authors Ron white and Valerie Arndt describe an approach that "*Views all writing even the most mundane and routine as creative*", here the students are going to use the language and take some chance to express more personal or more complex thoughts and images by asking them for example to write a poem or stories...etc, and this latter is not easy because there are many of students have a problem with writing in L2.

There are such tools which can give chance to learners to display their current abilities in making them use language in ways that suit their own needs like the websites, magazines and computer...etc. The use of computer contributes to develop writing the various reasons for using the computers have been identified by Harmer (op.ci, 261) as follows:

-A word processing package removes the problem of poor hand writing that some suffer from.

-A word processing package allows the competent users to edit their material at great speed and with great facility.

Spell checkers can ease the task of achieving correct spelling.

-If students are working in groups, a computer screen can sometimes be more visible to the whole group than a piece of paper might be.

-A computer screen frequently allows students to see their writing more objectively.

It also has the advantage of greatly inhering the participation of individuals.

When they are working in pairs or groups.

It is worthwhile to note that writing imaginatively may be frustrating and demotivating for some students. This is why it is preferable to set up creative writing gradually, starting with phrases and sentences before expecting whole compositions.

### 3-4-2- Developing Writing

When students are reading more, they will become better readers as who write more, will be more fluent writers. To be able to write in the L2, learners have to follow systematic training which represents five stages of development of the writing skill: copying, reproduction, recombination, guided writing and composition. Copying is a prerequisite step to start with for learning a language.

This stage allows learners to learn the conventions of the code, familiarizing them with the new script to be able to reorganize and copy down accurately and comprehensibly words and phrases they wish to remember. It should be based on known material either oral or read by the teacher.

After writing habits have been firmly established, learners will start the reproduction stage where they reproduce what they have learned without referring back to the original. Dictation exercises are employed to check on difficulties learners have.

At further stage, learners will be asked to recall all what has been is to discover whether the abilities to memorize, understand and distinguish aurally.

The recombination stage is the stage where the learners are asked to reproduce the learned work with minor adaptations. Rivers (1968, 249) emphasizes that "*At no point, however, will a student be required to make a recombination which involves a structural change and new vocabulary at the same time*". At this level, writing practice may take the form of practice structure drills of various kinds, substitution, transformations and expansion. Here students may be asked to make recombination in the form of variations of memorized dialogues, around a subject presented in a picture or a series of pictures, given or presented to the learners.

In the guided writing stage, learners are given a model and some direction in rewriting model. The freedom is given to them to select according to their level, the lexical and structural patterns required for the writing exercises. Rivers (ibid: 251) suggests that learners may summarize, or rewrite "*with a variation in person, tense, or number*"

The composition stage is highly dependent on a careful and systematic training of learners through the different preceding stages. The ability to construct a piece of writing based on a deliberate choice of lexical and structural items.

Successful, writing then depends on more than producing clear and correct sentences; it concerns writing whole pieces of communication.

#### **4- Collaborative Writing**

Writing and its teaching in academic context has been a controversial issue among scholars. Blakeslee (2001), has stated out "*Writing in academic contexts dramatically varies from writing in no-academic ones; however, this transition seems to be neglected by teachers*". For that reason collaborative writing should be regarded. It is important to define what does the word collaboration means?

Bekins and Merriam (2004) describe CW as complex on the basis that " *Second language acquisition research had moved from looking at the learners order of acquisition of linguistic elements to comprehensible input as a factor in the learners acquisition, and then to interaction as a means of means of getting the required input, i.e. from the learner peers to the learners interactions*".

As opposed to traditional classes where the teacher is the focal character, learner centered instruction gives learners the opportunity to interact with each other, share and show their ideas and discuss them before confronting the class as the whole. All of that lead to lowering anxiety. As Crandall cited in Arnold, 1999, p.233), "*In cooperative class rooms, students learn to rely on each other and also have the security of knowing that they will have several Opportunities to rehearse a contribution before they are asked to share it with the larger class*".

## **5- Learners' Problems in Writing**

Most of people see writing difficult. Writing is part of the learning process and can be difficult for students who can be rewarding or punishing.

Byrne (1991, p1) discusses three categories of problems which can make writing difficult. The first category is the psychological problems. He had shed lights on the importance of interaction and feedback and argues that the latter facilitate writing stating that "*The fact that we are required to write on our own, without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult*". (Byrne, ibid, p.4). The second one is the linguistic problems. As has already been stated, speaking has other features as well as words. In writing, however, the situation would be different, so, the students should be pay attention in selecting the words and structured that the produced text can easy be interpreted. The third category is the cognitive problems which are concerned the organization of ideas. The last cause of difficult deals with some of circumstances when writing is imposed on the learner in which the problem can be psychological and cognitive.

Arnold and Brown (1991) have stated that *"The various emotions affecting language learning are intertwined and interrelated in ways that make it impossible to isolate completely the in constituents, needs careful investigation for a better understanding of its effects on language learning"*

In our research, we will discuss some of the problems that face learners in writing skills as follow:

### **5-1- Anxiety**

Brown (2001,p336) draws attention to anxiety as a present feeling while writing stating that *"You may have felt a certain level of anxiety building within you as you felt the pressure to write in class essay that would be judged by the teacher, graded and returned with no chance for future revision"*

Slavin (2003) states that *"anxiety is constantly present in education"*. Moreover, there are studies show that there is a negative correlation between these feelings and FL achievement including writing for example: Cheng and Schallert, 1999; MacIntyre et al, 1997; Rodriguez and Youngm; 1991).

According to Harmer (2005) writing anxieties are very dangerous in the sense that it can result in a negative attitude towards writing. Then, he discusses some causes of student's fear of writing in more detailed way. First, he mentions lack of writing practice even in the mother tongue. Second, having nothing to say can also be an obstacle to students and at the end, some people are simply not interested through building the *"Writing habit"*

### **5-2 Motivation**

Slavin (2003) considers motivation as *"One of the most important ingredients of effective instruction"* (p.328). However, it is neither easy to define nor to restrict its



sources for is "a product of many factors, ranging from the students personality and abilities to characteristics of particular learning tasks, incentives for learning, settings, and teacher behaviors" (p.329). On this turn, a motivation is an important step; the teacher should be looked for. When the students are motivated, they can learn and succeed. So, it can be considered as a primary step in teaching.

