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***Enhancing Students' Writing Skill in EFL Classes Through  
the Cooperative Language Learning Technique***

**The case of Third year LMD Students of English at Biskra University**

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER in Sciences Of Languages**

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*We are each of us angels with*

*Only*

*One wing, and we can*

*Only*

*Fly by embracing one another.*

*Luciano de Crescenzo*

*To my family ;*

*To my teachers ;*

*To all the people who cooperated with me*

*To make this dissertation a success.*

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of using well-structured small group work to enhance third year LMD students' writing skill at the English Department of Biskra University. In order to check this correlation, we have hypothesised that well-structured small group work would enhance students' writing skill if the teachers put into classroom application the cooperative learning principles and techniques that would result in developing the learners' written production. To verify the validity of these hypotheses, an experimental study has been conducted. Two groups have constituted our sample: an experimental group and a control one. A pre-test has been administered to examine students' individual writings according to the graphic organization of an academic essay; i.e. the comparison and contrast essay which should include: an introductory paragraph, developmental paragraphs (two paragraphs at least: similarities paragraph, contrasts paragraph) and a concluding paragraph. The task is done without the implementation of the cooperative learning technique. The results of the pre-test have shown a limited knowledge of writing a descriptive essay and a wide range of mis-organization. Afterwards, a questionnaire has been conducted to teachers to gain more information about our sample's use of cooperative learning. An experiment has been conducted to enhance students' writing skill by implementing a cooperative learning technique Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1980) mainly through an explicit teaching. The results of the post-test have confirmed our hypothesis that the students' writing skill is developed through the use of well-structured cooperative group work. Thus, we recommend the adaptation of a Cooperative Learning Approach to teaching writing which entails teaching writing through a Communicative Approach.

## List Of Abbreviations

**CBA** : Competency Based Approach

**CL** : Cooperative Learning

**CLL** : Cooperative Language Learning

**CLT** : Communicative Language Teaching

**EFL** : English as a Foreign Language

**ESL** : English as a Second Language

**FL**: Foreign Language

**L1**: First or Native Language

**L2**: Second Language

**SCT** : The Sociocultural Theory

**SLA** : Second Language Acquisition

**STAD** : Student Teams-Achievement Divisions

**TEFL**: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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## **Introduction**

Along our experience as FL students at Biskra University, we noticed that the process of writing is more complex than we thought. Since writing is an independent medium of communication; in so many cases, students hardly find the appropriate learning situation or the appropriate technique which allow them practising the written form of the target language in order to acquire and develop English accuracy. Writing is the most important skill that ESL/EFL students need to develop, because learning to write has always been a means of practising, sustaining and reinforcing other skills.

For those reasons, in the context of ESL/EFL settings, we try to focus our study on the way how to improve students' writing skill and this would be via implementing the cooperative language learning activities. We believe that cooperative learning is an effective teaching and learning technique to enhance students' ability to write in a foreign language. With regard to our experience as adult learners at the University level, we propose that the process of learning should be organised and dealt with through cooperative and collaborative works, thus it would be more beneficial for both teachers and learners. The recent research studies focus largely on the effects of cooperative language learning and group work tasks on students' better interaction and engagement in ESL/EFL classes.

### **1. The Literature Review**

Recently, many researchers realized that the effective language programs have shifted from the focus on teacher-centered to learner-centered classrooms. The benefits of that shift were the emergence of cooperative learning or small group work (Arnold, 1999). The research literature on cooperative language learning examines the impact of cooperative learning on four main areas: *'on second language acquisition, maintenance of first language, the integration of language and content learning, and second language learners' perceptions'* (Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998: 13).

A commonly held belief in the field of second language education is that cooperative learning maximizes second language acquisition by providing opportunities for both language input and output (Fathman & Kessler, 1993; Holt, Chips, & Wallace, 1992; Long & Porter, 1985; McGroarty, 1993 qtd in Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998).

Compared with research on cooperative learning in mainstream education, research on cooperative learning in second language education is surprisingly less extensive. Although theorists take cooperative learning to be beneficial to second language learners, to date only a few studies have focused on cooperative learning and second language acquisition. In spite of the limited number of studies, the existing body of research seems to support the belief that cooperative learning offers second language learners more opportunities for interaction in L2 and helps them improve second language proficiency. Crandall (in Arnold, 1999) defines: *‘at its base, cooperative learning requires social interaction and negotiation of meaning among heterogeneous group members engaged in tasks in which all group members have both something to contribute to and learn from the other members.’* (226). Crandall wants to draw our attention to cooperative group work, students learn from each other through high level of student-student interaction and discussions using the target language. Groups are set purposefully heterogeneous to maximize each student contributions. In mainstream classes in second language contexts, where students speakers of target language serve as models for the other members as they provide linguistic feedback.

Moreover, Crandall states that CLL give students much more opportunities to develop their *‘cognitive, metacognitive and social, as well as linguistic skills’* (Arnold, 1999: 226). In the case of the current study, the writing skill is developed by providing effective cooperative activities adapted for language learning. He points out that *‘collaborative and cooperative writing and peer response’* is an activity where *‘process-based writing approaches involve peer interaction and conferencing, and there are numerous other ways of infusing cooperative learning into the writing classroom from initial pre-writing stages through the final product and publication’* (DeBolt, 1994 qtd in Arnold, 1999 : 232).

Although the reported beneficial effects of cooperative learning in the second language classroom are impressive, more research needs to be done to examine the types of discourse produced in cooperative groups to find out about student development of academic language.

## **2. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

The subject under study investigates the domain of second language acquisition, particularly the case of 3rd year LMD students at Mohamed Kheidar University of Biskra, the problematic issue of writing in a foreign language, and as an effective technique to enhance students' writing skill we, propose the implementation of the cooperative language learning techniques in our EFL classes. Because, we notice that students encounter problems when it comes to practice the language in its written form and find it relatively hard to communicate their thoughts and beliefs. The students difficulty to communicate in English is due to many and varied reasons. They are often expected to do exercises individually in the written expression courses; which does not involve the students in intensive interactions thus does not help them to develop their communicative skills.

Since the classroom is the primary situation in which learners have an opportunity to use the target language, so the kind of methodology followed by the teacher has a great influence on language development. Thus, teachers have to provide learners with a method of increasing those opportunities of language use. Cooperative language learning is one of the best methods to provide learners with extensive written production and communication. The study aims at answering the following questions: considering TESL/TEFL;

- Does a firm understanding of the underlying principles and beliefs of cooperative learning maximize students' learning?
- Can the building of the writing skill be enhanced and made less tedious through cooperative learning activities in the classroom?
- How are cooperative learning activities implemented in ESL/EFL classes in order to improve students' writing skill?
- How is cooperative learning believed to be an effective affective technique to improve students' written production?

## **3. Aims of the Study**

The aims of the present study are:

1. to investigate the correlation between well-structured cooperative group work in EFL classrooms and development of students' writing skill;
2. to enhance students' written production by implementing cooperative language learning activities and tasks.

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

There is a growing research base on the effects and effectiveness of cooperative learning (CL) in ESL/EFL settings. Although the benefits of cooperative approaches to L2 teaching and learning are many, teachers sometimes shy away from using cooperative learning activities as they are perceived to be too time-consuming in lesson preparation. Yet, exploring this area of study, we recognize that there are still elements of cooperative language learning that deserve further attention. In the field of second language acquisition, the current study would be significant if teachers adopt the use of collaborative practices. Therefore teachers disposed of using CLL in their classrooms contribute to the development of an oral and written product.

#### **5. Hypotheses**

In this respect, we hypothesize that: in ESL/EFL settings

1. If teachers use well-structured cooperative learning activities and design appropriate small group tasks, then learners will develop their writing skill and engage productively in classroom activities ;
2. Cooperative language learning would enhance students' writing skill unless teachers recognise its principles and practices in EFL classes.

#### **6. Research Methodology and Design**

##### **6.1 Choice of the method**

This research will be conducted through the experimental method as an appropriate way of investigating our hypothesis which states that using CLL and designing

appropriate small group tasks would improve learners' writing skill. Because, the use of CLL strategy correlates with the raise of students' interaction; consequently, enabling students to reach higher level of writing performance as well as oral by using the target language.

We are going to investigate the case study of third year LMD EFL students at the University of Biskra. We will have two groups under study: an experimental group and a control one. Both groups would be treated objectively in order to reach valid results in written expression module, the same courses of writing will be taught to both groups. A CLL activity will be implemented only to the experimental group while performing the writing tasks. Both groups will be tested before and after the treatment in order to determine the efficiency of organizing well-structured cooperative groups on enhancing the writing skill of the experimental group. To supplement our findings, and if time allows, we are going to conduct a questionnaire designated to teachers; because, after all, CLL is a language teaching theory.

## **6.2 Population of the study**

Subjects of our study are third year LMD students at the English Department of Biskra University. There are 350 third year students divided into nine groups, each group includes forty-six students. Since it is difficult to deal with the whole number of the population, our sample is composed of two groups which are chosen randomly. It consists of forty-six students whose native language is Arabic and their Second Language is French. A group is to be considered as the experimental group which will receive the treatment while another group is considered as the control one. In addition to students' population, we are also interested in the teachers of written expression at the same department, aged between 21 and 50 years or more. The reason behind choosing the teachers of writing and not other courses is due to the fact that they are supposed to know more about students' writing level as well as cooperative learning use.

## **6.3 Data-gathering tools**

To answer the research questions, quantitative data from teachers' questionnaire would be collected in order to have an over view about teaching cooperative learning and their awareness about its principles and practices in EFL classrooms. However, the questionnaire could not provide access to what is "inside a person's head" it is better to

proceed an experimental study to gain “research-relevant information”. A pre-test is to be administered prior to the study in order to assess students’ level in writing without the implementation of cooperative learning method. The treatment includes the use of well-structured cooperative group work during the writing tasks in the Written Expression courses where the experimental group will get intensive teaching of an elaborated cooperative learning technique Jigsaw II model (Slavin, 1980). At the end of the experiment, a post-test will be administered to both groups to determine if using well-structured small group work has contributed to the improvement of the experimental group writing proficiency. Finally, we will interpret the data according to the research aims, the hypothesis and the results of both the pre-test and the post-test to prove or disapprove the validity of the hypothesis.

## 7. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of three chapters:

**Chapter One** is about *Cooperative Learning in Foreign Language Classrooms*. It investigates various definitions, theories, principles, activities and techniques of cooperative learning, and its significance to the teaching of a second language.

**Chapter Two** is devoted to *The Writing Skill in Foreign Language Classrooms*. The main components of writing are reviewed with the stages of development, and types of writing. This is followed by a review of the teaching of writing through CLL activities.

**Chapter Three** *\_The Experimental Study\_* is divided into two parts: part one *\_ The Experiment\_* involves a detailed description of the experiment, its aims, population, data-gathering tools and content. And a description of both measurement tools: the pre-test and the post-test. Also, we provide a description of the teachers’ questionnaire, aims and population. Part two *\_ Data Analysis and Interpretation\_* concerns the analysis and interpretation of data driven from the pre-test, teachers’ questionnaire, and the post-test. We conclude these two parts by a summary and discussion of findings.

## Introduction

ESL/EFL teachers noticed that learners need more to acquire language in an interactional environment rather than in a traditional whole-class instruction so as to facilitate learning and foster the acquisition process. An examination led by a number of researchers in the domain of SLA reveals that cooperative learning has a dramatic positive impact on almost all the variables that are critical to language acquisition (Kagan, 1995). In this chapter we are going to approach cooperative learning as a general method that can be applied successfully in teaching-learning-process. First, we will present a conceptual definition of cooperative learning, comparing it with the traditional methods and structures. Then, we will present an overview on cooperative learning vis-à-vis SLA theories. In the following point we will introduce the major models and programs of cooperative learning and their application in the language classrooms, in addition to some well-known cooperative language activities that enhance writing. Eventually, CL relationship is defined by some essential characteristics that are going to be explained as well as some additional benefits of cooperative group work will be examined. We conclude the chapter by proposing some useful strategies in order to facilitate cooperative learning in the classroom.

### 1.1 Conceptual Definition of Cooperative Learning

In recent years, cooperative learning has emerged as a significant concept and instructional practice in the field of second language education because of the pedagogical, psychological rationale of its use in second language classrooms and the possible benefits it might have in second or foreign language settings (Coelho, 1992, 1994; Cohen, 1994; Holt, 1993; Kessler, 1992; McGroarty, 1989, 1992 cited in Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998).

According to Rita Rani Mandal (2009) the concept of cooperative learning refers to instructional methods and techniques in which students work in small groups and are rewarded; *'Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy based on the human instinct of cooperation. It is the utilization of the psychological aspects of cooperation and competition for curricular transaction and student learning'* (p. 97). The idea behind the cooperative learning method is that when group rather than individuals are rewarded, students will be motivated to help one another to master academic materials. Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy, in this str



students of different levels, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject.

R.Rani Mandal (2009) points out that *'In the field of language, cooperative learning values the interactive view of language, which is known as developed combination of structural and functional views of language'* (p. 98). In other words, cooperative learning sees language as a tool of social relations. Students are provided with authentic context for negotiation of meaning through the use of the language. Cooperative learning facilitates and deepens learning. In cooperative learning method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. You find students plan, translate and review the work together. In such class activities team members try to make sure that each member has mastered the assigned task because the teacher randomly calls the students to answer for the team. The teacher should reward the best team and the most challenging individual. This kind of grading will serve as an incentive to competition for further cooperation amongst teams' members.

All in all, Research in the second language classroom indicates that cooperative learning is very beneficial for ESL students in a number of ways. It can maximize second language acquisition by offering opportunities for both language input and output. Although these beneficial effects of cooperative learning in the second language classroom are impressive, more research needs to be done to examine the types of L1 and L2 discourse produced in cooperative groups to find out about student development of academic language (Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998).

## **1.2 Second Language Acquisition Theories and Cooperative Learning : Definitions**

Various definitions were drawn about the role of CL in language classes, but with some exclusivity in second language instruction. Both settings L1 and L2 agree that CL is *'The instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning'* (Johnson & Johnson, 1993, qtd in [www.georgejacobs.net](http://www.georgejacobs.net)).\_\_\_Consequently we can find many theories of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) that support the use of CL in L2 instruction. The following are some prominent theories that are interested in the use of CL: the input hypothesis, the interaction hypothesis, the output hypothesis, and the sociocultural theory.

### 1.2.1 The Input Hypothesis

Before discussing the issue of CL in L2 instruction vis-à-vis the Input Hypothesis, we should first give an overview about its principles. The first pioneer of this hypothesis ‘Stephen Krashen’ points out that SLA is driven by ‘comprehensible input’ (Krashen, 1981). In other words, we acquire language when we understand the input that we hear or read. In contrast, when the input is difficult or above our current level of L2 proficiency that it is not comprehensible, that input doesn’t contribute to SLA.

Krashen’s Hypothesis has paid the attention to the pedagogical and psychological rationale of CL and its use in second language classrooms and also the focus was put on the possible benefits it has in second or foreign language settings (Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998). Krashen and Terrell (1983) points out that the input from groupmates can be more comprehensible ; because, the group members communicate among each other using almost the same level of language eventhough learners pick up each others’ errors (qtd in [www.georgejacobs.net](http://www.georgejacobs.net)). The linguists Krashen, Jacobs, Terrell, Kagan, and others come into an agreement that L2 learners or acquirers, in a cooperative group work, try to provide an understandable input ; i.,e. they communicate using a simple and clear L2 and at the level of the group members’ comprehension. Kagan (2001) notes the positive impact of CL on second language acquisition ‘*students working in cooperative groups need to make themselves understood, so they naturally adjust their input to make it comprehensible*’ (p.9)

### 1.2.2 The Interaction Hypothesis

Hatch (1978) and Long (1981) see that cooperative learning offers second language learners more opportunities for interaction in L2 and helps them improve second language proficiency. This interaction contribute to increasing the amount of comprehensible input that students receive. This interaction is seen when they are given the opportunity to negotiate meaning and ask each other for help in order to understand input. Therefore, through interaction that CLL provides, students can build relationship of trust and confidence.

In 1976, an early study on cooperative learning and interaction in L2 was carried out by Long, Adams, McLean, and Castanos (Liang, Mohan, and Early, 1998), in adult ESL

classes. The researchers compared teacher leading discussions with pair discussions to examine the amount and variety of student talk in both contexts. Their results reveal that students in pairs produced a significantly greater amount and variety of student talk than in the teacher-led discussions.

### 1.2.3 The Output Hypothesis

Language acquisition is fostered by output, that output according to Swain (1985 cited in [www.georgejacobs.net](http://www.georgejacobs.net)) is functional and communicative, because memorization of language forms does not increase the learners' fluency and communicative competence. The cooperative group provides an output which is functional, communicative and relevant for the actual communicative situation in the classroom. Kagan (2001) argued that '*the single greatest advantage of cooperative learning over traditional classroom organization for the acquisition of language is the amount of language output allowed per student.*' (p.9). That is, CL allows much more time to students output than traditional classroom does. Also within an output / interaction framework, Swain (1985) states that during a CLL task learners need to speak and write ; so it is clear that CL offers them many opportunities to interact '*simultaneously*' and provide an increasing amount of output in their L2.

### 1.2.4 The Sociocultural Theory

The Sociocultural Theory led by second language educators such as Lantolf (2000) who investigate the relationship between L2 learners context (including peers) and experience with others. O'Donnell (2002) suggests that it is when the learner is put in contexts like cooperative learning that he can use more beneficial learning. When learning with peers or in small groups, learners argue, explain, and listen; this would be a good source for them to get knowledge.

In mainstream education, Vygotsky, the most influenced scholar by SCT, his strategy was mainly a cooperative learning strategy because in his experiments he created heterogeneous groups of children providing them with CL activities and tasks that were beyond the developmental level of some of them (Lantolf, 2000). Hence, Vygotsky's theory has been founded to support the use of cooperative learning strategies in which

learners work together to support each other (Slavin et al, 2003). In his theory, Vygotsky emphasises the importance of more competent students when they help less able students.

To sum up, SLA theories strongly support the implementation of CL in ESL / EFL classrooms, because the traditional approach to schooling insists on whole-class lessons, and students having independent seatwork whereas CL approaches replace independent seatwork with small groups of students who work on assignments collaboratively. CL methods differ according to the task structures and incentive structures that are used by the teacher (Slavin, 1995, 2006 cited in Good & Brophy, 2008).

