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**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of English**



**An Evaluation of First Year Students of English' Learning of the Basics**  
**Of Paragraph Writing From a Socio-cultural Perspective**

The Case of First Year Students at the English Department of Mohammed  
Seddik Ben Yahia University- Jijel

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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Running Head: The Basics of Paragraph Writing From a Socio-Cultural  
Perspective

An Evaluation of First Year Students of English' Learning of the Basics of Paragraph  
Writing From a Socio-Cultural Perspective

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## *Dedication*

*In the Name of Allah, the merciful, the most compassionate.*

*I'm honoured to dedicate this modest research work to:*

*My Precious Father "Abdelhak" for his endless efforts, sacrifices, and his massive support without which i might not be the person I'm today.*

*My Beloved Mother "Aziza" the best gift I have ever got, her kind heartedness and her constant prayers for me through the whole course of my life.*

*To my dearest Brothers " Adam"and " Tamime".*

*My sugary friend " Khadija"and "Nawal" for their great support to me I hope that our friendship will last forever.*

*Without forgetting my Sweetest partner in work " Djaouida" for all the good and bad days that we have passed together at University, for the encouragement we gave to each other, and for the sleepless nights we were working together before deadlines.*

*" Dina"*

## *Dedication*

*To my beautiful angelic mother “Hassina” and beloved father “Mohamed”  
A big thank you for your support and encouragement, I would not be where I am  
without your care, and support and most importantly, your continuous prayers. I  
am grateful and I always will be.*

*To my dearest brothers and sisters; “Mounir” “Housseem” “Ilhem” and  
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to you.*

*To my pretty amazing Unnies, to those who listened without judgment, spoken  
without prejudice, helped without entitlement, understood without pretension, to  
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### **Abstract**

The present study gauged from the perspective of socio-cultural theory, the effectiveness of the first year writing course offered at the department of English in Mohammed Seddik Ben yahia University in fostering students' s paragraph writing skills .In order to achieve the aims of this evaluation, a students' questionnaire was designed and implemented to a sample of a group of thirty five first year students chosen on the basis of convenience. Moreover, an interview was designed and administered to the writing teacher of the same group so as to verify students 'answers. The results revealed that the writing course currently in use suffers from five major weaknesses at least: the lack of sufficient time for writing practice, the lack of adequate teacher's and peer feedback, the lack of sufficient opportunities for cooperative learning, and failure in the development of writing as a habit. One of these findings at least, has been confirmed by the results generated by the teachers 'interview: feedback is not yielding the expected outcomes.

## List of Abbreviations

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

**LTM:** Long Term Memory

**MKO:** More Knowledgeable other

**N:** Number

**P:** Percentage

**Q:** Question

**SCT:** Socio-cultural Theory

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**SL:** Second Language

**TLC:** Teaching Learning Cycle

**ZPD:** Zone of Proximal Development

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

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## **General Introduction**

1. Statement of the problem
2. Aim of the study
3. Means of research
4. Structure of the study

## 1. Statement of the problem

Of all the language four macro-skills, writing is without doubt both the most important and the most demanding. In academic settings, this skill acquires an even more special importance as it serves as the medium through which students' knowledge and skills are evaluated in almost all subjects. According to Raco (2007), this importance allotted to writing in academic settings emanates from the fact that this skill represents the most effective tool for sharpening students' thinking and fostering their abilities in organizing, summarizing, and criticizing ideas. As a result of the multitude of functions writing is supposed to serve in the acquisition, transmission, and evaluation of academic knowledge, this skill causes learning difficulties for both native and non-native learners of English. Consequently, the teaching and evaluating of writing formed a focal point of interest for applied linguistic theory and research since the inception of this discipline. In this regard, Hyland (2003) reviewed the most important paradigmatic shifts in the teaching of writing to conclude that the pedagogy of teaching learning cycle developed on the basis of the learning principles of socio-cultural theory represents the most modern alternative available to teaching the skill in question. At least in theory, this pedagogy offers two distinguishing advantages to the writing classroom: devoting most of the class time to practice and moving gradually towards learners' autonomy in writing.

Designed following the process approach, the writing course currently in use at the department of English has been and given central importance in the curriculum in terms of the allotted time and coefficient. However, anecdotal evidence emanating from students suggests that this course is substantially biased towards an over-detailed presentation of the theoretical aspects at the expense of writing practice. Given that writing practice plays a decisive role in



fostering students' writing competence, the present study seeks to evaluate from a socio-cultural perspective the implementation of the writing course to a group of students at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. The study attempts to answer the following general question:

-How effective is the writing course in fostering first year university students' learning of the basics of paragraph writing from the perspective of socio-cultural theory?

## **2. Aim of the study**

The present study aimed at evaluating from a socio-cultural perspective the effectiveness of the writing course currently in use at the department of English in Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University in fostering first year university students of English' learning of the basics of paragraph writing.

## **3. Means of research**

In order to meet the aims of the present evaluation, two research instruments have been designed and used. A students' questionnaire was designed and administered to a randomly chosen sample of a first year students at the Department of English language in Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. Moreover, An interview was designed and carried out with the written expression teacher of the same group so as to verify the findings of the students 'questionnaire.

## **4. Structure of the dissertation**

The present study comprises a general introduction, two theoretical chapters, a practical chapter, and a general conclusion. As far as the theoretical chapters are concerned, chapter one reviews the modern learning theories with a specific focus on socio-cultural theory

(SCT). Chapter two provides a historical background about the development of writing theory and research writing, and reviews the literature related to the most prominent approaches to writing so as to showcase the teaching learning cycle (TLC) as being the culmination of the development in modern writing methodology. The third chapter is devoted to the practical part of the present study and deals with the description and analysis of data generated by students' questionnaire as well as the teacher's interview.

## **Chapter One**

# **The Pedagogy of the Teaching/ Learning cycle to Teaching and Evaluating Writing**

### Introduction

#### 1.1. Historical Background of Writing

1.1.1. Importance of Writing

1.1.2. Reinforcement

1.1.3. Language Development

1.1.4. Learning Style

#### 1.2. Writing Approaches

1.2.1. The Product Approach

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1.2.2.1. Stages of the Process Writing

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1.3.1.5. Linking the Related Texts Conclusion

## **Conclusion**

## Chapter One

### The Pedagogy of the Teaching/learning Cycle to Teaching and Evaluating Writing

#### Introduction

Due to its importance and the serious challenges it poses to English as foreign language learners, writing has attracted an ever-growing attention in the field of applied linguistics. Several approaches have been developed and used in teaching this important skill. The present chapter reviews the major developments in this field in order to provide an adequate background for appreciating the potential of the teaching /learning cycle, a modern pedagogy developed following the principles of the sociocultural theory.

#### 2.1. Historical Background of writing

Writing is a salient element in learning a second language. Especially for EFL learners because it gives the students the opportunity to express themselves through words. Writing varies in forms and purposes. However it is universal, since, all people use it whenever, they feel the need to be understood, or just to know what other people think or feel. Some learners view the writing skill as a Delphic and unreachable process, but they do not know that everyone can learn to write in his own unique way.

Writing has gone through different stages of historical development. According to Ignacio Gelb, writing in history begins with picture writing which expresses ideas directly, followed by word based writing systems. Then shifted to sound based syllabic writing systems, including unvocalized syllabi's or consonantal systems by reaching the Greek invention of the alphabet. The written language does not appear until its invention in Sumer, Southern Mesopotamia (3500 -3000 BC ); at that period early writing was named Cuneiform,

it consisted of making particular signs and marks in wet clay. After that the Egyptians used another writing system which they had developed from Mesopotamian cuneiform and it was known as Hieroglyphics. Later on, the writing systems of the Greeks, and the Romans came from Phoenicia. Even though; the Phoenician writing system is different from that of Mesopotamia still its development is purely based on the Sumerians and their advances in the written words.

Far away from Europe and Near East, writing was developed in Mesoamerica by the Maya (around 500 BC). In Asia, the Chinese developed from divination rites using oracle bones (1200 BC), and the writing system emerged independently. The ancient Chinese practice of divination involved aching marks on bones or shells which were then heated until they cracked .Thus; the Sumerians first invented writing as a means of long distance communication which was necessitated by trade .Yet, through history the purpose of writing has changed and become more educative than commercial.

## **2.2. Importance of Writing**

### **2.2.1. Reinforcement.**

According to Smith (2017), reinforcement refers to a stimulus which follows and is contingent upon a behavior and increases the probability of a behavior being repeated. There is always a focus on the crucial importance of reinforcement in writing. According to Harmer (2001), the majority of students acquire language in a purely oral/ aural way, in which most of them benefit from seeing the language down. Thus, written language can be traced greatly in the memory, than in the oral way and most of the students usually find it useful to write sentences in new language shortly after they had studied it (p.79). He claimed that the mental activity we have to go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience.

### **2.2.2. Language Development**

According to Harmer (2001), the process of writing provides an opportunity to learn as students go along, he states “the mental activity we have to go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience”.

