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**Students' Attitudes towards Academic Writing:
Challenges facing EFL Learners**

Case of study: Third year LMD students at Biskra University

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as Partial Fulfillment for
the Master's Degree in Sciences of Languages

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Dedication

“People do not die when they are buried out; they die when they are forgotten”

To the soul of my paternal grandfather: MOHAMED

To the soul of my maternal grandfather: AHMED

To my parents: AMARA & ZAHIA for their devotion to my education.

To my beloved brothers: KADEER, ATIF, RABIE and MOHAMED.

To my dear sisters: HANA & IMANE

To my fiancé: RAMZI

To the “DERNOUN’S” and “ACHOUR’S”, together you are my family

Unfortunately, I cannot thank everyone by name , I just want you to know that you count so much.

DERNOUN HANANE

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate English Foreign Language students' attitudes towards the writing skill. This research was conducted to find out the problems which face third year students when writing skill. This research was conducted to find out the problems which face third year students when writing. In other words, to investigate how students perceive the writing skill. This study used a descriptive method. This latter comprised two qualitative gathering tools; an interview and a questionnaire. According to the sampling, four teachers of written expression module were chosen to answer the interview. However 26 third year students were chosen randomly to fill in the questionnaire. Finally, based on the analysis of the teachers' interview and the students' questionnaire, the results and findings of the research revealed that students have negative attitudes towards writing which affect their level of educational achievement. The collected data was discussed and findings were shown in the graphs enclosed within this study. Also some recommendations were drawn at the end of the dissertation.

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ملخص

General Introduction

Writing is the most important language skill and the most sophisticated one, as it obeys rules and instructions. This is really true considering the efforts learners make to enhance their writing, and make words convey their thoughts in an understandable way. Despite the important role of writing in learning and communicating, both native and non-native students argue that it is very difficult to master. The ability to write accurately and effectively is a problem that evades many students. Students at the university level are intended to learn how to write different types of assignments.

In many countries, including Arab countries, educational systems emphasize writing for tests. For the students, they write only in order to pass examinations and to get good grades. Their attitudes towards the written tasks are artificial with no real sense or purpose. There has been a great deal of discussion about how attitudes affect the achievement level of students. A positive relationship has been confirmed between positive attitudes and good writing level. When reviewing the literature, previous studies have concluded that better writers have more positive attitudes and less apprehension. Our study, therefore, aim at finding out third year EFL students' attitudes towards the written tasks.

1. Statement of the problem :

Most English students, in the department of languages at Mohamed Kheider University, possess a weak performance in the writing skill. Due to the complexity of this skill, learners find it difficult to master all aspects of writing. Although third year students have dealt with Written Expression module for a relatively long period, they still produce erroneous patterns. We believe that students need to be provided with more efficient writing strategies to overcome the difficulties they face when writing.

2. Aim of the study :

The present study deals with the learners' poor achievement in written tasks with the purpose of identifying some factors which restrict the learners' ability to write correctly at the third year. Our aim is:

1. Identify some factors which markedly restrict the learners' ability to write correctly.
2. Investigate students' attitudes towards written tasks.
3. Translate the research findings into suggestions and guidance.

This study focuses on the challenges encountered by third year students in order to identify the suggestions and solutions for the recommended future researches. This study is a crucial issue to be dealt with as it reveals the problems that students face when writing especially the lack of methods and the ways of teaching academic writing.

3. Research questions

The aim of this research was to answer the following main questions:

- Why do third year students produce poor written production?
- How do third year students' attitudes towards writing affect their writing progresss?

4. Research Hypotheses :

Depending on the previous questions, we hypothesize that :

1. Students' attitudes impact their level of writing achievement.
2. Positive attitudes lead to positive educational outcomes.

5. Research Methodology :

5.1. Choice of the method

We intend to use a descriptive study as an approach to acquire and gather information for this research project. The primary aim of a descriptive research is to give an accurate description of a phenomenon such as attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and demographics. The present study utilized the descriptive method to examine Biskra

university students' writing problems as perceived by the students themselves and as perceived by their teachers.

5.2. Sample

The sample which will be used is a group of 26 third year students at Biskra university. We have chosen them randomly for two reasons:

- They have been studying English for a long period of time and Written Expression module during the three years.
- They are, thus, supposed to be able to write a composition.

5.3. Instruments

In order to examine the students' attitudes toward the writing tasks in EFL classrooms, a questionnaire will be designed for students in order to investigate their views and attitudes towards their writing difficulties. In addition to a teachers' interview which will help us determine their role in motivating and improving their students' attitudes.

6. Structure of the study

Our study is divided into two main parts : a theoretical part which includes two chapters and an empirical part which includes one chapter.

Chapter One provides an overview of the teaching of writing through defining writing, stating the roles that the teacher plays in this process, explaining its relation with the other skills namely speaking and reading. It contains an overview of EFL writing skills, including an examination of various approaches to writing such as the product, genre and process approaches.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth discussion of attitudes. It includes a number of definitions for attitudes, their major types as reported by explicit and implicit attitudes, how they are formed, its major models; the single-component model and the multi-dimensional model in addition to the different functions they serve.

In chapter Three, the methods used to answer the research questions are presented. The chapter also includes a description of the sample used for the study and of the data collection procedures. Finally, it contains the analysis of the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview. In this chapter, all the collected data are presented and analysed.

CHAPTER ONE
TEACHING WRITING

Introduction

This chapter introduces and discusses some technical aspects related to the skill of the writing in English . The analysis concerns fundamental considerations in this field in the Foreign Language . The aim of discussing those points is to get in an overall idea of what theorists in the field of education have highlighted as far as writing in the Foreign Language is concerned. The items discussed in this part are of an unestimated value , and the relative term included add important dimension to our theatrical part. Specifically, it first looks at what effective writing is, then the role of the teacher in this process. This is followed by a discussion of the connection of writing to other language skills, more precisely to reading and speaking. The chapter reports also the main accurate approaches in teaching writing.

1.1. What is Academic Writing?

In teaching a foreign language, writing is considered as the most problematic skill. It is agreed that the writing skill is difficult even for native students because it requires many processes and steps to be mastered.

There are a lot of definitions for writing. In its broad sense, it means “not only putting one’s thoughts to paper as they occur, but actually using writing to create new knowledge” (Weigle 2002, p.p. 32-33). It is “encoding internal representation into written text” (Weigle 2002, p. 36). Generally, writing is interpreted as the act of tracing symbols on a paper using a pen or pencil. According to Byrne (1993, p.1):

Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences.

This implies that the graphic symbols have to be combined according to special rules to form words, words to form sentences, and sentences to form paragraphs. Another definition is given by Byrne (1993, p.24) who believes that writing is a primary means of

recording speech, even though it must be acknowledged as secondary medium of communication. Writing is one of the major skills for using language, through which one can convey his thoughts. It is stated that "writing is a reflection of what can occur only after the main ideas are in place." (Clark, 2003: 8). This means that the writer's goal is to know how to say what has been discovered, not in discovering and selecting what to say. Flower (1989, p.54) states that writing is a process that can be influenced by some elements in the learning activities. He says that:

Writing is a social act that can only occur within a specific situation. It is therefore influenced both by the personal attitudes and social experiences that the writer brings to writing and the impacts of the particular political and institutional context in which it interviews, analyses of surrounding practices and other techniques, researchers seek to develop more complete accounts to local writing contexts.

Hyland (2003, p.3) defines it as "marks on a page or a screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules". Likewise, writing is seen as a graphic system used for communication as defined in Crystal (1995, p.257): "Most obviously writing is a way of communication which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression".

The term "writing" is usually used as a synonym to the term "composing". Accordingly, Flower and Hayes (1981, p.366) stated that: "Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing".

Neman (1995) defines writing as "a craft, an artistic process with techniques and conventions that can be learned, employing skills that can be improved."(p.4). From another view, Zamel (1992) describes writing as a meaning-making, purposeful, evolving, recursive, dialogic, tentative, fluid, exploratory process. According to Zamel; writing is the

combination of various cognitive operations which is consciously produced, revised, adapted and corrected. Many researchers agreed on the social nature of the writing skill.

In addition to that, the writer has to keep in mind: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, audience, purpose and the writing process. The combination of all these components makes writing a difficult skill. Writing is a very complex skill that demands both physical and mental activity from the part of the writer. Many cognitive psychologists have described it as the most complex demanding of all cognitive activities undertaken by human beings.

To sum up, Byrne 1979 states that writing is the transformation of our thoughts into language. Writing is a creative process of transmitting and communicating ideas that demands many factors in order to be successfully accomplished.

1.2. Characteristics of Effective Writing

Writing is the basic skill in language learning. An increased level of effectiveness can be reached through understanding the nature of the writing skill. According to Starkey (2004), a good and effective piece of writing should include:

1.2.1. Organization

Throughout the writing process, your ideas have to be regular, predictable and organized. In this context, the use of the prewriting technique helps in planning your work effectively. The writer thinks about organizing his/her written work before start writing down it. Starkey (2004, p.2) states:

By following an organized method of writing, you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence. He or she will be able to see how the various points you make in your piece of writing work together and how they support your thesis.

1.2.2. Clarity

Clarity is an essential characteristic of writing. Murray and Hughes (2008) emphasize the role of clarity in making a piece of writing easy to read. They believe that the use of short sentences is the best solution for clear writing.

According to Starkey (2004, pp.9-12), the learner should follow the next steps in order to achieve clarity:

- Eliminate ambiguity: here the writer should focus on the use of simple words and not those with more than one interpretation.
- Use powerful, precise adjectives and adverbs: the use of modifiers in a correct way can help in accomplishing clarity.
- Be concise by avoiding wordiness and repetition. He provides us with two reasons in order to avoid repetition:

The first is that unnecessary repetition is a sign of sloppy writing. It is easy to say the same thing a number of times, varying it slightly each time. It is harder to say something well once, and continue writing about your next idea or example. Second, wordiness wastes valuable time and space. "If you are writing while the clock is ticking, or are limited to a number of words or pages, say it right the first time and move on".(Starkey, 2004, p.17).

1.2.3. Coherence

In academic writing, success and failure depend on how coherent is that piece of writing. According to Murray and Hughes (2008, p.45), to be coherent means that you stick your ideas as a chain, if any link is missing, the connections become unclear.

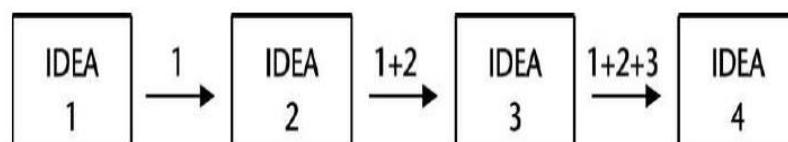


Figure 1.1: A Sequence of Ideas. (Murray and Hughes, 2008, p.46)

1.2.4. The choice of words

According to Starkey (2004), there are two aspects one should consider in choosing words:

- **Denotation:** Here the learners should look to the literal meaning of the word because some words may have many interpretations, or they may sound/look the same but they are widely different.
- **Connotation:** It is the implied meaning, or the meaning behind the written words. It involves emotions, cultural assumptions and suggestions.

1.2.5. Mechanics

Mechanics are somehow a kind of conventions. They are very significant in producing an effective piece of writing. Indentation, capitalization and punctuation these are all called writing mechanics.

Nunan (1991, p.37) believed that successful writing is a complex activity that should involve many abilities simultaneously:

- Mastering mechanics.
- Mastering and obeying conventions of spelling and punctuation.
- Using the grammatical system to convey one's intended meaning.
- Organizing content at the level of paragraph and the complete text to reflect given/new information and topic.

