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***The Role of Formative Assessment in Enhancing EFL
Students' Writing Skill***
***The case of: First year EFL Students at Mohamed Kheidher
University of Biskra.***

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree
in Science of Languages

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DEDICATION

To the soul of my father God bless him

To My beloved Mother, for her prayers to me

To my twin flame

To all my dear family without forgetting anyone

To my wonderful friends, with whom I spent my best moments

To all people I knew thank you for being in my lovely beautiful life

Amina

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ABSTRACT

Teaching writing is complex task. However, students who continuously receive input from either the teacher or their peers may produce adequate pieces of writing. This is not the case of most of the Algerian secondary school learners who arrive to the university unable to write effectively. This research aims to study the role of formative assessment and formative feedback in enhancing students' writing skill. Therefore, we aimed at finding out the teacher's role during the writing process. We further attempted to investigate the effectiveness of formative feedback in developing learners' composition. In order to reach the aforementioned objectives, we relied on two research tools: a questionnaire and classroom observation. The questionnaire was administered to teachers of written expression to identify their role during the course of teaching writing. The classroom observation was for first year students of English at Biskra University. It aimed at finding out students' attitudes towards the writing skill and their attitude towards the idea of receiving feedback during instruction. The observation analysis showed that the participants were aware of the need and the importance of feedback in writing and in shaping their language development. In addition, the analysis showed their positive attitudes towards their teachers' formative feedback during instruction. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire revealed that teachers' emphasis on the importance of feedback to develop their students' production during the instruction depends on students' needs and abilities. Constructive Formative feedback enables learners to develop their written production during the writing process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FA: Formative Assessment

L2: Second Language

LMD: License Master Doctorate

PHD: Doctorate

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General Introduction

Assessment is an integral component in teaching and learning process. There is a wide range of methods that are used to gather information about student's progress, behavior, and performance, and how well they are learning. Assessment may occur during the instructional course or at the end of the unit to mainly improve students' learning. It is used to determine decision about classification and to motivate students to progress. Besides, assessment is the process of observing learning for improvement. It provides feedback to both students and educators about the effectiveness of their teaching and learning experiences. It can be addressed in many types.

Educational assessment helps to determine the improvement of student's achievement and production at the level of positive feedback towards students' mastery of the four skills (speaking, writing, listening and reading). Speaking and writing are two productive skills of great importance during which learners' feedback can be constantly observed and measured.

In EFL classrooms students have to give equal importance to all skills when it comes to language proficiency. Thus, in order to raise our students' degree of proficiency, the focus was mainly on their productive skills in which the learners can express their abilities as well as their language difficulties.

Speaking and writing, mainly, have great importance in improving EFL level of proficiency. Particularly, speaking has been always considered as a primary means of communication while writing took as a secondary means of communication. As a matter of fact, by time, we came to realize the importance of writing precisely as an integral part of learners' language development and the role of the teacher as the core of improving the writing skill while adopting different approaches and techniques in order to respond to all

students needs and difficulties. Consequently, as an effective procedure, teachers realized the importance of formative assessment as an effective technique in achieving their goals while teaching writing skill.

Formative assessment, in this context, is meant to provide, first, teachers with strengths and weaknesses of their students' achievements while learning how to write well. Then, second, students with continuous and positive progress.

1. Statement of the Problem

Formative assessment is the teachers' everyday input as well as students' everyday output. Teachers' formative assessment seeks to provide positive feedback to the students as a key component to improve their writing performance and to overcome their deficiencies. For students, the writing task represents the main difficulty, according to them writing needs further practice and techniques to follow in order to master. Therefore, In EFL classrooms, teachers should call students' attention to their formative comments and feedback on their writing progress; in order, to improve their writing and to be aware of their own writing deficiencies. The problem, we believe, is mainly due to the fact that first year students' lack the formative assessment that enables them to tackle the different writing tasks and activities with ease. It is also to produce correct texts and improve the effectiveness of writing. Besides the way of assessing writing, is one of the reasons of the students' weak writing performance

2. Definition of the Issue

Writing is considered as a crucial skill that is used for different purposes: educational, personal and occupational. In the field of language education, researchers study this skill in different ways: how to teach it, how to improve it and how to assess it.

As far as writing assessment is concerned, many researchers shed light on some useful types, techniques and activities that teachers use to assess students' writing.

However, after the assessment of students' written products, teachers notice that their writing performance is far from satisfactory. That is to say, students are still unable to express themselves in a coherent manner and they still show a weak performance in their writing.

3. Literature Review

The purpose of this project is to provide information concerning the assessment of writing to know what extent this assessment practices affect students' writing. In other words, we attempt to investigate whether the teachers' ways of assessment improved or hindered the students' writing abilities. Hector Murrieta & Gordon Amerson "STEMs: A Proposal for Calibrated Classroom Assessments that Increase Student Motivation and Provide Authentic Evaluation of Student Learning" (2011) suggest that there is a need for classroom assessments that increase student motivation, reduce grade inflation and deflation, and provide teachers with an authentic evaluation of student learning of the content. In addition to this, Michael Harris and Paul McCann "Assessment" (1994) indicate that Assessment is generally seen as something done to students by teachers. Many students may feel panic and confusion. Tests descend upon them from time to time and have to be 'got through'. The more able ones may even enjoy these experiences, as they can assert their superiority over the rest of the class. However, many students feel anxious, worried and inadequate. There is often great pressure on them to succeed and if they do not, they become branded as failures. Unfortunately this competition creates more losers than winners. Many teachers feel little better. Some feel that tests are only useful as

a way of motivating students to work harder and virtually all of us feel insecure and uncomfortable when we have to pass or fail students.

Accordingly Peter W. Foltz, (2014) in his article "Improving Student Writing through Automated Formative Assessment: Practices and Results" describes the development, use, and results from an implementation of a grade school-level formative writing environment which provides accurate, instant automated feedback to student writers of English essays. The system assesses writing across a range of skills and provides feedback to students on aspects such as grammar, content, and organization.

In my turn I have to bring my humble contribution to the issue, that's why I intend to study this side of the issue which is the role of formative assessment on writing skill.

4. Significance of the Work

This study intends to offer insights into theory and practice that underlie effective writing instruction. Concerning practice, this research project may benefit two groups of people. First, for those teachers who used or are using formative assessment in their EFL writing classroom, the study might serve as a stimulus to help them reflect on their own practices in using activities. Also, for those who are or who will be teaching EFL writing courses yet have never incorporated or are not yet planning to use formative assessment in their EFL writing classrooms, the study might serve as a guide to show them what can be done and how. Second, this present work attempted to reveal the extent to which the writing assessment affected the students' writing performance and whether there was a need for remedies as far as its types and techniques is concerned.

5 Aims of the Study

The aim of the work are:

- To know which type of formative assessment is mostly used for first year LMD students.
- To explore the impact of assessment on students' writing. In other words, it aims to see whether the teacher way of assessment has a role on students' writing skills or hinders it.

6 Research Questions

This research is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How can formative assessment practices effect students' writing performance?
- Could formative assessment lead to students' success?