### **2.2.3. Learning Styles**

Learning styles allude to a set of competing theories that seek to account for differences in individuals’ learning. So, this term means that every student learns technically differently .In the sense that, an individual’s learning style refers to the student favorable way in which he comprehends processes and retains information. Therefore, the concept of individualized learning styles has a widespread recognition; especially, in the field of education and classroom management strategies. Some students are very quick in picking up language relying only on looking and listening, yet some others are slower since they need more time to think and produce language. Since, the learning styles are mainly based on cognition emotional and environmental factors and individual’s experiences; teachers and tutors must understand the differences in their students learning styles. So that, they can implement the adequate practice strategies into their daily activities, assignments and even assessments and quizzes.

## **2.3. Writing approaches**

### **2.3.1. The product approach in writing**

This product oriented approach is considered as a traditional approach .The Algerian educational system was dominated by this approach for so long, because its main concerns was the focus on the student’s final piece of writing ,i.e., the final form rather than on how it was produced. So, the product approach to writing gives much importance to the final result

of the writing process. According to Gabriellatos (2002), the product approach is “a traditional approach in which students is encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage” (5). It gives priority to classroom activities that the learner need to be engaged in imitating a model text where the student must be aware of the text features like the layout and the structure of the text. Obviously, when using the product oriented approach, this will lead to text accuracy. So, this approach tries to make the learner familiar with the conventions of writing through a model and the organization of ideas which are of prime importance more than the ideas themselves, before the learner get his final draft.

Since, the product approach to writing focuses on copying text models and correctness, the model text is seen as the starting point; it should be analyzed from different coins. Starting from sentence organization to structure to grammar. After the analysis of the model text features, the students are given a new topic and asked to produce a new text in parallel with the model text. Thus, the purpose of the application of such an approach is to make the EFL learners familiar with these conventions by learning to manipulate them correctly. So, the role of the model is very important because it leads the students to take the right path in writing by following the features and the correct use of form. White (1988) argues that both of the model text and the product are considered as final drafts, he claimed that the model is final before it comes at first.

### **2.3.2. The Process Approach**

It emerged as a reaction to the traditional approach to teaching and learning writing. Zamel (1983) states “Writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts, constructing meaning and then to the form.” which means, instead of focusing on the form, the students should construct meaning first. Badger and White (2000) state that the process approach is concerned with linguistic writing skills, rather than linguistic writing



knowledge. It stresses the writing skills such as planning and drafting, and puts less emphasis on grammar knowledge and text structure. The process approach deals with writing not as a final product, but as a process through which meaning is created. Therefore, the students have to be thought writing through teaching its processes, before jumping to the final and well organized version. Trrible (1997), points out “learners who move on into composing immediately are likely to produce badly when writing.”

### **2.3.2.1. Stages of the writing process**

Writing is a process that is made up of various stages, although, there are different stages set up by different scholars, the followings are the most common ones:

#### **2.3.2.1.1. Pre-writing/ Planning Stage**

It involves gathering information and ideas about the topic. The writer writes down whatever comes to his mind, it is an important step that helps the students to generate ideas. According to Robert (2004), it includes choosing a subject, narrowing a topic down and analyzing the audience. In this phase, the students write taking into account the spelling, grammatical mistakes and the organization of ideas. The pre-writing phase can be done individually, as well as in groups. Activities to deal with during this phase are thinking, reading and outlining.

#### **2.3.2.1.2. Drafting**

In this stage, the learner will write his first draft of the text. He must focus on the content and do not give much importance to the structure, the language and other mechanical aspects such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. Also, the learner should try to find the appropriate way to express his ideas and thoughts. First, the learner must begin with a topic sentence that should illustrate an event or present a particular phenomenon under discussion

in order to make the opening interesting for the reader. The student should provide enough supporting sentences for the topic sentence a by giving explanations, examples and expressing opinions to make the link between them. Discourse markers and conjunctions such as; moreover, but, or, must be used. Another essential point in drafting stage is that the student should select the suitable words and phrases. After finishing, the student has the chance to read his paragraph and if time allows he may redraft it by making some changes.

### **2.3.2.1.3. Revising**

According to Brown and Hood (1989), “the revision stage is where you check what you have said, what you wanted to say in a clear and appropriate way”. It is the process of revising what has been written in the drafting stage. At this stage, students check the written draft and rearrange the content, according to the teacher’s or peer’s feedback. They may add, delete or adjust the text. Richard (2002), states “the students working in pairs to read alone each other’s drafts before they revise. As students listen intently to their own writing they are brought to a more conscious level of rethinking and revising what they have written”.

### **2.3.2.1.4. Editing**

The editing stage can be classified as a part of revising. Yet; it is more concerned with judging text production, especially language forms and structure more than content meaning. The student must check the accuracy of the constructed text by fixing grammatical mistakes if any.

### **2.3.2.1.5. Publishing/Proofreading**

It is the final stage in the process of writing; it involves the production of the final piece of writing. Williams (2003), defines the publishing stage as “sharing your finished text with its intended audience, publishing is not limited to getting the text printed in journals. It

includes turning a paper in to a teacher or boss or an agency.” The final version may vary from the first draft, because it goes through the process of drafting, revising and editing. According to Hyland (2003), the teacher’s main role is to be Non-Directive and Facilitative. They should lead students to express their own understanding in an encouraging and co-operative environment. He adds, these stages are Non-Linear, instead, they are recursive, which means, the students can move forward or backward to revise and edit before producing the final version.

### **2.3.3. The Genre approach**

The genre based approach to writing is concerned teaching particular genres which the EFL learners are in need for to succeed in a given situation. This approach focuses on the content of the text as well as the context in which the text is produced. Therefore, the genre based approach considers the use of language as being functional, that is, via language the student can achieve particular goals according to certain cultural and social contexts. Thus, particular genres are used to accomplish particular functions in particular contexts. According to Byram (2004), the genre based approach is based on examples of a particular genre, by framework is meant guiding students; the genre framework supports learner’s writing with guiding principles about how to produce meaningful messages (p.234). The Routledge Encyclopedia of language teaching and learning has defined the genre approach as a framework for language instruction. Most genres use certain conventions or rules which are usually associated with the writer’s purpose. For example, when writing an argumentative essay, there must be a focus on thesis statement since, it aims at making an argument. That is why genres can be divided into categories; such as descriptive, narrative, argumentative and sub-categories like writing a business letter...etc.

### 2.3.3.1. The Teaching -Learning Cycle

The teaching- learning cycle is a teaching pedagogy based on the notion of Scaffolding, which draws from the views of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky. It consists of a number of stages, teachers and students go through, as a result, students will gradually gain self regulation. These stages stress the idea that learning occurs best when learners engage in tasks that are within their ZPD. In addition to that, verbal interaction and task regulation with the teacher play a central role in the development of learning.

According to Hyland (2007), the TLC treats learning as a social process resulted from the collaboration between the teacher and students or peer interaction. It supports learners through what Vygotsky labeled ZPD, which means teachers provide the learners with sufficient guidance that facilitates the accomplishment of the task. In other words, this guidance is done through providing explicit knowledge and activities that are slightly above their current level, i.e., once the learner is responsible for his own learning teachers gradually remove their assistance.

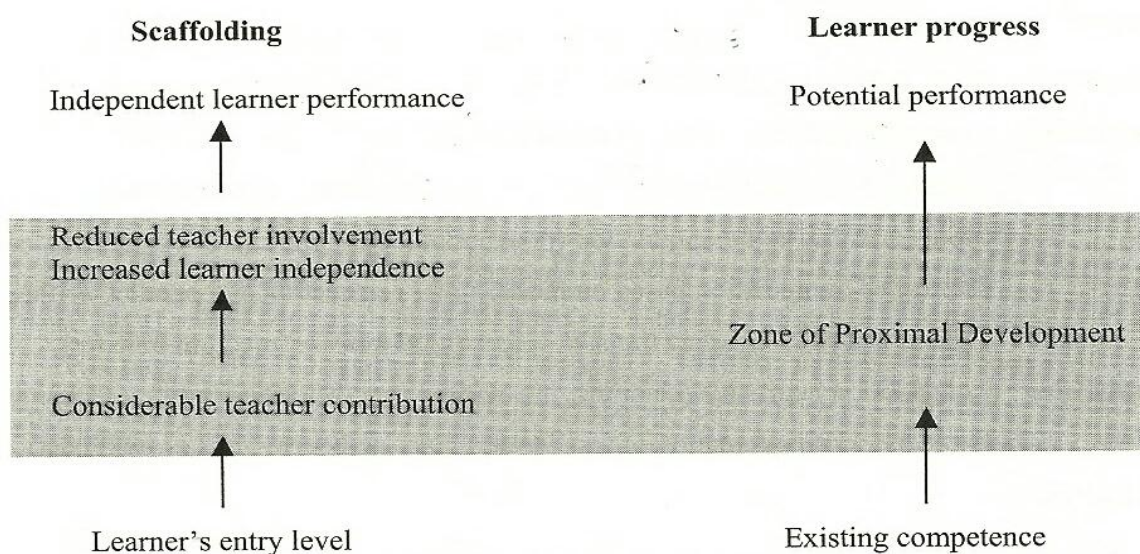


Figure2.1: Teacher -Learner Collaboration. (Based on Feez, 1998, P.2)

According to Hyland (2007), the teaching- learning cycle is based on the belief that learning takes place through explicit awareness of language, rather than through experiment and exploration. Teachers provide students with chances and opportunities to analyze expert texts, so that, they can enhance their writing skills. Hyland stated, all what have been mentioned above is achieved through a process which involves Contextualization-Modeling, Negotiating-Constructing which is usually presented as a cycle, as it is shown in the following figure:

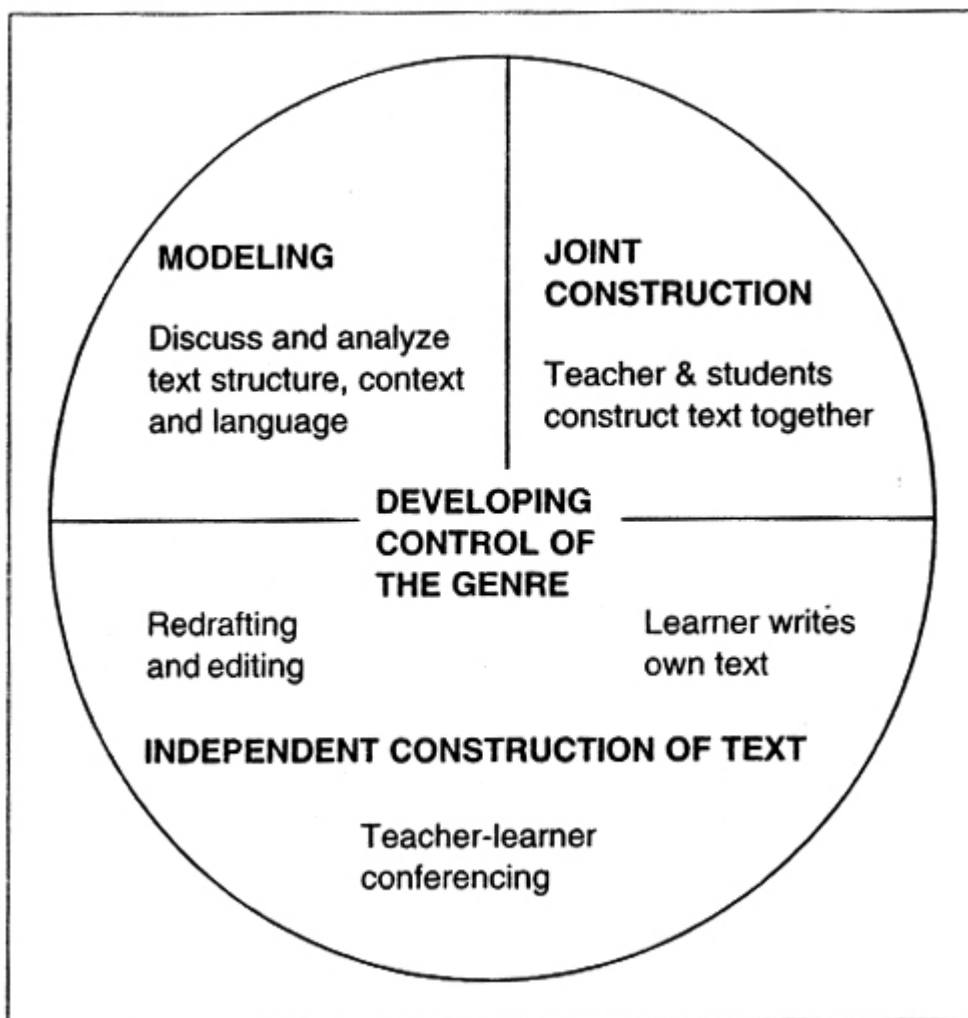


Figure2.2: The Teaching-Learning Cycle

In what follows, the description of the TLC stages within the cycle:

### **2.3.3.1.1. Building the context**

According to Hyland (2007), this phase involves guiding students to understand the context, explore features of the general cultural context in which the text type is used and understand the social purpose of the text, by investigating the context of a model text which has been selected on the basis of the learner's needs and the course objectives. The students are aided during this step through direct instructions and discussion.

### **2.3.3.1.2. Modeling and Deconstructing the Text**

According to Hyland, the second stage involves modeling the sample text, analyzing and investigating the structure and language features of the model text, to reveal its stages and figure out the main tenses, themes and vocabulary, and to compare model texts with other examples of the text types. Possible activities for this phase include asking students to complete gapped sentences or rewrite unfinished sentences...

### **2.3.3.1.3. Joint Construction of the Text**

The production of texts in writing classes requires the guidance of the teacher. Especially, if language learners are learning a new genre. First, they work together to construct texts by recalling previous information through practice, the learner moves to a stage of being able to control the text. In this case, the tutor will minimize the amount of scaffolding and his role is mainly making the writing activities clear to the student as well as responding to it. Therefore an assessment must be provided at this level in order to see if language learner are able to work independently or they still in need to repairable work at the pattern or going back to the previous joint construction stages.

#### **2.3.3.1.4. Independent construction of the Text**

In this stage students apply what they have learned in the previous stages, and builds up an example of any genre type independently; in which the expert acts like a supervisor, just by giving advice. Thus, after passing through different stages, the learner is asked to write a particular type of genre as what he has learned before. So, the learner will produce a given genre independently. In addition to this, the teacher must make sure that the learner comprehend the characteristics of a certain genre; such as structure of the text, grammar patterns, vocabulary usage, and contextual devices in order to promote the student's ability of learning writing throughout genre based approach.

#### **2.3.3.1.5. Linking the Related Texts**

At this point, students make a link between what they have learnt and other genres and contexts. They investigate what they have learnt in the TLC and how it can be linked to other texts of the same or similar contexts. Possible activities for this phase are comparing written and spoken texts models with similar context. According to Hyland (2004), each of these stages seeks to achieve different purposes, and so is associated with different types of classroom activities and teacher learner role.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented a review of historical development in writing teaching theory. This review has served as a background for the appreciation of the contribution the teaching-learning cycle pedagogy. The steps and principles of this pedagogy will serve as the theoretical framework for the design of the research instruments in the practical part of the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Socio-cultural Theory**

#### **Introduction**

##### 2.1. Learning Theories

###### 2.1.1. Behaviourism

###### 2.1.2. Cognitivism

###### 2.1.3. Humanism

###### 2.1.4. Constructivism

##### 2.2. Socio-cultural Construct

#### **Introduction**

###### 2.2.1. Mediation

###### 2.2.2. ZPD

###### 2.2.3. Scaffolding

###### 2.2.4. Regulation

###### 2.2.5. Inner and Private Speech

###### 2.2.6. Activity Theory

###### 2.2.7. Internalization

#### **Conclusion**



## Chapter Two

### Socio-Cultural Theory

#### Introduction

Various theories of learning have been developed to account for the way individuals learn, organize, and use different types of skills and knowledge. The present chapter deals with some of the most prominent theories of learning in the field of educational psychology so as to pave the ground for a better understanding of the contribution made by the theory that provided the framework of the present study, namely socio-cultural theory. In addition, the most important principles of socio-cultural theory will be discussed.

#### 1.1. Learning Theories

##### 1.1.1. Behaviorism

Although behaviorism has been thoroughly studied, scientists continue to have difficulty agreeing on one precise definition of the term. Leahey (2000), states that “Behaviorism was, and is, a moment primarily in American psychology that rejected consciousness as psychology’s subject matter and replaced it with behavior” (p. 686). Behaviorists address learning as a mechanic process and give particular importance to objectivity. According to behaviorists, people are not good or bad from birth. Experiences and environment constitute a human’s personality. According to them, human brain can be compared to a black box. Neither can we know what is going on in this black box nor do we need to know it. What is important is not what is happening in this black box, but what is important is what goes in this black box (input) and what comes out of it (output). Outputs are

objective, observable and measurable. Inputs and outputs can be adjusted, arranged and controlled Bacanlı (2016 p.19).

The Behaviorist movement was strongly influenced with Pavlov's findings on animal responses to stimuli. Pavlov rang a bell when his dog was going to be fed. The ringing of the bell caused Pavlov's dog to salivate, because the dog had been conditioned to feed at this time. This behavior resulted in Pavlov asserting that canines had been conditioned to respond to external stimuli. Hence, Pavlov believed that humans could also be conditioned to respond to similar stimuli Weegar (2012 p 3).

According to Mergel (2011), the theory of B.F. Skinner could be said to be different from that of his predecessors who based theirs on classical conditioning. On his part, he studied operant conditioning. That is voluntary behaviors used in operating on the environment.

According to him, he based his operant conditioning on the following mechanisms:

- (i) Positive Reinforcement or reward: Responses that are rewarded are likely to be repeated. For example good grades reinforce careful study.
- (ii) Negative Reinforcement: Responses that allow escaping from painful or undesirable situations are likely to be repeated. For example, being excused from writing a final examination because of good term work.
- (iii) Extinction or Non- Reinforcement: Responses that are not reinforced are likely to be repeated. For example ignoring student's misbehavior should extinguish that behavior.
- (iv) Punishment: Responses that bring painful or undesirable consequences will be suppressed. But they could reappear if reinforcement contingencies change. For

example, penalizing late students by withdrawing privileges will likely stop their lateness , ( as cited in Omomia and Omomia 2014 p.176).