### 1.3 Well-known Cooperative Learning Models

Cooperative learning is not a new technique to teaching. It has a strong foundation in research. Johnson (1997 cited in Good & Brophy) claims that cooperative learning is one of the best-researched approaches in education. Johnson (*Ibid*) stated:

If there's any one educational technique that has firm empirical support, it's cooperative learning. The research in this area is the oldest research tradition in American social psychology. The first study was done in 1897; we've had ninety years of research, hundreds of studies. There is probably more evidence validating the use of cooperative learning than there is for any other aspect of education. (p. 189)

Cooperative learning in second language teaching has been a subject matter in some of the best known and widely researched CL models which are : learning together model, group investigation model, student teams achievement divisions (STAD), and Jigsaw model (Good & Brophy, 2008).

#### 1.3.1 Learning Together

The learning together model was developed by David and Roger Johnson (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Its principles is to get students work cooperatively on assignment sheets. Those students diverse in terms of achievement, gender, race and ethnicity

Johnson & Johnson (*Ibid*) identified five elements that should be included in any cooperative activity: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual (and group) accountability, interpersonal and small-group skills, and group processing. These elements will be discussed later within the characteristics of CL.

### 1.3.2 Jigsaw

In the Jigsaw model, originally presented by Aronson and colleagues (1978), students participate and are involved actively in a cooperative group work to do tasks and activities, so that each group member possesses unique information. Mandall (2009) explains '*The group product cannot be completed unless each member does his or her part, just as a jigsaw puzzle cannot be completed unless each piece is included*' (p.98). Students work in heterogeneous teams; heterogeneous means students diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability. One member of each 'learning' or 'jigsaw' group would be asked to work on one separate section. The following step, members of different groups who were working on the same section would meet together in 'expert groups' to discuss their sections. Then they would return to their regular groups and take turns teaching their groupmates about their sections. Students have to listen carefully to each other's work and show motivation and interest to be able to learn. Finally, students take a quiz on the topic studied individually (Mandall, 2009).

### 1.3.3 Jigsaw II

In a variation called Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1980; cited in Arnold, 1999), all students are first given common information. That is, members of the home group are assigned the same topic, but focus on separate sub-topics. Each member must become 'expert' on his/her specific topic in order to teach the other members of the home group. Students take tests individually, and the group scores are recognized through a class newsletter. Jigsaw II model, when implemented in the classroom, the teacher needs to follow these steps: (retrieved from Elliot Aronson Web Site Copyright 2000-2013)

- Devide students in 4 or 5 member jigsaw groups. The group should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability ;

- Appoint one student from each group as the leader. Leaders intervene whenever having problems ;
- Devide the task into 4 or 5 segments ;
- Assign each student to learn one segment, taking the advantage of using the 'expert sheets' ;
- Form "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment. Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment, and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group ;
- Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups ;
- Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group. Encourage others in the group to ask questions for clarification ;
- Float from group to group, observing the process. If any group is having trouble (e.g. a member is dominating or disruptive), make an appropriate intervention.
- At the end of the session, give a quiz on the material so that students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count.

### 1.3.4 Reverse Jigsaw

This variation was created by Timothy Heeden (2003). It differs from the original Jigsaw during the teaching sub-topics of the activity. In the Reverse Jigsaw technique,

students in the expert groups teach the whole class rather than return to their home groups to teach the content (Heeden, 2003).

### **1.3.5 Group Investigation**

Shlomo Sharan and his colleagues (Sharan & Sharan, 1992; cited in Cummings, 2000) developed group investigation model. In this method, students form groups of 2 to 6 members and work together cooperatively in order to discuss and plan projects. Each group selects a subtopic from a unit studied by the whole class, then the group breaks subtopic into individual tasks, finally a group report is prepared and presented then evaluated.

### **1.3.6 Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)**

Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) is adapted from the '*Team-Game-Tournaments Approach*' (Slavin, 1986; cited in [www.KaganOnline.com](http://www.KaganOnline.com)). Students learn in heterogeneous groups processing a cooperative learning activity and they are tested and held accountable with a quiz after a period of time. The quiz scores are interpreted into team competition points, that is on how much students have improved in their performance over their past averages. STAD is beneficial in motivating students to do their best on quizzes taken individually.

## **1.4 Cooperative Language Learning Activities to Enhance Writing**

### **1.4.1 Collaborative and Cooperative Writing**

According to (DeBolt, 1994 cited in Arnold, 1999) the process-based writing approaches emphasise the use of cooperative learning in the writing classroom beginning from initial pre-writing stages until the final product and publication. Through cooperative writing, students can brainstorm in small groups, they can discuss between each other meanings or appropriate vocabulary and write the first draft, they can also edit. Peer conferencing and written peer response help students to develop more negotiation and social skills. Students can produce a poem in groups for example, or a report; and the Jigsaw approach used in the experiment can be the most appropriate technique for such activities.

### **1.4.2 Buzz Groups**

According to Mandall (2009) Buzz groups are teams of four to six students that are formed quickly. They discuss on a particular topic or different topics allotted to them. The discussion is informal and they exchange the ideas. Buzz Groups serve as a warm-up to whole-class discussion. They are effective for generating information ideas in a short period of time. This technique could be used to write essays.

### **1.4.3 Write Around**

For enhancing student's creative writing or summarizing, teachers can give a sentence starter (for e.g. If there were no plants on the earth... / A man met an alien on the sea shore...) then all students in each team have to finish the sentence. Then, they pass the paper to the right, read the one they receive, and add a sentence to that one. After a few rounds, four great summaries or stories emerge. Students should be given time to add a conclusion and edit their favourite one to share with the class (Mandall, 2009).

### **1.4.4 Think /Pair/Share**

According to Crandall (1999) *'With think/pair/share, learners have several opportunities to develop their ideas, rehearse their language and content before having to commit to speaking in front of the entire class'* (p. 229). It is a structured activity developed by Luman (1978). It is a simple and quick technique; the teacher develops and poses questions, gives the students a few minutes to think about a response, and then asks students to share their ideas with a partner. This task gives them opportunity to collect and organize their thoughts. "Pair" and "Share" components encourage students to be able to compare and contrast their understanding and thoughts with those of another, and to rehearse their response first with each other before going public with the whole class.

### **1.4.5 Roundtable / Roundrobin**

Roundtable and Roundrobin are two activities developed by Kagan (1994). In both activities, Roundrobin is taken orally each one takes his turn to speak. Hence, in Roundtable every member of the group takes a turn to write on one share piece of paper to answer the question and pass it to all members of the group, the turns continue until



the time is over or some of students do not have information about the question, *‘These activities are excellent for capturing ideas in brainstorming, for developing common background information, and for identifying possible directions for future activities.’* (Crandall, 1999, p. 231)

#### **1.4.6 Numbered Heads Together**

*‘I use not only all the brains I have, but all I can borrow.’* Woodrow Wilson (Cummings, 2000, p. 44)

This activity is developed by Kagan (1994). In this activity, the teacher asks a question for all the members of the group, and students put their heads together to discuss the answer, each member is given a number (1,2,3,4), each member of the group knows the answer and each one is explicated to answer the question when the number is called by the teacher, student with that number is required to answer the question *“Numbered heads together useful for students revising grammatical mistakes, vocabulary, or factual items from a reading or audio-visual texts”*.(High, 1999, p. 231).

### **1.5 Characteristics of Cooperative Learning and its Affective Nature**

CL is a group work that creates more positive affective climate in the classroom even though there are differences among the models of CL, but they share some essential characteristics which have an affective impact on the language classroom.

#### **1.5.1 Positive Interdependence**

It is a crucial concept where students come to believe that they sink or swim together that is, the teacher structure tasks that students work on producing or completing together something for example, a report, newsletter, a lesson, or a project (Crandall, 1999). In a cooperative group work each student has to play his role in order to achieve group goals. Good & Brophy (2008) reported that positive interdependence means all of these traits; *‘goal interdependence’*, *‘task interdependence’*, *‘resource interdependence’*, *‘role interdependence’*, and *‘reward interdependence’* (p.191).

- Positive Goal Interdependence: students perceive that they can achieve their learning goals if and only if all the members of their group also attain their goals.
- Positive Reward Interdependence: each group member receives the same reward when the group achieves its goals.
- Positive Resource Interdependence: each group member has only a portion of the resources, information, or materials necessary for the task to be completed; the members' resources have to be combined for the group to achieve its goals (the Jigsaw procedure).
- Positive Role Interdependence : teachers create role interdependence among students when they assign them complementary roles such as reader, recorder, checker, etc. (Johnson & Johnson, 1999)



**Figure 1.1: Outcomes of Cooperation. (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 8)**

### 1.5.2 Face-To-Face Interaction

According to Johnson & Johnson (1999) Students need to arrange themselves so that they are positioned to face each other for direct eye-to-eye contact and face to face

conversations. A group of two to five is typically enough to encourage all members participate. Cooperative groups are heterogeneous on purpose, teacher provides every student with opportunities to maximize his or her contribution according to his/her abilities for example.

### **1.5.3 Individual (And Group) Accountability**

*‘What children can do together today, they can do alone tomorrow’.*

(Let Vygotsky, 1962; cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1994)

The reason why teachers put students in cooperative learning groups is that all students can achieve higher academic success individually than when they do to study alone. Consequently, each student must be individually responsible and accountable for doing his or her own part of the work and for learning what the teacher has aimed to be learned (Felder and Brent, 2006). Therefore, each member of the group has to hold clear objectives that he/she will be accountable when there is an assessment or feedback.

### **1.5.4 Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills**

*‘I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than any other ability under the sun’*

(John D. Rockefeller, cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1994)

The fourth essential element of cooperative learning that Roger T. and David W. Johnson (1994) point out is the appropriate use of interpersonal and small-group skills. Because the teacher cannot oblige students to cooperate in small groups, they need to trust each other, communicate accurately, accept and support each other, and resolve conflict. ‘The more socially skillful students are and the more attention teachers pay-to teaching and rewarding the use of social skills, the higher the achievement that can be expected within cooperative learning groups’ (Johnson, *ibid*).

### **1.5.5 Group Processing**

According to Crandall (1999) students when engaged in group tasks, they also have to decide and reflect about each member contribution and they have also to overcome difficulties encountered during the task process. Crandall notes that *‘Through this processing learners acquire or refine metacognitive and socio-affective strategies of monitoring, learning from others, and sharing ideas and turns. In that reflection they also engage in language use’* (p. 229).

Johnson & Johnson (1994) explain that the purpose of group processing is to clarify and improve the effectiveness of the members in contributing to the collaborative efforts to achieve the group’s goals. In order to be sure that small-group processing takes place, teachers allocate some time at the end of each class session for each cooperative group to process how effectively members worked together.

## **1.6 Benefits of Cooperative learning in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms**

As previously mentioned, cooperative learning has many characteristics that affect students’ learning and their outcomes; moreover Crandall (1999) examined additional benefits in L2 and FL classrooms:

### **1.6.1 Reducing Anxiety**

When students have enough time to think and rehearse the correct answer with each other before they are asked to present it to the whole class anxiety and fear can be reduced. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes the role of cooperation to reduce the problem of anxiety he says that: *“Cooperation situations generally have a positive emotional tone, which means that they generate less anxiety and stress than other learning formats”* (p. 101).

### **1.6.2 Promoting Interaction**

In teacher-centered classrooms students with poor language rely on the teacher to act. Whereas in cooperative classrooms, students learn to rely on each other and rehearse their contributions before they are asked to share it with the larger class. Woolfolk (2004) emphasizes the importance of students’ interaction with the teacher or other

peers *'In order to test their thinking, to be challenged, to receive feedback, and to watch how others work out problems'* (p. 41).

### **1.6.3 Providing Comprehensible Input and Output**

As it was pointed before in 'the input hypothesis', group work makes students negotiate more comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981), that is, they engage in clarifying the task by asking questions or explaining or reviewing. And they try to modify output to make it more comprehensible for others (Swain, 1985; Swain and Lapkin, 1989; cited in Arnold, 1999).

### **1.6.4 Increasing Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem**

According to Slavin (1995) cooperation produces higher levels of self-esteem than did competitive and individualistic efforts. Increased self-confidence and self-esteem lead to the increase of the amount of learning efforts. Woolfolk defines self-esteem "*Self-esteem is an affective reaction of a judgment about who you are*" (2004, p. 71).

### **1.6.5 Increasing Motivation**

According to Gardner (1988; cited in Arnold, 1999), when students are motivated in the language classroom it can lead to more extensive use of the language and they also develop greater language proficiency. Working in groups and collaboratively motivates students in learning a language very well and it avoids such problems as shyness, unwillingness, and fear. In addition, the students' answer will be clear and explained very well because of group assistance in making contributions. Dornyei (2001) states that "*Cooperation is also motivating because the knowledge that one's unique contribution is required for the group to succeed increases one's efforts*" (p. 101).

### **1.6.6 Increased Opportunities for Learners to Listen to and Produce Language**

A number of researchers (Slavin, 1983 a; Harel, 1992; Chamot and O'Malley, 1987; Long and Porter, 1985; cited in Arnold, 1999) agree that during a cooperative activity, learners listen and produce a larger amount of the target language than when they work individually. Student-talking-time increased obviously even when teacher-talking-time remains high. Also, the student-turn-taking gets higher especially with learners with poor language.

### **1.6.7 An Increased Range of Speech Acts or Language Functions**

When students are engaged in negotiating meaning and discussing in CLL activity, they unconsciously use speech acts and language functions. They find themselves directing, reminding, clarifying, making suggestions, praising, or encouraging communication (Jacobs, 1996; cited in Crandall, 1999).

### **1.6.8 Opportunities for Learners to Develop Positive Social Skills**

A number of researchers (Sharan, 1980, 1990; Sharan and Shachar, 1988; Slavin, 1990; cited in Arnold, 1999) have examined the benefits of CLL on 'interracial relations' and on 'prosocial behavior' and 'conflict resolution'. because heterogeneity of groups in CL in terms of race, ethnicity, language, age ability and other diversity provide opportunities for students to learn in a democratic and tolerant society.

### **1.6.9 Greater Learner-Centeredness and Learner Direction in the Classroom**

Students in a CLL activity not only develop their learning of the academic content, but they also develop social interaction and problem-solving skills (Crandall, 1999). When working together peers support themselves and the teacher feels free in circulating, assessing, and offering help.

### **1.6.10 Increased Opportunities for Learners to Develop Academic Language**

When students work cooperatively they can find many opportunities to develop academic language through content-rich tasks. According to Kessler (1992; cited in Arnold, 1999), cooperative activities lead to the development of both social and academic language.

### **1.6.11 Students Develop Higher Order and Critical Thinking Skills**

When students work together, they need to organize themselves, to plan, to make decisions, resolve differences of opinions and solve problems; that is doing a number of higher order thinking skills and cognitive and metacognitive strategies which we cannot find in whole group activity (Lotan and Becton, 1990; cited in Arnold, 1999).

### **1.6.12 Language Learners Move from Interdependence to Independence**

There is an increased support for language learners to move from interdependence to independence according to Edwards (1997; cited in Arnold, 1999) '*students learn greater autonomy gradually*' (p. 330). They rely on each other first then on the leader experience in the group, acquiring greater independence and interdependence in their learning. During a cooperative task learners take the role of the teacher for instance, planning the task, monitoring, etc.

## **1.7 Some Strategies for Facilitating Cooperative Learning**

To be effective, cooperative learning activities need to be approached intentionally. Therefore both teachers and learners have to play essential roles to facilitate the cooperative task:

### **1.7.1 Teacher's Role**

The teacher is assigned an important and crucial role when he/she comes to prepare a group of students for a cooperative learning activity. A famous saying among coaches is, 'Failure to prepare is preparing to fail'. According to Shindler (2010) the teacher needs to determine the following elements before engaging in a cooperative task: the

size of the group, the group members, the time frame and nature of the task, and potential roles for group members.

### 1.7.1.1 Group Size

The teacher should select the size of the group. As Shindler (2010) suggests that cooperative group is mainly qualified by two students, if possible three or four are typically optimum. But group greater than four can be problematic '*Group of 2 or 3 maximize the involvement and help create a sense of interdependence and accountability*' (Smith, 2000, p.8). In case of larger groups, some students end up being spectators or marginalized by the others (Slavin, 1994; cited in Shindler, 2010).

### 1.7.1.2 Group Members

Kagan (1994) suggests that the most used team formation is that of '*heterogeneous*' teams which contain high/ medium /low students and mixing of gender and ethnic, '*The rationale for heterogeneous groups argues that this produces the greatest opportunities for peer tutoring and support as well as improving cross-race and cross-sex relations and integration*' (Kagan, 1994, cited in Dotson, 2001: 8).

Likewise, Roger and Johnson (1994) notice that creating cooperative learning - groups, helps to develop the '*heterogeneity*' of the student in small groups. Students should be placed in groups that are mixed by academic skills, social skills, personality, race, and sex ,it is much better than to let them select themselves or selecting by learning ability; stronger with stronger and weaker with weaker. Similarly, Alderman (2004) agrees that '*Cooperative learning groups are organized heterogeneously (mixed according to gender, ability and ethenticity)*' (p. 221). Shindler (2010) indicates that mixed abilities in grouping provides opportunities for stronger students to take on the role of peer tutor and weaker students to benefit from having the stronger students in their groups rather than select them randomly. Because it often leads for no control over the groups; therefore, it produces undesirable results. However, Harmer (2004) argues that the easiest way which demands little pre-planning is forming groups of students at



random, by grouping students who are seating near or next to each other without reason of friendship, ability or sex.

### 1.7.1.3 Identifying the Time Frame and Nature of the Task

When using cooperative learning, firstly teacher must prepare students to the task before grouping them. According to (Shindler, 2010: 231) states that '*Preparing a group of students for a cooperative learning activity is like preparing a team for a game*'. Shindler (*Ibid*) suggests some useful principles that the teacher follows when preparing the groups.

A useful principle to keep in mind is to introduce only one new variable at a time '*Never ask students to process new content and a new process at the same time*' (Shindler, 2010, p. 231). Similarly, Crandall (1999) notices that teachers fail to receive feedback when setting the groups due to the absence of preparation. She points out that '*Perhaps the greatest mistake teachers in initiating cooperative learning is failing to prepare the learners for the new approach.*' (p. 243). Crandall (*Ibid*) suggests that to ensure a successful CLL method and to help FL learners to understand the social, cognitive and linguistic skills that will be developed through CLL, the teacher needs to prepare learners for cooperative tasks and give them opportunities to practice and receive feedback on such skills as '*turn-taking, active listening, and positive feedback*' (p. 243) before they are engaged in groups. Also, Crandall (*ibid*) notes that the quality of the task is crucial; topics must be interesting and differ in style and strategies. For example, Jigsaw (Swain & Lapkin, 2001 cited in Pilar García Mayo, 2007) is an elaborated CL technique that is effective to draw the students' attention to form and to reflect about language.