### **5-3 Self- esteem**

It is one of the problems which face the students in writing. For Woolfolk (2004, p.71): "*Self-esteem is an affective reaction a judgment about who you are*". For example, feeling good about the way you write. Woolfolk (op-cit. p 73) asks two questions about self-esteem in learning.

- 1- How does self-esteem affect a student's behavior in school?
- 2- How does life in school affect a student's self-esteem?

As for the second question, Hog, Smith & Hanson (1990; cited in Woolfolk, *ibid*) found that student's positive conceptions about school, their teachers care and evaluation seemed to have an effect on student's self-esteem.

### **5-4 Self- confidence**

Harmer (2005) on his part raises the issue of self-confidence and considers it very important for good writing. For my point of view, the one who know what he/she is going to write/do, will be success and have a high level, because of the confidence with his/her own. Neman (1995) argues that writing doesn't require merely knowledge, but also "*The self-confidence*" to exercise this knowledge" (p.5). He means that sometimes all the students can have a knowledge of some thing,

but they don't have the opportunity to function their works because they have not got a confidence in themselves.

Neman (ibid) has suggested two types of solutions to writing problems. The first one is "*Craft- centered solution*" is concerned with correcting student's mistakes and even criticizing them. Nevertheless, this solution was rejected on the basis that its results in anxieties in the learner which would distort learning. The other solution is what calls "*The affect-centered solution*" This latter puts much emphasis on the general atmosphere of the learning process. The primary goal aim is helping students to acquire the skills necessary for good writing and learning.

## **Conclusion**

Teaching writing is gaining a paramount importance in language instruction. It has probably been more subject to pendulum swing than any of the other language skills. Then, writing is a basic skill that foreign language learners should master together with such skills. It was a system of communication which started to be conceptualized as a social, cultural, and cognitive phenomenon. Writing, then, is considered as a worth while enterprise in itself.

It is emphasized by scholars that this skill is sharply distinctive; therefore, it should be considered differently. However, some problems like: anxiety, lack of motivation, low self – esteem and self confidence, can make writing difficult to some of students. So, the teaching of this skill should be reconsidered and given further importance for its finite and unavoidable importance in learning English. On the second chapter, we will discuss a new technique in teaching writing skills and improving student's abilities in written production through cooperative learning.

## **Chapter Two: Cooperative Writing and Group Work Management**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we will discuss a cooperative learning (CL) as a technique to teach the writing skill for improving student's written production or ability. Then, we will discuss the issues of group work which can have advantages or disadvantages.

After that, we will deal with group activities that have become one of the key tools in communicative language teacher's tool boxes because groups provide so many opportunities for students to communicate and improve the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), (Harmer 1998). In our study in this chapter, we will focus on the types of group work and how it can be formal and informal....etc. We will talk about how can we form and organize the group activities.

At the end of this chapter, we will discuss the roles of the teachers and students in the group work activity.

# **1-Cooperation Learning and Group Work Management**

## **1-1- Theoretical Foundation of CLL**

CLL is mainly based on the works of Piaget (1965) and Vygotsky(1962) about the critical role of interaction in learning. Piaget (1964) cited in Woolfolk,(2004, p.41) states

Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not simply to look at it and make a mental copy or image of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed.

Studies of (Donato, 1994; Storch, 2002; cited in Storch; *ibid*) show that peers working together can similarly experience such assistance which is known as scaffolding. For that reason "*learners should be encouraged to participate in activities which foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge*". (*ibid*). Cooperative or collaborative learning has many implications for learning. Nuan (1992, p.13) mentions some of them:

- Learners are an important resource for their own collective learning, and this resource can be assessed through collaboration, cooperation and experiential learning;
- Learning is a social as well as a psychological process;
- Collaborative learning can help learners use what they have already known to go beyond what they currently think.

## **1-2 Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)**

The notion of cooperative learning is not a new one. It has only been examined in the last decades (Woolfolk, 2004). At first sight, it might appear that CL is simply

the division of students with different levels in small groups in order to achieve common goals and things which are not always what they appear to be.

It is defined by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec, leaders of cooperative learning since the 1970s have stated the following definition: "*Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning*" (1993, 9). If we are to maximize the benefits of groups, we need to understand the complexities that are involved in the collaborative interactions. The definition of CL is related to the amount of group support and to the degree to which each individual member of the group needs to learn and exhibit his or her accomplishments.

If teachers or students are uncomfortable with CL, it is often because they have adopted a particular technique without a firm understanding of the underlying principles and don't have sufficient support to implement creative multilevel CL activities that allow students to participate at different levels, with differential and varying levels of support. For that, Cohen et al (2001) states that "*Teachers must structure the educational and social environment so that students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to interact across both perceived and actual differences and disabilities*"

### **1-3 Cooperative Writing and Group Work**

We can consider writing as a cooperative activity in which students may find themselves producing a piece of writing.

The major advantage of this approach is to allow teachers to give a more detailed and constructive feedback to group writing that involves discussion and evaluation.

As Crandall (1999) states that

Cooperative learning is more than just small group activity. In a well structured cooperative task, there is a genuine information gap, requiring learners to both listen and contribute to the development of a moral, written or other product which represents the group's efforts, knowledge and perspectives. (p.226, 227).

In other hand, Woolfolk (2004, p.492) argues that they don't imply the same thing because group work is simply several students working together. They may or may not be cooperating, and he claims that "*Group work is the first step towards getting students to work cooperatively*".

In the CL method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the group work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. They plan, translate and review the work together. They monitor and evaluate their writing. In such class activities, team members try to make sure that such members have mastered the assigned task because the teacher randomly calls upon the students to answer for the team. The teacher should reward the best team and the most challenging individual.