### **1.1.2. Cognitivism**

According to Yilmaz (2012), the genesis of cognitivism as a learning theory can be traced back to the early twentieth century. The shift from behaviorism to cognitivism stemmed from the behaviorist tradition's failure to explain why and how individuals make sense of and process information. In other words, it was the limitations of behaviorism that spawned the cognitive movement. Dissatisfied with behaviorism's heavy emphasis on observable behavior, many disillusioned psychologists challenged the basic assumptions of behaviorism. They claimed that prior knowledge and mental processes not only play a bigger role than stimuli in orienting behavior or response (Deubel 2003) but also intervene between a stimulus and response (Winn and Snyder 1996). It is argued that people are neither machines nor animals that respond to environmental stimuli in an identical way. (Yilmaz 2012 p.83).

According to cognitive learning theory, learning involves a change in one's cognitive structure. This change occurs when new information or experiences are combined with existing knowledge stored in long term memory (LTM). In this sense, new knowledge is constructed by learners. Learning becomes meaningful when it is connected to what you already know. That is, when new information is connected to old knowledge. This is called meaningful learning; opposite to meaningful learning is rote learning. Knowledge without meaning is merely information. Thus, teachers are supposed to create learning experiences that result in this kind of learning. Levin (1986).

### **1.1.3. Humanism**

Humanism as a theory of learning was developed in the 1960s, as a reaction to behaviorism and cognitivism. This approach emphasizes the importance of learning lies in the process, not the outcome in which the student should have control over the learning process relying on observation and exploration. In humanism paradigm the teacher should play the role of a model encouraging and motivating learners in each phase of the learning process. According to Huitt (2001), humanism means that people act with intentionality and values since it is a philosophy that focuses on human freedom, and one's potential. From this point, researchers consider that the most important objective of humanism is that learning is considered as a natural desire, a mean of developing personal potentials and self-actualization; humanists believed that learning is seen as a personal act to fulfill one's potential.

The humanistic approach sees that self-motivation and goals are areas of a given interest, and individuals have the capacity to determine for themselves truth and falsehood through rational thoughts. According to Knowles et al (1998, p.13), in humanism, learning is a process by which behavior is changed, shaped or controlled. On the other hand, learning refers to the acquisition of new knowledge, behaviors, skills, and values through the process of practice, and study experiences.

### **1.1.4. Constructivism**

Constructivism as a theory of language learning has developed in the field of education, this learning theory refers to the idea that students construct knowledge socially and individually to construct meaning. Constructivist consider learning as an active process in which the student uses sensory input and constructs meaning out of it since learning involves the learners engaging with the world. Piaget and his followers claimed that the crucial action of constructing meaning is purely mental because it happens in the mind, physical actions and

via hands-on experiences which are essential for learning. According to Bruner (1961), the purpose of education is to facilitate a child's thinking and problem solving skills which can be later on transferred to a range of situations. The main concern of constructivism is the concept of "learning to learn" because what really matters is the ability to invent things and learning problem solving.

Bruner (1961) noted that students' construct their own knowledge and do things by organizing information and putting it into categories by using a coding system in which the main aim is to create autonomous learners. Bruner like Vygotsky emphasized the role of social environment claiming that adults should be active assistants of the child's learning, stating that other persons should help a child to develop skills via the process of scaffolding. Bruner (1978) defined the process of scaffolding as being "the steps that are taking to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill he is in the process of acquiring" (p. 19). Thus, the concept of scaffolding is very similar to vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), since both of them have common objective which is letting the child achieve a specific goal.

In Vygotsky's social constructivism theory great importance was attached to the socio-cultural context in constructing knowledge. In his approach to learning, there is a great focus on social context in which he argues that social interaction precedes development, cognition, and consciousness which are in turn considered as the final product of socialization and social behavior. Vygotsky's social constructivism asserts three major themes:

- a) Social Interaction: which is considered as of a paramount importance in the process of cognitive development? He states that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice; first on the social level (interpsychological), and later on the individual level (intrapsychological).

- b) The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO): which refers to any person who has a higher ability level than the learner himself concerning a particular task. This latter can be a teacher, a coach, his/ her peers, and sometimes computers.
- c) The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Vygotsky (1978) stated “the ZPD is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adults guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. (p. 86)

Therefore, learning is not one hundred percent conveyed, but mutually created by the participants in a structured dialogue in which the more knowledgeable partner promotes the learning the less able one by acquiring knowledge in progress. Vygotsky (1978) claimed “what the learner can do today only with assistance, she will do independently tomorrow”. Thus, the aim is achieving autonomy in learning”. (p. 87)

## 1.2. Socio-cultural Construct

This approach which has its origins in the writings of the Russian psychologist Vygotsky and his colleagues. It aims to activate the students’ language mental capacities, focusing on interaction with others, different individuals, in order to build up knowledge.

The socio-cultural theory focuses on how cultural beliefs and attitudes, affect learning and how learning takes place. In addition to how adults and peers influence individuals learning. According To John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), the socio-cultural approach sheds light on the strong relationship between social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge.

In Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory the major concern revolved around finding a new way to construct knowledge through different social and cultural factors and psychological education, by raising L2 students’ awareness of language acquisition. Thus, the socio-cultural

perspective tends to describe the circumstances under which individuals and their behaviours are directly affected by the surroundings like social and the cultural factors. Catherine A. Sanderson reports, "socio-cultural perspective is a perspective describing people behavior and mental processes as shaped in part by their social contact; including race, gender, and nationality" (2010)

According to Vygotsky (1978), adopting a socio-cultural perspective highlights the critical role of social context in cognitive and social development. Eun-young and Robert T. Jimenez claimed, "A socio-cultural perspective on second language learner strategies, focus on the impact of social context". (2011).

The socio-cultural perspective is concerned with the condition under which the learning occurs and the manner a second language learner will develop his/her capacity to manipulate, use the new language to regulate his/her mental and communicative activity. Thus, the socio-cultural theory gives attention to both social and individual dimensions since it studies how learning takes place in social contexts.

The acquisition of language will shift from being a social activity towards the individual's own cognition and that is the objective the socio-cultural theory aims to. Lightbown and Spada (2006), stated that socio-cultural theory is "an explanation of knowledge and learning that is based on the assumption that all learning is first social, then individual" (p.204). When talking about second language acquisition especially in modern communicative classes, language learners interact orally with more expert individuals who will provide them with the needed assistance through discussions and interaction, i.e., classroom interaction is an access to build new experiences, and leads to knowledge co-construction, in addition to improving skills of communication. Therefore, language learners

are considered as active participants in modern classes because they construct their own knowledge and discuss meaning through collaborative interaction.

### 1.2.1. Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory

According to Vygotsky, cognitive development cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. At first his ideas were banned, and then later on, it was brought back by his colleagues. He believes that besides to biological factors, socio-cultural factors are of great importance in the development of human mental functioning. Vygotsky (1981) states that, learning development is an outcome of interaction between individuals and socio-cultural environment.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (S.C.T) involves three major themes. First, individual development including higher mental functioning has its origins in social interaction and they are mediated by tools, since those tools facilitate the co-construction of knowledge. Second, the idea of genetic law of development, as a means to understand certain aspects of the mental functioning. i.e., a child's development is embedded in culture and occurs on two planes; first, socially, and later on, psychologically, as thought is internalized by the child. Third, the potential for cognitive development is limited to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this zone describes that a child is cognitively prepared, but needs support and social interaction to completely development.

According to Ratner's definition of socio-cultural theory, it is the field that studies the content, mode of operation, and interrelationships of psychological phenomena that are socially constructed, built, shared, and also are rooted in other social artifacts (P.9).

The socio-cultural perspective incorporates mediation as a core construct in language learning stressing the link between learning and social environment because it sees language



acquisition as a mediated process either by social interactions or cultural tools. That is why Vygotsky suggested that human mental development is a result of certain dynamic interactions between individuals and society and through these integrations children will learn gradually from their parents or their teachers at educational institutions, schools and so on. According to Lantolf (2001), one of the essential concepts of the socio-cultural theory is that the mind is mediated, i.e., individuals do not establish a direct relationship with the world; it is rather mediated through the use of certain tools.

## **1.2.2 The Basic Concepts of Socio-cultural Theory**

### **1.2.2.1. Mediation**

From a socio-cultural point of view, the term mediation or mediated learning holds that specifically human forms of mental activity that always arise in the interactions between individuals and members of a particular culture. Sharing experiences and knowledge in which given cultural tools are produced and the world of human relationships and artifacts determine, to a large extent, how we regulate our mental processes. These mental processes are constructed on the material substrate of the brain. Yet, these capacities are recognized into particular forms of consciousness which permit us to control our rational thinking, how to plan, and how to memorize things. Therefore, recognition happens as a consequence to culture specific interactions with other individuals. According to Vygotsky (1987), as humans we do not act directly on the physical world. However, people rely on tools and labor activity which allow them to change world under given conditions by using and manipulating symbolic tools or signs in order to regulate and mediate our relationship with others. In a sense that physical and symbolic tools are artifacts that once they were created by human culture throughout time, they are still available for generations. Mediation as a concept refers to the social interaction between teachers and learners and its enhancement of student's

learning experiences. It is considered as a core study of Vygotsky's (1978) theory of constructivism. According to him, the term mediation alludes to the role played by other important individuals in students learning. Saying that the individuals who improve their learning by arranging and shaping the learning experiences presented to them, where effective learning is basically found in social interaction between two people or more, who have various levels of knowledge and skills. Vygotsky points out that the crucial importance of cultural tools as mediators, including language which has a great significance in the process of learning since the socio-cultural theory supports the idea of using mediators which help individuals to evolve their environment as well as the use of activity mediators which allow these individuals to interact with nature. Thus, the use of a particular tool may include the mediated relationship of individuals and their environment whether it is humans 'use of language and physical signs to convert social relations into psychological processes between their minds and their environment, or the use of symbolic mediation to develop their intellectual knowledge. These cultural artifacts which are called 'portfolios, are essential to develop SL learners learning strategies and extract new information from the environment. According to Donato and McCormick (1994), portfolio is a cultural tool that enables students to self-assess the relevance and quality of what they know, to elucidate and establish goals and to select effective performance related strategies as well as developing specific evidence of strategy use (p. 463)

#### **1.2.2.2. The Zone of Proximal Development**

The Zone of Proximal Development or the ZPD was proposed by Vygotsky to express his dissatisfaction and disagreement with the assessment of a child's intellectual abilities, he argues that the testing techniques only determine and assess the actual level of development, but do not take into account the potential abilities of the child, what his or her future

achievements, i.e., what a child will be able to accomplish in the future, but, he/she does not achieve yet.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is defined by Vygotsky as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peer “(1978, P.86)

He stated that, the focus should be on a child’s ability to solve problems with assistance or guidance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO) instead of his ability to solve problems independently on his own.