1.3. The role of the Teacher in the Writing Process

The role of the teacher in the writing process moves from being a source of authority to a facilitator which his aim is to help students produce well structured pieces of writing. Harmer (2004, pp. 41-42) identifies five (05) roles of teachers in the writing tasks:

1.3.1. Demonstrating

The teacher should show students how to write better and to make them aware of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and other conventions which will help them to know the language rules and to be good writers.

1.3.2. Motivating and Provoking

The teacher's role when students feel lost in the writing task is to motivate them to feel more comfortable. The teacher should provide students with guidelines of how to start the writing process, how to relate ideas and motivate them to kill their fears.

1.3.3. Supporting

Another role for the teacher is supporting. When doing their classroom tasks, teachers should support their students by giving them ideas and make them involve in the activities through encouragement.

1.3.4. Responding

Responding means the teacher's reaction towards students' writing. It is done by giving comments on their errors and makes some suggestions to improve them.

1.3.5. Evaluating

A better way to determine whether students have benefited from the tasks provided by their teacher is evaluation. In tests, the teacher evaluates the student's mistakes and grades them to improve his/her writing ability.

1.4. Writing and Other Skills

Learning a foreign language (FL) needs mastering every single aspect of it. Writing is considered as the most important skill which goes through different stages and involves different aspects. During the learning process, students should not learn the writing skill separately; it is not isolated from the other skills. There are two types of skills: listening and reading represent the receptive skills, and speaking and writing represent the

productive skills. Each skill should work hand in hand with the other skills in order to improve their development.

1.4.1. Writing and its relation to Speaking

It was believed that speech is primary and the written language is just a reflection to the spoken language. Both writing and speaking are clearly productive activities in that they create language outcomes just as listening and reading are both passive activities.

“Speaking and writing involve language production and are therefore referred to as productive skills” (Harmer 1991, p.16). There is a noticeable difference between the spoken and the written language. Although they are both productive skills, they differ in many aspects.

A major difference between writing and speaking is that writing requires the use of complex grammar structure and syntax; however, speaking tends to use more simple structure. Raimes (1994) argued that speaking is spontaneous and unplanned, whereas writing is planned and it requires time to produce it since we are aware of what we are going to write. Another difference is formality; writing is formal and compact, while speaking is more informal and repetitive. Writing is more formal and governed by a strict grammar rules while speaking is characterized by the exaggerate use of fillers, connectors, and abbreviation.

A summary of the differences between speaking and writing is found in Brown (1994). He provides a list of the possible characteristics that differentiate between the written and the spoken language.

✓ Performance:

- Speaking is transitory while writing is permanent
- Speaking can be processed in real time while writing can be read and re-read.

✓ **Production time:**

Writers have more time to plan and revise their words while speakers must plan and formulate their utterances immediately.

✓ **Distance:**

The distance between the writer and the reader present in both time and space, while the speaker and the listener have a face to face contact.

✓ **Orthography:**

In writing, it carries a limited amount of information in comparison to speaking (stress, intonation, pitch ...etc).

✓ **Complexity:**

Written language consists of long clauses and coordinates whereas the spoken language contains short clauses and subordinates.

✓ **Formality:**

Writing is more formal than speaking because of its social and cultural uses.

✓ **Vocabulary:**

Writing contains a wider variety of vocabulary than speaking.

Given all what preceded, we can say that speaking and writing can be used together to meet the same communicative goals as a productive skills. Writing is learned through formal instructions while speaking obeys no strict rules in order to be mastered.

1.4.2. Writing and its relation to Reading

In the 1950s and 1960s, teachers taught reading and writing as a separate skills; they used to describe reading as a passive action and writing as an active action. Later on, both skills, reading and writing, were connected together. Writing and reading are closely related skills. They are commonly named “literacy skills”; they complete and serve each other. Stosky (1983, p.636) states that:

Better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material), that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers.

For Stosky, writing and reading are closely related; a good piece of writing is the result of reading and reading results in good writing. Good writers are good readers and poor writers are poor readers.

A better description of the reading-writing relationship is expresses in the following figure:

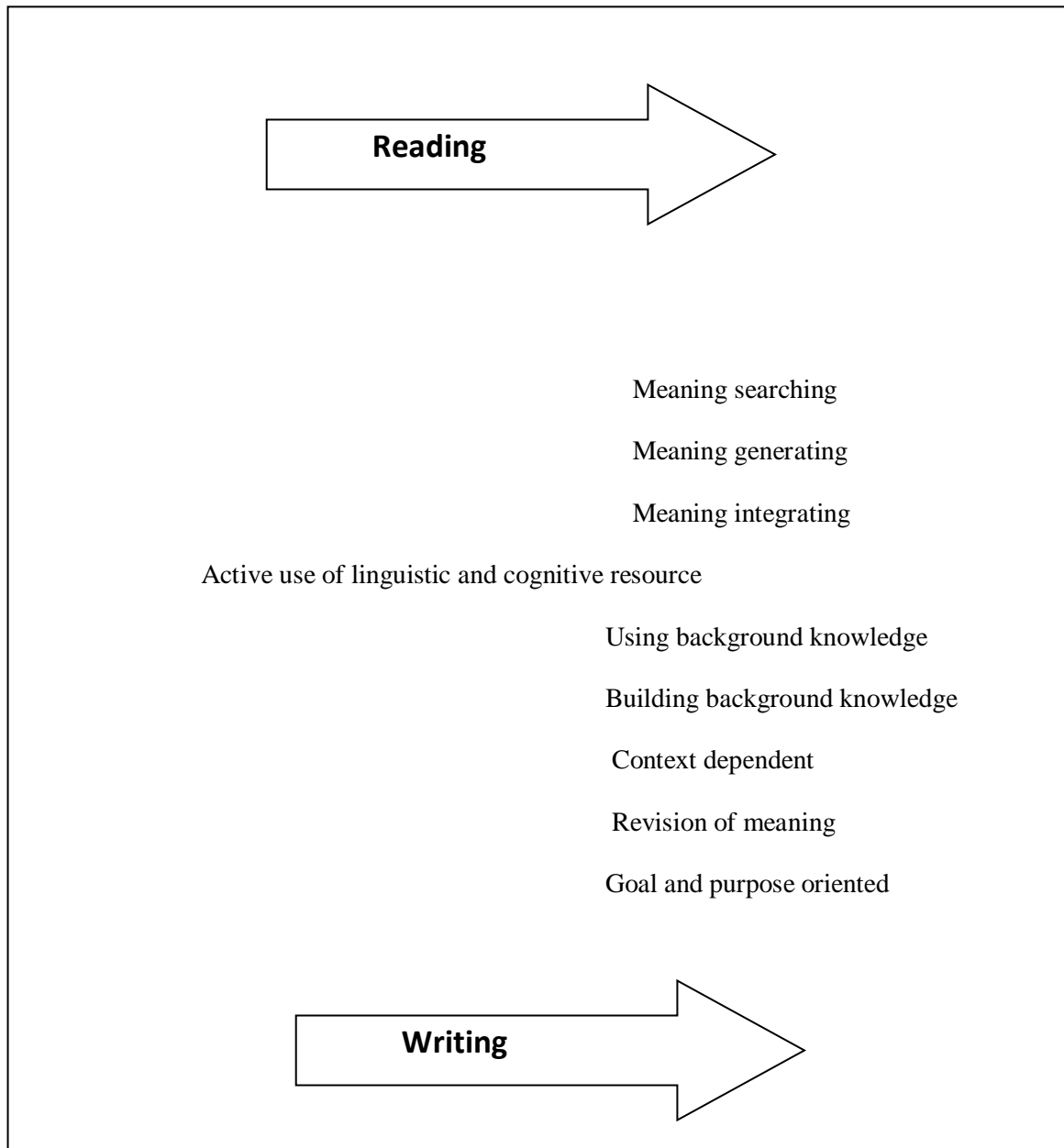


Figure 1.1. Reading-Writing Relationship

1.5. Approaches of Teaching Writing

“Good writers are those who keep the language efficient.
That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear”

(Ezra Pound)

To be a good writer is not something innate or born with; rather, it is learned through practice usually in formal settings. Effectively, teaching formal writing is based on a number of theories and approaches.

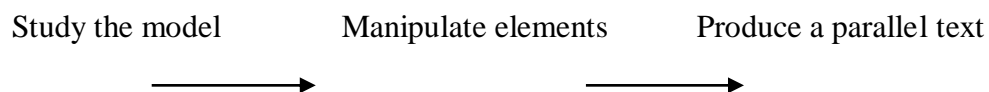
1.5.1. The Product Approach

This approach is also known as the “text-focused approach”. It focuses on the Behaviorist theory (imitation) in order to produce a well organized piece of writing. Nunan (1989) states that:

The product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, i.e. the letter, essay, story and so on. The writing teacher who subscribes to the product approach will be concerned to see that the end product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse conventions relating to main points, supporting details and so on. (p. 36)

In the product approach, students are given some model texts and they are supposed to produce a similar one through imitation. In this context, Nunan (1991) argued that imitation could be possible within the sentence level not the discourse level. Pincas states that: “The learner is not allowed to “create” in the target language at al... The use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns ... these patterns are learned by imitation; and ... not until they have been learned can originality occur”. Pincas (1962, pp.185-186).

In this approach, grammatical and lexical errors were simultaneously corrected while the stages of the writing process were neglected. According to White (1998, p.46), the product approach is:



This approach is “consistent with sentence level structuralist linguistics and bottom-up processing.” Nunan (1999, p. 272). The analysis of the written product is more likely to take place after the writing process in order to help the teacher to figure out the weaknesses and strengths of his/her students.

1.5.2. The Process Approach

The process approach was a reaction to the product approach. It emphasizes the process of writing rather than the final product. In this approach, students are given enough time to write passing through four main stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. White and Arndt described the stages of the writing process in the figure below:

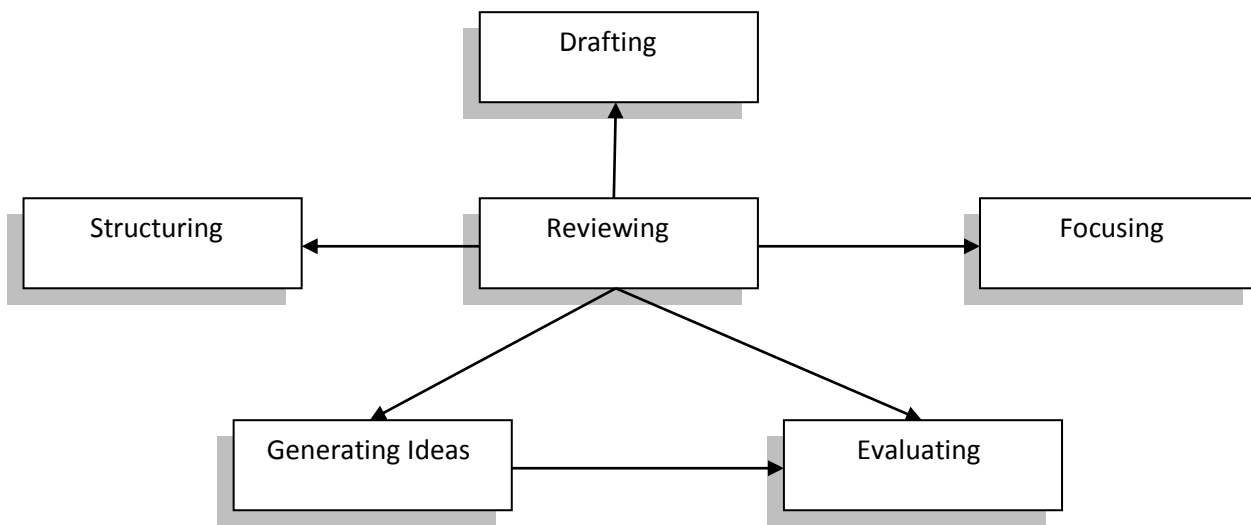
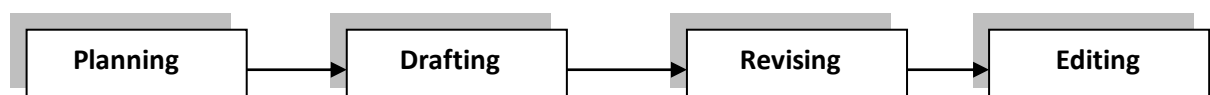


Figure 1.2. White and Arndt's Process Writing Model (cited in Harmer 2001, p.258)

➤ Stages of the Writing Process

The writing process is referred to as a linear sequence of a very related stages. Clark (2003) stated that the writing process is made up of related stages referred to as planning, drafting, revising and editing. Since they overlap, the success of a stage is determined by the success of the previous stage. In the same context, Clark argued that the process approach was based on the idea that writing is a reflection of what has already been formulated in the mind of the writer. From this, we infer that the more students go through these stages, the more they produce a good piece of writing.



