

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

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Investigation into The Attitude of Students and Teachers Towards
The Implementation of Portfolio Assessment to improve Students'
Writing Performance

The Case of Third Year Students of English at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as a partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of **Master in Sciences of Language**

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Declaration


I, Rahma KHAOUA, hereby declare that the content of the current dissertation which followed the rules of conduct of academic research is my own work and it has not been submitted before to any university or institution for a degree.

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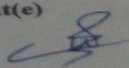
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Dedication

First and Foremost, I thank Allah for his help, for giving me a chance to be part in this life thus granting me health, power and patience that allowed me to accomplish this humble work

I dedicate this dissertation to

My beloved parents ABD EL HAMID and FATIHA for their endless love, assistance and prayers, without them I would not be here and I know I would never be able to reward them as much as I do. May Allah protect and endow them with long life, health and wellness.

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My grandmother for her endless prayers.

The soul of my grandfather and grandmother who were my second parents. May Allah have mercy on them.

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Abstract

Writing skill plays a vital role in teaching and assessing foreign languages, it equips our understanding of the world around us and refines the way we perceive it through communicating with others. In spite of teaching writing as one of the fundamental subjects that is taught to EFL students of the university of Biskra, they still struggle with it. Thus we tend to quest for a solution to overcome the pre-mentioned problem, therefore we suggested the portfolio assessment method. The overall aim of this study is to have an in-depth vision about the students and teachers opinions and attitudes towards using a portfolio assessment to improve students writing performance and reasons behind their attitudes. For the purpose of the accomplishment of the study, three main questions were raised: what are the students' attitudes and opinions towards using portfolio assessment as a tool for improving their writing performance? What are the teachers' attitudes and opinions towards using portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance? What are the reasons behind these attitudes? Hence, as the nature of the present study suggests, we have opted for the mixed Methods approach where we relied on the descriptive statistical analysis through percentages to summarize and simplify research findings that were achieved through the semi-structured interview for five teachers and questionnaire where 40 participants from the EFL third year population volunteered. Accordingly, the results reached throughout this study have answered the research questions. More precisely, the findings revealed that both teachers and students have positive attitudes regarding the implementation of the portfolio assessment technique for the sake of improving students' writing performance underpinning their answers with justifications : Providing chances for rehearse, increasing the ability to extract students own strengths and weaknesses in writing skill, teachers' continuous feedback giving to the students, for instance.

Key words: EFL, writing performance, portfolio assessment, the mixed Methods approach, attitudes.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL : English as a foreign language

WE : Written Expression

RQ : Question

L1 : First Language

L2 : Second Language

VS : Versus

Tr : Teacher

ETC : Etcetera

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General Introduction

Background Study

Nowadays, the spread of English language around the world is well documented. Undoubtedly, it has become the lingua franca and it has achieved prime status by becoming the most widely spoken language. English language facilitates communication between people who do not share the same language, thus it is the bridging line through which communities can get together to meet certain needs. The need to intervene in different domains especially those concerned with science and technology has made learning English a must before it is a choice. Algerian educational system is inseparable from the global language therefore it is one of the subjects taught in high and secondary schools and they have it even as an independent major at universities.

Writing is one of the skills that is being taught to EFL learners, it is one of the productive skills that should be mastered when using a language. However, learning how to write academically is not an easy task to perform and what makes writing a difficult task for them is that writing was not receiving much interest from the learners compared to other skills such as speaking skill which has been deemed a primary concern, also lack of rehearsing could be another reason that would result in scarcity in vocabulary. Teachers could have a hand in making writing problematic for students in that some of them are still unable to come out of their traditional outlook of teaching-learning process. Another reason that makes writing a challenging process is that it requires some criteria related to writing such as vocabulary, content, word choice, grammar, punctuation, spelling, word order and capitalization and if any of these is missing it would not be the appropriate piece of writing that is being looked forward to.

Within the same line, Assessment of students' progress has been a crucial step to be undertaken in any learning process and this assessment is not only important for students but teachers and parents as well. Assessing students' writing is more challenging especially when dealing with contexts where the English language is a foreign one (EFL) (Suwaed, 2018). Therefore, there are some assessment tools that help being consistent and aware of students' progress overtime. At this point, portfolio assessment technique has come out to be the breakthrough mechanism that can represent a shift from traditional way of assessing to alternative assessment in language teaching. Indeed, portfolios have received the lion's share of attention as a tool which addresses not only assessment but also teaching and learning alike. (Obeiah & Bataineh, 2015)

Statement of The Problem

Writing skill is an essential part that students have to deal with and it represents the backbone of English language. The latest is the process through which ideas can be transmitted, messages can be sent and communication can be achieved. Overall, Writing is an inseparable skill students have to improve while studying foreign languages (Kulišková, 2011). Writing has always been seen as an important skill in English language acquisition and it owns this importance because it represents the gist that reinforces grammatical structures and vocabulary that educators strive to teach their students (Cole & Feng ,2015). In addition, it helps generate ideas because sometimes students get new ideas while writing. The actual problem of having poor performance in writing was observed among third year students of English at Biskra university.

One of the suggested techniques that may adjunct third year students of English language to improve their writing performance is the use of portfolio assessment technique which can be referred to as an intentional collection of students' work which contains their progress, effort and achievement over a period of time and mostly it is a delayed evaluation to their performance. Portfolios assessment, unlike other ways of assessing, can provide a continuous picture of student progress, rather than a snapshot of their achievement. (Lynch Gómez, 1999, p.3-4)

The major thrust of the present research is to draw EFL learners' attention and teachers too to this way of assessing writing performance taking into account that the latter encourages them being a part of the learning process, to determine the leverage of the teaching, and most importantly to establish connection with parents and students. Thus the purpose of the portfolio can be shaped depending on the users' demands. (Birgin & Baki, 2007)

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: what are the students' attitudes and opinions towards using portfolio assessment as a tool for improving their writing performance?

RQ2: what are the teachers' attitudes and opinions towards using portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance?

RQ3: What are the reasons behind these attitudes?

Aims of The Study

The overall aim of this study is to explore and have insights about the students and teachers' opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards using a portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance and reasons behind their attitudes.

Specific aims:

- ✓ To explore students' attitudes towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve their writing skill.
- ✓ To find out teachers' opinions and beliefs towards using the portfolio assessment to ameliorate students writing skill.
- ✓ To explore the reasons behind both students and teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of portfolio assessment on improving students' writing performance.

Research Methodology

- Research Approach

In order to answer the questions asked earlier, we opted for the qualitative approach because the current study addresses the core features of qualitative inquiries by gathering qualitative data and interpreting them using descriptive analysis. It aims at having a complete understanding about the study which is entitled "Investigation into the students and teachers attitudes towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance".

- Research Design(s) / Strategy (ies)

In order to carry on the present study, the research design opted for is the qualitative one wherein the case study is surveyed with a non- experimental design. The case study is going to be surveyed with questionnaire and interview in order to explore the students and teachers attitudes towards using the portfolio assessment technique to improve students' writing performance and reasons behind these attitudes.

- Data Collection Methods / Tools

In this study, the tools that are going to be used are the questionnaire and the interview.

- ❖ The questionnaire is submitted to the students to see their attitudes towards using portfolio assessment as a tool to improve their writing performance.
- ❖ A semi-structured interview is devoted to teachers who have background knowledge about the portfolio assessment technique and are teaching written expression subject in

Biskra university in order to know their attitudes towards using the portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance and reasons behind them.

- **Data Collection Procedures**

In the current study two types of data collection methods are going to be implemented which are the semi structured interview and the questionnaire:

- The questionnaire will be distributed to 40 students in order to explore their attitudes and opinions regarding the use of the portfolio assessment technique as a means to improve their writing performance.
- A semi-structured interview will be conducted with 5 teachers who have background knowledge about the portfolio assessment technique and are teaching written expression subject in order to explore their beliefs and opinions towards its implementation for improving students' writing performance and reasons behind these attitudes.

- **Data Analysis and Procedures**

To analyze the data collected through the semi structured interview and the questionnaire, we are going to opt for the descriptive analysis to describe and portray the data gathered and adopt the thematic type of analysis in which we categorize, summarize, and reconstruct the main ideas and concepts provided in the data. The data gathered via interview will be familiarized firstly through listening and transcribing the tape recorded material, followed by organizing the ideas by using codes to end up with the identification of themes that help answer the raised questions.

Population & Sample

To accomplish this study, we have selected third year students at the University of Biskra as a population and the sample is 40 students are volunteered to take part in this research.

Sampling Techniques

The voluntary response sampling technique is going to be adopted in the present study because not all the students are given a chance to participate but only those who are motivated, we will opt for small-scale study due to the limited number of the participants in this study.

Significance of The Study

This study would be of interest to learners and teachers of English classes. It is conducted in order to make them aware of the significant use of the portfolio assessment in education mainly in the written expression subject. It helps teachers by providing them with a clear image about

their students' achievements over a period of time. It helps students as well through providing them with chances where they can practice writing and also through which their strengths and weaknesses can be depicted in order to be remedied or improved. Further, this study aims at investigating the teachers and students attitudes and opinions towards using a portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance and to display the reasons behind their attitudes.

Structure of the Dissertation

The present dissertation consists of three chapters, the first two chapters are dedicated to the theoretical background of the study whereas the third one is for the fieldwork. They are well-explained in the following points:

Chapter 01: Its aim is to provide more details concerning the first variable that is writing skill. Mainly, it tackles its definition, some general writing tips, purpose behind teaching writing in addition to its approaches. Furthermore, it states, with explanation, stages of writing. It also sheds light on the characteristics of academic writing. This chapter, further, investigates the reasons that make writing a difficult task to perform.

Chapter 02: This chapter deals with the assessment criterion in general and portfolio assessment in particular. More deeply, it highlights the definition of assessment and its purpose. Writing assessment in language learning is one of the issues that has been also tackled in addition to types of assessment. In the other corner, it defines portfolio assessment and states its features. Moreover, it takes into consideration the content of portfolios and how to score them. It also differentiates between the assessment using portfolio and the ordinary one using standardized testing and ending with mentioning some issues regarding the portfolio assessment implications.

Chapter 03: It is directed to fieldwork and data analysis. It is initiated by providing the theoretical background of the research methodology opted for in this study including the research approach that is relied on, in addition to the research strategies and data collection methods that are used with identifying the research sampling and population chosen for the study. In the other hand, it discusses the analysis and interpretation of the findings obtained from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview for the purpose of exploring and eliciting the attitudes of both teachers and students. In addition to providing a summary and synthesis of the results. Concluding with the pedagogical implications for the administration, teachers and students in addition to the limitations of the study.

Chapter One

Writing Skill

Introduction

Writing skill is observed as the most challenging and sophisticated skill compared to the other skills (speaking, reading and listening) and it is one of the productive skills that English language consists of. It tends to be a complex process through which the person can communicate ideas using special vocabulary, different sentence structure and different styles regardless of that it requires effort, patience and time to achieve acceptable outcomes. The latter is considered to be a medium through which attitudes can be shown, feelings can be expressed and letters can be sent. However the way we talk is not the same when we write, because the act of writing usually is less flexible and spontaneous compared to speaking. In addition, writing, unlike speaking, can be both private and public at the same time for the reason that the act of composition itself by its nature is meant to be reclusive and public in terms of that it is intended to address the audience (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill & Pincas, 1978). In this chapter, we will be presenting some areas related to writing skill such as definition of writing, general writing tips, purpose behind teaching writing, its approaches, stages, some characteristics of academic writing and to conclude with reasons for the writing difficulties.

1.1 Definition of Writing

One of the inventions that humans invented centuries ago is written language which keeps memories, feelings, and opinions preserved through recording them. It represents a bridge through which we can communicate not only with the current generation but also the future ones. Durga and Rao (2018) define writing as “one of the four skills –LSRW (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in language learning. Besides, it is the system of written symbols, representing the sounds, syllables or words of language, with different mechanisms - capitalization, spelling and punctuation, word form and function” (p.1). However, writing is often decontextualized because when communicating a message usually its writers are distant from their readers especially those who are meant to receive the message, not only this but also they have to predict and anticipate the obstacles may the reader encounter while reading. The most important thing is that writers usually can not receive feedback currently from the reader due to time and place distance (Nunan, 1991, p.80). Within the same line, Broughton et al. (1978) differentiate between writing and speaking, they state “The act of writing differs from that of talking in that it is less spontaneous and more permanent, and the resources which are available for communication are fewer because we cannot—as we do in conversation—interact with the listeners and adapt as we go along” (p.116).

1.2 General Writing Tips

There are some major tips that should be taken into consideration when writing, Carroll(1990) suggests the following:

- Being as clear and as brief as possible : through avoiding the use of ambiguous words that may mislead the reader thus leading to different interpretations also using short sentences to be brief.
- Being as specific and accurate as possible in order to strengthen and give credit to one's writing by including names, dates and specific events or ideas.
- Giving credit to the sources mentioned in order to avoid plagiarism and it is the case when other's ideas are used in one's writing.
- Editing and revising the writing product through correction of errors and mistakes, adding transitional words or sentences to guarantee coherence of the ideas and also keeping only necessary information otherwise better to be eliminated to avoid redundancy.

The above mentioned tips can help the writer write a well comprehensible, organized and reliable piece of writing and facilitates for him/her to well clarify his/her position and for the reader to understand clearly what the message the writer intended to convey.

1.3 Purpose Behind Teaching Writing Skill

Writing plays a crucial role in teaching a language. There is no language teaching and learning processes without including writing skill as a part of them. Writing is a tool by which students can express freely their ideas, way of thinking and beliefs. Moreover, it helps enhance their language acquisition as well. Besides, writing can be a means that is used to communicate; if students do not know how to write a comprehensible writing, they will not be able to transmit their opinions and ideas to their instructors and peers as they intended to be. Further, some areas of teaching consider writing as a norm on which the evaluation can be based as Walsh reports "Much of professional communication is done by writing: proposals, memos, reports, applications, preliminary interviews, emails and more are part of the daily life college student or successful graduate" (cited in Klimova, 2013, p.9). The same idea referred by Aydin(2010) who believes that writing is used in most of the activities including for example emailing, writing a job application, writing a business proposal or report, writing stories, novels and letters.

1.4 Approaches to Teaching Writing

1.4.1 The Product Approach

As its name suggests, it is the approach of writing that pays much more attention to the final product at the expense of how the product itself is produced. Writing in product-based approaches has served to reinforce L2 writing in terms of grammatical and syntactical forms including those of cohesive devices and the appropriateness of the vocabulary used in a certain piece of writing (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Students in this traditional approach are seen to be

imitators without being innovative, it encourages them to mimic a model text which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage. (Ghufron, 2016, p.40)

According to Badger and White(2000), learning to write in the product approach involves four main stages which are : familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing. The first stage aims to make learners familiar and aware of certain features of a particular text. In the controlled writing, the learners practice the skills with increasing freedom until they are ready for the free writing section, they consider writing skill as part of a genuine activity such as a letter, story or essay(p.153).

1.4.2 The Process Approach

Process writing approach is one of the approaches that are used to teach writing. As the name suggests, it focuses mainly on the process of writing by which students tend to produce their written products, thus this process helps them identify which strategy fits their learning styles and gives them the chance to think about what they are going to write. Elbow (1973) views Writing as an Organic, developmental process which is not only supposed to transmit a message but to cook it (p.15) .Since it is called a process, it involves the way writing takes a place rather than the product itself. Further, the light was shed on the idea that learners in this kind of approach are observed as a central part in the learning process because it provides them with the freedom and the needed time to convey their thoughts through writing.