ZPD is considered significant in the sense that it shapes the mental functioning of a child who is not mature yet, but are in the process of maturation. The ZPD is a dynamic construct, which represents the region in which the interpsychological functions turns into intrapsychological functions.

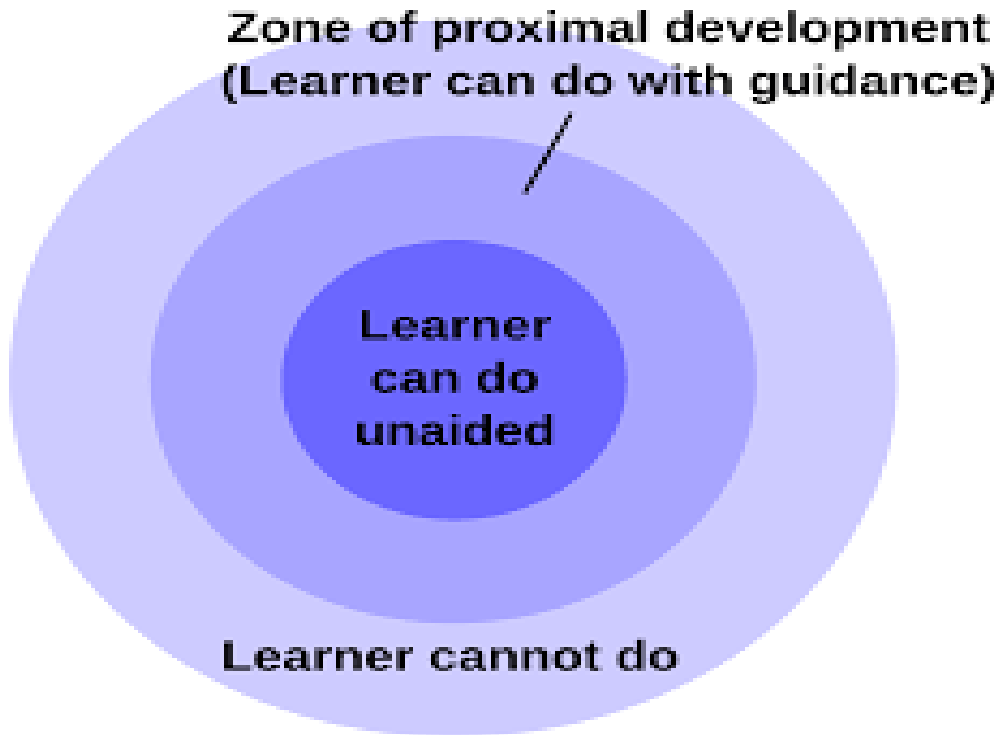


Figure 2.1: The Learner's Zone of Proximal Development

As shown in the figure above representing the ZPD, there are two level of attainment:

**Level01:** represents the current level of development, and this represents what a child is able to do independently without the assistance from others.

**Level02:** represents the potential level of development, which means, what the child will be able to achieve with the help and guidance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO)

Vygotsky's ZPD describes the distances between level one and level two. He believes through the assistance and guidance of a more experienced or more knowledgeable other (MKO), the child could be able to accomplish tasks that he/she cannot achieve independently. The provided help should be appropriate to the child's current level.

### 1.2.2.3. Scaffolding

Scaffolding refers to the change that occurs to the level of the learner by changing the level of support to fit the cognitive potential of learning, that is to say, that during a teaching session, one can alter the amount of direction and instruction to suit the learner's potential level of performance, meaning an expert can offer more support whenever noticing that the learner is struggling to solve a task, or providing less support as the learner is revealing control of the task. Thus, scaffolding sustains the learner's potential level of development in the zone of proximal development, which is basically taken from Vygotsky's idea of an expert assisting a novice, and how a language learner will improve his learning with the help of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), a person who has higher capacities than the learner himself. The concept ZPD is extensively used to study student's mental development concerning education. It is viewed the same as scaffolding since it is a set of assisted points for accomplishing tasks with the guidance of an adult or more competent individuals either teachers or peers. After fulfilling the task the scaffold is no more needed. That is why it is considered as a major key for children to construct new knowledge and experiences that is to say scaffolding is a vital process of Vygotsky socio-cultural perspective since it describes the crucial role of social interaction in learning and expresses the way other members of society affect the development of children

According to Ohta (2001), interaction between learners of differential proficiency can enhance the fluency, and the awareness of the status of their own knowledge on the part of the more proficient partner. All learners at some point or another require mediation and scaffolding to improve their level. Di Camilla & Anton (1997) reports, "like a space on a scaffold from which one may work, repetition enables the students to cling to what they have.

Thus, far constructed in order to maintain their focus of attention to think, to evaluate, and from that point possibly construct new forms” (p. 617).

#### **1.2.2.4. Regulation**

Another construct of S.C.T is Regulation. Vygotsky (1978) stated that a child first develops lower mental functions such as simple perceptions, through social interactions with MKO, children perceive assistance, which allows them to develop higher mental functions such as problem solving, and gradually children will acquire conscious control and individuality. This support provided by MKO (who could be a teacher, parents or a more experienced peer), helps the child to move from other regulation to self regulation, i.e., what cannot be done with assistance, will be done without it.

According to Lantolf (2000b), individuals move through stages in which they are controlled first by objects in their environment, then, by others in this environment, and finally, they gain control over their own social and cognitive activities. It takes place in the ZPD under the condition of Scaffolding from the more knowledgeable other (MKO) through instructions that are proximal to the child’s zone of skills and knowledge that contains the difference between the child’s actual development and what he/she is able to do in the future with help.

#### **1.2.2.5. Inner and Private Speech**

Its origin can be traced back to the work of Vygotsky and Piaget. In Piaget’s view, it was known as “egocentric speech”, which refers to as a sign of cognitive immaturity. In contrast, Vygotsky presents private speech or speaking aloud to one self as a phenomenon of child development, it is a critical transitional process between speaking with others and thinking for one self. He believes children use private speech to guide their thinking and behavior when

they face too difficult tasks; they speak to themselves to plan or guide their own behavior to accomplish the task.

The phenomenon of self directed speech did not show any cognitive immaturity, but some form of development. Vygotsky believes that cognitive development proceeds from being social to individual. In other words, a child's cognitive development originates in socialization activities and goes through individuation. Vygotsky (1978), believes that private speech is the process through which language initially functions as a social purpose and later plays self regulatory functions. He considers private speech as "the process of privatizing speech in a way that higher forms of consciousness arise of the inner plane and in this way our biological capacities are organized into culturally mediated mind. (Lantolf, 2000, P.15) Vygotsky believes that social speech turns into egocentric speech of children, and finally disappears at the age of seven or eight.

#### **1.2.2.6. Activity Theory**

Activity theory is a key concept of Vygotsky's theory on the nature and development of human behavior. Later on Leontiev developed it. The activity theory summarizes a unified nature of human behavior, which is a direct outcome of the integration of cultural and social mediation. Activity in Leontiev's (1978) theory is not merely doing something instead it is doing something that is motivated either by a biological need such as thirst or a certain culturally constructed need, such as the need to be literate in a particular culture. Leontiev (1981) claimed that the activity includes three levels: activity, action and operations corresponding to three concepts; motive, goal, and condition. In the sense that, activity contributes social environment with clear goals, motives show the reasons why something has happened, and finally actions introduce how the activity is operated. On the other hand,

Lantolf (2000), claims that an activity is motivated by a need which might be either social or biological.

According to Lauria (1973), the system that results from the integration of artifacts into human activity. Whether the activity is psychological or social is a fundamental system. She added, the mind is not properly speaking the activity of the biologically given brain, but is a functional system formed when our brain's electro-chemical processes come under control of our cultural artifacts foremost among these is language.

### **1.2.2.7. Internalization**

Socio-cultural perspective insists that internal and external functions are related in the sense that the development is linked to the study of how mediational means are appropriated by the individuals as a result of interaction with other individuals.

Internalization is inextensible from ZPD and scaffolding. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), it is the means of developing the capacity to perform complex cognitive action and motor functions with gradually less dependency on external provided mediation.

