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The Effect of Reflective Diaries on the Students' Writing Skill

The case of second year students at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University

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Declaration

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **"The Effect of Reflective Diaries on Students' writing Skills"** is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

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I

Dedication

In the Name of Allah the most merciful most companionate

Praise is to Allah the Almighty for always being there for me and blessing me with well-being, strength and courage to finish this piece of research.

I dedicate this work to:

the apple of my eyes whom I would never have succeeded without , my mother SAIDANI Warda who has taught me the value of hard work, perseverance and how necessary it is to love what I do.

To the light of my nights, the greatest father BOUBERTEKH Abdel Aziz the source of my happiness and my one and only army

To my dearest brother, BOUBERTEKH Wail

To my crying shoulder, my twin BOUBERTEKH MOUFIDA

To whom I thank Allah for his blessing of making him a part of my life, my beloved Husband IKHLEF OUSSAMA and his Family, especially my mother-in-law IKHLEF KHERFIA who once told me that knowledge has no age limit.

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Abstract

Writing skill is a major skill whose development is essential for language mastery; however, it is deemed to be a major struggle for many EFL learners. In response to this, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has advocated the use of extracurricular activities to approach writing acquisition. The present research work has explored the students; writing skills development using reflective diary-writing as an extracurricular act. Theoretically, it was hypothesized that reflective diary-writing supports writing skills development. Subsequently, the present inquiry aims at investigating the writing elements enhanced when writing reflective diaries along with exploring the latter's impact on learners writing style. Practically, the study has adopted experimental design based on one experimental and one controlled group of twenty second year students at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University (ten students in each group). Having said that, second year EFL students of English were administered a similar diagnostic and post- assessment to test the writing elements enhancement. The findings revealed that reflective diary-writing is relatively effective in developing students; writing skills. Precisely, it is effective in enhancing most students' writing elements. Given the findings of this study, it is suggested for EFL teachers to implement reflective diary-writing as a strategy for developing students; writing skills.

Key words: EFL learners, experiment, reflective diary-writing, writing skills, writing.

List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols

1- EFL: English as a Foreign Language

2- SLA: Second Language Acquisition

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The last decades witnessed a paramount shift in perspective with regards to the role of the English language around the world following USA's rise to power. As a result, English became the international language of business, commerce, science, education, medicine and many other fields. Consequently, learning this language became a must and teaching it should be a responsibility that requires considerable attention. According to David Crystal (1995), in the context of teaching, English is not only related to the efforts of guiding learners to be able to use the language, but also to be skilled in speaking and writing (as cited in Irwandi, 2020). This suggests that for an EFL student to be acknowledged as having mastery over the English language, he/she must master the productive skills of the language, mainly speaking and writing. Moreover, in real life communication, being able to speak in English is not enough due to the fact that not all communications can be carried out in the form of spoken language, but they sometimes require the written form. Hence, in order to have academic and professional opportunities, learners of English need to be proficient writers.

Writing is a widely explored topic in the literature. The latter suggests that there are multiple ways to improve the productive skill of writing, including using diaries. In other words, one of the alternative tools to teach writing is diary-writing. This idea was supported by Brown (2001) who advocated that the process of diary-writing allows students to possess an easy flow of ideas in mind as they transform their ideas, feelings, reactions and the like into the written form with only themselves in mind as the target audience. In the same vein, (McDonough, 1997, p.8), who suggested the use of such technique, emphasized the role of reflective diaries as a means for autonomous learning. On the other hand, multiple other studies in the literature on

reflective diaries, such as that of (Farrah, 2011, p.1000)), suggested that they have been applied in language classrooms as powerful tools to promote active learning. The former study examined the benefits of reflective diaries on improving the English writing skill, increasing motivation, enhancing creativity and critical thinking among university students. Similarly, (Lear, 2011,p. 3, 8, 10,16) investigated the impact of guided reflective diaries on developing metacognitive awareness. Interestingly, in addition to critical reflections, (Sudirman, 2021, p.1063) conducted a research in which he revealed that reflective journals were useful for students to make self-discovery responses to writing topics.

In the Algerian context, a study was conducted seeking to account for the use of diaries to acquire the skill of writing in English. (Chelli, 2013, p.221) carried out a study in which she suggested that training learners to self-assess their written productions through portfolios, including diaries, can have positive results in the Algerian context. According to Chelli (2013), since teaching writing in Algeria has focused more on the product, students' productions are evaluated by their test scores rather than their writing development. Chelli's findings revealed a significant improvement in students writing abilities, their attitudes towards writing and a development of meta-cognitive skills required for effective learning.

However, the current study separates itself from the aforementioned ones in the fact that it aims at using the technique of reflective dairies writing to compare the level of proficiency in writing for second year EFL students of Mohamed Seddik BenYahia University using an experimental design.

2. Statement of the Problem

Writing is a demanding skill which poses as a challenge for EFL students as it requires

the mastery of grammatical and rhetorical devices as well as conceptual and judgmental elements. It also includes the creation of the concept of design, the acquisition of knowledge, mental representation and experience with the subject that is dealt with. These components are essential since they are widely used in higher education and at work. If students are unable to communicate well with their targeted audience, they are unable to express themselves in writing and vice versa. The strength of this argument depends primarily on displaying a decent writing skill. Having said that, the process of diary-writing allows students to put into practice the language knowledge they have learnt in an anxiety-free environment where the affective filter is low, that is to say, they do not have to experience the pressure of being judged for their mistakes/ errors as far as writing is concerned. In the light of this, diary-writing could have potential significance in developing students writing skills.

The pedagogical couple, the teacher and his student, must consider the fact that writing cannot be solely acquired in the classroom due to the limited time allocated to teaching it. Therefore, other techniques should be experimented with to improve results. Note that this study is an attempt to bring about novelty by developing EFL students' writing skills through writing diaries.

3. Research Questions

As far as the skill of writing is concerned, Algerian License students of English seem to face enormous difficulties in writing. In the light of this, the study at hand attempts to explore the following question:

✓ Can writing dairies have an effect on the student's writing skill?

✓ How can dairies improve learners' writing style?

✓ To what extent does the use of reflective diaries make it easier for learners to properly write

Paragraphs and essays?

4. Research Hypothesis

In light of the above raised questions, it is hypothesized that writing reflective dairies is an effective tool to improve students' writing skills.

5. Research Methodology

In order to test the research hypothesis and achieve the desired aims, the appropriate instrument is an experiment. The experiment will be conducted at Mohamed Seddik BenYahia University, Jijel, as the sole instrument for collecting data in the present study. First, a randomly selected number of students (20), who are representative of the population (248 second year students of English), will be divided and assigned to two groups, the experimental group and control group. Second, both groups will receive a pre-test in order to gain more insight about the students' writing ability before the treatment takes place. Third, the experimental group (10 students) will be taught writing elements using a traditional method at the university, yet administered the extracurricular task of writing diaries at home. The other group(10 students) will adhere to only a traditional method. Finally, a written post-test will be administered to both groups following the treatment in order to measure whether reflective dairies writing have a significant impact on the students' writing ability.

6. Significance of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine whether diary-writing can improve students' writing skills since academic writing is quite distinct from free writing. Having said that the present study can sensitize the learners to seek such strategy to improve their writing skills.

7. Structure of the Research

The dissertation at hand comprises two main chapters. The first chapter, which is

divided into two sections, reviews the literature. Section one, entitled "Reflective Diary-writing", tackles the issue of diary writing with reference to its definition, its distinction to journal writing, types, and its significance in acquiring the skill of writing. Section two, entitled "Writing Skill in EFL Classes" addresses the issue of writing reviewing its definitions, purpose, principles, stages, approaches, the difficulties encountered by EFL learners as they engage in the process of writing, and attitudes towards free writing. Chapter two includes the practical part of this research. It focuses on the data collection instrument used, the sampling procedure, the analysis of the findings, and the discussion of the latter which is generated through the research instrument used.

Chapter One: Theoretical Part

Section One: Reflective Diary-writing

1. Introduction

The present section reviews different definitions of the key terms related to the term 'diary', its types, history, relation to the term 'journal', use and attitudes towards the former. The section at hand aims at highlighting the merits of using reflective diaries as far as writing skills are concerned.