1.4.3 Genre Approach

Genre approach can be regarded as an extension of the product approach, both of them view writing as predominantly linguistic but the genre approach emphasizes that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced. According to Badger and White(2000), the central aspect of the social context for the genre analysts is the purpose thus different kinds of writing such as writing letters and recipes are used to achieve a certain purpose, in other words , language in genre approach is functional and it is associated with context in which it is found. In this type of approach, students are encouraged to see writing as a form of reproduction rather than as creative. In addition, they are provided with different examples from the same genre. As a matter of example, if the students are asked to write a business letter, they would be receiving typical models of such letters before drafting their own. (Harmer, 2007)

1.5 Stages of Writing Process

The model of writing process that most L2 writing teachers and learners opt for is planning-writing-reviewing framework which was developed by Flower and Hayes(cited in Hyland, 2003,p.11).According to Hyland(2003), writing is a process which involves stages which are Planning(pre-writing), drafting, revising, and editing and all these stages do not necessary occur in a neat linear sequence, but recursive and interactive one.

1.5.1 Pre-Writing

Pre-writing is the first stage of writing where the writer plays with ideas without paying much attention to the grammar, spelling mistakes and punctuation, all what matters is to generate information that would help learners draft their first draft, it includes : Brainstorming, free writing, clustering and listing.

1.5.1.1 Brainstorming

It is one of the tools that helps learners generate new ideas and once they are not familiar with the process, they tend to opt for it in order to produce a wide range of information. According to Mogahed(2013) “ Brainstorming is a useful way of getting started or generating new ideas. Once learners are familiar with the process, they can use this activity on their own when they are stuck, revising their work, or moving on to a new phase” (p.64). The most important point that should be taken into account is that learners using this technique must be set free without any control over them and accept every single information that pops into their minds therefore brainstorming can not be skipped as most learners do.

1.5.1.2 Free Writing

Freewriting includes writing freely without making pauses on a topic for a period of time. Students only write what they think without worrying about being correct or not whether in punctuation, capitalization, grammar , spelling and even the incomplete sentences or phrases are allowed in it. The prominent goal that free writing tries to reach is keeping the pencil moving across the paper (Oshima& Hogue,2007,p.34). Moreover, freewriting does not only help students draw a big picture without delving deeply and get sidetracked with details but also bear in mind that not all the writings they do have to be good and not all of them must be kept. Saskatchewan Education(1997; cited in Mogahed,2013) indicates that while free- write, learners will often generate ideas that may lead them to divert to a new direction and as long as they are not focusing on a product, they take risks in free writing without realizing it. Thus, this can result in the discovery of something new, perhaps a new idea, skill or insight. Simply said, free writing could be a means to show one's abilities which might not be depicted previously.

1.5.1.3 Clustering\ Mind Mapping

Cluster as a word refers to a group of several items that are close to each other. Out of this definition, Rico (2000;cited in Dari & Wahyuni, 2018) defines clustering as a non-linear brainstorming process where a free association takes place. It is also the realization of the abstract images, ideas and thoughts that exist in one's mind, he adds “Using this clustering technique indicates that it is effective to stimulate the right brain and explore the image to easier the students generate the ideas in the writing process” (p.169). Further, in this technique circles, boxes, arrows and lines can be used.

1.5.1.4 Listing

Listing is another method in which students can generate ideas for their writing. As its name suggests, to list is to write down the information that has a relationship with the main focus of the writing. Oshima and Hogue (2007) suggest one of the ways of how listing can be shaped, they note "Listing is a prewriting technique in which you write the topic at the top of a piece of paper and then quickly make a list of the words or phrases that come into your mind" (p.16). In addition, listing technique helps narrow down the general topic into smaller one by making a list of every word and phrase that pops into one's mind (Oshima & Hogue, 2007, p.43). However not all what has been listed will be registered as the final product but the processes of deleting and adding can exist.

1.5.2 Drafting

It is the step of the writing process that involves writing full sentences using the previously selected thoughts and ideas in the form of a paragraph. Drafting stage helps the writer have an image of what he is doing, adding or removing some ideas is allowed. Oshima and Hogue (2007) comment that when the writer drafts, he doesn't have to think about grammar, spelling or punctuation but only getting the ideas down on paper, thus help point out many errors in the rough draft which is acceptable and usual since it is only a rough paper where the add and delete operations of ideas may take place (p.18).

1.5.3 Revising

Revising is the heart of the writing process since it is the stage where a piece is revised, reshaped and reread several times (Johnson, 2008). Revising is the stage in which the writer pays more attention to the writing itself including ideas and information. Furthermore, it involves organizing, adding, changing or removing some sentences in order to end up with clear conveyed ideas. Along with this, there are two main steps which are preferably done while revising, the first one is to find the problems whereas the second thing is to fix them as Grenville (2001) defines revising as follow:

It is about fixing the bigger, structural problems and, if necessary, 're-seeing' the whole shape of the piece. What this boils down to is finding places where you need to cut something out, places where you should add something, and places where you need to move or rearrange something. (p.137)

1.5.4 Editing

It is the stage in which the major concern is on mechanics which involve grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Usually this stage is left at the end in order to allow the writer in pre-writing,

drafting and revising stages to concentrate only on how to generate and connect ideas ,otherwise the brain would be only worried about writing mechanics without giving much importance to the structure as Johnson(2008) maintains that real writers edit their writing at the end also they rely on other editors to spell check and grammar check. In Teaching, teachers may rely on peer editing groups and teach students how to use the grammar and spelling functions on a word processor (p.180).

1.6 Characteristics of Academic Writing

1.6.1 Organization

In the process of writing, ideas and information should be presented in a certain order that allows the reader to clearly understand and follow what is written as Starkey (2004) states “ By following one of the organizational methods, 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 essay work together and how they support your thesis”(p.2).

Starkey (2004) points out three main organization methods for achieving a readable piece of writing :

- ✓ Making an outline : Before starting drafting, the writer should at first make an outline which refers to a technique involved in the prewriting stage, it involves providing a scheme about what is planned to be indulged in one's writing. Further, it helps display the relationships between the ideas as the writer outlines them, and determine their importance.
- ✓ Pyramid chart: Is another technique of organization in which usually the major parts of a certain piece of writing is placed in the top of the pyramid and followed by the minor ones and its major concern is to guide the reader throughout the whole writing.
- ✓ Listing: One could list notes based on :
 - Order of importance.
 - Chronological: The ideas are organized in the order in which they did happen or will happen.
 - List: By creating simply a roster of items of equal importance.
 - General to specific: By stating the main point then followed by supporting details or vice versa.

1.6.2 Clarity

Clarity is one of the important elements that any piece of writing should be in touch with. It is the case where ideas are well conveyed and free from any ambiguity that could lead to different meanings. The most reasonable reason of why the written assignments should be clear is that it takes much more time and attention in case it holds some ambiguity and vagueness as

Starkey(2004) remarks “You not only impress your reader(s) with your unique take on a topic, but also say exactly what you mean as clearly and, in many cases, as concisely as you can”(p.11). To achieve clarity in a piece of writing, Starkey (2004, p.12) suggests some guidelines which are :

- Eliminate ambiguity: Ambiguous language could be lied in both phrases or words that lead to different meaning thus different interpretation.
- Modifiers and precision : Including the use of adjectives and adverbs.
- Be concise: By avoiding wordiness, being concise means being limited in both time and space.
- Avoid unnecessary repetition.

1.6.3 Mechanics

It is defined by Kane(2000) as “The appearance of words, to how they are spelled or arranged on paper. The fact that the first word of a paragraph is usually indented, for example, is a matter of mechanics” (p.15). Rules of mechanics are complex because they sometimes confuse even professional writers. The latter involves grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization which are the core elements of written English even though they are not given that much importance, and they are significant because no matter how original the ideas in a piece of writing are, the disability to express them clearly and accurately through the written word will hamper the success of the piece of writing .(Starkey,2004)

1.6.4 Word Choice

Another major element for effective writing is word choice that helps accurately convey the ideas in a certain piece of writing. Starkey (2004) suggests two main aspects that should be taken into consideration while the process of choosing words which are connotation and denotation. The first one refers to the literal meaning of the word and its meaning could be grasped without referring to other criteria such as culture, society, speakers' intention, emotions and other suggestions but only the meaning found in the dictionary however denotation requires referring to these previously mentioned criteria to understand its meaning accurately yet both meanings must be considered when making word choices.

1.6.5 Coherence

As far as the text is concerned, coherence is one of the factors that contributes to the unity of its utterances in terms of meaning. Taboada(2004) defines coherence as “The hanging together of a text with relation to its context of situation or culture” (p.158). Further, Yule(2006) views coherence as everything fitting together well and it is not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people because they can make sense of the things they

read and hear thus it is more concerned with the contextual fitness of the utterances rather than they structures.

1.7 Reasons for Writing Difficulties

The majority of EFL learners encounter difficulty when it comes to writing skill. This difficulty can be due to a set of reasons such as lack of reading, lack of motivation, lack of rehearsal, and the influence of the first language on the target language writing.

1.7.1 Lack of Reading

It is one of the main factors that undisputedly affect EFL learners' writing performance. According to Raimes(1994), reading can do more in teaching writing than simply providing subject matters for discussion because the more students read the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns and their organizational flow. Also, when students read they engage actively with the new language and culture.

1.7.2 Lack of Motivation

Motivation plays an important role in learning-teaching matters, without motivation, both teachers and students can not progress under what circumstances. One of the teachers tasks is to provoke interest and involvement in the subject matter; particularly in writing; even when students are not interested in it, and this could be achieved through the choice of topic that students may be able to respond to, or by their attitude, humor, seriousness and conscientiousness that may have an effect on their students. Moreover, it is all about the behavior and enthusiasm that may inspire cultivating the sense of motivation which is not only laid on the teacher's shoulder but also on the students themselves because usually real motivation comes within the individual. (Harmer, 1998)

1.7.3 Lack of Rehearsal

Improving writing requires making effort and dedicating time for practice because nothing comes out of nothing but one's sweat which helps create good writers, as proven by F. Scott Fitzgerald who emphasizes the earlier noted idea, he says "All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath". (Hedge, 2005, p.9)

1.7.4 The Influence of First Language on Target Language Writing

Another obstacle that may hinder EFL students' writing performance is the influence of the L1 on target language writing, particularly English language writing. Friedland (1997) claims that there are number of studies that tackled the issue have found that there is a possibility where writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies from their first language to their second language and this transfer could include both good and deficient strategies and abilities ; he reports " Students who lacked first language strategies displayed a similar lack of strategies for writing in their second language" (p.109). Within the same line, Jones and Tetroe (1987)

strengthen the previously noted idea; according to them, writers' failure to deal with writing strategies in English was based on their failure in their first language. Put differently, someone who is weak in his\her L1, the interference from L1 to L2 will not be successful. (Cited in Friedland, 1997)

Conclusion

After presenting the theoretical background about the writing skill, we have deduced that being skillful in wiring is not an easy task to perform, but it is the one that needs the collaboration of both teacher and student and most importantly knowing the necessary strategies and techniques to do so. The following chapter will be devoted to the portfolio assessment theoretical background and the areas related to it.

Chapter Two
Portfolio Assessment

Introduction

Before we tackle what a portfolio assessment is and the criteria related to it, some other major points seem to be worth mentioning. In the present chapter we will start dealing with the definition of assessment, its purpose regarding the learning-teaching environment. In addition, it seeks to shed light on the writing assessment in language teaching. Then mentioning some types of assessment. Diverting the angle to start discussing themes concerning the portfolio assessment, starting with its definition with an attempt to provide more insights about features of portfolio assessment. This chapter is devoted as well to specify the content of the portfolio and how to score it. After that, we will display the main differences between assessment using a portfolio and the traditional way of doing so which is usually through standardized tests. Finally we will end up with providing some issues in portfolio implementation.

2.1 Definition of Assessment

Assessment is an essential part in the learning process and one of the fundamental tasks in teaching which undisputedly serves many purposes. It can be defined as the process which involves compiling evidence and making judgment on students capabilities, knowledge and progress in a certain area(s), consequently teacher assesses their language learning in order to know and make decisions about what to do next, weather would it be a remedial or improvement activities that will be set up. Assessment has been defined as the process of gathering and synthesizing information in order to discover and document students' strengths and weaknesses (Phye, 1997). By the same taken, Sárosdy, Bencze, Poór and Vadnay(2006) view assessment which may be considered one part of evaluation, a process that involves testing, measuring, judging the progress, the achievement or the language proficiency of the learners and provides feedback about students' performance. The focus is on both the students' learning and the outcomes of teaching. Van de Walle(1998) considers assessment as the means that should provide both teacher and students with ongoing feedback concerning progress towards goals and provide information as well as inform each individual student and teacher about the growth achieved. (Cited in Westwood, 2000)

2.2 The Purpose of Assessment

Assessment of foreign language teaching and learning is performed for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it endeavors to assist students and guide them throughout their learning journey and most importantly, it helps them target their progress as Gardner, Harlen and Hayward state “ Assessment processes should therefore help pupils to improve their learning as well as fulfilling

other roles such as helping them to gain certification, measuring the extent of their achievements and reporting these to others”(2010). Likewise, Assessment helps teachers know about how students have achieved their learning objectives, what kind of difficulties and problems that encounter students' learning, and which techniques are useful in teaching. (Tosuncuoglu, 2018)

According to Westwood(2000) Assessment has a set of functions in teaching and learning environment which are:

- Checking on the overall efficacy of the teaching program.
- Determining any particular student's stage of development.
- Gaining information about students' specific weaknesses and special Instructional needs.
- Identifying any concepts or procedures which may need to be re-taught or reviewed (P.77).

2.3 Writing Assessment in Language Learning

Writing assessment has been considered one of the most common tasks that are done in the classroom. As its name suggests, writing assessment refers to an area of study in which writing ability is being assessed as students receive feedback on their writing, it could be from their classmates or their instructor. Weigle(2002) demonstrates that teacher can not always monitor the kind and extent of help that students are receiving on out-of-class writing therefore several teachers defend the idea that highlights the importance of providing in-class timed test so that they can have clear evidence about students ability to accomplish on their own regardless of any sort of help that may be given intentionally or without.

In line manner, there are several ways to assess writing skill, however it is not solely belonging only to teachers roles but also to students who can assess their own writing through working in form of small groups or in form of pair. Writing assessment is used to accomplish several tasks both inside and outside the class including providing assistance to students and placing them in the right courses. In addition, it reinforces achieving acceptable teaching practices and grounding solid knowledge about students deficiencies so that they can be remedied. (Weigle, 2002)

2.4 Types of Assessment

2.4.1 Formative Assessment

Usually it is compared and contrasted with a summative one. The latter has been defined as an ongoing process which is done on a daily basis. As its name indicates, it is used to form and manipulate the learning process for the sake of achieving well documented outcomes. This kind of assessment enables the teacher to readjust his teaching in accordance with students needs, and most importantly formative assessment includes feedback which is received by the students on what they have achieved during the learning journey. The function of this sort of assessment is

remedial in nature as Wiesnerová reports “It is a piece of information about how successful a piece of learning has been and what they should work on in the future” (2012, p.12).

Within the same regard, Cizek(2010) defines formative assessment as the collaborative processes engaged in by both teachers and students in order to get insights about students' learning, identification of strengths, diagnosis of weaknesses, areas for improvement, and as a source of information that teachers can use in instructional planning and students can use for the purpose of deepening their understanding and improving their achievement. Formative assessment, moreover, can take the form of information-gathering activities such as classroom tests, observations, oral questioning, class discussions, projects, portfolios, homework, performance assessments, group work with peer feedback, student self-assessment...etc.