Secondly, identifying the time frame and nature of the task, Shindler (2010) sees that the students should pace their efforts and adjust their reflection required whatever the length of the activity '*what are the priority tasks that need attention? What needs to be done carefully? How much time is allowed for brainstorming or discussion?*' (Shindler, 2010: 236). Harmer (2004) argues that the teacher must focus on the nature of the task on choosing better tasks, through organizing a successful activity. Usually students do the task rapidly, so that the teacher may be disappointed of the outcomes. But, some

groups over complicate the task so that they become paralyzed in processing the activity. As a result, the teacher should give time frame of the duration of each piece of the process.

Nevertheless, explaining the tasks for cooperative group is essential to help to draw the success in students' minds. Dörnyei (2001) recommends to provide a complete explanation of the task for students '*If we want our students to give their best when attending to a task, they need to see the point in what they do*' (p. 79) otherwise students may feel a sense of demotivation and boredom. Likely, Crandall (1999) agrees that teachers should explain the task needs to be given to the group in order to extend the cooperativeness across the class. In another hand, Dörnyei (2001) explains that it is better for teachers not only to vary the tasks but also the content should be attractive for students, that makes students motivated to learn, he notices that '*Varying the tasks is important but not even the richest variety will motivate if the content of the tasks is not attractive to the students-that is, if the task is boring.*' (p. 80)

#### **1.7.1.4 Cooperative Incentive (Reward) Structure**

Incentive structure or reward structure should be precised before grouping the students. Good & Brophy (2008) see that it is a method to motivate learners depending on the nature of the incentive '*e.g, grades, concrete rewards, symbolical rewards*' (p. 190). Under cooperative incentive structure students are rewarded individually and that depends on all the group combined efforts and the reward is distributed equally to all members of the group without neglecting the less able students.

#### **1.7.1.5 Teacher as an Effective Leader**

As soon as the groups are structured and each student takes specific role in activity like checker, writer, reader, summarizer... in order to make every member of the group responsible of the work (Shindler, 2010), at that time teacher enhances students working together through listening students' opinions sharing their ideas, and monitor them during the task by asking them if they have finished or not or if they need help. Westwood (2008: 46) suggests '*that teacher should monitor closely what is going on*

*during group activities and must intervene when necessary to provide suggestions, encourage the sharing of tasks.*' In other words, he/she should give suggestions and praise them in order to motivate and encourage the sharing of tasks between them.

During the activity, one of the most important roles as leader of the cooperative learning effort is that of the link among the groups. Teacher's words and actions act as the mode of communication between each group. Without your words, each group is essentially working in isolation (Johnson & Johnson, 1999a; Slavin et al, 2003). A powerful principle to keep in mind related to the social learning model is that what can be communicated to one group will inform or improve the performance in the other groups.

#### **1.7.1.6 Assessing and Evaluating the Cooperative Learning Activity**

Evaluation of students in cooperative learning is not an easy task, teachers work to design appropriate evaluation method for cooperative learning activities *'Effective evaluation of cooperative learning in inclusive classroom must focus on both the content and the process of the group experience.'* (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 18). Therefore, the process of grading the group work discourages cooperation among students because of classmates' disabilities who could cause the failure of the group. So, (Johnson & Johnson, *Ibid*) claim that *'Teachers must be careful that the structure of group evaluation accounts for differing abilities.'* Therefore teachers should follow a method how to assess their students and evaluate those who work together. For example, there are many different types of activities which are appropriate for the evaluation of students who are working in cooperative group. Dippong (1992) recommends that evaluation of students' work can be processed in such activities: *'Group reports, problem solving, seminars and debates, and simulations and role-plays'* (Cited in Johnson & Johnson, *Ibid*).

During cooperative activity both teachers and students are accountable for evaluating and assessing the work. Teachers use direct observation to judge students' performance whether all members of the group have talked or not (Shindler, 2010). Nevertheless, self-assessment is also an important process to make students reflect and make efforts. But it could be problematic when trying to promote responsibility (Shindler, 2010).

That is, when the evaluation is translated into grades students feel hurt and angry about one another assessment. In fact, there are many teachers who are aware of the effectiveness assessment and evaluation as a strategy for recognizing and shaping the quality of student performance; however, other teachers do not incorporate assessment and evaluation in their teaching operation because they neglect its worth.

### 1.7.2 Learners' Role

According to Dornyei (2001) learners have several roles when they work cooperatively: as a recorder, corrector, summarizer and checker. For example, each member of the group should be responsible and accountable about the task. When a teacher gives information, learners have to pay attention to what he/she is saying and they grasp it very well. Then learners do the same as teacher's model of speaking or behaving. Learners have to participate without being forced or stimulated by the teacher. When learners ask questions, they have to ask questions not far from a given topic, however; the questions should be relevant. When the work is cooperative, learners have to work with each other and they think about their problems with solving together. CL '*promotes learning through communication in pairs or small groups.*' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 174). Its major concern is to enable students to learn from each other through their contribution to the group. Finally, when learners react appropriately according to the situation; the teaching-learning process will succeed especially when learners work cooperatively.

Like it was mentioned before that the teacher should assess and evaluate the groups' performances, the learners also should take the responsibility and evaluate themselves for the sake of learning. Crandall (1999) suggests that '*it may be more effective to ask students to keep a portfolio of work... and to evaluate themselves on the portfolio*' (p. 244). Conversely, (Shindler, 2010) argues that peer assessment and evaluation can be problematic in some cases when '*The reliability of the ratings are usually suspect due to social dynamics, and putting students in the position of rating one another is often perceived as unfair or uncomfortable*'(p. 237).

Another Suggestion was proposed by Kagan (1988) if we come to evaluate the group processes on purpose to improve students' cooperative interactions, students should fill out a sheet of questions (questionnaire) and answer individual<sup>ly</sup> or in groups about

everything that concerns the group processes ; their contributions, their needs and responsibilities, their opinions, and their suggestions ([www.KaganOnline.com](http://www.KaganOnline.com))

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion to this chapter, we might have neglected to indicate cooperative learning disadvantages and problems despite its potential benefits. Cooperative learning method is recommended not to replace traditional whole-class instruction but to retain it as most of researchers propose. This chapter explored CL vis-à-vis second language acquisition theories and instruction. It also included the major models of CL and cooperative activities to enhance writing. Furthermore, we mentioned the essential characteristics and principles of CL which affect positively the language classroom, besides, we stated its tremendous Benefits in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms. Lastly, we presented some strategies that should be followed by the teacher and the learner for facilitating CL. To sum up, if teachers wish to use cooperative learning effectively they need to prepare learners and teach them how to work cooperatively, also they need to assign suitable tasks.

## **Introduction**

In English learning classroom, the teacher aims at developing four skills of his/her learners' ability to listen and understand, to speak, to read and to write. The ability to write occupies the last place in this order, but it does not mean that it is least important. Emphasis should be paid to written work, which is in no way less important than reading and speaking. As a matter of fact, the four linguistic abilities are developed simultaneously. When we look at writing as a product, we are mainly interested in outcomes that is, we identify what the students have produced, e.g. grammatical accuracy, mechanics of writing, good organization, etc. In cooperative learning method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. They plan, translate and review the work together.

In this chapter, we will present the nature of writing and its components and stages. We will speak about how to build this skill in foreign language classrooms by the application of collaborative and cooperative writing. Then, we will present the role of the teacher in this process from demonstrating to evaluating students writing. We end this chapter with the main teaching approaches related to writing.

### **2.1 The Nature of Writing**

In the twentieth century, the spoken language was accepted; in contrast to the case of the written language which was neglected, because, in that era the origin of the written language was the spoken one. In language teaching, this negligence of written form and preference of the spoken form was claimed by many linguists like De Saussure to Chomsky. But this assumption of considering spoken language to be the origin of written one is only when a teacher makes the activity of dictation or recoding a tape (Grundy, 1998).

In the early years, the Audio-lingual approach was the dominant, as a result using the spoken language dominated. The focus of that era was on applied linguistics that implements theories of scientific linguistics on the spoken language. The opposite reaction towards writing in second language learning which means literary texts, the phoneticians as Sweet (1899/1964) and Passy (1929) claimed that

must be the essential base of both theoretical and practical studies of language which means the spoken language has the priority. The reason why spoken language is given much importance than written one is that writing is an orthographic representation of speech; as a result this concept affects a lot on many parts of the world. The neglect was almost in the United States until Leonard Bloomfield organize or ‘*institutionalize speech*’ (Kroll, 1990, p.16).

Nunan (1989) points out that writing cannot be just a pen and paper; in fact it is a complex mental activity. Learners have to master the writing skill to form paragraphs and texts. Teachers have to control and evaluate students writing about the content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. Thus, we support the researchers’ ideas saying that it is true that the spoken language has appeared before the discovery of the written language. In addition, each one is considered as a skill; writing skill and speaking skill and no one should be neglected.

## **2.2 Components of the Writing Skill**

Writing in English academically is not easy, it should follow some important criteria of writing, according to Starkey (2004) an effective piece of writing should include organization, coherence, clarity, with accurate language, and word choice.

### **2.2.1 Organization**

Organization is the first step in the writing process. The information should be organized in a structured format to readers which help and guide the writer to be direct in the writing process. According to Starkey (2004) organization helps the readers to show how the points are linked together and how they support your thesis. Starkey (2004: 2) states that “*The direction and purpose you get from organization helps your reader to believe what you are saying and to willingly follow your lead.*”

Organization is determined through some important techniques that show the value of the writing process which are pre-writing technique which includes free writing and brain storming. According to Starkey (2004), the prewriting technique in organization is the planning of the work which comes after reading and gathering the information from

the prewriting. According to Galko (2002) ‘ *Brainstorming is to let your ideas flow without judging them* ’ (p.10). So, brainstorming is an effective technique in order to develop your piece of writing. However, free writing according to Galko is writing what comes to your mind without stop with focusing on a specific topic. According to (Starkey, 2004) “*Free writing might better be called “flow writing”, because the most important aspect to this prewriting technique is the flow, or momentum, that comes when you stay with it*” (p. 10).

### 2.2.2 Clarity

Clarity is the essential part in writing. The learner’s goal in writing is how to convey information including the fact that you are able to write well. In other words, the learner’s writing should be readable and clear in order to make readers understand what you mean as Starkey (2004) mentioned four fundamental elements in making writing easy and accurate:

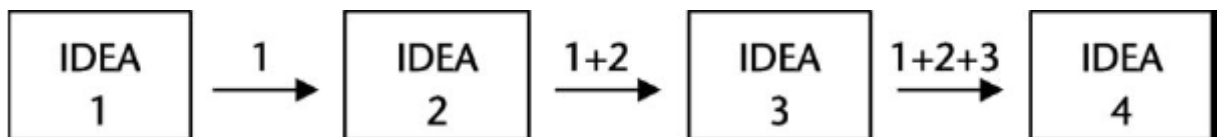
- 1) *Eliminate ambiguity*: the learner should avoid using ambiguous words or phrases that have more than one interpretation in order to help the reader understand what he means.
- 2) *Powerful, precise adjectives and adverbs*: the learner’s writing is clear when he uses adjectives and adverbs in order to make it accurate and help him convey his message.
- 3) *Be concise*, according to (Starkey, 2004: 15) who states that “*There are two equally important approaches to more concise writing: eliminating unnecessary words and phrases, and using the active (as opposed to passive) voice whenever possible.*”
- 4) *Avoid unnecessary repetition*: (avoiding wordiness) the learner should eliminate repetition of information and ideas.

### 2.2.3 Coherence

“*Coherence is perhaps the single most important element in any kind of writing*” (Murray & Hughes 2008:45). Kane (2000) and Creme and Lea (2008) agree that



coherence has a great role in making a good piece of writing. The learner's writing should present the ideas clear, valuable and understood to the readers. Murray & Hughes (2008: 45) notice that "*A good writer 'sticks' their ideas together so that they act as links in a chain, each link connecting the one before it with the one after. If any links are missing, the connections become unclear and the argument structure breaks down.*"



**Figure 2.2: Sequences of Ideas by (Murray & Hughes 2008:46)**

Figure 1 illustrates that there are a sequence of ideas that comes to your mind one after the other (idea 1 leads to idea 2; ideas 1 and 2 lead to idea 3; ideas 1, 2 and 3 lead to idea 4 etc. Therefore, the reader is able to understand the writer's ideas if the ideas are connected together with harmony (Murray & Hughes, 2004: 46) they notice that:

One of the main reasons writers fail to make themselves understood is because they take too much for granted and do not connect their ideas together clearly enough. As a result, the reader is unable to make sense of them and is therefore unable to evaluate them favorably.

## 2.2.4 Word Choice

According to Starkey (2004) the word choice displays the learner's style of choosing the lexical items and structures in order to convey his message. According to Starkey (2004) there are two aspects the learner should consider while choosing the words to be used: denotation and connotation. Denotation is "*literal meaning, of the word.*" (Starkey 2004:22). Learners should make sure of the correctness of their words:

The confusion may stem from words that sound or look similar (but have very different meanings), words and usages that sound correct (but in fact are not considered Standard English), or words that are misused so often that their wrong usage is thought to be correct.

Connotation involves emotions, cultural assumptions, and suggestions. Connotative, or, implied meanings can be positive, negative, or neutral. Some dictionaries offer usage notes that help to explain connotative meanings, but they alone cannot be relied on when trying to avoid offensive or incorrect word choices. Keep in mind that using a word without being aware of its implied meaning can annoy your reader or make your message unclear. Denotation and connotation must be included when making word choice, but the learner should be aware of choosing the words because it may confuse or insult or annoy the readers *“That means being aware of inclusive language, and avoiding slang, clichés, and buzzword”* (Starkey, 2004: 24).

### 2.2.5 Mechanics

The word mechanics refers to the appearance of words, how they are spelled and arranged on paper. (Kane, 2000:15). (Starkey 2004) notices that the learner should express himself through the written word in a clear and accurate way which helps him to succeed in his writing. Starkey addressed that written mechanics in these terms of grammar spelling, punctuations, and capitalization. . Brooks and Penn (1970: 20) states that *“For one thing, in writing, we must understand the structure of the language, what the parts of speech do, how the words relate to one another, what individual words mean, the rules of grammar and punctuation”*.

- Grammar is an essential element in writing .The learner must be knowledgeable of the rules of grammar and how to manipulate them in order to be skilled in the writing process, such as: pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions...etc.
- Capitalization is necessary both for specific words and to start sentences and quotes. (Starkey. 2004).Capitalization must be used in academic writing and the learner should follow the rules of using capitalization and be careful of using it in the right way.
- Punctuation is necessary part in English academic writing. With proper punctuation your writing will be more polished and technically correct, and you will convey your voice more directly (Starkey, 2004). Murray and Hughes (2008) state that punctuation indicates pauses and sentence boundaries also help the reader understand what is written. Capitalization and punctuation marks are important parts of writing according to (Murray and Hughes 2008:185):

They indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. A well punctuated and capitalized piece of writing should make your work easier to read and understand and will therefore help it make a more favorable impression on your readers.

## **2.3 Building the Writing Skill in Foreign Language Classrooms**

To build the writing skill is not an easy task for any one especially in a foreign language writing as our case with the English language. In this part we will mention some steps that are followed in building the writing skill.

### **2.3.1 Building Confidence and Enthusiasm**

Among students who are willing to write in English there are many students who are not able or not willing to write. In fact, those students actually have problems such as anxiety and fear about their writing .Because they make spelling mistakes, they have a difficulty in punctuation and they do not know how to construct sentences or paragraphs. Those problems are the main obstacles that affect negatively the students in completing writing tasks successfully. In addition to the previous obstacles, when students are asked to write they feel reluctant because the writing skill is rarely practiced even in their mother tongue. Hence the task of writing seems strange and alien. Moreover, when students have nothing to say they lose the will to write.

(Harmer, 2004) notes that the role of the teacher is to pay attention to students who suffer from poor self-esteem, lacking in familiarity and needed enthusiasm. In addition, the teacher provides an appropriate climate in the classroom to make the students feel like writers of English by the sense of belonging and feeling comfortable. This way of building the writing habit enhances the teacher in varying tasks of writing and choosing the acceptable activities. Furthermore, he provides a clear explanation about the tasks that are given to facilitate and succeed the completion of activities.

#### **2.3.1.1 Selecting Writing Activities**

Teachers have to show interest on learners' needs. So, when requirements are available especially in selecting the appropriate activities; therefore, students will be

more motivated and interested. Varied tasks and activities would enhance the success of learning; thus, motivating and interesting tasks are those that affect positively the thoughts and behaviors of students. Therefore teachers take a crucial responsibility in selecting the appropriate writing activities. Students are different from each other as learning styles are different. Each member among students has a preferable way of learning. For instance, some are visual, some are auditory and others are kinesthetic. Teachers must be aware of each student's style of learning in order to know how to select and provide the acceptable writing activities (Harmer, 2004).

### 2.3.1.2 Students Requirements

Students in the writing skill face problems, so they require or need solutions. The role of the teacher is to fulfill their needs by providing the following points:

- **Information:** teachers have to explain the writing tasks clearly for students. Because learners need to understand what does the task aim at and how to do it. Through their well understanding they will answer and complete the activities easily. For example, when they are asked to write a poem they have to grasp a clear idea about the topics that will be involved. If students are writing together (collaboratively) they require understanding very well the topic that is writing about, who is going to write, and what is to be written, also how to develop the writing sequence.
- **Language:** *“If students need specific language to complete a writing task we need to give it to them (or help them to find it) this may involve offering them phrases, parts of sentences or words.”* (Harmer, 2004: 62-63). Students always have no rich vocabulary, therefore in dealing with a writing task they find difficulties in using words in the appropriate place, or they do not even find the appropriate words.

### 2.3.2 Instant Writing

Instant writing is taking a short period of time such as ten minutes and it is considered to be a short writing process. It is not like a long piece of writing and the

teacher uses it when he sees it appropriate. If it is appropriate it enhances and increases self-confidence of each one. The following activities are examples of instant writing.

### 2.3.2.1 Sentence Writing

Teachers ask students to write sentences as practicing a language or preparing for the next exercise. The following activities are used for their purposes to make learners more confident and comfortable.

