



UNIVERSITE  
Abdelhamid Ibn Badis  
MOSTAGANEM

PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF ABDELHAMID IBN BADISS - MOSTAGANEM

FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

MASTER IN

« Didactics and Applied Languages »

**Assessing the Writing Skill in EFL Classes:**

**Case of First Year Pupils of BEN GUELLA**

**TOUATI High School, Mostaganem**

**Submitted by:**

**Ms. Sara CHETOUANE**

**The Board of Examiners:**

**Chairperson:** Dr. BENSTAALI Leila

**University of Mostaganem**

**Supervisor:** Dr. BENOSMANE Naziha

**University of Mostaganem**

**Examiner:** Ms. ADNANI Rajaa

**University of Mostaganem**

**Academic year: 2019-2020**

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to:

My beloved parents, who have always been a constant source of inspiration, and  
strengthens me with their love,

I also dedicate this work to my lovely brother and sisters, without their love and  
support, this research would not have been made possible,

To my sister Nadia in particular without whom I would have never reached this stage,

To all my friends who have stood by my side.



## **Acknowledgments**

First of all I owe particular thanks to Allah for having helped me to accomplish this modest work.

This research project would not have been feasible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Naziha BENOSMANE for her assistance, guidance, and advice in time of great need.

Deepest thanks also to the members of the jury, namely Dr. L. BENSTAALI and Ms. R. ADNANI for devoting some of their time and accepting to read and evaluate this work.

I also convey special thanks to Ms. KEHAILIA and Ms. MAZ for their help, insightful comments, and advice.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to the informants, being teachers or pupils, who helped me a great deal in the conduct of the field work.

## Abstract

The assessment of writing ability has recently received much attention from educators as well as writing specialists, especially because the writing skill at different educational levels seems less proficient than the one produced before. The development of writing skill involves more than the accurate use of grammar and syntax, it involves raising the awareness, support, practice, and continuous feedback. This study aimed mainly at raising teachers' awareness of the importance of assessing the writing skill. Furthermore, it aims at investigating the way teachers respond, measure, and score learners' writing competency and the role of feedback in the EFL teaching/learning process. A mixed methods approach design has been chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from an exploratory case study of first year pupils of Ben Guella Touati high school in Mostaganem. Hence, to achieve the objectives above, the study relied on three research instruments: a questionnaire and interview which were addressed to EFL teachers and also a classroom observation in order to shed light on the importance of assessing the writing skill as well as determining both the scoring procedure and its impact on students' results. The study reveals the importance of the teacher's choices in both the assessment practices and the feedback in enhancing learners' writing performances.

**Key words:** assessment, writing, teachers, tasks, pupils, feedback.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**ICT:** Information and Communication Technology

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.1:</b> Dimensions of Assessment.....	10
<b>Table 2.1:</b> Writing Activities in the Course Book.....	18
<b>Table 3.1:</b> Errors Symbols .....	40

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.1:</b> Concept Map of the Professional Theme of Writing.....	5
<b>Figure 1.2:</b> Simplified Model for the Instructional Role of Formative Assessment.....	11
<b>Figure 1.3:</b> Simplified Model for the Instructional Role of Summative Assessment.....	13
<b>Figure 2.1:</b> The Extent of Using Collaborative Writing.....	26
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> Techniques Used in Assessing the Writing Skill.....	28
<b>Figure 2.3:</b> The Frequency of Providing Pupils with Feedback.....	28
<b>Figure 2.4:</b> Kinds of Writing Tasks Used in Assessing the Writing Performance.....	28
<b>Figure 2.5:</b> The Teacher's Emphasis in the Correction of Written Production.....	30

## Table of Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	I
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	II
<b>Abstract</b> .....	III
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	IV
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	V
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	VI
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	VII
<b>General Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment</b>	
<b>1.1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>1.2. Definition of writing</b> .....	4
<b>1.3. Types of classroom writing performance</b> .....	5
<b>1.3.1. Imitative or writing down</b> .....	6
<b>1.3.2. Intensive or controlled writing</b> .....	6
<b>1.3.3. Self-writing</b> .....	7
<b>1.3.4. Display writing</b> .....	7
<b>1.3.5. Real writing</b> .....	7
<b>1.4. Importance of writing</b> .....	8
<b>1.5. Definition of assessment</b> .....	8
<b>1.6. Types of assessment</b> .....	10
<b>1.6.1. Diagnostic assessment</b> .....	10
<b>1.6.2. Formative assessment</b> .....	11
<b>1.6.3. Summative assessment</b> .....	12
<b>1.7. Principles of assessment</b> .....	13
<b>1.7.1. Practicality</b> .....	13
<b>1.7.2. Validity</b> .....	14

1.7.3. Reliability .....	14
1.7.4. Authenticity .....	14
1.7.5. Wash- back .....	15
1.8. Approaches to scoring writing .....	15
1.8.1. Holistic scoring .....	15
1.8.2. Analytic scoring.....	15
1.8.3. Trait-based scoring .....	16
1.9. Conclusion.....	16

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

2.1. Introduction .....	17
2.2. Research methodology .....	17
2.2.1. The participants.....	18
2.2.2. The educational context .....	18
2.2.3. Writing sessions.....	18
2.3. Data collection instruments .....	19
2.3.1. Classroom observation .....	20
2.3.1.1. Description of the observation .....	20
2.3.2. Questionnaire .....	21
2.3.2.1. Description of the questionnaire .....	22
2.3.3. Interview .....	23
2.3.3.1. Description of the interview .....	24
2.4. Data analysis .....	24
2.4.1. Analysis of classroom observation.....	24
2.4.2. Analysis of the questionnaire .....	27
2.4.3. Analysis of the interview .....	33
2.5. Conclusion.....	34

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

<b>3.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.2. Findings discussion.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.2.1. Discussion of the main results of the classroom observation .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.2.2. Discussion of the main results of the questionnaire .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.2.3. Discussion of the main results of the interview .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3. General discussion of the results.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.4. Recommendations .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3.4.1. Aligning the writing assignments to the pupils' needs .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3.4.2. Allowing enough time for teaching and assessing writing .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3.4.3. Providing pupils with more homework.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3.4.4. Assessment of writing should be done regularly .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3.4.5. Integrating peer-assessment with teacher-assessment.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3.4.6. Giving feedback about the wrong and right answers .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>3.4.7. Develop grading criteria for each writing assignments .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.4.8. Rubrics as an assessment tool for writing.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.4.9. Portfolio as a means of developing and assessing writing skills .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>3.5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>General Conclusion .....</b>	<b>45</b>

**References**

**Appendices**

## **General Introduction**

In education the term assessment is a systematic process of a wide variety of methods that educators use to gather, interpret, record, and use information about learners' responses to an educational task. In fact, it is a key component to a deep learning and it needs to employ effective strategies. These strategies are addressing improvement needs and achieving desired results.

Assessment provides valuable information that can inform decisions about learners' needs, if there should be some changes to be made or not to improve the method of teaching, to meet students' needs for the next cycle and focus more on the individual learner. However, assessing a foreign language writing skills is one of the most problematic areas in language testing. Understandably, there has been a growing interest among educators as well as instructors in effectively measuring and assessing the writing skills. Writing is a critical communication tool for students to convey thoughts and opinion, describe ideas and events, and analyze information. Indeed, writing is a life-long skill.

Writing assessment refers not only to evaluating student final papers, but also to measuring learners' knowledge of the element that they were taught and the tasks and practices used to evaluate learners writing and learning. Moreover, it can be used to monitor students' progress as well as determining if changes in instructions are required to meet students' need. Furthermore, to diagnose the weaknesses and strengths of the learner and to certify that the student has achieved a particular level of performance, so that educators can provide a specialized support, educational programming for the purpose of developing a deep understanding of what learners know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences.

Responding to learners' papers encompasses so many of the challenges of teaching writing successfully, correcting every error, writing detailed comments in the margin, offering encouraging and helpful summary remarks when they finish. The assessment is based on sound principles and procedures. Both teaching and assessment should relate to the learner's goals and very frequently to institutional goals.

Thus, the general aim behind this study is to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of assessing the writing skill, with reference to 1<sup>st</sup> year pupils of Ben Guella Touati high school, Mostaganem. Specifically, it aims to investigate the way teachers respond

and measure learners' knowledge of the elements of writing they were taught focusing on five major areas: sentence making, grammar, spelling mistakes, hand-writing, and comprehension. It aims also to know which type of writing assessment is mostly used in the EFL classroom. In addition, it seeks to explore the importance and the way of providing feedback. In other words, it aims to see whether teacher's way of assessment contributes to develop student's writing performance.

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

- ✓ How can teachers assess or respond to students' writing in ways that are effective?
  1. What are the types of tasks used to assess the writing skill?
  2. What is the method (tool) used to give scores when assessing the writing skill?
  3. How can teachers and learners receive a constructive feedback from assessment?

The above mentioned questions led us to formulate the following hypotheses:

- ✓ Teachers respond to pupils writing according to their individual needs and by using formative assessment.
  1. The tasks used to assess the writing skill are free-writing activities and guided-writing activities.
  2. The method (tool) used to score the writing assignments is rubric; which means using a scoring guide against a set of criteria.
  3. Learners can receive a constructive feedback through making the process of providing feedback positive and in such manner that will not discourage students' learning while teachers will know better what to focus on when teaching them.

Concerning the research methodology, the first tool to be used is a classroom observation to have deep insights into the students and teachers' practices during the writing sessions. In order to obtain secondary school teachers' views regarding writing sessions and its assessment, a questionnaire is submitted online. After finishing all the writing sessions, an interview is conducted with one teacher to check whether or not she maintains the same attitudes in comparison with the classroom observation done before.

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical overview concerning some definitions related to different scholars, types, and importance of

the writing skill in education. Then, it tackles the definition of assessment, its types and principles as well as providing the different approaches to scoring the written products.

The second chapter is devoted to provide a description of the research methodology, sample population, and the educational context. Then, it provides the reader with information about teaching the writing skill in secondary schools as well as the description of the data collection instruments used to conduct this research. Finally, the results of the investigation are analyzed.

The third chapter consists of two parts; the first part is devoted to discuss the findings provided by the classroom observation, questionnaire, and the interview to either confirm or deny the research hypotheses. The second part provides some suggestions and recommendations related to assessing the writing skill in EFL classes.

# *Chapter One*

## *Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment*

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

## 1.1. Introduction

Assessing writing skills is one of the most problematic areas in language testing that has expanded substantially in the past 30 years. Writing samples should be assessed across a variety of purposes, for writing to give a complete picture of student's writing performance across different text structures and genres. It is a teacher-centered approach in setting up criteria which is mainly based on: content, clarity, writing mechanics, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. To this end, teachers spend a lot of time ensuring that their writing assessment practices are valid and reliable. The present chapter reviews the key concepts related to two fields; writing and assessment. First, we will give some of the theoretical studies concerning the definition, types and importance of writing; second, we will provide a definition of assessment, reviewing its types, and principles as well as types of scoring the written product.

## 1.2. Definition of writing

Writing is becoming an increasingly important skill for second and foreign language learners, especially in major world languages such as English. Composing a text engages several major cognitive components that intervene at different levels of representation. Writing is indeed one of the most effortful activities that humans can implement (Kellogg, 1994, Piolat, Olive & Kellogg, 2005).

According to Nunan (2003), writing is a physical and mental act. It is about discovering ideas, thinking about how to: communicate; develop them into statements, and paragraphs that will be comprehensible to a reader. Writing has a dual purpose-to express and to impress. Writers must select the most advantageous medium for their writing. It is a process and also a product. The writer creates plans, writes various drafts, revises, edits, and publishes, while when the audience read is a product.

