

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel**  
**Department of English**



**The Role of Transparency in Writing Assessment Practices in  
Fostering Learner Autonomy in Writing  
The Case of Third Year EFL Students at the University of  
Mohammed Seddik Ben Yehia**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Master Degree in  
Didactics of English

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**Academic Year: 2018-2019**

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### **Dedications**

To the ones who have been with me when things were tough, the ones who have never  
left my side

I dedicate this work to:

my parents who have always prayed for my success,

my sisters who have been supporting me throughout this journey,

my lovely brothers, nephew, and nieces,

the person who taught me that our will is bigger and powerful than any difficulty  
we may face, the one who makes me smile when I have nothing to smile about, to you my  
piece of chocolate, my precious soul mate “Fati Ghoul”, I dedicate this work.

**Dalal**

I have the honor to dedicate this work:

to The closest person to my heart and the only person who has never let me down; the illiterate man who taught me how to hold a pen, my hero, my dear grandfather “Amor”. Thank you for all the love and support you have always covered me with; I will always carry you in my heart,

to my mom Nouara and my brothers: Youcef and Hocine,

to my first teacher ever: Miss Salima. May Allah bless you wherever you are; it's been 17 years, yet I have never forgotten you,

to my friends:

the one who has always been by my side, sharing with me all the sorrows and joys of life: Soumia,

my partner, friend, and sister: Daloula; no one will take your place, my sweet and special friend Amel.

to everyone the University of Med Seddik Ben Yehia was a reason I got to know them, and I share a beautiful or bad memory with,

to the suns I wished would never rise,

to the days I wished would never start,

to the child I had once been 17 years ago.

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the role of writing assessment practices in developing learner autonomy in writing. Two research instruments, namely a students' questionnaire and a teacher's interview, were designed and administered in the English language department at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yehia during the academic year 2018/2019 to address this issue. The students' questionnaire was administered to a sample of sixty (60) third year EFL learners chosen at random on the basis of convenience. In order to cross-examine the students' responses, a teacher interview was conducted with one written expression teacher at the same department. The analysis of the research results revealed that a slight majority of the responses indicated that the evaluation used in the writing course is transparent enough to foster students' autonomy in writing. However, a cross-comparison of the students' responses with the results of the teacher interview has revealed that the writing course has some serious weaknesses, which impact negatively on its effectiveness in fostering learners' autonomy in writing. These weaknesses can be summarized in four points: the insufficient time allotted for practice, the weak frequency and ineffectiveness of feedback, improvisation in the design of tests, and weak level in peer evaluation. In addition, the teacher's responses suggested that the issue of the connection between the transparency in evaluation criteria and fostering students' autonomy in writing is more problematic in the content modules of the curriculum.

### **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a foreign language

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

i.e.: It means

LMD: Licence Master Doctorat

Q: Question

%: Percent

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## 1. Statement of the Problem

Fostering learners' autonomy constitutes a shared over-arching goal among most, if not all, modern language teaching approaches. Due to the central role that writing plays in communication in today's globalised world, in general, and in the academic domain, in particular, the development of an adequate level of autonomy in writing should be one of the main goals of the English university curriculum. Learner autonomy in writing is defined by Abdullah (2015:xiii) as '...the learners' abilities to reflect and evaluate their written essays in planning and deciding the best arguments to revise their essays. In other words, learners' development of a satisfactory level in autonomy in writing depends entirely on these learners' abilities to judge the texts they produce against the standard set of objective criteria adopted and used by their academic and/or social community. Therefore, students' acculturation to and internalization of these standard criteria, being the sole guarantee for the development of autonomy in writing depend, in turn, on the degree of transparency with which the community in question utilizes those criteria in assessing students' writings. As far as writing assessment is concerned, Hyland (2004) points to the existence of two types of scoring procedures: holistic and analytic scoring procedures. The former refers to 'a single, integrated score of writing behaviour', while the latter refers to 'a set of criteria important to good writing' and 'give [s] a score for each category' (Hyland, 2004: 162). Hence, analytic scoring procedures are more transparent and more conducive to fostering learners' autonomy in writing.

As far as assessing English as a foreign language students' writing performances across the English university curriculum is concerned, over-crowded classes most often than not constrain teachers to resort to holistic scoring procedures which consist of assigning one mark to the whole student's writing performance. We assume that this rampant practice constitutes a major hindrance to the development of learners' autonomy

in writing. In the light of this, the present study attempts to explore the following major question:

What are students' and a teacher's perceptions of the relationship between transparency in writing assessment procedures and students' development of autonomy in writing?

## **2. Aim of the Study**

The present study aims at investigating students' and a teacher's perceptions of the relationship between transparency in assessment practices and the development of students' autonomy in writing at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yehia university in Jijel.

## **3. Hypothesis**

We hypothesise that the more transparent writing assessment practices are the more autonomous in writing the students become.

## **3. Means of Research**

In order to achieve the aims of the present research, two research instruments have been designed and administered: a student questionnaire and a teacher interview. The student questionnaire has been addressed to a random sample of sixty (60) third year EFL student at the department of English and the interview has been conducted with one EFL written expression teacher at the same department.

## **4. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present study is divided into three main chapters. Chapter one tackles the issue of writing assessment through reviewing its definitions, discussing its types and principles and discussing the stages of writing assessment design. Chapter two addresses the issue of learner autonomy with reference to its definition, origins, related terminology, and its role in writing. Chapter three presents the practical part of the present study and focuses on the analysis of the data generated by the research instruments.



## **Introduction**

The present chapter deals the definitions of the key concepts related to the evaluation of writing and reviews the principles of language assessment processes of language assessment practices. This review aims at showcasing the advantages of analytic scoring procedures in fostering learners' autonomy in writing.

### **1.1. Definition of Assessment**

Assessment refers to “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged”(Black & William, 1998, p. 2). This definition has two sides: the first one is that both teachers and students are involved in the assessment process, the second one is that assessment is a primary source of change in the teaching and learning process.

Brindley (2001) and Hyland (2003) agree on the fact that language assessment is an umbrella term, which covers several practices, whose aim is to collect information about learners' language performance. Brindley (2001) defines language assessment as “a variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's language ability or achievement” (p. 137). Bachman and Palmer (2010) agree with this view and see that language assessment is an important process, which systematically enables us to collect information about the learner's language ability, and which results in a score or verbal description

### **1.2. Historical Development of Language Assessment**

Many changes have been introduced to language assessment starting from the mid twentieth century. Brindley (2001) considers the reason behind the emergence of new language assessment trends is due to the change in how language is perceived. Similarly, Brown (2001) claims that these shifts appeared as a result of the developments in language research, which have resulted in different teaching methods and approaches. In the 1950s,

witnessed a great influence of the Behaviorists on the teaching of language and on contrastive analysis, where specific language elements, such as grammar, vocabulary, and phonology were the core aim of language testing (Ibid). During 1960s' and 1970s, and because of the influence of structural linguistics, language learners' linguistic abilities were assessed in relation to different isolated language items and structures, such as phonology, grammar, and vocabulary (Harmer, 2007). Testing in the 1970s and 1980s was influenced by the new communicative theories, and took an interactive direction, considering the whole communicative event, rather than breaking it down into separate linguistic elements (Brown 2004). In other words, learners' overall interaction and communication abilities was the core aim of language assessments, rather than their ability to master separate items and structures of the language. Due to the great demand for authentic, content-valid language instruction, language tests are expected to meet this trend, by adhering to more authenticity (Ibid). Bachman and Palmer (1996) claim that authenticity refers to the need for learners' performance in language tests to match their performance in real life setting, and not only in tests or formal instruction.

### **1.3. Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation**

The term assessment, tests, and evaluation are widely used as synonymous terms. However, researchers, such as Brindley (2001), Brown (2001), Genesee (2004) and Bachman & Palmer (2010) claim that they are not.

First, assessing is different from testing in the sense that assessment is an inclusive term, for it includes all forms of assessment and ability measurement instruments, namely tests, and all forms of feedback techniques (Brown, 2001; Brindley, 2001). Moreover, assessments are constant, and undertaken throughout the learning process, as they can take many forms such as teachers' feedback, ordinary tests, etc. whereas tests are undertaken in specified points of time (Brindley, 2001). When

undertaking tests, learners are expected to reflect their mastery of the content they have been taught. Their responses will be measured against a set of criteria, and the score they get will be used to make judgments about their abilities. However, assessment is not meant to be a means of making judgements about learners (Brown, 2001), but it is carried out in order to aid learners to improve their levels, in the sense that it checks learners' improvement, and facilitates the process of learning. All in all, tests are forms of assessment tools, but assessment does not consist entirely of tests (Brown 2001).

Genesee (2001) states the importance of clarifying the difference between assessment and evaluation. Assessment is an integral part of evaluation; it is restricted to collecting information about the learner's individual learning achievement (Genesee, 2001; Bachman & Palmer, 2010). However, "evaluation goes beyond students' achievements" (Genesee, 2001, p. 144), taking into consideration the entire teaching and learning context, using of all forms of assessment to make decisions upon the whole educational program (Genesee, 2001 p. 145). Similarly, Bachman and Palmer (2010) refer to the process of using information collected by stakeholders through assessment tools for the purpose of making judgments in educational programs, such as placing learners into institutional programs, deciding which students to pass a course, or making decisions to improve the learning process .

#### **1.4. Reasons for Language Assessment**

As it has been stated above, the main purpose of a language assessment is to collect information about learners' language proficiency and achievements (Brindley, 2001; Bachman & Palmer, 2010). This information would be then used, according to Brindley (2001) to fulfil six (06) purposes, which are as follows:

- Selection. For example, to determine whether learners have sufficient language proficiency to get an employment or to be accepted in a certain college.

- Certification. For example, to provide people with a statement of their language ability for employment purposes.
- Accountability. For example, to provide educational authorities with evidence that intended learning outcomes have been achieved and to justify expenditure.
- Motivation: e.g. to encourage learners to study harder. (p. 137)

In addition to the above stated purposes, which Bachman and Palmer (2010) refer to as micro evaluation which is related namely to individuals, they listed two other types of decisions, which could be made on the basis of assessment. They are: macro evaluation, which is about programs, and decisions about research. A macro evaluation aims mainly at making changes to improve a current program or to replace it with a new one. The third type is concerned with coming up with future research questions or new views about the nature of language. The following figure, extracted from Bachman and Palmer (2010) illustrates the relationship between assessments and their uses for evaluation.