7 Hypotheses

- If students are continuously assessed in classroom through formative assessment, their mastery in writing English will be improved.

8 Methodology

Writing practice is a key component to building mature language skills. However, because hand scoring of writing is time consuming, it is often not possible to provide rapid individualized feedback to students to maximize their writing and language skills. This research describes the role, use, and results from an implementation of a formative writing environment which provides accurate, instant automated feedback to student's English writers.

The research instruments based on two data gathering tools: A teachers' questionnaire and a classroom observation. The questionnaire which is meant for teachers of writing at the Division of English at Mohamed Kheidher University. It enquires about

their writing teaching practices and feedback-related matters such as their definition of feedback, the type of feedback they usually provide, and how they make students respond to it. In addition, through classroom observation we were able to determine students' different problems during the writing process and how frequently does the teacher provide the students with feedback.

This research will be conducted through the descriptive qualitative method as an appropriate way in order to confirm our hypothesis and to identify the importance of formative assessment that would enrich students' writing.

9 Limitation of the Study

This research is limited to written expression's teachers in order to spotlight on the writing competency and try to find out a series of new fact that is related to the two variables writing skill and formative assessment. It is limited also to one area, EFL writing skill competency.

10 Structure of the Study

The present research is basically divided into three main chapters. Chapter one and two are devoted to literature review and chapter three to the field work.

Chapter one deals with formative assessment as a means for improving students. It is related to some issues about the nature of formative assessment including its definition and types. It is also mentions principles and stages of assessment. In addition, it discusses the role of both teachers and students in the light of this process. Therefore, it defines the term formative feedback as a motivational factor for students' via learning and then it come through its forms.

In the second chapter, we introduce writing. This includes the nature of the writing, reasons for teaching writing, writing and other language skills. In addition, we present the main writing approaches and the importance of the teachers' written feedback.

Finally, the third chapter deals with data analysis. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of students' classroom observation and teachers' feedback questionnaire and ultimately a summary of the results obtained in this research work.

Chapter One: Theoretical Aspects of Formative Assessment

- 1.1 Introduction
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- 1.3 Types of Assessment
 - 1.3.1 Formative Assessment
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 - 1.7.2.3 Written Feedback
- 1.8 Conclusion

1.1 Introduction

The present chapter will review the basic components and the key concepts related to the assessment of the writing skill. First, it will deal with the assessment definition, explaining its types and principles. Then, it will provide a brief about formative assessment, its types and stages. Also it will mention the role of the teacher and students on formative assessment. Finally, it is worth shedding light on the formative feedback and its types.

1.2 Definition of Assessment

In recent educational studies and discussions, the term assessment has been used so differently. Within the field of learning and teaching, we attempt to give the definition of assessment from a larger perspective and conceptualization. A more typical and explicit definition of assessment is provided by Brown (2003), who claims that assessment always goes hand in hand with teaching. In other words teaching and assessment are interrelated. In brief, assessment is the gathering of information about the student's ability to perform learning tasks.

1.3 Types of Assessment

According to Brown (2004), there are four types of assessment that are used in the classroom differently and for different purposes: Formative, summative, formal and informal assessment.

1.3.1 Formative Assessment

It is generally defined as an ongoing process that takes place during the teaching/learning situation. The primary purpose of using formative assessment is providing an immediate feedback to improving the students' learning. (Cowie and Bell as cited in Andraide and Cizek, 2010) define it as: "The process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning during the learning". Thus, assessment is viewed as a collection of activities which are done during the learning process for the purpose of identifying students' level and boosting their learning outcomes. In this type of assessment, teachers do not give a final grade to students' work. Rather, they provide them with feedback about progress in their learning, Irons (2008).

1.3.2 Summative Assessment

Unlike formative assessment, known as assessment for learning, summative assessment is referred to as assessment of learning. It is a kind of evaluating and ranking students' learning, and it is generally done at the end of a project or a semester. It "...aims to measure or summarize what a student has grasped and typically occurs at the end of a course or a unit of instruction", Brown (2003). This type is generally prepared in advance to give time for learners to be ready for the assessment.

1.3.3 Formal Assessment

This type of assessment includes systematic and planned techniques that are used to estimate students' level of a language, Brown (2003). In formal assessment students are aware that the activities they are doing are going to be assessed. Exams, diagnostic tests are example of formal assessment that is applied in the class to see how much students have improved. These forms are prepared in advance in a standardized way and have special grading techniques.

1.3.4 Informal Assessment

Informal assessment involves any kind of unplanned comment or feedback carried out by the teacher about the student's work .It can include expressions such as: "good work", "carry on" and so forth. More importantly, informal assessment which is carried by the teacher during the instruction, its aim is not to make final results or judge the students' work. For example, we can find the teachers' marginal comments on the students' papers and his or her advice to the student like: how to better write an argumentative essay, on the other hand, formal assessment deals with the planned techniques and systematic methods used by the teacher to get into the student's achievement, Brown (2003).

1.4 Principles of Assessment

To meet the effectiveness of the assessment activity, certain principles are taken into consideration: practicality, validity, reliability, authenticity and washback.

1.4.1 Practicality

This principle means seeing to which extent a test can be put into practice. First a test is practical when it does not take too much time to answer. That is to say, it should not

be too short or too long. It also should not be too expensive and costly. Another feature of practicality is that it should be easy to score. In other words, the scorer must select the appropriate scoring procedure that suits the type of test. Besides, to reach the practicality of a test, the conditions in which a test is administered should be suitable and helpful, Brown (2004). Finally, the test scores must give clear descriptions of the students' level and abilities so that to help the teachers make decisions about the teaching and the assessment techniques that best suit the students' level.

1.4.2 Validity

According to McAlpine (2002) "A valid assessment is one which measures that which suppose to measure". When the type of assessment used in the class assesses the right skill designed to be measured, then, this method is said to be valid. In order the assessment to be valid it should focus on the objectives of the lesson. For example, a test of oral production should require only the oral ability.

1.4.3 Reliability

The assessment tools are said to be reliable when they give the same results in different situations. In other words, "If you give the same test to the same students or matched students on two different occasions, the test should yield similar results." Brown (2004). For example if the teacher gives his students different tasks to answer and the same tasks are given to the same students after 10 days , the results will be the same.

1.4.4 Authenticity

It means that assessment should present real world situation. That is, all types of assessment tools should prepare the learner to function correctly when they are in the

target culture. Also, the topics dealt with, should be interesting and the items should be contextualized.

1.4.5 Washback

According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), washback mean an intended or unintended direction and function of curriculum change on aspects of teaching and learning. It should comprise the following characteristics:

- Positively influences what and how teachers teach.
- Positively influences what and how learners learn.
- Offers learners a chance to adequately prepare.
- Gives learners feedback that enhances their language development.
- Is more formative in nature than summative.
- Provides conditions for peak performance by the learner.

1.5 What is Formative Assessment?

1.5.1 Definition of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is generally defined as taking place during a course with the expressed purpose of improving pupil learning. Andraide and Cizek (2010) define it as "Encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and, or by their students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged".