- **Dictation of Sentences for Completion:** dictation is an easy way to make students create and continue the rest of sentences; for instance, we can dictate: “*My favorite time of day is...’ and students have to write the morning, or the evening etc.*” This way of writing is beneficial for students to practice their vocabulary; therefore, they do not forget it forever.
- **Writing Sentences:** teachers can ask students to write two or three sentences about any topic they are interested in or they have studied before. For example when students have been studied about a topic of hopes and ambitions they can write two sentences about how their lives will be in the future. (Harmer, 2004: 63-70)

### 2.3.3 Collaborative Writing

Merlyn Lee (2010) notes that with the value placed on collaboration in both academic and workplace settings, teachers are beginning to realize the need for more opportunities for students to develop collaborative and cooperative skills. Writing, which is traditionally viewed as a ‘*solitary*’ activity, could be a rendezvous for enhancing students’ collaborative skills. Nevertheless, Lee (*Ibid*) argues that there were not enough studies in ESL setting about collaborative writing, she sees that

‘Collaborative writing offers an authentic learning environment where students do not only develop their writing skills but also critical thinking and decision making skills. Despite studies conducted on collaboration (Leeser, 2004; Mabrito, 2006; Storch, 2005; Watanabe & Swain, 2007), few studies have focused on how

students arrive at decisions, especially in an ESL context' (Lee, 2010, p. 159)

In a collaborative writing task, members of a group work together to write, they share ideas, debate with one another, and make decisions. In this social context, a learner tries to process and understand information in order to complete the task. When students' ideas vary, disagreement may arise and explanation becomes necessary. This collaborative activity may reveal patterns of interaction in the three stages of writing: prewriting, drafting, and revising.

### **2.3.3.1 Using the Board**

Writing on the board has a great impact on increasing students' collaborative writing. This way makes collaborative writing successful. In addition, it enhances students to move from their chairs to the board in front of everybody in the classroom. This technique of teaching is suitable for those who are courageous and have confidence; also their preferable learning style is kinesthetic. It gives also the opportunity for everyone in the classroom to see and notice what is going on.

### **2.3.3.2 Writing in Groups and Pairs**

The activities of writing in groups and pairs are several. Some students use the scribe to write the final draft of text. Another way of writing in groups and pairs is that every member among the group writes his version of the text. For example, students will concentrate more on vocabulary and language that is used. And they give their opinions and judgements about what they have written. This way has also short comings; for instance, not all students practice the writing skill. Hence, a scribe does not give a whole contribution to build and construct a text. The main objective in forming groups is to make students share ideas together, in other words to create a good and acceptable written text as the actual writing is. In fact, the role of the teacher is to make sure that all students are taking the scribe role in the course of an activity. Therefore, the problems are reduced and even avoided. (Harmer, 2004: 73-75)

### 2.3.3.3 Writing to Each Other

Writing to each other is another way that engages students to write in classroom. This way of writing does not take only the form of text but also it may take the form of interaction. This interaction through writing to each other informs students indirectly about the lesson like when the teacher asks each student to write a question for his/her classmate, for example : where are you from? The answer will be for example I am from America; therefore the student learns how to write a question and its answer (Harmer, 2004:79)

## 2.4 Stages of the Writing Process

There are five elements of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, reviewing / revising and editing. The five steps are described by Donald Graves (1983).

### 2.4.1 Prewriting

Prewriting is a successful technique to explore and develop the learner's ideas. According to Gallo (2001) who notices that there are many useful strategies included in prewriting that make the learner approach his writing and develop his ideas such as; brainstorming, free writing, asking questions, mapping, journaling and listing. Similarly, Zamel (1982 cited in Nunan, 1995) argues that skilled writers spend much time in planning but unskilled writers do not follow this stage.

Prewriting is an important stage as (Parson ,1985: 115)says” *Students who are encouraged to engage in an array of prewriting experiences have a greater chance for writing achievement than those enjoined to ‘get to work’ on their writing without this kind of preparation.*” In writing classrooms, it is important to make students aware of the value of the prewriting stage. Before they start to write, learners should select their topics of writing and it is always helpful that the learners take a moment to think about the topic by using prewriting activity including brainstorming reading, drawing, talking, note-taking, and clustering.It could be practiced in groups or with the whole class. In other words, teachers are advised to give more time to students to think about writing the topic in order to make students productive.

### 2.4.2 Drafting

*“Drafting means writing a rough, or scratch, form of your paper. It’s a time to really focus on the main ideas you want to get across in your paper.”* (Galko, 2004: 49). Hedge (1988: 89) defines drafting as the stage where the writer *“Puts together the pieces of the text [through] developing ideas [into] sentences and paragraphs within an overall structure.”* Also, (Johnson 2008:193) describes drafting as *“Where students make the first attempt to capture their ideas on paper.”* When the learner records his ideas, drafting is the first step writing in the learner’s paper, it may be correct or not. (Murray, 1978: 87) defines this strategy as *“Discovery drafts”* it helps learner discover what he wants to say by writing down his ideas in the draft paper without paying attention to spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes, he/she just write what he thinks about the topic freely, and he focuses only on the content rather than the form. Moreover, he should make notes in order to relate and explore his ideas and the content of the compositions, drafting should not be final because it’s not the version that the student shows to the readers. *“It’s start, though. And it will form the foundation for your final paper”* (Galko, 2004:49).

### 2.4.3 Reviewing/Revising

Reviewing or revising is the third stage after drafting. Which means revising what you have written to rearrange your writing by revising the content of what the learner means, also the structure if it is organized or not and the mechanics that includes spelling, grammar, punctuation. In this stage, learners’ revision is finished when students feel that their writing is correct. Here, (Galko, 2004: 75) sees that reviewing must be done with basic steps which are:

1. *Read your paper very carefully and very critically as if you were the intended audience ;*
2. *Content Revision Checklist ;*
3. *Decide what needs to be done ;*
4. *Make the needed changes.*



Grenville (2001: 153): “[as you revise] you will be looking for changes that will help readers understand the information better or be more convinced by your argument. Once you have found the places that need fixing, you have to decide whether to cut, add or move.” In this stage, revision can be revised by the teacher, groups, or the whole class because it is helpful when students read your compositions and react, suggest and comment what they like or ask questions for clarification. According to Nunan (1991), in this stage the competent writer revise all the levels of lexis, sentence and discourse through the composing process and use revision to make the meaning clear .In addition, the teacher’s revision is useful according to (Sommers, 1982: 150) who suggests that teachers’s role is to help students understand the purpose of revision by commenting and suggesting. After the revision, students get their feedback and decide what they change or delete. In other words, revising stage is the essential part of writing because it helps students to give them the awareness of their writing and to find the structure or the most appropriate form in order to keep them developing then editing.

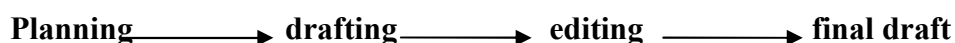
#### 2.4.4 Editing

Editing is the stage where the draft is polished; it is the final step before handing out the final draft. In this stage, the student writer pays attention to correct spelling, grammar and punctuation and other mechanical errors. Editing involves the careful checking of the text to ensure that there are no errors of spelling, punctuation, word choice and word order. According to Smith (1982) “*The aim of editing is not to change the text but to make what is there optimally readable*”(p.145). Similarly, Johnson (2008) notices that in editing stage student’s writing should be clear and simple by using appropriate spelling, grammar, and punctuation, Johnson (*Ibid*: 167) defines it:

Basically ‘editing’ means making your piece as reader-friendly as possible by making the sentences flow in a clear, easy-to read-way. It also means bringing your piece of writing into line with accepted ways of using English: using the appropriate grammar for the purposes of the piece, appropriate punctuation and spelling, and appropriate paragraphing.

## 2.4.5 Publishing

Publishing is the final stage in writing process which involves sharing or publishing the student's writing to the teacher. (Johnson, 2008: 199) states that publishing as "*Having an audience responds to your writing makes it comes alive*". (Harmer, 2004) describes publication as final version in how students produce their final writing. Publishing can take many forms; publication may be oral by reading aloud what they write, or written by letters, report or visual by sharing data show. Harmer summarizes the process of writing in the following steps:



**Figure 2.3: Process of Writing. (Harmer, 2004: 5)**

The role of the teacher in this stage is to respond to the students' writing and evaluate by providing inputs to their writing. After students receiving the reaction of the teacher students will be able to evaluate their own writing and get benefits of the teacher's suggestions and comments (Harmer, 2004).

## 2.5 The Role of the Teacher in the Process of Writing

(Harmer, 2004: 41-42) identifies five roles of the teacher before and during and after students writing which are:

### 2.5.1 Demonstrating

Teacher here helps students learning how to write in better way, as soon as students must use the language correctly, in other words, to be aware about conventions such as, (focus on punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage, dictating, correct broken paragraphs...) which help them knowledgeable about the language rules in order to to be good writers.

### **2.5.2 Motivating and Provoking**

The teacher's role is motivate students writing skill through guiding them and help them when they feel themselves lost in writing, teacher here help students to feel themselves comfortable. teacher helps students find their ideas when they are doing their tasks by asking and checking their responses, giving them guidelines how to start writing and how relate their ideas, killing their anxieties and fears which make them motivated and convincing them that they are able to be good writers.

### **2.5.3 Supporting**

Supporting students is the main role of teacher. Teachers should be supportive with students when they are doing their tasks in classroom and encourages them to be involved in writing tasks through the suggestion of ideas and means, because students always need encouragement and help in order to be better writers.

### **2.5.4 Responding**

It is the teacher's reaction to student's piece of writing. When teachers respond to students' writing, they give suggestions and comments about content and form. Also, teachers make comments on students' errors and their use of language and make suggestion for its improvement.

### **2.5.5 Evaluating**

Evaluation of students is an important tool to determine whether students benefit from the teaching practices. The teacher evaluates students in tests, he mainly focuses on their writing mistakes and gives marks and grades in order to improve their writing skill, he responds as a reader not as a grader.

## **2.6 Approaches of Teaching a Foreign Language**

We are going to define some approaches that are followed in the process of teaching:

### **2.6.1 Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 2001). But it means that learners must know the real functions of a given sentence rather than its surface structure. According to

(Savignon, 2002: 4) “*Communicative language teaching derives from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes, at the least, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational research.*” When students have a plenty of opportunities to practice and use a language they will be competent in the rules of a foreign language.

Students of teachers who tend to practice this approach (i.e. Communicative Language Teaching) would focus much more on the success of a task performance. In the communicative language teaching activities, learners must have the intention or aim in communication, and then their concentration must be on content more than form; moreover, they have to vary sentences. Communicative language teaching is a term that has an essential use in learning and it conveys a purpose for learners to be skillful in communication. Unlike the old method that makes learners study only rules of a language instead of communication. (Harmer, 2005: 84-85-86). According to Nunan (2004: 7):

The basic insight that language can be thought as a tool for communication rather than as sets of phonological, grammatical and lexical items to be memorized led to the notion of developing different learning programs to reflect the different communicative needs of disparate groups of learners.

## **2.6.2 Task Based Instruction**

Teachers provide tasks to students for completion. After they complete a task the teacher gives the correction. It is suggested that the task based methodology has three basic stages pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus. In the pre-task stage the teacher explains the whole task to learners with using such vocabulary to make the task clearer. During the task- cycle stage teacher is controlling when the members of the group or pairs are performing a task then they plan to tell the classroom what has happened before with oral or written performance. In the third one language focus stage, the text that is written or read learners among the classroom make a discussion on specific features of text; teacher also can intervene the discussion. Task based learning has a clear cue that it leads a teacher from control that exists in the old way of teaching to students-teacher discussion and interaction. (Harmer, 2005: 87)

### 2.6.3 Competency Based Approach

According to Chelli (2010) *“The competency based approach is very popular approach which focuses on measurable and useable knowledge, skills and abilities.”* It consists of organizing the content of the curriculum according to the objectives which is to develop the competency of students in learning foreign language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) note that CBA seeks the learner feedback defining exactly what students expected to do not only to learn. In other terms, the knowledge of the learners will be described and measured because knowing a language is not just knowing its rules and its surface structures, but learners have to know the real functions of a language in daily life settings of communication. When learners communicate they will be able to say or talk about their problems. Therefore they will think and talk in English for solving their problems. The Competency-based Approach, as its name suggests, seeks to establish competences in learners so as they can put in practice what has been acquired in school, in other extra school settings.

At the end, an approach, namely the Competency-based Approach came in an attempt to bridge the gap between school life and real life, by relating school acquisitions to varied and pertinent contexts of use inside as well outside school. An opinion backed by Slavin (1995) who also views that:

If a student can fill in blanks on a language arts test but cannot write a clear letter to a friend or a prospective employer, or can multiply with decimals and percents on a math test but cannot figure sales tax, then that student's education has been sadly misdirected. (241)

### Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that, writing in a foreign language is not an easy task; it needs more attention and knowledge from both teachers and learners. This chapter explored the nature of writing as a cognitive activity and as a language skill. It also included the basic rules of writing which contribute in the enhancement of any piece of writing. Besides, we have presented some procedures about how to build the writing skill through cooperative and collaborative writing, planning tasks, and providing

students' needs. In addition, we have included the stages of the writing process, then, the role of the teacher for guiding learners to be competent in writing and; lastly, we have presented and described the three main approaches in teaching foreign language related to the target skill.

## **PART ONE**

### **THE EXPERIMENT**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the experimental study which has been conducted at the English Department of Biskra University. A detailed description of the experiment indicates its aims, population, data-gathering tools and content. There is also a description of both measurement tools: the pre-test and the post-test.

#### **3.1 Aims of the Experiment**

As it is pointed out in the research proposal, the aim behind this experiment is to improve the students' writing skill by implementing cooperative learning technique. We have chosen the Jigsaw II (Chapter 1.3.3) (Slavin, 1980) model as an elaborated technique because it fits the elaboration of a descriptive essay using the comparison/contrast method of writing. Since written expression is taught to the third year students at the English Department of Biskra University, we have chosen two groups to be the sample population in the experimental study. The groups have been allocated randomly; one to the experimental group and the other to the control group. Since third-year LMD students have been taught different types and methods of writing essays in the fourth and fifth semesters, the same pre-test has been used with both groups. However, the experimental group only will be taught how to write a descriptive essay using the comparison/contrast method of writing through the implementation of cooperative group work (Jigsaw II) in the course of written expression, as it will be shown below (section 3.5).

#### **3.2 Population and Sample of the Experiment**

The sample population, as mentioned above, consists of two groups of third year LMD students at the English Department of Biskra University. One group is randomly selected as the experimental group and the other one as the control group. They represent the whole population of third year students—nine groups with twenty-three (23) students in each group, whose mother tongue is Arabic and they study English as a Foreign Language.

### **3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire**

Teachers are more concerned with the implementation of cooperative learning activities in the classroom than students; especially those who teach written and/or oral expression courses. Various cooperative learning activities related to writing can be useful to enhance students' writing skill.

#### **3.3.1 Teachers' Sample Population**

Our population sample includes teachers of written expression course in all levels because they deal with the different uses of cooperative language activities. There are fifteen (15) teachers at the English Department who answered the questionnaire. They are aged between 21 and 50 years old.

#### **3.3.2 Administration**

The questionnaire has been administered at the English Department of Biskra University during a week. Teachers preferred to answer it at home.

#### **3.3.3 Description**

The questionnaire consists of nineteen (19) open-ended and multiple choice questions divided into three sections as follows (See Appendix 1):



**Section One:** General Information (Q1-Q4): it is designed to get background information of the teacher concerning gender, age, qualifications and experience.

**Section Two:** Teachers' incorporation of Cooperative Learning activities (Q5-Q11). It is concerned with the use of the Cooperative Learning strategy itself. It seeks to know whether teachers adopt the Cooperative Learning Approaches in language teaching.

**Section Three:** Teachers' implementation of cooperative writing activities in EFL classrooms (Q12-Q19). This section is comprises questions seeking information about the teachers' degree of awareness of the various cooperative writing activities and their use in classroom application.

### **3.4 The Pre-test**

It consists of two parts: part one examines learners' knowledge of the different types and methods of writing essays since they were taught how to write an essay in the fourth and fifth semesters..; and the focus was on comparison /contrast method of writing. The testing was organized orally and was allocated 45 minutes. Part two tests students' writing according to the graphic organization of an academic essay. In other words, the comparison and contrast essay should include an introductory paragraph, developmental paragraphs (two paragraphs at least, one about similarities and the other concerns the contrasts) and a concluding paragraph. Thesis statement, grammar mistakes, and the amount of information included in each body paragraph were taken into consideration. Both groups (control group and experimental group) were asked to write a descriptive essay using the comparison/contrast method, the topic was free, and the task was done individually. The aim behind giving students the choice of the topic is to ensure that the problem does not lie in the topic but in the ability of organising a piece of writing even if the topic is free. The writing session has lasted 45 minutes. A total of 46 essays has been collected, examined and corrected.

### **3.5 Content of the Experiment**

The experiment includes the implementation of cooperative learning technique which is the Jigsaw II model (Chapter 1.3.3) (Slavin, 1980) in writing a descriptive essay using

a comparison/contrast method. A series of three teaching sessions were organized during three weeks. The reasons of choosing this cooperative learning technique are that the Jigsaw Approach is an elaborated CL technique that is considered as the most appropriate for writing activities, as well as an effective technique which enhances students' writing skill; and, helps students to benefit from 'the expert sheets' provided during the writing task. Since students were asked to write a descriptive essay using a comparison/contrast method, Jigsaw II helps students draw their attention to the form and the graphic organization of an academic essay. The graphic organization of a comparison/contrast essay includes the introductory paragraph, developmental paragraphs (as explained above), and the concluding paragraph; therefore, the students were divided into four member Jigsaw groups. The steps of Jigsaw II technique are described in the following.

### **The 'JIGSAW II' Technique**

The teacher is required to:

- Divide students in 4 member jigsaw groups, each group should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability.
- Appoint one student from each group as the leader. Leaders intervene whenever problems occur.
- Divide the task (writing a comparison / contrast essay) into 4 segments: the introductory paragraph, the similarities paragraph, the contrast paragraph, and the conclusion paragraph.
- Assign each student to learn one segment, taking the advantage of using the 'expert sheets'.
- Constitute "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment. Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment (brainstorming, drafting) and to rehearse the presentation.

their jigsaw group.

- Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups.
- Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group (revising, editing).
- At the end, students should take a quiz. They are asked to write the essay individually, then, they are assessed.

### **3.5.1 First teaching session**

A sample topic of a comparison and contrast essay was presented '*Japan and the U.S.A: Different and Alike*' (Neil HARRIS in The San Francisco Chronicle) (see Appendix 4). Students were asked to read and explore the text. Students's awareness was raised about the different parts of the topic: the introductory paragraph, the contrasts paragraph, the similarities paragraph, and the concluding paragraph. Students were reminded about the different topics proposed in the previous session and were asked to write a comparison and contrast essay. They agreed on one topic (Algeria and Egypt: different and alike). The time allotted was 45 minutes. Students worked in small groups and benefited from the 'expert sheets' about 'Essay Writing', they followed the Jigsaw procedure.

At the end of the session each group was asked to submit the last draft of the essay. Then, each leader group was asked to read the essay in front of his classmates in order to evaluate the group's efforts and; eventually, reward the best work. The aim behind this step is to encourage and motivate students and to value worth the groups' efforts.

### **3.5.2 Second teaching session**

The students followed the Jigsaw II procedure to write a comparison /contrast essay about the following topic: *Obama and Bush: Are They Two Faces for One Coin?* Students benefited from ‘expert sheets’ distributed to them (See Appendix 6). The time allotted was 45 minutes.