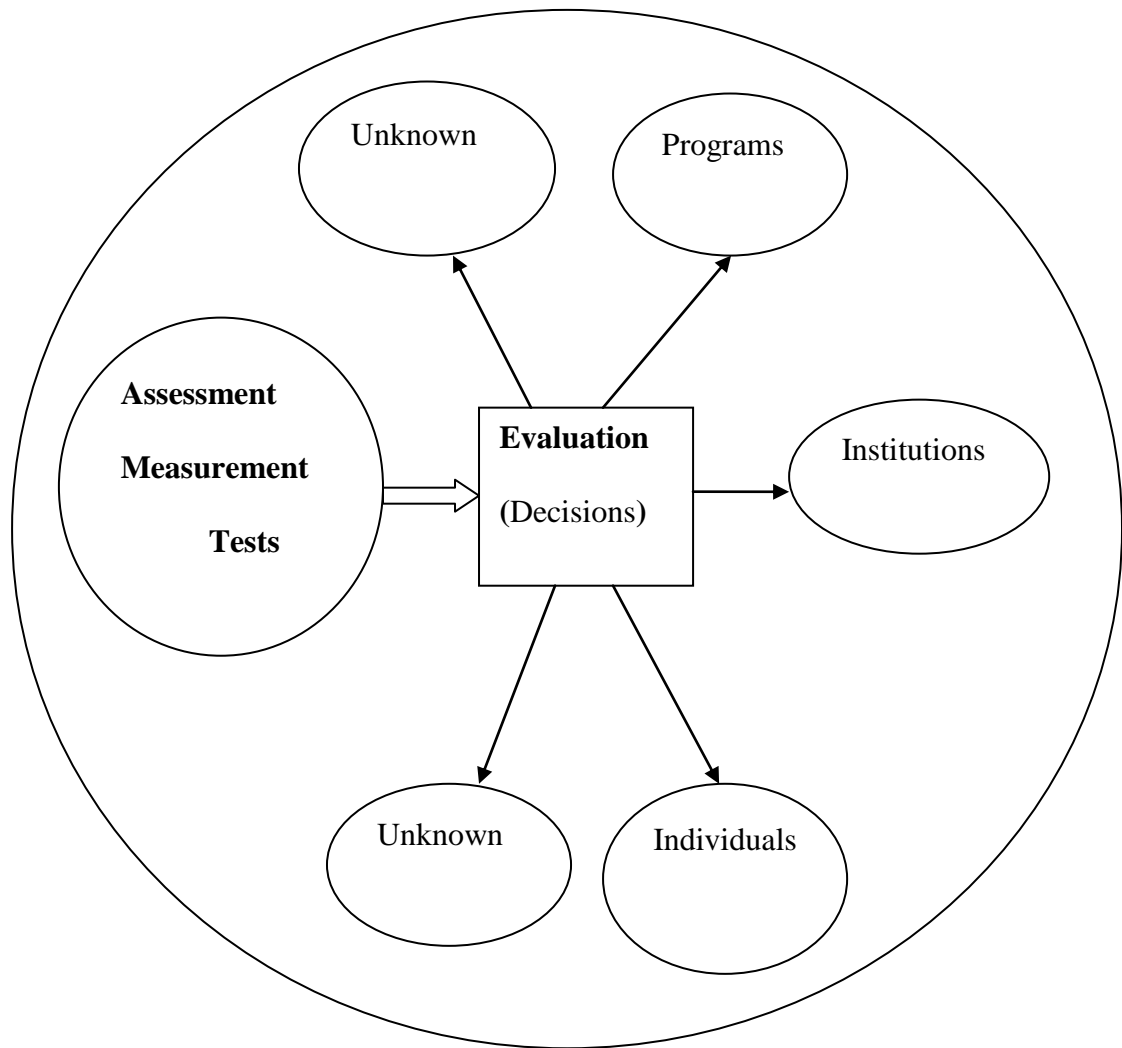


Figure 1.1: *Relationship between assessment/measurements/tests, their uses for evaluation, and the consequences of assessment use (Bachman & Palmer, 2010)*

### 1.5. Principles of Language Assessment

Many researchers in the field of language assessment, such as Charney (1984) Brindley (2001), Hyland (2003), Brown (2001), and Harmer (2007) claim that any language assessment tool must adhere to certain criteria, in order to ensure that the instrument is good enough, suits the current circumstances, and adequately measures the desired ability. These criteria are considered by Brindley (2001) as key requirements for any language assessment. Similarly, Hyland (2003) stresses the role of these criteria “in creating fair and meaningful tasks” (p. 220). In other words, whenever these criteria are

present in a language test, the test is said to meet the conditions of fairness and meaningfulness in testing learners.

### **1.5.1. Reliability**

Brown (2001) defines reliability as the consistency and dependability of the test. According to Brown, two types of reliability are recognised: test reliability and scorer reliability. The former requires the same test to give the same results in case it is administered to the same test takers in two different occasions; the latter means that if the test is scored by two scorers, the two scores must be equal or at least close to each other (Brown 2001). However, it is worth noting that due to the complex nature of the writing skill, the scorer may face some difficulties to reach high levels of scorer reliability (Ibid). This problem can be overcome, according to (Harmer 2007), through avoiding subjective scoring techniques, and adopting analytical scoring instruments to specify the scoring directions, and minimise the effect of individual marking styles.

### **1.5.2. Practicality**

Brown (2001) lists four conditions, which make a language assessment practical. They include: financial constraints, time constraints, case administration, as well as the scoring and interpreting procedures. A practical test does not exceed the financial boundaries provided for it. The time devoted for taking the test should match its level of difficulty. Additionally the test should take into consideration the appropriateness of the scoring methods to the available scoring resources. Hence, in order to judge a language test as a practical one or not, the availability of the above resources must be considered.

### **1.5.3. Validity**

Charney (1983) describes a valid test as a test which “assesses what it claims to assess”. Similarly, Harmer (2007) describes a valid test as one which “does what it says it will”. In other words, if the outcome of the test taker in a test is relevant to the desired

objective of the test, the test, then, is valid; if not, the test is invalid.. In order to validate such a test, more focus should be put on how well the ideas are organised and displayed. In the field of language assessment, many researchers, like Genesee (2001), Brown (2004), and Harmer (2007) have made a distinction between several types of validity.

A test is said to be content valid if it represents a sample of the subject matter and leads the test taker to perform the behaviour being tested Harmer (2007). Thus, the performance of the test taker should reflect the objective of the test; otherwise, the test is not a content-valid one.

To investigate the face validity of a test, one could ask the following question: “does the test, on the face of it, appear to the learners’ perspective to test what it is designed to test” (Brown, 2001, p. 389). In other words, face validity has to do with the first impression test takers have about the test. Accordingly, if test takers are satisfied with the test the first moment they come in contact with it, the test is said to be face valid; the opposite case suggests an absence of face validity.

Brown (2001) talks about another type of validity is construct validity. Taking construct validity into consideration means that any theoretical construct related to the learner should be considered by the tester, such as proficiency, communicative competence, self-esteem, etc. The reason behind construct validity is that the tests’ main aim should be the operationalisation of these constructs.

#### **1.5.4. Authenticity**

Brown (2001) explains the concept of authenticity, saying that an authenticity of a language test task is determined by its correspondence to real world. In other words, if the assessment tool targets learners’ performance in such a way that goes with their performance in real world contexts, the principle of authenticity is said to be respected by the test.

### **1.5.5. Backwash/ Washback Effect**

Hughes (2003) defines it as “the effect of testing on teaching and learning” (p. 1). Harmer (2007) states that a washback effect occurs when teachers start to direct their teaching practices according to the test their students will take. In other words, when both teachers’ teaching methods and students’ learning strategies are influenced by the test, it is said that a washback effect is taking place.

Hughes (2003) and Harmer (2007) point out that a backwash effect could be positive or negative. If the test follows teaching (Hughes, 2003), in the sense that its objectives do not contradict with the learning and teaching objectives, it could have a beneficial washback. However, if the preparations for the test dominate all teaching and learning practices to the point that teaching is directed towards tests and not the opposite, (Harmer, 2007), or “if the test content and the testing techniques are at variance with the objectives of the course” (Hughes 2003), harmful or negative washback will take place.

### **1.6. Types of Language Assessment**

Several dichotomies of language assessment have been distinguished by different scholars (Brown, 2001; Hughes, 2003; Harmer, 2007). These types of assessment vary in terms of ; the procedures, the time in which the assessment takes place, the reference, type of scoring. Choosing which type of assessment to opt for is not a random process. Indeed, certain criteria must be looked at when deciding according to which way the students are going to be assessed. In line with this, Brown (2001) links the selection of which type of assessment to use to the purpose and as well as the decisions that will be made using the assessment results, and the curriculum in which the assessment is functioning. Formal Vs Informal Assessment

Brown (2001) made a distinction between formal and informal assessment as follows: “Informal assessment is involved in all incidental, unplanned evaluative coaching



and feedback on tasks designed to elicit performance, but not for the purpose of recording results”, whereas formal assessment are “exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into the store house of skills and knowledge, they are systematic planned sampling techniques constructed to give teachers and students an appraisal of student achievement”(p.6). In other words, informal assessments can take all contingent forms, which do not aim at offering a fixed judgement about this performance, such as the feedback teachers’ give on students’ class performance. By contrast, formal assessment refers to any kind of systematic and planned techniques, whose purpose is to criticise the learner, with the purpose of making judgements about his achievements in a specific skill or area of knowledge.

#### **1.6.1. Formative Assessment versus Summative Assessment**

Brown (2001) defines formative assessment as: “evaluating students in the process of ‘forming’ their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process”, and claims that “summative assessment aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction” (p. 402). As its name suggests, formative assessment takes place while learners are in the process of learning. Since they are undertaken during instruction, formative assessments represent an instrument in the hands of both teachers and students to properly diagnose their learning abilities in terms of strengths and weaknesses, and thus a source of instruction improvement (Brindley, 2001). On the contrary, summative assessment occurs at the end of a lesson, unit, course, school year, or program; it offers a description of what learners have achieved and how well the instruction has gone, through measuring students’ final products (ibid). According to Hyland (2003), the results obtained from formative assessment are used as feedback for the instruction process, while the

results of a summative assessment are used as evidence of individual learners' accomplishments.

### **1.6.2. Norm-referenced Vs Criterion Referenced Assessment**

Rundle (2016) states that in a criterion-referenced assessment, the score is interpreted in relation to some mathematical measures, like: the mean, the medium, and the standard deviation. In such a type of assessment, the learner's performance is compared to a standard, which is based on the learners' abilities and skills. It means what he can or cannot do (Covacevich, 2014). Contrarily, Brindley (2003) describes norm-referencing as occurring "when learners' performance is described in relation to an explicitly stated standard", such as measuring student's performance against the performance of other students.