2.4.2 Summative Assessment

It is a type of assessment in which students are assessed for the purpose of measuring their achievement and it takes place at the end of a course or program. As its name suggests, it refers to summing something up which means the overall picture of students' achievement. Summative assessment results in a mark or grade which is subsequently used as a judgement on student performance (Irons, 2008). Within the same path, Andrade and Heritage(2018) comment “Summative classroom assessment, including grading, is usually done by the teacher for the purposes of certifying and reporting learning” (p.3). Baht(2019) ,likewise, believes that summative assessments endeavors to evaluate student learning, knowledge, proficiency, or success at the conclusion of an instructional period, like a unit, course, or program unlike the formative one which is related to the process of teaching. In addition, it has a set of advantages when it comes to the learning process, it motivates students and provides them with opportunities to develop a learning environment and also the results obtained by summative assessment are recorded as scores or grades. Back to Baht(2019) who describes assessment as an information grasp means, the latest supply a clear image about students progress and accomplishments, he adds:

The more information we have about students, the clearer the picture we have about achievement or where gaps may occur. Formative and summative evaluation tells where a student is standing on the way to his destination of learning, how much he is ahead or behind his classmates, to what extent the behavioral changes occurred in him are acceptable, how far he can apply his present acquired knowledge to his

future life or learning situations, at what point he is facing any difficulty and why and so on.(p.777)

2.4.3 Diagnostic Assessment

It is also called pre-assessment which refers to a type of assessment that is connected before starting the course or the instruction for the purpose of having a clear image about what kind of students are they, what are their weaknesses and strengths, their knowledge and abilities for the purpose of helping teachers determine what kind of instructions should be designed for them.

2.4.5 Confirmative Assessment

Confirmative assessment is an extension of summative assessment. It takes place when an instruction has been implemented in a certain place and time for the purpose of checking and confirming if the implemented instruction is still successful after a period of time or not.(Prasanthi and Vas, 2019)

2.4.6 Ipsative Assessment

Prasanthi and Vas(2019) define Ipsative assessment as the act of comparing and measuring students' work with previously done work in order to check if there is an improvement in their learning or no.

2.5 Definition of Portfolio

The origin of the concept portfolio is a Latin word which is "Portafoglio" that means to carry(Porta) and papers (foglio) (Lam, 2018, p.03). Phye (1997) defines a portfolio as a folder that contains the products of students learning such as written materials including both drafts and final versions (p.492). However the portfolio by definition is not a portfolio unless it contains more than one piece of writing (Weigle, 2002, p.200). Within the same line, portfolios may include a wide range of elements such as essays, compositions, poetry, book reports, journals, recordings of student's oral production or anything else one wishes to specify (Brown, 2000). In addition, the portfolio has some components and the most important ones are collection, reflection and selection of students' written samples.

Portfolio is one of the techniques that has emerged in the field of assessment, although many classroom teachers consider portfolio assessment time consuming and difficult, its benefits to students can be tremendous; more particularly, students often become much more reflective about their own performance and they assume responsibility for preparing a portfolio of their

work. Furthermore, portfolios are insight providers with students' maturity, self esteem, writing ability and mainly their ability to reflect on their own and other students' work (Phye, 1997, p.305). Mokhtaria (2015) reports:

The core reason for embracing portfolio work in the enterprise of teaching and learning is to inspire students to become active, engaged, and reflective learners. The portfolio promotes and sustains students' academic enrichment and personal growth, making it a powerful idea for significant learning. Portfolio-based assessment offers a viable alternative to traditional, standardized, high stakes testing. It provides a means for those students at risk for academic failure to demonstrate progress within a format less restrictive and inflexible than the traditional mean. (p.172)

2.6 Features of Portfolio Assessment

Hamp-Lyons and Condon(2000) suggests some characteristics of portfolio which are as the following:

2.6.1 Collection

Portfolio by its nature is a collection of more than one work, it invites students to display more than one piece of writing written for more than one purpose. This collection helps draw conclusions about students' pieces of writing, their styles, their performance and growth, therefore the ability to represent the writer more fully than other forms of assessment.

2.6.2 Delayed Evaluation

Delayed evaluation is another key feature of portfolio assessment that teachers and students find useful. This characteristic dedicates more time for revision, feedback, motivation to revise, redraft and most importantly it is used to make students aware of the responsibility towards their own learning, on the other side, this timing allows teachers to reevaluate teaching methods opted for, course assignments, sequencing of topics and assignments. As a result of the delayed evaluation, students will be informed about their progress.

2.6.3 Context Richness

Due to the fact that portfolio by definition represents and provides a range of opportunities in which writers' works are supposed to be collected, the portfolio will be context rich which refers to the extent to which students bring in their experiences to portfolio assessment in the form of

written products. The content of the portfolio, as noted before, is determined by the context where learning is held.

2.6.4 Reflection and Self-Assessment

Another characteristic of portfolio assessment that Hamp-Lyons and Condon shed light on is reflection and self assessment. Many writing teachers ensure that the way to make students learn how to write is by making their writing better which can be done through reviewing by inviting them to reflect on their own writing progress and fostering self assessment as well. Likewise, encouraging both reflection and self assessment help students to be aware of their learning process and products, besides, promoting students' greater involvement in their progress.

2.6.5 Selection

Portfolio generally includes a selection of the writer's work and usually it is guided by the assessor yet still there is a room for the writer to produce his\her best work. In addition, selection promises self-representation by which students tend to choose which pieces to submit for judgment.

2.6.6 Development over Time

One of the criteria that differentiates portfolio assessment from other genres of assessment is that it displays the development of writers over time. As long as the portfolio contains drafts of finished products, earlier and later works, as an example, the reader can trace the development of each piece. In addition, the amount and kinds of learning found between these points are measurable, and this measurement is useful for both teachers and students.

2.7 Specifying the Content of The Portfolio

As far as the portfolio is concerned, the content of a portfolio can be decided by the teacher, student or the combination of both. Weigle(2002) advocates that the major disadvantage of student's control of portfolio content is that students' choice may not be appropriate, thus teacher's interference in selecting the portfolio content is preferable because he is more aware of the scoring criteria that should be taken into account when designing the portfolio content thus increasing the reliability of the assessment .

Hermon (1996) points out three main types of portfolio depending on the content of each, the first one is the showcase portfolio in which students are supposed to include their best works only, however the second one which is named by the progress portfolio is to demonstrate the progress and the growth of the students over time. The last type is the working portfolio that is interested in documenting all the work done, including the writing assignments, or the achieved goals behind a course or a unit. Which type of portfolio should be opted for depends on the

purpose of the portfolio (cited in Weigle, 2002). In addition, a portfolio should include students' written products and other documentation in order to provide the raters with information that helps them in the evaluation task. (Weigle, 2002)

2.8 Scoring Portfolio

Portfolio is considered as one of the assessment tools that teachers may opt for to assess his or her students thus it is not isolated from scoring matters. According to weigle(2002,p.217) ,due to the complexity and the richness of the information that portfolio can provide, a number of issues must be considered in scoring portfolio:

1. Criteria for scoring.
2. The type of rating scale to be used.
3. Score reporting.

2.8.1 The Portfolio Scoring Criteria

According to Hamp-lyons and Condon(2000) set of criteria might be taken into account when evaluating the portfolio are as follows :

- Characteristics of the writer: It is related to the writer's processes of reflection and self awareness about the portfolio.
- Characteristics of the portfolio as a whole: It is the criterion related to the writing tasks provided; I.e does it include variety of tasks, sense of task and its purpose, choice and management of the genre(s) used; and the writer's ability to find an appropriate strategies for different writing assignments.
- Characteristics of the individual text: It is mainly concerned with evaluating single samples of writing including the significance of subject matter, the type of resources used, the amount of writing,...
- Intertextual features: Which involve grammar and mechanics control, management of tone and style, coherence (p.144).

2.8.2 The Type of Rating Scale to be Used

Since the portfolio contains a number of writing assignments, its assessment is time-consuming. There are two main types of rating scales for the portfolio content which are the analytical and the holistic rating scales. For large-scale assessment, a holistic scale is preferred. However for the classroom assessment where providing feedback to improve learning is the ultimate objective, the analytical rating scale which takes more time compared to the holistic

one, is more feasible due to the richness of information about students performance it provides(Weigle,2002). As Harman et al. (1996) quoted “Holistic scoring rubric requires teachers or other raters to give a single overall score to students' performance, whereas an analytic rubric asks for separate ratings on different aspects of performance” (p.38).

2.8.3 Score Reporting

Reporting scores of portfolios may vary depending on the implicit message that is intended to be sent to students. There are two main ways to do so. The first one is through numerical scores which encourage the quantitative analysis of data such as comparing group means. Whereas the second way through which the results of portfolio assessment can be reported is the traditional letter grades or verbal description that is usually concerned with capturing the complexities and difficulties of the performance documented in the portfolio.(Herman et al.,1996; cited in Weigle, 2002,p.221)

2.9 Assessment Using Portfolios vs. Standardized Testing

The assessment using traditional practices differs from that of portfolios. Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991, p.44) provide a comparison between the two:

Table 1.1*Assessment using portfolios Vs. Standardized Testing*

Portfolio	Testing
Represents the range of reading and writing students are engaged in.	Assesses students across a limited range of reading and writing assignments which may not match what students do
Engages students in assessing their progress and/or accomplishments and establishing on-going learning goals	Mechanically scored or scored by teachers who have little input
Measures each student's achievement while allowing for individual differences between students	Assesses all students on the same dimension
Represents collaborative approach to assessment	Assessment process is not collaborative
Has a goal of student self-assessment	Student assessment is not a goal
Addresses improvement, effort, and achievement	Addresses achievement only
Links assessment and teaching to learning	Separates learning, testing, and teaching

As the table portrays, the portfolio type of assessing students' performance seems to provide more insights about students' achievement and aims at making them an active part in their learning-assessment process. However, the ordinary standardized testing pays much more attention to what the students have achieved regardless of how they have done so.

2.10 Some Issues in Portfolio Implementation

There are a set of obstacles which may hamper the portfolio implementation. First, the time factor is a major problem that prevents the implication of portfolio assessment which takes much time to be applied. The absence of parental or community support is another obstacle because they are not familiar with such a new and unfamiliar system of assessment especially with the current status of traditional and standardized testing that control an overwhelming part when it comes to assessment in addition to lack of knowledge or training necessary for implementing portfolio-based student assessment. Another difficulty is concerning the manner for setting standards for the portfolios that need to be set and revised multiple times in order to confirm its

efficacy. Not only this but also lack of reliability and validity is another obstacle because portfolios can sometimes be hard to establish scoring systems that are reliable and ratings of several examiners must be collated to arrive at a reliable evaluation of the portfolio evidence of a particular student. Even the plagiarism issue when it comes to practice is another challenge that may cause lack of validity. The last barrier but not the least in portfolio implementation is the difficulty to have a portfolio that represents every aspect of a unit that is programmed in the teaching curriculum due to the overloaded programs that teachers have to deal with. (Mokhtaria, 2015, p.171)

Conclusion

The current chapter dealt with the theoretical background of the variable that concerns the portfolio assessment. It shed light on its definition in addition to its main features, content, the way to score and report portfolio results. Furthermore, it highlighted key major differences between standardized tests and portfolio assessment and the issues in portfolio implementation.

Since the main core of the present study is to explore and have insights about both teachers and students' attitude towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance, we will spot the light on the practical part of it in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis

Field Work

Introduction

The current study aims at exploring the attitudes of EFL teachers and students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve student's writing performance. Therefore, this chapter sheds light on the practical part which is divided into two sections, the first is about the research methodology opted for including the nature of the research approach, research designs, procedures, population, samples, data analysis procedures, the rationale behind the selection of the data collection tools. Whereas the second section is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the data collected for the purpose of answering the raised research questions. This chapter provides also the pedagogical limitations that have been encountered throughout conducting the study.

3.1 Research Methodology

The concept "Research" has been defined by different scholars, among them Dornyei (2007) who defines it as a means that tries to find answers to questions. Likewise, Burns(1997) reports that it is a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem (cited in Kumar, 2011). However Kumar(2011) views research as a process for collecting, analyzing and interpreting information to answer questions. Moreover, this process has certain characteristics which are controlled, rigorous, systematic, valid and verifiable, empirical and critical. In order to find answers to questions, two basic ways are brought into application. The former is through conducting a secondary, conceptual, library research which refers to looking at other people's ideas about a certain phenomenon or issue, whereas the latter is by conducting an empirical research that is conducting one's own data-based investigation (Brown, 1988; cited in Dornyei, 2007). The present section is mainly for the theoretical background concerning the research methodology that is highlighted to accomplish the current study. Therefore, the research approach, research strategy, data collection methods, sampling technique, and the data analysis procedures are the elements that fall under the umbrella of research methodology in this study.

3.1.1 Research Approach

In higher paradigmatic contexts, there are two main approaches which are frequently used in the process of conducting research which are namely the qualitative and quantitative approaches. However, a mixture of these two approaches is another highly proposed approach in use (Bouzeghaia, 2020). The selected research approach for the current study which is held under the investigation into the attitude of teachers and students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students writing performance is the qualitative approach which

is defined by Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999,p.9) as “An attempt to develop understandings of the phenomena under study”(Cited in Goodman,2011). According to Dornyei (2007), Qualitative type of approaches involve data collection procedures that result in open-ended, non-numerical data that will be analyzed through non-statistical methods. Furthermore, Qualitative data involves recorded spoken data such as interviews that are transcribed to textual form, notes and documents (p.19). Regarding the rationale behind the decision of selecting such type of approach is that the characteristics of the Qualitative approach are implied in the present study, some of these characteristics ,according to Dornyei (2007) are:

- The nature of the Qualitative data which are a wide range of data which will be collected by the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview where the data will be transcribed and interpreted adopting the thematic type of analysis.
- The insider meaning includes subjective opinions, experiences of the individual.
- The main objective is to explore the participants' attitudes and views towards a particular phenomenon (particularly, the attitude of teachers and students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance).
- Small sample size of the participants (Third year EFL students at University of Biskra)
- Interpretive analysis which means that the outcome of the research is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data collected by the researcher.

3.1.2 Research Strategy (ies)/Design(s)

Kothari(2004) defines the research design as an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis and its operational implications to the final analysis of data. The research design must at least contain clear statement of the research problem, procedures and techniques to be used for gathering information, the population to be studied and data analysis procedures. Yet its main function is to explain how you will find answers to your research questions, it further sets out the specific details of your inquiry (Kumar, 2011). Likewise, research designs are divided into three categories, categorized into qualitative research design, quantitative research design and mixed method research design .(Bouzeghaia, 2020)

Concerning the research design opted for in the current study within the qualitative approach is case study design which is identified as a research methodology that is interested in study about a person, a group of people, it can be also defined as an intensive systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-

depth a certain phenomenon in its natural setting to increase understanding of it.(Heale &Twycross,2017)

3.1.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods are the ones used to gather data about a certain study. As far as the present area of research is concerned, the adopted data collection tools for the purpose of answering the previously raised questions are mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools which are respectively the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview .

3.1.3.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are the most commonly used data collection tools which are defined by Brown(2001,p.6) as “ Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”(cited in Dornyei,2007). Simply said, a questionnaire is an instrument which contains different written questions directed to a group of people to be answered furthermore helps answer the questions raised for the academic purposes. According to Dornyei(2003), the questionnaire reveals three types of data about the respondents. These types are:

- ❖ Factual data: which are used to elicit certain facts about the respondents such as gender, age.
- ❖ Behavioral data: which are concerned with what the respondents are doing or have done in the past including their actions, life-styles, habits,...etc.
- ❖ Attitudinal questions: are types of questions that are used to display the attitude, beliefs, opinions, and views of the respondents towards a particular phenomenon, person,...

To put into practice, the student's questionnaire for the current study (See appendix 02) is used in order to answer the research questions which are about the students' attitudes towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve their writing performance as well as the reason behind these attitudes.

- **Aim(s)**

The questionnaire aimed to explore the attitude of EFL students' opinions regarding the implementation of portfolio assessment as a means to develop their writing performance and eliciting the main reasons behind their attitudes.

- **The Structure of The Questionnaire**

The present questionnaire is constructed of 20 open-ended and close-ended questions. The latter is divided into three sections in addition to the general introduction which encompasses three phases, the invitation phase, the instruction phase, and the confidentiality one. The first section which is about the general information consists of (6) close-ended questions, whereas the second section which is devoted to the writing skill contains (5) questions. The last section which sheds light on the core of the study, that is the implementation of portfolio assessment includes (9) questions. Due to the widespread use of the internet zone and its easy access, the questionnaire was submitted online using Google forms, where a database is provided in order to store the answers which are also organized and designed in the form of tables, graphs, and charts.