### **3.5.3 Third teaching session**

The students followed the Jigsaw II procedure to write a comparison /contrast essay about the following topic: *LMD vs Classic: Two Algerian Educational Systems*. Students benefited from ‘expert sheets’ distributed to them (See Appendix 3). The time allotted was 45 minutes.

**N.B.:** In all the three teaching sessions the last step of the Jigsaw II was not undertaken because it was left for the post-test.

### **3.6 The Post-test**

Session four was dedicated to the post-test with the experimental group. Students were formed into four member Jigsaw groups (See Appendix 2), and were given ‘expert sheets’ to benefit from them (See Appendix 5). The task consists of writing a descriptive essay using the comparison / contrast method, the topic is: ‘*The U.S.A and The U.K: Different and Alike*’. The Jigsaw II cooperative learning technique was implemented successfully. The first 45 minutes were devoted to cooperative writing, and the last 45 minutes were dedicated to writing essays individually. Each student was asked to submit his own individual essay. The aim is to investigate the research hypothesis whether students’ writing skill is enhanced through the implementation of the cooperative learning activity (Jigsaw II model), and to verify how much cooperative learning positively influences student’s individual outcomes; and, that will be eventually known by assessing and evaluating student’s individual work. A total of 23 essays have been collected, examined and corrected. The results are discussed at the end of the last chapter: Data Analysis and Interpretation.

Concerning the control group, students were asked to do the same task like the experimental group did, that is to write a descriptive essay using the

comparison/contrast method of writing, on the same topic, but without the implementation of the Jigsaw II cooperative learning technique, students do the task individually in 45 minutes. A total of 23 essays have been collected, examined and corrected. The results are also discussed at the end of the last chapter: Data Analysis and Interpretation.

## **Conclusion**

As indicated in this chapter, we have taught the implementation of Jigsaw II cooperative learning technique to the experimental group to see whether using well-structured small group work would influence students' way of writing, and if students would be able to recognise the graphic organization of descriptive essays as well as enhance their method of writing the comparison/contrast essays.

Through a series of teaching sessions that aimed at the implementation of an elaborated cooperative learning technique which would probably enhance students' writing skill and raise their awareness about the graphic organization of a descriptive essay; we have included Jigsaw II model (Slavin, 1980) (Chapter 1.3.3) by providing special 'expert sheets' that could help students in the writing process. Obviously, we were limited by time and syllabus constraints; otherwise, our lessons would have been much enriched by further CL techniques; especially those related to writing in order to help develop students' writing competence. We have tried to vary the examples as much as possible to make students acquainted with Jigsaw II in different topics. Moreover, we have tested students' writing before and after the experiment. Analysis and interpretation of tests' results and findings will follow in the next part.

## PART TWO

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Introduction

Our experimental study has focused on the use of cooperative learning technique Jigsaw II model in EFL classrooms as an effective strategy to enhance students' writing skill. Here is the analysis and interpretation of data driven from the pre-test, teachers' questionnaire, and the post-test.

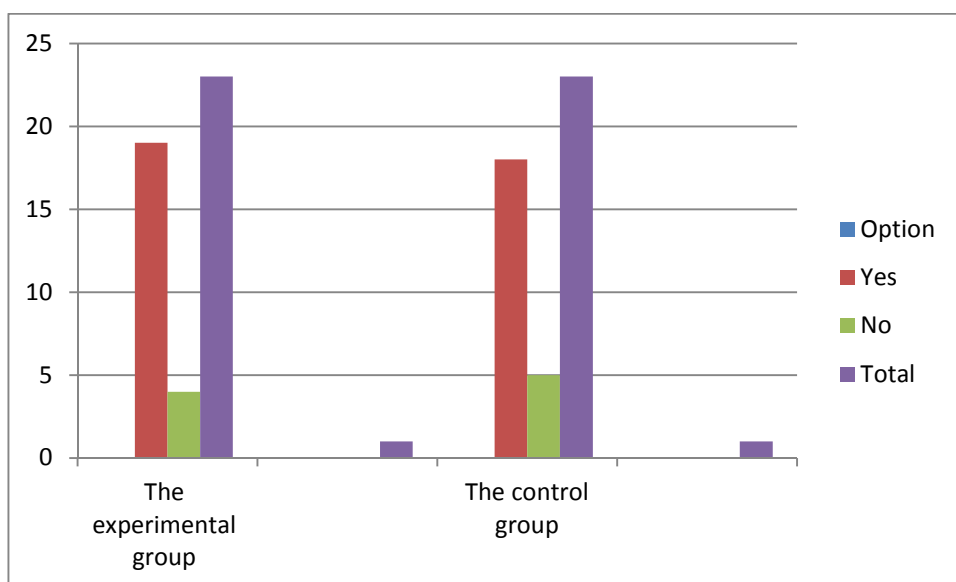
#### 3.7 The Pre-test

As it has been indicated above, the pre-test consists of writing a descriptive essay using the comparison/contrast method. Its graphic organization should include the following paragraphs: section A: inclusion of the introductory paragraph; section B: inclusion of at least one similarities paragraph; section C: inclusion of at least one contrasts paragraph; and section D: inclusion of the concluding paragraph. Moreover, thesis statement, grammar mistakes, and the amount of information included in each body paragraph are taken into consideration.

#### Section A: Inclusion of the introductory paragraph

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	82.60 %	18	78.26 %
No	4	17.39 %	5	21.73 %
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

Table 3.1 Percentage of students' inclusion of the introductory paragraph in the pre-test



**Graph 3.1 Percentage of students' inclusion of the introductory paragraph in the pre-test**

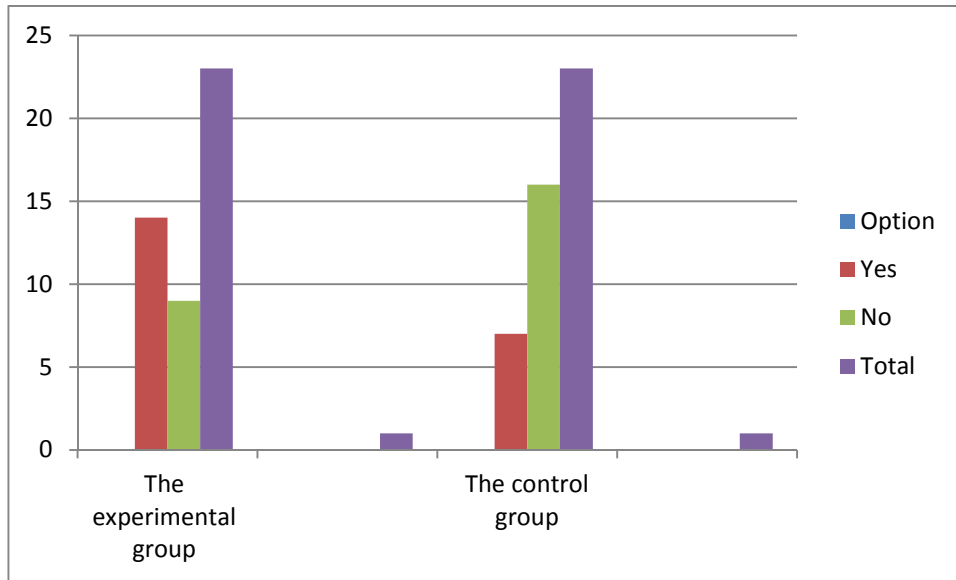
In this section, participants' essays revealed that many students give importance to the introductory paragraph (the EXP group 82.60 %, the CTR group 78.26 %). But, in one hand, many participants did not include a clear thesis statement (10 in the CTR) and (5 in the EXP), in addition to some grammar mistakes and poor vocabulary. In the other hand, there are some good paragraphs which contain well organized ideas and rich vocabulary (5 in the EXP group and 4 in the CTR group). Overwhelmingly, though students gave importance to the introductory paragraph, they failed to write an acceptable piece of writing including correct grammar, rich ideas and clear thesis statement. Despite the fact that the objective is to analyse students' essays from the graphic structure of an essay, we may also evaluate the essential elements of the writing process.

### Section B: Inclusion of the similarities paragraph

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	60.86 %	7	30.43 %
No	9	39.13 %	16	69.76 %

Total	23	100 %	23	100 %
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**Table 3.2: Percentage of students' inclusion of the similarities paragraph in the pre-test**



**Graph 3.2: Percentage of students' inclusion of the similarities paragraph in the pre-test**

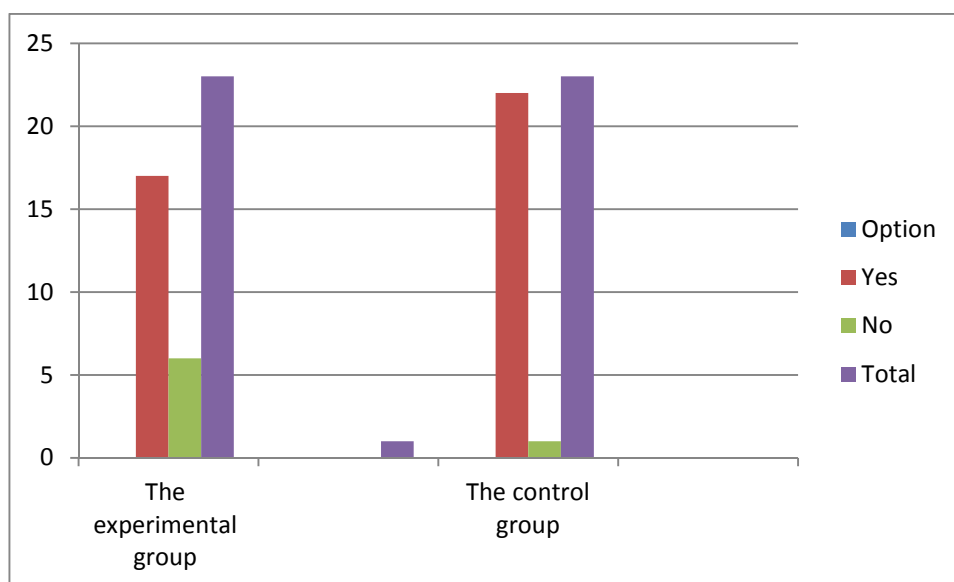
**Table 3.2** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups under pre-test conditions. The two groups have displayed different behaviours. The group that performed better is the EXP group; the inclusion of the similarities paragraph (60.86 % - 30.43 %) which means that this group already involves good elements. But, the majority of participants' essays in the EXP group (7) wrote short paragraphs, the amount of information was not rich, only one or two topic sentences without supporting sentences. In addition, some essays (3 in the CTR group and 3 in the EXP one) made a mixture of similarities and contrasts in the same paragraph. Also, some participants' paragraphs involve a description of one thing in the past then in the present time (for example: education, students and friends). Nevertheless, there were good paragraphs (2 in CTR group and 3 in EXP one) which displayed a positive use of comparison markers, less grammar mistakes but; always, the same problem that the participants encounter which is the poor flow of ideas and lack of development and information. In short, the performance demonstrates that both groups represent large mixed-ability classes with varying levels of fluency in written English.



### Section C: Inclusion of the contrasts paragraph

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	17	73.91 %	22	95.65 %
No	6	26.08 %	1	4.34 %
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

**Table 3.3: Percentage of students' inclusion of the contrasts paragraph in the pre-test**



**Graph 3.3: Percentage of students' inclusion of the contrasts paragraph in the pre-test**

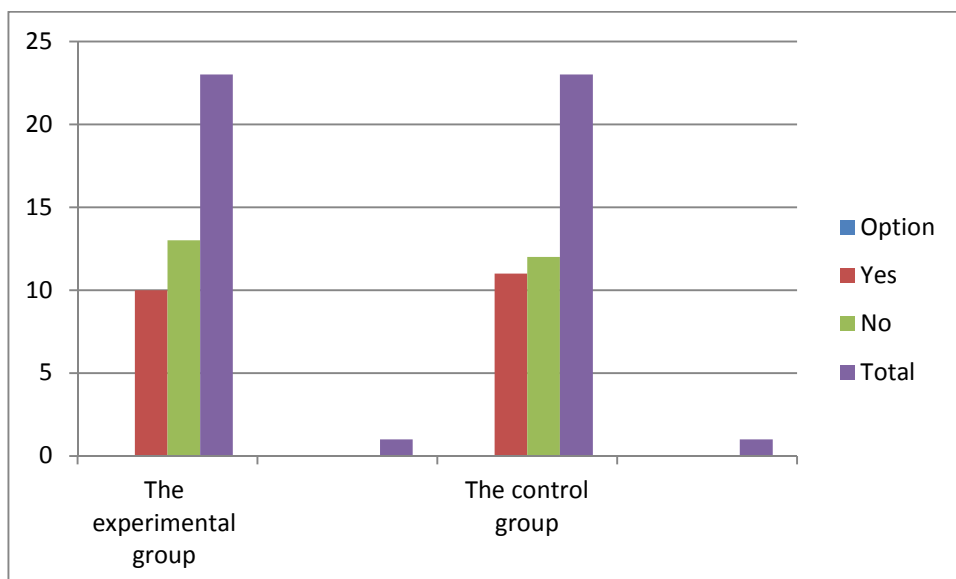
**Table 3.3** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups under pre-test conditions. We notice that the CTR group performed better than the EXP one (95.65 %-73.91%). As we have mentioned previously in section B, (16) participants from the CTR group and (9) participants from the EXP one did not include the similarities paragraph because they just wrote the contrasts paragraph. They believed that the comparison/contrast essay should contain only the different points between two items (students' examples: contrasts between internet and books; mothers and fathers; the classic educational system and the LMD...etc). The same remarks made for the preceeding section about the participants' writings: the paragraphs were short, they

lacked shining ideas, some topic sentences without the due details and; sometimes, one topic sentence constituted whole paragraph. Participants' mistakes of grammar are a worrying aspect. Nevertheless, there are noticeable paragraphs (2 in EXP group and 3 in CTR group) with good use of contrasts markers, less grammar mistakes but always the same problem that the participants encounter which is the poor flow of ideas and lack of development and information. In short, the performance demonstrates that both groups represent large mixed-ability classes with varying levels of fluency in written English.

### Section D: Inclusion of the concluding paragraph

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	43.47 %	11	47.82 %
No	13	56.52 %	12	52.17 %
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

**Table 3.4: Percentage of students' inclusion of the concluding paragraph in the pre-test**



**Graph 3.4: Percentage of students' inclusion of the concluding paragraph in the pre-test**

**Table 3.4** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups under pre-test conditions. We remarked that both groups have displayed almost the same behaviors. Nearly over the half of the participants did not succeed to write the concluding paragraph (56.52% in the EXP group and 52.17% in the CTR group). We suppose that the main reason is that students spent much time in writing the body paragraphs and neglected the concluding paragraph (so they were rushed up by the shortage of time). Also, there were some participants who wrote a conclusion which does not relate to the topic of their essays (3 in the EXP group). The good paragraphs were rare (1 in the EXP group and 1 in the CTR group). In conclusion, the participants' performances were similar which indicates that they do not pay much attention to end the essay with a paragraph that restates what has been written; or summarizes the most important ideas in the essay or displays someone's point of view.

### **3.8 Teachers' Questionnaire**

A questionnaire has been administered at the English Department to collect information about the various methods, techniques and strategies related to cooperative learning approaches that EFL teachers use to enhance students' writing skill. The target population has included teachers of the Written Expression course of all levels, because they are probably aware of students' needs and problems concerning writing. Fifteen (15) copies were distributed, but only eleven (11) copies were handed back. The questions were answered anonymously.

#### **3.8.1 Analysis of Results and Findings**

Answers from the teachers' questionnaire have been collected and counted. The following are the results drawn from the teachers' answers.

#### **Section One: Background information on the teacher**

##### **1. Gender:**

Option	Number	Percentage
Male	2	18.18%
Female	9	81.81%
Total	11	100%

**Table 3.5 : Teachers' Gender**

The table above represents teachers' gender. As it is indicated, 81.81% of teachers are females. There are only two males. Whatever is the gender, it would not influence the results of our research since they teach the same syllabus content within the same environment.

## 2. Age:

Option	Number	Percentage
Between 21 and 30 years	4	36.36%
Between 31 and 40 years	4	36.36%
Between 41 and 50 years	3	27.27%
More than 50 years	0	/
Total	11	100%

**Table 3.6: Teachers' Age**

None of the teachers has exceeded 50 years. Three teachers are aged between 41 and 50 years. And 4 teachers aged between 31 and 40 years, also 4 teachers aged between 21 and 30 years. Fortunately our sample involves young as well as aged elements; therefore, we can benefit from youth's new ideas and old teachers' experience.

## 3. Degrees or qualifications

Option	Number	Percentage
Licence / B.A	0	/
Master	2	18.18%
Magister / M.A	9	81.81%
Doctorat / Ph.D	0	/

<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>
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**Table 3.7: Teachers' Degree Or Qualifications**

To know more about teachers' level, we have asked them about their degrees and qualifications: 81.81% (9) teachers with Magister degree and (2) teachers with Master degree. This means that the teachers' level is good with regard to the important skill which is writing in a foreign language.

#### **4. How long have you been teaching Written Expression at the university?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than one year	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
From one to five years	<b>7</b>	<b>63.63%</b>
More than five years	<b>3</b>	<b>27.27%</b>
Total	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.8. Teachers' Experience In Teaching Written Expression**

According to the information in the table above, the majority of teachers (7) taught the written expression course more than one year. While (3) three teachers taught English more than five years, which means that our sample includes experienced teachers in writing.

## **Section Two: The teachers' incorporation of Cooperative Learning\* (CL) activities**

#### **5. How often do you use cooperative group work in the classroom activities?**

Option	Number	Percentage
Every session or more	0	0%
2 - 4 times per week	1	9.09%
About once a week	8	72.72%
About once a month	2	18.18%
Never	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.9: Frequency of Teachers' Implementation of Cooperative Group Work**

The table above indicates that the majority of teachers (72.72%) implement cooperative group work in the classroom activities about once a week, and (18.18%) use it once a month. Only one teacher uses CL (2 - 4) times a week and she/he added a remark that she/he uses cooperative group work (*most of the time*). However 2 teachers use it once a month, one argued that the question '*depends on the nature of the course itself*' and the other pointed out that '*this depends on the programme*'. The conclusion we can draw is that, in one hand, the implementation of CL in the classroom activities depends indeed on the nature and the time frame of the task (limitations of the timetable). In the other hand, despite its potential benefits, teachers avoid engaging in cooperative instructions in order to prevent problems developed in some group situations; in addition, teachers' poor knowledge of the various CL activities related to writing tasks.