Zinchenko refers to the concept of internalization as the bridge between external and internal activity. Critically appropriation does not simply reproduce the mental activity of another individual rather it transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Thus, internalization can be explained as knowing how to acquire a certain skill and how to master that skill through practices within society.

Kozulin (1998), relying on the extensive cross-cultural research of Michael Cole argues that as far as we know all humans are capable of classifying objects which may well be a biologically specified ability. However, not all humans classify objects according to the same schema.



## **Conclusion**

The present chapter reviewed the most important modern learning theories in order to show case the importance and contribution of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory to the understanding of the nature and scope of human learning. Moreover, the chapter presented the tenets and principles of this theory which has served as the theoretical framework for the present study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Field Work**

#### **Introduction**

##### 3.1. The Students' Questionnaire

###### 3.1.1. The Description of the Students' Questionnaire

###### 3.1.2. The Sample

###### 3.1.3. The Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

###### 3.1.4. The Overall Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.2. Teachers' Interview

###### 3.2.1. The Description of the Teachers' Interview

###### 3.2.2. The Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

###### 3.2.3. The Overall Analysis of the Teachers' Interview

##### 3.3. Limitations of the Study

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## Chapter Three

### Field Work

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the description and the analysis of the data generated by the questionnaire and the interview. These research instruments have been designed and administered respectively to a group of first year students and their writing teacher at the department of English in the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing course in developing the basics of paragraph writing. However, an important remark is in order here: the present study has undergone as far as methodology is concerned. The practical part of the present study was initially designed following an ethnographic methodology focusing on classroom observation, but the relatively long class's disruption, due to the special political events that marked this year, constrained us to resort to the use of the questionnaire and interview.

#### 3.1. The Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.1.1. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed and administered by the researchers themselves. This method of administration has resulted in return rate amounting to 100%. The students' questionnaire consisted mainly of five level likert scale items. The choice of the five likert scale format was intended to allow the respondents to specify their level of agreement /disagreement as well as the intensity of their feelings concerning the different propositions offered in the questionnaire.

Section one consists of five items, and deals with deconstruction. The second section is about joint construction, it is made up of four items. The third section concerned the independent construction, it consists of three items. The fourth section, is devoted to the nature of feedback, it is made up of eight items. The last section deals with biographic data, it comprises three questions (Q1, Q2, and Q3) aimed at determining the personal profile of students.

### **3.1.2. The sample**

The students 'questionnaire was handed personally to thirty five first years LMD students chosen on the basis of convenience at the department of English in Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia university, Jijel. The choice of this sample was motivated by the fact that the writing course offered to these students was supposed to focus on developing student's skills in paragraph writing.

### **3.1.3. The Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire**

#### **Section one: Deconstruction**

**Item one:** I always find the topics of the writing class relevant and motivating

#### ***Table 3.1***

*Student's Attitude towards Writing Class Topics*

Option	N	P(%)
Strongly agree	08	23%
Agree	12	34%
Neutral	08	23%
Disagree	06	17%
Strongly disagree	01	03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of the students (34%) agreed on that the topics of the writing class were relevant and motivating, followed by (23%) of students were strongly agree on the topics of writing class being relevant and motivating, while (17%) of students disagreeing the idea that the topics of the writing class are relevant and interesting, and only (03%) of students said that they were strongly disagree about the relevance of the topics.

**Item two:** The writing classes always follow a fixed routine

*Table 3.2*

*The Routine in Writing Classes*

Option	N	P(%)
Strongly agree	10	29%
Agree	17	49%
Neutral	05	14%
Disagree	03	08%
Strongly disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above indicates that (49%) of the students agreed on that their writing classes always follow a fixed routine, (29%) said that they were strongly agree, and (14%) were neutral, while (08%) showed their disagreement about the issue.

**Item three:** We usually spend the major part of the writing class writing

**Table 3.3**

*Time Devoted to Writing Practice in the Writing Class*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	02	06%
<b>Agree</b>	15	43%
<b>Neutral</b>	07	20%
<b>Disagree</b>	08	23%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	03	09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows that a great deal of division characterized the respondents' responses to this question. While (43%) agreed about spending the major time of the writing class practicing writing, (23%) of them disagreed. (20%) of them were neutral whereas (09%) said that they strongly disagree, and only (06%) said that they strongly agree.

**Item four:** The writing teacher always starts the lesson with a presentation of a sample paragraph and an explanation of key vocabulary

**Table 3.4**

*The Use of Model Paragraphs at the beginning of writing classes*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	08	23%
<b>Agree</b>	12	34%
<b>Neutral</b>	06	17%
<b>Disagree</b>	06	17%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	03	09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that a slight majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition in the question item. (34%) of students agreed and (23%) of them said that they strongly agree. Whereas, (17%) said that they were neutral, 17% of the respondents disagreed, and only (09%) declared that they strongly disagree.

**Item five:** The writing teacher always involves us in the analysis of different aspects of a sample paragraph.

**Table 3.5**

*Students' Involvement in the Analysis of Model Paragraphs.*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	04	11%
<b>Agree</b>	18	51%
<b>Neutral</b>	04	11%
<b>Disagree</b>	06	17%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	03	09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows that 62 % of the students either strongly agreed or agreed with idea that their teacher involves them in the analysis of the different aspects of the sample paragraph. (17%) declared that they disagree, while (09%) of them strongly disagreed and (11%) were neutral.

### Section Two: Joint Construction

**Item Six:** the writing teacher always asks us to aggregate in small groups to write paragraph after the presented model.

**Table 3.6**

*The Aggregation of Students into Groups*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	06	17%
<b>Agree</b>	05	14%
<b>Neutral</b>	03	09%
<b>Disagree</b>	16	46%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	05	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table above indicates that the majority of the students (46%) agreed and (17%) strongly agreed that their teacher always asks them to aggregate in small groups to write paragraph after the presented model. On the other hand (14%) of the students disagreed with the proposition that the teacher always asks them to aggregate in small groups to write paragraph after the presented model. Another (14%) of them strongly disagreed, and only (09%) of them said they are neutral.



**Item Seven:** The writing teacher has risen our awareness to the fact that writing is a process made of several steps and that each step requires the deployment of a peculiar set of skills.

**Table 3.7**

*The Students' Awareness of the Steps of the Writing Process*

Option	N	P(%)
Strongly agree	16	46%
Agree	13	37%
Neutral	02	06%
Disagree	01	03%
Strongly disagree	03	08%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table above shows that the majority of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition in question. (46%) said that they strongly agree and (37%) of the students agreed. On the other hand (08%) of them said that they strongly disagree and (6%) of them were neutral, while only (3%) disagreed.

**Item Eight:** the writing teacher always provides us with oral feedback during the different phases of paragraph writing.

**Table 3.8**

*Teachers' Feedback to the Students during Paragraph Writing Phases*

Option	N	P (%)
Strongly agree	11	31%
Agree	16	46%
Neutral	04	11%

<b>Disagree</b>	03	09%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses to this item show that (46%) of the students agreed on the point that their teacher provides them with oral feedback during the different phases of paragraph writing. (31%) of them said that they strongly agree. (11%) of them were neutral, while (09%) disagreed and only (03%) strongly disagreed.

**Item Nine:** The writing class always involves the joint construction of sample paragraph where each student is encouraged to contribute.

**Table 3.9**

*Students' Involvement in the Joint Construction of Model Paragraphs*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	06	17%
<b>Agree</b>	08	23%
<b>Neutral</b>	13	37%
<b>Disagree</b>	06	17%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	02	06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table reveals that the majority of the students (37%) were neutral to the proposition that the writing class involves the joint construction of sample paragraph where each one of them is encouraged to contribute. While (23%) agreed with the proposition,

(17%) of the students said that they strongly agree; (17%) of students disagreed, and (06%) were strongly disagree.

**Item Ten:** During the writing class, each student is asked to produce his own sample of the model text.

**Table 3.10**

*Independent Production of Sample Paragraph*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	11	31%
<b>Agree</b>	15	43%
<b>Neutral</b>	04	11%
<b>Disagree</b>	04	11%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results show that (43%) of the respondents agreed that during each writing class they are asked to produce their own sample of paragraph of the model text, and (31%) of the respondents even strongly agreed with the proposition. While (11%) of the students adopted a neutral (11%) of the students simply disagreed, and only (03%) of the respondents declared that they strongly disagree.

**Item eleven:** As a follow up of in-class writing tasks, the writing teacher requires us to write homework's on a weekly basis.

**Table 3.11**

*The Frequency of Assigning Writing Home Works to the Students.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	08	23%
<b>Agree</b>	11	31%
<b>Neutral</b>	15	43%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table above shows that the majority of the students (43%) were neutral to the proposition in question. (31%) of them agreed that their teacher requires them to write homework's on a weekly basis, and (23%) of the students even strongly agreed, and only (03%) of them disagreed.

**Item twelve:** Each student is required to keep a portfolio of his/her different writing performance and to submit them to subsequent evaluation

**Table 3.12**

*The Necessity of Keeping a Portfolio of Students' Writing Performances.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	04	11%
<b>Agree</b>	11	31%
<b>Neutral</b>	13	37%
<b>Disagree</b>	05	14%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	02	06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

Responses to the item in question show that a great deal of division marked the respondents' responses to this item. While only (11%) of the respondents strongly agreed, (31%) of them stated that they agree, and (37%) of them said they are neutral ( 14%) informed that they disagreed, while (06%) they said that they strongly disagree.