2. Definition of Reflection

One of the most well-known definitions of reflection is "the process whereby we construct and make meaning of our experience" (as cited in Jado, 2015, p. 89). This definition suggests that reflection is crucial in one's life since it is what builds the individual's knowledge and allows him/her to make sense of personal events they experience during their life time. On the other hand, there is a number of key educational theorists who regarded reflection as alearning tool (e.g Boud et al 2013)

According to Boud et al (2013) suggested a definition of reflection in the context of learning. Interestingly, unlike other scholars, her approach focuses on the relationships which must be obtained between the pedagogical couple, teacher and student, and amongst students in order for critical reflection to occur. She also argued that there must be a valid freedom of choice as the student reflects, this follows that there must be a given structure which allows equal power relationships between the pedagogical couple and between the students themselves.

Distinctively, (Boud et al, 2013, p.7) defined reflection as "a form of response of the learner to [learning] experience". They further suggest that there is a reflective phase in any form of learning activity. The aforementioned statements suggest a strong link between the

learning experience and the reflective activity which follows it. Hence, suggest that one way to render learning effective is to strengthen this link. To form the latter (link), one must incorporate into learning activities a specific allocation of time which can be used for reflection. There is a number of ways to achieve this. Keeping a diary of events and one's reactions to them is one of them.

Similarly, Jado (2015) stated that despite the fact that reflection can be achieved in numerous ways; diary-writing is a very powerful form of reflection, let alone a firmly established method to put one's life under scrutiny.

3. Definition of Diaries

A review of the literature on dairies reveals a number of definitions for the former (Bailey, 1990; Richards, 1992; Porter et al. 1996; Jeffrey and Hadley, 2002; Bailey & Curtis, 2009; Barjesteh et al. 2011). Most researchers believe that a diary is a usually handwritten, daily record of one's personal experiences and observations in which feelings and thoughts are expressed and it is meant to be private ,that is, it is not intended for publication rather it is written for an audience of one (Bailey & Curtis, 2009).

Other researchers consider a diary a free-writing activity that is characterized by being anxiety-free since writers write under no pressure or fear of being judged or/and evaluated (Barjesteh et al., 2011).

Dissimilarly in the academic context, other scholars view diary writing as an introspective academic instrument for the initiation. (Porter et al. 1996). Bailey (1990), for instance, definesa diary as a research instrument that involves introspective reflections in first person about one's language learning or teaching experience. In other words, diaries which are basically reflection on actions and experiences can serve as a tool to examine classroom issues and to have a realistic insight into the teaching/ learning reality

Interestingly, this reflection, diary, becomes a learning tool rather than a research tool when reread and scrutinized for patterns (Jeffrey and Hadley, 2002).

4. Types of Diaries.

Elg et al (2011) proposed four different types of diaries: brief, descriptive, reporting, and reflective

The Brief Diary:

This type refers to those diaries that are meager in their content. Typically, one briefly describes their daily life and feelings (Elg et al, 2011).

The Reporting Diary

This type provides chronological report of the daily activities and feelings that one experiences (Elg et al, 2011).

The Descriptive Diary

a means to daily describe one or multiple experiences. The writing is also related to the patient's health or contact with health services. This type of diaries portrayed a far better view of the specific problems encountered by the individual in their day-to-day life (Elg et al, 2011).

The Reflective Diary

According to Elg et al (2011), this type differs from the previous mentioned ones in the fact that it includes reflections that occur during the day. This type particularly views diaries as a reflective tool which is definitely not new to the literature on the former. This passage which is found in a reflective diary presents an example of the type in question "Maybe I should be more active [...] maybe get a little more mobile, so that it will not hurt so much [...]" (Elg et al, 2011, p. 137).

5. History of Diaries and Journals

According to Janesick (1998), the origin of diary-writing dates back to the Greek and Roman times since some of the first known ones were written in that period. After this, St. Augustine and Pascal have kept dairies to chronicle moments in their own lives in an attempt to investigate how the human mind works.

In the 10th century, Japanese ladies wrote detailed and frank descriptive texts of their everyday lives, dreams, hopes, visions, fantasies, feelings, and inner thoughts. These diaries were labeled 'pillow diaries' as they were hidden under their writers' pillows (Janesick, 1998).

Later, According to Janesick (1998), the Renaissance had its fair share of influence on dairy-writing rendering such process a requirement of that era since "there was an almost understood agreement that one must chronicle the spirit of rebirth and living in personal terms case by case".

Next, in the 1660s Samuel Pepys provided records including thick descriptions of various issues in literature and history such as the problems of the Church of England, the monarchy, and the great fire. His diary was published in the 1800s when the Victorians started focusing on both letter writing and diaries (Janesick, 1998).

According to Janesick (1998), before the Victorian era, many spiritual and organized religious groups kept diaries. On the other hand, the use of diaries as political record has also flourished. For instance, during the French Revolution, many wrote dairies which involved personal justifications for the revolution, which demonstrated deep feelings of patriotism, nationalism, and rejection of the corrupt monarchy.

Having said that, in addition to literary and historical figures, some psychologists were diary writers. In fact, diary-writing was viewed as a therapeutic aid in the field of psychology (Janesick, 1998).

Lately, According to Janesick (1998), Progoff (1975, 1992) has developed a set of techniques that proposed a structure for keeping an intensive journal. The latter is a "reflective, in-depth process of writing, speaking what is written, and in some cases sharing what is written with others" (Janesick, 1998, p. 510). Interestingly, Janesick (1998) further argued that one has to reflect on inner thoughts to unlock the possibilities of learning and living.

Nowadays, diary-writing is so prevalent to the extent that thousands of diary resources and examples are one click away (Janesick, 1998).

6. Diaries vs Journals

Despite the fact that the two terms have been used interchangeably by many writers in much of the literature on dairy-writing who used them synonymously, there are certain researchers who do not believe in the synonymy of the terms in question and have established a distinction between the two terms 'diary' and 'journal'. According to Nakano (1985), one writes a diary for private purposes whereas one writes a journal to show others. Therefore, the distinction between the aforementioned terms lies in the purposes they serve.

Note that the present study does not use the terms in question interchangeably and support the distinction made by Nakano.

7. Journal Guidelines

According to Habibi et al (2017), The reflective journal has to adhere to the writing guidelines and answer the questions mentioned in Figure 01 bellow.

```
My Reflective Journal Writing
Name :
Class :
After reading the passage (based on the title during
the test), please kindly to write the reflective journal
based on these questions given.
1.  During the hands-on-story entitled (based on
    the title), what information did you observe?
2.  Which part did you like from the story  Why
    did you like that part?
3.  Which part did you dislike based on the story ?
    Why did you dislike that part?
4.  What have you learned from the story?
5.  How is your feeling after reading the story?
```

Figure 01: Reflective Journal Guidelines by Habibi et al. (2017, p. 18)

8. The Use of Reflective Diary Writing in Learning Process

Reflective diary writing can be of a great significance in learning process. The merits of such type of writing are summarized in the following points:

Allowing Anxiety-free Writing

According to Schneider (1994), learning diaries in their nature are very similar to natural speech (as cited in Jado, 2015). Therefore, writing in such type of dairies is not bound to any form of self-consciousness or inhibition which, according to Jado (2015), makes them a safer place to practice writing without the limitations of modality, audience and judgment (as cited in Jado, 2015). This type of writing is dissimilar to any other type they

have stumbled upon in class (as cited in Jado, 2015).

Promoting Critical Thinking Skills

Learning diaries enhance critical thinking (as cited in Jado, 2015).

A Means for Reflection

a learning diary is a structured way of recoding learning and gathering data for self-analysis and reflection (as cited in Jado, 2015). This follows that, learning diaries encourages learners to write their personal reflections about their own learning processes. This enhances learning and reflective learning (as cited in Jado, 2015).

9. The Use of Reflective Diary Writing for Language Learning

Journal writing can improve students' writing. That is to say, it allows learners to enhance their writing skills since they are engaged in highly personal and relatively unstructured writing (as cited in Jado, 2015).

10. Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards Free Writing

Although free writing is of a significant value, Jacobs (1986) conducted a study whose results revealed that students view free writing as "ugly writes" as it contains grammatical mistakes and /or errors and insignificant ideas. On the other hand, He reported a distinctive positive result, arguing that students feel that quick writing was "freeing" (as cited in Jacobs, 1986).

As far as teachers are concerned, according to Jacobs (1986), some teachers worry that requiring students to write quickly will result in stressful experience for the latter.

11. Conclusion

This section has reviewed definitions of the major concepts related to the term diary its types, history and its relation to journals and the teachers' and students' attitudes towards it. Furthermore, this review has put forward the merits of using reflective diaries on improving one's writing following a process-based approach.