#### 6. How many students do you set in each group?

Option	Number	Percentage
2 - 3	1	9.09%
4 - 5	7	63.63%
More than 5	1	9.09 %
(2 - 3) + (4 - 5)	1	9.09%
(4 - 5) + (More than 5)	1	9.09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.10: Group Size**

As shown in this table, the majority of teachers (63.63%) set between 4-5 students in a group. And equal percentage (9.09 %) for the other options. These results indicate that a few teachers know the optimum size of cooperative group which is 2-3 students per group, such composition maximizes the involvement and helps create a sense of interdependence and accountability among students. Nevertheless, even 4-5 or 6 students per group can be approved in large classes like those at the English Department of Biskra University where we can find classes with 50 students. However, teachers who set more than (6) members in a group either because of their poor knowledge and experience, or a matter of negligence .As a result, for such composition some students end up being spectators or marginalized by the others. At last, we should mention that there is a teacher who opted for both options (2-3) and (4-5) and wrote, '*it depends on activity / objectives*', another one also opted for both option (4-5) and (more than 5). In fact, we agree with the teacher's comment; depending on the task structure and objectives. For example, in Group Investigation Model developed by Sharan & Sharan (1992), the groups are formed from 2 - 6 members to work together using cooperative inquiry. In short, the results signify that there is certain awareness among teachers of written expression course about the basic element of cooperative groups which is the best group size.

### 7. Do you set the groups on what basis?

Option	Number	Percentage
Heterogeneity*	0	/
Gender	0	/
Students select themselves	8	72.72%
Selecting students by learning ability	0	/
Heterogeneity* + Students select themselves	2	18.18%
Students select themselves + Selecting students by learning ability	1	9.09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.11 : Criteria of Grouping**

As shown in the table above, most teachers let their students form the groups by self-selection. Such behaviour is not recommended by most of the researchers since CL approves the heterogeneity of the groups' combination. Many researchers recommend the heterogeneous grouping because mixed groups contain students that are mixed by academic skills, social skills, personality, race, and sex. Those students are interacting together; therefore, they benefit from each other. In the case of allowing students to form their own groups, there is a teacher who added a comment, '*students selecting themselves according to their level*'; such comment indicates that, either, there is a certain intention hold by the teacher in order to prevent group conflict and controversy since students would select their friends. Or, teacher pays more attention to group product rather than group processes. Concerning teachers' suggestions of other criteria of grouping, only one (1) teacher said, '*sometimes, I interfere to split good students on all groups to create an equilibrium between them*'.

**8. Classify the following CL models according to your knowledge:use 1, 2, 3 or 4.**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Learning together model</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Jigsaw model</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Group investigation model</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table3.12. Teachers' awareness about CL models**

When the teachers were asked to classify the CL Models by order of the most known item, the Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) model reached the highest scores in priority first, 4 times with a percentage of (40%) in comparison with other models. Learning together model (twice), Jigsaw model (twice), and Group investigation model (twice) obtained a percentage of (20%). We should mention that there is one teacher who did not answer this question. We may deduce that she/he encounters them for the first time thinking that cooperative learning is just to ask students to work together in groups without the necessary application of the significant principles and



techniques. Since Student Teams- Achievement Divisions (STAD) model has reached the highest scores, this result implies two possibilities: either teachers have really put into classroom application this technique and students carried out successful achievement and meaningful outcomes, or they have just made a theoretical evaluation.

**9. In accordance with your experience, can you please indicate how far do you agree with the following ideas (CL positive impact on your students when engaging in cooperative group-work). Use 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 (1- totally agree; 2- partially agree; 3- neither agree or disagree; 4- partially disagree; 5- totally disagree)**

**A. CL maximizes students' interaction in L2.**

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total
<b>Subject</b>	7	4	0	0	0	11
<b>Percentage</b>	63.63%	36.36%	/	/	/	100%

**Table3.13. Teachers' Perception of Peer Interaction**

It is commonly believed that cooperative learning maximizes second language acquisition by providing students more opportunities to practice using English and to engage in direct interaction in groups; therefore, we asked teachers to express their agreement or disagreement. The majority (63.63%) totally agrees with the statement presented above. On the other hand, we have recorded 4 cases (36.36%) of partial agreement and there is nil disagreement. On the whole, all teachers (100%) seem to agree that L2 acquisition is fostered by cooperative group work. Indeed, teachers have experienced the positive impact of CL on their students through promoting face-to-face interaction. Certainly, they have noticed that, in every cooperative group work, their students learn to work together regardless of ethnic backgrounds or whether they are male or female, handsome or ugly, disabled or not. Also, they certainly have noticed that their students engage in meaning negotiation and discussions through taking more turns, producing more samples of the target language. Eventually, their students' outcomes become effective and meaningful.

**B. Students are encouraged to believe in positive inter-dependence; they sink or swim together!**

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total
<b>Subject</b>	2	5	1	3	0	11
<b>Percentage</b>	18.18%	45.45%	9.09%	27.27%	/	100%

**Table3.14. Teachers' Perception of Positive Interdependence**

It is commonly believed that cooperative learning is characterized by positive interdependence. Interdependence requires students to believe that they sink or swim together; i.e. students perceive that they must coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their group mates to complete a task and they cannot succeed unless their group mates do (and vice versa). Therefore, our sample of teachers was asked to evaluate their students' interdependence during cooperative group work. The percentage of 27.27% shows a partial disagreement with the statement above; maybe because they have noticed during the cooperative situations, that there are some members do not feel responsible of doing the task, they feel independent of one another. Whereas, (45.45%) of teachers display partial disagreement, because, in one hand, they agree with the concept as a basic element of CL, that is, theoretically accepted. In the other hand, practically the concept of interdependence seems to be a bit neglected. In some cooperative group situations, teachers have experienced individualistic behaviors. Only one student does all the work and the others 'go along for a free ride'; however, there are 7 teachers out of 11 who genuinely share our view that each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success.

**C. Students encourage each other to reach group's goals**

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total
<b>Subject</b>	5	4	2	0	0	11
<b>Percentage</b>	45.45%	36.36%	18.18%	/	/	100%

**Table3.15. Teachers' Perception of Students' Motivation**

According to the percentage of (45.45%) which displays total agreement, and (36.36%) of partial agreement ; we notice that (9) teachers out of (11) share our view point that, in cooperative group work, students encourage each other to reach group's goals. In other words, teachers have certainly noticed that their students encourage each

other to complete the task, and facilitate other members' efforts to achieve group's goals. Concerning teachers who do not agree or disagree, there is a high probability they do not perceive that their students develop important social skills.

**D. Each student is individually accountable to do his/her fair share of the group's work.**

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total
<b>Subject</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>27.27%</b>	<b>72.72%</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table3.16. Teachers' Perception of Students' Accountability**

According to teachers' responses, they agree that each student is individually accountable to do his/her fair share of the group's work since there is nil disagreement. Three of them (27.27%) totally agree, and (8) out of 11 partially agree. In the whole, we can assume that according to the teachers' evaluation of group's efforts, their students show individual responsibility and accountability for doing his/her part of the work. Concerning teachers who partially agree, probably, they have recorded that some members of the group did not perform better when they were given individual tests, or they have performed a weak presentation when they were examined orally. So, teachers' assessment reveals how much effort each member does contribute to the group's work.

**E. Teachers do not only pay attention to teaching the language, but they also reward the use of social skills.**

	1-	2-	3-	4-	5-	Total
<b>Subject</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>36.36%</b>	<b>36.36%</b>	<b>27.27%</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table3.17. Teachers' Perception of Social Skills**

According to the teachers' responses, they said that their role is not only limited in teaching the language but also their students must be taught the social skills required for high quality collaboration and be motivated to use them if coope

productive. The more socially skillful students are, and the more attention teachers pay to teaching and rewarding the use of social skills, the higher the achievement that can be expected within cooperative learning groups. Therefore, the teachers' monitors have certainly experienced the case when their students display among each other a feeling of trust, accurate and unambiguous communication, and support.

#### 10. Do you explain the values of cooperative learning to your students?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	11	100%
No	0	/
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table3.18. Teachers' Perception of the Value of Cooperative Work**

The teachers when asked whether they draw their students' attention to the values of cooperative work, they all responded that they do (100%). This implies that our teachers do actually help their students see the potential benefits of this technique, and they are aware of the necessity of involving students in the process of learning and teaching. Eventually this will contribute in the success of a cooperative classroom.

#### 11. In your opinion how conflict and controversy in small groups can be controlled?

Intellectual controversy and conflict of opinions among the cooperative group is predictable especially when the groups are heterogeneous. Therefore, we wanted to know about the teachers' different strategies and methods concerning this situation. There are 2 teachers out of 11 who did not answer. The following are the nine teachers own views:

- *By the control of the teacher, and drawing their attention towards the effectiveness of such technique in developing their performance, production and social skills.*

- *It is the teacher's role to control these small conflict by creating competition between groups so that each member in each group feels responsibility for the group's success.*
- *By defining the benefits/importance of working together (in groups) and explaining them that this method increases their motivation/self-confidence and performance.*
- *Logically, there should not be any conflict or controversy because the selection of the members of the groups is not done at random. But if it happens we just make a change.*
- *By a review of group roles : (a) everyone participates, (b) no arguing ; all opinions are honored, (c) no side conversations, (d) all show self-respect and respect for others.*
- *It can be controlled through going to them, group by group, and direct them to work by helping them from time to time.*
- *Sometimes I remind them of the benefits of group work.*
- *Changing the members.*
- *The small group includes the conflict of ideas.*

In conclusion, we can say that the teachers really hold a sense of awareness of effective cooperative classroom.

### **Section Three: Implementation of Cooperative Writing Activities**

**12. In your opinion which language skill is the most difficult for students to master?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Listening</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>Speaking</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>45.45%</b>

<b>c+d</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27.27%</b>
<b>a+c</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.19: Teachers' Perception of Students' Most Difficult Skill**

If we consider the 5 teachers who opted for writing with those 3 teachers who have chosen speaking and writing, we obtain 8 teachers out of 11 who consider writing as the most difficult skill to master. Since writing is a productive skill, learners find difficulties to produce an effective piece of writing characterized by all its components which are: organization, coherence, clarity, accurate language, and word choice. Nevertheless, a teacher reminds us that there shouldn't be a distinction between the four skills and she/he commented '*still the remaining receptive skills aren't that easy*'.

### 13. Which of the following describes your students' level of writing in English?

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>High</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>Above average</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>81.81%</b>
<b>Below average</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Low</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>d+e</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.20. Students' Level in Writing in English**

Teachers were asked to evaluate their students' level in writing in English. The majority- with a percentage of 81.81%- agree that their students have an average level in writing. There is one teacher who added a comment '*it is average because they have a problem in their style (the interference of mother tongue concerning their style, lack of vocabulary.*' However, 1 teacher opted for the "below average option", he provided the following reason '*lack of reading and practising.*' However, the teacher who opted for both (below average) and (low) options, his/her reason is that '*students encounter many problems at different levels*'. All in all, these results indicate that the majority of students lack the ability to write accurately, e.g. grammatical accuracy, mechanics of

writing, good organization. For this reason, we recommend the engagement of students in cooperative writing which is a better technique to enhance their productive skills; therefore, low achievers benefit from the knowledge of high achievers.

**14. Classify the following items according to the importance you give them while teaching writing. Use 1, 2, 3 or 4.**

Order of Importance	Subject	Percentage
1	Organization of ideas	54.54%
2	Grammar / Vocabulary	36.36%
3	Punctuation	9.10%
Total	/	100%

**Table 3.21: Classification**

The teachers' classification of the different components of the writing skill resulted with the following: "Organization of ideas" option reached the highest scores as a first priority with a percentage of (54.54%) in comparison with the other components. The second position was taken by both "Grammar" and "Vocabulary" options with a percentage of 36.36% and; finally, "Punctuation" was in the third position with a percentage of 9.10%. Since "Organization of ideas" reached the highest scores, it means that teachers do emphasise teaching the strategies and techniques for the production of an organized piece of writing restricted by the content of the curricular issues. For example: how to write a paragraph (topic sentence/ supporting sentences/ concluding sentence) and how to organize ideas in an essay (how to argue, to describe, narrate...etc). Nevertheless, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation remain elementary for the process of writing as a teacher commented '*they have the same importance because they do contribute in a good written production*'.

**15. Which of the following CL activities do you implement most when teaching writing?**

Option	Number	Percentage
Jigsaw	0	/
Write Around	3	27.27%
Think-Pair-Share	3	27.27%
Roundtable / Roundrobin	1	9.09%
Numbered heads together	0	/
Buzz groups	0	/
b+f	1	9.09%
c+d	1	9.09%
a+b+d	2	18.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table3.22. Teachers' Implementation of Cooperative Writing Activities**

Teachers were asked to choose the writing activities that they implement most. From the results shown above, two cooperative writing activities were the most used 'Write Around' and 'Think-Pair-Share', probably this type of activities suited their classes. With Think/Pair/Share, learners have several opportunities to develop their ideas, rehearse their language and content before engaging in the process of writing. Moreover, 'Write Around' activity enhances student's creative writing or summarizing. Other two teachers opted for three activities (Jigsaw, Write Around and Roundtable / Roundrobin) which mean that those teachers like to vary the cooperative activities to ensure that each student in the group participates actively. In fact, we support variations on cooperative structures to better engage students in a creative cooperative classroom.

#### 16. During the cooperative activity how do you monitor the groups?

Option	Number	Percentage
Intervene and provide suggestions.	1	9.09%
Encourage the sharing of tasks.	0	/
Check only if students are doing the	0	/



<b>activity</b>		
<b>Wait until students call for help</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>a+b</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>72.72%</b>
<b>b+d</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>a+c</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9.09%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.23 : Teachers' Strategies of Monitoring**

The teacher is assigned an important and crucial role when he/she comes to prepare a group of students for a cooperative learning activity. Thus, teachers were aware of this important function: 8 teachers out of 11 said that they intervene and provide suggestions, and they also encourage the sharing of tasks. It means that teachers do monitor effectively their groups by checking closely what is going on during group activities, and do not wait until students call for help. A teacher added a further comment, '*direct the students for the best way to do their work (helping them)*'.

### **17. Do you incorporate assessment and evaluation in cooperative writing activities?**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>63.63%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36.36%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.24 : Teachers' Assessment And Evaluation**

The results indicate that the majority of teachers do assess and evaluate groups' efforts which mean that they are conscious of the teaching-learning process. And when they were asked to specify the method of assessment and evaluation, 4 teachers provided the following views:

- *We select one example of a paragraph and write it on the board.*
- *We generally encourage self-essessment or self-evaluation. When it is a writing skill, we ask learners to exchange their pieces of writing and assess them.*
- *Instant evaluation as well as a final one.*

- *I read and provide feedback in terms of spelling, coherence, and even mechanics.*

A teacher from those who did not incorporate assessment and evaluation in cooperative writing activities (4) presented a reason that *‘they work together, but the assessment is individual’*. Indeed, the purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her own right. Individual accountability is the key to ensuring that all group members are, in fact, strengthened by learning cooperatively. After participating in a cooperative writing activity, group members should be better prepared to complete similar tasks or have quizzes individually (Jigsaw procedure is the best example).

**18. Which of the following cooperative incentives do you use to reward the group efforts?**

Option	Number	Percentage
Grades	4	36.36%
Concrete rewards	0	/
Symbolic rewards	0	/
No rewards	1	9.09%
a+c	2	18.18%
a+b	1	9.09%
b+c	1	9.09%
a+b+c	2	18.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.25 : Teachers’ Cooperative Incentive Structures**

Usually, teachers use incentives to motivate their students to learn. Teachers were asked to define which kind of incentives they use to reward groups’ efforts. The highest score with 36.36% of the sample was assigned to grades. Probably, because students prefer to have good marks rather than any other kind of reward. Two teachers commented *‘grades are supposed to be students’ sweeties!’*, *‘to foster the student achievement’*. In the other hand an equal percentage 18.18% for teachers who combine two or three rewards. There are teachers who not only use grades but also symbolic

rewards. And other teachers like to vary the incentives between Grades, Concrete rewards and Symbolic rewards. A teacher commented: *'it depends, my learners gain smiling faces ☺ for each good performance. They gather these faces to get more marks'*. Concerning the teacher who opted for 'no rewards', he commented *'preparation for future exams'*; probably he wants to leave the rewarding to the last step until students perform individually.

To conclude, we can say that the teachers are aware of the effect of incentives on students' outcomes. In our case, the teacher rewards groups of students according to the performance that results from their combined efforts.

### 19. Do you think that CL enhances students' writing skill?

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	9	81.81%
No	2	18.18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.26: Teachers' Evaluation of Cooperative Learning**

According to the table above, 81.81% of teachers support our hypothesis that CL enhances students' writing skill; as a matter of fact, they are teachers of written expression courses. However, two teachers out of eleven do not agree, here are their motives:

- *Sometimes only one or two students do the work and the others just help with simple thing that is why they cannot master the writing skill as we want.*
- *It needs further time/ it is based on group works, so they make noise.*

Whereas the teachers who agree draw the following reasons:

- *Because students enjoy group work and they have a chance to exchange ideas and skills, and they have opportunity to have peer-assesment before teacher's assesment.*

- *A good technique to develop the learners writing as well as social skills. They exchange ideas, experiences, and sometimes challenge each other.*
- *It helps students interact with each other and it maximizes their capacities.*
- *They learn from each other.*
- *Students get the opportunity to benefit from their classmates' knowledge.*
- *When they use cooperative groups, they try to make a discussion concerning their idea, acquire some new terminology and learn the style of the others.*
- *Students do encourage each other.*
- *Students share ideas and ask each other's questions. They feel like they're challenged/ in competition, so each member of the group tries to do his/her best to impress others and show his/her performance.*
- *They learn from each other some techniques and strategies besides the ones they get from their teacher.*

### **3.8.2 Summary of Results and Findings of the Teachers' Questionnaire**

To sum up, we observed from the results drawn from the teachers' questionnaire that we have a mixed sample of teachers of written expression courses in English Department of Biskra University in terms of gender, age and experience. Their age is between 21 years old and 50 years old, and they all owe Magister/Master Degree. Besides, all the teachers have taught written expression courses more than one year and 3 of them taught it more than five years. It is also noticed that, most of the teachers implement CL every week eventhough its implementation in the classroom activities depends on the nature and the time frame of the task. Also, it seems that the teachers know how to structure the cooperative groups since the majority of them do not exceed over 5 members in each group. However, unfortunately, the majority of the teachers do not know the value of heterogeneous groups since they let their students form their own groups. In that case, such teachers would focus on group product rather than group processes. Nevertheless, it seems that the teachers are aware of the major models of CL, and Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) is the most known among the other models. Furthermore, the majority of them, according to their experience in monitoring the groups, they agree that CL is characterized by face-to-face interaction, positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, and interpersonal and small-

group skills, all of them are fairly illustrated in the cooperative small-groups. Because, all the teachers try to draw their students' attention to the values of collaborative work. So, they suggested some methods and strategies to control conflict and controversy in small groups. Most of the teachers think that writing is the most difficult skill for students to control. Thus, the teachers' main concern in teaching writing skill is to get students learn how to organize the ideas in a piece of writing. Fortunately, the teachers like to vary the cooperative activities to ensure that each student in the group participates actively. What is important is that the implementation of CL in the classroom should include all its principles and techniques. Eventhough, most of the teachers try to monitor the groups through intervening and providing suggestions, and they also encourage the sharing of tasks among the members of the cooperative group, in addition to reward the groups' efforts using all kinds of incentives (grades, concrete rewards, symbolic rewards...etc), their students' level in writing remains average, and most of the students encounter difficulties to master the writing skill. Consequently, most of the teachers do support our hypothesis that CL is the best technique to enhance students' writing skill.