This kind of grading will serve as an incentive to Harmer's competition for further cooperation amongst teams' members. The use of cooperative writing helps students to understand and evaluate their abilities in writing, as Harmer (2001) has stated that "*many of us also place high premium on teaching techniques that go beyond mere mastery of content and ideas.*"

Similarly, Slavin (1994) states that

Group work can be an extremely useful addition to a large class. Not only does peer discussion help students understand and retain material, but it helps them develop better communication skills. Students also become aware of the degree to which other students

can be available resource in learning. As many students will say, they know they really understand the subject matter when they must explain it or teach it to a peer.

For that reason, we will discuss the importance of group work in learning writing skills.

## **2- Importance of Group Work**

According to Hedge (1998), in particular that group work has helped him to explore more consciously the substantial cultural differences we have." *I come from a society where great value is placed on the performance of the individual*".(Hedge, 1998,p.137). CLL, then, has many advantages for language learning. Woolfolk (op.cit) states that "*Truly cooperative groups have positive effects on student's empathy, tolerance for differences, feelings of acceptance, friendships self – confidence, and even school attendance.*" (p.498). Dornyei and Malderez (1999, p.156) have stated the advantages of group work on many levels stating that approach is responsible for:

- The participant's attitudes toward and effective perception of the learning process (Ehrman&Dornyei, 1988).
- The extent of cooperation between students and the degree of individual involvement (Johnson& Johnson, 1995).
- Student and teacher confidence and satisfaction (Dornyei&Malderez, (1997).

It has another advantages such as, collaborative learning involves active learning.

When students get actively involved in the material they are studying deeper learning and understanding usually results, students feel less isolated and alone, and especially at there beginning they have support the "Where do I start" stage and

depending on the task kit may be responsible to divide out components and share work load ([www.student learning/groupwork/indx3shtn](http://www.studentlearning/groupwork/indx3shtn)).

Group work can play role in developing higher level thinking skills, improves the performance of the weaker students when grouped with higher achieving students and addresses learning style differences among students.

### **3/Group Work Types**

Johnson&Johnson and Smith (1995) stated that there are three (03) types of group work:

#### **3-1 Informal learning Groups**

Are used throughout the course. These group are occasionally used at the beginning of the class to review material from prior class, during the lecture emphasize a topic, or at the end of class to provide closure. As an example, the groups review and discuss the basic concept of differentiation just prior to starting a class period on differentiation circuits.

On the other hand, it is stated that informal learning groups are ad hoc temporary clustering of students within a single class session. Examples include pee-pairs during lecture or small groups to answer a question posed during a section. The purpose of this group type is to observe whether the students are getting the course content, give the opportunity to integrate and apply course concept, or change of the class.



### **3-2- Formal Learning Groups**

CLL can take the form of group work or pair work. Harmer (2005) considers group work and pair work cooperative activities the advantages of which are mainly giving students equal opportunities for using and practicing the language and more interdependence from the teacher.

Moreover, both group work and pair work assign more responsibility to the learner. As Harmer (2005) discusses that "*decisions are cooperatively arrived at, responsibilities are shared*".(p.21).

Johnson and Johnson and Smith (1995) stated that "*formal learning groups are established to complete a specific task, such as perform a lab experiment, carry out a project and write a report. These groups may complete their work in a single class session or over several weeks. According to him, the purpose of this type is to help students to provide the opportunity for feedback, to elate the work place environment and to gain experience in selection decisions and to best use the skills of the members through their own internal organization to create a good writing production to be useful in appropriate way.*

### **3-3 - Forming Groups**

Johnson Johnson and Smith (1995) claimed that "*Groups of students could be formed in different ways weather by using the alphabetical list with three, four to five students. We can as well form groups by mixing student's different abilities*". This method ensures that students interact and help each other. In other words, the less able students gain knowledge from more able ones.

CLL can take the form of pair or group work. Consequently, the first challenge that faces teachers is group formation because he will decide who will work with whom. There are many factors that teachers should take into account when forming the groups: Sex, Proficiency, Student's preferences, randomly. So, the teacher should carefully consider this point in order to avoid such problems. Then, we can consider the group size as an issue of group's formation. The groups can be either small (3-4) or large (more than 4 students) in which students have to participate in teacher's decisions for the sake of making group work function effectively.

Williams (ibid, p.134) argues that "*For the true cooperation that characterizes effective work groups, bonding is essential*". It means that students should not be allowed to choose their own groups because if they are allowed to, they would do that on the basis of friendships, sex, age, language which result in them discussing any thing other than the task of writing.

#### **4- Strategies for Implementing CLL Classes**

Learners are not born with tendency to cooperate with one another. For that reason Christenson (1990) states three assumptions of CLL. In the first place, she claims that "*cooperative skills must be learned because students need long-term training before they would be able to cooperate with one another*". In other words, teachers should not expect their students to easily accept working with others. The change should go on slowly. The second assumption is that the physical and special arrangement of the classroom affects cooperative work. The groups have to be

structured in such a way that students can interact face to face. The third assumption is that peer support and group dynamics are the keys to successful group work.

There are other strategies that are suggested by Crandall (1999; p.242) who proposes that *"If cooperative language learning is to be successful, both teachers and learners need to be adequately prepared and interesting, relevant topics and materials must be available"*. He proposes four strategies for a better implementation of CLL. First, preparing learners for cooperative tasks, where teachers have to be aware of the transition from teacher-centered classrooms to cooperative learning. Second, assigning learner to specific meaningful tasks, *"The quality of the task is central to the success of the cooperative activities."* (Crandall, ibid, p.243). The learners should be relevant and motivate. Third, debriefing learners on their experiences with cooperative learning, reflection on what was learned whether social, cognitive or linguistic is important step in learning. Fourth, involving learners in evaluating individual and group contribution training students how to evaluate their contribution to the group should be part of any cooperative activity only that this training has to be gradual. Christenson (1990) refers to the necessity of preparing students for the new approach claiming that *"These activities help students adjust to future small group, cooperative experience by breaking down student expectations for the traditional teacher controlled classroom"*(p.141).