Section Two: The Writing Skill in EFL Classes

1. Introduction

The skill of writing has been, and still is, attracting the attention of an increasing number of researchers around the world. The present section deals with the definitions of the key terms and concepts related to writing and reviews its approaches, phases, stages of development, and its relation to diary writing. The section in question concludes by reviewing free writing. This review aims at showcasing the advantages of latter.

Note that students of English at the university level are assessed on the basis of written examinations. Therefore, writing constitutes a paramount role and its mastery by university students of English is a must.

2. Definition of Writing

Bell and Burnaby argued that writing is a purely cognitive task that is characterized by complexity. They stated that writing is "a cognitive activity mainly complex in the way that the writer is simultaneously required to control a number of variables, such as content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, orthography and letter formation at the sentencing level" (as cited in Nunan, 1989, p. 36). This view suggests that writing requires constant monitoring of what is being written. Distinctly, according to Harmer (2004), writing can be defined as: "activities that push students to focus on accurate language use, and provokes language development as the students resolve problems which the writing puts into their minds" (p. 31). Harmer emphasized language development and accuracy as inevitable results of writing which he considered as an active, productive task which requires time to think about what is supposed to be written. He also implicitly suggested that writing is a solitary activity allowing the individual to enjoy certain merits.

3. Approaches to Writing

Regardless of the many theories that substantiate writing as a productive skill, there is no agreed-upon answer to the question of how to teach writing. However, it is essential to understand the what, why and how of writing in order to choose the most suitable techniques and the most appropriate approach to adopt. There are three major approaches in the literature on the process of writing: the product approach, the process approach and the genre-based approach. The name of each approach suggests what it highlights in terms of the writing process.

The Product Approach

A product-based approach denotes a writing process which emphasizes the end product. Regularly, students imitate a model text to produce one. In other words, students mimic a model composition provided by the teachers. For instance, in writing classrooms, teachers provide examples or a model composition for the students. Based on this model, students produce a similar composition. Steel (2004) reported a number of steps that one has to follow in order to apply this approach (the product-based approach) in the ESL writing classroom. These steps are as follows:

1) Students read the model composition provided and take notes with regard to the distinctive features of a composition. That is, the organization of ideas in addition to the use of language and mechanics of writing.

2) Students perform controlled practices to exercise the elements outlined in the model text.

3) Students attempt to mimic the model essay by organizing a collection of preset thoughts to suit the model.

4) Students perform the task by using their skills, sentence structures and various levels of vocabulary in order to compose the anticipated composition.

A product-based approach has a number of advantages. To start with, students start learning how to use particular pattern-product methods in writing composition systematically; especially in writing narrative, descriptive, and persuasive essays. Moreover, students learn to correct vocabulary and various sentence patterns for these text types and improve students' grammatical awareness (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

To conclude, despite the merits attributed to it, the product-based approach lost its popularity as it has no concern over the process of writing but solely over grammar, structure, and syntax. It demotivates the students as it stresses accuracy in mimicking rather than students' creativity.

The Process Approach

Unlike the aforementioned approach, the process-based approach grants a paramount importance to the process of writing instead of the end product. There are four processes involved in the writing process: planning, drafting, revising and editing. Kroll (2001) pointed out that "drafting and receiving feedback on their drafts, be it from peers and/or from the teacher, followed by revision of their evolving texts is one of the crucial steps in the process-based approach" (p. 221). Adopting this approach enables writers to move back and forth to improve their writing. It also promotes creativity since writers are at liberty to create their own composition. Thus, it is seen as a dynamic approach since a recursive process takes place.

Due to its benefits, the process-based approach is increasing in popularity. Students can enhance their writing abilities in the classroom as scaffolding occurs. Other than that, feedback is given by the teacher and peers. This allows students to create well-written texts. In the same vein, Maarof et al (2011) stated "teacher feedback is regarded as a main requirement for improvement in students' essay writing" (p. 30). In addition, the approach in question stresses the thinking process (es) leading to promoting creativity.

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As far as this approach is concerned, Nemouchi (2009) summarizes the steps a writer goes through in his act of writing as follows:

1. Generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. The teacher remains in the background during this phase only providing language support, if required, in order not to inhibit students in their production of ideas.

2. Students extend ideas into note form, and critically judge the quality and usefulness of ideas.

3. Students organize ideas into concept maps. This stage renders the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more immediately obvious, which eases the production by the students in question.

4. Students write the first draft. This is done in the classroom and frequently with peers, that is in pairs or groups.

5. Drafts are exchanged by classmates, who are supposed to read each other's work. This results in developing an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else and thus can improve their own drafts.

6. Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.

7. A final draft is written.

8. Students once again, exchange and read each other's work and perhaps even write a response or reply. Despite all the advantages, process-based approach has it disadvantages. Having said that, it is time consuming. Moreover, it focuses on the process instead of structures and grammar.

Genre-based Approach

According to Badger and White (2000), writing in this approach is "essentially concerned with knowledge of language, and as being tied closely to a social purpose" (p. 155). In contrast to the process-based approach, genre-based approach looks at writing as pre-dominantly linguistic. This view seems similar to the product approach's view, but they are different in the fact that the genre-based approach highlights the social nature of writing. That is, writing varies as the social context

in which it is produced varies.

Since genre-based approaches give importance to various text types that are intertwined with social needs. They have a number of advantages. First, "learners should be exposed to many examples of the same genre to develop their ability to write a particular genre" (Elashri, 2013, p. 7). This means that the constant exposure to a given genre creates familiarity with it, resulting in well-written texts as far as the genre in question is concerned. Second, genre-based approach is "concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose writing" (Tuan 2011, p.123) as every writing has its purposes to the readers. Finally, genre-based approaches are suitable for beginners since a model text is provided to assist learning resulting in a lower affective filter, specifically reducing anxiety among the learners.

This approach has a number of limitations including unsuccessful attempts to reach the target audience due to the fact that students are lacking in the departments of knowledge of language structure, as well as in the department of grammar. Additionally, it underestimates the student's ability since learners mainly focus on the end product rather than the process of writing.

4. The Process of Writing

Since the early 1970's, the nature of written discourse as well as the writing process itself have attracted renewed interests from educational researchers, linguists, applied linguists and teachers. In this period of time, many researchers and educators were interested in exploring the new philosophy that has to do with exploring the different phases through which the student/writer undergoes to reach the end product (Kroll, 1990). Many researchers like Raimes (1987), Chenowith (1987), Hedge (1988), Kroll (1990) and Harmer (2004) acknowledged that writing is a recursive rather than a linear process; writers rarely write following a preconceived plan or model and that the process of writing creates its own form and meaning. When one refers to writing as a process, one views that ideas are generated, put in first draft, organized and arranged in a whole,

revised and corrected, and finally written in a final draft. The process of composition is not a linear one because the writer moves from planning to compose to revising and editing. Therefore, writing is characterized by being a recursive activity in which the writer moves backwards and forwards between drafting and revising (Hedge, 1988, p. 20)

Prewriting

Prewriting is the "generating ideas" part of the writing process when the student decides on the topic and the position or point-of-view for a target audience. Prewriting should be bestowed the time necessary for a student to create a plan or develop an outline to organize materials for the final product. The writer collects, generates, and manipulates ideas during the prewriting stage.

Prewriting is an important phase in the writing process since, according to Murray and Hughes (2008), it allows a smooth flow of ideas, improves one's writing skill, and fosters one's confidence as they generate ideas. As expressed by Murray and Hughes (2008) "prewriting exercises do not only help students to find something to write about, they also help them improve their writing skills by providing them with opportunities to generate ideas and write with confidence" (p. 16). This follows that, the pre-writing stage focuses on stimulating students' creativity and bestowing them the liberty to think about what to write and how to approach the chosen topic.

Prewriting techniques may include brainstorming, clustering, mapping, listing, and free writing. To implement this stage effectively, students ought to concentrate on identifying the purpose of their writing and its audiences. That is, students should decide on the target reader (s) and the content of the text before starting the writing process.

Drafting

Drafting is the "physical act of writing" as referred to by Lindermann (1987, p. 26). It is the actual writing stage where the writer develops his/her topic on paper. Hedge (2005) defines drafting as the stage where the writer "puts together the pieces of the text through developing ideas into

sentences and paragraphs within an overall structure" (p. 89). This indicates that, in writing one has to follow a certain agreed-upon structure as far as combining linguistic units is concerned. The latter takes place during the drafting stage. In fact, Schorn (2002) argues that careful attention to the order and structure of ideas at this stage will save the writer from having to make extensive revisions later on.