### **3.9 The Post-test**

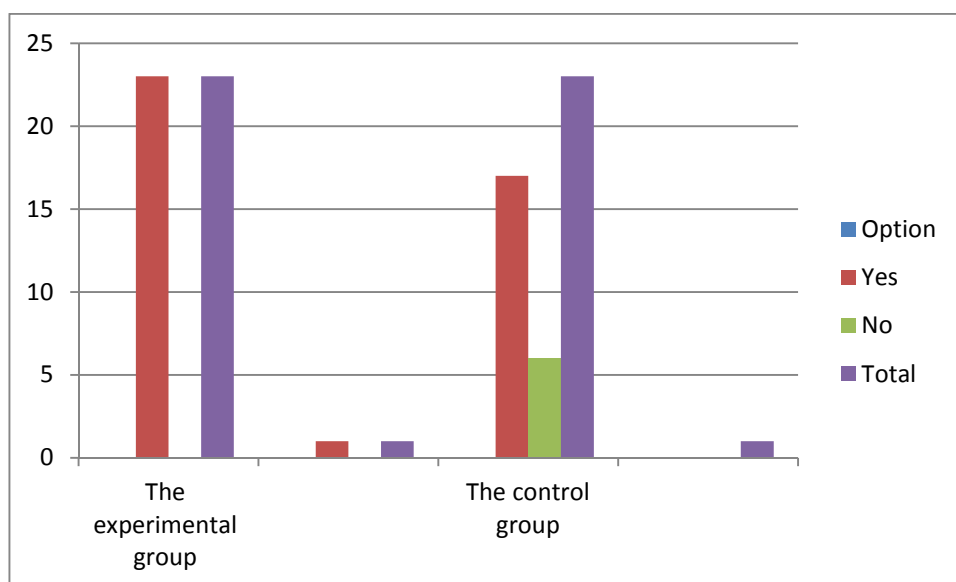
The post-test aims at investigating whether students' writing skill is enhanced through the implementation of the Cooperative Learning activity (Jigsaw II model). It also verifies how much cooperative learning activities positively influence student's individual outcomes through the comparison of the results of the experimental group that received the treatment to those of the control group. The two groups have been randomly allocated to the experimental and/or control group. The results are displayed below.

#### **3.9.1 Analysis of Results and Findings**

##### **Section A: Inclusion of the introductory paragraph**

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	23	100 %	17	73.91 %
No	0	0 %	6	26.08 %
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

**Table 3.27: Percentage of students' inclusion of the introductory paragraph in the post-test**



**Graph 3.27: Percentage of students' inclusion of the introductory paragraph in the post-test**

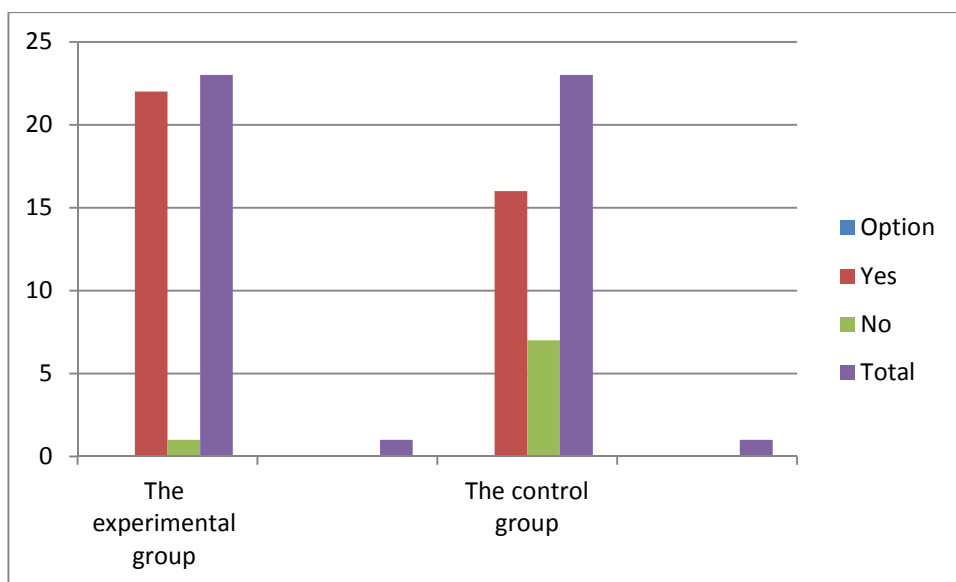
**Table 3.27** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups. We notice that both groups displayed different behaviors. The group which performed better appears to be the EXP group with a full percentage (**100%**) and a percentage of (**73.91%**) for the CTR group. Evidently, when we compare the EXP group's performances in the pre-test and the post-test (**82.60% - 100%**), we can conclude that the EXP group seems to benefit from the implementation of the cooperative learning technique during the writing activities. All the participants of the EXP group succeeded to write the introductory paragraph. They realized that any piece of writing should begin with a

paragraph where the first line is indented called the introduction. Moreover, the participants succeeded to write long paragraphs enriched with meaningful ideas. Participants developed the introduction until it reached (6) lines (18 participants), with at least (3) topic sentences followed by supporting ones; moreover, all the participants have mentioned the thesis statement. Surprisingly, the participants committed less grammar mistakes, and this can be backed to the positive influence of CL on student's outcomes. Students have learnt from each other since every participant has become 'an expert' in his segment of the essay. Lastly, low-ability students have benefited from high-ability students' knowledge.

### Section B: Inclusion of the similarities paragraph

Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	95.65 %	16	69.56%
No	1	4.34 %	7	30.43 %
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

**Table 3.28: Percentage of students' inclusion of the similarities paragraph in the post-test**



### **Graph 3.28: Percentage of students' inclusion of the similarities paragraph in the post-test**

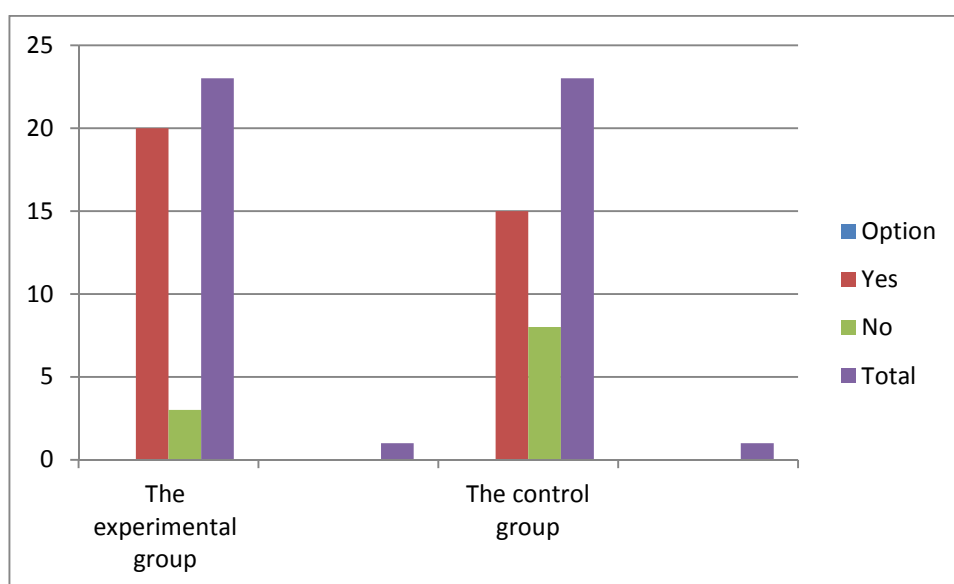
**Table 3.28** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups. In all cases, it's the EXP group which performed better than the CTR group (**95.65%-69.56%**). To begin with, the participant who did not include the similarities paragraph; in fact, he wrote a long paragraph where he/she related the similarities to the contrasts to the conclusion without indentation, even though the paragraph involved rich ideas. Since the aim of teaching the CL technique Jigsaw II to the EXP group is to raise students' awareness about the graphic organization of a descriptive essay using the comparison/contrast method; the first line of each paragraph should be indented for the sake of identifying the different ideas included in the essay. Therefore, the participant's similarities paragraph was wrong. The EXP group realized a percentage of **95.65%** which is extremely high in relation to the percentage of **60.86%** in the pre-test. Moreover, the participants' language was almost good; a logical organization of ideas, less grammar mistakes and rich vocabulary. The students' ideas were diverse about the common points that exist between two items (e.g. religion, feasts, economy, language, culture, vito...etc), and the correct use of comparison markers. In addition, it is obvious that participants benefited from the 'expert sheets' through the stages of writing process: brainstorming, drafting, reviewing and editing. As a result, participants' paragraphs were relatively long (minimum **6** lines and maximum **9** lines); where participants employed adjectives, comparatives and superlatives. What really counts in participants' paragraphs is that there is a considerable amount of information included in relation to their paragraphs of the pre-test. Consequently, this improvement is probably due to the positive impact of CL method implemented during the post-test *'The quality of thinking is better as a result of having more perspectives and the opportunity to process verbally rather than just mentally'* (Slavin, 1994 cited in Shindler, 2010, p. 230). Nevertheless, there are some short paragraphs (in **3** essays) whose length is between **3-4** lines which comprise grammar mistakes and disorganized ideas.

### **Section C: Inclusion of the contrasts paragraph**



Option	The experimental group		The control group	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	20	86.95 %	15	65.21 %
No	3	13.04 %	8	34.78%
Total	23	100 %	23	100 %

**Table 3.29: Percentage of students' inclusion of the contrasts paragraph in the post-test**



**Graph 3.29: Percentage of students' inclusion of the contrasts paragraph in the post-test**

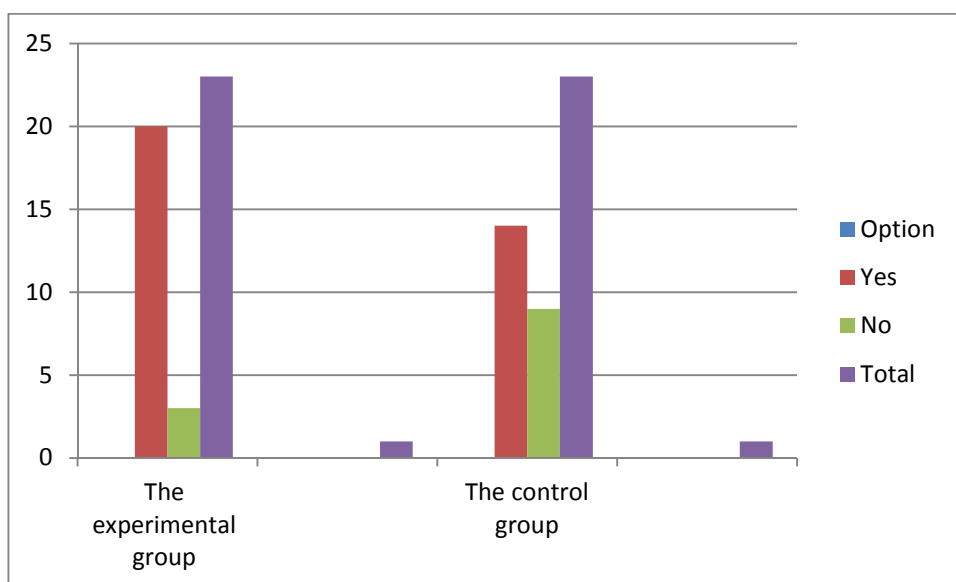
**Table 3.29** presents the performances of the EXP and the CTR groups. We notice that the EXP group performed better than the CTR one unlike the previous results of the pre-test. Our attention is drawn to the EXP group results in the post-test. So, when compared to the results in the pre-test (73.91% - 86.95%) we can assume that the EXP group has improved. Concerning the three participants who did not include the contrasts paragraph it is because one of them wrote only two paragraphs (the introduction and the similarities paragraph) roughly with a pencil. The other one provided the introduction and a long good paragraph about similar points without finishing the contrasts and the

conclusion, and the last one is the participant who did not indent. Through the participants' writings, we notice that there was a remarkable improvement in the individual's language. The participants benefited from the expert sheets and wrote long paragraphs (maximum **13** lines - minimum **5** lines) full of shining ideas, rich vocabulary, and good use of contrasts markers. The students' ideas were diverse about the contrasting points that exist between the items (e.g. history, geography, currency, motto, life style, culture...etc). Also, participants provided a considerable amount of information unlike what they did in the pre-test. Nevertheless, there exist short paragraphs (**3** essays) whose the length is between (**3-4** lines) with grammar mistakes and ambiguous ideas. In conclusion, the participants displayed an increase in their level of writing proficiency in the target language due to the implementation of CL technique during the writing tasks. Each participant not only has become 'an expert' in his/her segment of the topic but she/he also has been able to teach the other members of the group the topic or the skill.

#### **Section D: Inclusion of the concluding paragraph**

<b>Option</b>	<b>The experimental group</b>		<b>The control group</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>86.95 %</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>60.86 %</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13.04 %</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>39.13 %</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Table 3.30: Percentage of students' inclusion of the concluding paragraph in the post-test**



**Graph 3.30: Percentage of students' inclusion of the concluding paragraph in the post-test**

**Table 3.30** indicates that the group which performed better is the EXP one (**86.95% - 60.86%**). Previously, in the pre-test results, we have noticed that almost half of the participants from both groups displayed some negligence in ending their essays by a concluding paragraph due to time restriction or other circumstances. Our attention is drawn to the EXP group results in the post-test, they indicate that almost all the participants have learnt that any piece of writing should be ended with a concluding paragraph. And that the right graphic organization of the descriptive essay written in comparison/contrast method should involve an introduction, at least two developing paragraphs (similarities paragraph and contrasts one), and a conclusion. The three participants who did not include the conclusion are the same ones mentioned previously in **section C**. Concerning the participants' writings, generally the paragraphs were acceptable in terms of length (**2 - 5** lines), however there are two students whose paragraphs reach (**7**) lines. The participants' conclusions were either in a form of a point of view (**12** paragraphs), or a summary of the most important ideas in the essay (**7** paragraphs), or in the case of one participant ending with a wish. In short, there is an improvement in student's individual performance thanks to the CL strategies which enhance students' writing skill by providing an atmosphere of negotiating meaning and learning from each other.

### 3.9.2 Summary of Results and Findings from the Post-test

In short, the scores of students' essay/writing are almost good; all the participants displayed an increase in their level of writing proficiency in the target language due to the implementation of CL technique during the writing tasks in the classroom. Each participant not only becomes an expert in his/her segment of the topic but she/he also teaches the other members of the group the topic or the skill. The students in the experimental group could write long essays respecting the graphic organization of a descriptive essay written in a comparison / contrast method (the introduction, the similarities paragraph, the contrasts paragraph and the conclusion). Their writings were full of shining ideas, rich vocabulary, with less grammar mistakes which was our aim behind teaching the cooperative learning technique Jigsaw II. On the contrary, in the control group the students' writings were so limited; disorganized, almost short without brilliant ideas, thus the statistics confirm the advancing of the experimental group. Consequently, the implementation of the cooperative learning technique Jigsaw II has influenced students' writing. The results indicate that there is a correlation between students' writing proficiency and the use of well structured small group work by the teacher. As indicated statistically, a strong correlation exists between the two mentioned variables.

### Conclusion

Statistical analysis has indicated that a significant correlation exists between teachers use of cooperative group work and students development in writing. Students do not write proficiently because teachers rely on the individualistic learning. The research hypothesis has been confirmed by the post-test. Students' essays of the pre-test compared with the ones of the post-test confirm the correlation between the two variables, and it has proved that implementing the cooperative learning technique (Jigsaw II) has made a difference within the experimental group. Students, when tested individually, have written well organized essays with indented paragraphs, each paragraph involves rich amount of information and less grammar mistakes. Eventually, students have employed the graphic organization of a descriptive essay written in a comparison/contrast method by providing the components : the introductory paragraph, the similarities paragraph, the contrasts paragraph, and the concluding paragraph

Therefore, it is advocated that cooperative learning strategies could be used during the process of writing, so that the product produced by the group is good.

## **General Conclusion**

This study aims at studying the correlation between well-structured cooperative group work in EFL classrooms and development of students' writing skill, in third year LMD students at the English Department of Biskra University. To test this hypothesis, we divide it into two hypotheses : the first one is : if teachers use well-structured cooperative learning activities and design appropriate small group tasks, then learners will develop their writing skill and engage productively in classroom activities. The second one is : Cooperative language learning would enhance students' writing skill if teachers recognise its principles and practices in EFL classes.

Basing our research on investigating these two hypotheses, we begin by a section of theoretical review composed of two chapters: chapter one explored CL vis-à-vis second language acquisition theories and instruction. It also included the major models of CL and cooperative activities to enhance writing. Later, we mentioned the essential characteristics and principles of CL which affect positively the language classroom.

The second chapter explored the nature of writing as a cognitive activity and as a language skill. It also included the basic rules of writing which contribute in the enhancement of any piece of writing. Since one of the many ways to implement writing tasks in communicative language teaching is well-structured small group work, we conclude this chapter by making a relation between it and the last one through giving some examples of cooperative activities that can be used to teach writing.

The last chapter of this dissertation is devoted to the experimental study which is in turn is divided into two parts: part one involves a detailed description of the field work; the experiment, its aims, population, data-gathering tools and content. And a description of both measurement tools: the pre-test and the post-test. Also, we provide a description of the teachers' questionnaire, aims and population.

Part two concerns the analysis and interpretation of data driven from the pre-test, teachers' questionnaire, and the post-test. We conclude these two parts by a summary and discussion of findings.