Some people hold on the false belief that writing is a talent that some have and others do not. This belief makes them never make an effort to learn writing. According to Langan (2012) writing is a skill, and like most other skills, such as: typing can be learned. Therefore, writing can be learned through practice. Flognfeldt (2016) defines writing as:

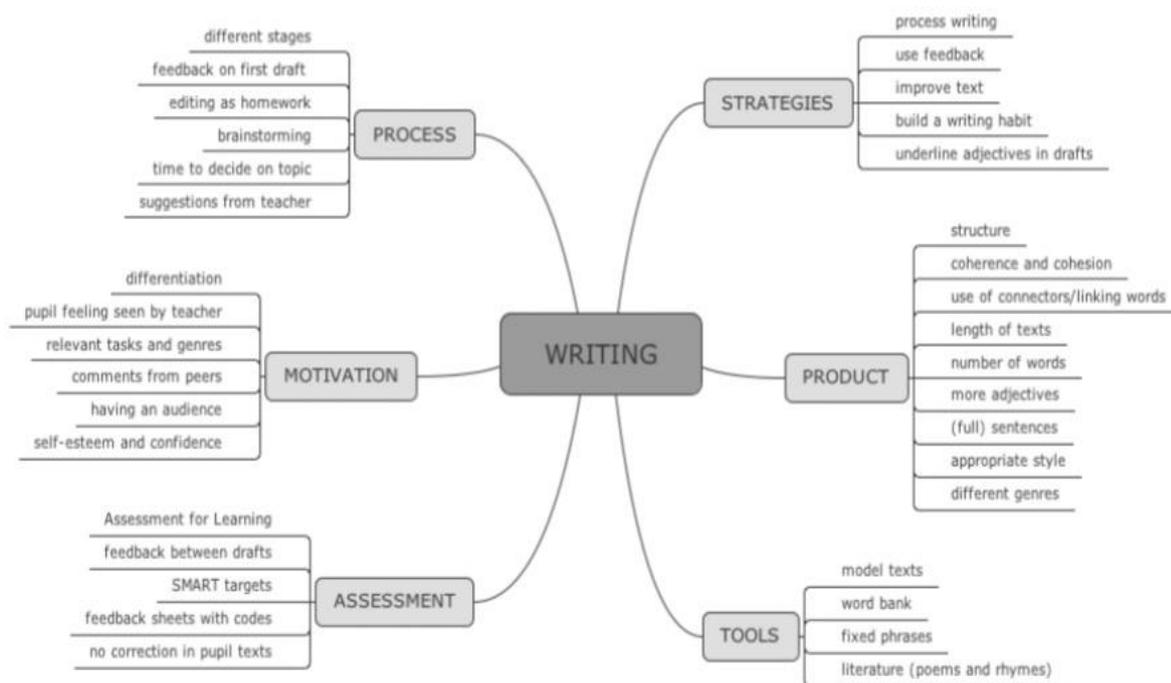
*A Process that ends with a product, this product has a structure, a certain size, content, style, etc. Various strategies are involved in the writing process and different tools may be useful in various stages of the process.*

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

*Social or affective factors may motivate the writer, since the writing process takes place at school, the kind of assessment and feedback given by the teacher may be facilitative factor. What the model does not show is that writing is always embedded in context.*

(Flognfeldt, 2016:262)

To understand the nature of writing, Flognfeldt (2016) made a map that represents some of the key thematic factors involved in writing. As explained in the following figure:



**Figure 1.1:** Concept Map of the Professional Theme of Writing (Flognfeldt, 2016)

Furthermore, based on those definitions, it can be stated that writing skill is a complex activity that allows students to put their feelings and ideas on a paper, and to convey a meaning through a well constructed text. Also, developing writing skills means developing other skills; such as, thinking, planning, and summarizing.

### 1.3. Types of classroom writing performance

Types of writing activities to perform writing should be based on the student's level and capacity. According to Brown (2001), there are five major categories of classroom writing performance.

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

## 1.3.1. Imitative or writing down

At the beginning level of learning to write, students will simply “write down” English letters, words, and possibly sentences. This includes the ability to spell correctly and to perceive phoneme-graphic correspondence in the English spelling system. Some forms of dictation fall into this category, although dictations can serve to and test higher-order processing as well. Dictations typically involve the following steps:

- a. A teacher reads a short paragraph once or twice at a normal speed.
- b. A teacher reads the paragraph in short phrase units of three or four words each and each unit is followed by a pause.
- c. During the pause, students write exactly what they hear.
- d. A teacher reads the whole paragraph once more at a normal speed so student can check their writing.

## 1.3.2. Intensive or controlled writing

Writing is sometimes used as a production mode for learning, reinforcing, or testing grammatical concepts. This intensive writing typically appears in controlled, written grammar exercises. In this type of writing, students are supposed to copy sentences and words, rewrite texts and passages, and order sentences among others.

A common form of controlled writing is to present a paragraph to students in which they have to alter a given structure through. So, for example, they may be asked to change all present tense verbs to past tense; in such case students may need to alter other time references in the paragraph.

Guided writing, for example, the teacher might get students to tell a story just viewed on a videotape by asking them a series of questions: where does the story take place? Describe the principal character. What does he say to the women in the car?

Yet, another form of controlled writing is a dicto-comp technique, the teacher, after reading the passage, puts key words from the paragraph, in sequence, on the board as cues for the students.

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

## 1.3.3. Self-writing

A significant proportion of classroom writing may be devoted to self-writing, or writing with only the self in mind as an audience. The most salient instance of this category in classroom is note-taking, where students take notes during a lecture for the purpose of later recall. Other note-taking may be done in the margins of books and on odd scraps of paper.

Diary or journal writing also falls into this category. However, in many circumstances, a dialogue journal, in which a student records thoughts, feelings, and reactions; which an instructor reads and responds to, while ostensibly written for oneself, has two audiences.

## 1.3.4. Display writing

It was noted earlier that writing within the school curricular context is a way of life. For all language students, short answer exercises, essay examinations, and even research reports will involve an element of display.

Display writing is writing that is primarily intended for the teacher, who already knows the answer that the student is addressing. The student is literally displaying what he or she already knows. Examples of this type of writing include essays and other writing for the purpose of a summative assessment.

## 1.3.5. Real writing

While virtually every classroom writing task will have an element of display writing in it, some classroom writing aims at the genuine communication of messages to an audience in need of those messages. Three subcategories illustrate how reality can be injected:

- a. **Academic:** The language experience approach gives groups of students' opportunities to convey genuine information to each other. Content-based instruction encourages the exchange of useful information, and some of this learning uses the written word.
- b. **Vocational/ Technical:** Quite a variety of real writing can take place in classes of students studying English for advancement in their occupation. This is what we call it "English in the workplace".
- c. **Personal:** In virtually any ESL class, diaries, letters, post cards, notes, personal messages, and other informal writing can take place, especially within the context of an interactive classroom.

# **Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment**

## **1.4. Importance of writing**

Writing is one of the basic skills, and an essential factor of language. Hence it is important for native, second and foreign language learners.

Writing skills may enhance students' chances for success. According to Mukulu et al (2006), writing is considered the most important language skill that students require for their personal development and academic success. In the same way, Rao (2007) asserts that writing strengthens students' learning, thinking and reflecting on the English language in their academics. So, this means that writing is the primary basis upon which one's work, learning, and intellect will be judged; writing has become a vital component to assess a person's knowledge.

Written expression is a crucial part of communication and critical thinking. For high school students, developing strong written skills not only helps their high school grades, but also prepares them for their academic and professional futures. Whether writing essays, taking notes or applying for scholarships, high school students must learn to develop their ideas and proofread their written work before sharing it.

Thus, the person is often judged by the quality of writing. Be it at school, college, workplace or society. Furthermore, it equips us with communication and thinking skills. Moreover, if writing is adequately practiced in the classroom, it helps a lot with recycling and generating content. Studies have shown that the best way to learn to write is to rewrite. So, this will certainly provide opportunities for the revision process (Haris, 1993).

## **1.5. Definition of assessment**

One of the most important measurement tools of students' learning is how that learning is assessed. Assessment is a vital component of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, assessment gives a description of students' performances in order to provide a possibility to make a sort of judgment about these learners.

Black and Wiliam (1998) refers assessment to "all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged" (p.2), as cited in (Cheng and fox, 2017:1 ). There are two main points about this definition. First, assessment involves both teachers and students. Second, these activities include both the classroom tests and daily assessments that teachers use in the classroom.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

According to Barbara and Walvoord (2014), in the context of language teaching and learning, assessment “is the systematic collection of information about student learning undertaken with the time, knowledge, expertise and resources available, in order to inform decisions that affect student learning” (p.7). In other words, assessment is the process of gathering information on a daily basis in order to understand individual student’s learning and needs. In the same sense, Chapelle and Bingley (2002) define it as the “act of collecting information and making judgments about the learner’s knowledge of a language and ability to use it” (p.267).

Broadly speaking, assessment is seen as a method used to determine knowledge about student learning, and it is a part of advanced education. It provides feedback to learners, educators, parents, policy makers, and the public about the effectiveness of educational programs (the National Research Council, 2001).

Thus, the assessment of academic programs involves six steps (Allen, 2004):

1. Develop learning outcomes
2. Check for alignment between curriculum and outcomes
3. Develop an assessment plan
4. Collect assessment data
5. Use results to improve the program
6. Routinely examine the assessment process

Moreover, the following two terms best represent the dimensions of assessment (Cheng and Fox, 2017):

- Assessment for learning: refers to the way towards looking for, and interpreting proof for use by learners and their instructors to choose where learners are in their learning procedure, where they need to go, and how best to arrive.

- Assessment of learning: refers to appraisals that occur after learning has happened, to decide if learning has occurred. They are utilized to offer expressions about a student’s learning status at a specific point in time.

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is	How to get there
Teacher		Engineering effective discussions, tasks	Providing feedback that moves learners

## Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

	Clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions	and activities that elicit evidence of learning	forward
Peer		Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Learner		Activating students as owners of their own leaning	

**Table 1.1:** Dimensions of Assessment (adapted from Wiliam, 2015)

### 1.6. Types of assessment

Assessment is a very important part of instruction, as it helps both teachers and learners achieve successfully the educational objectives. It comprises two types, which are used in language classrooms. These types occur in different times, and different forms to accomplish multiple purposes. These types are formative and summative assessments.

#### 1.6.1. Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment is a form of Pre- assessment that allows a teacher to determine students' individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction. It is primarily used to diagnose students' difficulties and to guide lesson and curriculum planning.

According to Murphy (2009), diagnostic assessment is the process of diagnosing learners' strengths and weaknesses in the beginning of the course, not least the foreign language lesson. It benefits both the instructor and the students. It allows teachers to plan meaningful and efficient instruction.

Alderson (2005) suggests that diagnostic tests should identify strengths and weaknesses in learners' use of language and focus on specific elements rather than global abilities. Moreover, this assessment can be done at the beginning and the end of a course. Post-course assessments can be compared with pre-course assessments and can show students' potential improvement in certain areas and allow the instructor to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of students.

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

## 1.6.2. Formative assessment

Formative assessment occurs throughout the school year. It can be referred to as continuous assessment. Initially, the goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning, and to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching; and by students to improve their learning.