Galko (2002), however, argued that one should focus on the main ideas he/she wishes to convey through his/her piece of writing. When drafting, one may skip sections or make notes to himself/herself to come back to later on and add and/or check certain issues in the paper. As one drafts, he/she does not need to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation since he or she shall have time to refine these mechanical parts of one's paper at a later stage. Based on the aforementioned statement, when writing the first draft, the student should focus on the content. Students should write freely and attempt to find the best way to communicate their ideas with no regard to the mechanical parts of the paper such as grammar and the like. If students do not know what to write then they are allowed to go back to the prewriting stage.

Revising

According to Grenville (2001), the revising stage is the one during which the writer corrects the mechanical errors and realizes substantial changes in his/her writing. This follows that, revising is the stage where writers check spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In addition to this, they check whether what they have written is identical to the intended meaning they have in mind and check its clarity and appropriateness for the reader in the writing situation in question.

Interestingly, Johnson (2008), on the other hand, stresses the significance of teacher-reviewing and peer-reviewing in producing an advanced final product during the stage of revising, which he considered the core of writing.

Editing

Editing is the stage where the draft is polished. It is the preparation of the written material for reading. Editing involves the careful checking of the text to ensure that there are no mistakes concerning word choice and word order. In the same vein, Johnson (2008) stated:

> Basically 'editing' means making your piece as reader-friendly as possible by making the sentences flow in a clear, easy-tored way. It also means bringing your piece of writing into line with accepted ways of using English: using the appropriate grammar for the purposes of the piece, appropriate punctuation and spelling, and appropriate paragraphing (p. 167).

This means that as one edits his/ her work, he/she needs to check it for its clarity, correctness, and appropriateness. In addition, one has to check punctuation, spelling, and the quoted, paraphrased, or summarized materials. Note that Johnson stresses the role of the writer himself in this particular stage.

On the contrary, Brown (2001) stressed the role of the teacher in such stage, suggesting that teachers should only highlight grammatical mechanical errors with no correction, as well as suggesting further word choices and transitional words to improve clarity and coherence of writing. The two viewpoints are quite dissimilar.

5. Writing Components

All researchers agree on one issue concerning writing, it is a very demanding and challenging task since, according to Raimes (1984); it requires a number of interrelated components.

Raime (1984) has identified eight interrelated writing components: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, the target audience and the writer's process. The following diagram (Figure 01) demonstrates the eight components which must be dealt and covered with by any writer in order to produce a well-written piece of writing.
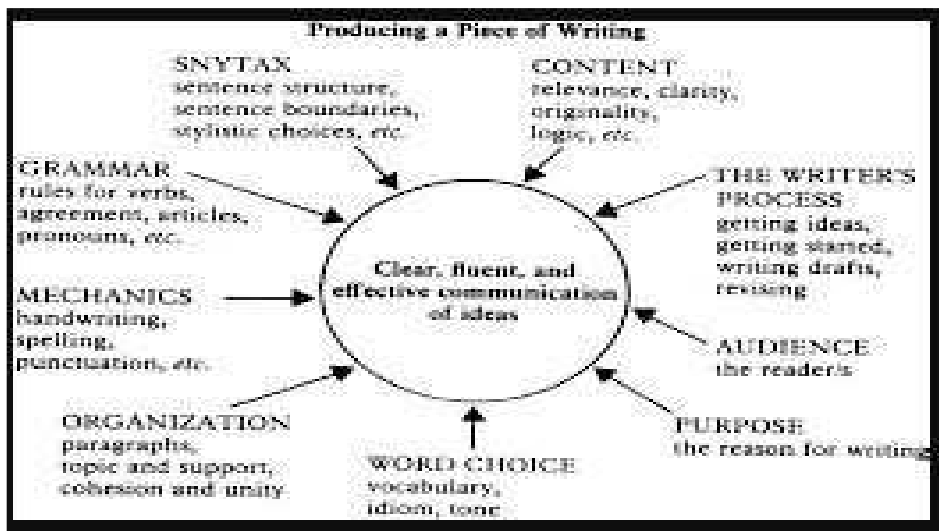
Figure 02: Components of Writing (Raimes, 1984, p. 6)

The aforementioned blocks of writing demonstrate the complexity of this task since one has to make a paramount effort in order to bring the different elements of a complex activity into a harmonious connection.

In order for a writer to produce a well-written text, she/he needs to master the different components of the writing skill which, according to Raimes (1984), can be defined as follows:

Content

Content is one major component of writing. It is the base of all the components mentioned above. It is the combination of relevance, clarity and logic and the like.

Word Choice

The writer chooses his words willingly such as his/her vocabulary and idioms.

Writer's Process

The writer's process is the sequence that is followed by the former to get a general picture of what he/she is going to write such as brainstorming and initial drafting.

Target Audience

The reader is of a significant role in the writing process. The writer has to estimate

What are the former's preferences in terms of reading and in what manner they wish to read.

Organization

It is the final form of the text. This may include numbers of paragraphs, topic and concluding sentences.

Grammar

It is the system of rules of a given language and its effective use leads to good writing.

Syntax

It is the specific pattern of forming sentences or phrases in any natural human language. Interestingly, it includes sentence structure and the like.

Mechanics

It includes the handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and the like. This accepts free-error writing and not only free from the grammatical errors.

6. Stages of Development of the Writing Skill

In order to develop ability in writing, students move systematically and thoroughly through the different stages of the writing skill. Having said that, Rivers has identified five stages: copying, reproduction, guided writing and finally composition.

Copying

Despite being viewed as an unworthy activity by many foreign language teachers since the students already know the script, the researchers believe that copying is but a significant task. Rivers and Temperly (1978) argued that the process of constantly repeating to himself / herself what a student is copying deepens the impression in his/her mind of the sounds and symbols, rendering copying a worthy activity. That is to say, as a student is copying, he should repeat to himself what he is writing so that he deepens the impression in his mind of the different sounds and their written symbols.

Reproduction

According to Rivers (1968); this stage consists of writing, or better say, reproducing sentences that have been already copied or learned without referring to the original. This means that; during the reproduction stage students will attempt to write, with no originality, what they have learned orally and read in their learning materials. This could only be a successful attempt if they have been trained to, habitually, be accurate during the copying stage. The activity that is mostly used in this stage is dictation, where students develop two major skills: listening and writing in the sense that they have to distinguish between the sounds aurally and write the corresponding symbols accurately.

Guided Writing

According to Rivers (1968), in this stage, the teacher requires the students to write following specific directions, with the freedom in the choice of structural patterns as well as the lexical items to be used. For instance, the teacher gives a model paragraph and the students have to write their own paragraphs following the pattern presented. The students may also be asked to write an outline, a summary of a story, or rewrite a story or a part of it using his/her own words. In other words, in this stage, the students write with the guidance of the teacher. This suggests that they will be granted a sense of freedom as far as the selection of lexical items and structural patterns for their written exercises are concerned. Nevertheless, this freedom shall be limited with a framework that retains them from attempting to compose at a level beyond their current level of knowledge.

Composition

The last stage of composition encompasses individual selection of vocabulary items and structure in order to express personal meaning. In this stage of development of

the writing skill, students select vocabulary items of their choice, as well as particular structures, to express their ideas. This stage largely depends on a sufficient training in the preceding four stages. It is worth noting that within this stage, the student develops his writing skill gradually until he/she can produce an acceptable piece of writing. The student will be required solely to describe, narrate and explain, or to summarize. As he/she become familiar with restrictively expressing him/herself consciously, he/she shall be able to comment on or develop ideas beyond those found in his/ her textbook (Rivers, 1968).

7. Free Writing

Introduction

Unlike presently, according to Kelly (1969), in the 20th century, free writing held an insignificant role. Due to the fact that it does not involve translation, teachers, who particularly adhered to a Grammar Translation Method, only incorporated such task at the end of the courses, if not skipping it altogether.

Definition of Free Writing

Grenville (2001) has defined free writing as "non-stop talking into the page because you can't stop to think, your unconscious gets to have a go" (p. 11). This means that free writing is a significant way to grant one's subconscious mind the opportunity to provide ideas as it has access to all cognitive data one has in his/her mind including those that are not consciously recognized by the individual. Briefly, free writing is the process in which the subconscious mind takes the lead instead of the conscious mind resulting in a nonstop flow of ideas. This, by definition, includes diary-writing. Interestingly, Steele (2004) regarded free writing as the last phase in writing according to a product-based approach.