### **1. Concluding Remarks**

In the case study of language learners of the third year LMD students at the English Department of Biskra University, we deduced that students are almost lacking competence in writing ; and mis-organization, grammar mistakes, poor vocabulary and lack of shining ideas are widespread in their writings. Therefore, teachers have to think how to come up with up-to-date methods and techniques in order to enhance students' writing skill. Eventually, teachers need to contribute to the way they approach and adapt to Cooperative Learning Approaches in EFL classroom. For this reason, we destinated two tools of research to investigate this domain, which are : first, a questionnaire administered to the teachers of written expression at English Department of Biskra University. Second, we conducted an experiment with two groups of third year LMD students at the English Department of Biskra University.

In fact, the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire reveal that teachers are practising the group work rather than the cooperative group work. As it exists a big difference between to structure students in groups and they work together, and to have students who work cooperatively in well-structured small groups.

Indeed, the majority of the teachers asked in the questionnaire claim that cooperative learning principles and techniques cannot be interpreted literally in the classroom activities, consequently, they do not limit the cooperative group size between (2-4) members, instead they exceed the group size until (4-6) members. In addition, they neglect the heterogeneity of the composition of the cooperative group, so they let their students form their own groups. Nevertheless, we can say that the majority of the teachers are aware of some cooperative learning techniques hoping that they are putting them into classroom application. Moreover, they do monitor the groups and use different kinds of cooperative incentives to reward the group efforts and motivate students to learn. As a matter of fact, to enhance students writing skill, our teachers provided some useful strategies and methods to be practised in EFL classrooms.

Concerning the experiment, the results from the post-test reveal that the implementation of the cooperative learning technique (Jigsaw II) was successful. When we compare between the results of the pre-test and the ones of the post-test statistics reveal that there is an improvement in students' writing skill, effectively students could write an organized piece of writing with less grammar mistakes and rich amount of ideas and information in their essays; therefore, our hypotheses stated in the

introduction which is, if teachers use well-structured small group work, and organize appropriate cooperative tasks, then they would enhance their students' writing skill come to be proved.

## 2. Pedagogical Implications

As indicated in the results of this empirical study, implementing and teaching cooperative learning techniques to the EFL students in the classrooms contributes in the development of students' writing skill, in addition to the potential benefits that characterize CL in terms of social skills, linguistic skills and cognitive ability. Therefore, what must be done is to have teachers recognize the principles and practices of cooperative learning that is, they should be controlled by the techniques of any cooperative activity in order to obtain accurate results and meaningful outcomes.

A teacher is responsible for helping students to develop their writing skill by organizing an appropriate classroom management. A teacher has to bear in mind that cooperative learning is not just having students work together in groups, instead, cooperative learning is '*The instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning*' (Johnson & Johnson, 1993, qtd in [www.georgejacobs.net](http://www.georgejacobs.net)). In fact, there is a difference between simply having students work in a group and structuring groups of students to work cooperatively. A group of students sitting at the same table doing their own work, but free to talk with each other as they work, is not structured to be a cooperative group, as there is no positive interdependence. Perhaps it could be called individualistic learning with talking. For this to be a cooperative learning situation, there needs to be an accepted common goal on which the group is rewarded for its efforts. Putting students into groups does not necessarily gain a cooperative relationship; it has to be structured and managed by the teacher.

The ability of all students to learn to work cooperatively with others is the keystone to building and maintaining stable marriages, families, careers, and friendships. Being able to perform skills, such as reading, speaking, listening, writing, and problem solving, are something good and of great value but they become of little use if the person cannot apply those skills in cooperative interaction with other people in career, family, and



community environments. The most logical way to emphasize the use of students' knowledge and skills within a cooperative framework is to spend much of the time learning those skills in cooperative relationships with each other. So, we need to get back to the basics, reconcile our university and school courses with current research, and encourage that a healthy portion of instruction is cooperative.

### **3. Limitation of the study**

The results and discussion have indicated that our hypotheses which are supported; that is to say, that using cooperative small group work in EFL class would enhance students' writing skill. Nevertheless, this study has some limitations:

The first limitation is time constraints. Longer time would help us to use different tool and a larger sample of teachers who teach written expression courses for all levels at the Department of English at the University of Biskra 2012-2013. This would give our results different dimensions. Extended time would also permit us to extend our research through specifying more activities related to writing and that can be taught through cooperative learning techniques appropriately because this method would give better results.

The second limitation is the number of teachers' sample. Different teachers teach different groups of the population, hence different methods and techniques would be used. Therefore, the number of sample would not represent the whole population, thus it is difficult to generalize these conclusions.

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- [http://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/research\\_and\\_rationale/increase\\_achievement.php](http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/increase_achievement.php)
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- <http://www.co-operation.org/pages/overviewpaper.html>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Teachers

*Dear teachers,*

This questionnaire is intended to gather information about using the cooperative learning technique in the EFL classrooms as an effective strategy to enhance students' writing skill within the Written Expression course. The collected information will help to enrich our research work about the benefits of the various cooperative learning activities that improve learners' written production. Your responses will remain strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported in the dissertation anonymously. We are very grateful to your help. Will you please tick (✓) the corresponding answer or fill the blank space when necessary.

#### Section One: Background information on the teacher

1. Gender:

Male	
Female	

2. Age :

Between 21 and 30 years	
Between 31 and 40 years	
Between 41 and 50 years	
More than 50 years	

3. What degree do you hold?

Licence / B.A	
---------------	--

Master	
Magister / M.A	
Doctorat / Ph.D	

4. How long have you been teaching Written Expression at the university?

Less than one year	
From one to five years	
More than five years	

**Section Two: The teachers' incorporation of Cooperative Learning\* (CL) activities**

5. How often do you use cooperative group work in the classroom activities?

Every session or more	
2 - 4 times a week	
About once a week	
About once a month	
Never	

\_ If, once a month or never, could you say why?

.....

.....

6. How many students do you set in each group?

2 - 3	
4 - 5	
More than 5	

7. Do do you set the groups on the basis of

Heterogeneity*	
Gender	
Students selecting themselves	
Selecting students by learning ability	

\_ If there are other criteria can you specify, please.

.....  
 .....  
 8. Classify the following CL Models according to your knowledge ; use 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Learning together model	
Jigsaw model	
Group investigation model	
Student teams-achievement divisions (STAD	

9. According to your experience, please indicate how far you agree with the following ideas, (CL positive impact on your students when engaging in cooperative group-work). Use 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. (1- totally agree ; 2- partially agree ; 3- neither agree or disagree ; 4- partially disagree ; 5- totally disagree)

CL maximizes students' interaction in L2.	
Students are encouraged to believe in positive interdependence ; they sink or swim together !	
Students encourage each other to reach group's goals.	
Each student is individually accountable to do his/her fair share of the group's work.	
Teachers do not only pay attention to teaching the language, but they also reward the use of social skills.	

10. Do you explain the values of cooperative learning to your students?

Yes	
No	

11. In your opinion, how conflict and controversy in small groups can be controlled?



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

**Section three : Implementation of Cooperative Writing Activities**

12. In your opinion, which language skill is the most difficult for students to master ?

Listening	
Reading	
Speaking	
Writing	

13. Which of the following describes your students' level of writing in English.

High	
Above average	
Average	
Below average	
Low	

\_ If 'below average' or 'low', can you say why please ?

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

14. Classify the following items according to the importance you give them while teaching writing. Use 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Organization of ideas	
Grammar	
Vocabulary	
Punctuation	

15. Which of the following CL activities do you implement most when teaching writing ?

Jigsaw	
Write Around	
Think-Pair-Share	
Roundtable / Roundrobin	
Numbered Heads Together	
Buzz groups	

\_ If there are others, can you specify please.

.....

.....

.....

**16. During the cooperative activity, how do you monitor the groups ?**

Intervene and provide suggestions.	
Encourage the sharing of tasks.	
Check only if students are doing the activity.	
Wait until students call for help.	

\_ If there are others, can you specify please

.....

.....

.....

**17. Do you incorporate assessment and evaluation in cooperative writing activities?**

Yes	
No	

\_ If 'yes', can you specify the method.

.....

.....

.....

**18. Which of the following cooperative incentives do you use to reward the group efforts ?**

Grades	
--------	--

Concrete rewards	
Symbolic rewards	
No rewards	

\_ If you do not reward the groups, can you say why ?

.....

.....

.....

19. Do you think that CL enhances students' writing skill ?

Yes	
No	

Because.....

.....

.....

.....

**THANK YOU**

**\*Cooperative learning:** *'The instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning'* (Johnson & Johnson, 1994, p. 47)

**\*Heterogeneity:** students diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability.

## Appendix 2 :

### The 'JIGSAW' Technique

- Devide students in 4 member jigsaw groups. The group should be diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and ability.
- Appoint one student from each group as the leader. Leaders intervene whenever having problems
- Devide the task (writing a comparison / contrast essay) into 4 segments: the introductory paragraph, the similarities paragraph, the contrast paragraph, and the conclusion paragraph.
- Assign each student to learn one segment, taking the advantage of using the 'expert sheets' ;
- Form "expert groups" by having one student from each jigsaw group join other students assigned to the same segment. Give students in these expert groups time to discuss the main points of their segment (brainstorming, drafting) and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group ;
- Bring the students back into their jigsaw groups ;
- Ask each student to present her or his segment to the group (revising, editing) ;
- At the end students take a quiz and asked to write the essay individually then assessed.

## Appendix 3 : Essay Writing

A comparison and contrast essay will include the following parts:

- Introductory paragraph ; thesis statement ;
- Body : includes two paragraphs at least : \_ similarities paragraph ;  
\_ contrasts paragraph ;
- Concluding paragraph.

### 1) The Introductory Paragraph ; Thesis Statement

- \_ Attract the reader's attention and gives him /her an idea of the essay's focus.
- \_ Start with writing a few sentences (a topic sentence and supporting sentences).
- \_ Finish with your thesis statement (the main idea of the essay).

### 2) The comparison (similarities) Paragraph

- \_ Write your ideas (similarities shared between subject 1/subject 2) in the form of sentences, explain your views.
- \_ Use comparison markers: as, like, in the same way, more than, etc.

### 3) The contrasts Paragraph

- \_ Write your ideas (differences between subject 1/subject 2) in the form of sentences, explain your views.
- \_ Use contrast markers: but, however, yet, while, conversely, on the other hand, instead of, etc.

### 4) The Concluding Paragraph

- \_ Conclude in 3 or 4 sentences ;
- \_ Useful phrases: in conclusion, to conclude, it is true that, to sum up, etc.

## Appendix 4 :

### Japan And The U.S.A: Different And Alike

At the first glance, Japan astonishes and fascinates the Americans because it seems so different. All that characterizes the United States \_ racial and ethnic variety, newness, vast territory, and individualism \_ is absent in Japan. Instead, one encounters an ancient and homogeneous population, traditions that emphasize the importance of groups and communal needs, with a rich panoply of highly elaborate rites and ceremonies that cover every aspect of daily living from drinking tea to saying hello.

Where Americans pride themselves on a studied informality and openness, the Japanese employ formality and complexity. If Americans value time, the Japanese treasure space. While Americans have always enjoyed a sense of continental scale, employing metaphors of size to describe both the natural environment and industrial production, Japan has exerted its genius on the diminutive and the miniature. It seems appropriate for America to produce the world's largest airplanes while Japan creates cameras and transistors.

Opposites supposedly attract, but there is more to it than that. Japan and America share, to different degrees, some large experiences, and broad skills which have created a certain kind of sympathy. Both, for example, have transplanted cultures. Each nation has a 'mother' society \_ China and Great Britain \_ that has influenced 'the daughter' in countless ways: in language, religion, social organization, art, literature and national ideals. Both societies, moreover, have developed the brokerage art, the business of buying and selling, of advertising and mass producing.

Both peoples love to shop, to shop and to record. And both peoples have always emphasized the importance of work and are paying penalties for their commitment to development and modernization.

**(Neil HARRIS in The San Francisco Chronicle)**

## Appendix 5 :

### The United States Of America

"In God we trust" (official)

**Anthem:** *The Star-Spangled Banner*

**Capital** Washington, D.C. National language English

Government Federal presidential constitutional republic - President Barack Obama (D)

- Vice President Joe Biden (D) - Speaker of the House John Boehner (R) - Chief

Justice John Roberts Legislature Congress - Upper house Senate - Lower house

House of Representatives Independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain - Declared

July 4, 1776 - Recognized September 3, 1783 - Current constitution June 21, 1788

Area - Total 9,826,675 km<sup>2</sup>

Currency United States dollar (\$) (USD)

English is the official language of at least 28 states; Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language. Whether the United States or China is larger is disputed.

### United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**Anthem:** "God Save the Queen

Location of the **United Kingdom** – in Europe – in the European Union

**Capital** and largest city **London**. Official languages **English**

Recognised regional languages

- Irish
- Scottish Gaelic
- Scots
- Ulster-Scots
- Welsh
- Cornish

Government Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy - Monarch Queen

Elizabeth II - Prime Minister David Cameron MP - Deputy Prime Minister Nick

Clegg MP Legislature Parliament - Upper house House of Lords - Lower house

House of Commons Formation - Population - 2011 census 63,181,775 - Density

255.6/km<sup>2</sup> \_ Currency Pound sterling

## Appendix 6: Obama And Bush: Are They Two Faces for one Coin

**Barack Hussein Obama II**; born August 4, 1961 is the 44th and current President of the United States, the first African American to hold the office. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he was president of the *Harvard Law Review*. He was a community organizer in Chicago before earning his law degree. He worked as a civil rights attorney in Chicago and taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School from 1992 to 2004. He served three terms representing the 13th District in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004, running unsuccessfully for the United States House of Representatives in 2000. He began his presidential campaign in 2007, and in 2008, after a close primary campaign against Hillary Rodham Clinton, he won sufficient delegates in the Democratic Party primaries to receive the presidential nomination. He then defeated Republican nominee John McCain in the general election, and was inaugurated as president on January 20, 2009. Nine months later, Obama was named the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. He was re-elected president in November 2012, defeating Republican nominee Mitt Romney, and was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2013.<sup>[4]</sup>

**Bush** was born in New Haven, Connecticut while his father was attending Yale University after service in World War II. The family moved to Midland, Texas, where the senior Bush entered the oil exploration business. The son spent formative years there, attended Midland public schools, and formed friendships that stayed with him into the White House. Bush graduated from Yale, received a business degree from Harvard, and then returned to Midland where he too got into the oil business. In Midland he met and married Laura Welch, a teacher and librarian. They had twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara, now out of college and pursuing careers.

When George W. Bush, at the age of 54, became the 43<sup>rd</sup> president of the United States, it was only the second time in American history that a president's son went on to the White House. John Quincy Adams, elected the sixth president in 1824, was the son of John Adams, the second president. While John Adams had groomed his son to be president, George Bush, the 41<sup>st</sup> president, insisted he was surprised when the eldest of his six children became interested in politics, became governor of Texas, and then went on to the White House.



## Résumé

Le but de la présente étude est d'étudier l'effet de l'utilisation de travail bien structuré petit groupe pour améliorer troisième année à l'écriture de l'habileté des étudiants LMD d'au département d'anglais de l'université de Biskra. Afin de vérifier cette corrélation, nous avons émis l'hypothèse que le travail bien structuré petit groupe renforcerait de l'écriture de l'habileté si les enseignants mettent en application classe les principes d'apprentissage coopératif et des techniques qui se traduirait par le développement des apprenants des élèves de la production écrite. Pour vérifier la validité de ces hypothèses, une étude expérimentale a été menée. Deux groupes ont constitué notre échantillon: un groupe expérimental et un de contrôle. Un pré-test a été administré à examiner les écrits individuels des élèves, selon l'organisation graphique d'un essai universitaire, à savoir la comparaison et le contraste essai qui devrait inclure: un paragraphe d'introduction, les paragraphes de développement (deux paragraphes au moins: similitudes paragraphe, contraste paragraphe) et un paragraphe de conclusion. La tâche est effectuée sans la mise en œuvre de la technique de l'apprentissage coopératif. Les résultats du pré-test ont montré une connaissance limitée de l'écriture d'un essai descriptif et un large éventail de mauvaise organisation. Ensuite, un questionnaire a été menée aux enseignants d'obtenir plus d'informations sur l'utilisation de notre échantillon de l'apprentissage coopératif. Une expérience a été menée pour améliorer l'écriture de la compétence des élèves en mettant en œuvre un apprentissage coopératif technique Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1980) principalement grâce à un enseignement explicite. Les résultats du post-test ont confirmé notre hypothèse que l'écriture de l'habileté des élèves se développe à travers l'utilisation du travail de groupe coopératif bien structuré. Ainsi, nous recommandons l'adaptation d'une approche de l'apprentissage coopératif pour enseigner l'écriture qui implique enseignement de l'écriture à travers une approche communicative....

## ملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة تأثير استخدام جيد التنظيم مجموعات العمل الصغيرة إلى تعزيز مهارة الكتابة السنة الثالثة طلاب ' LMD في قسم اللغة الانجليزية من جامعة بسكرة .من أجل التحقق من هذا الارتباط، فقد افترض أن حسن التنظيم مجموعات العمل الصغيرة من شأنه أن يعزز مهارة الكتابة إذا وضع المعلمين في الفصول الدراسية تطبيق مبادئ التعلم التعاوني والتقنيات التي من شأنها أن تؤدي إلى تطوير المتعلمين الطلاب إنتاج مكتوب .للتحقق من صحة هذه الفرضيات، وقد أجريت دراسة تجريبية .وقد شكلت مجموعتين عينة لدينا : مجموعة تجريبية وعنصر تحكم واحد .ويتم إدارة مرحلة ما قبل الاختبار لدراسة الكتابات الفردية للطلاب وفقا لمنظمة البياني للمقال الأكاديمية، أي المقارنة والتباين مقال يتضمن ما يلي :فقرة تمهيدية، الفقرات التنموية (فقرتين على الأقل :أوجه التشابه الفقرة، ويتناقض الفقرة (والفقرة الختامية .تتم المهمة دون تنفيذ تقنية التعلم التعاوني .وقد أظهرت نتائج الاختبار القبلي معرفة محدودة من كتابة مقال وصفي ومجموعة واسعة من سوء التنظيم .بعد ذلك، تم إجراء استبيان للمعلمين لاكتساب مزيد من المعلومات حول استخدام عينة لدينا للتعلم التعاوني .وقد أجريت تجربة لتعزيز مهارة الكتابة الطلاب من خلال تنفيذ تقنية التعلم التعاوني بانوراما الثاني سلافن، (1980أساسا من خلال التدريس واضحة .وقد أكدت نتائج ما بعد اختبار فرضيتنا أن الكتابة مهارة الطلاب تم تطويرها من خلال استخدام جيد التنظيم والعمل الجماعي التعاوني .وبالتالي، فإننا نوصي التكيف من نهج التعلم التعاوني لتدريس الكتابة التي ينطوي تدريس الكتابة من خلال نهج التواصلية.