Before teaching skills through groups, the learner should be prepared. For that, Johnson and Johnson (1975, cited in Christenson, ibid) suggested four steps for teaching these skills. First, students must see the value of group work. This is mainly because students usually expect the traditional classroom. They claim that the teachers manage to do that through:

- Simply explaining the value of CLL.
- Scarifying a session on the value of CLL.
- Placing posters to remind students of the advantages of CLL.

The second step is that students should be aware of the skills that cooperative work requires such as getting information from other peers and responding to questions. The third step as suggested by Johnson&Johnson (ibid) is practicing the skills students acquire.

The last step is processing the skill which means that "*Students need to become aware of what exactly it is they have practiced and to evaluate how successful they have been in the practice of the skills*" (Christison, 1990, p.145).

## **5- Improving Students' Writing Skill through Group Work**

To improve students' writing through group work, there are two roles that should regard:

### **5-1 Teachers' Role**

Using frame work is suggested by Harmer (1991) who points out that

It is possible to identify the teacher in a number of role in this lesson: as controller in eliciting nationality words; as assessor of accuracy as students try to pronounce the works; as corrector of pronunciation; as organizer in giving instructions for the pair work, initiating it, monitoring it, and organizing feedback; as prompter while students are working together; and as resource if students need help with words and structures during pair work

In a setting where the teacher is perceived as a more equal partner in the learning process, and where teacher and students participate jointly in activities, as in writing

conferences, prompter could refer to the teachers' role in helping student to remember and formulate a point.

On the other hand, Williams (ibid) explains the role of the teacher in such instruction as that of "*coach and facilitation*", this coach intervenes regularly in order to direct students and see if they are doing well in learning process. This intervention consists of:

- \* Circulating among the groups.
- \* The teacher may add their own suggestions, and not just comments.
- \* The teacher should be able to monitor the groups, for example: he is talking to a given group; the other groups should be in sight of the teacher and not in sight of his back. (p.148).

Moreover, "*The teacher gives the advice, and advice is easier to take when it comes from some one seated nearby rather than from towering a head*" (p.148). The teachers play an essential role in helping group function well. As Edge (1993, p.70) points out, "*The teacher is not asked to give up control in order to use pair work and group work. The teacher is asked to exercise control in order to use pair work and group work.*"

## **5-2 Students' Role**

CLL "Promotes learning through communication in pairs or small groups" (Richards Rodgers, 2001, p.174). It is the main techniques that enable students to learn from each other through their contribution to the group. In this regard each student is going to take the role that goes with his/her personality.

As Crandall reports” *for example; in an activity requiring individual roles, an extroverted or more confident student who likes to speak in class may be assigned the role of reporter, while one prefers to write may be named the recorder.*” (p.2-3). In his turn, Cohen (1994 cited in Dornyei&Malderez, 1999) proposed that in group work, students are assigned the roles traditionally done by the teacher. They, therefore, take charge of the learning process and check that all the group members are on task.

In CLL, the students are responsible for their own learning, but that not means the teachers have no role to perform. In addition, Woolfolk (2003) argues that in order to promote cooperation between students, the teacher can assign roles to each member of the group.

## **Conclusion**

It is not easy to incorporate group work activities, but there are some general rules about structuring group work well. There are many learning goals that can be achieved by having students collaborate either in pairs or in small groups. In groups, students can review problems such as for exams, compare and contrast knowledge, ideas and thoughts.

This chapter has explained the way cooperative writing works to enhance written production. The advantage of cooperative writing and group work will serve and formulate the state of teaching writing skills at Biskra University according to the questionnaire that have been formulated to teachers and students to diagnose the state of teaching writing skill through cooperative learning. All of that will be explained in the next chapter in research design.

## **Chapter Three: Field Work**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires which have been administrated to second year students and their teachers. Informants have provided very useful data which will be commented. Before doing this, it is preferable to describe the research tool.

### **1- Description of the Teachers' Questionnaires**

Teachers' questionnaire explores whether teachers of written expression in the department of English at the University of Biskra incorporates elements of CLL in teaching this module; and if yes, how they are precede. This questionnaire is a whole of 20 items divided into 02 (two) sections.

#### **Section One: Approaches to Teach Writing Skill**

The first section is made up of 07 items including the role of teacher in teaching writing skill and his purposes (Q1-2). The other questions (Q3-5) are about the process that is followed by the teachers in teaching writing skill and its process is their students are involved. Finally, the (Q6-7) include the role of the teachers in teaching writing like: motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, etc. These questions would enable us to determine the extent to which teachers have concerned themselves with the psychological side of their students

## Section two: Cooperative Writing and Group Work Management

This section is designed to explore the use of CLL and its importance (Q8-9). Question (10-11) seeks the frequency of setting students to work in groups and the strategies that are followed in forming groups.

The following questions (Q12-13) deal with the rate of interaction between the students in the classroom. Questions (14-15-16) deal with the need for working in groups and its importance. Some of these problems that students can come across, when working cooperatively, is dealt with in question on (18) and whether teachers have encountered these problems or not is dealt with (Q 19-20).

### 2-Analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire

#### 1- Section One: Approaches to Teach Writing Skill

Item 1: What role do you play in teaching writing skill?

Options	N	%
An organizer	04	66.66
Participant	/	/
Assessor	01	16.33
As controller	01	16.33
Total	06	100

**Table 01: Teachers' Opinions about their Role.**

As the table indicates, the most of teachers (66, 66%) argued that their roles are as an organizer to encourage students to write. This is clear that the presence of the teachers inside the classroom is very important.



Item 2: Do you teach writing skill to?

Options	N	%
Language development	03	50
Learning Style	02	33.33
Writing as skill	/	/
Improving students' abilities	01	16.33
Total	06	100

**Table 02: Reasons Behind Teaching Writing Skill.**

According to the results that are stated above 50 % of our teachers affirm that they are teaching writing skill for improving language development by enhancing the way of writing production.