Merits of Free Writing

According to Grenville (2001), free writing, such as diary-writing, is a significant task since it allows the individual to discover thoughts and ideas that one never knew he/she had. Moreover, it promotes creativity as the individual is always prepared to take a risk in such task.

Conclusion

This section has reviewed definitions of the activity of writing, its approaches, steps, stages of development, and its relation to diary writing. Furthermore, this review has put forward the merits of free writing following a product-based approach.

Chapter two: Fieldwork

Chapter Two: Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter deals with the practical part of the present study. First of all, it investigates the effect of reflective diary-writing on the writing skills of second year License students of English belonging to a non-English speaking university, Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. The latter is conducted by presenting a detailed identification, analysis, and description of a sample of students' developments throughout the experiment. Note that the aforementioned sample is selected on the basis of convenience. The chapter in hand starts by providing a thorough description of the research instrument adopted forthis study. Second, it provides an analysis of the data obtained through the research instrument and offers an extensive discussion of the results. Finally, it articulates a conclusion to the whole dissertation.

1. **Research Methods**

In order to fulfill the goals of this research, a specific research design must be followed. The objective of this research is to examine and analyze the effect of writing diaries on developing EFL students' writing skills, and therefore an experimental design has been chosen for that sake.

Choice of Methodology:

In this study, the researchers opted for the experimental design; where an experimental group (10 students) and a control group (10 students) were selected. The experimental group was given a pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test. The control group, however, only took the pre and post-tests. Meddour (2014) stated that ''conducting a pre-test and post-test experimental design will put the researcher in a better position to claim that the differences in

tests' scores values are due to the experimental treatment'' (p. 8). Hence, these three stages are aimed at gathering the necessary data before and after the treatment so that the results imitated from the previously mentioned tests can be analyzed properly.

Population and Sampling

In an attempt to seek relevant answers to the previously-mentioned research questions, a sample of twenty (20) second year students of English, at Mohamed Seddik BenYahia University, Jijel, was selected out of a total of 248 student on the basis of convenience for most of them were reluctant to cooperate and share their diaries due to some personal reasons. The sample was chosen because at this level, students are expected to be capable of producing paragraphs and essays. Having said that, they are aware of the processes as well as the academic principles of writing. Note that neither the students' academic achievements nor their academic level was taken into consideration. The aim is to obtain a representative sample to enable generalizations on the whole population.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers opted for the experimental design; where an experimental group and a control group were selected and provided with pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test. According to Gass and Mackey (2016) "in many second language studies, participants are given a pre-test to ensure the comparability of the participants' groups before their treatment, and a post-test to measure the effects of treatment" (p. 202). In other words; the post-test is conducted in research to help the researcher know learners' level and their weaknesses while the post-test is used to measure learners' performance and to check their improvement after the intervention. Thus, the post-test and the post-test are used to compare and analyze results.

Description of the Research Instrument

The present research work adopts an experimental design to empirically investigate the

impact of reflective diary-writing on students' writing skills. This research design consists of two groups, one is an experimental group, and the other is a control group. Having said that, both groups constitute a sample of ten second year students of English in each group at Mohamed Seddik BenYahia University, Jijel. Besides, two important tests took place; a pre-test, and a post-test. In addition to that, we have two variables; writing diaries is the independent variable, and students' writing skills is the dependent one. The learners were administered a similar diagnostic and post- assessment to test the enhancement of their writing elements after the treatment sessions.

Description of the Pre-test

The first meeting of this experiment was an introductory session. It was planned mainly to take a pretest in order to check the participants' current level before the treatment period. At the beginning students were given a task in which they were required to write a paragraph about one of the two topics suggested. The first one talks about whether they can judge a person based on their physical appearance while the second entails whether Ramadan is the perfect time to change their bad habits. The students set down for the pre-test for about 30 minutes. Then, the researchers collected the papers.

The participants were assessed on the following criteria: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, target audience; whether they attain to the reader and their proclivities and writer's process. Each of the previous criteria is graded 2.5 points out of 20.

Description of the Treatment Period

Both control and experimental groups received the treatment instructions for two weeks. The control group maintained the information they obtained in writing classes they took at the university. However, the experimental group used diaries as a practice tool at the end of each day to reflect on a certain topic. The experimental group wrote diaries as a form of

a take home assignment and sent the researcher the work every day via Emails.

The latter was done to make them more at ease with expressing personal things about themselves.

Description of the Post-test

The last session of the experimental design was devoted to the post-test. Students of both groups were given a test similar to the pre-test. It could be argued that repeating the pre-test in the post-test phase can have the negative effect of familiarity with the topic. However, the aim is to facilitate identifying any possible improvement in their writing skills. Specifically the writing components addressed in this study; content, word choice, writer's process, target audience, organization, grammar, syntax and mechanics.

2. Data Analysis and Discussion:

Analysis of the Results of the Pre-test and the Post-test of the Control Group

Table 01: The Scores of the Pre-test and Post-test of the Control Group

Student	Control Group	
	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
A	12	13
B	16	16
C	11	11.5
D	13	13.5
E	12	12
F	11.5	11
G	10	9.5
H	9.5	10
I	14	14.5
J	15	15
Mean	**12.4**	**12.6**

Table 01 shows the results obtained from both the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group indicating no variance for each student. An insignificant improvement is traced in their scores. As a result, we can say that most of the control group's participants did not improve their writing skills level. It seems that they have only used their background knowledge about writing which results in gaining nearly identical scores in the pre-test and the post-test. Having said that, the researchers propose that guided writing inside the classroom was not effective alone to develop students' writing skills.

Analysis of the Results of the Pre-test Scores of the Experimental Group

Table 02: The Scores of the Pre-test of the Experimental Group

Student	Pre-test Scores
A	11.5
B	10
C	12
D	10.5
E	9
F	12
G	18
H	15
I	13
J	11.5
Mean	**12.25**

Table 02 demonstrates that second year EFL students at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia have an excellent to a poor writing. The analysis of the pre-test is done after correcting the participants' daily written extracts from their personal diaries. This correction was done by four teachers of English including the researchers of the

present study. Furthermore, counting the final score of each student was based on adding the marks that the students have obtained in each writing element, that were discussed above, which was out of two and a half points (2.5 points).

Note that the mean (average) was obtained by adding the individual marks of each writing element together and dividing the sum by the total number of the scores. The scores of the pre-test denote a poor to an excellent performance on the part of the participants. They also demonstrate that the learners have mixed abilities. Although the best score being eighteen (18) scored by only one student, two students have scored under the average, whereas the rest of the results have distinctively ranged between the two scores.

Analysis of the Results of the Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group

Table 03: The Scores of the Post-test of the Experimental Group

Students	Post-test Scores
A	13.5
B	10.5
C	14
D	10
E	9.5
F	13.5
G	19.5
H	15.5

I	12.5
J	14
Mean	**13.25**

The participants of the experimental group were introduced to a similar test to be filled after receiving the treatment sessions. The scores obtained from the post-test (see Table 03) indicate a very minor progress in the participants' performance. Most of the participants have demonstrated a barely noticeable improvement which relatively differed from one student to the other. Most students did very well as their scores increased up to two points and a half (2.5 points). The researchers assume that, to a certain degree, the successful performance is a result of the treatment administered through the experimental study.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group

Table 04: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test

Student	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
A	11.5	13.5
B	10	10.5
C	12	14
D	10.5	10
E	9	9.5
F	12	13.5

G	18	19.5
H	15	15.5
I	13	12.5
J	11.5	14
Total	**12.25**	**13.25**

Table 04 shows the results obtained from both the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group indicating the variance for each student. Regarding the variance noted, it seems that the participants have succeeded in demonstrating a higher level of performance after the treatment sessions. The highest variance is marked by 2.5 points which displays a noticeably significant progress; on the other hand, a variance of half a point which does not signal a noticeable progress. This follows that the obtained results demonstrate progress after receiving the treatment.

Having said that, the researchers assume that the proposed technique was relatively effective in developing the writing skills of the participants. Moreover, the findings of the study in hand revealed that the class of the participants is of a mixed ability.

3. **Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Different Writing Components of the Experimental Group**

   Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Content

Table 05: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Content

Student	Content	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.5	2
B	1	1.5
C	1.5	2
D	1.5	2
E	0.5	1
F	1.5	1.5
G	2.5	2.5
H	2.5	2.5
I	1.5	1.5
J	1.5	2.5
Mean	**1.55**	**1.9**

As Table 05 above indicates, the scores obtained by the students are varied as far as content assessment is concerned. The table, also, demonstrates that all of the students have obtained a better to the same score after the treatment. Given that this element of writing is significant as it is the physical manifestation of the ideas of the writer as he/she crafts his/her text, the full mastery of such element is required to craft a genuinely adequate piece of writing.