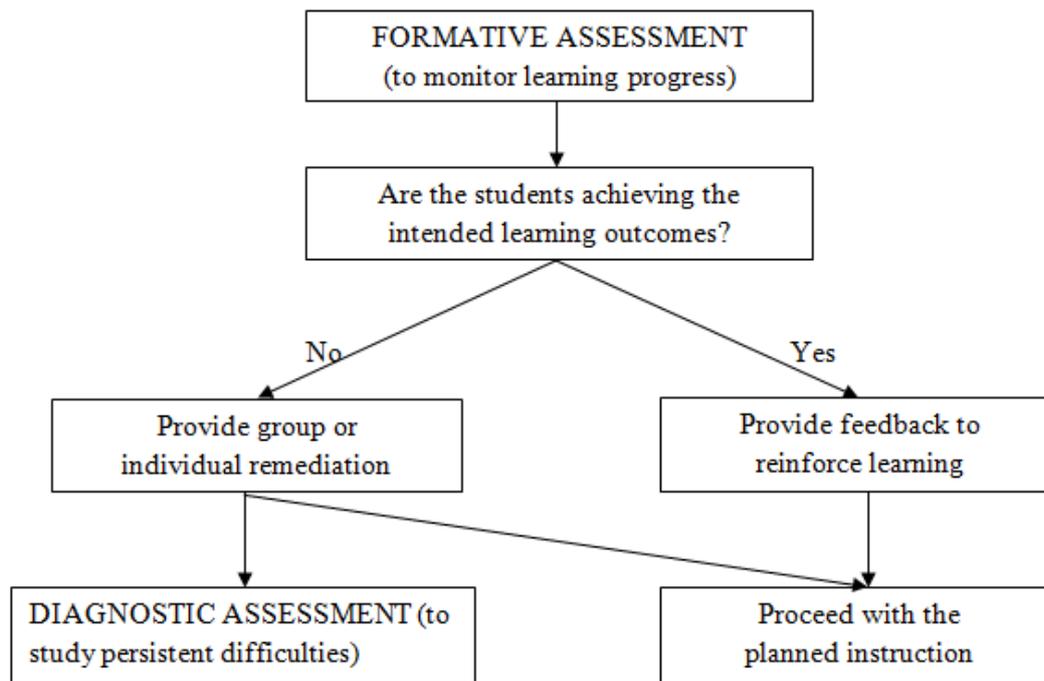
According to Black and William (2009), formative assessment encompasses the following processes: practice in a study hall is formative to the degree that proof about learner accomplishment is evoked, interpreted, and utilized by instructors, students or their companions, to settle on choices about the subsequent stages in guidance.

Alternatively, (Cizek, 2010:6) refers to formative assessment as:

*The collaborative processes engaged in by educators and students for the purpose of understanding the students' learning and conceptual organization, identification of strengths, diagnosis of weaknesses, areas of improvement, and as a source of information, teachers can use in instructional planning and students can use in deepening their understanding, and improving their achievement.*

As for the above definition, formative assessment is viewed as a collection of activities or processes used by teachers, and students to recognize and respond to student learning and for the purpose of identifying student's level, and boosting their learning outcomes. To understand its role, a model was provided by (Gronlund, Norman, 1998).

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment



**Figure 1.2:** Simplified Model for the Instructional Role of Formative Assessment  
(Gronlund, Norman, 1998)

### 1.6.3. Summative assessment

Summative assessment is an appraisal of learning at the end of a project, unit, semester, program, or at a specific point in time. It is used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period. Generally, summative assessment gauges how a particular population responds to an intervention rather than focusing on an individual.

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, 2003:6). This means that summative assessment is a kind of evaluating and ranking students' learning, and it is generally done at the conclusion of unit.

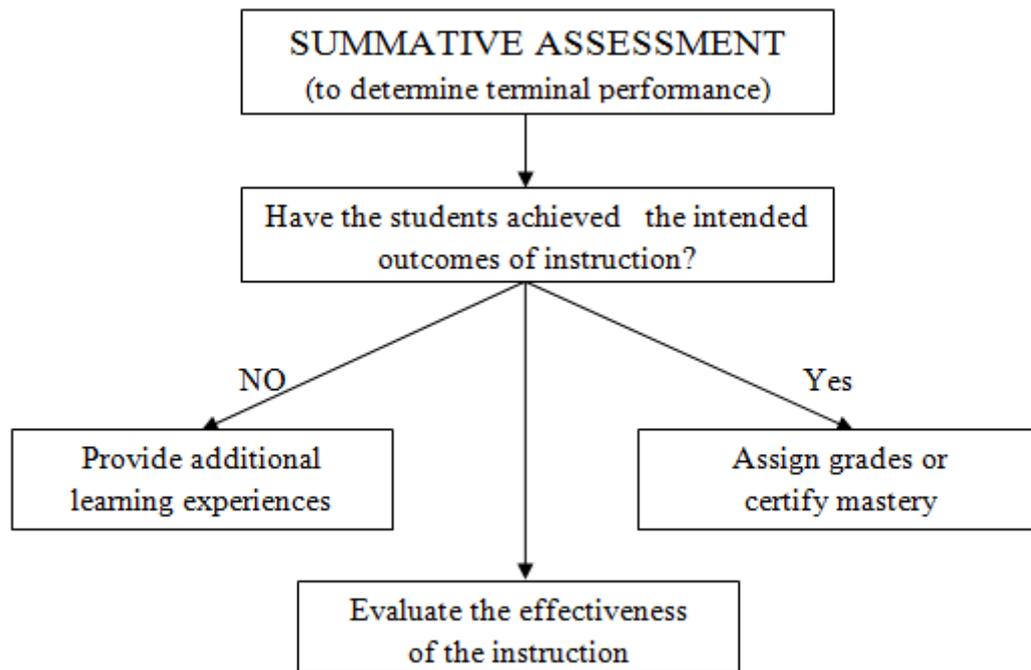
In addition, Miller (2006) state different purposes for using summative assessment in the classroom:

- To pass or fail a student
- To grade or rank a student
- To allow progress to further study
- To assure suitability for work

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

- To predict success in further study
- To signal employability and selection for employment

To understand the role of summative assessment, a model was provided by (Gronlund, Norman, 1998).



**Figure 1.3:** Simplified Model for the Instructional Role of Summative Assessment (Gronlund, Norman, 1998).

## 1.7. Principles of assessment

The key concept of assessment is to enable the assessor to clarify if the learner has gained the required understanding, skills, and knowledge required as a part of their program. To meet the effectiveness of the assessment tasks used, certain principles are taken into consideration.

### 1.7.1. Practicality

Practicality can be simply defined as the relationship between available resources for the test, it means seeing to which extent a test can be put into practice. Brown (2004) defines practicality in terms of cost, time, administration, scoring / evaluation. That is to say, a practical test:

- Stays within budgetary limits.
- Can be completed by the test-taker within appropriate time constraints.

# Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment

- Have clear directions for administration.
- Consider the time and effort involved for both design and scoring.

## 1.7.2. Validity

Validity of a test is the extent to which it exactly measures what is supposed to measure (Hughes, 2003). In order for the assessment to be valid, it should focus on the objectives of the lesson. Brown (2004) proposed five ways to establish validity. They are:

- Face Validity: Mousavi (2009) refers face validity to the degree to which a test looks right, and appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it claims to measure, based on the subjective judgment of the examinees who take it, the administrative personnel who decide on its use, and other psychometrically unsophisticated observers. (Mousavi, 2009 as cited in Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010)
- Content validity: the most important step in making sure of content validity is to make sure all content domains are presented in the test.
- Constructive validity: is the most obvious reflection of whether a test measures what it is supposed to measure as it directly addresses the issue of what it is that is being measured.
- Concurrent validity: is the use of another more reputable and recognized test to validate one's own test.
- Predictive validity: is closely related to concurrent validity. Therefore, a test that would yield predictable results in a letter measure.

## 1.7.3. Reliability

It means that if the test is administered to the same students on different occasions, then it produces the same results. In other words “if you give same test to the same students or matched students on two different occasions, the test should yield similar results” (Brown, 2004:20). Thus, assessments are usually expected to produce comparable outcomes, with consistent standards over time and between different learners and examiners.

## 1.7.4. Authenticity

It is the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task. Authenticity deals with a real world situation. Many large-scale tests nowadays offer simulation of real-world tasks in writing, of which the

# **Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment**

performance of this productive skill was not included previously. All types of assessment tools should prepare the learner to function correctly when they are in the target culture.

## **1.7.5. Wash- back**

The term wash-back (Hughes, 2003) refers to the impact that tests have on teaching and learning. For example the extent to which assessment affects a student's future language development. Such impact is usually seen as being negative: tests are said to force teachers to do things they do not necessarily wish to do. However, some have argued that tests are potentially also 'levers for change' in language education.

## **1.8. Approaches to scoring writing**

Scoring writing is a very delicate task. According to Hyland (2003), such an approach takes a variety of forms and falls into three main categories: holistic, analytic, and trait-based. Each of these approaches has a different purpose, focus, and will provide different types of information to teachers and students.

### **1.8.1. Holistic scoring**

A method of evaluating a composition based on its overall quality, holistic scoring results in a more general description for categories, but includes the different elements of writing implicitly, or explicitly. This approach to scoring students' written performances reflects the idea that "writing is a single entity which is best captured by a single scale that integrates the inherent qualities of the writing." (Hyland, 2003: 227)

Furthermore, this approach to scoring writing is quite short-sighted in that it reduces writing to a single score. It is rather impressionistic and fails to pay attention to details by providing a score for each of them.

### **1.8.2. Analytic scoring**

Analytic scoring focuses attention on separate important traits of effective writing in that genre. The student receives a separate score for each trait, which combines to create a final score. In this approach, the teacher analyses the students' writing taking into account different features such as: grammar, cohesion, and vocabulary. Hyland (2003) Suggests that it is recommended that raters, when devising analytic rubric, use explicit and comprehensible descriptors that relate directly to what is taught.

# **Chapter One: Theoretical Concepts of Writing and Assessment**

## **1.8.3. Trait-based scoring**

Both analytic and holistic scoring were a priori in that they assumed a pre-determined set of criteria which could distinguish good writing from poor writing. Trait-based approaches to scoring writing are context-sensitive and, as such, differ from both holistic and analytic scoring methods. Trait-based approaches are therefore task-specific. Hyland (2003) suggests that trait-based scoring falls into two main categories: primary-trait scoring and multiple-trait scoring.

- Primary-trait scoring: the teacher focuses on a particular component of the writing, but may include a secondary trait which may receive less weight.
- Multiple-trait scoring: is task-specific; this requires that raters provide separate scores for different writing features.

## **1.9. Conclusion**

The present chapter provided different explanations of theoretical aspects related to writing and assessment. Part of it was concerned with the clarification of what writing is; its main types and importance were discussed. Furthermore, the second part of this overview explained the meaning of assessment as well as its most important types and principles. At the end of this chapter, the last part explored the different approaches to scoring the writing skill. In the next chapter, the researcher will describe the practical part of the situation under investigation to examine how teachers can assess their students' writing skill.

## *Chapter Two*

# *Research Methodology*

# **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

## **2.1. Introduction**

Teaching and assessment are two important processes that are complementary to each other. The second chapter provides a description of the selected context and the sample population that contribute to the situation under investigation, with special reference to BEN GUELLA TOUATI high school, as well as the research design and instruments. In the present study, three data collection tools are used, including a classroom observation, a questionnaire, and an interview. Also, this chapter is concerned with the analysis of the data gathered.

## **2.2. Research methodology**

Research has been defined by various authors in different ways. It always begins with a question or a problem and choosing an appropriate method to investigate the problem. After collecting answers to your questions, you can analyze the findings or observations to draw appropriate conclusions. Its purpose is to find answers to questions through the application of systematic and scientific methods. Thus, research is a careful consideration of study regarding a particular concern or problem using scientific methods.

According to (Creswell, 2012:03) research is “a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or an issue”. This means that research follows specific steps that aim at gathering and analyzing data to solve a particular problem and finds new knowledge related to a specific field of study.

Doing a research requires specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic; this later called research methodology. The methodology sections answers two main questions: how was the data collected or generated? And how was it analyzed?

Research methodology may be described as a science of analysis how research is done systematically (Kothari, 2004). In it we investigate the various stages that are generally implemented by a scholar in studying his problem of research in conjunction with the reason behind them.

Additionally, “research methods are the tools and techniques for doing research. Research is a term used liberally for any kind of investigation that is intended to uncover interesting or new facts” (Walliman, 2011:01).

The methodological approach of this study was exploratory mixed methods approach, as the study began with a quantitative study followed up the qualitative data gathering. Quantitative methods allow the researcher to test a hypothesis by systematically collecting and analyzing data. It provides support when the researcher needs to draw general conclusions

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

from a research, while qualitative methods is for exploring ideas and experiences in depth. It seeks to delve deep into the topic and gain information about participants' attitudes, impressions, and opinions. Creswell (2012) noted that quantitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of study, while qualitative research is the approach to data collection, analysis, and report writing differing from quantitative approaches. For this reasons, researchers need to use both approaches to get results that are wide-reaching and deep.