1.5.2 Types of Formative Assessment

As far as formative assessment is defined as information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning. This latter has two types of assessments, in one hand we have:

1.5.2.1 Planned Formative Assessment

Cowie and Bell (1999) suggested that it is used to show or prove the ability of learners in thinking, it happens at the beginning and end of the topic, its main purpose is to improve and develop learning and teaching process.

1.5.2.2 Interactive Formative Assessment

It is described by Cowie and Bell (1999) as "Taking place during teacher-pupil interaction". This process based on noticing, recognizing, and responding, it happens in any time during interaction, it is not limited for example we have a work shop, the teacher gives an activity to the learners to do it in a group work. The teacher notices the information about learners' thinking, then gives the comments or questions about how they interacted with each other, and then recognizes the significance of the information.

1.5.3 The Role of Teachers and Students in Formative Assessment

Since the formative assessment is the partnership that involves teachers and learners with their learning goals. So this process based on these two pedagogical elements so we will investigate the roles of both teachers and students.

1.5.3.1 The Teachers' Role

There are many researchers and experts who stress the necessity of being aware of formative assessment in order to have the ability to judge their students' level; it means the teachers have to be capable to provide the needed information for their students. Pinchuk and Consultant (2009) said that the teacher should set different objectives to go on, how he will reach this objectives, and finally he will test, whether he transmits his knowledge to

his students or not, in order to measure their progress and know his effectiveness as an instructor. Indeed the teacher has so many different techniques to elicit the evidence of high quality of feedback and the type of formative assessment such as: questioning; questions which require complex answers not the familiar ones to know the real level of students.

1.5.3.2 The Students' Role

Formative assessment is a learning partnership that involves teachers and students with their learning goals. So students are considered as a key factor for making this process go further and further in the successful path. Indeed students are the motivational factor, because they have the right to make the decision, if they want to learn, and improve their thinking in a positive manner or not. Students should be engaged in the projects and classroom performance formally, (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, and Chappuis cited in Pinchuk and Consultant 2009). In order to have better results; tasks should be explained in simple language, it is helpful to students in order to develop their own thinking. This is an essential aspect of the formative assessment process.

1.6 Stages of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is everyday teachers' task. That is to say, it may occur during all stages of the lesson plan. In the following, we will introduce formative assessment that is before instruction, during instruction and after instruction.

1.6.1 Pre- Formative Assessment

The teachers' role during this period is to design instruction based on pre-assessment tasks. Pre-assessment tasks provide enough information about students' background knowledge of the subject matter to be taught before instruction. Therefore, these tasks help teachers to focus instruction on areas of misunderstanding as well as

elements that are not yet reached or learnt. Moreover, pre-formative assessment help teachers to sit down their instructional goals based on the outcomes of these assessments for future planning. Furthermore, pre-assessment helps students to develop their learning using prior knowledge to adjust the new one comprehensibly, Greenstein (2010).

1.6.2 Formative Assessment during Instruction

It is any assessment that occurs during the state of teaching and learning in classroom situations. Classroom assessment during instruction seeks to provide information about how well students are progressing and to decide whether to move forward or backward instruction. Also, it helps teachers explore each individual ability that need further explanation and practice than other ones. Similarly, according to Greenstein (2010) assessment during instruction helps teachers identify students who are struggling with particular concepts or applications. Therefore, it aims to focus instruction on points of strengths and weaknesses of skills, knowledge, and language development. Moreover, assessment during instruction serves to as an effective strategy that encourages students' self-assessment as they receive teachers' formative feedback.

As a result, students' motivational sense will be raised via learning new knowledge and skills. The use of formative assessment during instruction relies on many strategies as questioning; for example, according Greenstein (2010) "Asking students to demonstrate their knowledge in the difference ways increases the chances that you will get an accurate picture of their understanding". Questioning strategies are used in all parts of instruction (before, during and after). It is a much reliable way to identify concepts of misunderstanding that gives teachers the opportunity to correct subjects. Therefore, questions should be integral components during instruction because teachers are in need for the information they provide through answers to know if they have understood what is presented by McMillan (2007).

1.6.3 Formative Assessment after Instruction

Traditionally when instruction has finished, students assessment reveals in a form of grade that is to provide them with a final decisions of learning. In contrast, according to McMillan (2007) with formative assessment teachers still have opportunity to improve learning before it is over (summative assessment take place then). Formative assessment after instruction has been defined by ibid as "last assessment" that is according to her it seeks "to identify areas in which students could use a bit more clarification, practice, or reinforcement before a summative assessment". Furthermore, it is an agreed upon definition that formative assessment come to fill the gap of misunderstanding after the instruction has been completed. Post instruction strategies reviews summaries of all what has been taught so far, as it involves questioning strategies to highlight elements of weak or confusing; in order, to be avoided in summative conclusions.

1.7 Formative Feedback

1.7.1 Definition of Formative Feedback

Formative feedback represents information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning. And while the teacher may also receive formative feedback and use it as the basis for altering instruction. Therefore, Irons (2008) describes formative feedback as "any information, process or activity which affords or accelerates students learning based on comments relating to either formative assessment or summative assessment activities". It refers to consistent feedback which enables teachers to gather information about students learning as well as to provide comments on students' written or oral performance.

Moreover, formative comments create opportunities for learners to know how well they have done and what they can do for future improvement.

1.7.2 Types of Feedback

Teachers may respond to students' writing differently in accordance with the kind of the writing task and the kind of misunderstanding or mistakes they committed. Therefore, teachers' responses can be in different forms of feedback. Conferencing, peer feedback, and teachers' written comments are the most common ones. Each one focuses on a certain area to develop students' writing performance.

1.7.2.1 Conferencing

Formative feedback offers the opportunity for students to enter into a dialogue in order to discuss explanation and needs. Such interaction often refers to as teacher-student conferencing. Conferencing is a kind of responding to students' writing orally or face to face feedback. Furthermore, Hyland suggested that:

The interactive nature of the conference gives teachers' a chance to respond to diverse cultural, educational, and writing needs of their students, clarifying meaning and resolving ambiguities, while saving them time spent in detailed marking of papers. For students, writing conferences not only assist learner with auditory learning styles, but give them a clearer idea of their strengths and weaknesses, develop their autonomy skills, allow them to raise questions on their written feedback, and help them construct a revision plan. (2003, p.192)

Unlike written feedback, conferencing tends to provide immediate opportunities for detailed discussion and useful comments for students who play the role of active participants rather than passive ones in terms of trying to clarify meaning, strengths and weaknesses. The main advantage of using conferencing is that students can discuss, reply, and ask question to clarify meaning or solve a particular problem as they are engaged in here and now discussion.