1.5.2.1. Planning

Planning is the first step to start with; it is supposed to be general and simple. Lipson (2005) believed that it is not necessary to draw a plan, what important is to have a plan in your mind. He added that this plan is not a final version; the writer may modify it either by adding some new ideas or by deleting others. Students need to be clear about the message, about the purpose as well as the audience. After writers have generated ideas about the topic, they start to focus on developing a plan for the piece they are going to write.

1.5.2.2. Drafting

At the drafting stage, students start writing down their ideas on a paper focusing only on the content not on the form. Actually, they do not need to be careful about spelling or word choice; rather, they need to convey only the intended message.

At this stage, ideas are clearer and more understandable if they are written on a paper. Gallo suggested that the writer can put down notes in order to come back and make modifications.

1.5.2.3. Revising

“Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar until later” Hedge (1988, p.23). The good way for evaluating ones writing is through revising.

During the revising stage, the writer reread his/her work, checks clarity and cohesion, and take into consideration any proposed feedbacks in order to see whether his/her writing needs modifications or not.

1.5.2.4. Editing

The last stage of the process approach to writing is editing. It refers to the correction of grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors before publishing the final

product. In this stage, various strategies maybe used by students to correct their errors. They can, for example, work in pairs, group, use textbooks or dictionaries ... etc. Hedge puts forward the view that: "Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave the details like correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar until later. (1988, p.23).

1.5.3. The Genre Approach

It would be better to define the term "Genre" before discussing it as an approach. According to Lynch (1996, p. 148):

A genre is a type of text (e.g. recipe, prayer, advertisement), which is recognized as a "type" by its overall content, structure, and function. The notion of genre is closely connected with that of an audience, and in particular, with the idea that readers (and writers) of a specific genre are members of a community of people sharing interests and expectations about its communicative purpose.

This approach started to appear in the late 1980s as a reaction to the Process approach. Hyland (2004, p.4) define genre as "a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations."

One feature of the Genre approach to writing is that the writer's choices depend on the context, the relationship between the writer and the reader, and the purpose. In this context, Hyland argued that "the concept of genre enables teachers to look beyond content, composing processes, and textual forms to see writing as an attempt to communicate with readers to better understand the ways that language patterns are used to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose" (2004, p.5). This implies that the writer should be aware of the different elements of writing: topic, context... etc. "The central belief here is that we don't just write, we write something to achieve some purposes: it is a way of getting something done" Richards (2003, p.18).

Writing under the Genre approach makes writers aware of their audience. Hyland described it as systematic because it “incorporates both discourse and contextual aspects of language use (2004, p.12). In this approach, writing is considered as a social act that leads, consequently, to a successful communication. Swales (1990) believed that Genre approach is “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p.58).

Conclusion

As a conclusion to this chapter, we can say that writing is not an ability that is acquired naturally; rather, it demands from the writer to be aware of the writing rules and stages. We can say also that one should go through much practice to get used to the writing rules and strategies, because it is not acquired in natural setting (at home, in the streets, etc.); this is why it needs an intensive process of training to get used of it and its conventions. Since the writer is not writing for himself, he should be aware of how to write and what to say. This includes mastering the writing process or strategies. We tried through this chapter to give an overview of the writing skill. We tried also to discuss its relation to other skills. Finally, we described the common known approaches in teaching foreign language.

CHAPTER TWO
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES
TOWARDS WRITING

Introduction

Writing is often a challenging subject for students. To help students develop their writing skills, teachers employ a variety of techniques for students to learn and use when writing. However, teachers must delve further to understand and learn about their students' attitudes towards writing. This should be done because attitude is an important factor that plays a large part in students' literacy learning. Attitude affects motivation to learn and write and influences how students approach the task of writing. Attitudes are based on self-efficacy beliefs, and that is important to understand as well. Negative attitudes can make writing even more challenging. Therefore, understanding attitude and its effect on the development of successful writers is important for guiding writing instruction. If teachers learn about and understand students' attitudes towards writing, this knowledge can impact their instructional practices positively. It is for these reasons that I wanted to investigate students' attitudes towards writing and the affect attitude has on their writing progress. This chapter provides an in-depth study of attitudes, how they are formed, their main types and models, and the functions they serve.

2.1. Attitude Theory

The concept of attitude is essential to social psychology. Early psychologists have defined social psychology as the scientific study of attitudes. The first definitions were too broad, for example, Allport (1935) defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p.810). Allport (1967) notes the difficulty in constructing a definition sufficiently broad to cover the many kinds of attitudinal determination which psychologists today recognise while, and at the same time, narrow enough to exclude those types of determination which are not ordinarily referred to as attitudes. Decades after, the notion of attitudes lost its breadth.

Daryl Bem said that “attitudes are likes and dislikes” (1970, p.14). In a similar way, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitudes as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (p.1). Triandis defined attitude as “an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations” (1971, p.2).

A number of definitions are available for the concept of attitude in the literature. Baker (1992, p.1) states that: “The notion of attitudes has a place in psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, history, human geography and creative arts”. The role of attitudes in our language and thoughts is very important; it is an indelible part of it. However, some modern definitions add emotional features in addition to the behavioral one. “An attitude is a learned disposition to respond to an object in consistently favorable way” Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p.6). They noted that the majority of instruments developed to measure attitude “... arrive at a single number designed to index the general evaluation or feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward the object in question” (p.11). They also argued that attitude is inferred from behavior, it cannot be directly observed. This implies that attitudes are defined as hypothetical constructs that are used to explain the direction of human behavior.

Another definition provided by Travers in which he defined an attitude as “a readiness to respond in such a way that behavior is given a certain direction” (1973, p.337). This definition implies that attitude is responsible for behaving in a particular and a definite way. Whenever one has a positive attitude towards something, he/she will try to achieve it. On the opposite side, if he/she has a negative attitude, then he/she will feel hostile and will try to avoid it. Whilttaker (1970) argued that “an attitude is a predisposition on readiness to respond in a pre-determined manner to relevant stimuli” (p.591). This means that one’s attitude decide one’s response to a given stimulus.

All in all, and according to the previous definitions, we can say that attitudes are responsible for the way people behave towards an object, idea or person. Attitudes differ from other pre-dispositions or tendencies such as habits or interests in the sense that attitudes are learned dispositions, they have motivational characteristics, and they may be arranged from positive to negative.

2.2. Aspects of Attitudes

Attitudes have two main aspects. The first is that attitudes are not behaviours that people do; rather, they are predispositions to respond to a given object in a specific manner. They are tendencies to act towards or against a given circumstances as in the definition stated by Jung (1971, p.687) “an attitude is a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way” (cited in Oskamp & Schultz 2005). The second aspect is the driving force of attitudes. Attitudes are not just a result of past experiences, they, as stated by Allport (1935), exerting a directive or dynamic influence. Directive means that attitudes guide the behavior and encourage actions, and dynamic means that they drive the behavior. The evaluation aspect of attitudes, which is the disposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to given objects, has been increasingly stressed by recent research. For instant, Olson & Maio define attitudes as “tendencies to evaluate objects favourably or unfavourably”(2003, p.299). Bem defines attitudes as “Attitudes are likes and dislikes” (1970, p.14 cited in Oskamps & Schultz, 2005, p.8), this simple definition emphasises the importance of the evaluative aspect of attitudes.

To summarize we can say that in general “Attitude” is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. They are positive, negative or neutral views of an attitude object. People can also simultaneously hold a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude in question. All attitudes take a stance - positive or negative – but they can vary in intensity.

2.3. Dimensions of Attitudes

In his recent study, Pajares (1992, p.325) did a thorough survey of teachers' beliefs in education and came to the conclusion that beliefs "play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information". Pajares (1992, pp. 313-316) sees beliefs as an essential component of attitudes that include knowledge, affect and behavior. According to the international dictionary of education (1977, p.32), there are three dimensions for attitudes: beliefs, feelings and behaviors.

2.3.1. Beliefs

Beliefs are mental concepts which are essential components of attitudes. Pajares (1992) draw a conclusion that beliefs "play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information" (p.325). Beliefs are mental constructs which influence teachers' and students' beliefs on their behavior. There are many researchers who draw some conclusions about the influence of beliefs on behavior. Burns (1992), for example, argued that beliefs motivate instructional practices in the classroom; beliefs tend to shape teachers' instructional practices. Beliefs are instrumental in shaping students' and teachers' role in the classroom. For them, beliefs help them to apply their knowledge in line with the teaching approach they are applying.

2.3.2. Feelings

The international dictionary of education (1977, p.14) defines feelings as "those aspects that emerge from experience of teachers that will develop emotionally in them". It is very important to establish rapport between the student and the method he/she is applying since the effective component has to do with emotions. We can say that students' and teachers' feelings play a major role in language teaching approaches.

2.3.3. Behaviors

The behavioral dimension is the action tendencies or responses that shape behavior. In this sense, the behavior will be accepted according to the attitudinal affect and belief (Eiser 1984, p.66). When students established beliefs and feelings towards an approach, they determine their behavior. The previous dimensions of attitudes interact to form an attitude which will produce observable behaviors.

2.4. Formation of Attitudes

As we have stated in the previous definitions, attitudes are learned dispositions and how they are formed has been a major question for psychologists to investigate. The term attitude formation refers to the movement we make from having no attitude toward an object to having an attitude toward the same object. It would be a positive or a negative attitude. Oskamp (1991) quoted in Bordens and Horowitz (2002, p.167). Attitude formation is an inevitable process. According to Coon and Metterer (2008, p.535), "attitudes are intimately woven into our actions and views of the world". Smith and Mackie (2000, p.250) pointed out that "... we develop attitudes because they are useful to us". This implies that attitudes are beneficial for social and psychological survival. Bordens and Horowitz (2002) list four (04) mechanisms of attitude formation:

2.4.1. Mere Exposure

To be exposed to an object, this will increase a positive feeling toward that object which means that simply being exposed to an object increases a positive feeling toward that object. The mere-exposure effect has been demonstrated with a wide range of stimuli, including foods, photographs, words, and advertising slogans. Repeated exposures increase liking when the stimuli are neutral or positive to begin with.

2.4.2. Direct Experience

A second way we form attitudes is through direct personal experience. Attitudes acquired through direct experience are likely to be strongly held and to affect behavior. People are also more likely to search for information to support such attitudes. Attitudes which are acquired through experiences, usually direct experiences, tend to be affect behavior strongly.