### 2.2.1. The participants

The present research was carried out with first year pupils of literary stream at Ben Guella Touati high school, Mostaganem. The selected sample is composed of two classes. This latter consists of 25 pupils in each class. Not only pupils, but also 02 teachers of English will take place in this investigation. They all hold the degree of classical system. Their experience in teaching English ranges from 06 to 15 years, and they teach two levels: first and third year.

### 2.2.2. The educational context

The study was conducted, at Ben Guella Touati high school, Mostaganem during the academic year 2019\_2020. The fact that the study aims at investigating how teachers can assess the writing skill in ways that are effective, EFL classes is one of the reasons that motivated us to choose this particular setting. Generally, the writing sessions take place along three trimesters. Thus, the next part is devoted to describe the writing sessions in secondary school in order to move on to the assessment part.

### 2.2.3. Writing sessions

Writing in high school is usually linked to the objectives of every unit. In the Algerian first year English book; every unit covers some writing activities. This can be presented in the following table:

Units	Topics
Unit 1: Getting Through	-Writing about the advantages of internet. -Writing a letter to a friend. -Writing an apology letter to the head master of the school.
Unit 2: Our Findings show	Writing about the star sign.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Writing about an accident.</li><li>-Writing a newspaper report about an accident.</li></ul>
Unit 3: Back to Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Writing an environmental S.O.S message.</li><li>-Writing about a problem to solve</li><li>-Writing about the problem of waste products.</li></ul>
Unit 4: Eureka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Writing a short biography about a famous person.</li><li>-Writing to reply to an extract from a letter of opinion.</li><li>-Writing about cloning and genetically modified foods.</li></ul>
Unit 5: Once Upon a Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Writing short review of a book or a film.</li><li>-Writing a description of a deceased member of a family.</li><li>-Writing an E-mail to a friend.</li></ul>

**Table 2.1:** Writing Activities in the Course Book

When looking at the writing part in the course book, there are reading texts which include all information needed and pupils are required to read the texts to get background information. Moreover, to facilitate more the task, there are models to follow, pictures to describe, information in tables as well as grammatical structures that they have studied before.

In addition, the pupils are taught the skills of writing at sentence level, and by the end of each unit they have a project which enables the learners to develop their writing skills.

### **2.3. Data collection instruments**

The underlying need for data collection is to capture quality evidence that seeks to answer all the questions that have been posed. It is a methodical process of gathering and analyzing specific information to offer solutions to relevant questions and evaluate the results. For this study, we used three tools. These include: a classroom observation, teacher's questionnaire, and an interview with a teacher. The interview was conducted with one teacher because it was a face to face interview which took a long time. This latter allows us to gain a deep insight to specific answers, meaningful discussion, and deducing the validity of each response.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### 2.3.1. Classroom observation

Observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways to check for nonverbal expressions of feeling, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities (SCHMUCR, 1997). In this case, observation has some aspects that are unique to this research method; including training, entering and living the study group, length of time in the field, sampling, and data collection techniques.

Moreover, participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for development of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWALT & DeWALT, 2002). However, this observation was used as a first tool in the current research study, in which we tend to simply take notes as an observer of the most important points relevant to the writing sessions and its assessment. This latter can be referred to unstructured observation to collect primary research data.

#### 2.3.1.1. Description of the observation

More specifically, the classroom observation started from February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, until March 09<sup>th</sup>, 2020 throughout the second trimester. We started observing the classroom practices for better understanding of the teachers methods used in assessing the writing skill. For the writing sessions in secondary school, pupils had from 4 to 6 sessions devoted as following: the teacher had only one hour to present the writing assignment and give them time for thinking, drafting, editing, and writing the final version of their paragraphs ( content mostly), and the task were group-based. While they are writing, the teacher kept his ears on sound system, moved from one group to another to read from time to time and highlight form and content mistakes. For the next session, they took also one hour for reading their output; after the teacher has corrected their written expressions paragraphs carefully at home. The classroom observation meant to observe items related to pupils and teachers mostly, these include:

- a. **Pupils' group-based work:** we draw attention if the collaborative work in the writing class was successful or not, whether or not they were all participating in the writing part, and correcting each other's mistakes.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

- b. Pupils' self-monitoring:** to determine the writing skill improvement, we pay attention if teachers provided opportunities to their pupils for self-monitoring through self-evaluations and peer evaluations on their both own and peer writing.
- c. Teacher's assistance:** we pay attention to the way teachers assist and guide their pupils while they were writing in the class, answering their questions, helping them at the level of vocabulary, and giving them a sufficient time to practice writing and produce their own piece of writing.
- d. Teacher's motivation:** we focus on how usually teachers motivate their pupils to learn writing, whether they gave their pupils permission to make mistakes, assigned relevant writing assignment that are applicable to their pupils' own lives or just sticking to the syllabus, and providing students with a writing prompt.
- e. Teacher's assessment:** the focus is about if teacher's assessment occurred at many different stages throughout the course, whether it also could come through different forms or not. Additionally, if the teacher took different roles such as: motivator, collaborator, critic, evaluator...etc, and asking questions to check for understanding.
- f. Teacher's feedback:** focusing on the learning goal, we pay attention to teacher's feedback throughout two stages: first, when they were at the level of revising; if the teacher talked with her pupils about ideas, wrote written responses on their drafts. Second, teacher gave multiple types of feedback at all stages, not just in the end and the period that they took to provide feedback after the assessment process.

### 2.3.2. Questionnaire

As a second tool, we used a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire design is very crucial and important part of the research. Therefore, a set of adequate questions in a sequential order is required in a questionnaire. A questionnaire is defined as a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate to analysis (Babbie, 1990).

From the questionnaire, we form an opinion or a conclusion according to the answers that we receive. The questions are firmly constructed to receive answers related to the chosen variable for analysis. Therefore, the questionnaire construction is the most important part of the research and other information collection activities.

In order to have a better understanding of writing assessment in secondary school, we used a questionnaire to get data from high school teachers, having almost 19 teachers that are

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

currently teaching. I opted for mail delivery of questionnaire due to the actual situation of quarantine. The questionnaire will assist us in getting second information in analyzing the responses being collected, also getting data on different aspects and sides of assessment method.

### **2.3.2.1. Description of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of both qualitative and quantitative data. To provide quantitative data we used both close-ended and multiple choice questions. Close-ended questions require “Yes” or “No” answers while multiple choice questions require participants to select the appropriate answer from the suggested ones. Moreover, to obtain qualitative data, we used open-ended questions which require long responses according to the participant’s point of view. That is to say, the respondents could give some kind of reflections and explanations. To organize this questionnaire, we divided it into three main sections; each section contains a series of questions.

#### **a. Section one: Profile (Q1-Q3)**

This section is about the background participants’ information. It aims at gathering personal information about:

Question (1): aims at knowing teacher’s gender.

Question (2): the educational system teachers studied in.

Question (3): aims at knowing teachers’ years of teaching experiences.

#### **b. Section two: Teaching practices (Q1-Q4)**

This section is made up of four questions. It is mainly concerned with teachers’ opinion about the writing sessions.

Question (1): aims at knowing whether teachers prefer to do the writing tasks in group work or not. After that, they have space to state either the benefits or the detriments of this collaborative work for the sake of justifying.

Question (2): investigates the kinds of difficulties that teachers face when teaching the writing skill.

Question (3): aims at comprehending the way teachers choose the appropriate writing exercises.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

Question (4): the last question of this section is intended to know the different objectives of the writing practices at the end of the year.

### **c. Section three: Assessment practices (Q1-Q7)**

In this section, teachers are asked about different concepts that are related to assessing the written production.

Question (1): investigates the assessment techniques that instructors use during the writing class such as: self-assessment, peer-assessment, teacher- assessment, or any other suggestion. After that, they have space to mention and explain this specific suggestion or technique.

Question (2): tries to collect teacher's point of view about when to provide your pupils with written feedback.

Question (3): intended to explore teachers' preferences about the type of the writing activities, whether they use free-writing activities, guided-writing activities or projects. Then, they have a space to mention other types they use.

Question (4): aims at knowing the way teachers present the writing assignment.

Question (5): seeks to discover the difficulties that teachers find when it comes to assessing their pupils' writing.

Question (6): tries to gather information about their pupils' level in the writing skill.

Question (7): the last question of this section asked about teachers' areas of emphasis when correcting their pupils' papers.

### **2.3.3. Interview**

An interview is a conversation for particularly gathering qualitative information, and the story behind a participant's experiences. It helps the researcher explains, better understands, and explores the research subject. Interview questions are usually open-ended questions so that in-depth information will be collected. (Richards, 2001:61) asserts that: "interviews allow for a more in depth exploration of issues than is possible with a questionnaire, though they take longer to administer and are only feasible for smaller groups".

We conducted a structured face-to-face interview in which the interviewee responds to a set of questions that are pre-prepared.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

### **2.3.3.1. Description of the interview**

The structured interview was conducted with one English teacher at Ben Guella Touati high school. It is composed of six questions. The aim behind this interview is to know her professional experiences as English teacher in assessing the writing skill in secondary school. The questions were meant to provide an exchange of information, and to investigate deeply the social, educational situation behind the problem being discussed concerning assessing the written production.

Question (1): since pupils have to work in groups during the writing class; the teacher is asked first, to describe her pupils' performance. Second, to describe the way followed to assess this work.

Question (2): attempts to investigate teacher's personal opinion about whether the mistakes should be discussed in the classroom with pupils or not.

Question (3): is an attempt to have insight about the importance of assessment and feedback in gaining the writing skill.

Question (4): aims at knowing the teacher's way and focus when scoring the pupils' written production.

Question (5): seeks to discover the way the teacher integrates feedback in both the writing and learning processes.

Question (6): explores the purpose behind assessing the writing skill.

### **2.4. Data analysis**

After collecting data from the classroom observation, the answers provided by teachers as participants, and the interview at Ben Guella Touati high school, the results were analyzed to answer the questions that have been asked and test the raised hypotheses in order to draw a conclusion. These analyses are a description of the actual results in terms of numbers, percentages, and figures.

#### **2.4.1. Analysis of classroom observation**

As mentioned before, the classroom observation was intended to observe specific items related to pupils as well as teachers. These items included: pupils' group-based work, pupils' self-monitoring, teacher's assistance, teacher's motivation, teacher's assessment, and teacher's feedback.

## **Chapter Two: Research Methodology**

### **a. Pupils' group-based work**

Classes always consisted of advanced and struggling pupils. We noticed that the good pupils always preferred to work alone, or with each others. Whereas, the struggling pupils sat in isolation and they were struggling in understanding the instruction by themselves. They gave the impression of that they were unable to exchange, create ideas, and produce a coherent piece of writing. However, we found that only two groups which consisted of advanced pupils were engaging in the writing task, discussing and sharing ideas among them. Furthermore, we observed that the other groups which consisted of struggling pupils were not only having difficulties at the level of participating and helping one another in the writing process, but also at the level of correcting each other's mistakes due to time limitation and their lack of familiarity with the target language. Additionally, the collaborative writing environment was too noisy as compared by working individually. So, most of the pupils might not be motivated in the collaborative work.

### **b. Pupils' self-monitoring**

Giving learners control over their writing assignments is a way of increasing autonomy. We noticed that teachers always had the overall control of the writing task and its assessment. Pupils were not aware of how to analyze the task (i.e. they always jump in without clear understanding of the task). We noticed that pupils were having difficulty in monitoring their thinking, and they were asking a lot of questions. We found that only the teacher who had the right to evaluate and assess their written production after finishing the task without giving them on what the correction was based.

### **c. Teacher's assistance:**

We noticed that teachers always guided their pupils in the writing assignment, explaining carefully the task and repeating for many times, providing them with examples to direct their thinking, giving them a start to begin with, and tips to follow. We saw that teachers moved around from one group to another trying to simplify the instruction for those who did not understand, showing them the way to develop ideas, providing them with the vocabulary they need, and highlighting the mistakes.