1.7.2.2 Peer Feedback

Students can actively and collaboratively develop their writing as they respond to each other work. Peer response is said to provide a means of both improving writers' drafts and developing readers' understandings of a good writing, but teachers have generally been more positive than students, who tend to prefer teacher feedback and its benefits have been hard to confirm empirically in L2 situations. Many researchers as Andraide and Cizek (2010) argue that students react much better when they receive feedback on their work as peers rather than feedback provided by the teacher. For them "Feedback from peers can be more immediate, timely, and individualized than teacher feedback" *ibid* . In that, feedback from teachers tends to be authoritative and poorly explained in the case of negative feedback. While, peer feedback is less threaten and explores individual needs. Furthermore, formative peer feedback appears during all stage of the writing process by which students are encouraged to revise their friends work and provide reader reaction as they exchange their writings. Consequently, students will be able to identify key points of strength and weak and plan for future revisions.

1.7.2.3 Written Feedback

Teachers written feedback have a significant role in improving students writing. Teachers often play the role of readers as they respond to their students' writing. Thus, teachers do not feel satisfied by only giving grades till they provide written comments as reader reaction. According to Hyland (2003) teacher's written comments appears as a justification of the marks they give. Written feedback according to Bloxham and Boyd (2007) needs "to provide specific and sufficient comment and suggestions on strengths, areas for development and strategies for improvement". Therefore, teachers need to consider what students want from feedback and what they attempt in their revision. Teachers' response to their students writing takes a variety of forms. According to Hyland (2003) the most common ones are commentary, cover sheets, minimal marking, taped comments, and electronic feedback.

Conclusion

Assessment tells the teachers about the effectiveness of their methods of instruction, it shows the students their areas of strengths and their areas of weaknesses and this through the feedback they receive from their teachers .For this sake, we highlighted in this chapter of our research the basic elements related to the field of assessment, its types, principles and the stages of formative assessment. All those information gathered to know the role of formative assessment. The following chapter relates to the writing skill, and the impact of formative assessment on this skill.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Aspects of Writing

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2.1 Introduction

Learning a foreign language requires learning the four skills of this language. Language teachers usually follow a certain order; beginning with listening, speaking, reading and then writing. The reason behind leaving writing at the end is that it is viewed as the most difficult and sophisticated one compared with the other language skills. Writing, therefore, is a fundamental skill in language learning; it is also a difficult skill that requires considerable effort and practice on the learner's part to reach an acceptable level of writing. This chapter, it presents the reader with the writing skill, beginning with nature of writing and the reasons for its teaching. Then it aims to review the criteria that make for producing an effective piece of writing. Moreover, it deals with the writing skill and the other skills speaking and reading comparatively. It also explores the different writing approaches. Finally, it identifies the importance of teachers' written feedback during the process of teaching writing skill.

2.2 Nature of Writing

According to Collins (2003), writing is a group of letters or symbols written or marked on a surface as a means of communicating ideas. This definition suggests that writing is the activity of producing a piece of written language which is designed to be read. However, writing is more than being a matter of transcribing language into symbols. Just as speech is more than producing sounds, writing is much more than the production of graphic symbols; these symbols have to be arranged according to some conventions to

form words, and to combine them to form sentences. A sequence of sentences, short or long, but coherent is an adequate means of communication. Due to Collins and Gentner (1980) the learner/writer should consider the four structural levels in writing starting with the word structure, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and overall text structure. Coordinating all these aspects is a staggering job that is definitely more than a simple activity of putting symbols together.

In addition to the intricacy of structure, other psychological, linguistic and cognitive related issues interfere to make writing a complex activity for both native speakers and language learners. Byrne (1991) explains that writing is a difficult activity because it is neither a natural nor a spontaneous activity and that "the problems related to writing are usually grouped under three headings which overlap to some extent: psychological, linguistic and cognitive."

Moreover, writing is directly linked to people's roles in society. According to Tribble (1996) to be deprived of the opportunity to learn how to write is "to be excluded from a wide range of social roles, including those which the majority of people in industrialized societies associate with power and prestige."

In terms of pedagogy, Harmer (2004) suggests that writing is a central element in the language teaching setting as students need to write down notes and to take written exams. Yet, over the years it has seemed that writing has been seen as only a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary rather than a skill in its own right. However, trainers and methodologists have looked again at writing in the foreign language classroom and acknowledged the importance of writing as a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their first language.

So, the idea we draw from the previous definitions is that writing is the activity of being able to communicate with language through a graphic representation of ideas. It is

also a difficult, sophisticated, prestigious social activity of communication and an important skill for language learners as well as native speakers.

2.3 Reasons for Teaching Writing

Almost all human beings grow up speaking their first language (and sometimes second or third). Spoken language, for a child/learner is acquired naturally as a result of being exposed to it, whereas the ability to write has to be consciously learned. Harmer (2004) agrees that writing should be learned because it could not be naturally acquired like speaking, though, he provides more reasons to teach writing for EFL learners which include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right. Harmer (1998) illustrates the reasons for teaching writing as follows:

- **Reinforcement:** Some learners acquire languages in a purely oral/aural way, but most of them benefit greatly from seeing the language written down.
- **Language development:** The mental activity learners go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience.
- **Learning style:** For many learners, producing language in a slower way is something they appreciate. Writing provides time and ease for learners more than face-to-face communication does.
- **Writing as a skill:** Learners need to know how to write essays, how to put written reports together and how the writing system operates (for example, in terms of conventions such as punctuation, paragraph construction) just as they need to know how to pronounce language appropriately.

2.4 Effective Writing

Writing in English within an academic context requires some criteria of acceptability relative to different aspects of writing which include organization, vocabulary, language use, punctuation, accurate capitalization and paragraphing. According to Starkey (2004), an effective piece of writing is the one that is organized, clear, and coherent, with accurate language and effective word choice.

2.4.1 Organization

In the process of writing, information should be presented to readers in a structured format; even short pieces of writing have regular, predictable patterns of organization. The striking advantage of organization is to help the reader to believe what you are saying, and to willingly follow your lead:

By following [an organized method of writing], you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence. He or she will be able to see how the various points you make in your [piece of writing]. Ibid (2004, p. 2).

Organization is usually decided upon through certain techniques that precede the actual act of writing. In other words, the writer decides about the organization of his written work before engaging into the physical act of writing through some prewriting techniques including mainly free-writing and brainstorming. The use of the prewriting techniques helps at making an effective plan that guarantees the organization of the written work because a plan is usually made after reading and classifying the notes gathered from the prewriting activity.

According to Chelsa (2006), Creme & Lea (2008), and Galko (2002), free-writing and brainstorming are effective for shaping the learner's thoughts allowing some time to

make connection with the assigned subject noting everything and anything that comes to mind. The two preceding techniques are similar in that they are timed, and flowing exercises meant to elicit many thoughts and ideas on a given topic. However, free-writing requires putting whole sentences or phrases on paper whereas brainstorming involves creating a list that might contain various individual thoughts that make sense in a particular order.

2.4.2 Clarity

The learner's goal when writing in an academic context is to convey information, including the fact that he can write well, Starkey (2004). Clarity is an essential element of writing the learner should become skilled at in order to make his writing readable, and guarantee that those who read it understand exactly what he means to say. Murray and Hughes (2008) emphasize the importance of clarity as a fundamental element in making one's writing easy to be read and accessible. According to them, the key to achieve clarity is to make short sentences and to the point, the learner/writer should be relevant, make every word count, and try not to express more than one idea in each sentence.