Section One: General Information (From 1 to 6).

This section included 6 close-ended questions. To begin with, the first question was in the form of a dichotomous question, it was about the participant's gender (male or female) (Q1), whereas in the second question, the participants were asked to mention how many years of studying English language(Q2). The next question was if they like learning English(Q3). The following one was to identify their level in English language whether beginner, intermediate, or Advanced (Q4). Concerning the fifth question was about the participants preference regarding the four English skills (Reading, writing, speaking and listening) (Q5). The last question that was raised was about which skill is the most difficult for them among the previous skills mentioned above (Q6).

Section Two: Writing Skill (From Item 7 to 11)

This section tackled five questions that are related to writing skill. The first question was about whether the participants like learning English(Q.7). The second question which was in form of filter and branching questions, where the participants who answered with yes are asked more detailed question thus the first part of it was to identify whether the participants practice writing in the classroom, however the branching question was about the form of practice they make, individual work, pair, or group work (Q.8). Regarding the third question in the present section, the participants were asked to select what difficulties in writing they encounter in the writing skill such as spelling of words, tenses and sentence formation, miss-organization of ideas, and lack of vocabulary(Q.9). Furthermore, they were asked whether they think about what they write(Q.10). The last question was in the form of filtering and branching ones as well,

participants were asked if they receive feedback from their teacher when writing, the branching question concerns the type of feedback whether oral, written one or both(Q.11).

Section Three: Portfolio Assessment (From Item 12 to 20)

As far as the portfolio rubric is concerned, it included 9 questions. To begin with, the first question which was in the form of a dichotomous one was to identify to what extent the participants are satisfied with the way their teachers assess their writing by providing justification to their answers(Q.12). In addition, they were asked whether they are familiar with the concept's portfolio assessment(Q.13). After that, a brief definition was provided to give a clear insight about the portfolio assessment.

The subsequent two questions are mainly an attempt to elicit students' attitudes and opinions regarding the usefulness of portfolio assessment in both improving students' writing skills and developing a more positive attitude towards writing by developing an individual portfolio of their own work with justification as well (Q.14, Q.15). However, in (Q.16) the participants were asked to identify what problems in writing that can be overcome through portfolio assessment, the problems mentioned in this context are about spelling, grammar, punctuation problems and others .

As for the next question, the participants are asked whether they recommend their teachers to opt for the portfolio assessment in order to assess their written products moreover justifying their answers (Q.17). The (Q.18) was to elicit if they have gone through a portfolio assessment experience and those participants reacted with yes are supposed to describe how it was. In the following question they were required to tick, in accordance with assigned characteristics from the Likert scale, and identify to what extent they agree or disagree with the stated statements list(Q. 19). Eventually, the participants are asked for further comments regarding the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance(Q.20).

- **Piloting and Validation**

Pilot stage is a stage through which the questionnaire went before submitting them to the selected sample for the study. It was done to ensure the perception, comprehensibility, and clarity of the questions. As a result, it was administered to four students from the population selected which is third year students of English at the English Department in Biskra University (See appendix 01). The Opinionnaire section was added in order to enable the students to evaluate the questionnaire in terms of the complexity, ambiguity, form, and type of the questions.

- **Administration**

The administration of the questionnaire was through Facebook-based survey, in which we texted and explained to the 40 participants who belong to third year students population at Biskra University and explained the meaning of portfolio assessment using both languages Arabic and English to make sure that they grasped what is intended to be conveyed. In addition, the participants were free to ask questions in case they did not fully understand a particular question among the questions found in the questionnaire survey. Eventually, the answers of the students were automatically stored through Google forms survey platform.

3.1.3.2 Teachers' Interview

According to Burns (1997,p.329) the interview is “a verbal interchange, often face to face, though the telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person” (cited in Kumar,2011).Simply said, any verbal interaction that takes place face to face between two or more persons to achieve a certain purpose is an interview. Dornyei(2007), on the other side of the coin, identifies three main types for the interview. To start with, the structured interview is the one that is pre-prepared by the researcher and the questions are asked in the same order with every interviewee. Moreover, in this type of interview, the researcher is able to compare between the participants' answers, in addition to the simplicity of its data analysis compared to the unstructured ones. The second type of interview which is highlighted by Dornyei is the unstructured interviews which are the most flexible ones in which the participants are set free without any constraints and its intention is to create a relaxed atmosphere in which they may reveal more than they would in a formal context. Likewise, it is more resembling a natural conversation due to the fact that such type of interview does not determine a detailed interview guide in advance. The last type which was put a finger on is the semi-structured interview which is a compromise between the early noted types. It is characterized by the utility of predetermined questions, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issue raised in an exploratory manner through prompts and probes. The interviewer, in such a type, will ask the same questions to all the participants but not necessarily in the same order or wording.

Practically speaking, in the present study the researcher opted for the semi-structured interview where the researcher interviewed 5 teachers who are teaching WE subject at university of Biskra and have background knowledge about the study. The semi-structured interview was a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions which widened the breadth of the discussion and

provided in-depth information that helped answer the questions related to the study being investigated.

- **Aim(s)**

The semi-structured interview addressed WE teachers and have information about portfolio assessment in order to have in-depth information about teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the study held under the implementation of portfolio assessment technique to help improve students' writing performance in addition to the main reasons for their attitudes.

- **The Structure of The Interview**

The current study opted for, as mentioned earlier, the semi-structured interview which encompasses 8 questions in addition to the general introduction that consists of an opening and welcoming phases where the researcher introduced himself and explained the reason behind calling the interviewee. The 8 questions were addressed to the WE teachers who are familiar with the concept portfolio assessment. To begin with, the first question was about the number of years the teacher has been teaching English language(Q.1). Whereas the second question was to pinpoint the most common obstacles that may encounter students while writing a paragraph or an essay (Q.2). Concerning the third question was to have insights about whether they provide feedback when it comes to writing skill, and what type of feedback they give(Q.3). Moreover, the fourth question that was raised for the purpose of the study was to explore whether they give opportunities to students to reflect, revise, and redraft their written products and examine their usefulness in developing students' writing performance (Q.4). In addition, the interviewees were asked as well to identify whether they have experience and opted for the portfolio assessment before, with giving examples of it in case they have so(Q.5). The subsequent two questions were to display teachers' opinion regarding the efficacy of portfolio assessment as a tool to improve students' writing skill with justifying the answer provided and to display as well the attitude of the students towards the portfolio assessment technique (Q.6, Q.7). The following question was about their views concerning the applicability and the reliability of portfolio assessment in a teaching-learning environment with justification (Q.8). Eventually, the room was open for further suggestions or comments.

- **Piloting and Validation**

They are the stages that help verify the type ,the content, the form, the organization, the simplicity or the ambiguity, and the relevance of the questions provided in the interview to

insure their validity , reliability and their comprehensibility. The interview pilot stage was held with one WE teacher at Biskra university in the form of a face to face meeting (See appendix 03).

- **Administration**

The semi-structured interview was administered to 5 teachers through face to face interaction which takes a one-to-one format (see appendix 04). Before starting the interview, the researcher introduced himself to the teacher and explained his point of view about the portfolio assessment concept and gave the turn to the interviewee to provide his ideas with focusing on the eye contact method. All the five teachers interviewed were familiar with the portfolio assessment meaning, however they haven't experienced it but one teacher who has so with students of high school.

3.1.4 Research Sampling

Sampling is one of the data collection procedures that any researcher has to select. Kumar(2011) defines sampling as“*The process of selecting a few (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group*” (p.177). In other words, a sample is a subgroup of the population on which the study is undertaken. There are two types of sampling which are probability and non-probability sampling. What type of sampling to choose depends on the nature and the purpose of the study. Therefore, the population selected for the present study is third year students at English department at university of Biskra and the number of the sample volunteers is 40 students.

The Voluntary Response Sampling

As far as the nature of the present study concerns, the researcher opted for the non-probability sampling ,more specifically the voluntary response sampling which is defined by Murairwa(2015) as a non-probability sampling design in which the sample is selected according to the potentiality of the respondents who are willing and motivated to be part in the survey. Such type of sampling helps guarantee high responses rate and the selected voluntary participants are willing to provide data for the research. In other words, not all the population have been given the chance to be included in the sample in which the study is interested but only those who are motivated and are able to respond.

3.1.5 Population and Sample

The population that is concerned in our study is Third year students at the university of Biskra, the researcher has selected specifically this population due to the fact that they are dealing with writing essays thus they are supposed to already master paragraph writing. In addition, they are future Master students, therefore, they are required to write research papers and master theses using academic writing which is the ultimate objective. The whole population of Third year students contains 324 students whereas the number of students who have volunteered are 40 students.

3.1.6 Data Analysis and Procedures

In any research, the data analysis step is the step that comes after the collection of the data. For the present study, the researcher opted for the descriptive approach where the description, interpretation and exploration phases to the collection data took a place.

3.2 Results

The following section is devoted to the analysis of data collected from the students' questionnaire and teachers' interview.

3.2.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Participants' Responses

Item01 : Specifying Gender Distribution

The question that falls under the Gender distribution item is a close-ended type of question where the participants are asked to specify their gender, a male or a female.

Table 3.1

Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	9	22.5%
Female	31	77.5%
Total	40	100%

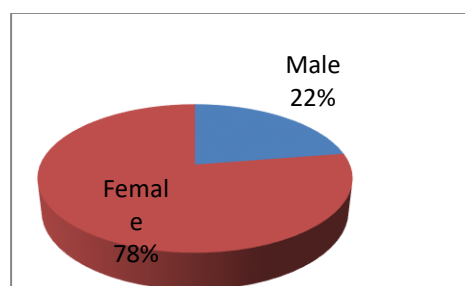


Figure 3.1 : Gender Distribution

As can be seen in the table, the total number of the participants is 40, 31 of them are females whereas 9 are males, the same thing has been displayed using percentages, the female percentage is 77.5% while 22.5% is male percentage, therefore one may infer, females number is greater than males due to the large number of females comparing to males in the Third year

population. Another reason that could be behind such documented differences between the two genders is female's interest in English language is higher than male gender.

Item02 : Number of Years of Studying English Language

In this item, the participants are required to state the number of years they have been studying English language

Table 3.2

Number of Years Studying English

Year	Frequency
10	32
11	5
12	3

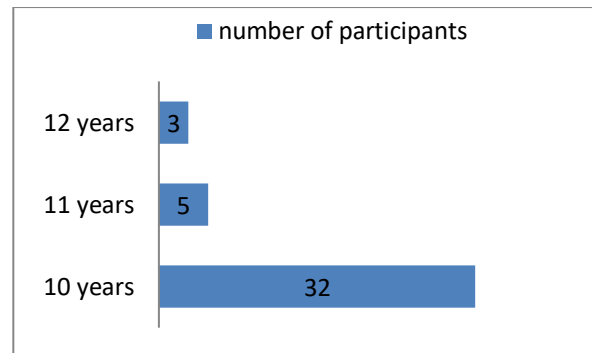


Figure3.2 : Number of Years Studying English

As both figure and table indicate, the majority of the participants (80%) have been studying English language for 10 years whereas 20% of the sample have 11 and 12 years. Therefore, we can determine that the participants share the same learning experience in English language.

Item03 : Participants' Attitude Towards Learning English

The Third question belongs to the general information section is a close-ended question where the participants are asked to answer with yes or no. Therefore, it seeks to reveal participants' attitudes towards the English language whether they like it or not.

Table3.3

Participants' Attitude Towards Learning English

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	97.5%
No	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

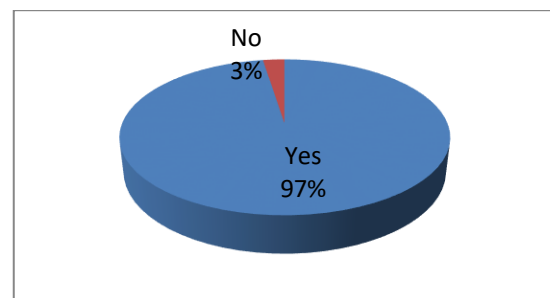


Figure 3.3 : Participants' Attitude Towards Learning English

As a result, the table shows that 39 participants like English language but only one does not in addition to the figure that highlights the percentages of both, the percentage in which participants have a positive attitude towards learning English is 97.5% whereas that of a no

option is 2.5%. Therefore, it may highlight the reason behind the respondents' choice of studying English language as a major at university.

Item04 : Participants' Level in English Language

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced

The current question is a close-ended question that aims to identify participants' level in English language, beginner, intermediate or advanced.

Table3.4

Participants' Level in English

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Beginner	1	2.5%
Intermediate	33	82.5%
Advanced	6	15%
Total	40	100%

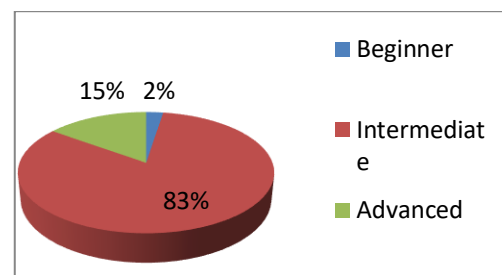


Figure3.4 : Participants' Level in English

As the figure displays the percentages, 83% consider themselves intermediate learners, and 15% of them as advanced ones whereas only 2% as beginners thus the majority of them reckon themselves as intermediate achievers of English language. These data may indicate that some students still face difficulties in English since the beginner level still exists among third year students who are supposed to be above the average level.

Item05 : Participants' Preferred Skill

The question belonging to this item is a close-ended one in which the participants are supposed to select which skill they prefer among the four common skills of the English language(the productive and receptive ones).

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking

- Listening

Table3.5

Participants' Preferred Skill

Skill	Frequency	Percentage
Reading	9	22.5%
Writing	8	20%
Speaking	18	45%
Listening	5	12.5 %
AQ	40	100%

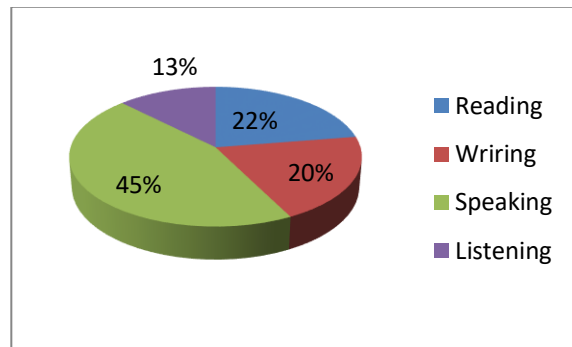


Figure 3.5 : Participants' Preferred Skill

As it is indicated in the figure above, we can say that the majority of the participants prioritize speaking skill, 18(45%) participants voted for it ,concerning writing skill 8(20%) of them prefer it, while Reading controls 22.5% of the total percentage, however the lowest rank of preference was devoted to listening where only 12.5% of the population have selected it. That is to confirm what has been noted earlier that speaking skill is deemed a greater concern than the three remaining skills.

Item06 : The Most Difficult Skill

The present question is a close-ended type of question that endeavors to elicit the participants' beliefs concerning the most difficult skill for them.

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening

Table 3.6

Participants' Most Difficult Skill

Skill	Frequency
Reading	0
Listening	5
Writing	24
Speaking	11

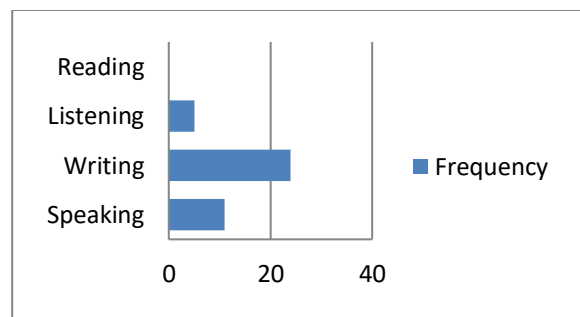


Figure 3.6 Participants ' Most Difficult Skill

The figure documents the participants' views regarding the most difficult skill. The analysis of the results indicates that 24 participants consider writing as the most challenging one whereas 11 participants label speaking as the most difficult one, as for listening skill only 5 participants do so. This is the confirmation of what has been said earlier that writing represents the barrier that hinders the students' achievement due to some reasons.