Furthermore, we observed that teachers gave their pupils more time to finish their assignments, encouraging them in different ways; for instance, teacher's appreciation of pupils' efforts to make them work more.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### **d. Teacher's motivation:**

Another key factor that contributed in the writing class was to motivate pupils. We observed that teachers always worked from the syllabus. This means that the instructors did not relate the writing task to their pupils' own lives. They missed the point that pupils are always interested in developing writing experiences from real-life events and searching for topics that interest them. We found also that there were no prompt questions which can be also used as a key motivator to pupils. On the other hand, we noticed that instructors allow their pupils to make mistakes through the learning atmosphere. This was clear from hearing teachers saying to their pupils that "from mistakes they will learn"; this may actually make them benefit from those mistakes. Also, we observed that they tried to motivate their pupils by giving them extra-marks which kept them motivated to finish the task and produce their pieces of writing

### **e. Teacher's assessment**

We noticed that teachers were acting as facilitators more than evaluators inside the classroom by checking for their pupils' progress. However, all teachers assumed that correcting the written work is a time consuming activity for them.

On the other hand, we observed that when teachers dealt with controlled writing tasks such as gap-filling, reordering, and open dialogues; it was usually corrected orally in the classroom. The whole class went through the answer together. Also, we noticed that this correction involved pupils in the revision and editing stages of their own pieces of writing so that they can learn from their errors.

Additionally, there were times when pupils write individually in the free-writing activities. Then, the teachers corrected their production at home focusing mainly on grammatically correct sentences and phrases, spelling mistakes, and organization of ideas.

### **f. Teacher's feedback**

We noticed that most of the time teachers were giving encouraging and positive feedback. Firstly, when pupils were at the drafting stage, teachers talked with them about different ideas and gave them kinds of specific comments and suggestions, have pupils respond to their classmates' drafts in the group workshop. Secondly, after correcting their papers, teachers provided them with written feedback and explanations of what they did incorrectly.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### 2.4.2. Analysis of the questionnaire

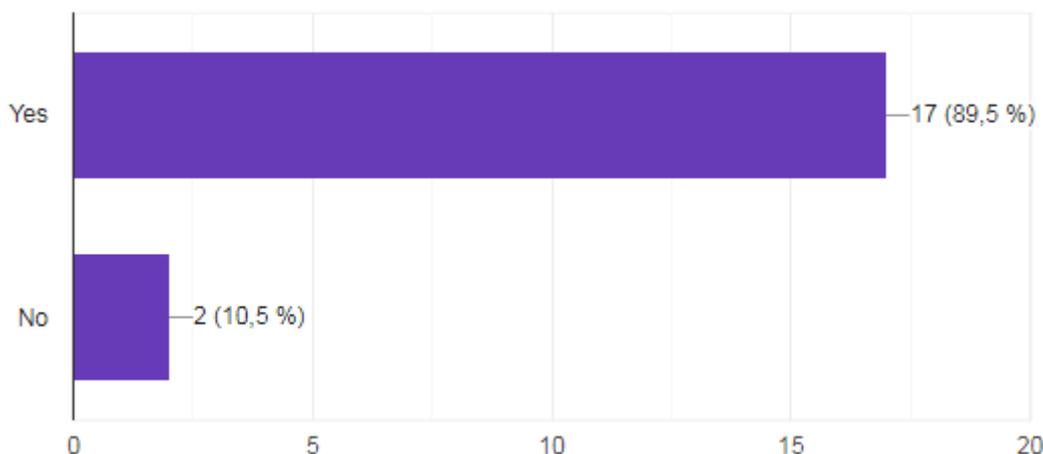
The questionnaire was used as a data collection in this study to better understand how teachers can assess the written production and give a constructive feedback after that. To this end, the obtained answers were categorized into three main sections as stated earlier.

#### a. Section one: Profile

We can notice from the result obtained that twelve respondents of the questionnaire were female and seven were male. Generally speaking, the number of the female teachers is usually higher than male teachers in EFL classes. Also, the majority of teachers engaged in the study belonged to classical system and have a reasonable experience which ranges from two to sixteen years. This leads to say that the majority of them spent a number of years in the field of teaching which gave them an adequate knowledge about teaching and assessing the writing skill.

#### b. Section two: teaching practices

**Item 1:** do you let your pupils work collaboratively on their writing? , if yes say why?



**Figure 2.1:** The Extent of Using Collaborative Writing

The result revealed that 89% of teachers answered that they let their pupils work collaboratively on their writing, while the rest of teachers representing 10, 5% of the total said they did not. This means that they opted for working individually during the writing class. Few of them had justified as follows:

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

*“Team work is vital for exchanging, correcting each other’s ideas, it is a great help for weak pupils, it helps in developing communicative skills, interaction, and critical thinking, collaborative writing rises pupils motivation to work, it is much more productive and competitive, pupils may ask each other’s questions they cannot ask the teacher about.”*

**Item 2:** what kinds of difficulties do you encounter when teaching the writing skill?

This item is an open-ended question through which teachers reported the difficulties they faced when teaching the writing skill. They stated as follows:

*“Poor level of English, pupils’ poor vocabulary; they rely on Arabic translation, lack of motivation, lack of contribution by some learners since their peers are doing the job, choice of topics that motivate pupils, taking the pupils following the instruction, coherence and cohesion, weak arguments, timing, big number of pupils.”*

**Item 3:** How would you choose the appropriate writing task?

The teachers’ choices of the appropriate writing tasks were quite different. Ten teachers admitted that their writing activities must be related to the syllabus (textbook), topic of the unit, and according to what they learnt during the sequence. In contrast, the other nine teachers said that they choose their own writing tasks with clear instructions and simple ideas to convey. These activities were related to their learners’ needs, focusing on their pupils’ interests in order to motivate them; the task should target the language point and at the same time it must be relevant and significant to both their level, and life conditions. Also, they usually take into consideration their abilities.

**Item 4:** what objectives do you intend to reach by the end of the year at the level of writing with your pupils?

The objectives that were provided by the teachers were quite alike. These objectives are summed up as follows:

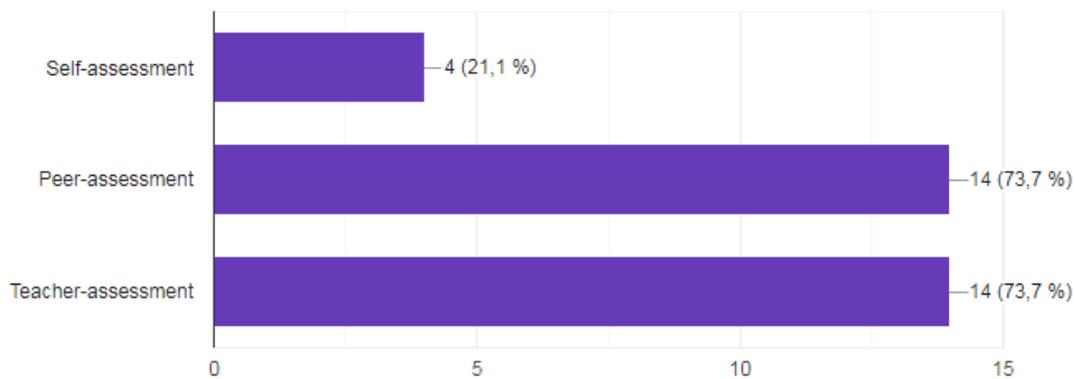
*“At the end of the year, learners will be able to compose letters, public statements, speeches...etc correctly and accurately, a learner will be able to write correct paragraphs free from errors, pupils will be able to write sentences and coherent paragraphs, using the correct tenses and suitable linking words, teachers intend to enrich their learners’ vocabulary and develop their style of writing in order for them to be able to express themselves freely, upgrade their level, pupils will be able to produce a coherent and cohesive piece of writing,*

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

*they will be able to deliver a simple thought, an idea effectively and correctly; even with few sentences, learners will be able to understand the concept of topic sentence, body paragraph, and conclusion as well as different linking words, to enable pupils to write well-structured and meaningful paragraphs and essays, pupils will be able to develop written expression's abilities, and produce a final version, making less spelling, grammatical mistakes, and achieve fluency.”*

### c. Section three: assessment practices

**Item 1:** what are the assessment techniques you use in the classroom? (You can choose more than one answer) If there are others, specify

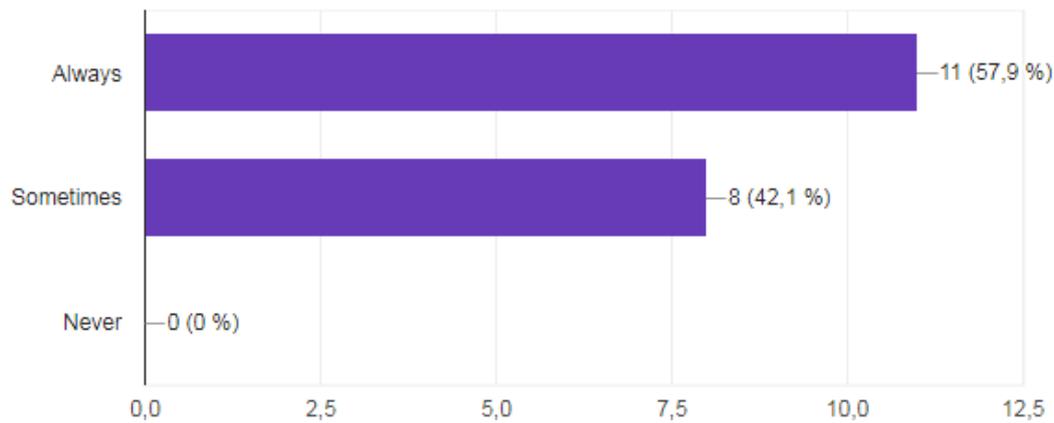


**Figure 2.2:** Techniques Used in Assessing the Writing Skill

As it is mentioned in the graph, 73, 7% claimed that they use both teacher and peer assessment in the writing class. Whereas, the other teachers 21, 1% confessed that they use self-assessment as a technique in the classroom. Some teachers added some suggestions for instance portfolios.

**Item 2:** How often do you provide your pupils with written feedback?

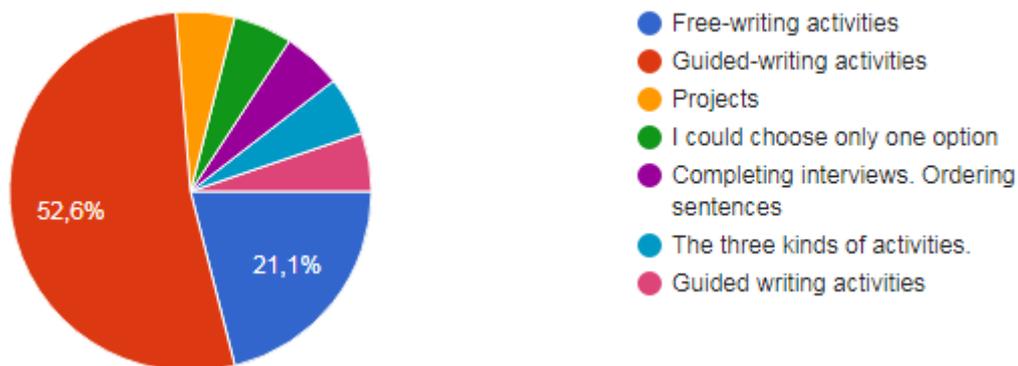
## Chapter Two: Research Methodology



**Figure 2.3:** The Frequency of Providing Pupils with Feedback

The teachers' responses revealed that 57, 9% of them always provide their pupils with written feedback. On the other hand, 42, 1% out of the total number of teachers had chosen to comment sometimes on their pupils written products.

**Item 3:** What do you use from the following to assess your pupils writing performance?  
(You can choose more than one answer)



**Figure 2.4:** Kinds of Writing Tasks Used in Assessing the Writing Performance

The result of this question showed that 52, 6% of the respondent teachers answered that guided-writing activities were very much used in their classes. 21, 1% of teachers picked out that they used free-writing activities. On the other hand, 5, 3% had chosen that they asked pupils to prepare projects for the sake of assessing their writing performance. 5, 3% also opted to use the three kinds of activities. Moreover, few of them had added further suggestion like completing interviews and ordering sentences.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### Item 4: How do you usually present the writing assignment?