2.4.3. Operant and Classical Conditioning

Most social psychologists would agree that attitudes result from our experiences, not our genetic inheritance. Through socialization, individuals learn the attitudes, values, and behaviors of their culture. During the course of socialization, a person's attitudes may be formed through operant and classical conditioning. Operant conditioning is a method characterized by rewarding a person for a given attitude. This method aims to maintain the attitude or strength it. Parents may, for example, reward their daughter with praise when she expresses the attitude that doing math is fun. Each time the child is rewarded, the attitude becomes stronger. Or, parents may punish their son with a verbal rebuke when he expresses that same attitude. In these examples, operant conditioning serves to impart attitudes.

In the other hand, classical conditioning is a learning method that happens when a stimulus comes to a response that is not previously evokes to form the attitude. It is a form of learning that occurs when a stimulus comes to summon a response that it previously did not evoke to form an attitude. Furthermore, people are more likely to imitate behavior that is rewarded. Thus, if aggressive behavior seems to be rewarded—if children observe that those who use violence seem to get what they want it is more likely to be imitated.

2.4.4. Observational Learning

Another way for attitude formation is through observing what people are doing and whether they receive a reward or they are punished. After observation, people success in imitating that behavior (169-170).

2.5. Models of Attitudes

When reviewing the literature, two main approaches can be clearly seen. They are namely the single-component model and the three-component model (Stahlbery and Frey, 1996). More details are discussed below.

2.5.1. The Single-Component Model

The framework of the single component model is regarded as one-dimensional, owing to the fact that it focuses solely on one component of attitude, with evaluation being dominant. The model considers the affective component of attitudes to be the only pertinent or applicable indicator regarding attitudes' evaluative nature. This model considers the affective component of attitudes to be the only applicable indicator regarding the nature of attitudes. In this model, the terms "evaluation" and "affect" are used interchangeably. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argued that this model differentiates between beliefs and behavioral intentions. Beliefs are related to the views held by individuals concerning objects, knowledge, information or thoughts, which may be positive or negative. While behavioral intentions make reference to a tendency to a number of different attitude actions and to react, in a particular way, to a particular object.

2.5.2. The multi-dimensional model of attitudes (The three-component model)

Unlike the single component model, the multi-dimensional model includes elements viewed as being responses to a particular object, as viewed by Eagly and Chaiken (1993). As explained by Rosemberg and Havoland (1960, p.3), attitudes are

tendencies to react to various stimuli with certain types of response. These responses are recognized as:

Affective: related to emotions such as likes or dislikes. It is stated that affective responses may be either extremely positive or extremely negative, positioned according to the dimension of meaning and its perceived value

Behavioral: it is related to the action tendencies or the way the attitude we have influence our behavior. This particular element represents the way in which an individual reacts to the attitude object, with further consideration to the intentions to act, as articulated in overt behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Ajzen, 2005). Such reactions may be established through the evaluative aspect of meaning, which also runs from extremely negative to extremely positive.

Cognitive: it is related to beliefs, ideas and views. Eagly & Chaiken (1993) further highlight that cognitive responses are occasionally referred to by other terms, including cognitions, inferences, information, knowledge and opinions.

Ajzen (2005) argues that attitude is a 'complex' and a 'multi-dimensional construct' consisting of three components, namely, emotional or affective, which represents the positive or the negative feelings about the object; a cognitive component, which comprises ideas and beliefs about it; and a cognitive component, relating to the tendency to behave in a particular way towards it. The link between these components is shown in the figure below:

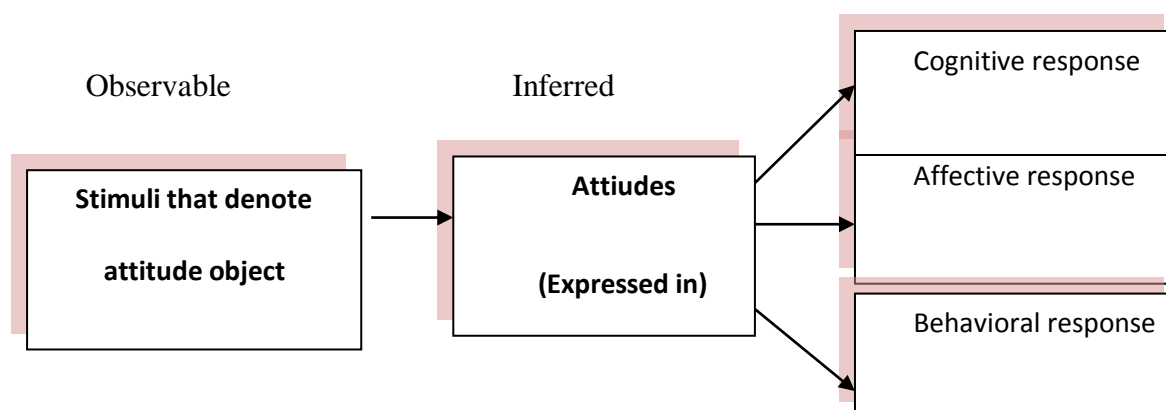


Figure 2.3. The multi-component model of attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p.11)

Cognitive evaluative responses include the covert responses that occur when these associations are inferred or perceived as well as the overt responses of verbally stating one's beliefs. On the other hand, Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.11) have argued that affective responses can also range from extremely positive to extremely negative and therefore can be located on an evaluative dimension of meaning. Attitudes may actually be found to hold only one of these components; thus, when attitudes are being formed by a person to an object, affective information may be more relevant. It should also be considered that individuals' attitudes might be influenced by previous behaviors or situations.

2.6. Types of Attitudes

“In a broad sense, the study of attitudes is important because attitudes are important for our social lives” Hewestone and Strobe (p.240). Social psychologists have emphasized the importance of attitudes because they play a major role in our social lives. It is worthy to know the distinction that social psychologists have made between implicit, explicit attitudes and cognitive dissonance.

2.6.1. Explicit Attitudes

Bordens and Horowitz (p.181) argued that; “an attitude operating in a controlled processing about which are aware of its existence, its cognitive underpinning, and how it relates to behavior”.

People seem to be convinced by the justifications of their existence and they feel in harmony with their attitudes. Explicit attitudes are formed at the conscious level and they are easy for self-report. Explicit attitudes operate on a conscious level, so we are aware of them—aware of the cognitive underpinnings of them—and are conscious of how they relate to behavior. They operate via controlled processing and take some cognitive effort to activate. For example, you may know how you feel toward a given political candidate and match your behavior to that attitude. It is these explicit attitudes that we often find having a directive effect on behavior.

2.6.2. Implicit Attitudes

An implicit attitude is defined as “an individual’s automatic evaluative response to a target, which can occur without awareness. An implicit attitude is a spontaneous, immediate, good-bad response to the target that cannot be consciously controlled. It reflects how the individual evaluates the target at a subconscious level” (Breckler, Olson and Wiggins 2006, p.202). This implies that implicit attitudes refer to the target objects and not the individual’s suspicion.

Although implicit and explicit attitudes seem different, they cooperate together as one entity. Breckler et al. assert that the distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes will not always be important, inconsistency between the types of attitudes leads to what is called cognitive dissonance.

2.6.3. Cognitive Dissonance

Fischer, Frei, Peus and Kastenmuler (2008, p.189) define cognitive dissonance as “the subjective perception of incomparability between two self-related cognitions”. This type was termed dissonance by Leon Festinger. He states that: “First, I will replace the word ‘inconsistency’ with a term which has less of a logical connotation, namely, dissonance” (1957, p.2). After that, he provides an explanation of his understanding of cognition: “by cognition... I mean any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, about one’s behavior” (1957, p.3). According to Festinger, cognitive dissonance can be considered as a condition that leads to activity toward dissonance reduction.

2.7. Structure of Attitudes

Semin and Fiedler (1996, p.4) define attitude as « a hypothetical construct in the sense that we cannot directly measure it ». Social psychologists argued that the best way to identify and outline the breadth and width of an attitude is to draw conclusions from a given responses. In the same breadth, they note that attitudes are only « inferred from certain classes of evaluative responses to attitude object » (1996, p.4).

We have stated before that attitudes have three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Bohnerd and Wanke (2002) conclude that « these three response classes are not necessarily separable from each other, and do not necessarily represent three independent factors » (p.5). They add that « attitudes may consist entirely of cognitive or affective components, and it is not necessary all three classes are represented » (p.5).

Attitudes, according to Ajzen, can be inferred through verbal and non verbal responses. Response categories are three: affect, cognition, and behavior. When teachers, males and females, think that female students are more cooperative than male students, their attitude is affect-wise ; when teachers believe in their male students capacities, their attitude is

cognitive-wise ; and when teachers express the intentions of their behavior, their attitude is described as behavior-wise.

Ajzen (1988) drew the following table in which he explains the overlapping of these responses:

RESPONSE		CATEGORY	
Affect	Cognition	Behavior	
Verbal	Expressions of feeling toward attitude object.	Expressions of beliefs about attitude object.	Expressions of behavioral intentions toward attitude object.
Non Verbal	Pyisical responses to attitude object.	Perceptual responses (eg, reaction time) to attitude object.	Overt behavioral responses to attitude object.

Table 2.1: Different types of evaluation responses (drawn upon Semin and Fiedler, 1996, p.4)

According to Ajzen, attitudes can be inferred from verbal and non verbal responses. The evaluative responses issued by individuals are categorized according to the way that these are performed. Response categories are affect-, cognition-, and behavior-related.

2.8. Functions of Attitudes

Social psychologists claim that people utilize attitudes in order to accommodate certain functions. They have identified five (05) functions that help people from being active members in the society. Hewstone and Stroebe (2004, p.240) stated that:

At a personal level attitude influence perceptions, thinking, and behavior.... At the interpersonal level, information about attitudes is routine requested and disclosed. If we know others' attitudes, the world's becomes more predictable. Our own thinking may be shaped by this knowledge, and we may try to control others' behavior by changing their attitudes. At the intergroup level, attitudes towards one's groups and other groups are at the core of intergroup cooperation and conflict.

These five functions of attitudes span from pragmatic to social functions which enable individuals of being defensive or offensive on their personal connections.

2.8.1. Knowledge Function

An attitude function is to guide, organize and simplify information. According to Hewstone and Stroebe (2004), the more positive attitudes someone have about his/her level of intelligence, the more he/she thinks that he could solve problems. These attitudes with the knowledge function help in making sense and understanding the world. They can also help individuals to pay direct attention to specific situations or people and to know the causes of specific events. The knowledge function in attitude can also be looked at how it provides people with meaningful and structured environment. Because the world is too complex for us to understand, we group objects and events into categories and develop simplified attitudes that allow us to treat individuals as members of the category.

2.8.2. Social-Identity Function

Attitudes mediate relations with others and express central values. An attitude function is to establish identification with particular reference group. Attitudes also help us to gain connection with others. This is through the social identity function of attitudes.

2.8.3. Utilitarian Function

This function tends to maximize rewards and minimize punishments. In this function, individuals try to make their decisions on the basis of producing the greatest amount of rewards and satisfaction and the lowest amount of pain. Aligning with the

attitudes of people perceived as authorities in the subject matter brings more satisfaction than holding opposing views.