Item 3: Do you follow the process of planning, drafting and editing in teaching writing skill?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 03: Teachers' opinions about following the process of Planning, Drafting and Editing.**

The table above indicates that all teachers with proportion 100% said that they follow the process of planning, drafting and editing to achieve a better result.

Item 04: Say, why?

The teachers who said yes to item 04 reported the following answers:

- Because there is no work without planning. It guides the writer to organize and to end up with a good piece of writing.
- Because they are very useful and they helps students for better writing.
- Because any piece of writing should go through these stages.
- They are very important to produce a good, correct and comprehensive written production.

Item 5: In which process do you feel your students are mostly involved?

Options	N	%
Drafting	06	06
Editing	/	/
Revising	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 04: The Rate of following the process of Drafting, Editing and Revising.**

The most of teachers 100 % are indicated that their students are mostly involved in the process of drafting which helps them to enhance their abilities in writing production.

Item 06: Do you encourage your students in teaching writing skills?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 05: Teachers' attitudes towards written topic as Motivation.**

All teachers state that their job is to encourage and motivate students.

This implies that our teachers are aware of the great role that motivation is successful in language teaching and learning.

Item 07: If "yes", how?

The teachers have reported the following answers:

- By encouraging them to write as much as they can because "Practice makes perfect"
- Students should not be restricted to what they do in class (because it is not enough); instead, they have to practice at home and rely on other resources to assess their own work.
- Asking their peers to check from internet and reading books can also help a lot.
- Asking them to write paragraph as much as possible.

## **Section Two: Cooperative Writing and Group Work Management**

Item 08: Do you believe that CL is important to enhance learning?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 06: Teacher's Opinions Concerning CL as an Element to Enhance Learning.**

The six teachers 100% gave a positive answer to this question. This shows the awareness of great value of CL in the learning process.

Item 09: If "yes", how?

The informants who said yes to question 09 gave the following reasons:

- It creates interaction between students.
- It helps them to exchange ideas.
- CL is a way that helps students to communicate and benefit from each other.

To gain vocabulary and reduce the degree of shyness.

- Because one of its major characteristics is "autonomy" and "learning- center-dues"

Students should rely on themselves (in addition to their teachers' pieces of advices to develop their writing skill. Even if CL is more based on speaking; it however, very important to develop writing.

Item 10: How often do you divide your class into groups?

	N	%
Always	/	/
Sometimes	05	83.33
Often	/	/
Rarely	01	16.66
Total	06	100

**Table 07: Frequency of Groups Organization.**

83.33 % of informants responded that they sometimes divide their class into groups.

This indicates that the majority of teachers are not aware of the importance of CLL and group work in improving students' writing production.

Q 11: What are the main strategies do you put into consideration when you divide the class into groups?

- Our teachers responded the following answers:
- By dividing them into groups.
- In fact, I don't follow any strategies; they have just divided themselves as they want.
- The groups must be equal (as much as possible) in terms of number, gender, level and performance.

Item12: Do you think that interaction between students would increase their abilities in teaching writing skill?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 08: Teachers' Opinions about the interaction between Students.**

100 % of our informants admitted that the interaction between students would increase their abilities in teaching writing skill. This leads us that interaction is very important to gain positive teaching learning.

Item 13: If "yes", how?

The most of teachers gave their decisions as following:

- Students share their ideas and help each other to solve problems.

- They can ask each other questions about unclear things. So, anxiety is overcome because they don't have asked the teacher (for shy students).
- The interaction between students can help them to decrease the degree of anxiety and being shy.
- They gain new vocabulary and learn from the mistakes of each other.
- They exchange knowledge.

Item 14: Do you believe that cooperative writing can motivate students to develop their writing abilities?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 09: Teachers' view point about Cooperative Writing as a Motivating Factor.**

The table above reveals that 100 % of our informants believe that CW can greatly motivate students to develop their writing abilities.

Item 15: If "yes", how?

Our teachers are responded as follows:

- When working in groups a kind of "competition" is created.
- Each student has to do well.
- They exchange knowledge and benefit from the mistakes of each and correct to each other. So, they are going to increase their abilities.

Item 16: Do you think that pair work is good for teaching the writing skill?

Options	N	%
Yes	06	06
No	/	/
Total	06	100

**Table 10: Teachers' Opinions about using Group Work in Teaching Writing Skill.**

The most of teachers 100% are confirmed that group work is good for teaching writing skill. This indicates that the use of group work in classroom is beneficial and fruitful in teaching writing skill.

Item 17: Please, explain why?

Our informants responded as follows:

- Because they can exchange their ideas and increase their ability to produce.
- Students share ideas and correct to each other.

Item 18: Do your students have problems working together?

Options	N	%
Yes	05	83.33
No	01	16.33
Total	06	100

**Table 11: Teachers' Perception of Students' Problems in Working Together.**

83.33% of our teachers said that their students have problems when they work together with their classmates. This is absolutely natural for differences between students in level.

Item 19: Have you encountered these problems?

Options	N	%
Yes	05	83.33
No	01	16.33
Total	06	100

**Table 12: Rate of Solving CLL Problems.**

83.33 % of teachers have encountered the problems of students when they are working together, except one teacher has no problems with his students in classroom when they are working in groups. This seems irresponsible for his job as a teacher to solve the problems of their students encountered in their learning.

Item 20: Explain, how?

- Our teachers responded as follows:

- In a group, there is always a "leader"; a student who imposes his/her ideas to others and do tell the work. Others have to follow and keep passive.

- In other cases, a student is designed or is obliged to do all the work, others chat with each other and is not interested at all.

### **3- Students' Questionnaire**

#### **1-Description of the Students' Questionnaire**

Students' questionnaire mainly aims at investigating the students' attitudes to group work as applied by their teachers and whether they benefited from it or not. The whole questionnaire is made up of 16 items classified under two sections

.