For this question, teachers argue that presenting the writing assignments begin usually with explaining the task through different ways. According to each instructor the task is presented as follows:

- *“They discuss the topic together and brainstorm it, collect the possible information and write it on the board. Then, they divide pupils into groups and sometimes further divide the topic and give each group part of it.”*
- *“By providing pupils with illustrations, picture study, videos, documents, class discussions...etc to present the topic and guide them to brainstorm, then the teacher writes the topic on the board, divides pupils into groups and let them work.”*
- *“Through brainstorming as a first step towards providing learners with clear instruction about what they are supposed to do.”*
- *“Ask them to write paragraphs; one or two paragraphs would be selected to be corrected.”*
- *“Explaining the topic using some mind maps or pictures from the text book.”*
- *“They start by presenting the topic through visual aids, and then write some ideas on the board. After that, they present the aim and the assignments to pupils, and they start working on it in groups.”*
- *“Using power points presentations”.*
- *“Writing the topic, pre-stage (brainstorming of ideas related to the topic), while-stage (writing with the teacher monitoring), and finally post-stage (during which some pupils read their paragraphs before a class check and developing a model topic).”*
- *“Explaining the topic, pupils think, share and then they produce together the composition following the plan.”*
- Some teachers prefer that *“pupils guide themselves by themselves, and then they tell them what to do or not to.”*
- 

### Item 5: What are the difficulties you find in assessing your pupils' writing?

In this question, teachers have mentioned some difficulties they face at the level of the assessment process when dealing with the writing skill. These difficulties are summarized as follows:

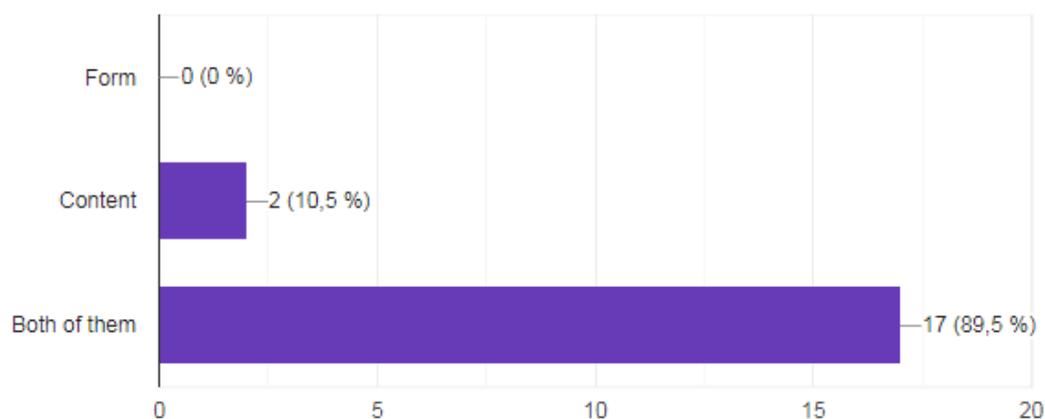
## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

- Some teachers noted that: *“they actually face all kinds of difficulties due to the poor level of pupils in the target language. Despite the fact that some pupils have great ideas about the topic, but they still cannot translate that information into a well organized paragraph in the English language.”*
- Some teachers said that: *“doing the assessing in class is time-consuming.”*
- *“They find it difficult to assess written productions that are full of mistakes to the point that no sentence makes sense.”*
- *“Pupils’ lack of interest in the topic presented in the text book.”*
- *“Unable to understand some words (illegible hand-writing).”*
- *“The time devoted for the correction of written expression is not enough to deal with all the mistakes done by the class.”*
- *“The influence of the mother tongue.”*
- *“Lack of cohesion and coherence, spelling and grammatical mistakes, choice of the appropriate writing register.”*

### Item 6: How do you evaluate your pupils’ writing skill as compared to other skills?

From the result obtained, we can say that all teachers showed a negative response. A large number of respondents 63, 2% pointed out that most of the time pupils had unsatisfactory level as well as 36, 8% out of the total number of teachers indicated that they had a poor level when it comes to writing.

### Item 7: When correcting your pupils’ writing, do you focus more in: form, content, or both of them?



**Figure 2.5:** The Teacher’s Emphasis in the Correction of Written Productions

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

As it is shown in the graph above, the majority of the responses 89, 5% indicate that teachers gave more importance to both form and content while the remaining teachers 10, 5% showed that they focused on content only.

### 2.4.3. Analysis of the interview

The analysis of teachers' interview aims at investigating how can teachers assess the writing skill as well as providing pupils with feedback. Some questions were similar to those of questionnaire in order to check any similarities or differences between the responses of the two tools in relation with assessing the written products.

**Question 1:** How would you describe and assess group and pair work in writing in terms of result and performance?

*“Generally speaking, group work is an effective way in terms of teaching as well as results of pupils, but for some pupils is not successful due to certain circumstances including the noisy environment which can prevent some pupils from working and affect their quality of writing. Whereas, pair work it can be considered as the successful way of grouping pupils. Additionally, you should assess each individual contribution in the group work”*

**Question 2:** Do you think that mistakes should be discussed in the class?

*“First, making it safe to make errors in the classroom starts with u as a teacher. It is important to discuss the mistakes in the class because it is the only place where pupils can correct their mistakes and teachers highlight the gaps in knowledge and make sure that everyone learns what they are supposed to be learning”*

**Question 3:** Do you think that feedback / assessment is necessary for gaining the writing skill?

*“Yes it is necessary to assess the written products and give the appropriate feedback that reflects how pupils did. First, the written assessment allows pupils to express their understanding and requires pupils to perform thinking. Second, feedback helps pupils recognize their strengths and weaknesses and shows them what and where they need to focus more”*

**Question 4:** What do you rely on when scoring your pupils' written production?

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

*“I personally rely on content and grammar mistakes only because if you are going to judge every single error, pupils are not going to the average”*

**Question 5:** How would you successfully integrate feedback in the writing and learning process?

*“Integrating feedback can be through clarifying the learning objectives and criteria for success, different strategies that can be used to accomplish the task, interaction through fostering effective classroom discussions, correction, and through different orientations”*

**Question 6:** What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?

*“The main purpose of assessing pupils writing assignments is to give information about pupils’ performance in the writing development as well as improving writing”*

### 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to portray the research methodology followed in collecting the required data for the current study, the participants of this investigation and the educational context in which the research took place. Furthermore, it gave a description and an explanation of the data collection procedure used to carry out this research as well as presenting the data analysis. Thus, the next chapter will deal with the discussion of the findings obtained previously and give some recommendations and suggestions.

*Chapter Three*

*Discussions and*

*Recommendations*

# **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

## **3.1. Introduction**

The present chapter provides discussions of the findings obtained from the instruments used in conducting the research including classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview. Moreover, it recommends some strategies to promote an effective teaching and assessment of the writing skill including aligning the writing task to pupils' needs, allowing more time, provide pupils with more homework assignments, integrating teacher with peer-assessment, and developing grading criteria. By the end, the researcher suggests some useful tools to assess and improve the writing competency and give more accurate written feedback.

## **3.2. Findings discussion**

After collecting and analyzing the data obtained from the classroom observation. Also, the responses provided by the participants though using a questionnaire and interview. We attempt to discuss the findings obtained previously highlighting the shortcomings. We are going to explore the pre-mentioned hypotheses in relation to the main findings of this research work. Consequently, in this section the researcher can prove or refute the suggested hypothesis concerning assessing the writing skill.

### **3.2.1. Discussion of the main results of the classroom observation**

Through the obtained data from the classroom observation, the previously stated hypotheses have been proved to some extent. First, teachers did not deal with each pupil separately. In here the teacher's position can be explained in terms of lack of time devoted to meet pupils' individual needs and the big number of learners in the classroom, while pupils' learning is affected by those needs especially at the revision stage where teachers are required to work with them because pupils are mostly not interested in revising their writing. The researcher concludes that if teachers are given enough teaching hours, the results and performance of pupils' writing will be improved.

In the same vein, the use of formative assessment was clearly present throughout the learning process. The interaction and discussion between the teacher and his pupils was open and appropriate in the writing sessions, it is not based on marks but rather on corrective feedback, they take errors into account, and the formative assessment practices including (think, pair, share) which generate interaction among pupils and their teacher. Also, the teacher acts as a facilitator and guides them when necessary. This confirms the use of

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

formative assessment and proved the second part of the general hypothesis. Worth noting, the fact that the assessment of writing skill was not done regularly and it is under the teacher's assessment only and sometimes it is through a discussion between the teacher and the whole class.

Additionally, what was apparently observed from teachers during the sessions attended is that they provide their pupils with feedback without mark as a characteristic of formative assessment.

### **3.2.2. Discussion of the main results of the questionnaire**

Clearly, the obtained results revealed that teachers use several types of activities which are used to practice writing in the classroom, like free-writing activities in which pupils compose paragraphs and reports. In addition, most of the teachers opt for the guided-writing activities including filling the gap and multiple choice questions in which the pupils practice the language features such as vocabulary and spelling. In particular, pupils are provided with opportunities to experience successful and independent writing within the context of the teacher support. Also, teachers offer their learners assignments as home work for further practice.

Additionally, the assessment techniques vary from one teacher to another, from guided to free writing activities in order to have different assessment results for each pupil. That is to say, the use of a range of assessment tasks helps teachers to accommodate different students' needs. Also, they all share the same goal which is the collection of the pupils' information for the purpose of improving the learners' performance in the writing expression. Thus, the guided-writing allows the teacher to give immediate feedback on pupils' performances and the opportunity to discuss further areas of improvement, whereas, the free-writing activities allows teachers to discover what pupils know, think, where their gaps are and to promote critical thinking skills.

The teaching methods using teacher/peer-assessment might be changed continually. From the results obtained, teachers clearly use mostly two types of assessment. First, peer-assessment is an effective technique that can teach pupils responsibility toward their learning. However, teachers must not rely only on peer-assessment because learners may not receive grammatically and structurally correct peer-assessment. That is to say, in EFL environment it

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

is not an easy task for most pupils to assess their partners' writing task. Therefore, they may share the same difficulties in terms of grammar, vocabulary, words spelling, coherence and cohesion. This latter will lead them to provide incorrect feedback. Generally speaking, pupils do not have the background knowledge of the English language and they are not used to this kind of reviewing their peers' written products.

However, in teacher-assessment, it seems that teachers assess the learners with much strictness, have the knowledge of language and will give them more accurate feedback. One can conclude that teachers have to provide pupils with assessment criteria and train them on how to use these criteria. This will involve pupils in the assessment process and increase their self confidence.

### **3.2.3. Discussion of the main results of the interview**

Based on the obtained results, teacher's feedback is an essential part of an effective learning environment in the sense that it helps pupils understand the subject and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. It relies mainly on the teachers' strategy to provide feedback.

When interacting with the teacher, we noticed that she is not familiar with the concept of feedback until we provided an explanation of it. Teachers opted for noting only the wrong ones while it is important that they should discuss all the answers whether they are wrong or right. Delving into the correct answer, this will hopefully let the pupils who got the wrong answer have a little more understanding of what they did wrong and what steps they should have taken to get the answer right.

Furthermore, this also will let the teacher see if there are any gaps in his/her teaching through the discussion between the teacher and the class, she/he may see the misunderstanding in her/his way of teaching.

Additionally, before pupils start to write, the teacher gave pupils feedback about what they are trying to learn. This is one way that shows how teachers can integrate feedback in the learning process. They will experience teacher feedback as additional to teacher directions they have to follow. This means explaining criteria for success like what to use in this writing.

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

Also, teachers have provided positive feedback more than negative one, this shows that they integrate successfully feedback in the writing and the learning process.

Another point, the teacher' answer in question four, as it is mentioned in the previous results revealed that she is not aware of how to score pupils' pieces of writing especially in tests and exams, since she relied only on two components namely grammar and content while ignoring the other criteria related to writing. In addition, as it was mentioned in the classroom observation with the same teacher that the time devoted for teaching and assessing is not enough, but still it is not sufficient for grading learners writing based on two criteria only. To this end, teachers should draw many criteria that contribute to the scoring process.