Section Two: Writing Skill

Item07 : Participants' Attitude Towards Writing Skill

The ultimate objective behind including the question which says: « Do you like writing » is to check out to what extent the Participants are interested in learning and improving their writing.

Table3.7

Participants' Attitude Towards Writing Skill

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	27	67.5%
No	13	32.5%
Total	40	100%

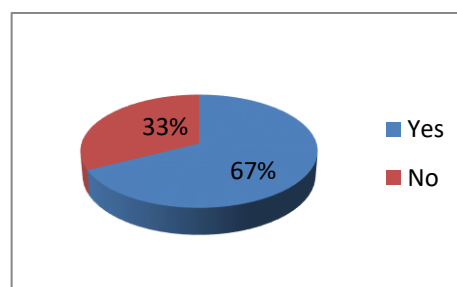


Figure 3.7 : Participants' Attitude Towards Writing Skill

As the table reports, the number of the participants who chose the yes option is 27 participants while only 13 out of 40 voted for no choice. The same thing is displayed in the form of a figure, mainly a pie-chart one which documents that the biggest portion is a yes portion with 67% while 33% only is for a no choice.

That is to say, the majority of the participants have a positive attitude towards writing and they would like to be good achievers when it comes to this skill but they might lack push, motive or encouragement that enables them to become so.

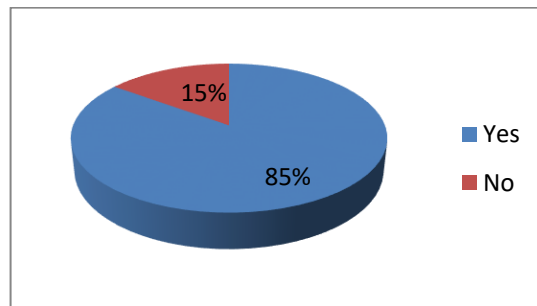
Item08 : Participants' Practice Writing In The Classroom

- Yes
- No

The first part of the present item is a yes no question which indicates whether the participants practice writing in the classroom or not.

Table3.8*Participants' Frequency in Practicing Writing*

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	34	85%
No	6	15%
All	40	100%

**Figure 3.8 : Participants' Frequency in Practicing Writing**

As both table and figure provided, the number of the participants who confirmed that they practice writing inside the classroom is 34 whereas the ones who said No is 6. Formed differently, the pie chart indicates that 85% concerns the participants who answered with yes, while 15 % only denied practicing Writing in the classroom. As a result of the displayed data, one may reckon that the deficiency in writing is not necessary a result of lack of practice but the over-reliance on teachers, because they over- count on the things done in the classroom while they can develop themselves even outside it and the teacher in this case can be a monitor and a help-provider but not a full-information giver

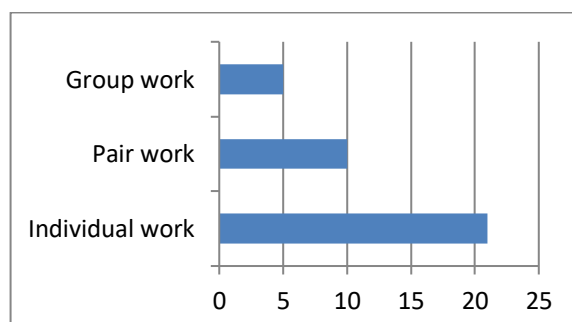
In addition to the first question, a branching question is added which is addressed to the participants who chose the yes option. Its aim is to find out what form of writing they practice, individual work, pair or group work with taking into account that the choices were given in form of check boxes that enable the participants to select multiple answers.

If yes, is in form of :

- Individual work.
- Pair work
- Group work

Table 3.9*Participants' Form of Practicing Writing*

Type of practice	Frequency
Individual work	21
Pair work	10
Group work	5

**Figure3.9 : Participants' Form of Practicing Writing**

As the figure highlighted above, a great number of the respondents practice writing individually, more precisely, 21 participants ticked the individual choice, whereas 10 of them selected the pair work while those who practice in the form of group work were only 5. It can be deduced that though teachers try to vary the different forms of practice, still the commonly used one is the individual work.

Item09 : The Difficulties Encountered in Writing

- Spelling of words.
- Tenses and sentence formation.
- Miss-organization of ideas.
- Lack of vocabulary

The present item is used to identify the most common obstacles that the students encounter in writing. Each column indicates a difficulty that the participants encounter in writing, the question was given in the form of multiple choices which were given in a checkboxes form in order to enable the participants to select more than one answer in addition to leaving some space for mentioning other difficulties which are not provided in the previous choices. Accordingly, the difficulty that was set by the participants is the miss-use of punctuation

Table 3.10
Writing Difficulties

The Difficulty	The Frequency
Spelling of words	9
Tenses and sentence formation	13
Miss-organization of ideas	8
Lack of vocabulary	22
Punctuation	3

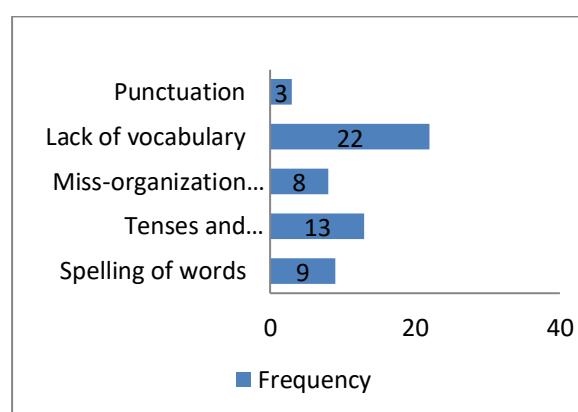


Figure 3.10 : Writing Difficulties

This section, both the table and figure above illustrate the answers of our participants about what type of difficulty that may face in writing. 9 participants confirmed that they encounter difficulty in how to spell words, 9 participants find difficulty in organizing the ideas in addition to 9 others who stressed on tenses and the difficulty in producing well-organized sentences.

Moreover, 21 participants viewed that the difficulty in writing lies in lack of vocabulary which makes it harder to provide a comprehensible piece of writing. Concerning the new added element, 3 participants regarded using a suitable punctuation in the required place is the most challenging norm in writing skill. It can be said that third year students still have difficulties in writing skills including spelling, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and coherence of the ideas.

Item10 : Participants' Frequency in Thinking About Writing

- Yes
- No

The question under this item seeks to explore the participants' perception towards writing skill and to what extent they are aware of its products

Table3.11

Participants' Frequency in Thinking About Writing

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Always	26	65%
Sometimes	13	32.5%
Never	1	2.5%
All	40	100%

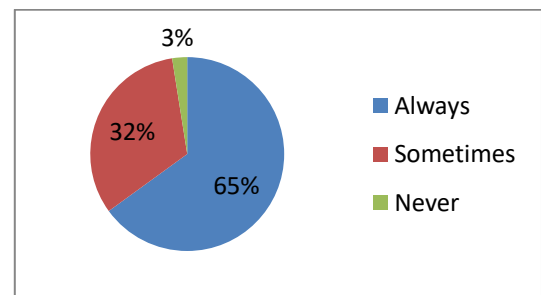


Figure 3.11 : Participants' Frequency in Thinking about Writing

As both table and figure demonstrate, 26(65%) participants always think about what they write and 13(32%) they sometimes do, however only 1(3%) participant does not. Accordingly, the majority of the participants dedicate some time thinking about what they write which enables us to predict that they are well-aware of the pieces of writing they produce. Only a few of them write randomly.

Item11 : Feedback Reception

- Yes
- No

The first part of the question is to get insight about whether the participants receive feedback from their teachers they write or not.

Table3.12

Participants' Reception to Feedback

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	75%
No	10	25%
All	40	100%

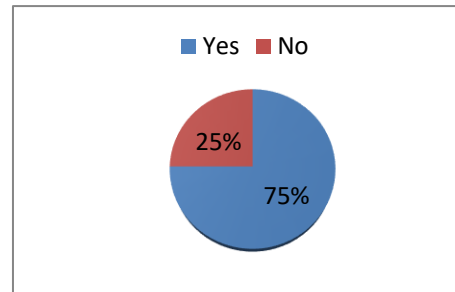


Figure 3.12 : Participants' Reception to Feedback

As the table above shows, 30 participants confirm that they receive feedback from their teachers about their writing whereas only 10 participants assure that they do not. That is to confirm, the figure indicates that 75% of the participants do receive feedback. Accordingly, the second part of the question which is directed to the participants who chose the yes option .

If yes, What kind of feedback do you receive:

- Oral feedback
- Written feedback
- Both

This sub question is to identify what type of feedback the participants receive about their writing.

Table3.13

Type of Feedback

Type of Feedback	Frequency
Oral Feedback	11
Written Feedback	1
Both	18

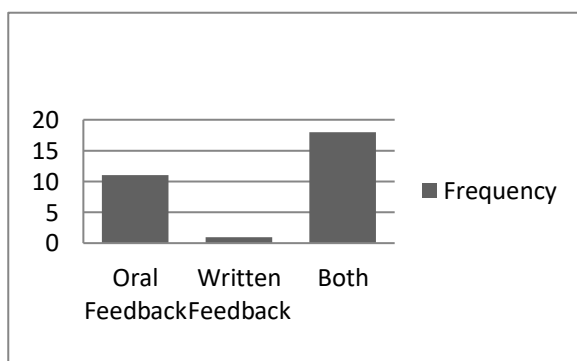


Figure 3.13 : Type of Feedback

As the figure indicates, 11 participants selected oral feedback as the type of feedback they receive and 1 participant voted for written feedback whereas 18 participants confirmed that their teachers use both feedback when it comes to the writing skill. One may deduce that most teachers vary between the type of feedback and they utilize both of them.

Section Three: Portfolio Assessment

Item12 : Participants' Satisfaction about the Way their Teachers Assess their Writings

- Yes
- No

This item is provided in order to explore to what extent the participants are satisfied with the way teachers assess their writing products.

Table3.14

Participants' Satisfaction about Teachers' Assessment

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	30%
No	28	70%
All	40	100%

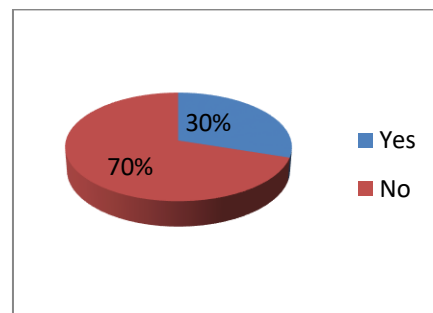


Figure 3.14 : Participants' Satisfaction about Teachers' Assessment

As the table and figure display, 12(30%) participants are satisfied with the manner their writing is assessed, however 28(70%) of them are not. One may infer that the dissatisfaction of the students regarding ways of assessment of their writing can be one of the outcomes of the old fashioned teacher's methods in the field of assessment that do not reflect the reality of the students' abilities such as test-exam assessment which controls the overwhelming portion in our evaluating-assessing environment. According to the respondents' justification concerning their dissatisfaction is the shortage in time in which teachers are supposed to deal with many lessons in a due time thus affecting the duration devoted to correcting students' written products and giving feedback in order to make them aware of their mistakes. One the respondent's answer "Due to time, teachers are not available to give us even an oral quick feedback. We can't realize our progress without their guidance but rarely I receive comments about my writing with some

written remarks”, in addition to” The teacher's feedback whether it was oral or written is never enough if the student is not given a chance to write the same paragraph multiple times with the teacher’s interference by correcting them ”.

Nevertheless, the satisfaction of the 30 %students about the teachers’ methods in assessment their writing is justified by the fact that some teachers allocate some time reading and correcting students’ pieces of writing, one of them said : 'Our teacher's way of assessing our writings is so good , he reads the whole composition and checks if it was relevant then he sees the form and the steps of writing and the organization of each part if it was an essay”.

Item13 : Participants’ Familiarity with Portfolio Assessment

The question that falls under this item is a close-ended question, its aim is to find out to what extent the participants are familiar with the portfolio assessment technique.

Table3.15

Participants’ Familiarity with Portfolio Assessment

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	42.5%
No	23	57.5%
All	40	100%

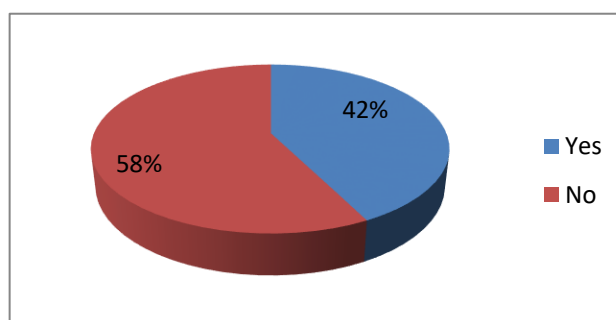


Figure3.15 : Participants’ Familiarity with Portfolio Assessment

Another criterion that wanted to be discussed is the participants’ familiarity with the portfolio assessment. As both table and figure document, the majority of the participants do not know what it refers to and represents, more specifically, 23(58%) participants are not familiar with the portfolio assessment meaning while 17(42%) of them do. That is to say that the portfolio as a technique used in the assessment field is not well spread thus the door is open for the attempt to its application.

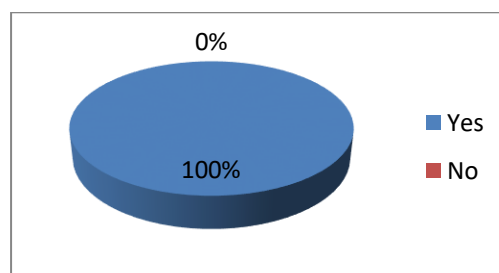
Item14 : Students’ Attitude and Opinion Regarding the Usefulness of the Portfolio Assessment in Improving their Writing Performance

The present question's ultimate aim is to figure out the respondents’ views about the idea of implementing the Portfolio Assessment technique in improving Students’ writing performance.

Table3.16

Participants' Opinion about the Portfolio Assessment Efficacy

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	40	100%
No	0	0%
All	40	100%

**Figure 3.16 : Participants' Opinion about the Portfolio Assessment Efficacy**

As can be seen in both table and figure above, no one of the respondents selected the No option. These results implied the idea that the students have a positive attitude towards the implementation of portfolio assessment. For that reason, they were required to justify their answers, therefore they confirmed that this technique helps them be aware of the progress they reach and point out the mistakes they make ,in addition it gives them a chance to practice their writing more than once. Moreover, a student wrote, “Of course it will help to develop our writing skill because we will be aware of our mistakes, so we will try not to do them again”. Further, respondents are eager and motivated to imply such a method when it comes to the assessment of their writing performance. One of the justification provided as well is “I always want more guidance and monitoring for my writing so that I can be fully aware of what I am expected to do and level up my writing when it is required and I believe this technique would actually make it easier for students from different levels to gradually improve and witness their improvement” .

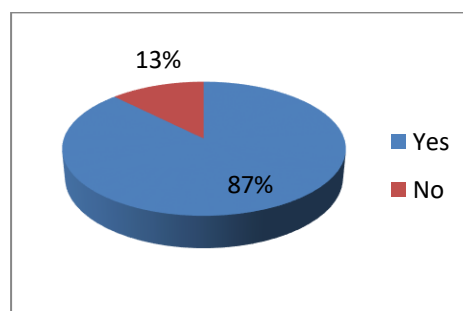
Item15: Students' Opinions About Developing an Individual Portfolio of their Own Work

This item seeks to figure out the participants attitudes towards writing skill by Developing an individual portfolio of their own work.