Having said that, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. An example of correct use can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer stated "I don't believe that it's possible to determine someone's true personality based on what they wear". It seems that the writer has successfully conveyed his /her interrelated relevant ideas in his text. On the other hand, there seem to be instances in which the content has been irrelevant and failed to communicate the writer's ideas. For instance, in student A's composition he put: "Also, you can't know a person by just talking to them on Facebook, real life contact matters". The writer has stated a number of ideas; nevertheless, the latter are irrelevant to the text, according to the raters who corrected his/her paper. In other words, he/she failed by supplying irrelevant ideas in his/her piece of writing.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Word Choice

Table 06: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Word Choice

Student	Word Choice	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.5	1.5
B	1.5	1.5
C	1.5	1.5
D	2	2
E	1	1

F	1.5	1.5
G	1.5	1.5
H	2.5	2.5
I	1.5	1.5
J	1.5	1
Mean	**1**	**1.5**

Results in Table 06 reveal that the scores obtained by the students are diverse as far as word choice assessment is concerned. The table, also, shows that all students have gained a better to the same score after the treatment. Given that this element of writing is of great importance as it is the tool that the writer uses to convey his/her ideas, having a great command of such element is required to craft a genuinely adequate piece of writing. Based on that, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. An example of correct word choice can be seen in student A pre-test in which the writer has stated "Nowadays, fashion plays an important role in individuals' life because it is considered as a means for self-expression"

It seems that the writer has successfully chosen words that best express his /her point of view about the topic in his/her text. On the other hand, there seems to be instances in which the word choice failed to communicate the writer's opinion, an example from student A's states: "social classes in society are fundamental and honestly expensive clothes are obvious and they distinguish the person wearing them". The writer has used a number of words; nevertheless, the latter are irrelevant to the text, according to the raters who corrected his/her paper. In other

words, he/she used inadequate vocabulary in his/her composition.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Writer's Process:

Table 07: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Writer's Process

Student	Writer's Process	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.5	1.5
B	1	1
C	2	1.5
D	1	1.5
E	1.5	1.5
F	2	2
G	2.5	2.5
H	2.5	2.5
I	0.5	0.5
J	1.5	1.5
Mean	**1.6**	**1.6**

Based on the data displayed in the above Table 07, the scores attained by the students are

varied with regard to the element of writer's process. The table exhibits that not all students have gained a better to the same score after the treatment. Given that this element of writing must be mastered to craft a genuinely adequate piece of writing. Based on that, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. The element of writer's process was mainly measured on the bases of whether the participants follow the different processes of writing that were reviewed in the theoretical part. Due to the fact that conducting an interview at the time was impossible because of the time limit, the participants where verbally enquired when they have returned the papers of the post-test. Interestingly most of participants stated, when inquired whether they have followed any of the writing processes, that they followed the steps of brainstorming, drafting, and/or revising. On the other hand, two students claimed that they have followed all of the steps. However, one student stated that they only wrote with no steps to follow in mind.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Target Audience:

Table 08: The performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Target Audience

Student	Target Audience	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.25	1.5
B	1.5	1.5
C	1.5	1.5
D	1.5	1.5
E	1.5	1.5

F	1	1
G	1.5	2
H	1.5	1.5
I	2	2
J	1.5	1.5
Mean	**1.47**	**1.55**

Table 08 represents that the scores gained by the students are not significantly varied when it comes to the writing component of target audience. The table clearly indicates most students have the same score even after the treatment. Given that this element of writing is of great value as it is necessary for the writer to know who is reading in order to produce a worth read piece of writing.

Based on that, the opposite situation can be quite an issue. Given an example about the target audience can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer has referred to himself while writing his diary: "To be honest , I am the kind of people who judge others based on their physical appearance , for me appearance matters the most to get a good or bad impression". It seems that the writer knows the fact that when writing a diary, he/she must relate to themselves in his/her text. On the other hand, there seem to be instances where the rater notices a misunderstanding of the concept target audience, in student A's text for instance: "people in society have different personalities and values that make others judge them from their outfit".

The writer ignores the fact that he/she is the subject of the writing according to the raters

who corrected his/her paper. In other words, he/she didn't refer to himself/herself when expressing their opinion about the topic. This can be attributed also to the fact that the student is conscious about the fact that his diary will be read by the researcher, which, in turn, may have affected or shifted the audience to which he is writing for.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Organization:

Table 09: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Organization

Student	Organization	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1	1.5
B	1.5	1.5
C	1.5	2
D	1.5	1.5
E	1.5	1.5
F	1.5	1.5
G	1.5	2.5
H	1.5	1.5
I	2	2
J	1.5	1.5

Mean	1.5	1.7

Table 09 displays the students' scores in terms of organization. The table shows that all students have gained a better to the same score after the treatment. Given that this component of writing is essential because readers expect the writer to express his/her ideas in a logical order so as they don't get confused as they follow his/her line of thought, having a great command of such element is required to genuinely write an adequate piece of writing. Based on that, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. An example of well-chosen organizational pattern can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer has stated: "Our religion instruct us to never judge each other based on our appearance be it skin color or outfit, personally I think that people are more than what they wear". It seems that the writer has successfully presented her ideas in a way that made sense in her text. However, there are instances where the pattern of organization was not clear, in student A's text, she writes: "It's not always the case since some women are obliged by their parents to wear specific things in specific colors and it makes them less privileged to express themselves adequately therefore personally I can't judge them because I am well aware that it is not the right attitude". The writer has attempted to convey an idea that probably would confuse the reader; nevertheless, the latter is irrelevant to the text, according to the raters who corrected her paper. In other words, she didn't follow a clear pattern of organization that would make it easier for the reader to follow.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Grammar

Table 10: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Grammar

Student	Grammar	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.5	1.5
B	1.5	1.5
C	1	1.5
D	1	1.5
E	1	1
F	1	1.5
G	1.5	2.5
H	1.5	1.5
I	2	2
J	1.5	2
Mean	**1.35**	**1.65**

Results in the above Table 10 expose that the scores obtained by the students are diverse as far as grammar is concerned. The table clearly demonstrates that all some students have gained a better score while some gained the same after the treatment. Given that this element of writing is the structural foundation of the writer's ability to put words together to produce sentences that convey a meaning, having a great command of such element is required to craft a

genuinely adequate piece of writing. Based on that, the opposite case can be a problem. An example of appropriate structures can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer has stated "Ramadan is the best time to repent and seek forgiveness from the almighty , and being forgiven for our sins encourages us to continue avoiding them".

It seems that the writer has a good knowledge about the English grammar rules. On the other hand, there seems to be instances where the writer lacks some grammatical competence , in student A's for instance: "when I was young , I see a girl who people saw her as arrogant from the way she dresses , when I speak with her I found her nice and kind ". The writer has used the present tense to retell an incident in his life for the purpose of giving further illustration of his view point; nevertheless, the latter is grammatically incorrect according to the raters who corrected his. In other words, he chose an incorrect verb form that may confuse the reader.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Syntax

Table 11: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Syntax

Student	Syntax	
	Pre-test	**Post-test**
A	1.5	2.5
B	1	1
C	1	2
D	1	2
E	1	1

F	1.5	2
G	1.5	2.5
H	1.5	1.5
I	1.5	1.5
J	1.5	2
Mean	**1.3**	**1.8**

Table 11 reveals that the scores obtained by the students are diverse concerning syntax. It shows that all students have scored better after the treatment. Given that syntax is one of the major components of grammar that writers use to create meaning in their work. However, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. An example of a proper sentence can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer has stated "we should never judge a book by its cover"

It seems that the writer has successfully uttered his /her thoughts about the topic in a well-structured form. On the other hand, there seems to be instances in which the formation of the sentence failed to communicate the writer's opinion, in student A's text is a case in point: "Clothes they don't define our real personality because by clothes, you can pretend a character that isn't your personality". The writer has used incorrect syntax according to the raters who corrected his/her paper. In other words, he/she lacks competence in using the syntax of the English language.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Mechanics

Table 12: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of

Mechanics

Student	Mechanics	
	Pre-test	Post-test
A	1.5	1.5
B	1	1
C	2	2
D	1	2
E	1	1
F	2	2
G	1.5	2.5
H	1.5	2
I	2	2
J	1.5	1.5
Mean	**1.5**	**1.75**

Results in Table 12 show that the scores obtained by the students are diverse as far as mechanics is concerned. The table, also, shows that all students have gained a better to the same score after the treatment. Mechanics are the fundamental tools and structures of writing, having a great command of such element are required to craft a genuinely adequate piece of writing.