Also, the pupils' level in the writing composition was almost poor if we consider all the mistakes made in that written production, but teachers should at least base that grading on four or five criteria because the test or the exam scores are looking to see if the learner have mastered a group of language mechanics that he or she was taught before for instance: punctuation and capitalization.

### **3.3. General discussion of the results**

Thanks to the classroom observation, teacher's questionnaire and interview, the researcher has collected a considerable amount of data concerning the research work related to assessing the writing skill in EFL classes with special reference to first year pupils of Ben Guella Touati high school, Mostaganem. Here we provide a discussion of the main findings in relation to the previously mentioned hypotheses.

In the beginning of this research, it was suggested as a general hypothesis that teachers respond to pupils' writing according to their individual needs and they use formative assessment during the learning process. After the collection of data through the three research instruments, the research work revealed that due to the insufficient time allocated to the teaching and assessing writing, teachers did not respond to pupil' pieces of writing according to their individual needs. However, formative assessment was used and present during the writing classes to measure pupils progress. These results confirm the second part of the general hypothesis and refute the first part.

In the first sub-hypothesis, the researcher proposed that the tasks used to assess the writing skill are free and guided writing activities. That is to say, teachers should diversify the types

## Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations

of tasks used in the writing class to give more chances for pupils' learning and for teachers to collect more information about their pupils' performance, weaknesses, and strengths. However, what was found is that they use more than one type. Most of the teachers use guided-writing activities more than any other tasks. In addition, they used free-writing activities and projects but not as much as using the guided ones. This result confirms the first sub-hypothesis. Regarding the second sub-hypothesis, the researcher proposed that the method (tool) used to score the writing assignments is rubric; which means using a scoring guide against a set of criteria. The previously mentioned results showed that teachers focus mainly on grammar and content when scoring pupils' pieces of writing. However, they should include a list of criteria that helps them evaluate pupils' performance in the writing assignments (rubrics) for instance capitalization, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling mistakes, coherence and cohesion. Ignoring all the other components of the pupils' work is not the correct solution. Consequently, learners will not release that they have made any other mistakes and they will continue on the same way. This result nullifies the second sub-hypothesis.

In the third hypothesis, the researcher suggested that learners can receive a constructive feedback through making the process of providing feedback positive; and in such a manner that will not discourage pupils' learning while teachers will know better what to focus on when teaching them. The investigation indicates that most of the time teachers provided pupils with positive feedback which raises pupils' self esteem and motivates them to get rid of their weaknesses. Teachers have always informed the learners how well or badly he or she has performed plus providing a detailed explanation about the mistakes they have done. That is to say, providing feedback involves the assessment of the work and correcting the mistakes.

Moreover, as it was mentioned, providing feedback highlights the strengths and weaknesses of pupils. This feature allows teachers to know their learners' needs and gaps and direct their teaching to concentrate more on those needs. Besides, teachers have the responsibility to immediately provide feedback after one or two days from the writing class because pupils will forget and cannot connect the feedback provided with errors they have made. This above-explained result confirms the third sub-hypothesis provided by the researcher.

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

### **3.4. Recommendations**

After identifying the shortcomings of this research, some recommendations are suggested below to make the assessment process of writing more effective.

#### **3.4.1. Aligning the writing assignments to the pupils' needs**

Creating assignments is a major part of overall course design, and every activity the teacher assign should clearly be aligned with your course's goals and pupils' needs. Assessment involves real learning; teachers should integrate assessment into daily instructions and classroom activities.

Alignment is the connection between learning objectives, learning activities and assessment. An aligned course means that the learning objectives, activities and assessments match up so that pupils can learn what the teacher intends them to learn in accordance with their needs. Also, teachers should specify what they want learners to do when they finish the task. When assessment is aligned with instruction and pupils' needs, both pupils and teachers will benefit from it. Thus, pupils are more likely to learn because instruction is mainly focused on their needs.

#### **3.4.2. Allowing enough time for teaching and assessing writing**

Considering teachers' complaints about the lack of time devoted for teaching and assessing the writing skill, we suggest that teachers should be provided by more teaching hours to meet the overall needs of the course. Writing is one of the skills that should be mastered by students in order to learn a foreign language. To this end, teachers need more and enough time to teach and assess their pupils' pieces of writing. The amount of time devoted to instruction and practice in writing has a great influence on pupils' performance as well as development. Insufficient practice time impacts pupils' achievement and results. Thus, to ensure that the teaching and assessing of the writing skill is done accurately, teachers should be provided by more and enough time to stay focused and achieve the desired results and also to prevent teachers' error; for instance, using ineffective assessment criteria for a given writing task; which is mainly caused by this insufficient time.

#### **3.4.3. Providing pupils with more homework**

Homework does have academic benefits; there is a strong link between homework and achievement of learners in high school. For this reason, teachers should be aware of the

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

importance of assigning regular homework for their pupils; first, to help pupils develop their writing skills as well as increasing their general understanding of the language. Second, it helps pupils develop independent learning. Thus, we suggest that teachers should know how to choose relevant activities as homework for their pupils and take individual learning styles into account as well. Also, the assignments should match the writing skill, interests and needs of pupils. Worth noting, that once the homework is set, it should be assessed and feedback given by teachers.

### **3.4.4. Assessment of writing should be done regularly**

Regular evaluation and regular progress check are essential elements of an effective and beneficial assessment in general and formative assessment in specific.

The frequency of assessing pupils' pieces of writing will show the teacher if there are any progress or not in learners' level as writers. So, this process should be carried out at least one time per week. Additionally, this regular assessment will also contribute in the improvement phase of pupils and will direct the teachers to where they need to focus more when teaching them.

### **3.4.5. Integrating peer-assessment with teacher-assessment**

Peer-assessment encourages learners to monitor their progress, take responsibility for their own work. Peer-assessment is useful for advanced pupils who are involved in the observation process. Pupils become better and competent at peer-assessment with practice, clear guidelines and it should be highly related with teacher assessment.

For peer-assessment to have an impact on learning, pupils need training to peer-assess effectively which includes using prompts, checklists of criteria and scoring rules, teacher modeling of how to assess written works and give them enough time to do so.

The teacher's responsibility is to clearly outline the assessment criteria, and check if they did well or not and highlight any other mistakes done. This can be done through a discussion or debate in order to assist pupils in the assessment process.

### **3.4.6. Giving feedback about the wrong and right answers**

Teacher feedback has always been an important part of writing; it also plays a fundamental role in guiding students to write, ensuring teacher effect and writing

## Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations

development. Thus, feedback is the information about how a learner is doing to reach a goal; and there are two types of feedback including written and oral.

First, feedback does not need to fix everything possible, but only needs to take pupils' work to the next level. Teacher's feedback should be focused on both the correct and wrong answers. Learners' motivation should rather be enhanced through encouraging and positive feedback. The feedback provided by teachers should not only be informative, but it should also take into account learners background knowledge, motivation, level of learning and performance, and language ability. Teachers have to describe at least one thing the learner did well, with reference to the success criteria, they need also to build on their strengths. The best feedback on pupils' writing is the one which notices where pupils are meeting criteria that show their learning.

The importance of the teacher written feedback has largely been documented by a considerable number of researchers in the areas of ESL and EFL writing. In both English language teaching contexts, especially in classrooms where the teaching of writing is process-oriented, teachers and students have acknowledged the crucial value of the teacher written feedback. Not only does it facilitates students' revisions, but also assists them during the step learning to write process (Harmer, 2004; Peterson, 2010).

Teachers can use error codes and comments on the paper of pupils to give feedback about their writing. The error code can be through underlying the errors to signify the mistakes and write the symbols for these mistakes under it or in the margin to help pupils know which type of mistake they did. Then, the students are required to correct those errors by themselves. Nott (2008) explains some error codes used to indicate students' mistakes. They are explained as follows:

<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>M</b>	Should be masculine (gender of noun and / or form of adjective)
<b>F</b>	Should be feminine (gender of noun and / or form of adjective)
<b>SG</b>	Should be singular (number of noun and / or form adjectives)
<b>PL</b>	Should be plural (number of noun and / or form adjectives)
<b>AG</b>	Make verb ending agree with subject or make adjective ending agree

## Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations

	with noun; can be used in conjunction with one of the symbols above
<b>SP</b>	Error of spelling, including verb, forms, and accents
<b>V or VOC</b>	Error of vocabulary
<b>T</b>	Error of tense
<b>G</b>	Error of grammar
<b>WO</b>	Error in word order
<b>R or REG</b>	Error of register
<b>ME</b>	Error of meaning other than VOC; meaning not clear
<b>()</b>	Omit bracketed words; can be used in combination with other symbols, such as letters or lines
<b>^</b>	Words missing, this symbol can be used in combination with other symbols, or suggested words can be written above text
<b>?</b>	(After a symbol). Not clear what the student intend the word / phrase to mean

**Table 3.1:** Error Symbols (Nott, 2008)

### 3.4.7. Develop grading criteria for each writing assignments

Assessment criteria are a way to provide formative feedback throughout a course to support ongoing learning and make it easy for teachers to explain how marks have been awarded.

The grading criteria help teachers when evaluating pupils' papers. Criteria for writing are usually presented to learners in one of the ways, analytically or holistically. The analytical method gives separate scores for each criterion – for example, content: 8points; form: 12points, whereas, the holistic method gives one score that reflects the teacher's overall impression of the paper. Also, developing and using criteria is important to be as fair as possible when evaluating pupils' written products.

The purpose of assessment criteria is to establish clear standards of achievement for each learning outcomes. It should also specify how the task will be evaluated.

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

Criteria make it clear to pupils what factors will be taken into account when making a judgment about their performance, Lado (1962: 248) confirms this, he said: “there are things which can be measured in connection within the content, the point of information to bring out, the organization and sequence in which these points are, the formal signals given to the reader to guide him in understanding the topic fully”.

Therefore, the number of criteria for a single task needs to be small in order to enable pupils to clearly understand what is expected of them. The well written criteria are those who help pupils understand what they need to do. Sharing assessment criteria with learners at the beginning of the course is an effective way to help pupils build confidence in their learning and improve their performance.

### **3.4.8. Rubrics as an assessment tool for writing**

A rubric is a scoring plan that utilizes a set of criteria for the assessment of learners’ performances. It gives a portrayal of each degree of execution that the student is accepted to accomplish (Zidane, 2010). Thus, rubrics are a coherent set of criteria for pupils’ work that include descriptions of levels of performance.

The development of scoring rubrics goes through different steps:

1. The identification of the qualities and attributes that the teacher wishes to observe in the pupils’ outputs that would demonstrate their level of proficiency.
2. Determined whether holistic or an analytic rubric would be more appropriate.
3. The identification and definition of the criteria for lowest level of performance.

Writing rubrics allows the teacher to help pupils improve their writing skills. It helps teachers also in reducing the time they spend grading pupils work and makes it easier for teachers to explain to learners why they got this specific grade and also what they can do to improve their writing.

Therefore, rubrics can have two essential functions. First, they present a tool of measurement that is used to make judgment about learners’ performance. In addition, they use these assessment results to develop pupils’ writing skill.

Rubrics are classified into two types. The first type is analytic rubrics which breaks down the objective into specific components parts. Every section is scored independently using a rating scale. It is useful for assessment because a rubric can list a different category for each components of the assessment that needs to be included.

## Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations

The second type is holistic rubrics; the instructor scores the assignments as a whole, without judging components separately. Holistic rubrics are best to use when there is no single correction answer or response and the focus is on overall quality, proficiency, or understanding of a specific content skills.

### 3.4.9. Portfolio as a means of developing and assessing writing skills

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of pupils work samples. Crosby (1997) indicates that primary purpose of portfolios in EFL contexts is to increase the level of students' motivation and to give them a sense of autonomous learning. It provides teachers with diverse and multi-source information for the purpose of assessment. Also, it inspires students to become active, engaged, and reflective learners.