Table3.17

Participants' Opinion about Developing an Individual Portfolio

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	87.5%
No	5	12.5%
All	40	100%

**Figure 3.17 : Participants' Opinion about Developing an Individual Portfolio**

The statistics above reveal the participants' viewpoints about developing an individual portfolio of their own work. Almost all of the participants would like to do so , 35 (87%) participants said "Yes" and 5(12%) participants select the No answer. We further asked them for the justifications; the majority of them asserted that portfolio assessment is a helpful tool in which students can witness their progress, achievement and weakness and all these things can be found and created in the portfolio item. One of the participants confirmed "The only way to learn something is by trying and making mistakes first, then the role of correction takes place. In addition to the chance that having one's own portfolio enables you to compare your writing now to what it used to be thus showing that your work becomes more organized, revised and coherent". According to them, having one's own portfolio raises their confidence too, more exemplified "When you flip through the portfolio you'll start pointing out the mistakes you used to make by yourself and that gives you a boost of confidence and a spark of hope. I believe that it develops some critical thinking abilities too".

The statistics and justifications provided above lead us to say that since the majority of the respondents showed a positive attitude towards the idea of having their own portfolio for the sake of improving their writing performance, teachers may take full advantage of it and include it as a teaching material when teaching writing skill.

Item16 : Participants' Perception Towards the Problems in Writing that Can be Overcome Via Portfolio Assessment

In this item, we shed light on The respondents' views about what kind of obstacles in writing that could be overcome through the use of portfolio assessment technique.

- Spelling.
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- All

Table 3.18

The Problems Can be Overcome Via Portfolio Assessment

The problem	The Frequency
Spelling mistakes	4
Grammar mistakes	6
Punctuation mistake	5
All	25

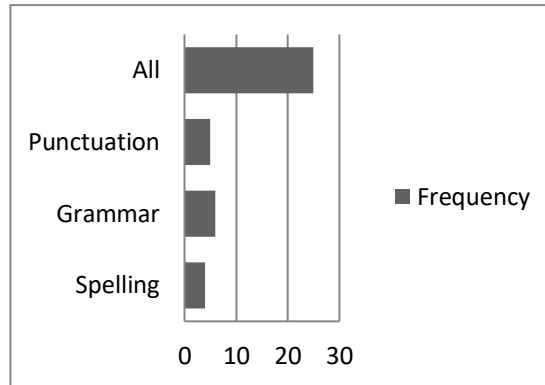


Figure 3.18 : The Problems Can be Overcome Via Portfolio Assessment

As reported in the table above, the number of the participants who reacted with the punctuation obstacle is 6 whereas spelling problems, the number is 4. In addition, 8 participants consider the Grammar side as one of the problems that can be overcome by portfolio assessment. In the same line, 25 participants confirmed that all the problems indicated above are the ones that the portfolio assessment implementation may remedy. In short, the results revealed that the majority of the respondents see portfolio assessment as a technique which helps reduce and overcome some problems related to writing skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation problems.

Item17 : Participants' Recommendation About Portfolio Assessment Application

- Yes
- No

Table 3.19

Participants' Recommendation

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	95%
No	2	5%
All	40	100%

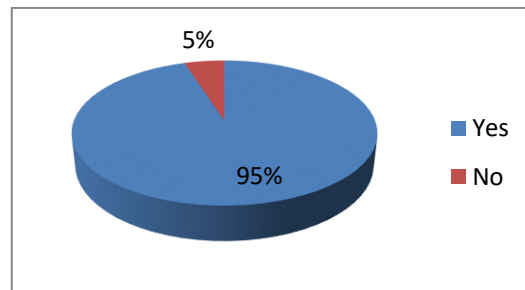


Figure3.19 : Participants Recommendation

Based on the table and the figure presented, 38(95%) participants agreed to recommend the application of portfolio as an assessment tool to assess their writing, while only 2 of them chose

the No answer. According to results provided, we can say that almost all students prioritize the implementation of portfolio assessment as an innovative way of assessment and evaluation.

One of the justifications provided by the respondents is " I would really appreciate it if the teachers used this method and collected our writing in order to evaluate it because with this method we will be able to know if we're making progress or not and we'll learn more from our mistakes". Another justification" Keeping all your writings in the same place will benefit both the student as well as the teacher. The teacher will be able to review his students' writings and compare them to how they used to write and how they write now, and this will help him identify their weaknesses and what they should do to overcome them. For the students, it will give them motivation and actually show the progress they are making, and by following the teacher's remarks they will not repeat the same mistakes again and again."

Item18 : Participants' Experience of Portfolio Assessment

- Yes
- No

The question aims to discover the application of the portfolio assessment in the participants' learning duration or not.

Table3.20

Participants' Experience of Portfolio Assessment

Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	8	20%
No	32	80%
All	40	100%

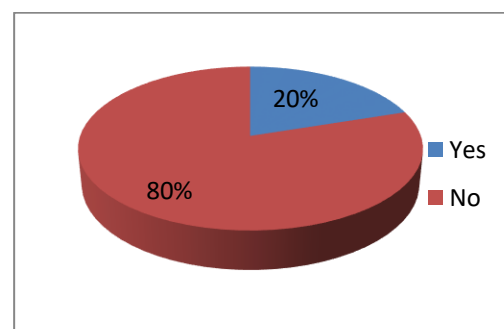


Figure 3.20 : Participants' Experience of Portfolio Assessment

As the table demonstrates, 32 participants out of the total number did not go through the portfolio assessment whereas 8 of them did so. That is to confirm, as the figure illustrates, that the high percentage of the participants who haven't experienced the portfolio assessment technique reached 80% whereas that of those who have so is only 20%. That is to imply, portfolio assessment is still an unknown technique and the teacher may try to spread it by using it side by side with the usual type of assessment that is a test-exam one.

One of the examples of the participants about her experience with the portfolio assessment technique where she revealed satisfaction, she said “ I kept a journal where I used to write down my thoughts. It's actually beneficial I'm not making the same spelling mistakes I used to, and I developed a good sense of choosing the most suitable tense I need to conjugate my verbs into, but to be honest it is also funny. When I read what I wrote 6 years ago I started realizing how much this language I used to write in is different from the actual English; and this what motivates me, I guess.”

Item19: Participants' Views Towards the Portfolio Assessment

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The present item targets to elicit the participants' attitudes, beliefs and opinions toward the portfolio assessment as a tool to ameliorate their writing skill. There are 10 statements distributed in the Likert scale in which the respondents are required to select only one of the options stated above.

Table3.21

Participants' Attitude towards The Implementation of Portfolio Assessment

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Portfolio assessment helps reduce spelling, grammar mistakes and redundancy	24 (60%)	16 (40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Portfolio assessment helps display your weaknesses in writing	26 (65%)	13 (32.5%)	1 (2.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Portfolio assessment encourages you to correct your own errors and mistakes	28 (70%)	11 (27.5%)	1 (2.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Portfolio assessment is a different way of teaching and assessing writing in the classroom.	15 (37.5%)	22 (55%)	2(5%)	1 (2.5%)	0(0%)
Portfolio assessment enhances the quality of the writing products.	21(52.5%)	19 (47.5%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
The teacher is available to give feedback and answer your questions.	14 (35%)	22 (55%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	0(0%)
Portfolios assessment produces a more representative picture of your writing	13 (32.5%)	25 (62.5%)	0(0%)	2 (5%)	0(0%)

You encourage adopting portfolio assessment technique to improve your writing	28 (70%)	11 (27.5%)	0(0%)	1 (2.5%)	0(0%)
Portfolio assessment helps you practice writing	22 (55%)	16 (40%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	0(0%)
Integrating a portfolio assessment in the learning and assessment processes is necessary.	24 (60%)	14 (35%)	1(2.5%)	1(2.5%)	0(0%)

- **Statement 1 “Portfolio assessment helps reduce spelling, grammar mistakes and redundancy”**

The participants were asked to elicit their opinions towards the statement that says ” Portfolio assessment helps reduce spelling, grammar mistakes and redundancy”. As the data collected above show, 24(60%) participants strongly agreed whereas 16(40%) of them selected the agreed choice but none chose the neutral, disagree nor strongly disagree. One may describe that a high number of the participants are aware of some advantages of portfolio assessment technique which is shaped in reducing the mistakes that are related to writing such as spelling, grammar mistakes and the redundancy aspect.

- **Statement 2 “Portfolio assessment helps display your weaknesses in writing”**

In the present statement which is “Portfolio assessment helps display your weaknesses in writing”, 26(65%) respondents declared that they strongly agreed with it, while 13(32.5) agreed, and 1 participant took the neutral position. That is to reach an agreement about the portfolio assessment significance in pointing students' weaknesses in writing skill thus facilitating and preparing the atmosphere for writing performance betterment.

- **Statement 3 “Portfolio assessment encourages you to correct your own errors and mistakes”**

Regarding the third statement that says “Portfolio assessment encourages you to correct your own errors and mistakes” aims at providing insight about the participants' attitudes about it. As the data displayed in the table above, 28(70%) of the respondents strongly agree, 11(27.5%) agreed, however 1(2.5%) participant remained neutral. Apparently, respondents reached an agreement scale of 97% that is to infer the portfolio assessment usefulness in having a well-revised piece of writing that is mistakes-free

- **Statement 4 “Portfolio assessment is a different way of teaching and assessing writing in the classroom”**

The purpose of the statement is to find out to what extent the participants found the portfolio assessment useful in terms of memorizing and reviewing their writings. Therefore, 15(37.5%) strongly agreed, 22(55%) agreed, and 2(5%) of them were neutral while 1(2.5%) disagreed with it. Consequently, the great number of the participants were in agreement of the differentiability of portfolio assessment as an innovative tool in the field of writing assessment.

- **Statement 5 “Portfolio assessment enhances the quality of the writing products”**

The current statement, “Portfolio assessment enhances the quality of the writing products”. As the data show, 21(52.5%) chose “strongly agree”, 19(47.5%) of them agreed and none of them went for the neutral, disagree nor the strongly disagree choices. Based on data provided, a great number of participants stressed on the usefulness of portfolio assessment in enhancing the quality of the written products.

- **Statement 6 “The teacher is available to give feedback and answer your questions”**

In this statement, the participants were required to state the degree on which they agree with the idea that says “The teacher is available to give feedback and answer your questions”. As the data indicate, 14(35%) participants strongly agreed, 22(55%) agreed, and 2(5%) remained neutral whereas 2(5%) disagreed with it. It can be insinuated that teachers control an overwhelming part in the teaching-learning process where he is available to provide feedback when necessary.

- **Statement 7 “Portfolios assessment produces a more representative picture of your writing”**

Providing the statement of “Portfolios assessment produces a more representative picture of your writing”, a number of participants of 13(32.5%) have chosen “strongly agree” while 25(62.5%) agreed with it but 2(5%) selected the opposite position of disagreement. Consequently, the data collected shows that the majority of participants agreed on the utility of portfolio assessment in providing a clear image about the students' achievement.

- **Statement 8 “You encourage adopting portfolio assessment technique to improve your writing”**

In this statement which is “You encourage adopting a portfolio assessment technique to improve your writing”, the respondents are required to provide us with their opinion towards it. Consequently, 28(70%) were strongly agreed and 11(27.5%) agreed whilst only 1(2.5%) took the

different position of disagreement. That is to infer, most of the participants are motivated to opt for the portfolio assessment technique as a substitute manner to assess and evaluate their writing performance.

- **Statement 9 “Portfolio assessment helps you practice writing”**

In the statement which says “Portfolio assessment helps you practice writing”, the respondents were directed to state their opinions, attitudes and views about it. As a result, 22(55%) strongly agreed, 16(40%) agree, however 1(2.5%) participant remained neutral and 1(2.5%) disagreed with it. From the data, mostly all of the respondents agreed upon the idea that portfolio assessment significance in providing them with chances to practice writing skill.

- **Statement 10 “Integrating a portfolio assessment in the learning and assessment processes is necessary”**

The present statement that is stated by “ Integrating a portfolio assessment in the learning and assessment processes is necessary” indicates the differentiability of the portfolio as a procedure of assessment in teaching-assessing writing. As the data show, 24(60%) participants strongly agreed, 14(35%) agreed while 1(2.5%) remained neutral and 1(2.5%) disagreed with the statement. That is to predict that most of the participants recommend adopting the portfolio assessment in their learning atmosphere.

3.2.2 Analysis and the Interpretation of the Interview

The current study adopted the semi-structured interview as a data collection tool in which five teachers were interviewed, three male teachers (Tr1, Tr2, Tr3) and two female teachers (Tr4, Tr5) who are teaching English language at the university of Biskra. The semi-structured interview includes both close-ended questions and open-ended questions with justification. The interviews are recorded then transcribed. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of the interview seeks out to provide more insights about teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards the portfolio assessment implementation as a tool to ameliorate their students' writing performance and to elicit the reasons behind such attitudes. Further, the interview items are 8 items which will be analyzed and interpreted respectively.

Item01: Respondents' Years of Experience In Teaching English.

The question belongs to this item is an open-ended question which tries to identify the interviewee's years of experience in teaching English language at Biskra university, this determines whether they are expert or novice teachers in the field.

Table3.22*Respondents' Expertise of Teaching*

Teachers	Years of experience
1	30
2	13
1	12
1	9

As the table demonstrates, five teachers have taken part in the study as interviewees. One of the teachers has more than 30 years of experience, two other teachers have 13 years, whereas the two left teachers have 12 and 9 respectively. The dominant teachers among others are of great experience which exceeds 10 years experience in teaching English language, thus expert ones. Accordingly, the discussion held among these teachers provides a valid reliable explanation concerning the research area.

Item02: The Difficulties Encountered Students In Writing

This item addresses the commonly shared difficulties among answers of the five teachers which are at the level of macro and micro skills. The former one is about planning, organization and generating the ideas and how to cohesive them. Whereas the latter includes spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, word choice...etc. Another key obstacle that pauses a major difficulty according to Tr4, is the initial stage. He said:

The initial stage is the stage that probably pauses the major difficulty, students are unable to start writing a paragraph due to the lack of knowledge about the techniques of how to start....

Item03: Feedback Providing

The question held under this item is divided into two parts ,the first part is on form of close-ended question whereas the second one is in form of open-ended type of question, it advocates the use of feedback consequently all the five teachers assume that providing feedback in any learning environment is mandatory to achieve the desired outcomes , to assure its validity in assessing different criteria related to writing starting from teacher's methodology, teaching material, demonstrating students strengths and weakness and their growth. However concerning the second part of the question which tackled the type of the feedback teachers provide differs from teacher to another among the ones undertaken the interview, Tr1 adopts the

informative one that orients students to learn from their mistakes. Whereas Tr2 utilizes both written and oral feedback. Concerning Tr3, she usually adopts the peer feedback which, according to her, is the most effective one because it enriches students' experience thus developing their writing performance. In addition to Tr5 who does not opt for a specific type of feedback yet the one used frequently is conferencing feedback which involves conferencing the students about a certain area. One of the vivid example, moreover, that is indicated by Tr2 combining the two previously mentioned types (oral and written one), he said:

I do both, in case I do not have much time reading and correcting students' written product inside the classroom, I take the assignment home and I write some comments on students' papers, however when we practice writing in the classroom, I pass by the students and give oral feedback in terms of instructions, remarks...