Based on that, the reverse situation can be quite problematic. An example of good use of mechanics can be seen in student A's pre-test in which the writer has stated: "Ramadan is the best time of the year when I always try to acquire good habits such as constantly reading the Quran, praying on time and giving charity".

Apparently, the writer has good command of mechanics such as capitalization, spelling and punctuation. In contrast, there are times when the writer lacks the skill of using mechanics in his/her writing, an instance from the same student's coùposition says: "I belive that ramadan is an idol time for muslim people to feel one another and ask forgiveness from Allah ". The writer didn't seem to pay attention to capitalization and he also misspelled the word believe according to the raters who corrected his/her paper. In other words, he shows some weakness when it comes to the mechanics of writing.

Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Components of Writing of the Experimental Group

Table 13: The Performance of the Experimental Group in the Pre-test and Post-test in Terms of Writing Components

Stu dent	Content		Word Choice		Writer's Process		Target Audience		Organizat ion		Grammar		Syntax		Mechanic s		Total	
	Pr e-tes t	Po st-tes t	Pr e-tes t	Po st-tes t	Pr e-tes t	Po st-tes t	Pr e-tes t	Pos t-test	Pre -test	Pos t-test	Pre -test	Pos t-test	Pre -test	Pos t-test	Pre -test	Pos t-test	Pre -test	Pos t-test
A	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	11.5	13.5

B	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1	1	1	10	10.5
C	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1	2	1.5	2	1	1.5	1	2	2	2	12	14
D	1.5	2	2	2	1	1.5	1	2	1.5	1.5	1	1.5	1	2	1	2	10.5	10
E	0.5	1	1	1	1.5	1.5	1	1	1.5	1.5	1	1.5	1	1	1	1	9	9.5
F	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	1	1	1.5	2	2	2	12	13.5
G	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	2.5	18	19.5
H	2.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	15	15.5
E	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	0.5	0.5	1.5	1.5	2	2	2	2	1.5	1.5	2	2	13	12.5
J	1.5	2.5	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	2	1.5	1.5	11.5	14
Mean	1.55	1.9	1.55	1.55	1.6	1.6	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.35	1.65	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.75	12.5	13.25

Table 12 puts together all what has been analyzed above. It demonstrates the scores of the experimental group for each one of the writing elements, proposed by the Raimes (1984). Comparing the scores of the different writing elements in the pre-post-tests, the scores, which were out of 2.5 for each component revealed that overall, students' performance in writing has noticeably improved (mean total 13.25) after the intervention compared to the sum total of the mean prior receiving the treatment (12.5).

4. Comparison between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Control Group and Experimental Group

Table 14: The Scores of the Pre-test and Post-test of the Control and Experimental Groups

Student	Control Group		Experimental Group	
	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
A	12	13	11.5	13.5
B	16	16	10	10.5
C	11	11.5	12	14
D	13	13.5	10.5	10
E	12	12	9	9.5
F	11.5	11	12	13.5
G	10	9.5	18	19.5
H	9.5	10	15	15.5
I	14	14.5	13	12.5
J	15	15	11.5	14
Mean	**12.4**	**12.6**	**12.25**	**13.25**

Table 14 presents a comparison between the experimental group's and the control group's results obtained from both the pre-test and post-test indicating diversity for each student in the experimental group whereas the control group indicates almost no change. Regarding the variance noted from the experimental group, it seems that the participants have

succeeded in

showing a higher level of performance after the treatment period. As for the control group, there is a relatively insignificant to no progress traced in the post-test; this can be attributed to the fact that they received no instruction. They only depended on the knowledge they acquired from the traditional method of teaching they were exposed to. Having said that, the researchers find that the experimental group which was assigned to regularly write diaries for the treatment period (two weeks) demonstrated an improvement in the participants' writing skill in the post-test while the control group which relied on what they have already been taught in written expression demonstrated a minor change in their scores in the post-test .Therefore, the suggested technique was relatively effective in enhancing the performance of the participants.

5. Data Discussion

The practical part of the dissertation provides the essence of this research work; therefore, it provides interpretations and discussions of the data generated by the research tool adopted in this study. Having said that, it provides answers to the aforementioned research questions.

The present investigation seeks to answer the following research questions:

✓ Can writing dairies have an effect on the student's writing skill?

✓ How can dairies improve the learners' writing style?

✓ To what extent does the use of reflective diaries make it easier for learners to properly write paragraphs and essays?

In what follows, each research question is answered in light of the obtained results.

Diary-writing and Students' Writing Skills

The results obtained from the analysis indicate that there is 70 % improvement in the students' writing skills. However, the degree of development has been noticed to be different amongst the participants. This is due to the treatment sessions that were provided to them; they were relatively insufficient to affect induce the improvement initially aimed for.

As it was reviewed above, the findings of the pre-test and the post-test revealed that development in writing successfully occurred with some writing elements, while it was not the case for others; word choice and writer's process. The latter can be explained through the fact that the students were accustomed to a particular diction which needs a longer period of time to be reformed and altered compared to such a relatively short period of time that was devoted to the experiment while the latter may be due to the fact that they were taught the distinct process of writing in the writing module before the experiment took place.

Based on the pre-test and post-test results, as far as the writing elements are concerned, the scores of the experimental groups' students denoted that students' mastery over the dissimilar writing components appeared to be distinct from one student to the other.

All in all, the findings revealed that students' writing skills (from the experimental group) relatively developed after regularly writing reflective diaries. However, students' writing elements were highly improved but two, word choice and writer's process.

Improving Learners' Writing Style through Diary-writing

The second research question estimated that dairies may improve the learners' writing style. To explore the nature of the relationship between the two variables, the researchers based the measuring of learners' writing style on their diction, choice of words.

It is worth mentioning that students' diction did not improve after the experiment. Therefore, it is concluded that diary-writing is not sufficient for students to develop their writing style.

Reflective Diary-writing and Paragraph-and-Essay-Writing

The third research question sought to test the relationship between the participants' paragraph-and-essay-writing and reflective diary-writing. With this aim in mind, the participants were exposed to the pre-test to measure their writing followed by the treatment wherein they were kindly enquired to regularly write diaries. Lastly, the post-test was administered to test the development of their writing after the treatment.

The pre-test results confirmed the learners' distinct levels with regard to writing as the

averages varied from low to high. On the other hand, the total post-test results signaled a progress in their writing. Nonetheless, the progress was different from one student to the other.

On the basis of the comparison of the experimental group participants' results of the pre-test and post-test, some students outperformed others in achieving more significant variance in terms of the scores. However, other participants have not achieved as significant variance. This is justified by the fact that learners are of mixed abilities since the sample of the study. Eventually, the findings indicate that reflective diary-writing is relatively an effective technique in enhancing learners' paragraph-and-essay-writing.

To put it in a nutshell, the findings obtained from the overall research are aligned with the research hypotheses of this study supporting the fact that reflective diary-writingis an effective technique in developing students' writing skills.

6. Pedagogical Implications and Limitations of the Study6.1.Pedagogical Implications:

This study examines the effect of reflective diary-writing on learners' conceptual development and mindset growth. Furthermore, it attempts to gain an understanding of students' perceptions of the process of journaling. The findings generated by this qualitative study reveal that the use of reflective diaries can positively impact students' writing. In other words, the former can enhance the latter. These results have important implications for the EFL classroom as they contribute in developing students' writing skills. Having said that, there is a remarkable progress at the level of grammar, punctuation, spelling and organization as far as the writing of students are concerned. In the same vein, these findings might be of a great significance to teachers as it offers them a better teaching experience of writing. Teachers are kindly advised to implement this alternative teaching technique that may result in a significant shift in their students' writing skills. Note that motivating students to write reflective diaries is a must if

teachers are to successfully and effectively implement such technique.