### **1.6.3. Discrete Point versus Integral Assessment**

According to Harmer (2001), discrete point assessment is based on the idea that language should be treated as separate items, and that those items should be assessed in isolation. On the other hand, he refers to integral assessment as the process of assessing language performances as a whole, driven by the argument that language is a whole system that should be treated as one entity

### **1.6.4. Alternative Assessment Methods**

Most language instructors have been using traditional approaches of assessment to test learners' writing ability, which are represented in formal assessment tests. However, this approach to assessment has been criticised for many limitations (Weigle, 2002). According to her, this approach is limited in the sense that it does not reflect the way learners are used to write in a non-test context, due to time restrictions that bound the test, and the topic unfamiliarity. In addition, one cannot judge the learner's writing proficiency based on his performance in a single sample or genre. Hence, new methods of assessment,

referred as alternative or informal assessment methods, have been gaining increasing attention in the field of language assessment. The appearance of such methods was driven by the desire of demonstrating students' writing abilities in non-stressed environment, for students' performance in formal tests is affected by certain psychological factors, like fear, stress, and anxiety (Vangah, Jafarpour, & Mohammadi, 2016). In addition to the advancement of certain trends in language teaching and learning, such as learner-centered instruction, in which learners are given more freedom in reflecting and assessing their work (Brown, 2000, as cited in Vangah et al., 2016).

#### **1.6.4.1. Portfolio Assessment**

One of the alternative methods of assessing writing is the use of language portfolios. Portfolios are according to Hyland (2003) "multiple writing samples, written over time, and purposefully selected from various genres to best represent a student's abilities, progress, and most successful texts in a particular context". In language portfolios, the student has the freedom to select the samples and genres he wants to demonstrate his writing progress. Unlike in timed testing where students are required to produce one sample text, and might be unfamiliar with the topic they are required to write about, (Hyland, 2003), language portfolios offer learners the opportunity to reflect actual day-to-day learning experiences (Vangah et al, 2016). Additionally, "portfolios allow teachers to evaluate students' performance in educational outcomes that cannot be assessed with traditional testing formats" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 03) .For example , portfolios can be used to assess how well students work on long-term projects, collaborate with others, develop a piece of work over time, and reflect on their own learning.

#### **1.6.4.2. Self-assessment**

Another example of an alternative assessment tool is the use of learner self-assessment. Learner self-assessment is referred to by Boud (1991) as "the involvement of

students in identifying standards and/ or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards” (p. 5). In other words, in this type of assessment students are encouraged to identify the criteria of success for written productions, and to monitor their own work against these criteria. Boud (1995) acknowledges the role of self-assessment in fostering learner autonomy, as it contributes in raising students’ self awareness.

#### **1.6.4.3. Peer Assessment**

In addition to portfolios, peer assessment represents another type of activity used to assess writing in which pupils exchange each others’ products and give comments and views about what is written providing corrections where necessary (Coffin et al, 2003). Peer assessment calls for group work and gives pupils the chance to enrich their knowledge in addition to giving feedback to the learners’ outputs. Similarly, it helps in diagnosing their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, this kind of assessment strongly motivates pupils to handle their own learning and pushes them to be more active and autonomous in the classroom.

#### **1.7. Definition of Writing**

The simplest definition of writing is that writing is the visual representation of speaking, in which the auditory signs of spoken language re replaced by graphic symbols (Brown, 2001). However, this definition is too general, since it suggests that writing is more than a mere arrangement of words together. In fact, Byrne (1991) states that:

Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols  
, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols  
have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words,  
and words have to be arranged to form sentences. (p. 1)

In other words, writing is characterized by its complex nature, which requires writers to know the different rules according to which the different graphic symbols that represent writing are arranged together to form meaningful sentences, paragraphs and essays.

However, writing is totally different from speaking, unlike spoken language, no immediate perceptions are required from the part of the receptor (reader) in written language, because it is permanent; writing is both time and place distant; and it includes unique rhetorical conventions (Ibid).

### **1.8. The Importance of Writing in English as a Foreign Language Classes**

In the educational context, learners' academic knowledge and their mastery of the courses being taught are tested mainly through writing. Thus, it is of high importance to teach and learn writing as a fundamental skill, since it is a determinant factor to learners' success. Harmer (2004) considers writing as a tool for learning. According to him, thanks to the writing tasks learners perform, they are offered the opportunity to reinforce the content they have been studying. Raimes (1983) elaborates the benefits of writing in the learning process as follows.

...writing helps our students learn. How? First, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that we have teaching our students. Second, when our students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. Third, when they write, they necessarily become very involved with the new language; the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand and brain is unique way to reinforce learning. (p. 03)

Raimes (1983) adds that writing offers students the chance to discover other areas of the language, rather than just the ones they have been taught. Harmer (1998), stresses the importance of writing as “it is a basic language skill, just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together, how to reply to advertisement and increasingly, how to write using electronic media”. (p.79). From what has been stated above, Harmer (1998) takes into consideration the role of writing in everyday life communication, as writing mediates between people in different aspects of life.

### **1.9. Stages of Developing the Writing Assessment Process**

The process of test designing is made up of several phases. Many stages need should be passed through in the way of a language test development. As follows is a model proposed by Cambridge ESOL Programme (as cited in O’Sullivan, 2012, p. 47), which illustrates three main stages, along which any language assessment process should proceed.

#### **1.9.1. Planning and Designing**

According to the model, the first stage is concerned with forming a clear idea about the test, through making all the initial decisions that concern it. Information such as whom the test is designed for, its purpose, number of test takers, the number of the test tasks, should be collected. In addition to that, the test designer should decide upon the rating scale to be adopted, the resources to be used by test takers to complete the test, and the resources used to deliver the test. At this stage, the following considerations need to be looked at:

- The appropriateness of the test type to the test takers’ age, culture, gender, and language learning experience

- The ability of the test to elicit from test takers the exact type of language that needs to be assessed
- The appropriateness of the test to the time scale.

### **1.9.2. The Development Phase**

Once the overall picture of the test is formed, and all of the test's initial decisions are made, test designers should move to specifying the test's variables. The development phase includes considerations, that describe deeply the test development, and others related to the scoring system to be used.

The model suggests that in this stage, test designer specifies which strategies and information learners need to activate to complete the tasks of the test, in what form they are required to respond to the test, and the assessment criteria beforehand (so that learners are aware of the importance of each task, as this can highly affect their performance). Additionally, specifications about the length of learners' output in the test should be provided, as well as the degree of test takers' familiarity with the topic, as it results in better performance.

On the other hand, other parameters, which have to do with the scoring system, are discussed by the model. First, a scoring plan should be put, taking into account how the output will be scored , how the scores will be recorded, and by whom they will be managed. The scoring rubrics to be used also need to be demonstrated within the developmental phase. Test raters also need to be considered. Specifications concerning the minimum requirements for their selection, and any potential training should be clear. Rating procedures as well as its conditions, such as where and when it will be done need consideration as well, in addition to whether the rating will be moderated by someone else or not, and if yes who and how.

### **1.9.3. Test Administration and Monitoring**

The last stage of the Cambridge ESOL test development model is test administration and monitoring. O'Sullivan(2012) states that “all aspects of test administration must be controlled as much as possible” (p. 53). Given the importance of any language assessment experience (the obtained scores) in making deductions about learning and revealing the usefulness of the concerned test. For the success of any test administration process, clear written instructions for the administration procedures must be provided. Otherwise, risks of causing the test' results to be unreliable for comparative purposes may be run. O'Sullivan (2012) lists four criteria, which need to be considered during the process of a test administration process. The first one is the physical conditions under which the test is taken, such as the room layout, the lighting requirements, and the background noise limits. Another factor is the uniformity of test's administration. In other words, the test should be administered under the same conditions for all the test takers. The test security also must be considered as it is very important to ensure that the test is well stored in centres pre and post to the administration.

### **1.10. Types of Scoring**

In addition to designing writing assessment tasks, the teacher needs to correct the piece of writing, and give it a score, which reflects the level and the quality of the production (Weigle, 2003). Among the types of assessment that have been discussed earlier is norm-referenced assessment. Such an assessment is based on the idea that learners' writings should be evaluated compared to other production, which are considered to be the norm reference. However, this assessment was replaced by criterion-referenced assessment, in which the written production is evaluated against certain criteria, such as grammar, style, coherence, cohesion (Brown, 2001). According to Hyland (2003), within



criterion referenced assessment there are two types of scoring scales: holistic scoring and analytic scoring.

### **1.10.1. Holistic Scoring**

This type of scoring is based on evaluating the learner's general writing proficiency based on the universal impression the written text has on the ratter (Weigle, 2002; Hyland, 2003). It means that the overall performance of learners in a test is assessed by giving it a single mark (Fulcher, 2010). Brown (2001) states that the holistic scoring "provides little washback into the writer's further stages of learning" (243). Additionally, it focuses on a global impression, and not on a single ability, highlighting learners' achievements rather than disabilities. On the other hand it has disadvantages too. For instance, it is not diagnostic, because ignores the writing sub-skills, and gives "confuses the writing ability with the writing proficiency" (Hyland, 2003).

### **1.10.2. Analytic Scoring**

In this kind of scoring, the teacher analyzes the pupils' writings considering all the aspects of the language like grammar, vocabulary, coherence and cohesion. An analytic assessment offers more details about the learner's performance with regard to different aspects of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, content, mechanics (Weigle, 2002). In other words, each of the aspects is rated and given a score separately. Such procedures are useful in the sense that they provide a diagnostic evaluation of the learner's performance, due to the detailed information they provide. Moreover, they facilitate the process of feedback given by teachers and revision by students.

## **1.11. The Importance of Assessing Students' Writing**

The main purpose of a language assessment is to collect information about learners' language proficiency and achievements (Brindley, 2001; Weigle, 2003; Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Many researchers, such as Hyland (2003), Bachman & Palmer

(2010) have acknowledged the importance of assessment. Hyland (2003) clarifies the contribution of the assessment results, namely scores and teachers' evaluative feedback, to the learning of students and to the creation of a responsive writing course. Accordingly, he reports that "Without the information gained from assessments, it would be difficult to identify the gap between students' current and target performances and to help them progress." In other words, assessment represents a necessary tool for teachers to track the effectiveness of the writing course and students' progress over time. As stated earlier, language assessment refers to the process of collecting information, which reveals learners' language abilities (Brindley, 2001; Hyland, 2003; Bachman & Palmer, 2010). In writing, this information would be then used, according to Hyland (2003), to fulfil one or more of the following purposes:

**Placement Test:** students have differing abilities and qualifications. To place them within the appropriate class, course, curriculum, which properly corresponds to their current level and goals, assessment test, is the perfect tool to do this.

**Diagnostic Test:** assessing writing has a diagnostic function as it assists in highlighting learners' weaknesses and strengths, consequently diagnose where necessary measures to be taken. In addition to that, Brindley (2001) reports the role of assessment in predicting learners' future performance.

**Achievement Test:** it is conducted to provide learners with concrete evidence of their achievements in a specific writing course, with regard to what has been taught.

**Performance Test:** it is conducted "to give information about students' ability to perform particular writing tasks, usually associated with known academic or workplace requirements." (p. 210).