In order to achieve clarity in writing, according to Starkey (2004), the learner should:

- Eliminate ambiguity by avoiding words or phrases that have more than one possible interpretation. The learner should focus on what he means and keep away from any language structure that could mislead the reader.
- Use powerful, precise adjectives and adverbs. One way to accomplish clarity is to use powerful and specific adjectives and adverbs. The right modifiers (adjectives and adverbs) help out the learner to convey his message across in fewer, more accurate words. For example, Chihuahua can take the place of little dog; exhausted

can take the place of really tired; and late can take the place of somewhat behind schedule.

- Be concise, this means getting right to the point without unnecessary spinning around, worthless repetition or wordiness. Ibid sees that: "wordiness is boring, and it takes up valuable time and space... there are two equally important approaches to more concise writing: eliminating unnecessary words and phrases, and using active (as opposed to passive) voice whenever possible". Moreover, he provides two reasons for avoiding repetition of ideas and information in one's writing:

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

2.4.3 Coherence

Coherence is an important element in any kind of writing. It is particularly crucial in academic writing, where success or failure may depend upon how clearly the learner has managed to communicate his ideas and points of argument to his reader. No matter how insightful or original those ideas may be, if he is not able to present them in a clear and logical way, their meaning and value is lost. Kane (2000) and Creme & Lea (2008) among others, agree that coherence has a great role in making a good piece of writing. According

to them, coherence has to do with arranging and linking one's ideas in a way that makes them understood by the reader.

Murray & Hughes (2008) notice that a good writer is the one "who sticks his ideas together 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."

2.4.4 Word Choice

The best way for the learner to accurately convey his ideas in writing is to choose the right words. Doing so ensures that the reader understands what the writer is really writing. According to Starkey (2004) and Kane (2000), there are two aspects the learner should consider while choosing the words to be used: *denotation and connotation*.

Denotation is the basic or literal meaning of a word. Learners should make sure of the correctness of their words, because sometimes some confusion may stem from words that sound or look similar but have very different meaning, words and usages that sound correct but in fact are not considered standard English, or words that are misused so often that their usage is thought to be correct. Connotation "is a word's implied meaning which involves emotions, cultural assumptions, and suggestions" Starkey (2004). The learner should confirm that each used word denotes exactly what he intends to it, considering connotation requires the learner thinking beyond the dictionary, to what might be implied or inferred by his writing.

According to what has been said before, both denotative and connotative meanings must be considered when making word choice. However, this is not all, the learner should also consider whether the used words might confuse or possibly offend his audience. This means avoiding informal language and slang words.

2.4.5 Mechanics

In composition, "mechanics" refers to the appearance of words, to how they are spelled or arranged on paper. The fact that the first word of a paragraph is usually indented, for example, is a matter of mechanics, Kane (2000). Conventions of writing require that a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with full-stop punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point). These types of conventions or mechanics are very significant in putting together a good quality piece of writing because no matter how original are the learner's ideas, if he cannot express them in a clear and accurate manner. Starkey (2004) addressed writing mechanics in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

Grammar is a key element not only in writing, but in language as a system of communication in general. Having a good knowledge of the parts speech, the structures of the language and its rhetorical devices and knowing how to manipulate them in order to write comprehensively is what writing requires:

... 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. Brooks & Penn (1970, p. 20)

Capitalization and punctuation marks are integral parts of written English. Among other things, "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" Murray and Hughes (2008). Similarly, spelling is one of the factors which need to be taken into account by students when dealing with writing, because it is an aspect many teachers in an EFL context focus on when evaluating students work. Correct spelling gives

one's work credibility. Not only will the reader know that one is educated, but also that he is careful about his work.

2.5 Writing and Other Language Skills

2.5.1 Writing and Speaking

Both writing and speaking are clearly productive activities in that they create language outcomes just as listening and reading are both passive activities. When it comes to communication, Tribble (1996) sees that speaking and writing are complementary skills and emphasizes that the person who commands both the forms of writing and of speech is therefore constructed in a fundamentally different way from the person who commands the form of speech alone. However, the physical act of speaking and writing are very different. What follows is a summary of some differences between writing and speaking as seen by Brown (1994):

- Performance: oral language is transitory and must be processed in real time, while written language is permanent and can be read and re-read.
- Production time: writers generally have more time to plan, review and revise their words before they are finalized, while speakers have a little or no time to do.
- Distance between the writer and the reader in both time and space eliminates much of the shared context that is present between speaker and listener in face to face contact and this necessitates greater explicitness from the part of the writer.
- Orthography in writing carries a limited amount of information compared to the richness of devices available to speakers to enhance a message (for example: stress, intonation, pitch, volume, pressing).

- Complexity: written a language tends to be characterized by longer clauses and more subordinators, while spoken language tends to have shorter clauses connected by coordinators, as well as more redundancy (repetition of nouns and verbs).
- Formality: because of the social and cultural uses of which writing is ordinarily put, writing tends to be more formal than speaking.
- Vocabulary: Written texts tend to contain a wider variety of words, and lower frequency words, than oral speech.

Harmer (2004) makes the difference between writing and speaking in terms of time and space of communication, participants, process, organization, language, signs symbols and product. However, he sees that in some contexts, these differences between writing and speaking fade away. For example, the use of written language in text messaging and internet chatting seems to be more like speech than written discourse where speakers seem to be speaking while using written words.

2.5.2 Writing and Reading

When looking at the nature of writing and reading, it seems that the two skills are separate in that reading is a passive activity and that writing is a productive one; still, these two language skills are complementary and can be closely developed. As it is seen by Johnson (2008), the apparent relationship between the preceding skills is that reading helps students become better writers. Through reading, students have incidental contact with the rules of grammar, so they develop a sense for the structure of the language and grammar and increase their vocabulary. Therefore, Reading in the writing classroom is understood as the appropriate input for acquisition of writing skills because it is generally assumed "that reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skills can be learned, or at least inferred" Eisterhold (1990).

The evidence that there is an existing relationship between reading and writing is the results of the correlational study carried by Stotsky (1983) that came out with the following results:

- There are correlations between reading achievement and writing ability. Better writers tend to be better readers.
- There are correlations between writing quality and reading experience. Better writers read more than poorer writers.
- There seem to be correlations between reading ability and measures of syntactic complexity in writing. Better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers.

2.6 Approaches to Teaching of Writing

Learning to write is a difficult and a complex skill for EFL learners that requires an explicit methods and approaches to be followed in order to produce well structured compositions. Therefore, the writing process has been viewed as the adaptation of different methods and approaches. Those approaches and methods are described as "complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing. It is helpful therefore to understand these theories as curriculum options, each organizing L2 writing teaching around different focus" Hyland (2003). In the following, we will present the most common approaches which could be used in English classes for teaching writing skill.