2.8.4. Self-Monitoring Function

Individuals high in self-monitoring tailor their behavior to fit situational cues and reactions of others (Hewstone and Stroebe 2004). For instance, female students tend to be more self monitoring than male students and would gladly accept the teacher's views. Attitudes are what the world infers of the individuals' identities. In other words, they give the individuals the access to social and professional life.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, we can say that attitudes can be taken as acquired tendencies which lead a person to behave in a certain way towards a person, an object, or a specific situation. We tried through this chapter to give a general view about the concept of attitudes, the dimensions of attitudes, how attitudes are formed, the main models of attitudes, the two major types of attitudes, how attitudes are structured, and finally their functions.

CHAPTER THREE
DATA ANALYSIS AND
INTERPRETATION

Introduction

The aim of this research is to find out students' attitudes towards academic writing and the challenges they face when composing an essay. For this purpose, a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview were administered. The questionnaire was devised to explore how third year students perceive the writing process. The objective of these research tools is to verify the hypotheses being mentioned at the beginning of the study.

3.1. Students' Questionnaire

3.1.1. The Sample

The simple random sampling was followed to select the sample in order to conduct this research. Through this method, each member of the population (3rd year students) has equal chance to be picked. The size of the sample used was 26 third year LMD students at Biskra University.

3.1.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed through the combination of the input discussed in the theoretical chapters. A fourteen item questionnaire was developed to explore the major aspects being investigating. The questionnaire consists of closed questions and open-ended questions. In closed questions, the student had to tick his/her option (s) while in open-ended questions; the student should explain why he/she prefer one option than the other. The fourteen items were categorized in two sections:

Section One: General Information (from Q1 to Q2)

This section helps us to have a general idea on what students think about WE module (Q1), and to know their level in writing (Q2).

Section Two: Students' Attitudes toward Writing (from Q3 to Q14)

This section aims to figure out what skill is more difficult than the other skills (Q3); the degree of the difficulty of the writing skill (Q4); the practice of writing in class

(Q5); the use of the writing skill according to the respondents (Q6), whether the time given to students to complete a task is sufficient (Q7); whether students receive any help from the part of their teachers (Q8); where respondents prefer to write (Q9); students opinions about their level in writing (Q10); their attitudes toward expressing their thoughts through writing (Q11); to find out if they have difficulties and if so what kind are they (Q12); and then try to see whether the current teaching approach is helpful for them (Q13); and finally, the respondents' satisfaction of the provided topics (Q14).

3.1.3. Results of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire fundamentally aims of testing the hypotheses we have formulated in the first chapter. Through the results of the questionnaire, we are going to make sure whether our hypotheses are confirmed or not.

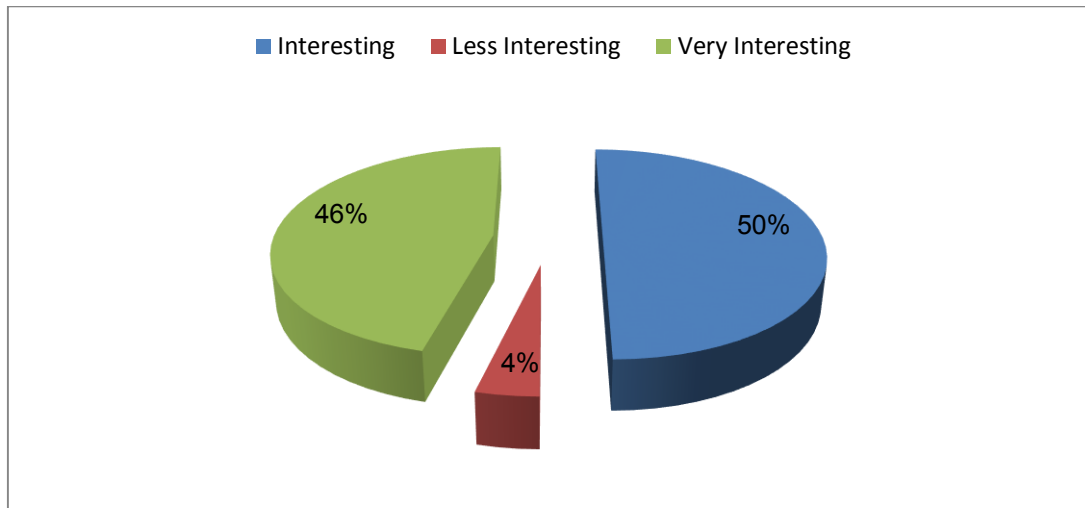
Section One: General Information

Our concern from this section is to have an overlook on students' thinking about Written Expression module. From this section we can know how students evaluate their level in writing.

Question One

In your opinion, the content provided in written expression module is:

- a- Interesting
- b- Less Interesting
- c- Very Interesting



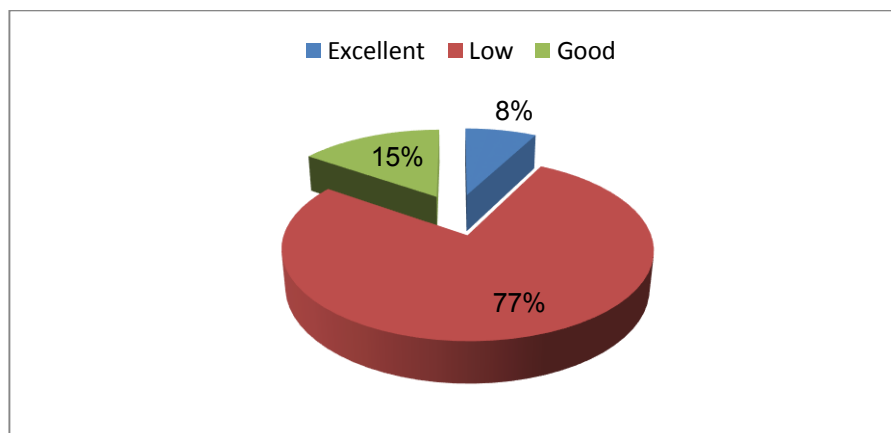
Graph 3.1: Students' Attitudes towards Writing

As shown in table 3.1, 50 % of the students believe that written expression module is interesting, 46,15 % argue that it is very interesting module, whereas only 3,85 % said that it is less interesting. This implies that students are aware of the importance of written expression module.

Question Two

How do you evaluate your level in Writing?

- a- Excellent
- b- Good
- c- Low



Graph 3.2: Students' Evaluation of their Level in Writing

Table 3.2 reveals that the great majority, 76,93 % of the students evaluated their level in writing as “low”, 7,69 % as “excellent” while 15,38 % of them think that they have a “good” level. This means that they are not sufficiently satisfied with their level in writing.

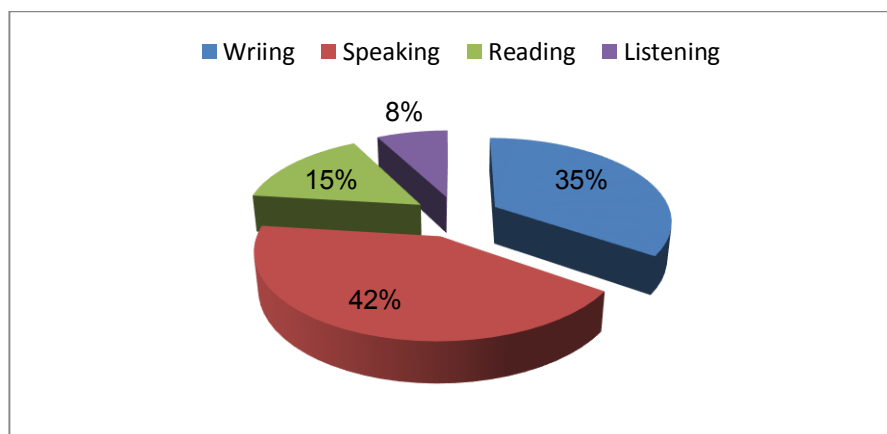
Section Two: Students’ Attitudes toward Writing

We intend through the questions of this section to find out students’ attitudes toward writing. These questions will help us understand why students find writing as a very difficult to be master and what kind of difficulties they face.

Question Three

Rank the following skills in terms of difficulty according to you:

- a- Listening
- b- Reading
- c- Speaking
- d- Writing



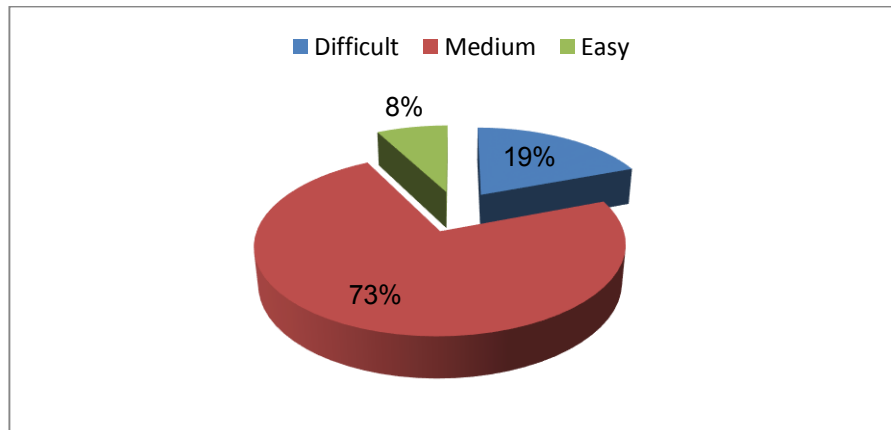
Graph 3.3: Priorities given to Skills

If we classify the findings according to the priorities, the students classified the difficulty of the four skills as follows: Speaking 11 times (42,31%), then Writing 9 times (34,62 %), then Reading 4 times (15,38 %), and finally Listening 2 times (7,69 %).

Question Four

How do you find the writing tasks?

- a- Difficult
- b- Medium
- c- Easy



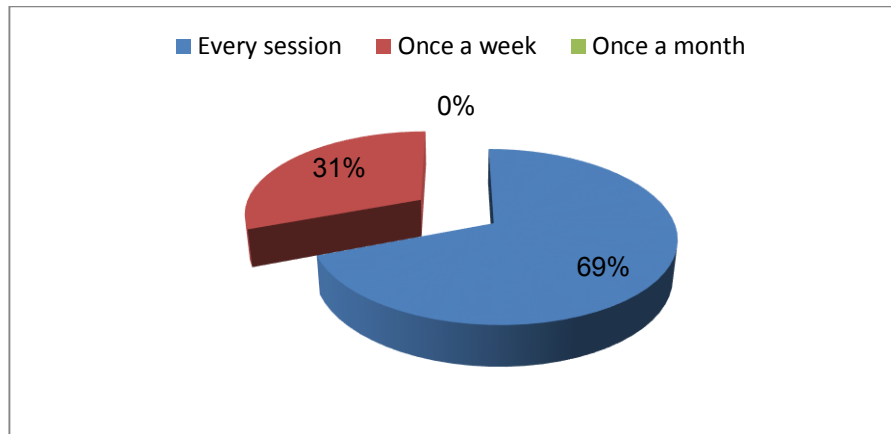
Graph 3.4: How Students View the Writing Tasks

Graph 3.4 shows that 73,08 % of the students find that the writing tasks are “medium”, and 7,69 % of them find that the tasks are “easy”. The rest of the students, 19,29 %, claimed that the writing tasks are “difficult”. These results prove that third year students still consider written expression module as a difficult module.

Question Five

How many times do you write in class?