#### **Section Four: The Nature of Feedback**

**Item thirteen:** The writing teacher always encourages us to seek each other's feedback about our writing performances

**Table 3.13**

*The Role of Peers 'Feedback.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	12	34%
<b>Agree</b>	05	14%
<b>Neutral</b>	08	23%
<b>Disagree</b>	07	20%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	03	09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the table above shows, a great deal of division also marked the responses to this item. (34%) of the students opted for strongly agree, and (14%) of the students opted for agree. While (23%) were neutral, (20%) opted for disagree, and (09%) opted for strongly disagree.

**Item fourteen:** I usually learn from my peers as much as from my teacher about the different aspects of my writing

**Table 3.14**

*The Importance Allotted to of Peers' and Teachers' Feedback*

Option	N	P (%)
Strongly agree	08	23%
Agree	11	31%
Neutral	07	20%
Disagree	05	14%
Strongly disagree	04	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As outlined in the table above, a great deal of division also marked the respondents' responses to this item. (23%) of the students have chosen strongly agree, and (31%) said that they agree. While (20%) were neutral, and (14%) have chosen disagree, (11%) said that they strongly disagree.

**Item fifteen:** Teacher usually assigns a mark to my writing without including any detail about the different aspects of my writing production.

**Table 3.15**

*Holist Marking of Students' Writing Performances*

Option	N	P (%)
Strongly agree	02	06%
Agree	14	40%
Neutral	09	26%
Disagree	09	26%

<b>Strongly disagree</b>	01	02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the table reveals, the majority of the students did not agree with the proposition in the question item. While (40%) opted for agree, (26%) of respondents were neutral, and another (26%) of responses opted for disagree.

**Item sixteen:** The writing teacher usually provides reformulation of my erroneous sentences and paragraph

**Table 3.16**

*The Teachers' Reformulation of Erroneous Sentences and Paragraphs.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	07	20%
<b>Agree</b>	11	31%
<b>Neutral</b>	15	42%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	02%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	01	02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

The responses to this item show that a great deal of division also marked the responses to this item. (42%) said that they were neutral, and (31%) have chosen agree, while (20%) of them said they were strongly agree. (04%) were divided equally between disagree and strongly disagree.

**Item seventeen:** The writing course has enabled me to write better in the content modules

**Table 3.17**

*The Ability of Writing Course in Improving Student's Writing in the Content Modules.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	14	40%
<b>Agree</b>	17	48%
<b>Neutral</b>	02	06%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to this item, the majority of the students opted for either agree or strongly agree. While (06%) said they were neutral, only (06%) were divided equally between disagree and strongly disagree.

**Item eighteen:** I always find the writing tasks assigned in the writing classroom neither too easy, nor too difficult

**Table 3.18**

*Writing Tasks Adjustment to Students' Zone of Proximal Development.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	05	14%
<b>Agree</b>	17	49%
<b>Neutral</b>	12	34%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	00	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>



In answering this item, only (03%) of respondents said that they disagreed. The majority of the students (49%) said that they agreed and (14%) of the students said that they strongly agree. (34%) of the respondents, however, were neutral.

**Item nineteen:** I always find the feedback provided by the written teacher slightly beyond my current level of writing competence

**Table 3.19**

*Students' Attitudes toward Teacher's Feedback.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	07	20%
<b>Agree</b>	14	40%
<b>Neutral</b>	11	31%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	02	06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

In response to this item, a relatively high percentage of the respondents did not approve the proposition in question. While (48%) have of them chosen agree, (23%) of the students have chosen disagree. (17%) of the students have chosen neutral. (06%) of the students have chosen strongly agree, and another (06%) of the students have chosen strongly disagree.

**Item twenty:** In the writing class, there is always a smooth and gradual move from one task to the other and from one level to the other.

**Table 3.20**

*The Gradual and Smooth Sequencing of Writing Tasks.*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	07	20%
<b>Agree</b>	14	40%
<b>Neutral</b>	11	31%
<b>Disagree</b>	01	03%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	02	06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the table above, the majority (40%) of the students opted for agree, (20%) of the students opted for strongly agree, while (31%) of the students opted for neutral. Only (03%) of the students opted for disagree, and (06%) of them opted for strongly disagree.

### **Biographic Data**

#### **Item Twenty one: Gender**

**Table 3.21***Participants' Gender*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Male</b>	09	26%
<b>Female</b>	26	74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As outlined in the table, the majority of the participants' are females (74%), and only (26%) are males.

**Item Twenty Two:** I practice free English writing on..... a. Daily basis      b. weekly basis  
c. monthly basis      d. never

**Table 3.22***Time Devoted to Free English Writing Practice*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Daily basis</b>	06	17%
<b>Weekly basis</b>	12	34%
<b>Monthly basis</b>	09	26%
<b>Never</b>	08	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

In answering this item, (34%) of the participants' said that they practice free English writing on a weekly basis. Followed by (26%) who said that they practice free English writing on a monthly basis, and (23%) admitted that they never practiced free English writing, while only (17%) of the students said that they practice free English writing on a daily basis.

**Item twenty three:** I consider that my current writing proficiency level is.....

a- \_beginner b-\_intermediate c-\_post-intermediate d-\_advanced

**Table 3.23**

*Students' Level of Writing*

<b>Option</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P (%)</b>
<b>Beginner</b>	17	48%
<b>Intermediate</b>	15	43%
<b>Post a intermediate</b>	02	06%
<b>Advanced</b>	01	03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in the table above, the vast majority (48%) of the respondents opted for option A, i.e., they considered their current writing proficiency level as beginner, followed by (43%) who considered it as intermediate, (06%) opted for option C, i.e., post intermediate, and only (03%) opted for option E, i.e., advanced.

### **3.1.4. Discussion of The Students Questionnaire**

First of all, it should be noted that since the students' questionnaire was designed to investigate the organization, content, and sequencing of learning tasks in one writing class, the issues under investigation should have formed consensus among the respondents. That is, any significant diversion from unanimity in the respondents' answers should cast serious doubt about the reliability of other respondents' answers. In this regard, the surprising relatively high rate of approval of some aspects that do not form, at least, in theory, the strengths of the process approach following which the writing course currently in use has

been designed may be due to acquiescence bias, being one of the serious weaknesses of the questionnaire as a tool of research, rather than to real strength in the course under study.

Regarding the effectiveness of the course under study in fostering students' learning of the basics of paragraph writing, the analysis of the results generated by the students' questionnaire reveal that the writing course currently in use suffers from at least five major weaknesses. These weaknesses are the lack of sufficient time for writing practice, the holistic scoring of students' performances and the lack of adequate teacher's and peer feedback, the lack of sufficient opportunities for cooperative learning, failure in the development of writing as a habit.

## **3.2. The Teacher's Interview**

### **3.2.1. The Description of the Interview**

The teachers' interview consists of seventeen questions.

### **3.2.2. The Discussion of the Interview**

It should be noted here that the teacher provided only abrupt, short answers to the questions, which has not helped us much in the analysis of the results. However, the most important findings that should be retained from the teacher's responses is her declaration that the presentation and analysis of model paragraphs do not form always the starting point in her writing class. In addition, the teacher regards brainstorming as one of the most important sources of difficulty for students. These responses are in perfect harmony with the fact the writing course is process-oriented. These aspects are considered as being weaknesses in the process approach to writing that the teaching/learning cycle pedagogy seek to reform. On the other hand, the teacher confirmed that students' questionnaire finding that the teacher's

feedback remains is ineffective. Moreover, the teacher confirmed that the amount of homework assignments is insufficient for fostering the habit of writing among learners.

### **3.3. Limitations of the Study**

In the process of the conducting this research, some difficulties were encountered, they are listed below:

- To begin with, time constraint was the major obstacle that we have faced, while conducting this research.
- The present study intended to investigate the effectiveness of the writing course in question using an ethnographic methodology based on classroom observation, which would have more rewarding, however, because of the special circumstances that marked this year, we opted for other research tools: a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview.
- The interview is supposed to be recorded, but because of the teacher's refusal, we submitted it in a printed form.
- It was difficult to find the participants, since it was the end of the year, most of the students stopped attending their classes.

## Conclusion

The present chapter dealt with the presentation and the analysis of the two research tools used in the practical part of the study, namely the students' questionnaire and the teacher's interview. The findings of the students' questionnaire suggest that the writing course in question suffers from, at least, five major weaknesses: the course does not provide students with sufficient time to practice writing, the course does not allow students to obtain an adequate amount of teacher's and peer feedback, it does not provide students with sufficient opportunities for cooperative learning, and fails to foster writing as a habit among students. At least, one of these findings has been confirmed by the teacher: the teachers' feedback is ineffective.

## General Conclusion

The present study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the writing course in enhancing the students' proficiency in paragraph writing from the perspective of the socio-cultural theory.