Portfolio used in the EFL writing classrooms can reduce writing anxiety and help pupils in improving self-assessment skills. The term writing portfolio refers to a form of portfolios which centers on writing skills. It helps pupils in raising their awareness of their own writing and supports them in improving their writing skills. Moreover, it provides various opportunities to practice writing, and helps them to interact with peers in the discussion of writing.

With both the teacher and student participating in the selection of the contents of the portfolio assessment becomes a collaborative process. This can make pupils active and raises their motivation to work.

Furthermore, commenting on learners work in the margin or in the end is considered as teacher-pupil conversations about how they did in these assignments. Thus, teachers have to comment on pupils' work in the margin and adding the final comments in the end.

Teacher's comment on learners writing in the margins should be based on some principles. These principles include:

1. Responding as a reader, not as a writer
2. Ask questions to help pupils revise and improve
3. Resist the temptation to edit
4. Be specific

## **Chapter Three: Discussions and Recommendations**

Final comments should reflect back the paper's main points, discussions of strengths and weaknesses. Also, teachers have to limit their comments and begin by making positive comments first.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

This final chapter seeks to discuss the findings obtained throughout the research process in order to answer the research questions. It provides some recommendations and suggestions which can contribute in improving the teaching and assessment of writing. Moreover, the chapter has emphasized on the importance of aligning the written tasks with pupils' needs, allowing much time for teaching writing, and developing grading criteria. Also, it presents the role of regular and peer-assessment, and homework in improving writing skills. Attention has been paid to the tools which can be used to assess and develop writing ability in relation with teacher written feedback.

## **General Conclusion**

Writing is a necessary component of education. It is considered as a major element in the process of teaching and learning which have to be mastered by students. By learning to write, the students will get knowledge about how to write effectively, express ideas, and how to share their thoughts. Effective schooling practices and assessments have numerous benefits aside from the obvious one of providing a measure of students' progress as it can be a means to engage students with their learning. Therefore, they should aim to support active learning rather than assessment of learning to ensure that the assessment process is an integral part of the students' education.

The current research work has focused on three main objectives. The ultimate purpose is to highlight the need of assessment of EFL classes and development of students writing skill. It also attempts to investigate the types of tasks used in order to assess the writing ability. Moreover, the study aims at discovering the pedagogical tools that help EFL learners improve their writing through an effective assessment as well as shedding light on the importance of providing learners with feedback.

The research work is composed of three chapters. The first chapter dealt with the theoretical concepts related to teaching and assessment. The second chapter explored the methodology; it described the participants and the educational contexts as well as analyzing the data driven from the instruments used including a classroom observation, a questionnaire, and interview. The last chapter was devoted to discuss the findings followed by a general discussion of all the results obtained previously and offer some recommendations and suggestions based on those results.

As far as the results are concerned, the quantitative analysis of the classroom observation as well as the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the teachers' questionnaire and interview revealed that EFL high schools teachers cannot respond to their students' writing according to their individual need due to the lack of time devoted for writing sessions, but they maximized the use of formative assessment in the classroom. That is to say, they provided their pupils with ongoing feedback to help them recognize their strengths and weaknesses. The study also concluded that most of the teachers diversify in the writing activities in order to make learning beneficial and improve learners' level in writing. Furthermore, the results showed that instructors did not rely on particular tool which consists of list of elements when scoring their students' writing but rather than focusing on two

components of language mechanics namely: grammar and content. Most importantly, teachers were aware of the importance of providing their pupils with constructive and positive feedback to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses; and teachers to know their learners' needs and recognize any gaps in their teaching.

Hence, the previously mentioned hypotheses have been proved to some extent. We assumed that Teachers respond to pupils writing according to their individual needs and by using formative assessment. We also estimated that the tasks used to assess the writing skill are free-writing activities and guided-writing activities. Moreover, we expected that the method (tool) used to score the writing assignments is rubric; which means using a scoring guide against a set of criteria. Finally, we suggested that learners can receive a constructive feedback through making the process of providing feedback positive and in such manner that will not discourage students' learning while teachers will know better what to focus on when teaching them.

Eventually, this research does not involve all aspects of assessment of the writing skill. Therefore, this can open the door to other researchers to discuss other important aspects related to teaching and assessing the writing skill in secondary school that were not discussed in this work such as: the use of self and peer-assessment to assess students writing performance and the use of ICT in teaching and assessing the writing skill. The researcher has conducted this research work because she believes in the importance and great value of writing skill and its assessment. We hope that our humble work including the proposed suggestions and recommendations will meet both students' needs and teachers' expectations for fruitful learning outcomes. However, this work has some limitations, the libraries were closed due to the actual situation because of Corona' virus. Also, the data collection was not an easy task, in the sense that some teachers did not accept to be observed, and lack of participants due to the unexpected school closing.

# References

## References

- Alderson, J. (2005). *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency: the Interface between Learning and Assessment*. London.
- Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey research methods (2nd ed)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Black, P. W. (1998). *Inside the black box: Raising Standards through classroom assessment*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-48.
- Brown, H. D. (2003). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. California: San Francisco State. University.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. White plains, NY: Pearson. Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2010). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. New York: London: 2nd Edition.
- Chapelle, C. A. (2002). *Assessment, An Introduction to Applied Linguistics* . Oxford University Press.
- Cizek, G. J. (2010). *An Introduction to Formative Assessment: History, Characteristics, and challenges*. New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Council, N. R. (2001). *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment*. Washington, D. C: National Academy Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research : Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research( 4th ed)*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Crosby, C. (1997). *Portfolio assessment in the Korean ESL writing classroom*. *Thai TESOL Bulletin*, 10(2).
- DeWalt, K. M. (2002). *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Flognfeldt, M. (2016). *Profesional Feedback Loop: How Can Practicing Teacher's Reflection Inform English Language Teacher Education?* Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.

Fox, J. &. (2017). *Assessment in The Language Classrooms: Teachers Supporting Student Learning*. London.

Hamzauoi-El Achachi, H. (2006). *An Exploration into the Strategies used for Essay Writing across Three Languages: The case of EFL University Students (doctorate Thesis)*. University of Tlemcen.

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. England: Longman.

Harris, J. (1993). *Introducing Writing*. London: Penguin Group.

Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press: 2nd edition.

Hyland, K. (2003). *Second language writing* . London: Cambridge University Press: Kroll, B (ed). (1990). *Second language writing : Research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

kellog, R. T. (1996). *A Model of Working Memory in Writing*. C. M. Levy, & S. Ransdell: *The science of writing: theories, methods, individual differences and application (57-72)*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum associates.

Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques (2nd ed.)*. Daryaganj: New Age International Ltd, Pub.

Lado, R. (1992). *The construction and use of foreign language tests*. New York: MC Graw-Hill Company.

Langan, J. (2012). *English Skills*. New York: McGray-Hill.

Mary, j. A. (2006). *Assessing General Eduation Programs* . United States. Retrieved Martch, 2020, From <https://archive.org/details/assessinggeneral0000alle/mode/2up>

Miller, N. (2006). *Alternative forms of formative and summative assessment* .

Mukulu, E. e. (2006). *KCSE Revision English Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau*.

Murphy, S. (1999). *Assessing Portfolio*. In C. Cooper & L. Odell (Eds), *Evaluating Writing* (p 114-136). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Norman, E. G. (1998). *Assessment of student achievement*. Retrieved April, 2020, from <https://archive.org/details/assessmentofstud0000gron/mode/2up>

Nott, D. (2008). *Making students' written works: principles and practice* . UK: subject centre for languages. Retrieved June, 2020, from <https://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/2956.html>

Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching* . McGraw-Hill, Singapore, 88: International Edition.

Piolat, A. R. (2004). *Processing Time and Cognitive Effort in Revision: Effect of Errors Type and Working Memory Capacity*. L. Allal, L. Chanquoy, & P. Largy: *Revision cognitive and instructional processes* (21-38). New York: Kluwer Academic .

Rao, Z. (2007). *Training in Brainstorming and Developing Writing Skills*. ELT.

Richards, C. J. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching* . Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schmuck, R. (1997). *Practical action research for change*. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight Training and Publishing.

Walliman, N. (2011). *Research methods : The basics*. New York, NY: Routledge.

walvoord, B. E. (2014). *Assessing and Improving Student Writing in College: A Guide for Institutions, General Education, Departments, and Classrooms*. United States of America: 1st edition. Retrieved March, 2020, from <https://archive.org/details/assessingimprovi0000walv/mode/2up>

Wiliam, D. &. (2015). *Embedding Formative Assessment* . United States of America.

Zidane, R. (2010). *Validating holistic scoring for the assessment of EFL Learners " writing performance. Case of forth year graduate students at AbouBekrBelkaid University -Tlemcen. (Doctorate-thesis)*.

# **Appendices**

## Appendices

### Appendix (1): Checklist Observation

Items for observation	Yes	No	Y/N
When assessing pupils' work, teacher marks areas for improvement			
Teacher uses and encourages self and peer correction			
Teacher locates errors and gives them symbols to denote types of errors (using coding system)			
Teacher indicates in the margin that there is an error of a particular kind somewhere on that line and asks pupils to locate it & correct it			
Teacher shares with pupils the grading criteria that is to be used to assess their written work			
Teacher uses a variety of writing tasks of throughout the unit			
Teacher provides constructive feedback			
Teacher provides motivation			
Using formative assessment during the class			
Assessment of pupils' mastery at the end of the lesson to confirm mastery of lesson objectives			
Assess pupils' progress before, during, and after instruction			
Graciously accepts less than "right" responses with stragglers			
Make supportive statements to pupils			
Pupils' understanding is assessed throughout the lesson by the use of teacher's questions			
Pupils written work are assessed regularly & accurately			
Homework are used and appropriate			
Encouragement of pupils self-monitoring & self- assessment			
Provide interesting & adequate reinforcement			

## Appendix (2): Teacher's Questionnaire

### *Teacher's Questionnaire:*

Dear Teacher,

This set of questions seeks your response as a teacher to the delivery system of assessing writing skills at secondary level. Its objective is to examine an academic issue. The researcher gives you full assurance that your response will be kept strictly confidential, and will be used only for research purpose.

I thank you for your collaboration.

#### **I. Profile:**

1. Gender.....

2. What is your degree?

✓ Classical

✓ Magister

✓ Licence

✓ Master

✓ Doctoral

3. How many years have you been teaching..... years

#### **II. Teaching practices:**

1. Do you let your pupils work collaboratively on their writing?

✓ Yes

✓ No

Why?.....  
.....  
.....

2. What kind of difficulties do you encounter when teaching the writing skill?

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

3. How would you choose the appropriate writing task?

.....  
.....

4. What objectives do you intend to reach by the end of the year at the level of writing with your pupils?

.....  
.....

**III. Assessment practices:**

1. What are the assessment techniques you use in the classroom?

✓ Self-assessment

✓ Peer-assessment

✓ Teacher-assessment

✓ Others

Specify.....  
.....

2. How often do you provide your pupils with written feedback?

✓ Always

✓ Sometimes

✓ Never

**3.** What do you use from the following to assess your pupils writing performance? (You can choose more than one answer)

✓ Free-writing activities

✓ Guided-writing activities

✓ Projects

Others.....  
.....  
.....

**4.** How do you usually present the writing assignments?

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

**5.** What are the difficulties you find in assessing your pupil's writing?

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

**6.** How do you evaluate your pupils' writing skill as compared to other skills?

✓ Good

✓ Satisfactory

✓ Unsatisfactory

✓ Poor

7. When correcting your pupils' writing, do you focus more in?

✓ Form

✓ Content

✓ Both of them

Thanks for your collaboration.

### **Appendix (3): Teacher's Interview**

The aim of this interview is to discover your feedback about assessing the writing skills in secondary school. Your honest answers will be of great use for this research.

1. How would you describe and assess group and pair work in writing in terms of result and performance?
2. Do you think that mistakes should be discussed in the class?
3. Do you think that feedback/assessment is necessary for gaining the writing skill?
4. What do you rely on when scoring your pupils' written production?
5. How would you successfully integrate feedback in the writing and learning process?
6. What is your purpose of assessing the writing skill?