### **Section One: Students' Perceptions of Writing Skill (Q 1-Q 6)**

This section contains seven questions investigating some elements of writing. In the first place, students are asked about their interest in writing (Q 1), and their arguments are answered in (Q 2). Questions 3 and 4 deal with anxiety that can be generated in students for one reason or another. We dealt with students' perceptions of some teachers' behaviors towards them in writing class in (Q 5). In the last question (Q 6-7), we seek information about students' preferences of how the writing task be carried out.

### **Section two: Students' Perceptions of their Teachers' Implementation of Group Work (Q8-11)**

This section aims at gathering information on some teachers' practices so far as CLL is concerned, and the way students want it to be applied. Questions (Q 8-Q 9) are asked to students to see whether the teachers set them to work in groups or not and to know their roles in monitoring the groups. Questions (10-11) are asked about the frequency their teachers use group work and their roles in classroom. The following questions (12-13-14-15-16) are an important part of this section because they reveal to us whether students like this technique and feel better when they work with it or not.

## **4-Analysis of Students' Questionnaire**

### **Section One: Students' Perceptions of the Writing Skill**

Item 1: Is writing in English Important to you?

Options	N	%
Yes	49	98
No	01	02
Total	50	100

**Table 13: Rate of Students' Interest in Writing.**

The majority of our students (98 %) claim to have interest in the writing skill. This indicates that our students like writing and want to do well. Only (02 %) of students state that writing in English is not interesting. The result is due to several reasons. The following question, therefore, seeks to give the both explanations liking and disliking the writing skill.

Item 02: Please, explain why?

The students who answered positively provide a variety of answers within the same scope as follows:

- Because they like it and it enables them to express their ideas. Others see it the way that can improve their language and correct mistakes; thus, improve their general level in English. Moreover, they argue that writing gives them more fluency into their ideas and learn new words and expressions.

- Some of students consider writing an important skill that they have to master if they want to become good at the English language. Finally, another argument is provided by some of students is that they like writing skill because they want to be teachers.

For those who answered "No", they argue that writing skill is difficult and it needs more activities and practice. One of them said that he/she wants to speak English

rather than write it. Another one has admitted that he/she has not ideas to express them.

Item 03: Do you feel afraid to write?

Options	N	%
Yes	20	40
No	30	60
Total	50	100

**Table 14: Rate of Students' Fear in Writing.**

40 % of our students admit that they have fear of writing and the rest 60 % state that they are not afraid to write. Absolutely the causes of this feeling are varied in which the teachers should be aware about them and try to put end to them as much as possible.

Item 04: If yes, is it because you?

Options	N	%
a) Have few or no ideas	20	40
b) Fear teachers' negative feedback	/	/
c) Worry about making grammatical mistakes	30	60
Total	50	100

**Table 15: Causes of Students' Fear in Writing.**

60 % among the students answered that this fear is due to their worry about making grammatical mistakes. This indicates that their teachers insist on grammar and require of them to produce grammatically correct sentences, and 40 % of our

students are for what is written interested about the content and the lack of getting good ideas and expressions.

Item 05: What does your teacher do to create a good learning atmosphere?

Options	N	%
a) Acknowledge what students can do	10	20
b) Check that students are comfortable with learning	/	/
c) Encourage students to write	30	60
d) Establish a good relationship with students	10	20
Total	50	100

**Table 16: Teachers' Techniques of Creating a Good Learning Atmosphere.**

The statistics, therefore, indicates that 60 % of students claim that their teachers encourage them to write. This means that our teachers are trying enhance language learning. Another part of students which constitutes 20 % state that their teachers acknowledge them for what can do to write. Finally, other teachers tend to establish good relation ships with their students in order to assure them and make learning fun.

Item 06: When writing in class, do you prefer?

Options	N	%
a) Working individually	21	42
b) Working in groups	19	38
Total	50	100

**Table 17: Students' Preferences of Writing Techniques.**

The results this question show that our students generally prefer to work individually (42 %). Working in groups for them is about (38 %). Some of students, however, opted for the two choices.

Item 07: Please, explain why?

Students who prefer to work individually argue that they can not express their ideas without any intervention from other students. Also, they claim that when they work in groups, they lost every thing and can not organize or evaluate their works.

Moreover, students add that they are always satisfied with their peers' suggestions especially that some students are not serious and take the time of working in groups for enjoyment. One of the students explains his choice saying that when someone works individually he/she can do better.

For the ones who prefer to work in group claim that working in groups is good way to exchange ideas and also share one's ideas with other peers. They argue that their group mates help them to discover their mistakes and correct it together.

Last, working with other students leads to achieve a good work.

## **Section Two: Students Perceptions of their Teachers' Implementation of Group Work**

Item 8: Does your teacher help you to see importance of cooperative group work?

Options	N	%
Yes	40	80
No	10	20
Total	50	100

**Table 18: Rate of Helping Students See the Value of CLL.**

80 % of our students claim that their teachers talk to them about the importance and benefits of group work. This indicates that our teachers prepare their students for this technique and encourage them to accept it because of its advantages. Conversely, 20 % of our informants say that their teachers do not tell them any thing about the importance of cooperative group work. The following question explores the ways of how can they work cooperatively.

Item 09: If "yes", does he/she

Options	N	%
a) Simply explain why he is doing cooperative work	45	90
b) Do brainstorm session on the importance of group work	05	10
Total	50	100

**Table 19: Techniques of Helping Students to See the Value of Group Work.**

The results point out that most of the students 90 % argue that their teachers help them to see the value of cooperative group work by explaining simply the benefits of cooperative group work. The rest of respondents 10 % claim that their teachers do brainstorm sessions on the importance of groups work.

Item 10: How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?

Options	N	%
a) Never	04	08
Rarely	07	14
Sometimes	30	60
Often	/	/
Always	09	18
Total	50	100

**Table 20: Frequency of Group Work Use.**

60 % of our informants say that they sometimes work together. These findings revealed that practicing the technique of working together is a little bit ignored by our teachers despite its advantages. The other respondents, however, opted for the other choices with varying percentages. Only 08 % of students said that their teachers never ask them to work in groups.

Item 11: Does your teacher control the groups?