- a- Every session
- b- Once a week
- c- Once a month



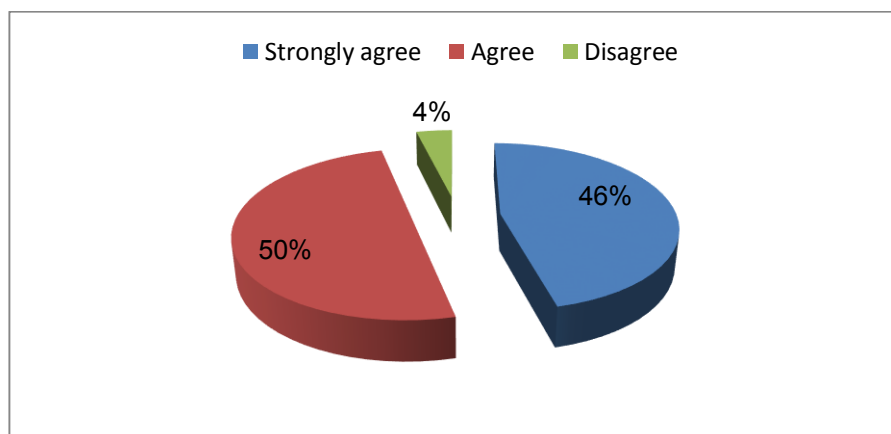
Graph 3.5: Writing in Class

As reported by 69,23 % of the students, they said that they write in class almost every session. 30,77 % of them claimed that they write in class one time per week. This finding is very encouraging since it confirms that our students have practical session in which they may write individually, in pairs, or in groups.

Question Six

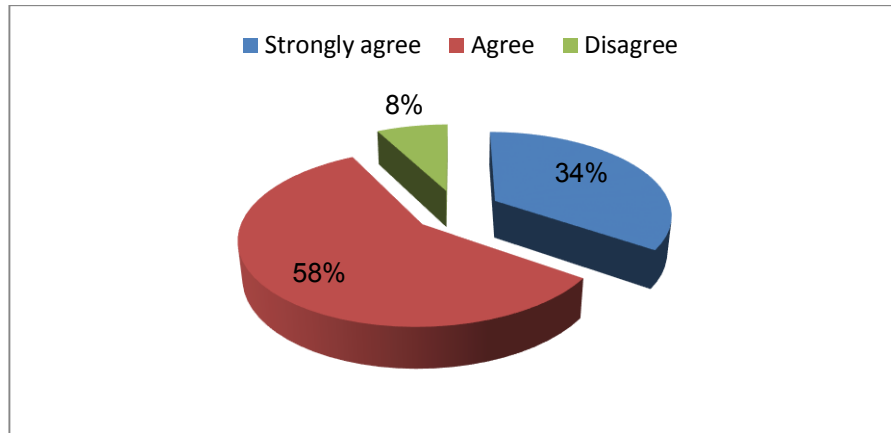
What does Writing mean to you?

- a- A way to express myself
- b- A way to communicate with people
- c- A way to record personal experiences
- d- A way to get marks



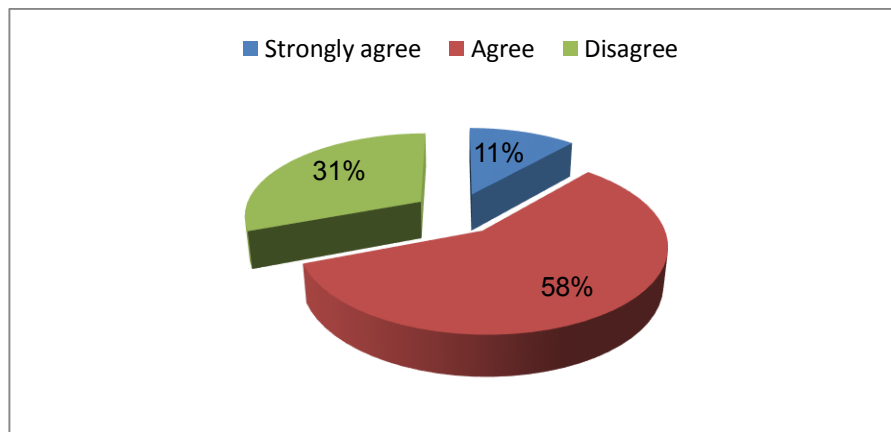
Graph 3.6.a: Writing as a way to express myself

50 % of the students claimed that they consider writing as a way to express themselves, 46,15 % of the agree with that assumption while 3,85 % are disagree. This reflects that students believe in the expressive function of writing.



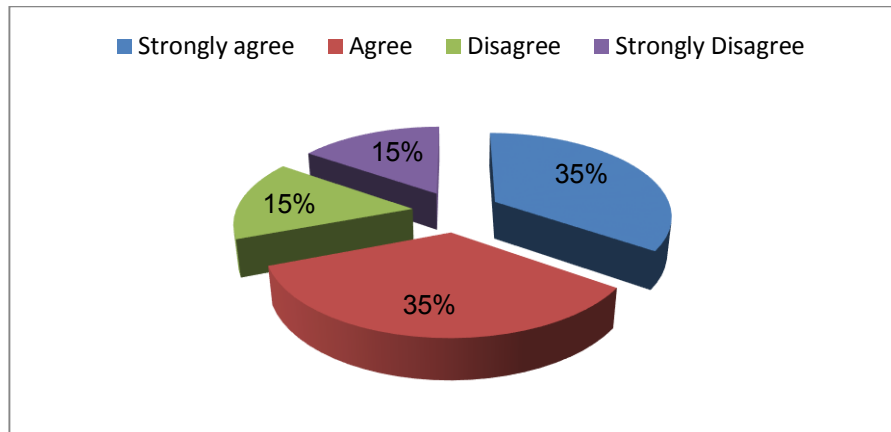
Graph 3.6.b: Writing as a way to communicate with people

When asked students whether they use writing to communicate with people, 57,69 % stated that they agree with that, 34,62 % are strongly agree, while 7,69 of them disagree. This implies that students use writing for communicative purposes.



Graph 3.6.c: Writing as a way to record personal experiences

57 % of the students agree that they use writing to record their personal experience. 11,54 % strongly agree with them. However, 30,77 % claimed that they do not use writing to record their personal events or experiences.



Graph 3.6.d: Writing as a way to get marks

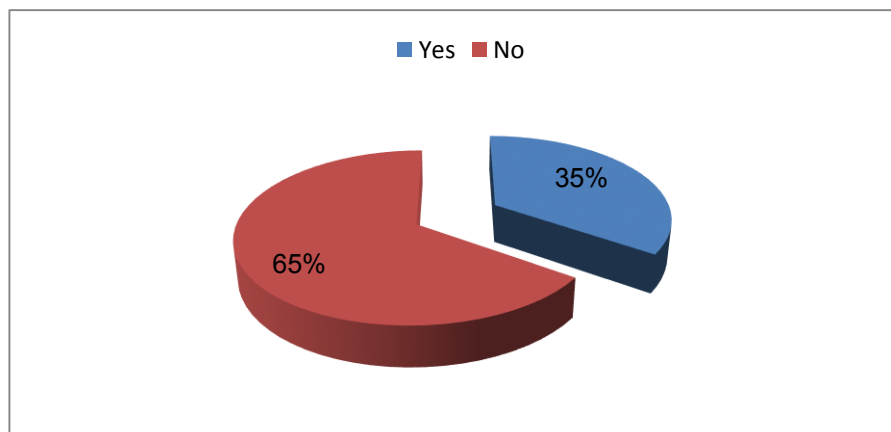
Do students look at writing as only a way to get marks? 34,62 % “agree” with that fact and the same percentage “strongly agree”. This is a very threatening result because students should not think most of the time about marks; instead, they should learn how to express themselves using the written language.

Question Seven

Is the time allotted for the production of a composition enough for you?

a- Yes

b- No



**Graph 3.7: Students’ Opinion about the Time Allowed
For the Production of a Composition**

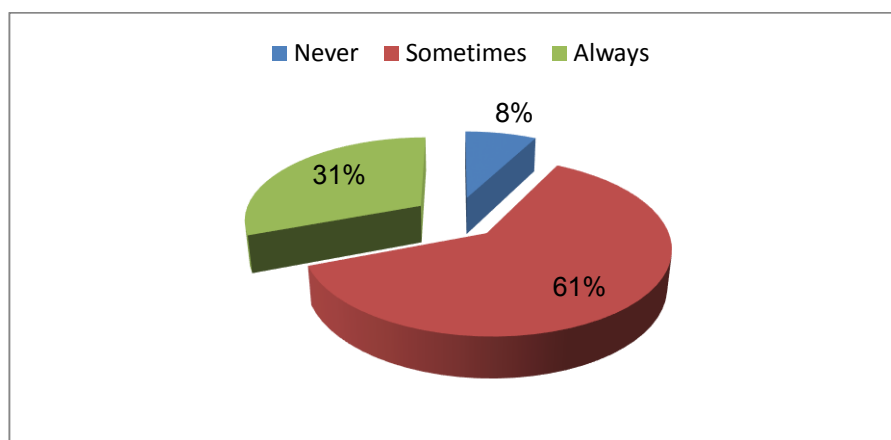
Responses to the question whether the time allowed to write a composition is enough or not how that 65,38 % of students think that it is not enough; 34,62 % of students

think that it is. We may suggest that students should be given much more time to work and write without pressure.

Question Eight

Does your teacher help you when you write?

- a- Never
- b- Sometimes
- c- Always



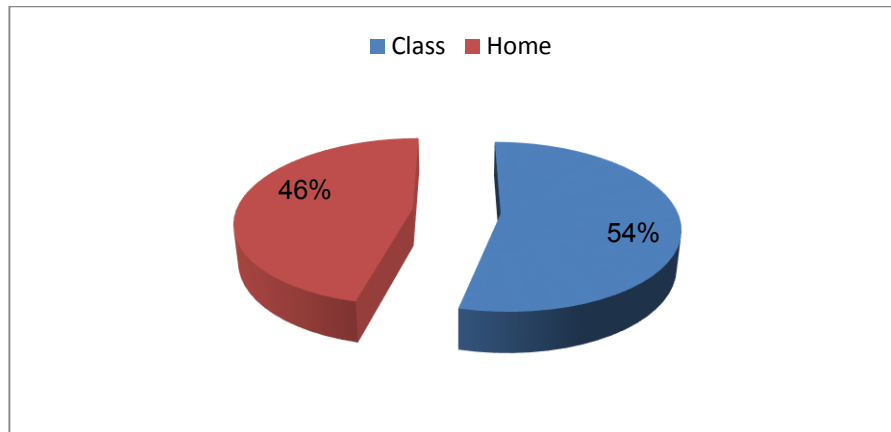
Graph 3.8: Extent of WE Teachers' Help

61,54 % of the students stated that their teacher of WE help them “sometimes” when they are writing. 30,77 % of them said that they “always” receive help from their WE teachers.

Question Nine:

Do you like writing in:

- a- Class
- b- Home



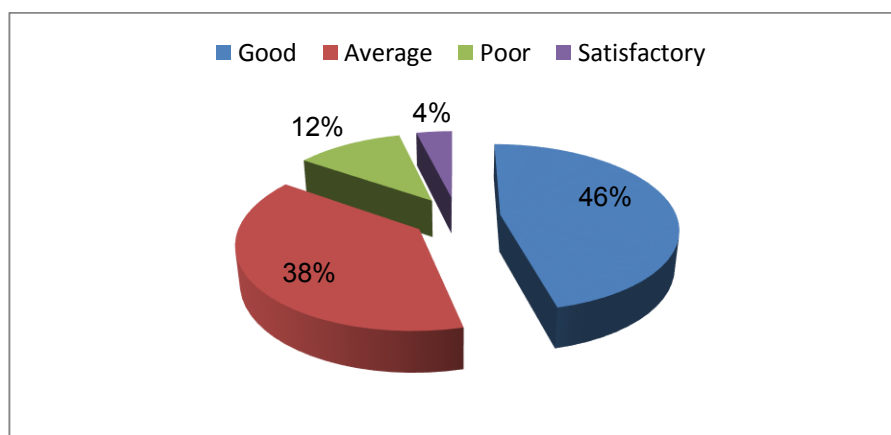
Graph 3.9: Writing Practice in/outside University

The majority of the students (53,85 %) said that they like writing in class. 46,15 % claimed that they like writing at home. Actually, this is encouraging to know that this number of students is interested in writing out of the university.