**Proficiency Test:** it is designed to determine whether learners have sufficient language proficiency to get an employment or to be accepted in a certain college.

Brindley (2001) suggests that, in addition to the above assessment reasons, teachers can use assessment to motivate learners to work harder or for instructional decision-making.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented a general overview of language assessment in EFL classes as well as their principles and types. This review has demonstrated the importance of analytic assessment procedures to fostering learners' autonomy in writing.

## **Introduction**

Fostering learner's autonomy constitutes the overarching goal of any successful teaching/learning endeavour. Given the importance and centrality of the writing skill in academic and social settings, achieving an adequate level of autonomy should form the main goal of writing instruction. The present chapter reviews some literature related to this issue so as to determine to the most important criteria forming autonomy in writing.

### **2.1. Definition of Learner Autonomy**

Any attempt to use the term autonomy should be preceded by identifying it (Holec 1985 as cited in Aoki, 1989, p. 129). Holec (1981), Dickinson (1987), Little (1991), Benson and Voller (2007) among others have tried to define autonomy in the field of language learning research. Holec (1981, as cited in Aoki, 1989, p130) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", where the term ability for him refers to "the capacity to do something", and insists that autonomy is a developed ability, rather than an inborn one (Ibid). In other words, in order to be autonomous, the learner should take in charge the responsibility for his learning process. This ability should be manifested in all the decisions concerning all the learning process modalities, such as: determining the learning objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. Additionally, learner autonomy is, in Holec's terms, a feature of the learner himself, rather than the learning situation (Dickinson 1987).

Dickinson (1987) defines autonomy as any "situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning, and the implementation of those decisions". In addition to deciding upon the modalities of the learning process, discussed above, the autonomous learner should seek to implement them too.

Little (1991) suggests that before deciding what autonomy is, one should first know what autonomy is not. In this respect, he suggested five points, which sum up his view of what autonomy is not:

- Autonomy is not self-instructed. In other words, being an autonomous learner does not necessarily mean to study without a teacher.
- Autonomy is not a matter of teachers abdicating their role and responsibility over the class. Instead, the teacher should establish a kind of partnership with the learners.
- Learner autonomy is not a teaching method; thus, it cannot be developed via lesson plans.
- Learner autonomy is not a single behaviour. Autonomous learners are detected by their behaviours; however, autonomy can take many forms.
- Autonomy is not permanent, and not easily achieved.

To consider Little's (1991) definition, learner autonomy is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action". In this respect, Little approaches autonomy from a psychological perspective, in the sense that being autonomous is governed by certain psychological capacities, which relate the learner to both the learning content and process.

Benson & Voller (2007) believe concepts such as autonomy to have no generally accepted principle, because their meanings are derived from different disciplines, and vary according the situations in which they occur in language education. However, they sum up five ways in which the term autonomy has been used in the field of language education. They are as follows:

- Situations in which learners study entirely on their own.
- A set of skills which can be learnt and applied in self-directed learning.

- An inborn capacity, which is suppressed by institutional education.
- The exercise of learner responsibility over their own learning.
- The right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

## **2.2. Origins of Learner Autonomy in Language Learning**

Some researchers, like Hill (1991), trace back the emergence of the concept of learner autonomy in education to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where many scholars pointed out the role of autonomy in learning. For example, Galileo believed that the teacher's task was not to teach, but to help the learner discover. In addition, Rousseau's "Model Learning", which states that learning takes place when the learner enjoys or suffers from the results of the actions, for which they should be responsible (Ibid).

In the field of language learning, the notion of learner autonomy started to gain attention starting from 1970s. At the time, many voices, such as Freire (1972) and Holec (1979) (as cited in Little, 1991) claim that language should be treated as a tool of communication; and hence, communicative language teaching approaches were introduced to foreign language classes. These approaches emphasised the importance of engaging the learner in the learning process.

The early history of learner autonomy in foreign language teaching and learning started in 1979 by the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project (Benson 2006). The term was first introduced to the field of language research by Henri Holec in 1979, when he prepared a report entitled "Autonomy in Foreign Language Teaching" for the Modern Languages Project (Little, 1991; Aoki, 1998; Benson, 2006). The report was published in 1981, and came as a result of a movement in Europe, which revolved around producing permanent or lifelong learners. Accordingly, Holec's idea of autonomy was based on his conviction that adult education should be used as a tool to change society, through making learners producers of society, rather than products of society (Little, 1995).

Gremmo and Riley (1995) note that research on language learning and teaching became interested in autonomy and self directed learning after the twenty years that followed the Second World War, considering them as efficient alternatives to traditional teaching. According to them, the emergence of autonomy at the time was due to five reasons: the spread of monitoring rights movement, the decline of Behaviourism, the increasing interest in minority rights, the development of technology, and internationalism.

### **2.3. Learner autonomy related terminology**

Benson (2006) notes that the term learner autonomy is associated with many other terms, such as self-instruction, self-access, self-study, self-education, out-of-class learning or distance learning, which are often used interchangeably with the term autonomy. However, he points out to the fact that the previous terms and the term autonomy differ in various ways; thus, they should not be used as synonyms. According to him, the difference lies in that the terms suggest ways of learning by oneself, while autonomy implies attitudes and capacities. In other words, a learner who is capable of learning by himself does not necessarily have positive attitudes towards the process of learning by oneself. On the other hand, an autonomous learner has developed positive attitudes towards his independence in learning, but does not necessarily engage in it.

#### **2.3.1. Self-directed Learning**

Dickinson (1987) defines self-directed learning as follows: “attitudes to learning, in which the learner accepts responsibility for his learning, but does not necessarily, carry out courses of action independently in connection with it”. In Dickinson’s terms, a self-directed learner may have positive attitudes towards taking responsibility over his learning, but does not behave accordingly.

### **2.3.2. Distance Learning**

Distance learning is a form of open learning. As its name suggests, it takes place when the teacher and the learner are distant from each other. In distance learning, the instruction process is mediated through one or more form of technology, because the teacher and the learner are geographically separated. The following characteristics are suggested by Keegan (1986) to describe distance learning

- In distance learning, the teacher and the learner are separated from each other.
- The learning materials that are used in distance learning are planned and prepared by the educational institution. Technical and information technologies are the basis of this kind of learning.

### **2.4. Significance of Learner Autonomy in Education**

In response to the needs of the century, fostering learner autonomy in education became a desirable goal in the field of language education (Little, 1991). Many educators today encourage the implementation of learner autonomy in language education.

According to Little (1991) the reasons that make learner autonomy so important can be divided into two categories; general educational reasons and psychological reasons. In Little's opinion, the benefits of learner autonomy in education are as follows:

- By letting students choose what to learn, learning items will be specifically targeted, and learning will be therefore more effective.
- Adopting an autonomous learning policy, where learners are responsible for their learning allows them to eliminate the barriers that exist between learning and living. In such a case, transferring the ability to be autonomous in learning into an ability of being autonomous in other aspects of life will be easier; the thing which would make them more efficient society members.



Little's psychological reasons support the idea that the most successful learners are those who are aware of the psychological and cognitive processes that take place while learning, and are able accordingly to integrate newly acquired information to previously acquired ones in their way of completing a task.

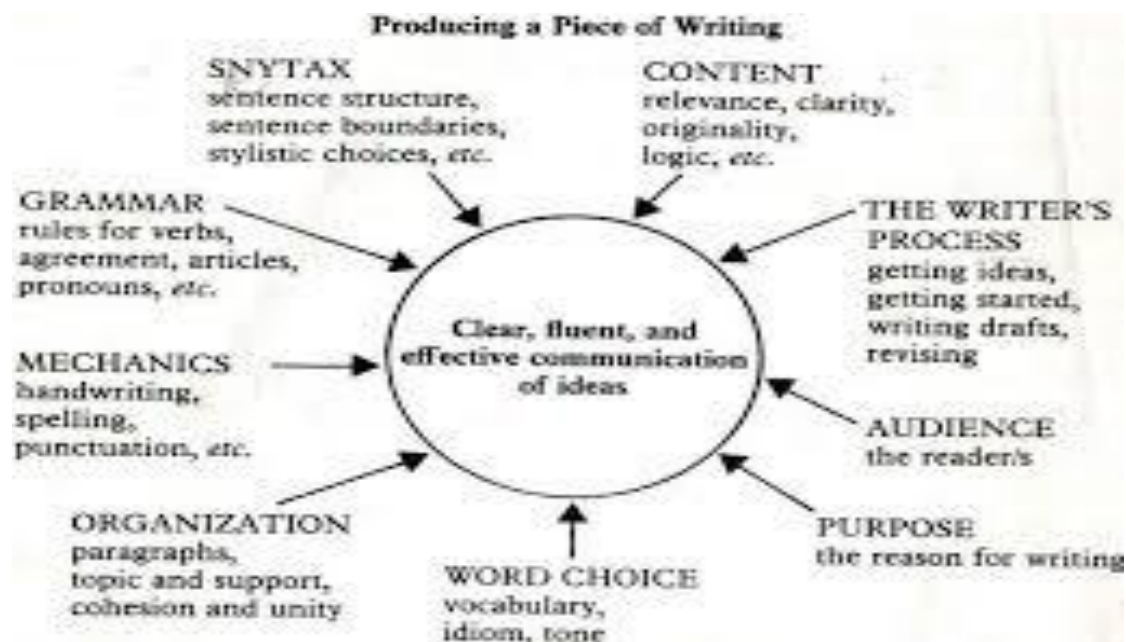
Little(2015) further suggests that the main significance of learner autonomy lays in creating life-long learners both during and beyond the educational experience. In this respect, he identifies three reasons why autonomy matters in education and after education. First, given that formal instruction is not permanent, relying solely on school knowledge is not enough to face the requirements of the modern world. Thus, he concludes that the role of formal education is not to teach knowledge, but to guide learners to be capable of learning beyond the school stage. Moreover, being an autonomous learner is a key way to cope with the new changes taking place in modern language curricula. This is because autonomy is one of their final goals, as learners are required to independently solve tasks, and initiate learning. Thirdly, the improvement of education quality is highly dependent on the degree to which learners are autonomous. The more learners are aware that it is their responsibility to acquire knowledge, the more efficient education programs are.

In Abdullah's (2015) view, learner autonomy is one way of supplying learners with skills that allow them to function responsibly both as learners and as effective members of society.