6.2. Limitations of the Study

Although the hypotheses and the research question have been successfully answered. That is to say that reflective diary writing enhances the student's writing skill. However, the study had some limitations, which have obstacle the study to fulfil the needs of the research and to involve the dissertation with the necessary information. The researchers have encountered a number of constraints as they were conducting this study. First, the time limit was an issue that forced the researchers to work under pressure; the experiment should have been carried out at the beginning of the year. Second, convincing the entire randomly

selected sample to participate in the study in hand was difficult which resulted in a small number of participants. This leads to the third limitation; students were not fully engaged in the experiment as they were slightly demotivated to perform the administered tasks and send their diaries daily because it was two weeks before the exams. Since the experiment was conducted online, researchers dealt with the participants via the email. They were supposed to send their diary constantly which means that their writings could be affected by Autocorrection. Finally, there were mainly females in the sample; therefore, the latter cannot be fully representative of the sample.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the fact that the present study is limited to being quantitative, further research should explore how the use of reflective journals can improve the students' writing skills both qualitatively and quantitatively. Moreover, Future research would benefit by being focused to a smaller scale with narrower variety of participants. In addition, because of the existence of individual differences, it is important to remember that self-reflection diaries are not the only way to encourage students' autonomy. Portfolios, questionnaires, journals and other projects which allow students to produce a variety of text-types and give students greater

freedom should also be considered. It would be also important to consider implementing not only questions that guide the students to think in their learning process, but also that invite them to reflect more on their personal objectives, that is, working deeper on their intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, The Students need more practice to help them improve their writing skill; they may continue to write a reflective diary once they finish their activities in school or classroom. As what Muhammad et al have stated that knowledge is characterized as a dynamic combination of structured experience, contextual knowledge, values and expert perspective which gives a

Structure to evaluate and integrate new information and experiences. Due to its benefits, reflective journal writing should be an integral component of university writing courses. Similar studies should be carried out at other Algerian universities in order to see whether their results corroborate or oppose the results of the present study.

General Conclusion

Writing skill is one of the four skills necessary to attain progress and develop language proficiency and accuracy. The current study empirically investigates the effectiveness of reflective diary-writing on enhancing second year students' writing skills.

Practically, an experimental design was adopted. It aimed at measuring learners' writing skills by means of an immediate assessment bestowed on them by the end of the treatment sessions. By the same token, it attempted to investigate the nature of the relationship between learners' writing style and diary-writing. Furthermore, this study attempted to explore the learners' paragraph-and-essay-writing development through a diagnostic assessment, that is to say a pre-test, followed by a treatment intervention and a post-test.

The present research work consists of two main chapters. The first one is fully devoted to the theoretical framework of the study whereas the second one is devoted to the practical part of this inquiry. As far as the theoretical part is concerned, this study begins with a general review of the literature on the two research variables. The first section provided an overview of the different definitions of the key terms related to the term 'diary' and other related issues aiming at highlighting the merits of using reflective diaries as far as writing skills are concerned. However, the second section highlighted the merits of free writing following a product-based approach and the eight writing components whose measurements were the basis of the practical part.

The second chapter reports the practical aspects of the study. It deals with the nature of the study along with the procedures followed in order to collect data, a thorough analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

The findings of the study in hand reveal that reflective diary-writingis relatively effective in enhancing students' writing skills. Precisely, it is effective in enhancing student's writing

elements except word choice and writer's process.

The scores obtained from the pre-test and the post-test analyses indicate dissimilarity amongst the students' writing skills.

All in all, based on these findings, the research hypotheses are confirmed. Thus, they add to the realm of research on the use of reflective diary-writing to enhance students' writing skills. Therefore, further research is encouraged to investigate more on this topic from different angles that were, due to the scope of this Master dissertation, not approached in this study.

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Appendix A

Pre-test

Name:………………   **Mark**

Family name……………   **/20**

Prompt: Write a paragraph on one of the following topics:

Topic one:

 Based on your personnel experience, do you think that you can judge a person based on his physical appearance?

Topic two:

Do you think that the holy month of Ramadan is the perfect time to change some of your bad habits? If yes, how?

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Good luck

Appendix B

Treatment Test

Name:………………   **Mark**

Family name……………   **/20**

 Prompt:

Dear participants,

        Your contribution in this experiment is of great value, I sincerely appreciate your good intentions and openness to help.

 *Write in a form of a composition (from 10 to 15 lines)

-        Express your thoughts and emotions freely.

-        Please send your composition daily.

-        Whenever you face any kind of difficulty please email me.

*Write about both topics each for 5 days

Topic one: Everyday, life teaches us a valuable lesson .Write a note to yourself about what you have learnt each Day.

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Topic two: You are working hard to prepare for the exams these days .Write about the difficulties you encounter during revising each module.

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Good luck

Appendix C

The Post-test

Name…………………   **Mark**

Family name……………   **/20**

Prompt: rewrite a composition on one of the following topics taking into consideration the feedback you received and all the remarks and treatment.

Topic one:

 Based on your personnel experience, do you think that you can judge a person based on his physical appearance?

Topic two:

Do you think that the holy month Ramadan is the perfect time to change some of your bad habits? If yes , how?

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Good luck.

الملخص

الكتابة وسيلة لاكتساب اللغة وتنميتها .إنها طريقة اتصال مهمة، يمكن من خلالها مشاركة تجارب الحياة ووجهات النظر الشخصية .إنها مهارة مهمة يعد تطويرها ضروريًا لإتقان اللغة؛ ومع ذلك، فإنه يعتبر تحديا كبيرًا للعديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية .رداً على ذلك، دعا بحث اكتساب اللغة الثانية إلى استخدام أنشطة غير مألوفة للتعامل مع تطوير مهارة الكتابة لدى طلاب السنة الثانية جامعي بكلية الآداب و اللغات حيث توصل البحث الحالي إلى طريقة فعالة لتحقيق ذلك باستخدام مذكرات تقويمية ذاتية .من الناحية النظرية، تم الافتراض بأن كتابة مذكرة شخصية تدعم تنمية مهارات الكتابة، و هدف البحث الحالي إلى التحقيق في عناصر الكتابة المحسّنة عند كتابة المذكرات جنبًا إلى جنب مع اكتشاف تأثير الأخيرة على أسلوب كتابة المتعلمين .من الناحية العملية، اعتمد الباحثون تصميمًا تجريبيًا يتكون من عشرون طالب من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية السنة لثانية بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى يعتمد على مجموعة تجريبية واحدة ومجموعة واحدة مضبوطة من عشرة طلاب ، حيث تم إعطاء المتعلمين تشخيصًا مشابهًا وتقييمًا لاحقًا لاختبار تحسين عناصر الكتابة و كشفت النتائج أن كتابة مذكرة شخصية فعالة نسبيًا في تطوير مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب على وجه التحديد، إنه فعال في تحسين عناصر الكتابة لدى معظم الطلاب .بالنظر إلى نتائج هذه الدراسة، يُقترح على معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية اعتماد كتابة المذكرات كوسيلة لتحسين مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية : طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كتابة المذكرات اليومية، الكفاءة في الكتابة، الكتابة.

Résumé

L'écrit est une compétence majeure dont le développement est essentiel à la maitrise d'une langue. Toutefois, il est considéré comme l'un des obstacles majeurs pour de nombreux apprenants de l'ALE. En réponse à cela, la recherche portant sur l'acquisition d'une langue seconde (SLA) a préconisé l'utilisation des activités parascolaires pour approcher l'acquisition de la compétence rédactionnelle. Ce travail de recherche examine le développement des compétences de l'écriture des apprenants en recourant à l'écriture réflexive du cahier de réflexion comme un acte parascolaire. Théoriquement, les recherches ont prouvé que cet acte favorise le développement des compétences scripturales. Par la suite, la présente enquête a pour but l'étude des éléments d'écriture améliorés lors de la rédaction de cahiers de réflexion. Elle sert également à explorer l'impact qu'exercent ces éléments sur le style d'écriture des apprenants. Pratiquement, nous avons adopté un plan expérimental basé sur un groupe expérimental et un groupe témoin de vingt étudiants (un groupe de dix apprenants chacun) de deuxième année anglais, à l'université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. Ceci dit, les apprenants de deuxième année anglais ont fait un pré-test et un post-test pour évaluer l'amélioration des éléments d'écriture. Les résultats ont révélé que la rédaction d'un cahier de réflexion est relativement efficace pour développer les compétences rédactionnelles des apprenants. Précisément, elle est efficace pour améliorer la grande majorité de leurs éléments d'écriture. Compte tenu des résultats de cette étude, il est suggéré aux enseignants de l'ALE de mettre en exergue la rédaction d'un cahier de réflexion comme stratégie de développement des Compétences rédactionnelles des apprenants.

Mots clés : apprenants EFL, expérience, rédaction d'un cahier de réflexion, compétences rédactionnelles-écrit, écriture.