Question Ten

When reaching third year, how do you qualify your writing level?

- a- Good
- b- Average
- c- Poor
- d- Satisfactory



Graph 3.10: Students' Qualification of their Writing Level

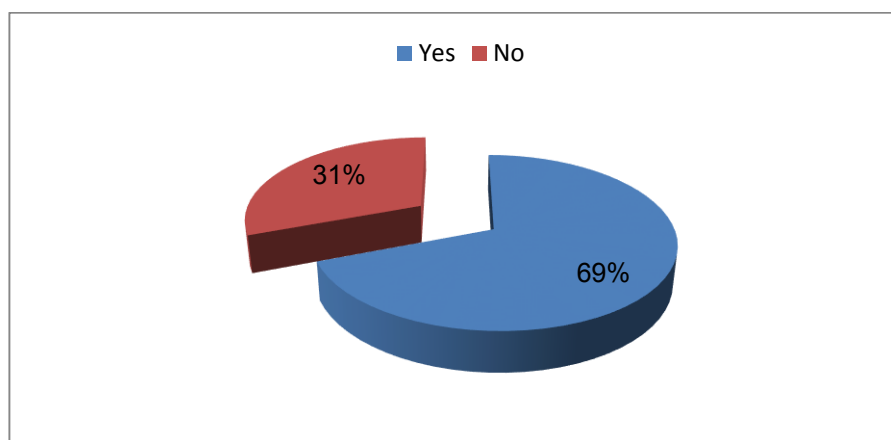
The results in table 3.10 show that 46,15 % of the students have a good level in writing. 38,46 % said that they have an average level, while 11,54 % claimed that they have poor level.

Question Eleven

Do you feel relax when expressing your thoughts in writing?

a- Yes

b- No



Graph 3.11: Students' Feelings about Writing

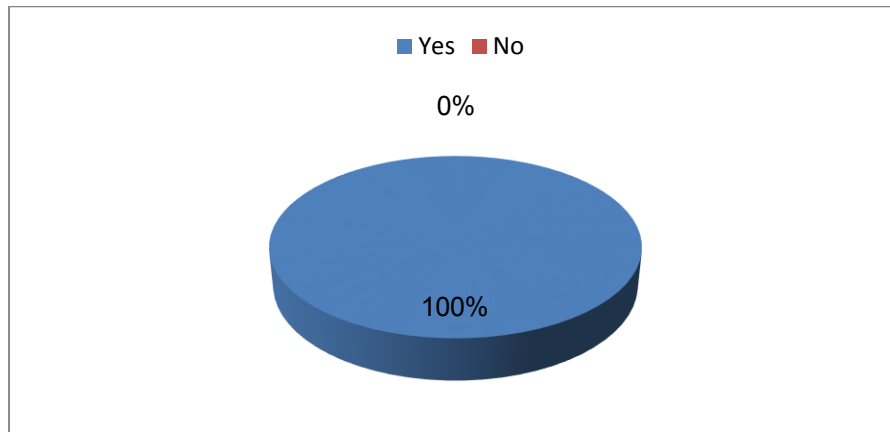
The results shown in table 3.11 reveals that 69,23 % of the students enjoy expressing their thoughts in writing while 30,77 % do not feel relax when writing. Maybe the students feel relax because there are no direct audience, they just write and express their views freely.

Question Twelve

Do you have some difficulties while writing?

a- Yes

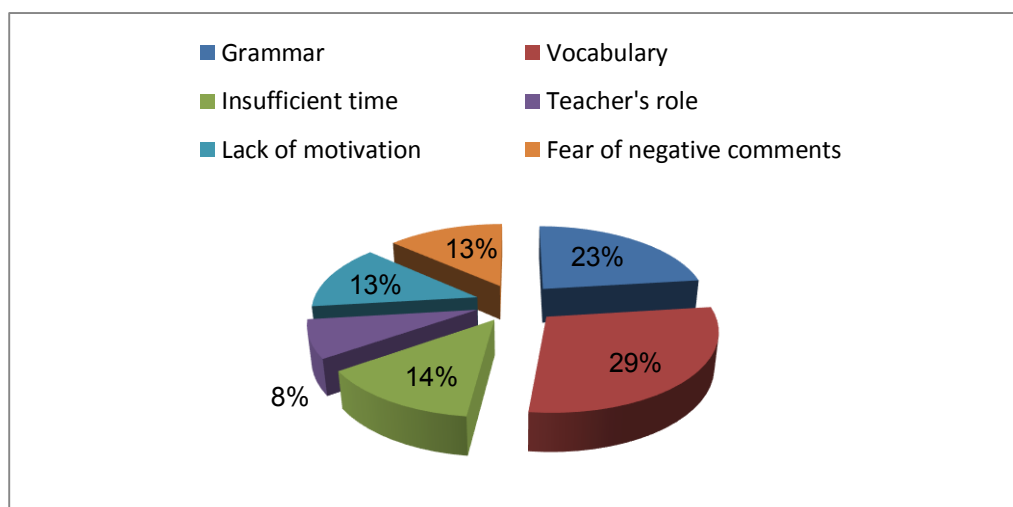
b- No



Graph 3.12: Writing Difficulties

As it was expected, 100 % of the students said that they have difficulties while writing. It is a serious problem that encounters third year students.

- If yes, do you think that your writing problems is due to?
 - a- Grammar
 - b- Vocabulary
 - c- Insufficient time
 - d- Teacher's role
 - e- Lack of motivation to Write
 - f- Fear of negative comments



Graph 3.12.a: Students' Difficulties in Writing

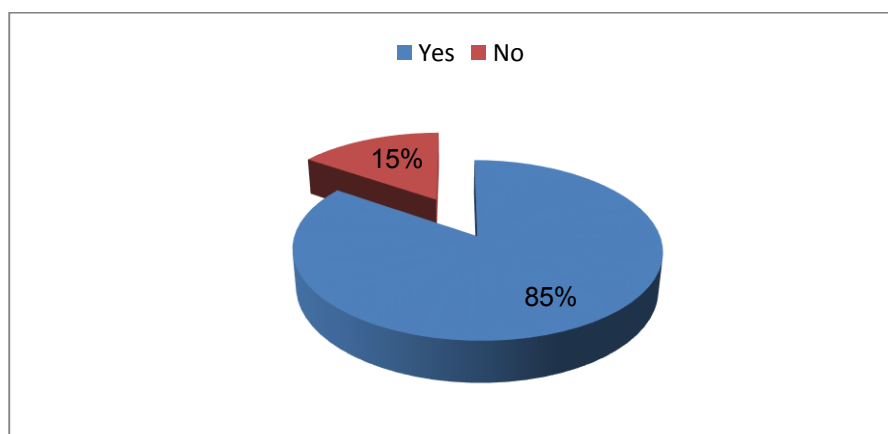
If we classify the findings in terms of priorities, the students classified their difficulties in writing as follows: vocabulary (15 times), then grammar (12 times), then insufficient time, lack of motivation and fear of negative comments (7 times) for each, and finally the teacher's role (4 times). This indicates that students have problems with the formal characteristics of language.

Question Thirteen

Does the present teaching of writing help you write effectively (clear and concise writing)?

a- Yes

b- No



Graph 3.13: Effectiveness of the Present Teaching of Writing

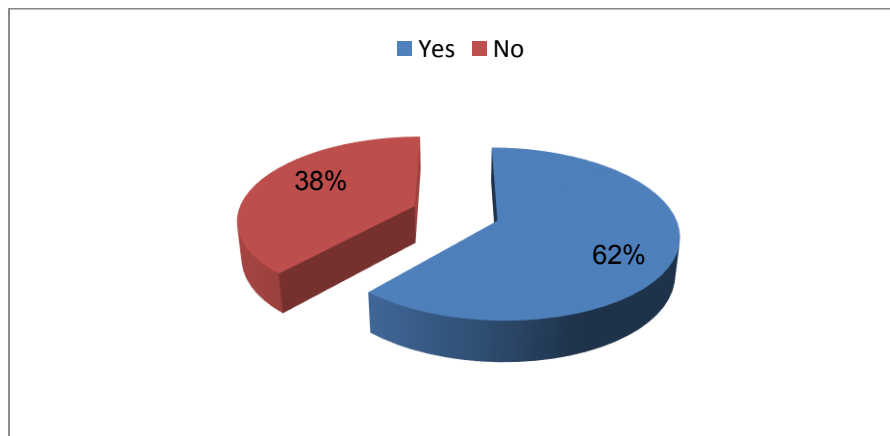
84,61% of the students show their satisfaction for the present method of teaching writing. This means that there is no need to modify the approach applied by their teachers. On the other hand, four students, that is, (15,39 %) do not share the same opinion. They are not satisfied with the way writing is taught presently. They consider the current teaching inadequate since it does not help them write accurately and effectively. They also reported that they lack practice and are not involved in the learning process.

Question Fourteen

Are you satisfied with the topics provided for writing?

a- Yes

b- No



Graph 3.14: Students' Satisfaction with the Provided Topics

- If no, say why:

a- Because the topics are not related to the other modules

b- Because you have difficulty in finding something to say about

c- Because you cannot find enough vocabulary to express your thoughts

61,54 % of the students said that they are not satisfied with the topics provided for writing. They claimed that they have difficulty to find something to say because the topics are not related to the other modules. Teachers should put in consideration the tackled topics of other modules when designing any written task.

3.4. Discussion of the Results of the Questionnaire

The analysis of the questionnaire support the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research in that it confirm that writing is a very complex skill because students have many difficulties when it comes to grammar and vocabulary. Students still center their focus on the mechanics of writing. 100% of the sample stated that they face difficulties when composing.

The first section shows that (96%) of the students think that WE module is interesting. This section also demonstrates that the great majority of students are not satisfied with their level in writing. When speaking about the time allowed for writing, we find that 65% of the students are not satisfied because, according to them, it does not provide them with enough time to practice and write.

Another problem facing the students' achievement level is the topics provided for writing. 61% of the students claimed that that the topics they are supposed to write about do not match with the other modules. When taking these obstacles in his/her mind, the student formulates a negative attitude toward that module which will affect his/her written production.

3.2. Teachers' Interview

3.2.1. The Sample:

The interview was developed to four (04) teachers of Written Expression module in Biskra University. The purpose was to find more information that could help us determine students' attitudes towards writing and their level in the written tasks in addition to the difficulties they are facing while composing.

3.2.2. Description of the Interview:

The interview that was designed for teachers included seven (07) questions (see Appendix 2). The questions were labeled in match with the questions of the students' questionnaire. We used open-ended questions in order to make the teachers feel free to express their views.

1.2.3. Analysis of the Interview:

Question 1

What do you think of the actual level of most of your students in writing?

Interviewee 1: "Below the average".

Interviewee 2: “Low”.

Interviewee 3: “Low”.

Interviewee 4: “Average”.

All the teachers said that the level of their students in writing is low. This means that the writing skill is really a troublesome skill in that the students do not produce acceptable compositions. We believe that teachers should apply certain strategies to raise students’ awareness of the importance of the writing skill.