### **2.5. Teaching Writing through the Process Approach:**

Writing in any language as a second or a foreign one is not a representation of one's own thought and ideas on papers, but rather a complex task to be performed especially by EFL/ESL students (Brown, 2001, as cited in Ahlsen & Lundls, 2007) . In relation to this, Hedge (2005) states that writing is more than producing accurate, complete and grammatical sentences or phrases, but it is about "guiding students to produce whole

pieces of communication, to think, develop information, ideas or arguments for a particular reader or group of readers”(p. 10). In other words, the teacher’s role is no longer on evaluating students’ end products and performances, but rather on encouraging, guiding and providing students with supportive feedback throughout the whole process of writing. She adds that effective writing requires a variety of features; high degree of accuracy, complex grammar devices, careful choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, etc. In this respect, Raimes (1983) mentions that, effective piece of writing requires the involvement of several features as it is clarified in the following diagram:



According to Hedge (2005), writing is a process that involves several interrelated processes, which EFL students should follow to effectively communicate with their readers or audience under the teacher’s supervision and guidance, i.e., the teacher should provide his students with supportive feedback and raise their awareness to the importance of each stage. This means that for the student to create an effective communication with his audience, he should go through some sub processes before delivering the final piece of writing. In this respect, Brown & Hood (1989) agree upon three main stages of the writing process.

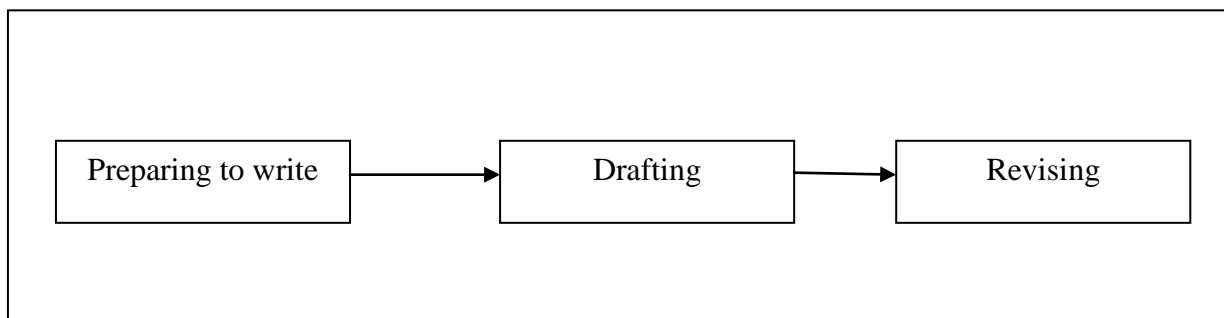


Figure 2.2: *stages of the writing process (Brown & Hood, 1989, p. 06)*

According to Brown and Hood (1989), there are three main stages that the writer may go through to produce a final piece of work. Accordingly, they point out that during the writing process and when the writers start to write, he may move forth or back between those stages. Moreover, they argue that it is a recursive process and not a linear one. According to them, when writing comes into practice, it is often to be like:

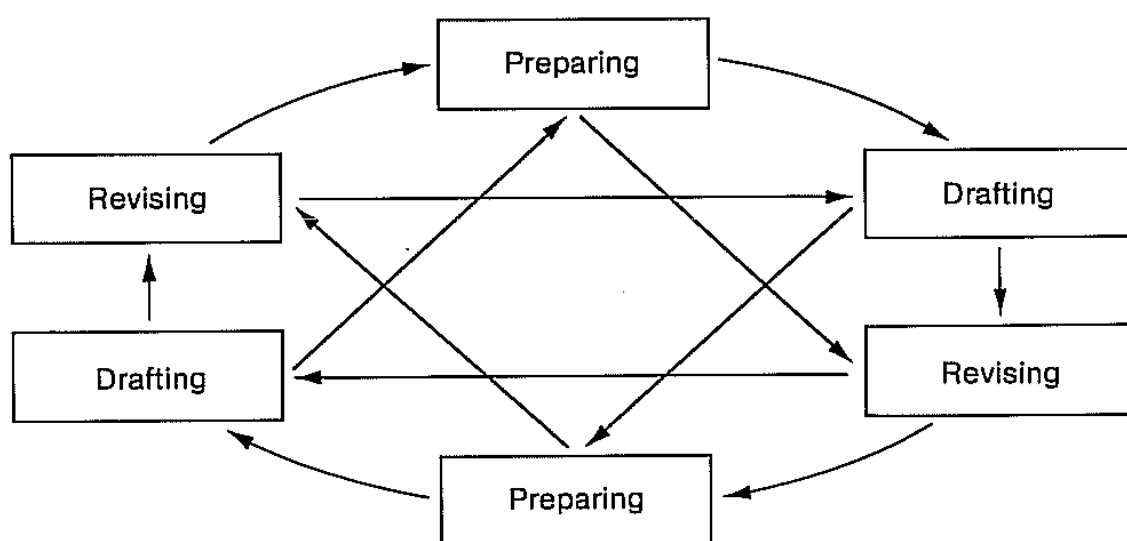


Figure 2.3: *the process of writing (Brown & Hood, 1989, p. 06)*

## 2.6. Stages of the Writing Process

### 2.6.1. Pre-writing Stage

At this level, the students may set some plans in his mind in order to organize the ideas of his work. According to Hedge (2005), these plans could take the form of written outline plans as well as mental plans. Additionally, she states that before putting ideas down on

the paper the writer should first know the purpose of his writing in order to determine the text organization and the appropriate language that must be used to affect the reader's opinion. According to Hartly (1992, as cited in Wellington, 2003), these plans consist of a wide range thinking activities. These thinking activities include the content, the audience, the purpose, the context, etc. Once, all what is mentioned earlier is clearer to the writer, he may then determine the type of the text and the style to be used in order to better attract the audience. According to Wellington (2003) the plans that the writer may set depends greatly on the purpose of this writing as well as the audience.

There is no exact way for writing, but what is commonly known among researchers, is that the preparational stage facilitates writing for students, because it helps them to develop a sense of audience and purpose (Hedge, 2005). Once student know his audience, purpose, content, and the time-devoted of writing, he starts setting plans and structures for his work, which correspond properly to the intended audience. Thus, many strategies and techniques can be used by students to better develop and organize their ideas. 'Brain storming' is one of the most commonly used strategies at this stage. Brainstorming means searching for ideas, information, expressions or arguments that are related to the topic or the content of their writing. Once students start to think about what is related to their writing tasks, they may limit time for a quick writing (Brown & Hood, 1989). Students may also set some "WH" questions to further develop their ideas, such as what is the problem? Who is being affected by it? What it should be dealt with? , etc. Asking such kind of questions may help them as writers to produce an effective piece of writing. Taking into account all what has been mentioned earlier, students can start organizing their ideas in a way that fits their topics and audience. (Brown & Hood, 1989)

### 2.6.2. Drafting

Drafting is the second stage in the writing process. In this stage, students start to state their ideas clearly, i.e., they start to write down whatever comes up into their minds in relation to the topic. According to Hartly (1992), the act of combining ideas together and putting them down on paper; as a first draft; is known as a physical act (Hartly, 1992 as cited in Wellington, 2003). In this respect, Hedge (2005) considers the drafting process as a composing one, through which a number of operations are simultaneously involved, which creates a recycling relationship between them and this is what makes effective writing. She argues that the first draft can be changed and redrafted again, because the main concern of the writer at this stage is to convert his ideas into words and sentences in order to convey a meaningful message without paying attention to spelling, punctuations, and grammar. Once the first draft is finished, changes or modifications may take place. In other words, the first draft is not necessarily the last written production; it can be re-planned or rearranged in terms of adding and omitting ideas (Ibid). Once the first draft is produced it can be reviewed and re-planned. So, according to Hedge (2005) the drafting stage involves several recursive processes starting from planning to draft, reviewing, re-planning, revising ,because is important according to her is what the writer wants to say, regardless of the mistakes he may make.

As far as the process of drafting is concerned, the writer may use some strategies that enable him to go longer and develop his ideas further. Writing space is one of the strategies that could be used while drafting to keep the writer going on and helps him later when he redrafts what has been already written. Skipping lines, leaving wide margins can be used. The most challenging thing for the students is how to get started properly. Brown and Hood (1989) suggest for students to write three or more introducing sentences and

keep the drafting phase going on and once they finish, they may go back to the introducing sentences and choose one of them.

### **2.6.3. Reviewing/ Editing:**

At the reviewing and editing phase, students should develop critical reading, i.e., they should be able to read their written productions critically, examine it, improve it and express their own ideas accurately and fluently (Raimes, 1983). In this respect, Hartly (1992, as cited in Wellington, 2003) indicates that students at this level may go through some interrelated evaluating activities before reaching the post stage where the final version is produced to the audience. As it has been stated before, the evaluating activities begin by reading through the text, rethink about what has been written, i.e., if the text includes what the entire writer wants to tackle; then he can re-plan and revise again in order to put the final modifications and changes (Hartly, 1992 as cited in Wellington 2003).

Good writers tend to engage in the editing phase in order to evaluate the clarity of their ideas and how they are going to be perceived by their audience (Hedge, 2005). Grammar errors, spelling, punctuations and all what has been neglected in the previous stages should be dealt with in the editing phase, in order to produce an effective piece of writing that will encourage the readers to read and the teachers to assess. It is essential for the students to receive a supportive feedback from their teachers at this level, especially for the correction of the linguistics forms like grammar, sentences structure, etc. (Hedge, 2005).

Evaluating activities requires from the students to develop high levels of awareness in such a construction phase. The aim of the reviewing and editing phase is to provide readers with comprehensible and well structured text that fits the purpose of the written work and the audience perspectives. (Hedge, 2005)

#### **2.6.4. Publishing:**

The last stage in the process of writing is concerned with publishing the final version of the student's productions. Generally, students have some kind of satisfaction about their work, so they deliver it to their intended audience. Wellington (2003) defines publishing as an act of sharing the final written text to the audience, but it is not limited to the printed text in a journal. He adds that, it includes also the turning of the paper to the teacher. In other words, publishing student's written work can be done through the use of several ways; such as reading aloud or to a group of audience.

According to Wellington (2003), publishing is a part of a reflection process through which students' personal levels will be developed once they get evaluated by others, i.e., when they publish what has been written before and get evaluated by their audience they will enhance their writing performance. This evaluation and feedback that they get from their teachers will increase their levels of awareness.

### **2.7. Learner Autonomy Abilities in Writing**

In reviewing the related literature, it has been found that the general concept of learner autonomy in language learning has been extensively discussed. However, very few attempts have been made to build models for specifying the abilities required for developing learner autonomy with regard to the writing skill. Among these attempts is the contribution of He (2015) and the contribution of Rohaya (2015).

#### **2.7.1. He's Model (2015)**

##### **2.7.1.1. Planning**

In order to foster learner autonomy in writing, learners are advised to plan their learning process. In line with this, He (2015) suggests a two level working plan that would facilitate this process short term level and long term level. In the short term level of the plan, learners must clarify in details the things they intend to do in each of the afore-

mentioned writing process phases, such as the selection of topics, styles and content. In the long term, learners are required to identify the desired goals to be achieved, such as improving their writing skill, their thinking abilities, and their ability to manage their learning. Given that the plan is generated by the learner himself, according to his own characteristics, needs, and conditions, setting such a plan offers learners the opportunity to appropriately begin a self-improvement process in writing.