Options	N	%
Yes	35	70
No	15	30
Total	50	100

**Table 21: Students' Perceptions of the Teachers' Task in Class.**

More than half of our students (70 %) say that their teachers have controlled them when working in groups. This is simply that our teachers are interested to their jobs. The rest of respondents (30 %) report that their teachers do not control them and this following many reasons.

Item 12: When the teacher asks you to work in groups, are you

Options	N	%
a) Very motivated	15	30
b) Motivated	30	60
c) less motivated	05	10
d) not motivation	/	/
Total	50	100

**Table 22: Students' Reaction to Group Work.**

The results show that more than (60 %) of our students are motivated to work with other peers. 30 % are very motivated, 10 % are less motivated.

All these results indicate that students' attitudes towards group work are generally positive which motivates them to learn.

Item 13: Whatever your answer is, please say why?

For the students who respond that they are motivated because working in groups enable them to learn and discover other people's ways of thinking.

Others claim that they feel comfortable and can do the best.

Students who said that they are very motivated state that they like working with other people to develop and increase their abilities. For those who are less motivated, they argue that working in groups can't evaluate their levels and it does not give them the opportunity to express their ideas.

Another one has stated that working in groups is wasting time because it is sometimes difficult to agree with another one.



Item 14: When you work in groups, do you

Options	N	%
a) Take a positive attitude toward your self	20	40
b) Feel that you are satisfied with your self	10	20
c) Feel that you are not good at all.	15	30
d) Feel more confident	05	10
Total	50	100

**Table 23: Students' Feeling When Working Cooperatively.**

The results point out that taking a positive attitude from working in group is highly raised in great number of our students (40 %). Others (30 %) feel that they are not good at all. This can be of their fear to make mistakes or they are not comfortable to work in peers. There is 20 % of our students have felt that they are satisfied with themselves and this can help them; to develop their levels. Only 10 % of our informants feel more confident and I think that this result is not enough because confidence is important to success.

Item 15: How much did you learn from group work?

Options	N	%
a) Very much	14	28
b) Much	25	50
c) Little	10	20
d) Nothing	01	02
Total	50	100

**Table 24: Amount of Learning When Working Cooperatively.**

Half of students (50 %) state that they learnt a lot from group work. This indicates this way of learning helps much in their learning. There are (28 %) of our students learn very much. However, 20 % a significant number of our respondents admit that they learn a little, but only 02 % claim that they learn nothing from group work. This result depends on the level of the student in learning.

Item 16: This way of learning (group work) help you to:

Options	N	%
a) Learn to respect different ideas and opinions	40	80
b) Ask and respond to more questions	10	20
Total	50	100

**Table 25: Advantages of Group Work**

Most of our students (80 %) state that learning through group work help them to learn to respect different ideas and opinions. In effect, group work relies on

exchanging ideas and opinions between students would teach them how to listen the others and respect their suggestions. Only (20 %) of our students who state that working in groups enable them to ask respond to more questions like when they discuss with each other.

## **Conclusion**

After analyzing both teachers' and students' questionnaires, we have found that teachers and students have shown a great interest towards positive effects of CL in teaching writing skill. Although, our students have preferred to work individually, they have supported the way of learning in groups.

Teachers' interest is the major advantage of teaching the writing skill through CL with group work then, why are their students' written productions of low quality if they seem to endorse CL approach with group work? These results are rather negative, that is to say, our teachers, at least, neglecting the necessary skills for group work, and they do not tell their students about the advantages of group work. In general, only some students encounter some problems when working in groups.

Finally, student's reactions to group work are positive on the whole and confirm that they can learn much from group work. Teachers' evaluation of students' reaction to group work, as applied by them, implies students' readiness for such technique.

## **5-Recommendations**

From the results that we obtained from both teachers and students questionnaire, we are recommended that

1-CLL teaches students how to interact with other people and learn from each other by exchanging the ideas

2-To teach writing skill through group work, the teachers need to choose such materials or resources for each group to meet the objective of the task. These objectives are to provide each group with case study and list of questions to address related to each .these resources can help them to solve problems.

3-Set a timeline for the activity. How much time will they need with each group?

4-Go over the instructions for the activity very clearly and do comprehension checks to make sure they all understand the purpose of the activity and the method for grouping during both rounds.

5-Students should follow the writing strategies such as: planning, drafting, editing, revising and reviewing to develop their writing and to have a good written production.

6-The students need to confirm their selves by sharing their ideas which help them to learn effectively from their mistakes through group work.

7-Students need to pass their difficulties in writing such as the psychological factors (anxiety).

8-CLL has many effects on students for that reason; the teachers should care about those producers in learning by going slowly with their learners.

## **General Conclusion**

In English language, writing can be taught in different ways according to teachers' background and students' preferences. One of these methods is CLL which teaches students how to interact with other people and learn from one another. Moreover, it helps them to understand the nature of writing and its importance. Most of all, learning from others both teachers and peers can increase the ability of exchanging and enrich information.

This study has investigated two main principles. The first one is related to teachers' concern with the affective side of the learner and their techniques in teaching writing skill. The results of teachers' questionnaire showed that our teachers care about students' affection in that they encourage them and try to lower or decrease their fear of writing.

The second principal, concerns students' attitudes to cooperative group work, the hypothesis are confirmed in that these attitudes are positive. That is to say, most of students like to work in groups despite they fear to make mistakes.

This study gives an overview of how this way of learning is applied by teachers of written expression in the department of English at Biskra University.

This work is equally beneficial to teachers of various modules and especially, oral and written in order to improve their students' learning. Accordingly, teachers' questionnaire contained items about teachers' consideration of the affective side of the learner. For one reason or another, some teachers do not probably bother themselves looking for these techniques, and others may have an idea about these techniques, but they do not use them. So far as their use of group work to foster

students' learning, it has been found that group work, as applied by them, is not systematic.

The fact is that CLL has many models and effects, which this study did not shed light on, requires that other researches need to be carried out.