Question 2

Do you think that the time allocated to teaching Written Expression is sufficient to cover the aspects needed to develop the writing skills?

Interviewee 1: “No, the time is not sufficient for practice”.

Interviewee 2: “No”.

Interviewee 3: “No, it is not”.

Interviewee 4: “No, because they need time for theory and practice”.

Teachers claim that the time allocated for the students to write is not enough. Students should feel at ease when writing, they should not write under pressure because that might not lead to a truly representation of their capacities. So, time pressure while writing should be avoided.

Question 3

What motivates your students to write?

Interviewee 1: “The choice of good topics, and rewards”.

Interviewee 2: “Give them topics that interest them”.

Interviewee 3: “Peer work”.

Interviewee 4: “The use of interesting topics and cooperative work”.

In order to motivate students, teachers provide them with interesting topics which are suitable to their age and needs. Also, they believed in the importance of cooperative work in motivating students to write.

Question 4

What do you think about your students' attitudes towards writing?

Interviewee 1: "They are not excited to write".

Interviewee 2: "The majority of the students hate writing; they are not motivated enough to write".

Interviewee 3: "They consider it to be a difficult skill to master".

Interviewee 4: "They consider it as a heavy burden".

The great majority of teachers claim that students have negative attitudes towards writing. It is important to know that one of the major problems which teachers face is negative attitudes from the part of their students. Therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that students get motivated by providing them with the appropriate tools to produce accurate writing.

Question 5

Do your students find difficulties when composing essays?

- If Yes, what kind of difficulties?

Interviewee 1: "Yes".

- "In terms of generating ideas, ordering time and outlining".

Interviewee 2: "Yes".

- "A good thesis statement, grammar, spelling, punctuation and transitions".

Interviewee 3: "Yes, they do".

- "Choosing the topic, generating ideas, vocabulary and grammar misuse".

Interviewee 4: "Yes, many".

- “Basic problems related to the writing process, (spelling, grammar, punctuation). In addition to those related to the essay’s structure (how to form a thesis statement, an introduction body, and conclusion).

Indeed, all teachers declare the fact that their students find difficulties when writing in English. This reality is closely matched to what we found when analyzing students’ questionnaire. Teachers claimed that their students’ lexical repertoire is poor and limited, they have grammatical errors in addition to transition, punctuation and spelling mistakes. Also, those problems related to the structure; students have problems with writing a good thesis statement and how to introduce/conclude a topic. Teachers added that the choice of the topic also influence the students’ writing achievement.

Question 6

Do you try to build confidence among students when they are writing?

Interviewee 1: “Yes, I do”.

Interviewee 2: “Of course”.

Interviewee 3: “Yes, as much as I can”.

Interviewee 4: “Yes, for sure”.

All teachers said that they try hardly to build confidence among their students during the writing process by providing them with the necessary writing strategies and techniques. Also, by motivating them and providing them with items about the topic they are going o deal with.

Question 7

As a teacher, how can you help your students improve their writing skill?

Interviewee 1: Through:

- “Encouraging them to read at home to memorize how the language structures are used in context”.

- “Correcting their home works”.
- “Imitating the outline of native speakers and rewrite compositions in their own style”.

Interviewee 2:

- “The best way to enrich vocabulary is reading which leads to good/high level in writing”.

Interviewee 3: Try to:

- “Provide full time for practice”.
- “Vary the techniques of writing”.
- “Provide feedback”.

Interviewee 4: By:

- Giving them the right steps that should be followed in the writing process”.
- “Giving feedback”.
- “Make them practice as much as possible”.
- Help them being good readers”.

Teachers high lightened the important role of reading. The reading passages may serve as primary sources for which writing skills can be learned because better readers tend to produce more correct writing than those who do not read at all. Also, teachers gave much importance to the cooperative work in enhancing the students’ level in writing. Providing students with feedback will absolutely help them correcting their errors and make sure not to fall in them again.

Conclusion

The analysis of students’ questionnaire and teachers’ interview reveals that students have difficulties when completing a written task. This confirms the hypothesis that writing as a complex and a difficult skill. Throughout the three (03) years, students still face problems related with the different aspects of writing like grammar and

vocabulary. The results of the study support the role of the teacher in WE classes. The respondents show their satisfaction for the present way of teaching writing which disconfirmed our hypothesis which suggests making some changes at the level of the teaching methodology. Respondents are not satisfied at all with time and topics provided for writing. Students' attitudes toward a given task, a positive or a negative attitudes, will absolutely draw a difference in completing that task.

Recommendations

As far as the problem of writing English is concerned , we do recognize that it is not easy for our pupils to overcome their weakness which became a constant habit throughout our schools. The reasons which prevent them from improving their levels in writing are multiple and deeply rooted within their contexts and inside themselves , too. But , it is no way saying that there are no solutions since we came to diagnose the illness.

Out of the whole study and after different aspects of our investigation have been concluded , we came to recognize that some points are of most value and deserve to be reconsidered again . The aim of these suggestions is to draw our colleagues' attention that the issue of the pupils' underachievement in writing , like any other problem could be solved , or at least be partly treated.

1. Teachers need to apply to their pupils' preferences and abilities to trigger their willingness to write.
2. Pupils should be made aware of the importance of writing , out of being a way to get grades , in order to create a long-term desire and practice in the skill.
3. Feeling the affective side of learners is a participation in their improvement in the skill of writing .
4. Weak writers among pupils should be encouraged to do better and consider their weak levels as basis for better works in an attempt to free them from the self-esteem complex.
5. Writing as a process assured through the combination of a number of factors that the teachers have to consider in association in order to help pupils create successful products. These factors do not relate to the subject matter only, but the learners' contextual and psychological areas.

6. Writing can be improved by the provision of interesting and stimulating topics , developed through longer periods of time that would fit the pupils' weak abilities in the skill.
7. It is advisable for a teacher of writing to be aware of individual differences among the students such as age, sex and attitudes since the students differ in the value they place upon education.
8. Collaborative writing, in pairs or in groups, is of great effective and cognitive help for students. Students have to be encouraged to share their writing with each other.

General Conclusion

This research is based on studying the effects of attitudes on motivating third year students at Biskra university to write. This study has almost interpreted the hypothesis stated that if students have positive attitudes toward writing, then they would improve their level in the written tasks and they would produce successful compositions.

The procedures carried out in this research are divided into two parts; theoretical part of the writing skill and attitudes, an addition to the practical study. In the first part of the dissertation, we presented background information about the writing skill by giving definitions of writing and its relation with other skills. We tried also to stress the important role of the teacher in the writing process as demonstrator, motivator, supporter, responder and evaluator. Moreover, we have presented the different stages of the writing process; prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. Finally, we have mentioned the three current approaches in teaching a foreign language. In the second chapter, we have dealt with the notion of attitudes. We started by its different aspects, then we moved to its dimensions, besides we illustrated how attitudes are formed. In addition, we have presented the models of attitudes namely the single-component model and the multi-dimensional model. Moreover, we tried to differentiate between explicit and implicit attitudes as their main types. Finally, we presented the structure of attitudes and the different functions they serve.

The second part of the dissertation is devoted to the practical study which is divided into two parts; questionnaire for students and its results in addition to an interview for teachers and its analysis. The results from both instruments showed that writing is a difficult skill which most of students are afraid of it. Their negative attitudes affect negatively their achievement level. Also, the results confirm that teachers are aware of

their students' problems in writing, they try to make them much more motivated to write. Concerning the students' attitudes, the results showed that they have negative attitudes; they consider it to a difficult skill to be mastered.

We conclude by saying that attitudes are necessary in the learning process. Attitudes are beneficial for students to improve their achievement level and to have more self-confidence.

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APPENDICES

Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire

Questionnaire to Students

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Your answers will be relevant to a master's degree I am carrying. You are kindly required to put a tick (✓) in the boxes to indicate your attitude, or answer briefly when verbal answers are needed.

Thank you for cooperation

Section One: General Information

1- In your opinion, the content of written expression module is:

Interesting Less Interesting Very Interesting

2- How do you evaluate your level in writing?

Excellent Good Low

Section Two: Students' Attitudes toward Writing

3- Rank the following skills in terms of difficulty according to you.

Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing

4- How do you find the writing tasks?

Difficult Medium Easy

5- How many times do you write in class?

Every session

One a week

One a month

6- What does writing mean to you?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A way to express myself.					
A way to communicate with people.					
A way to record personal experiences.					
A way to get marks.					

7- How much time are you given to do your writing?

.....

- Is it enough for you?

Yes

No

- Why?

8- Does your teacher help you when you write?

Never

Sometimes

Always

9- Do you like writing:

In class	
At home	

10- When reaching third year, how do you qualify your writing level?

Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Average	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/>

11- Do you feel relax when expressing your thoughts in writing?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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12- Do you have some difficulties while writing?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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- **If yes, do you think that your writing problems is due to:**

Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher's role	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of motivation to write	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Fear of negative comments	<input type="checkbox"/>		

- Please add any obstacles that may hinder your writing achievement.

13- Does the present teaching of writing help you write effectively (clear and concise writing)?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

14- Are you satisfied with the topics provided for writing?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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- If no; say why
 - Because the topics are not related to the other modules.
 - Because you have difficulty finding something to say about.
 - Because you cannot find enough vocabulary to express your thoughts.

Appendix 2: Teachers' Interview

Teachers' Interview

Dear teachers,

This interview is part of a research on challenges facing third year students while composing. It aims at finding out the teachers' opinions about the level of their students' writing and what kind of errors they fall in.

I would be thankful if you could fill in this interview

Miss. Dernoun H

1- What do you think of the actual level of most of your students in writing?

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.....
.....
.....

1- Do you think that the time allocated to teaching Written Expression is sufficient to cover the aspects needed to develop the writing skills?

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.....
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2- What motivates your students to write?

.....
.....

3- What do you think about your students' attitudes towards writing?

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.....
.....

4- Do your students find difficulties when composing essays?

.....

- If yes, what kind of difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5- Do you try to build confidence among students when they are writing?

.....

6- As a teacher, how can you help your students improve their writing skill?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for cooperation

ملخص الأطروحة

هذه الأطروحة الأكاديمية تستكشف مشكل طلبة السنة الثالثة بجامعة بسكرة مع التعبير الكتابي في اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. الموضوع الأساسي الذي يدور حوله التحقيق يتمحور حول السؤال التالي: لماذا يستمر الطلبة في إنتاج أخطاء كتابية بصفة متكررة و هل لنظرتهم السلبية لهذا المقياس دور في ضعف مردودهم الكتابي. هذا البحث العلمي هو محاولة لإيجاد أهم الأسباب التي تشجع على استمرار هذه الأخطاء على الرغم من اجتياز عدة سنوات في دراسة هذه اللغة. و في اعتقادنا أن النظرة السلبية للطلبة لهذا المقياس هو السبب الرئيسي لهذه الظاهرة. تم عرض هذه الإشكالية و مناقشتها في ثلاث فصول : يركز الفصل الأول على تعريف المنتج الأدبي الكتابي للغة الانجليزية بينما يعالج الفصل الثاني موقف الطلبة و نظرتهم لهذا المنتج الكتابي. أما الفصل الثالث فهو يحدد أدوات التحقيق الموضوعية لجمع البيانات اللازمة و تفسيرها و توضيحها في جداول و رسومات بيانية. كما يشير هذا الفصل الى رؤى جديدة يرجى من خلالها مساعدة الطلبة للحد و التغلب على هذه الظاهرة من أجل إنتاج تعبير كتابي ناجح وفق المقاييس النحوية و الإملائية للغة الانجليزية و كذلك الوصول الى مستوى عال من الكفاءة اللغوية.