### **2.7.1.2. The Use of Portfolios**

As it has been stated earlier, a language portfolio is a “multiple writing samples, written over time, and purposefully selected from various genres to best represent a student’s abilities, progress, and most successful texts in a particular context” Hyland (2003). Writing portfolios are based on the idea that a link should be made between feedback and the quality of learning (He, 2015). It means that learners are supposed to benefit the maximum from the different types of feedback. Feedback is given a big importance in enhancing learners’ writing, for it attracts their attention towards their mistakes (Raimes, 1983). Ferris (as cited in Kroll, 2003, p. 119), clarifies the significance of feedback in writing as follows: “For students, the feedback they receive from both instructors and peers may be the most significant component in their successful developments as writers.” As it is commonly known, the teacher is supposed to be the one who monitors students’ written productions. However, with the advancement of the trend of learner autonomy, feedback should be the responsibility of both teachers and students (Murcia, 2001, as cited in Kroll, 2003). He (2015) claims that building an effective writing portfolio depends on learners’ ability to give feedback both to themselves and their peers.

According to He (2015) in order to make the feedback on students’ writing portfolios efficient, it should pass through three steps. The first step is encouraging learners to self-review their writing, through detecting their different mistakes, such as



wrong spelling and improper use of grammar, and correcting them. The next step is the establishment of peer feedback in learning writing. Peer feedback is effective in the sense that it enables learners to think independently, and to revise each others' work. As a final step, teacher's written feedback should be provided. However, this feedback should not be in the form of explicit feedback, in the sense that the teacher corrects the errors. Indeed, such corrections should be done in the previous two stages. Instead, teachers ought to provide some positive comments.

### **2.7.2. Rohaya's Model (2015)**

#### **2.7.2.1. Reflection**

Reflection is an ability which learners need to develop in order to be autonomous writers. According to Abdullah (2015), reflection refers to learners' reviewing their writing on the basis of the feedback they receive.

Abdullah, (2015) asserts that "Decision making refers to the ability to plan the revisions of the drafts" (p.24). In this sense, learners must develop the ability to pinpoint the problem, try to find alternatives for the erroneous items, and decide whether or not to adopt them.

#### **2.7.2.2. Revision**

Revision is the phase where learners concretely correct their drafts in response to the received feedback (Abdullah, 2015). Murcia (2001) as (cited in He, 2015, p. 604) asserts that "Revising is a complex process which requires both the teacher and students' involvement". In other words, revision requires the collaboration of both the teacher and the learner. Learners should revise their drafts making use of the feedback they receive from both their teacher and their peers. The correction should be made with regard to different aspects, such as content, organization, style and language (Abdullah, 2015).

**2.8. Conclusion:**

This chapter has reviewed the concept of autonomy, its significance in language learning, and some related terminology. In addition, the present chapter provided some criteria that constitute learners' autonomy in writing.

## **Introduction**

The present chapter represents the practical part of the study. It investigates the relationship between transparency in assessment practices and the development of students' autonomy in writing at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yehia University in Jijel. The chapter begins by providing a detailed description of the two research instruments used in the study. Then, it presents an analysis of the data generated by the research instruments into question.

### **3.1. The Students' Questionnaire**

#### **3.1.1. The Sample**

In our attempt to seek a relevant and reliable answer to our research question , a sample of sixty (60) students ,representing third of of third year License students of English as a foreign language at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia-Jijel during the academic year 2018-2019,180,has been chosen on the basis of convenience to participate in the present study.

#### **3.1.2. Description of the Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire consists of twenty four (24) five point Likert-scale items divided into two (02) sections. The first section is entitled "Transparency of Writing Assessment Practices", and includes fourteen (14) questions. The second section entitled "Learner Autonomy in Writing" includes ten (10) questions.

The questionnaire was administered to sixty (60) third year EFL students in the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University during the academic year 2018-2019. The researchers were present during the whole administration time so as to provide explanation or clarification of the respondents. The administration of the questionnaire lasted three days and the return rate was 100%.

### 2.2.1. The Teacher's Interview

#### 2.2.1.1. Description of the Interview

This interview is a whole of 24 items. It was conducted to one written expression teacher who was asked to answer 22 open-ended questions related to the degree of transparency he reaches in assessing his students' writing, as well as his students' readiness to be autonomous in writing.

The interview was administered and tape recorded in approximately half an hour on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, 2019. The interview was conducted in a relaxing mood, and the teacher was told to feel free to provide any additional information or explanation he may see necessary to the issues under discussion. It should be noted that the interview aimed at cross-examining the data collected through the students' questionnaire.

### 3.2. Data Analysis and Discussion

#### 3.2.1. Analysis of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire

##### 3.2.1.1. Section One: Transparency of Writing Assessment Practices

**Item 1: I feel very satisfied with the teacher's evaluation of my written work in the writing course.**

Table 3.1

*Degree of Satisfaction with Teachers' Evaluation of Written Productions*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Stronglyagree	02	3.33%
Agree	39	65%
Neutral	03	05%
Disagree	16	26.67%
Stronglydisagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results in the above table show that while a majority of the participants 68.33% were satisfied with the evaluation they receive from their writing teacher, 26.67% were not. Additionally, 05% of the students chose to be neutral.

**Item 02: I am confident that the teacher's evaluation of my written work reflects adequately my level.**

Table 3.2

*Writing evaluation reflection of students' level*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	06	10%
Agree	36	60%
Neutral	03	05%
Disagree	10	16.76%
Strongly disagree	05	08.33%
Total	60	100%

It seems from the results obtained in table 2 that 60% of the participants agreed and 10% of them strongly agreed that the evaluation they receive from the writing teacher is reflective of their real level. On the contrary, 16.76% of the participants showed disagreement. The table also shows that while 08.33% have strongly disagreed, 05% were neutral.

**Item3: The teacher usually assigns a mark to my written performance with reference to the different aspects of my writing.**

Table 3.3

*Evaluation of the different aspects of students' Writing Performance*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	06	10%
Agree	36	60%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	06	10%
Strongly disagree	00	00%
Total	60	100%

Table 3.3 shows that more than half of the participants 70% have agreed, or strongly agreed that their writing teacher assigns a mark to each aspect of the piece of writing. Through this, it can be deduced that a degree of awareness of the writing evaluation criteria is reached by students. 20% of the subjects chose to be neutral.

**Item 4: At the beginning of each semester, the writing teacher explains to us the set of writing competencies that constitute the goals of writing instruction.**

Table 3.4

*Teacher's explanation of the writing course goals*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	08	13.33%
Agree	33	55%
Neutral	06	10%
Disagree	06	10%
Strongly disagree	07	11.67%
Total	60	100%

The results in the above table show that half of the participants 55% agreed that the writing teacher explains to them the goals of writing instruction at the beginning of each semester, while 13.33% of them strongly agreed with this statement. In contrast,

11.67% expressed a strong disagreement, and 10% stand for both those who were neutral, and strongly disagreeing with the statement.

**Item 5: The writing teacher always provides me with a clear set of criteria against which my writing performance has been evaluated.**

Table 3.5

*Transparency of Evaluation Criteria in the Writing Course*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	07	11.70%
Agree	21	35%
Neutral	06	10%
Disagree	20	33.30%
Strongly disagree	06	10%
Total	60	100%

As far as the fifth statement is concerned, it is apparent from the above table that 35% of the subjects agreed that the writing teacher shares with them the writing evaluation criteria. By contrast, 33.30% disagreed with the same idea. The rates of those who expressed a strong agreement or a strong disagreement with the previous belief are approximately the same, as 11.70 strongly agreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. On the other hand, 10% represents the ones who preferred to be neutral.

**Item 6: We usually spend the major part of the writing class writing.**

Table 3.6

*Writing Practice Frequency Inside the Classroom*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	07	11.67%
Agree	22	33.67%
Neutral	08	13.33%
Disagree	15	25%
Strongly disagree	08	13.33%
Total	60	100%

According to table 06, 33.67% of the participants agreed, while 25% disagreed that they spend the majority of the writing class writing. 13.33% were neutral. Similarly 13.33% refers to those who strongly disagreed while 12% strongly agreed that they spend the major part of the writing class writing.

**Item 7: The writing teacher explains to us clearly the objectives of each writing task.**

Table 3.7

*Teacher's Explanation of Writing Tasks' Objectives*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	08	13.33%
Agree	24	40%
Neutral	09	15%
Disagree	15	25%
Strongly disagree	04	06.67%
Total	60	100%

40% of the respondents agreed that the writing teacher explains to his students the objectives of each writing task, while 25% disagreed. Additionally, 15% represents those who were neutral. 13.33% strongly agreed and 07% strongly disagreed.



**Item 8: The writing teacher has raised 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.**

Table 3.8

*Awareness of the Steps of the Writing Process and the Skills Associated with each Step*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	15	25%
Agree	21	35%
Neutral	09	15%
Disagree	12	20%
Strongly disagree	03	05%
Total	60	100%

As the above table demonstrates, a rate of 35% agreed that they are aware of the steps that make up the writing process and the skills required for each step, thanks to their teacher. Additionally, 25% opted for a strong agreement. Subsequently, 20% of the participants disagreed, 15% were neutral and 05% strongly disagreed.

**Item 9: The writing teacher always provides us with oral feedback during the different phases of the writing process.**

Table 3.9

*Teacher's Feedback Throughout the Writing Process*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	05	06.70%
Agree	27	45%
Neutral	14	23.30%
Disagree	11	18.30%
Strongly disagree	04	06.70%
Total	60	100%

As it is plainly shown in the above table, 45% of the students of the participants agreed with statement 09, and 23.30% were neutral. On the other hand, 18% of the students disagreed, while 07% strongly agreed. By contrast, 07% strongly disagreed.

**Item 10: The writing class always starts with the analysis of a sample text.**

Table 3.10

*Analysis of a Sample Text at the Beginning of Writing Classes*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	20%
Agree	15	25%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	10	16.67%
Strongly disagree	11	18.33%
Total	60	100%

The results in the above table reveal that 25% of the students agreed with proposition in question, and 20% strongly agreed that the writing classes start with analyzing a sample text; an equal number 20% were neutral, while 18% strongly disagreed, and 17% disagreed.

**Item 11: In addition to the mark, the teacher provides me with reformulations of my erroneous sentences.**

Table 3.11

*Teacher's Reformulations of the Student's Erroneous Sentences*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	05	08.30%
Agree	21	35%
Neutral	13	21.70%
Disagree	12	20%
Strongly disagree	09	15%
Total	60	100%

The table above demonstrates that, 35% have shown their agreement concerning statement 11. In addition, 21.70% were neutral, 20% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed. On the other hand, only 8% of the participants strongly agreed.