2.6.1 The Product Approach

The origins of this approach have been developed from the earliest views of the behaviouristic theory of second language teaching and learning. Therefore, the emphasis is

given to elements of language structure as a set of habit formation manipulated by the process of imitation and re-enforcement. On the basis of this view, the product approach introduces the writing process as a final product of syntactical patterns that aims to study the surface structure (form) then later on the deep structure within a particular context where it is used for the first time. Learning to write in foreign or second language within the principles of the product approach "involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts" Hyland (2003). Moreover, since the emphasis is on language form, writing within the principles of this view should go through four stages, *ibid*:

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

Teachers' role in this approach is limited to produce texts through which certain grammar and vocabulary are going to be taught. Therefore, the teacher is seen as the controller and the directive of prescribed texts such as substitution patterns, fill in the gaps, re-ordering and writing from transformational tables and graphs. Furthermore, a central role is that the teacher is seen from the perspective of only correcting final drafts no matter to the process of the final product. Therefore, teachers' feedback is given only at the end of the written work (product). On the other hand, learners' role during the process of writing is to produce their own writing following the structure of the prescribed texts as they attempt various activities.

2.6.2 The Process Approach

In contrast to the product approach whose aim is to measure students' final product, the process approach to writing "emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task" Hyland (2003). Therefore, the process approach pays attention to each stage the writing process goes through. Procedures such as pre-writing, redrafting, editing, and finally publishing are the stages of exploring and creating a good piece of writing the learner should go through. In addition, the various stages of drafting, reviewing, redrafting and writing are recursive, Hyland (2003). In other words, the writer can move backwards or forwards once he feels the need to review. Thus, those stages are not sequenced in turn, but they are interactively related to each other for the purpose of editing and generating ideas (form and content), Harmer (2001).

2.6.3 The Genre Approach

The genre approach to teaching writing is considered as an extension to the product approach. In other words, in the genre approach teachers should provide a sample model of a particular social and cultural context. However, this approach emphasizes the language function, the purpose of writing, and the reader to whom the written text is delivered. In the genre theory, "writing is seen as an essentially social activity in which texts are written to do things, the assumption being that if the reader cannot recognize the purpose of a text, communication will not be successful" Trrible (1996). An explicit description of the genre approach is proposed by Swales (1990) who defines genre as:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes, these purposes are recognized by the expert members of the

parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influence constrains choices of content and style.

(1990, p. 58)

Therefore, the genre approach is concerned with the study of particular genres for specific purposes. In that, according to Hyland (2003) "the central believe here is that we don't just write, we write something to achieve some purpose". Furthermore, writing in different genres as narration, description, argumentation...etc has specific characteristics that differ from one genre to another. Thus, writers should be aware of those recognizable characteristics in order to make the writing process more efficient and effective, Knapp & Watkins (2005). To sum up, the orientation of the genre approach is given to both language form and language function to achieve particular communicative purposes.

2.7 The importance of Teachers' Written Feedback

Teachers' play a central role in improving students' writing skill. According to Hyland (2003) the idea of getting student writes emphasis the role of the teacher in helping students produce texts. In that, a major role comes from the concept of providing feedback. Feedback alone is a powerful way that increases students' written awareness and production. Therefore, Harmer (2001) describes teachers' role as a feedback provider; in that, he suggests that:

Giving feedback on writing tasks demands special care.

Teachers should respond positively and encouragingly to the content of what the students have written. When offering correction teachers should choose what and know much to focus on based on what students need at this

particular stage of their studies, and on the tasks they have undertaken, (2001, p. 262)

Furthermore, written feedback is "one way of avoiding the over correction problem", Harmer (1998). In other words, students often have negative attitudes towards using the red ink that is used usually only for scoring. Therefore, teachers come to release the importance of their formative written feedback which decreases students' negative attitudes towards scoring and increases their knowledge and writing improvement through suggesting and argumenting on students' work as well as telling them where they have done good or bad. Consequently, teachers' written feedback is considered as an effective strategy in encouraging and motivating students to write.

2.8 Conclusion

From what has been said before, we come to a conclusion in which we say that writing is a difficult skill that requires both learners and teachers to have some necessary knowledge and information that would reinforce and make of the teaching/learning of the writing skill easier and important. One way to achieve this is to look at writing as a process that contains different approaches for teaching. In the following chapter, we will examine the nature of writing as a process under the belief that increasing learners' awareness of writing as a process will help them to overcome the difficulties they face when they write, and therefore produce well written texts.

Chapter Three: Field Work

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Sampling

3.3 Teacher's Questionnaire

3.3.1 Aims of the Questionnaire

3.3.2 Description the Questionnaire

3.3.3 Analysis the Questionnaire

3.3.4 Discussion

3.4 Classroom Observation

3.4.1 Aims of the Classroom Observation

3.4.2 Description of the Observation

3.4.3 Analysis of the Observation

3.4.4 Discussion.

3.5 Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the situation under investigation as well as the research design and instruments. In the present work the method is used is the descriptive one. We used two tools to gather data from the participants. The first is teachers' feedback questionnaire, while the second is classroom observation to check the learning students the writing skill. This chapter includes the aim, description and the analysis of both teachers' questionnaires and the classroom observation. Data analysis will be reported in tabular presentations so that results will be clearer.

3.2 Sampling

The sample in this research was selected randomly. It is formed of first year EFL university students, who study in the Division of English at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University. Teachers are also chosen according to their specialty which is the writing module and who were targeted to respond to the research instruments that was addressed to them.

3.3 Teacher's Questionnaire

3.3.1 Aims of the Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at getting insight about the teachers' view about the role of formative assessment on learners writing skill, in addition to their roles in this process. Our population consists of teachers of written expression in the Division of English at the University of Biskra. The questionnaire is handed out for a sample of (6) teachers, (3) teachers whom handed back it.

3.3.2 Description of the Questionnaire

The whole questionnaire is made up of (9) items. It involves different types of questions: "Open ended" questions which require teacher's personal opinions or their background about some assessment, and "yes" "no" questions, or tick- up the right answers from a set of options.

Section One: is about the background information, it aims at gathering general information about the sample. Teachers are asked to indicate their qualification, and their teaching experience.

Section Two: is entitled formative assessment, this section is made up of seven questions. It is mainly concerned in variety of concepts and issues related to formative assessment aims at investigating teachers about its implementation in the teaching process.

3.3.3 Analysis the Questionnaire

Section One: Background information

Question one: Qualifications?

Option	Number	Percentage %
License (B.A)	0	0.00%
Magister (M.A)	2	66.67%
Doctorate (PHD)	1	33.33%
Total	3	100.00%

Table 1: Teachers' qualifications

From the above answers, we can say that our sample is qualified for teaching. Two of them have the magister degree and the other has the doctorate degree (PHD).

Question two: Years of experience?

Option	Number	Percentage %
ten years	1	33.33%
five years (23 at high school)	1	33.33%

twenty years	1	33.33%
Total	3	100%

Table 2: Teachers experience in teaching

The results show that the respondent's teachers have been teaching at the university from five to twenty years. This means that they are well experienced in teaching English in foreign language classrooms.

Section Two: Formative Assessment

Question one: As long as you are a teacher what does mean for you assessment?