Item04: Providing Opportunities for Practice

Regarding the question related to this item, it was a combination of close-ended and open-ended questions in which the five teachers were asked whether they give their students a chance to redraft, reflect and revise their writings in addition to indicating if following these stages do help develop students' writing skills. The five interviewed teachers' answers were different in terms of application and utility. More specifically, Tr2 argued that putting into practice the above mentioned stages is not frequently in use due to time issues and the noncommitment of the students nevertheless if they have time, he will dedicate some efforts to do all the steps starting from drafting till the final version of the paragraph or essay. On the other hand, Tr1 and Tr5 claimed that they definitely dedicate some time to go through the steps. As for Tr3 and Tr4, assume in their answers the necessity to undertake the steps of writing as a part of their training, and they do provide, in some cases, their students with chances for redrafting, reflecting and revising stages. In conclusion altogether, substantiate the usefulness and the efficacy of providing such opportunities for the students for the purpose of ameliorating their writing skills. Tr5 in her answer stressing on the exigency of following the stages of writing, she said:

Surely, we should follow a process starting from brainstorming, drafting till we reach an acceptable piece of writing. We can not directly write a paragraph or anything, we are obligated to follow a process...

Item05: Portfolio Assessment Experience

The question asked under this item was in the form of both close-ended and open-ended questions in which the five teachers were asked whether they have gone through a portfolio assessment experience before in the classroom with underpinning their answers with examples in case they have so. To put into practice, only Tr5 experienced the portfolio assessment technique which was used for the purpose of bettering up the writing performance level within the writing

field. More particularly, she experienced the portfolio assessment with third year high school students who were supposed to self assess their paragraphs which were of argumentative and descriptive types of paragraph. Students were instructed about the way to select, collect and reflect on their paragraphs they produced in a portfolio and also she opted for the individual conference with the students as one of the ways of giving feedback about their written paragraphs in terms of accuracy, grammatical complexity and organization. She said:

I trained them how to self-assess using the cooperation of paragraphs, they write different paragraphs and of course the teacher is going to provide them with feedback which can be provided in different ways such as conferencing pupils. By providing feedback each time, we can notice the growth and development they achieve. As a result, it was successful, students were able to develop meta-cognitive abilities and reflect about their pieces of writing based on these remarks provided by the teacher.

On the other side of the coin, Tr2, Tr4 and Tr5 consider portfolio assessment a time consuming task which the teacher has to follow and teach the development of the students from the beginning of the semester till the end of it.

Item06: Teachers' Opinions Concerning the Portfolio Assessment

The question that falls under this item is a close-ended and open-ended question in which the teachers were asked to display their attitude and opinion about the thrust of the study which is the portfolio assessment implementation to develop students' writing skill. Based on the data gathered from the interview, the five teachers showed a positive attitude towards it , to deliver deeply, Tr1, Tr2, Tr3, Tr4, and Tr5 altogether believed that portfolio as an assessment tool is a major time commitment and teachers need extra time to grade many portfolios since each one will include several items, it is helpful since it represents the concrete involvement of the students and it gives them a chance to observe their progress as it serves as a writing history and information feedback for them which helps them consider their previous mistakes. Further, through this way of assessing, students will craft writing especially if their final evaluation will depend on the finished products they include in their portfolios. From the data provided, we can say that teachers show a positive attitude towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing skill.

Item07: Teacher's Opinion About Student' Perceptions

The question is a combination of both open-ended and close-ended questions in which the core of it is to elicit the opinion and beliefs of the teachers regarding the students' attitude towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve their writing skill with providing a justification. The five teachers being interviewed share the same opinions, they believe that the

students will positively embrace the idea and show acceptance since it helps better their writing proficiency especially those interested in doing so in addition to the portfolio ability in demonstrating and realizing the students performance, strength, growth and weaknesses. However, the portfolio assessment requires commitment from both teachers and students who are required to be well-trained. Tr5 reporting the attitude of the students after experiencing the portfolio assessment technique, she reported:

In the secondary school experience, I used an interview data collection method with the students who were satisfied because they had learned how to edit their work step by step till they reached something adequate in terms of accuracy, organization, coherence, they also developed the intellectual abilities and being responsible for doing something.

Item08: The Implication of Portfolio Assessment

Based on the data gathered, all the interviewed were in agreement about the portfolio assessment usefulness, according to them, there is no question about its effectiveness, and the experiences shown in the literature proved that it is effective, the problem in our classes could impede its implication due to the number of the students per classes excess sometimes 30 and 35 students. They think that the portfolio could be applicable in case they have a limited number of students with which they can work frequently. It also could be applicable in case teachers have only this module (a writing module) so they can manage and allocate time and efforts for the students correcting their assignments and providing feedback.

In addition to this point, Tr2 directed our attention to another important fact that represents a barrier which prevents portfolio assessment implication, this point is that the way students view writing. He added:

Writing skill in our learning and teaching situation is looked at it as a course just to be graded, it should be looked at it as a skill to be developed, when students convince themselves that they are studying writing as a skill not as a content so in this case both teachers and students are in good position to implement effectively the portfolio assessment.

Overall, the main condition to guarantee the workability of the portfolio assessment method is having small groups of students with enough time yet these two conditions are not possibly accessible in our teaching-learning situations.

Respondents Comments and Suggestions

This section is devoted to comments and suggestions of the respondents concerning the present study, all the five teachers presented some which are:

- The craft of writing requires the engagement in writing.

- Teaching writing is a craft and collaborative effort in which many participants should be there starting from the course designers, administration, students, teachers, peers...etc. They need to have a different look at what writing is and what writing should be.
- Students at the university should be well trained to write a paragraph before moving to the master level.
- Portfolio assessment is very helpful and useful as it emphasizes practice writing, but the fact that teachers can not fulfill this portfolio because of time issues and other constraints, students cannot discover it completely.
- The attempt to apply the portfolio assessment in the present environment requires selection, one should be selective and teachers can combine between portfolio strategy of portfolio and others .
- Syllabus of the writing course must be reconsidered in terms of content and teaching, and assessment methods.
- The necessity for dedicating some time for the feedback.
- Teachers must be innovative in the way they teach, correct and give feedback.

3.3 Summary and Synthesis of The Findings

The aim of the present study is to explore both students and teachers' attitudes, beliefs and opinions towards the implementation of portfolio assessment technique to improve students' writing performance and to find out the main reasons behind such attitudes. As it is known and said earlier, students having a poor performance in writing skill is well-documented among Third year students of English language, more specifically. As a remedy and curative solution for such a problem, portfolio assessment technique is suggested to be opted for which is regarded as an effective tool to do so.

In order to achieve the pre-mentioned purpose, two types of data collection methods which seem to be the most suitable ones for the study are used and these data collection tools are the interview that is directed to the teachers and the second one is the questionnaire which is devoted to the students. As the results obtained from the analysis and the interpretation of the data gathered, they were useful to some extent.

Concerning the questionnaire, the target sample is third year EFL students at university of Biskra. The total number of the students volunteered to answer the questionnaire is 40 participant who were mixed of 31 females and 9 males, therefore, the females number exceeded the male ones due to the fact that the majority of third year EFL students is a female gender or due to the

nature of the branch being studied that is English language which is a female-target major. In addition, almost all the participants; but 8 of them, have 10 years of studying English language taking into account the years spent in both middle and secondary schools. Therefore, the majority have the same learning experience.

The participants were asked also to indicate their attitudes towards English language, thus all of them but one participant claimed that he does not like it, this feedback determines the reason behind choosing it as a specialism at university. However to like something does not mean to master it and this is what is being applied among Third year EFL students, said differently, most of the participants like studying English language but their level is still intermediate only few consider the advanced level as theirs. This fact can be the outcome of the quality of teaching methods, or the students' deficiencies in the basic academic English language rules. The participants were further asked to state their preferred skill. Therefore, the one that received much preference and interest was speaking skill followed by reading then writing and ending with listening which has zero preference. More precisely, the majority of the respondents give much importance to speaking skill over the remaining ones and according to them, mastering English language lies all in being fluent speakers. Henceforth, the last mentioned element leads the way to indicating the most difficult skills to them, thus more than the quarter portion of the participants viewed writing skill as the most difficult one whereas reading as the easiest skill. The difficulty in writing lies in the complexity, variety of the elements that constitute writing as a skill such as grammar, punctuation, coherence, cohesion...etc.

Though writing skill regarded as the most challenging one, more than half of the respondents showed positive attitude to it, furthermore, they claimed that they practice writing skill in the classroom using the three different phases individual, pair and group work but, according to the results obtained, the frequently used one is the individual work in order to point out each one's abilities, strengths and weaknesses thus facilitating and finding out what would be done next either a betterment or remedial activities.

Reaching this point, the respondents were invited to state the difficulties that they encounter in writing, accordingly the majority of them considered lack of vocabulary as one of the obstacles that would hinder the well-achievement in their writings besides spelling, tenses and sentence formation and miss-organizing ideas used in addition to the added difficulty which has been stated by one of the participants and it was the miss-use of punctuation which creates redundancy and miss- conveying the idea. Within the same vein, they were invested whether they think about what they write or not, furthermore the plurality confirmed that they give themselves time thinking about what their write, inserting such question under this section was

for the purpose of making sure that they are aware of the written products they make only few went for “sometimes” option. Moving to the following item that concerns the feedback, the respondents were required to reveal whether they receive feedback when they write or not , thus the predominating answers were positive, more specifically, they admitted that they receive feedback and they further identified its type, consequently the frequently used one was both types oral and written feedback.

Again, satisfaction checking item was included in the students questionnaire, more particularly, they were asked to reveal their opinions regarding the methods used in their writing assessment ; as a result, most of the respondents did not show satisfaction with the manner their writing being assessed claiming that the latter does not fully measure their abilities ,in addition, a snapshot type of assessment does not help completely reduce their lacks and deficiencies in writing skill. Within the same regards, they are hoping to find another substitute method that helps shed light on the aspect that they lack and they do not.

Pointing out to the portfolio assessment, that refers to the collection of students' work which can be a combination of all their works from the drafts and revisions version till the final one to represent students' overall achievement and performance or only a selection of best works thus it all depends on the agreement between the both teacher and students. The portfolio content that is assessed by either teacher or peer assessment displays the growth of students over time.

From the results obtained, more than half of the participants are not familiar with such types of assessment. Hence, a brief definition of the portfolio assessment was provided in order to enable them to adequately answer the following questions regarding it. To start with, the students were required to state their opinions concerning the implementation of portfolio assessment as a tool to ameliorate their writing abilities. As a result and based on the findings, all of them admitted its efficacy and workability in improving their writing and for that reason, they were further asked to justify ,among the justification raised is that such assessment provides a continuous feedback that enables them know on what point they should/ not focus on, it also provides them with chances in which they show responsibility of their own work in terms of editing their works and redrafting till they reach adequate piece of writing. This feedback itself is an answer to one of the questions raised in the present study, which is “What would be the students' attitudes and opinions towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve their writing performance and reasons behind such attitude”. Referring back, this confirmed the positive attitude of the students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment.

This questionnaire dealt with the participants' viewpoint concerning the idea of developing an individual portfolio of their own work. Depending on the results, almost all of the answers were in favor of doing so and in spite of not being well-familiar with the portfolio assessment, some of the participants experienced it on their own way, opting for a journal material in which they put the remarks received and with drafts examples that were such a concrete proof about the development they were achieving, they admitted as well the usefulness of having their own portfolio in pointing out , noticing, and sensing the progress they make in writing in a considerable amount of time. Keeping the track within the same context, the major difficulties and obstacles that can be overcome and depicted by the portfolio assessment, according to the findings, are punctuation, spelling and grammar problems. This feedback proved the respondents' positive attitude towards the portfolio assessment usefulness as well. Due to what has been discussed earlier, they recommended inserting it in their learning process.

By all means, the obtained results suggest that the great majority of participants consider the portfolio assessment implementation useful as it plays a crucial role in making their writing seem more adequate in terms of accuracy, coherence, cohesion and organization. Moreover, they showed strong agreement with the idea that believes in the portfolio assessment efficacy in presenting an overall image of their abilities in writing and stressing its dissimilarity from other types of assessment in which it encourages the cooperation of self ,peer and teacher feedback to reach acceptable pieces of writing.

On the other hand, the semi-structured interview was directed to five teachers who are teachers of English language at university of Biskra. The major thrust of the interview was to elicit teachers' opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to promote students' writing performance and stating the major reasons behind them.

Practically, respondents' Expertise of Teaching English was one of the aspects involved in the interview questions. As the analyzed data revealed, all the five teachers but one are of more than 10 years experience in the three levels which are middle, high and university one. Therefore, this feedback shows to some extent the reliability of their feedback in helping provide the necessary data for our study. Moving on, participants highlighted the most common difficulties that may encounter students while writing and these problems are at the level of both micro and macro levels due to several reasons such as lack of rehearsal and motivation, the over-reliance on teacher which does not encourage the autonomous Learning, in addition to teaching methods and other reasons that may hinder overcome the problems highlighted above. Within the spectrum of this study, the five interviewees believe that providing feedback plays a vital role in the learning as well as teaching process especially that of a constructive type of feedback aiming at directing

and guiding the students throughout their learning journey, the latter helps extract weaknesses, strengths and their abilities. Moreover, the participants were supposed to reveal to what extent they rely on the process of writing and find it helpful. Depending on the data analyzed, all of them assured the necessity of following the stages of writing from the first stage till the last one where the students are supposed to produce accurate written products. Reaching this point, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 were integrated to answer the research question regarding the teachers' attitudes, opinions and beliefs towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance and finding out the main reasons behind such attitudes. To put into practice, according to the analysis of the finding, the interviewees claimed that the portfolio assessment is of great help when it comes to developing students' writing skill. In spite of the fact that the latter is time and effort consuming, it breaks the barrier that existed between the teacher and the students by creating chances that allow the conference and cooperation between the two in addition to its ability in providing opportunities where they can practice their writing skill, it also cultivates the essence of responsibility for both parts. In the light of this feedback, the attitude of the teachers towards the implementation of portfolio assessment as a technique to improve students' writing performance is a positive one which answers the research question being asked earlier.

Conclusion

This chapter represents the fieldwork of the study. The latter is divided into two sections starting by the one highlighting the theoretical background of the research methodology opted for and underpinning with justification the choice for such methodology including the research approach, strategies, data collection methods, research sampling and population, data analysis and procedures. Concerning the second section, it dealt with the findings of the two data collection tools used which are the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview with their interpretations. On the whole, the results to some extent were useful in terms of answering the research questions raised in the present study.

Pedagogical Recommendations

For Teachers

- Teachers should try to be innovative and integrate new methods in their tutorials such as the portfolio assessment which received from both teachers and students positive attitudes.

- WE teachers should provide their students with continuous feedback through which the mistakes made in their writing will be overcome and remedied.
- WE teachers should provide their students with opportunities where they can reflect, revise and redraft their writing.
- WE teachers are required to encourage students and raise their awareness of the necessity of following all the stages of writing starting from drafting till having a well-produced piece of writing.
- Teachers should try not to thicken and make the students feel that grades are the most important thing but their learning itself what matters the most.
- Teachers should take into account their students' learning styles and preferences in terms of the activities and the way they solve them.
- Teachers should encourage their students to practice writing inside, outside the classroom and in their free time.
- Teachers should motivate their students to be productive in their writing.

For Students

- Students should practice writing even outside the classroom.
- Students should not only rely on their teachers but also on themselves.
- Students should be aware of their weaknesses, deficiencies and strengths in writing.
- Students are advised to develop their own portfolio in which they include their achievement, growth, lack...etc.
- Students are required to ask for feedback either from their teachers or colleagues.
- Students are supposed to not only concentrate on speaking skill but on the four skills all together because they are all of great importance in English language learning.

For Administration

- The administration is required to guarantee the needed materials and aids for a successful teaching-learning process.
- The administration should take into consideration the amount of time allocated to each unit\lesson since teachers are obligated to finish the designed program.