**Item 12: During each writing class, the writing teacher always provides us with the opportunity to collaborate to write in small groups before producing individual texts.**

Table 3.12

*Opportunities Provided for Students' Collaboration in Writing*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	09	15%
Agree	12	20%
Neutral	11	18.33%
Disagree	15	25%
Strongly disagree	13	21.67%
Total	60	100%

Students' responses show that 25% of the participants disagreed with the proposition in question. 21.67% of the participants chose to strongly disagree, while 20% agreed. Other students 15% strongly agreed, and 18.33% were neutral.

**Item 13: Writing teacher encourages us to review other peers' texts against a clear set of criteria.**

Table 3.13

*The Role of Peer Assessment in Writing Classes*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	05	08.30%
Agree	28	46.70%
Neutral	11	18.30%
Disagree	10	16.70%
Strongly disagree	06	10%
Total	60	100%

The above table shows that 46.70% of the students chose to agree with the thirteenth statement. "Neutral" was the choice of 18.30%. An approximately equal number of participants 16.70% disagreed; 10% strongly disagreed, and 08.30 expressed a strong agreement.

**Item 14: As a follow up of in-class writing tasks, the writing teacher requires us to write homework on a weekly basis.**

Table 3.14

*Teacher's Assignment of Homework in Writing*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	20%
Agree	20	33.33%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	10	16.67%
Strongly disagree	06	10%
Total	60	100%

Concerning statement 14, which aims at discovering whether writing teachers encourage out of class learning, the highest percentage of participants 33.33% have opted for agree. 20% expressed a strong agreement or neutrality. On the other hand, disagreement was the choice of 16.67% of the subjects, while 10% stand for those who strongly agreed.

### 3.2.1.2. Section Two: Learner Autonomy in Writing

**Item 15: I am fully aware that the production phase and the editing phase require complete distinct psychological processes.**

Table 3.15

*Students' Awareness of the Psychological Processes Involved in the Writing Process*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	09	15%
Agree	28	47%
Neutral	23	38%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly disagree	00	00%
Total	60	100%

47% agreed with the above statement, while 38% preferred to be neutral. Subsequently, 15% have indicated that they strongly agree with the above statement.

**Item 16: My writing teachers' feedback enabled me to get a clear idea about the level of my writing competence.**

Table 3.16

*Role of teacher feedback in increasing students' awareness of their writing level*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	12	20%
Agree	27	45%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	07	10%
Strongly disagree	03	05%
Total	60	100%

It is plainly clear that an overriding majority of the participants (75%) confirmed the above statement. 45% of the participants agreed, and 20% have shown even strong agreement. While (20%) opted for “neutral”, only 05% of the subjects expressed a strong disagreement.

**Item 17: As a result of my writing teachers' feedback, I am able to predict with a high level of accuracy the score I might obtain in a standardized test of writing like TOEFL or IELTS.**

Table 3.17

*Student's Scoring Predictions in Standardized Tests of Writing (TOEFL or IELTS), based on their Writing Teacher's Feedback*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	03	05%
Agree	23	38.30%
Neutral	04	06.70%
Disagree	12	20%
Strongly disagree	18	30%
Total	60	100%

The table above indicates that 38% of the participants affirm their ability to predict high levels of accuracy in standardized tests, while 30% preferred to be neutral. On the other hand, 20% of the students disagree with the previous belief, 07% strongly disagreed and the rest of them 05% strongly agreed.

**Item18: I practice writing in English at least once a week.**

Table 3.18

*The Frequency of Practicing writing outside the classroom*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	18.30%
Agree	23	38.30%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	10	16.70%
Strongly disagree	04	06.70%
Total	60	100%

The results of the above statement show that 38% of the students agree while 20% choose to be neutral. Additionally, 18% of them strongly agreed while 17% disagreed and 07% strongly agreed.

**Item19: I always share my English writings with teachers, friends, and classmates**

Table 3.19

*Students' Sharing of their Writing Productions with Others*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	07	12%
Agree	19	31%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	10	17%
Strongly disagree	12	20%
Total	60	100%

The above results show that the largest number of the participants 43.30% admitted an ability of predicting the scores they might have in a standardized test. Contrarily, 50% of them negated the statement, for 30% were in a state of a strong disagreement, and 20% in a state of disagreement. Additionally, only 6.70% expressed their neutrality.

**Item 20: I am fully aware about my writing difficulties in English and I have devised plans to overcome them.**

Table 3.20

*Student's Readiness to Overcome their Writing Difficulties*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	17%
Agree	29	48%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	05	08%
Strongly disagree	04	07%
Total	60	100%

As illustrated in the above table, 48% of the participants agreed that they are aware of their difficulties in writing, and have plans to overcome them. In addition, 20% of the students preferred to be neutral, 17% strongly agreed, while 08% disagreed, and 07% strongly disagreed.

**Item 21: I am able to classify my writing competence in terms of the set of competencies stipulated by the European framework of reference.**



Table 3.21

*The Student's Ability to Classify their Writing Competence according to the European Framework of Reference*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	06	10%
Agree	14	23.33%
Neutral	21	35%
Disagree	13	21.67%
Strongly disagree	06	10%
Total	60	100%

From the results tabulated above, neutrality was the choice of 35% of the students concerning their ability to evaluate their writing proficiency according to the European framework of reference. 23.33% of the participants selected agree, while 21.67% disagreed. Additionally, the same number 10% refers to those who preferred to strongly agree, or strongly disagree with the aforementioned statement.

**Item 22: The writing course has enabled me to perform better in the content modules of the curriculum.**

Table 3.22

*The Importance of the Writing Course for Students' Performance in the Content Modules*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	11	18.33%
Agree	28	46.67%
Neutral	15	25%
Disagree	05	08.33%
Strongly disagree	01	01.67%
Total	60	100%

The results from the above table report that 47% affirmed their agreement concerning the above statement. Additionally, 25% of the students have chosen to be neutral, 18% opted to strongly agree while 08% of the students preferred to disagree and only 02% strongly disagree.

**Item 23: Improving my writing skill would enable me to achieve higher levels of success in my future life.**

Table 3.23

*The Importance of the Writing Ability in Future Success*

Options	Participants	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	33.34%
Agree	24	40%
Neutral	09	15%
Disagree	05	08.33%
Strongly disagree	02	03.33%
Total	60	100%

In the above table, results demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of the participants 73.34% acknowledged the importance of writing in achieving success in their future life. On the contrary, only 11.66% negated the previously mentioned statement. Additionally, a rate of 15% of the students did not provide their opinions and preferred to be neutral.

**Item 24: Some of the themes and topics that I have written about in the writing course are the topics and themes that I would like to write about in the future.**

Table 3.24

*The Relevance of the Themes of the Writing Course to Students' Interest*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly agree	17	28.33%
Agree	17	28.33%
Neutral	12	20%
Disagree	10	16.67%
Strongly disagree	04	06.67%
Total	60	100%

The results in the above table reveal that the number of students who have confirmed their agreement or strong agreement is equal 28.33%. Additionally, 20% of them preferred to be neutral, 16% disagreed, and only 06% strongly disagree.

### **3.2.2. Discussion of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire**

An overall analysis of the results generated by the students questionnaire reveals that a slight majority of the respondents confirmed that the writing course was transparent enough and acculturated them to the evaluation criteria of their writing productions and, hence, fostered their autonomy in writing. The analysis of the results demonstrate that the most serious weakness in the writing course as far as the issue under discussion is concerned is its ineffectiveness in enabling students to predict their potential scores in standardized tests which is due to the fact that teachers improvise the design of their writing tests and exams. In addition, the results also suggest that the writing course does not enable students to socialize enough to and internalize sufficiently the evaluation criteria through a sufficient amount of practice and peer-feedback. Last but not least, the respondents did not show satisfaction with the effectiveness of teachers 'feedback.

### **3.2.3. Analysis of the Teachers Interview**

#### **Q.1. How often do you correct students' writing productions, besides the ones they produce during exams?**

When the teacher was asked how often he corrects his students' productions, he declared that he corrects them twice a month.

#### **Q.2 When you correct, do you just assign a mark to the overall performance, due to time constraints, or because the groups are overcrowded?**

The teacher's answer reveals that the facts of time constraints and overcrowded groups are not pretext for not assigning marks to the overall performance of students. Moreover, he declared that despite the huge number of his students (six groups) he tends to provide them with detailed comments about their errors by underlining the error and indicating its type, and letting students figure out how to correct it, especially at the beginning of the course. Once they get familiar with the feedback techniques, symbols will be used instead. Additionally, he said that after correcting, he devotes some sessions to deal with the areas which most students have failed in in their compositions, which are commonly: grammar and structure.

#### **Q.3. Do you think that feedback is important to students' progress?**

Concerning the answer of the above question, the teacher indicated that he provides his students with the necessary feedback, but he is not responsible for its effectiveness. The effectiveness of the given feedback, according to him, is determined by many reasons. These reasons are: the degrees of attention learners pay to the feedback, their motivation to learn and improve, and the consideration they give to the type of the feedback. In this respect, it can be understood that the effectiveness of the feedback is dependent on the learner alone, and not on the teacher.

**Q.4. On the basis of your experience in correcting and commenting on students' writing, do you feel that students take into consideration your feedback?**

The answer of the respondent was that generally only more able students, who are generally, the smartest and most motivated ones, pay attention to the feedback he gave since he can see the efforts and the improvement in their productions each time.

**Q.5. Could you give us an idea about the type of feedback that you give to your students?**

When the teacher was asked about the type of feedback that is given to his students, he mentioned that he usually uses the explicit feedback through, in which he clarifies the type of the errors to the students, and leave them to self-correct the compositions

**Q.6. Do you usually seek to raise your students' awareness to the objectives and competences they are supposed to develop in the writing course?**

According to the teachers, because of time constraints, he is obliged to tell his students about the competences and objectives that are needed to be reached. However, this can not be done all the time, because the writing course itself does not have clear objectives, but has one general aim, which fostering learners' academic writing ability. For instance, in order to help students to achieve good results in terms of quality of writing, the technique of comparing between formal and informal writing is used by the teacher. This technique requires a lot of work from the part of the students.

**Q.7. Do you think that the writing course currently in use is effective in fostering writing as a habit among students?**

The teachers' answer was negative. He affirmed that third year writing course is not well defined i.e. there is no writing syllabus and the students are concerned with

practice only. This latter, has been accepted as a general aim for the students in the sense that through practice they are supposed to develop their academic writing competency.

**Q.8. Do you feel that students accept your evaluation of their written performance?**

The interviewee's answer to this question reveals that he does not know if his students are satisfied about the marks they get or not. He adds that he has never receives any complaint from the part of his students, but even though it does not mean that they are satisfied.

**Q.9. Do you feel that the writing course you teach provides students with sufficient practice?**

When this question was asked, the teacher stated that despite the restricted time, he usually asks his students to practice inside the classroom and under his supervision to make sure that all of them are practicing.