Chapter one reviewed the different modern learning theories and their basic principles with a specific focus on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and its relevance to the teaching/learning process. Chapter two explored the major approaches to writing with specific emphasis on the teaching learning cycle as a modern pedagogy to teaching writing reflecting the principles of socio-cultural theory.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the first year writing course in developing students' skills in paragraph writing, a students' questionnaire was designed so as to reflect the steps and principles of the teaching learning cycle, a modern pedagogy based on socio-cultural theory. These steps and principles have been presented in terms of four elements: deconstruction, Joint construction, Independent construction, and the Nature of feedback. This questionnaire was handed to a sample of a group of thirty five first year students chosen on the basis of convenience. Moreover, an interview was designed following the same principles and administered to the writing teacher of the same group so as to verify students' answers.

The analysis of the data generated by the present study revealed that the writing course currently in use suffers from five major weaknesses, at least: the lack of sufficient time for writing practice, the lack of adequate teacher's and peer feedback, the lack of sufficient opportunities for cooperative learning, and failure in the development of writing as a habit. One of these findings, at least, has been confirmed by the results generated by the teachers' interview: feedback is not yielding the expected outcomes.



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## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1:**

**The Student's Questionnaire**

**Dear students,**

The present questionnaire aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the writing course in developing students' proficiency in paragraph writing. The data collected through this tool will be used in the practical part of a master's dissertation in English didactics. The success of this research work depends on your sincerity in answering the questions. Bearing in mind that there is no right or wrong answer, would you please tick the answer (✓) that you consider the most appropriate. Be ensured that your identity will remain anonymous and the data you will provide here will remain completely confidential.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

and Dj. Miss D.Boukriche Bouternikh

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Questions	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>I. Deconstruction</b>					
1. I always find the topics of the writing class relevant and motivating.					
2. The writing classes always follow a fixed routine.					
3. We usually spend the major part of the writing class writing.					
4. The writing teacher always starts the lesson with a presentation of a sample paragraph and an explanation of key vocabulary.					
5. The writing teacher always involves us in the analysis of different aspects of the sample paragraph.					
<b>II. Joint Construction</b>					
6. The writing teacher always asks us to aggregate in Small groups to write paragraph after the presented model.					
7. The writing teacher has risen our awareness to the fact that writing is a process made up of several steps and that each step requires the deployment of a peculiar set of skills.					
8. The writing teacher always provides us with oral feedback during the different phases of paragraph writing.					
9. The writing class always involves the joint construction of sample paragraph where each student is encouraged to contribute.					
<b>III. Independent Construction</b>					
10. During each writing class, each student is asked to produce his own sample of the model text.					



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<p><b>11.</b> As a follow up of in-class writing tasks, the writing teacher requires us to write home works on a weekly basis.</p>					
<p><b>12.</b> Each student is required to keep a portfolio of his/her different writing performance and to submit them to subsequent evaluation.</p>					
<p><b>IV. The Nature of Feedback.</b></p>					
<p><b>13.</b> The writing teacher always encourages us to seek each other's feedback about our writing performances.</p>					
<p><b>14.</b> I usually learn from my peers as much as from my teacher about the different aspects of my writing.</p>					
<p><b>15.</b> Teacher usually assigns a mark to my writing without including any detail about the different aspects of my written production.</p>					
<p><b>19.</b> The writing teacher usually provides reformulations of my erroneous sentences and paragraphs.</p>					
<p><b>20.</b> The writing course has enabled me to write better in the content modules.</p>					
<p><b>21.</b> I always find the writing tasks assigned in the writing classroom neither too easy, nor too difficult</p>					
<p><b>22.</b> I always find the feedback provided by the written teacher slightly beyond my current level of writing competence</p>					
<p><b>23.</b> In the writing class, there is always a smooth move and gradual move from one task to the other, and from one level to other</p>					

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### V. Biographic Data

24. Gender : Male  Female

25. I practice free English writing on a ...

A-daily basis b-weekly basis c-monthly basis d-never

26. I consider that my current writing proficiency level is...

A-beginner b-intermediate c-post-intermediate d- advanced

**Appendix 2:**

**The Teachers' Interview**

**Dear teacher,**

The present interview aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the writing course in developing students' proficiency in paragraph writing. We would be so grateful if you would collaborate with us and answer the following questions. The data collected through this tool will be used in the practical part of a master's dissertation in English didactics.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

Miss D. Boukriche and Dj. Bouternikh

Department of the English language and literature

Faculty of Letters and Languages

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Jijel

### **Section One: General Information**

01. How long have you been teaching the written expression module?
02. Did you receive any specific training in teaching?

### **Section Two: Professional Knowledge**

03. Do you think that the topics of your writing class are motivating and relevant?
04. Do you usually follow a fixed routine in your writing class?
05. Do you usually start your lesson by presenting and analyzing different aspects of a sample paragraph?
06. Do you usually involve your students in the analysis of different aspects of the sample paragraph?
- 07- Do you think your allots sufficient time for students to practice writing?
08. Do you devote different specific amounts of time to each phase involved in the students 'production of a piece of writing?
- 0.9Which steps of the writing process are usually most challenging to your students?
10. Do you encourage students 'collaboration in the production of a piece of writing?
- 11-do you think that students benefit from the feedback they receive from their peers?
12. Do you provide your students with oral feedback during the different phases of paragraph writing?
13. How often do you require students to produce their own individual samples of the written texts under study inside the classroom?
14. How often do you give your students home assignments?
15. How often do you evaluate students' homework's?

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16. Do you think that allotting a mark to students' writings is sufficient?

17. Which aspects do you focus on when giving feedback?

18. Do you think that your feedback is beneficial to your students?

“Thank You so much for your Co-operation”.

### **Presentation of the interview**

Question 01: how long have you been teaching the written expression module?

Teacher: For 06 years

Question 02: Did you receive any specific training in teaching?

Teacher: yes

Question03: Do you think that the topics of your writing class are motivating and relevant?

Teacher: Yes

Question04: Do you usually start your lesson by presenting and analyzing different aspects of a sample paragraph?

Teacher: Not always

Question05: Do you usually involve your students in the analysis of the different aspects of the sample paragraph?

Teacher: Yes

Question06: Do you think you allot sufficient time for students to practice writing?

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Teacher: Yes, but it is not the case this year for some unexpected circumstances

Question07: Do you devote different specific amounts of time to each phase involved in the student production of a piece of writing?

Teacher: Yes

Question08: Which steps of the writing process are usually most challenging to your students?

Teacher: Brainstorming, Proofreading, and Editing

Question09: Do you encourage your students' collaboration in the production of a piece of writing?

Teacher: Yes

Question10: Do you think that your students benefit from the feedback they receive from their peers?

Teacher: To some extent

Question11: Do you provide your students with oral feedback during the different phases of paragraph writing?

Teacher: yes, of course and that is done all the time

Question12: How often do you require students to produce their own individual samples of the written texts under study inside the classroom?

Teacher: Always

Question13: How often do you give your students home assignments?

Teacher: Once a week

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Question14: How often do you evaluate students' home work?

Teacher: Regularly

Question15: Do you think that allotting a mark to students' writing is sufficient?

Teacher: No

Question16: Which aspects do you focus on when giving feedback?

Teacher: Format, unit, coherence, and usage

Question17: Do you think that your feedback is beneficial to your students?

Teacher: Yes

## Résumé

La présente étude évaluait du point de vue de la théorie socio-culturelle, l'efficacité du cours d'écriture de première année offert au département d'anglais de l'Université Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia pour ce qui est de pousser au cul et d'encourager les compétences en paragraphe des étudiants. Afin d'atteindre les objectifs de l'évaluation, un questionnaire destiné aux étudiants a été conçu et mis en œuvre auprès d'un échantillon d'un groupe de trente-cinq étudiants de première année choisis sur une base pratique. De plus, une entretien a été conçue et administrée à l'enseignant du cours d'écriture du même groupe afin de vérifier les réponses des élèves. Les résultats ont révélé que le cours d'écriture actuellement utilisé souffre au moins de cinq faiblesses majeures: le manque de temps pour la pratique de l'écriture, le manque de feedback adéquat des enseignants et des pairs, le manque d'opportunités suffisantes d'apprentissage coopératif, et l'échec du développement d'écriture comme une habitude. L'une de ces constatations à tout le moins, a été confirmée par les résultats obtenus lors de l'entretien avec les enseignants: les commentaires ne donnent pas les résultats escomptés.



## ملخص

تمت معالجة هذه الدراسة من وجهة النظرية الاجتماعية الثقافية وتأثير دورة الكتابة في تعزيز وتطوير دورة الكتابة في تعزيز وتطوير مهارة الكتابة والإنشاء للطلاب السنة الأولى في كلية اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى-جبل-، ومن اجل تحقيق أهداف هذا التقييم تم تصميم استبيان وتطبيقه على عينة مكونة من خمسة وثلاثين طالب تم اختيارهم عشوائيا، إضافة إلى تصميم مقابلة وإجراءها مع معلمة الإنشاء لنفس المجموعة، من اجل إثبات صحة الأجوبة المقدمة من طرف الطلبة.

أظهرت النتائج أن دوره الكتابة المستخدمة حاليا تعاني على الأقل في خمسة مواضع، عدم توفير وقت كافي للممارسة الكتابة، الافتقار للتغذية الرجعية وقله فرص التعليم الجماعي، وكذلك الفشل في تطوير الكتابة كعادة، واحدة من هذه النتائج المستخلصة تم تأكيدها على الأقل من خلال النتائج المستخلصة من المقابلة التي أجريت مع الأستاذة التغذية الرجعية لا تثمر عن النتائج المتوقعة.