Limitations of The Study

The present study is about the attitude of teachers and students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment techniques to improve students' writing performance. To achieve its objective, we encountered a set of obstacles. The first one is the time constraint that was allocated to finish drafting the present study. Further, the difficulty to make the interview with teachers, more specifically there were some teachers who did not accept to be interviewed yet they suggested answering it in the form of written responses. In addition to the limited number of teachers who are familiar with the portfolio assessment method since it is a new technique.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Writing skill is one of the integrating skills in English language as it serves many purposes. Though it is used in every single module that is studied, students were not well-aware of its importance but lately. As far as the population of third year EFL students is concerned and in spite of the fact that most of them have a poor performance in writing skill, we tend to help in a way to remedy and find solutions to ameliorate their writing performance. Accordingly, this study held under the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing skill takes place. As for the structure of the present study, it is made up of three chapters. The first one is devoted to the first variable that is writing skill in which the researcher highlighted the most common aspects related to it starting by its definition and general writing tips. It also identified the purpose behind teaching writing, its approaches, stages followed when writing in addition to the characteristics of academic writing and ending up with stating the impulsions that lie behind the difficulty of writing skill. On the other side, chapter two is devoted to the second variable of the study that is the portfolio assessment technique. The researcher tackled different areas related to it. More specifically, he defined the assessment that has to do with the learning and teaching environment in addition to highlighting its purpose. Furthermore, he dealt with writing assessment in language learning and types of assessment including summative, formative, diagnostic, confirmative and Ipsative one. The researcher defined portfolio assessment as well as mentioning some of its features. Additionally, he shed light on the content of the portfolio, how to score it and based on what criteria. He did not only make a comparison between the two ways of assessment which are the assessment using portfolio and using standardized testing, but also explaining the issues that may hamper the implementation of portfolio assessment technique.

Concerning the third chapter, it presented the practical part of the study where the researcher adopted two data collection tools which are respectively the questionnaire that is designed for third year EFL students at Biskra university and the semi-structured interview for five teachers who teach WE subject and have background knowledge about the portfolio assessment. Its aim is to explore the attitudes of both teachers and students towards the implementation of portfolio assessment to improve students' writing performance in addition to stating the main reasons behind their attitudes.

Throughout this research and based on the analysis of the data gathered, students consider writing skill as the most difficult one in which the majority of the students have a poor performance, thus it needs solution in terms of the way it is taught, learned and even assessed. Accordingly, the portfolio assessment was a suggested one yet it received acceptance and students recommended to use it in their learning situations. Both teachers and students think that the latter helps ameliorate writing skill in terms of accuracy, cohesion, coherence, spelling, punctuation and other criteria related to it.

The results obtained from both teachers' interview and students' questionnaire have succeeded in achieving the objective of the study by answering its questions. To conclude, we may say that both EFL teachers and third year students have positive attitudes and beliefs towards the implementation of portfolio assessment technique to ameliorate students' level in writing skill.

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Appendices

Appendix 01

Students' Questionnaire

Dear learners,

The present questionnaire is an attempt to gather information needed for the accomplishment of a master dissertation. You are kindly asked to answer the following questions about your attitudes and opinions regarding the experienced study which entitled by « Investigation into The Attitude of Students and Teachers Towards the Implementation of Portfolio Assessment to Improve Students' Writing Performance ». Therefore, your contribution would be important and greatly appreciated. Please answer the questions and tick (✓) the corresponding checkboxes and answer with full statements when necessary, your responses will be kept anonymous in this research.

Section One: General Information

1. Please specify your gender

Male Female

2. For how many years have you been studying English language?

.....years.

3. Do you like learning English ?

Yes No

Please, justify

.....
.....

4. How do you consider your level in English?

Beginner

Intermediate

Advanced

5. which skills do you prefer ?

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Please justify

.....
.....

Section Two: writing skill

6. Do you practice writing in the classroom?

Yes No

If yes, is it in form of :

Individual work

Pair work

Group work

7. what are the difficulties that you face when writing

Spelling of the word

Grammar mistakes

Miss-organization of ideas

Lack of vocabulary

Others

.....
.....

8. Do you think about what you write?

Always

Sometimes

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

Never

9. Do you receive feedback from your teacher when you write?

Yes No

If yes, what kind of feedback do you receive? Does he give you :

Oral feedback

Written feedback

Both

Section Three: portfolio assessment

10. Do you think that portfolio assessment helps you improve your writing skills?

Yes No

Please justify.

.....
.....

11. Do you think that you would develop a more positive attitude about writing by developing an individual portfolio of your own work?

Yes No

Please justify

.....
.....

12. What problems in writing that can be overcome via portfolio assessment?

Spelling

Grammar

Punctuation

Other.....
.....

13. Check the box that corresponds to your answer

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

(1) Strongly agree . (2) Agree . (3) Neutral . (4) Disagree . (5) Strongly disagree

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Portfolio assessment helps reduce spelling, grammar mistakes and redundancy.					
Portfolio assessment helps display your weaknesses in writing.					
Portfolio assessment encourages students to correct their own errors and mistakes.					
Portfolio assessment helps you practice writing i.e when you are redrafting your first draft after receiving feedback.					
Portfolio assessment is a different way of teaching and assessing writing in the classroom.					
Portfolio assessment enhances the quality of the writing products.					
The teacher is available to give feedback and answer your questions.					
Portfolios assessment produces a more representative picture of your abilities in writing.					
Students encourage adopting portfolio assessment technique to improve their writing performance.					
Integrating a portfolio assessment in the learning and assessment processes is mandatory.					

Section four : Opinionnaire

1. Are there any difficult questions?

Yes No

If yes, mention them.....

2. Are there any repeated questions?

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

Yes No

If yes, mention them.....

3. Are the questions presented in a smooth order?

If no which one(s) ?.....

4. How did you find the questions?

Interesting Not interesting

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix 02

Students' Questionnaire

Dear learners,

The present questionnaire is an attempt to gather information needed for the accomplishment of a master dissertation. You are kindly asked to answer the following questionnaire about your attitudes and opinions regarding the experienced study which entitled «Investigation into The Attitude of Students and Teachers Towards The Implementation of Portfolio Assessment to Improve Students' Writing Performance ». Your contribution would be important and greatly appreciated. Please tick (✓) in the appropriate box(es) or provide a complete answer if asked. Your answers will be kept anonymous and used for research purposes only.

Section One: General Information

1. Please specify your gender

Male Female

2. For how many years have you been studying English language?

.....years.

3. Do you like learning English ?

Yes No

4. How do you consider your level in English?

Beginner

Intermediate

Advanced

5. Which skill(s) do you prefer ?

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

6. Which skill is the most difficult for you?

Reading

Writing

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

Speaking

Listening

Section two: writing skill

7. Do you like writing?

Yes No

8. Do you practice writing in the classroom?

Yes No

If yes, is it in form of :

Individual work

Pair work

Group work

9. What are the difficulties that you face when writing?

Spelling of words

Tenses and sentence formation

Miss-organization of ideas

Lack of vocabulary

Others

.....

10. Do you think about what you write?

Always

Sometimes

Never

11. Do you receive feedback from your teacher when you write?

Yes No

If yes, what kind of feedback do you receive?

Oral feedback

Written feedback

Both

Section Three: Portfolio Assessment

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

12. Are you satisfied with the way your teacher assesses your writing?

Yes No

Justify.....
.....

13. Do you know what portfolio assessment means?

Yes No

If no here is a brief definition of it :

Portfolio assessment is a type of assessment that is mainly concerned with collection of students work and it is a continuous process of evaluation that helps provide feedback to students about their progress, achievement, strengths and weaknesses in writing. In this kind of assessment, students are actively involved in assessment process where they reflect, revise and rewrite their pieces of writing in accordance to the feedback given by the teacher or peer.

14. Do you think that portfolio assessment helps you improve your writing skills?

Yes No

Please justify.....
.....

15. Do you think that you would develop a more positive attitude about writing by developing an individual portfolio of your own work?

Yes No

Please justify.....

16. What problems in writing that can be overcome via portfolio assessment?

Spelling

Grammar

Punctuation

All

Other.....
.....

17. Do you recommend your teacher to opt for the portfolio assessment in order to assess your written products?

THE USE OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

Yes No

Please justify.....

18. Have you ever experienced portfolio assessment?

Yes No

If yes, how was it?.....

19. Check the box that corresponds to your answer

(2) Strongly agree . (2) Agree . (3) Neutral . (4) Disagree . (5) Strongly disagree .

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Portfolio assessment helps reduce spelling, grammar mistakes and redundancy					
Portfolio assessment helps display your weaknesses in writing					
Portfolio assessment encourages you to correct your own errors and mistakes					
Portfolio assessment is a different way of teaching and assessing writing in the classroom.					
Portfolio assessment enhances the quality of the writing products.					
The teacher is available to give feedback and answer your questions.					
Portfolios assessment produces a more representative picture of your writing					
You encourage adopting portfolio assessment technique to improve your writing					
Portfolio assessment helps you practice writing					
Integrating a portfolio assessment in the learning and assessment processes is necessary.					

20. Do you have any suggestions concerning the implementation of portfolio assessment as a tool to develop students' writing? if yes please suggest them

.....

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendix 03

Teachers' Interview

For accomplishing the present study of « Investigation into The Attitude of Students and Teachers Towards the Implementation of Portfolio Assessment to Improve Students' Writing Performance », we have opted for a semi-structured interview for five teachers. The present method is conducted in order to elicit teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the current study.

Introductory phase: introducing myself to the teacher, then explaining the reason for calling him/her for an interview in addition to providing an overview about the studied phenomenon.

Question 1:How many years of experience in teaching English language do you have?

Question 2:What are the most common difficulties that may encounter students while writing a paragraph or an essay?

Question 3:Do you provide feedback in writing?

Question 4:Do you give your students a chance to reflect, revise and redraft their written paragraphs? If yes, is it helpful for the students to develop their writing skill?

Question 5: Have you ever experienced or tried to opt for the portfolio assessment in the classroom ? If yes, can you give examples about when do you rely on it?

Question 6: Do you think that portfolio assessment can improve students writing skill?

Question 7: What do you think, how would the students' attitude be towards the implementation of portfolio assessment? Please justify.

Question 8 : What do you think of portfolio assessment, is it applicable and relied on in our teaching -learning environment?

Anything else to add as a further suggestion or comment.

Appendix 04

Teachers' Interview

For accomplishing the present study of « Investigation into The Attitude of Students and Teachers Towards the Implementation of Portfolio Assessment to Improve Students' Writing Performance », we have opted for a semi-structured interview for five teachers. The present method is conducted in order to elicit teachers' opinions and attitudes towards the current study.

Introductory phase: introducing myself to the teacher, then explaining the reason for calling him/her for an interview in addition to providing an overview about the studied phenomenon.

Question 1:How many years of experience in teaching English language do you have?

Question 2:What are the most common difficulties that may encounter students while writing a paragraph or an essay?

Question 3:Do you provide feedback in writing? If yes, what type of feedback?

Question 4:Do you give your students a chance to reflect, revise and redraft their written paragraphs? If yes, is it helpful for the students to develop their writing skill? Please explain

Question 5: Have you ever experienced or tried to opt for the portfolio assessment in the classroom ? If yes, can you give examples about when you rely on it?

Question 6: Do you think that portfolio assessment can improve students writing skill?

Question 7: What do you think, how would be the students' attitude towards the implementation of portfolio assessment? Please justify.

Question 8 : What do you think of portfolio assessment, is it applicable and relied on in our teaching -learning environment?

Anything else to add as a further suggestion or comment.

الملخص

تلعب مهارة الكتابة دورا حيويا في تدريس اللغات الأجنبية و تقييمها، فهي تساعدنا على استيعاب العالم من حولنا و الطريقة التي ندرك بها ذلك من خلال التواصل مع الآخرين. على الرغم من تدريس الكتابة كأحد المواد الأساسية و التي يتم تدريسها لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة بسكرة، إلا أنهم مازالو يعانون منها و بالتالي فإننا نميل إلى البحث عن حل للتغلب على حل المشكلة المذكورة سابقا ، لذلك اقترحنا طريقة تقييم المحفظة و الهدف العام من هذه الدراسة هو الحصول على رؤية متعمقة حول آراء الأساتذة و الطلاب و موقفهم تجاه استخدام تقييم المحفظة كوسيلة لتحسين أداء الطلاب بالإضافة الى الأسباب الكامنة وراء هذه المواقف. لغرض إنجاز الدراسة، تم طرح ثلاثة أسئلة رئيسية : ما هي مواقف الطلاب و آرائهم تجاه استخدام تقييم المحفظة كأداة لتحسين أدائهم في الكتابة؟ ما هو موقف الأساتذة و آرائهم تجاه استخدام تقييم المحفظة كوسيلة لتحسين أداء الكتابة لدى الطلاب ؟ و ما هي اسباب هذه المواقف؟ حسب ماتلميه طبيعة الدراسة الحالية، اخترنا نهج الأساليب المختلطة حيث اعتمدنا على التحليل الاحصائي الكتابي من خلال النسب المئوية لتلخيص و تبسيط نتائج البحث التي تم الحصول عليها من خلال المقابلة شبه المنظمة والتي كانت موجهة لخمسة أساتذة و استبيان حيث تطوع 40 طالبا في الصف الثالث في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية و عليه ، أن النتيجة التي تم التوصل إليها خلال هذه الدراسة قد أجابت على أسئلة البحث. بتعبير أدق، كشفت و أثبتت النتائج أن كلا من الأساتذة و الطلبة لديهم مواقف إيجابية فيما يتعلق بتنفيذ أسلوب تقييم المحفظة من أجل تحسين أداء الكتابة لدى الطلاب الذين دعموا أجاباتهم مع التبريرات : توفير فرص للتمرن، و تمكين الطلبة على استخلاص نقاط القوة و نقاط الضعف لديهم في مهارة الكتابة. التغذية الراجعة المستمرة للأساتذة لطلابهم، على سبيل المثال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، أداء الكتابة، تقييم المحفظة ، نهج الاساليب المختلطة ، المواقف.

Résumé

La compétence en écriture joue un rôle essentiel dans l'enseignement et l'évaluation des langues étrangères, elle équilibre notre compréhension du monde qui nous entoure et affine la façon dont nous le percevons en communiquant avec les autres. Malgré l'enseignement de l'écriture comme l'une des matières fondamentales enseignées aux étudiants EFL de l'université de Biskra, ils ont toujours du mal avec cela. Ainsi, nous avons tendance à rechercher une solution pour surmonter le problème pré-mentionné, c'est pourquoi nous avons suggéré la méthode d'évaluation du portfolio. L'objectif global de cette étude est d'avoir une vision approfondie des opinions et des attitudes des étudiants et des enseignants vis-à-vis de l'utilisation d'une évaluation du portfolio pour améliorer les performances des étudiants en rédaction et les raisons de leurs attitudes. Aux fins de la réalisation de l'étude, trois questions principales ont été soulevées : quelles sont les attitudes et opinions des étudiants à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'évaluation du portfolio comme outil d'amélioration de leur performance en rédaction ? Quelles sont les attitudes et les opinions des enseignants à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'évaluation du portfolio pour améliorer les performances d'écriture des élèves ? Quelles sont les raisons de ces attitudes ? Par conséquent, comme le suggère la nature de la présente étude, nous avons opté pour l'approche des méthodes mixtes où nous nous sommes appuyés sur l'analyse statistique descriptive par des pourcentages pour résumer et simplifier les résultats de la recherche qui ont été atteints grâce à l'entretien semi-structuré pour cinq enseignants et au questionnaire où 40 participants de la population de troisième année de l'EFL se sont portés volontaires. En conséquence, les résultats obtenus tout au long de cette étude ont répondu aux questions de recherche. Plus précisément, les résultats ont révélé que les enseignants et les étudiants ont des attitudes positives concernant la mise en œuvre de la technique d'évaluation du portfolio dans le but d'améliorer les performances d'écriture des étudiants étayant leurs réponses avec des justifications : Offrir des chances de répéter, augmenter la capacité d'extraire les forces des étudiants et les faiblesses dans les compétences en écriture, la rétroaction continue des enseignants aux étudiants, par exemple.

Mots clés: EFL, performances d'écriture, évaluation du portfolio, approche Méthodes mixtes, attitudes