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**Appendix 01**  
**Teachers' Questionnaires**

Dear Teacher,

We are currently conducting an investigation on "improving student's writing skill through cooperative learning. We shall be, therefore, very grateful to you if you take part in this questionnaire by answering the following questions. May I thank you in advance for your collaboration.

**- Section One: Approaches to teach the writing skill.**

1) - What role do you play in teaching writing skill?

- a) – An organizer
- b) - Participant
- c) – Assessor
- d) – As a controller

2) –Do you teach writing skill to?

- a)- Language development
- b) – Learning style
- c) – Writing as a skill
- d) – Improving student's abilities

3) - Do you follow the process of planning, drafting and editing in teaching writing skill?

- a) – Yes
- b) - No

4) – Say, why?

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5) – In which process do you feel that your students are mostly involved?

- a) – Drafting
- b) - Editing
- c) - Revising

6) – Do you encourage your students in teaching writing skills?

a) – yes

b) – No

7) – If "Yes", how?

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**- Section Two: Cooperative writing and Group work Management.**

8) – Do you believe that CL is important element to enhance learning?

a)- Yes

b) – No

9)- If "Yes", how?

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10)- How often do you divide your class into groups?

a) – Always

b) - Sometimes

c)- Often

d) - Rarely

11)- What are the main strategies do you put into consideration when you divide the class into groups?

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**12)** – Do you think that interaction between students would increase their abilities in teaching writing skill?

- a)- Yes
- b) – No

**13)-** If "Yes", how?

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**14)** – Do you believe that cooperative writing can motivate students to develop their writing abilities?

- a)- Yes
- b) – No

**15)-** If "Yes", how?

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**16)-** Do you think that pair work is good for teaching the writing skill?

- a)- Yes
- b) – No

**17)-** Please, explain?

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.....

**18)-** Do your students have problems working together?

- a)- Yes
- b) – No

**19)-** Have you uncounted these problems?

a)- Yes

b) – No

**20)**- Explain, how?

.....

.....

**Thank you for your cooperation**

**Appendix 02**  
**Student's Questionnaires**

Dear students,

I would be so grateful if you could answer the following questions about your attitudes towards the use of cooperative group work, its advantages to improve your writing skills. Please, tick the box that corresponds to your choice.

**- Section One: Approaches to teach writing skills.**

1) – Is writing in English Important to you?

- a) – Yes
- b) - No

2) –Please, explain why?

.....

3) – Do you feel afraid to write?

- a) – Yes
- b) - No

4) – If yes, is it because you?

- a)- Have few or no ideas?
- b)- Fear teacher's negative feedback?
- c)- Worry about making grammatical mistakes?

5) – What does your teacher do to create a good learning atmosphere?

- a) – Acknowledge what students can do?
- b) – Check that students are comfortable with learning?
- c) – Encourage students to write?
- d) – Establish a good relationship with students?

6) – When writing in class, do you prefer?

- a) – Working individually?
- b)- Working in group?

7) – Please, explain?

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.....

.....



**- Section Two: Cooperative writing and Group work Management.**

**8)-Does your teacher help you to see the importance of cooperative group work?**

**a)- Yes**

**b) – No**

**9) – If "Yes", does he/ She:**

**a) – Simply explain why he is doing cooperative work?**

**b) – Do brainstorm session on the importance of group work?**

**10) –How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?**

**a)- Never**

**b)- Rarely**

**c)- Sometimes**

**d)- Often**

**e)- Always**

**11)- Does your teacher control groups?**

**a)- Yes**

**b) – No**

**12)- When the teacher asks you to work in groups, are you:**

**a) – Very motivated?**

**b) - Motivated?**

**c)- Less motivated?**

**d)- Not motivated?**

**13) – What ever your answer is, please say why?**

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**14)- When you work in groups, do you?**

**a)- Take a positive attitude toward your self?**

**b) – Feel that you are satisfied with your self?**

**c) – Feel that you are not good at all?**

**d)- Feel more confident?**

**15)-** How much did you learn from group work?

**a)-** Very much

**b)-** Much

**c)-** Little

**d)-** Nothing

**16)-** This way of learning (group work) helps you to:

**a)-** Learn to respect different ideas and opinions?

**b)-** Ask and respond to more questions?

**Thank you for your cooperation**

## ملخص

هذه الدراسة قد ركزت على كيفية تطبيق التعلم التعاوني بالنسبة لطلبة السنة الثانية انجليزية في جامعة بسكرة و فعالية هذه الدراسة كأسلوب لتسهيل أطروحة الكتابة. بسبب اعتبار الكتابة كبيرة ، تم التحقيق في التقنيات المناسبة لتعليم هذه المهارة و خاصة من خلال عملية التعلم التعاوني الذي يعتبر منهاج جديد لتشجيع عملية البحث و ذلك بسبب تأثيره الايجابي على المتعلم. علاوة على ذلك ، تم استكشاف اتجاهات الطلبة إلى العمل. لدراسة هذا تم الاعتماد على نظريتين: الفرضية الأولى تتمثل في مدى وعي الأساتذة للعمل التعاوني لتحسين قدرات الطلبة في الكتابة من خلال المشاركة الوجدانية في مهام الكتابة. و النظرية الثانية تتمثل في مدى وعي الطلبة للجانب الايجابي للعمل التعاوني الذي يرتبط بالجانب العاطفي. لتنفيذ هذه الدراسة العملية هنالك سؤالين قد طرحا: الأول للأساتذة و الثاني خاص بطلبة السنة الثانية انجليزية و التي قد تم تحليلهما. نتائج الدراسة بالنسبة للأساتذة قد أثبتت أن أساتذة السنة الثانية مهتمين بالجانب العاطفي للطلاب و ذلك من خلال محاولتهم لخلق جو جيد للدراسة. أما بالنسبة للنتائج الخاصة بالطلبة أثبتت أنهم لديهم جانب ايجابي بالنسبة لتدريس الكتابة عن طريق العمل الجماعي . كذلك، فإن العمل التعاوني يدفع الأساتذة إلى مساعدة الطلبة باتخاذ القرارات و منحهم المزيد من الفرص.