This item aims at gaining insight about what is meant by formative assessment for teachers. Each one of the teachers provide a specific definition of assessment as an ongoing process which measuring students' progress both positively and negatively besides giving feedback and monitoring the performance, and other agree that assessment is a method or a way we use to evaluate both the teacher's and learners' progress. For the last teacher it means diagnostic teaching to improve both teaching and learning activities.

Question two: Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?

Option	Number	Percentage %
Yes	3	100%
No	0	0
Total	3	100%

Table 3: The implementation of formative assessment.

This question intended to get an insight about whether teachers implement the process of formative assessment in their classrooms or not. In fact all of them said the positive answers "yes" those teachers justify their positive answers by saying that students need to be assessed all the year to see how well they are doing and what procedure to be taken to adjust this performance. Besides, it helps teachers to check the current states of their student's language ability.

Question tree: Do you think that it is important to use formative assessment in the classroom?

Option	Number	Percentage %
Yes	3	100%
No	0	0
Total	3	100%

Table 4: The importance of using formative assessment

In this question information were gathered about the importance of using formative assessment in the classroom. It is very noticeable that there is a strong agreement to assessment which is proved by the "yes", that it is very helpful to use formative assessment in the classroom. Their justification represented that, to see the gradual development of students and provide the necessary feedback. It is very important since it helps the teacher control the learners' progress and monitor their understanding in a better way. It is also very important to improve teaching and learning process.

Question four: What are the effects of using formative assessment in your classroom?

This question is issued to elicit information about the effects of using formative assessment in the classroom. As it was expected it helps students figure their level and allow them to make progress steps. It makes better achievements for both teachers and learners.

Question five: Do you face some challenges in the classroom when you use formative assessment?

Option	Number	Percentage %
Yes	2	66.67%
No	1	33.33%
Total	3	100%

Table 5: Challenges of using formative assessment in classroom?

In this question teachers are asked to provide us the problems that teachers face when using formative assessment. The first teacher claims that there are a big number of students per group in addition to lack of time. The second teacher said that the test is more difficult in over-crowded classes. Whereas the last teacher don't find any problem when using formative assessment.

Question six: When correcting students' writing, are you interested more in form, content or both?

Option	Number	Percentage %
form	0	0
content	0	0
both	3	100%
Total	3	100%

Table 6: Correcting students' writing

The results revealed that the teachers gave importance to both form and content. They adopted positive attitude when providing feedback on students' written compositions. Therefore, organization of the piece as a whole and presentation of the piece of writing and coherence of the ideas is important for teachers.

Question seven: How frequently do you provide your students with written feedback?

Option	Number	Percentage %
Always	1	33.33%
Sometimes	2	66.67%
Never	0	0
Total	3	100%

Table 7: Providing written feedback to students

The results of this question revealed that all teachers provided their students with written feedback as they all picked either "sometimes" or "always".

Question eight: What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?

Option	Number	Percentage %
Monitoring students' progress	3	42.86%
Providing feedback	3	42.86%
Comparing between learners	0	0
Planning the course based on the students' proficiency level	1	14.29%
Total	3	100%

Table 8: Purpose of assessing the writing skill

As it is noticed above, two teachers assessed their students' writing for monitoring their progress and providing feedback. In addition, the other teacher assessed them for comparing between learners and planning the course based on the students' proficiency level.

Question nine: In your opinion, in the Algerian educational system, they are interested in:

Option	Number	Percentage %
High quality of students (level)	0	0
High quantity of students (number)	3	100%
Total	3	100%

Table 9: What Algerian educational system interested in?

This question aims at determining whether the Algerian educational system is interested in the quality level of the students or, they are interested in the large number of students. It seems that our educational system is interested in the large number of students, this was proved by the all of the respondents.

3.3.4. Discussion

The major aim of this conducted research is to investigate the role of formative assessment on the learners' writing proficiency. The findings of this study based on the

teachers' views. They are aware of the process of formative assessment and they implement it in the classroom. They assess their students formatively through written feedback, in order to monitoring students' progress and providing feedback. Concerning the teaching of writing in the light of formative assessment, according to the facts which we get from the analysis of this questionnaire, most of the teachers consider the writing skill as their major concern while teaching, so they are aware of their students' needs in order to develop their writing proficiency. This fact will be realized through assessing students formatively. It has a great role in the educational system; it must be implemented in a positive way because the negative evaluation might inhibit students' participation.

3.4 Classroom Observation

3.4.1 Aims of the Classroom Observation

A classroom observation has been carried out in order to observe the effectiveness of using formative assessment on the students' attitudes in the educational setting. Because of lack of time we conducted this observation with one teacher. The objective behind this observation is to seek to what extent the formative assessment is used in classrooms. It also investigates the role of this process on the learners' writing skill, and how it improves their skill. Moreover, one group is selected in order to be able to confirm the research hypothesis, and to achieve objectives drawn.

3.4.2 Description of the Observation

For the sake of supporting the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, classroom observation has been carried out. The classroom observation is considered as one of the main methods is used by the researcher in order to collect qualitative data. In

fact, we have attended two sessions per week, with the same group (group eleven of first year English students at Biskra University) with one teacher.

Moreover, the researcher tried to attend with this teacher without telling him about the topic in order to make him spontaneous, and to avoid anything prepared to maintain the credibility of the information. In addition to that, the observer was sitting as if she is one of the students, which enabled her to observe all the reactions of both the teacher and his students.

The observation was conducted by using a checklist that included a set of items under an observation of teacher's formative assessment. It aims at collecting data students' awareness about formative assessment and its implementation as a process in the field of teaching and learning. Beside it presented to observe teacher-student interaction, and how frequently does the teacher provide the students with written feedback. In order to collect informations during the observation, the checklist includes seven items.

3.4.3 Analysis of the Observation

Item one: When students make mistakes, do they like their mistakes to be corrected?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One				√
Session Two				√
Total				2
Percentage (%)				100

Table 10: Student's attitudes towards correcting their mistakes

The results showed that students like to be corrected their mistakes. This ensures that they are processed naturally towards learning. It means that students have a positive attitude towards their teachers' correction.

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One		√		
Session Two		√		
Total		2		
Percentage (%)		100		

Item two: Does the teacher of written expression provide students with feedback about their production?

Table 11: Frequency of teachers' feedback

Table11 shows that students rarely receive feedback from their teacher because of the overcrowded class.

Item three: Does the teacher's correction during the course develop students' writing?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One				√
Session Two				√
Total				2
Percentage (%)				100

Table 12: The development students' writing throughout feedback

The results indicate that correction for students during the course have positive effects on developing their writing.

Item four: How frequently does the teacher provide the students with written feedback?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One			√	
Session Two			√	
Total			2	

Percentage (%)			100	
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Table 13: Written feedback given by the teacher

The results of this question revealed that teacher sometimes provided their students with written feedback.

Item five: Is the feedback's teacher positive?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One				√
Session Two				√
Total				2
Percentage (%)				100

Table 14: Feedback's teacher positivity

The results show that students receive positive feedback as "very good". This means that they are doing well while they are writing.

Item six: Does the teacher give the students a chance to correct each other?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One			√	
Session Two			√	
Total			2	
Percentage (%)			100	

Table 15: Peer Correction

The results show that their teacher allows them the chance to correct their mistakes. This indicates that teacher is aware of the great advantages of using peers and self correction as a source of raising students' awareness towards recognizing their mistakes and therefore to be avoided in the future use.

Item seven: Would the student like his teacher to correct each mistake he makes?

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
Session One		√		
Session Two			√	
Total		1	1	
Percentage (%)		50	50	

Table 16: Students' preferences of Teachers' feedback

Table 16 shows that students sometimes like their teacher to give them the mark and tell them the kind of the mistaking parts. Few of them prefer him to only show them the kind of the committed mistakes.

3.4.4 Discussion

The analysis of data gathered in relation to the participants understanding about the role of formative assessment on their writing skill revealed that students are aware of this process of formative assessment. They are also supporting it to be implemented in the classroom by the teacher because they believe that this process enhances their level. The results obtained from (table 10) show that when students make mistakes, they like to be corrected. The results from (table 11) show that the teacher of written expression rarely provides students with feedback about their production due to the overcrowded class; so that he cannot correct each student's mistake. Whereas (tables 12 & 13) show that though providing students with [insignificant](#) feedback, the process of writing assessment enhances the students' writing performance. That is to say, the formative assessment used by the teacher of writing help students develop their skill and produce good writing performance.

From the results of this analysis, we notice that assessing students formatively contributes in improving their writing skill, especially when the teacher provides the students with written feedback.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results collected by the two research instruments used in the current study. Therefore, the analysis of classroom observation shows students' positive attitudes towards the necessity of developing the writing skill as well as their positive preferences of teachers' correction during the writing course. In other words, the results show that students are aware of their teachers' formative feedback in enhancing their writing skill. Concerning the analysis of teachers' feedback questionnaire, teachers

shed light on the importance of their role during the writing process. Particularly, they emphasized the importance of formative feedback during the various stages of students writings in helping students get rid of their difficulties and thus improve their written production.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Teachers' formative feedback is considered as a means through which information and output from the teacher are given to the learner in order to enhance their language skills and thereby their performance. In the writing context, learners' output can vary from

one learner to another. In other words, learners' abilities and needs are expressed differently. Therefore, teachers' responses to learners' output also may vary in accordance with their needs, abilities and performance.

In this work, we attempt to investigate the role of formative assessment on learners' language proficiency, at the university level. Through this research, we hypothesize that if students are continuously assessed in classroom through writing, their mastery of producing in English writing will be improved, in order to make a continuous evaluation for the written production of learners. In addition to that, they will be observed in classroom during the target language. The implementation of formative assessment as a process in the field of teaching and learning is essential for enhancing the learners' writing skill.

The present study is a total of three chapters. The first and the second chapters are related to the review of literature, while the third chapter is concerned with the practical area of investigation. In its theoretical part, the research provides a description of the most basic concepts and elements related to the field of language assessment. It looks also at the terminology related to the writing skill.

In the practical part of this study, the researcher used the descriptive method, in order to describe the situation of teaching writing skill in the light of implementing formative assessment. The questionnaire and classroom observation are used as data gathering tools to test the hypothesis which we assume in this work. This research requires a questionnaire for teachers and a classroom observation for students. The obtained results confirmed the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between learners' language proficiency and formative assessment. As a result, formative assessment enhances the learners' writing skill, the findings elicit that formative assessment is the appropriate

process which needs to be implemented in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

The results show that there is a positive relationship between the dependent variable, and the independent variable. The study shows that students need to be continuously assessed in order to improve their quality of their writing production.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 01: Students' Feedback Classroom Observation Checklist

Appendix 02: Teachers' Feedback Questionnaire

Classroom Observation Checklist

Teacher: **Date:**
Observer: **Time:**
Class observed: **Branch:**

N: Never **R:** Rarely **S:** Sometimes **A:** Always

Observation	Items	N	R	S	A
Teacher's Formative Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When students make mistakes, do they like their mistakes to be corrected? 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the teacher of written expression provide students with feedback about their production? 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the teacher's correction during the course develop students' writing? 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How frequently does the teacher provide the students with written feedback? 				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the feedback's teacher positive? 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the teacher give the students a chance to correct each other 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the student like his teacher to correct each mistake he makes? 				

Suggestions and comments:

Teacher's Questionnaire

I will be very grateful if you take few minutes to fill in this questionnaire which aims to gather information about the role of formative assessment in enhancing EFL students' writing skill. Thank you very much for taking the time to share your ideas and experiences. Your input is very important and greatly appreciated.

Section One: Background information

Qualification:

- ✓ License (B.A)
- ✓ Magister (M.A)
- ✓ Doctorate (PHD)

Years of experience.....

Section Tow: Formative Assessment

1. As long as you are a teacher what does mean for you assessment?

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

2. Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?

✓ Yes

✓ No

Justify.....
.....
.....

3. Do you think that it is important to use formative assessment in the classroom?

✓ Yes

✓ No

justify.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. What are the effects of using formative assessment in your classroom?

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

5. Do you face some challenges in the classroom when you use formative assessment?

Yes

No

Would you please, justify your answer :

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. When correcting students' writing, are you interested more in?

Form

Content

Both of them

7. How frequently do you provide your students with written feedback?

Always

Sometimes

Never

8. What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?

Monitoring students' progress

Providing feedback

Comparing between learners

Planning the course based on the students' proficiency level

Other.....

.....

.....

9. In your opinion, in the Algerian educational system, they are interested in:

- ✓ High quality of students (level)
- ✓ High quantity of students (number)

Please, say why :

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for your cooperation

المُلخَص

هذا العمل عبارة عن دراسة وصفية لدور التقويم و التصحيح البلاغي خلال عمليتي التدريس و التعليم في تحسين المهارة الكتابية للطالب. يهدف هذا العمل إلى استنباط دور الأستاذ التقويبي البلاغي في تحسين المهارة الكتابية للطالب، و لتحقيق هذا الهدف اعتمدنا على وسيلتين للبحث وهما: الاستبيان و الملاحظة في القسم.

الاستبيان لأساتذة التعبير الكتابي قسم انجليزية، جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة، تهدف إلى معرفة دورهم خلال تدريس هذه المادة و كذلك معرفة الطرق المستعملة في تسهيل استيعاب الواجب الكتابي. أما الملاحظة في القسم فهي للطلبة بهدف معرفة انطباعهم حول المهارة الكتابية خلال عمليتي التدريس و التعلم في تحسين الأداء الكتابي.

أظهرت نتائج تحليل الملاحظة في القسم أن الطلبة وعي حول ضرورة تحسين المهارة الكتابية في التطور اللغوي، وكذلك انطباعهم الايجابي حول تلقي الدور التقويم البلاغي للأستاذ أثناء التدريس والتعلم. كما بينت نتائج الاستبيان ضرورة و أهمية التقويم البلاغي و مدى تطبيقه في اعلام الأستاذ حول قدرات و احتياجات الطلبة الكتابية.