**Q.10. Do you feel that your students have sufficiently grasped the concept of writing as a process?**

The respondent's answer was that the majority of the students have not understood yet that writing is a process. However, the proficient students are aware of the processes involved in writing as he usually observes that they follow the steps of writing.

**Q.11. Which step or steps of the writing process do you think are the most challenging to the students?**

When the teacher was asked about the most challenging steps in writing for the students, he mentioned two main steps namely; brainstorming and the editing phase. Accordingly, he justified why brainstorming is one of them by students' unfamiliarity with the topic, which causes a lack of information, or by psychological factors, such as demotivation. Concerning, the editing phase, he sees that students do not acknowledge the difference between speaking and writing, and thus tend to write in the same way they speak. However, the nature of speaking implies that more than one draft should be written.

**Q.12. Which aspects of the written production is the most problematic to the student?**

The teacher's answer was that the most difficult aspects for weak students are the grammar and the organization of ideas. In the other hand, the most difficult aspect for good students is finding decorative expressions.

**Q.13. Do you feel that students' collaboration in producing a written text is beneficial to students?**

When the teacher was asked this question he affirmed that collaboration is beneficial at the first stage in the writing process, which is brainstorming, where students are involved in group discussion to exchange their ideas and this is what is meant by collaboration in writing; otherwise, it will be a kind of negative dependency. On the other hand, students need to demonstrate his writing potentials as an individual.

**Q.14. Do you think that students may benefit from the feedback provided by their peers as well?**

The teacher's response was positive; he indicated that most of the students benefited from the feedback that is provided by their peers. In addition to this, he mentioned that he opts for the technique of peer reviewing. According to him, peer reviewing is an effective way in improving writing, because it creates competition between learners, as each one will try to produce the best that he can, in order to minimise the number of errors he may make, and not to feel offended by his peers' corrections.

**Q.15. Is there any difference between the writing tasks that you usually assign inside the classroom and those you assign as homework?**

The participants answered that he had never assigned homework this year.

**Q.17. Do you think that your students are sufficiently aware about their individual difficulties in writing?**

When this question was asked, the teacher indicated that some of the students are aware of their difficulties and they tend to tell him, following his feedback, about them and ask him about ways to deal with these difficulties.

**Q.18. Once they have completed the writing course, do you think that your students are capable of predicting the level of their potential performance in a standardised test?**

The response of the teacher affirms that the students are not aware of the existence of the standardized tests in writing and they have never seen them.



**Q.19. Have you noticed that sharing pieces of creative writing with teachers and other students have become a clear tendency among some students at least?**

The answer of the teacher on this question indicates some students tend to share with him some of their pieces of writing, in such a situation he added that he supports and encourages his students to develop this type of writing.

**Q.20. Do your content module colleagues provide you with positive feedback about your students' writings?**

The interviewee replied that he had never received such a thing. However, as a content module teacher himself, he said that his students do not apply the skills they learn in the writing course into the content module. According to him, this is because in such modules' tests, students are interested only in writing the content, and not in producing a well structured and decorated piece of writing.

**Q.21. Do you have specific memory about any student who benefited the most from your course?**

It is indicated by the teacher's response that he had no special memory about any students who benefited from the writing course, because it is unlikely for a student to develop his writing proficiency in such a short time, as that which devoted to each writing course at the university.

**Q.22. Do you think that the themes that you assign to your students are capable of sparking life-long interest?**

When this question was asked, the teacher indicated that he is not sure about it, but he tried to provide them with authentic topics and obvious ones where students are capable to write about. He added that his main focus is on the originality of their ideas.

### 3.2.4. Overall Discussion of the Results

The teacher's responses confirmed the most important results of the analysis of the students' questionnaire. Despite the writing teachers' effort to provide students with transparent evaluation criteria that would enable them to achieve high levels of autonomy in writing, the lack of sufficient writing practice as well as the frequency and effectiveness of feedback constitute a major hindrance to the achievement of this objective. Moreover, the teacher confirmed the use of standardized tests is completely absent in our context. Furthermore, the teacher confirmed that peer feedback is not adequately used to enable learners to socialize to and internalize evaluation criteria since the teacher himself think that students' cooperation is detrimental to the development of their autonomy in writing. Furthermore, the teacher made an interesting remark about the students' inability to transfer the skills acquired in the writing course to their performance in the content modules. This interesting remark lead us to suggest that the issue of transparency in writing evaluation criteria should better be raised in the content modules of the curriculum rather than in the writing course.

### 3.2.5. Limitations of the study

During the period of conducting this research, some problems have raised and caused difficulties for the researchers. These limitations are as follows:

- The first limitation to the present study was the time constraints.
- The fact that autonomy in writing is an under researched area in applied linguistics, which has rendered it difficult for us to find adequate references to operationalize the definition of the variable in question.
- Another limitation concerns the political events that have marked this academic year, and caused difficulties for us to contact the intended sample to respond to the questionnaire.

## **Conclusion**

The present chapter presented a description and analysis of the results generated by the two research instrument used in this study, namely the students' questionnaire and the teacher's interview. While a slight majority of the respondents has confirmed that the writing course utilizes evaluation that are transparent enough to foster students' autonomy in writing, a cross-comparison of the students' responses with the results of the teacher interview has revealed the insufficient time allotted for practice, the weak frequency and ineffectiveness of feedback, improvisation in the design of tests, and weak level in peer evaluation constitute the major obstacles to the development of students' autonomy in writing. In addition, the teacher's responses suggested that the issue of the connection between the transparency between evaluation criteria and fostering students' autonomy in writing is more problematic in the content modules of the curriculum.

### **General conclusion**

The present study examined the role of the writing assessment practices in fostering learners' autonomy in writing at the department of English language literature at the University of Mohhamed Seddik Ben Yahia in Jijel.

The first two chapters reviewed the literature related to the issue of writing assessment, while the second chapter dealt with autonomy in writing. This review of the related literature has informed the design and analysis of the two research instruments implemented in the practical part of this research.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the evaluation criteria in the writing course in fostering students' autonomy in writing, a students' questionnaire was designed and administered to sample of sixty third year students chosen on the basis of convenience at the department of English in Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University. The students' responses have been analyzed and compared to those of teacher who responded to an interview designed and implemented for this purpose.

The results generated by the students' questionnaire have shown that a slight majority of the responses indicated that the evaluations used in the writing course are transparent enough to foster students' autonomy in writing. However, a cross-comparison of the students' responses with the results of the teacher interview has revealed that the writing course suffers from serious weaknesses which impact negatively on its effectiveness in fostering learners' autonomy in writing. These weaknesses can be summarized in four points: the insufficient time allotted for practice, the weak frequency and ineffectiveness of feedback, improvisation in the design of tests, and weak level in peer evaluation. In addition, the teacher's responses suggested that the issue of the connection between the transparency between evaluation criteria and fostering students' autonomy in writing is more problematic in the content modules of the curriculum.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Students 'Questionnaire**

Dear student,

The present questionnaire aims at evaluating the effectiveness of the writing course in fostering learners' autonomy in writing. The data collected through this tool will be used in the practical part of a master's thesis 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.

We thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours Sincerely

Miss F. Bousbia and Miss D. Alioua

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## I. Transparency of Writing Assessment Practices

	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Disagree	disagree	Strongly agree
1. I feel very satisfied with the teacher's evaluation of my written work in the writing course.						
2. I am confident that the teacher's evaluation of my written work reflects adequately my level.						
3. The teacher usually assigns a mark to my written performance with reference to the different aspects of my writing.						
4. At the beginning of each semester, the writing teacher explains to us the set of writing competencies that constitute the goals of writing instruction.						
5. The writing teacher always provides me with a clear set of criteria against which my writing performance has been evaluated.						
6. We usually spend the major part of the writing class writing.						
7. The writing teacher explains to us clearly the objectives of each writing task.						

<p><b>8.</b> The writing teacher has raised 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.</p>					
<p><b>9.</b> The writing teacher always provides us with oral feedback during the different phases of the writing process.</p>					
<p><b>10.</b> The writing class always starts with the analysis of a sample text.</p>					
<p><b>11.</b> In addition to the mark, the teacher provides me with reformulations of my erroneous sentences.</p>					
<p><b>12.</b> During each writing class, the writing teacher always provides us with the opportunity to collaborate to write in small groups before producing individual texts.</p>					
<p><b>13.</b> The writing teacher encourages us to review other peers' texts against a clear set of criteria.</p>					
<p><b>14.</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>II. Learner Autonomy in Writing</b></p>					
<p><b>15.</b> I am fully aware that the production phase and the editing phase require complete distinct psychological processes.</p>					
<p><b>16.</b> My writing teachers' feedback enabled me to get a clear idea about the level of my writing competence.</p>					

<p><b>17.</b> As a result of my writing teachers' feedback, I am able to predict with a high level of accuracy the score I might obtain in a standardized test like TOEFL or IELTS.</p>					
<p><b>18.</b> I practice writing in English, at least, once a week.</p>					
<p><b>19.</b> I always share my English writings with teachers, friends, and classmates.</p>					
<p><b>20.</b> I am fully aware about my writing difficulties in English and I have devised plans to overcome them.</p>					
<p><b>21.</b> I am able to classify my writing competence in terms of the set of competencies stipulated by the European framework of reference.</p>					
<p><b>22.</b> The writing course has enabled me to perform better in the content modules of the curriculum.</p>					
<p><b>23.</b> Improving my writing skill would enable me to achieve higher levels of success in my future life.</p>					
<p><b>24.</b> Some of the themes and topics that I have written about in the writing course are the topics and themes that I would like to write about in the future.</p>					

## Appendix B

### Teacher's Interview

Thank you for collaboration to participate in this interview, will serve as a data collection tool to support our master dissertation entitled: "the role of writing assessment practices in enhancing learner autonomy in writing.

#### Section One: Transparency of Writing Assessment Practices

**Researcher:** How often do you correct students' writing productions, besides the ones they produce during exams?

**Teacher:** OK. As part of the module of written expression, I do correct their written productions bimonthly; it means once in fifteen days. There is correction; it's in the program in the module of written expression. Is this what you mean? Or you mean the other content modules

**Researcher:** When you correct, do you just assign a mark to the overall performance, due to time constraints, or because the groups are overcrowded?

**Teacher:** I had six groups, but you can not justify not giving detailed information by the fact that you have overcrowded groups. If you can not do it, don't do it as of the start. Once you are in it, ok, you do it as you see fits. For me, I give detailed comments on the writings of the students. At first, in the beginning, I would mention the type of error for example or the type of the thing students needs, or the students, all of them, needs to do when I come to form a general picture about their productions. So I would give the same comments, and schedule lessons to deal with some areas, the areas mentioned.

**Researcher:** Which areas specifically?

**Teacher:** Sometimes it is the grammar, sometimes it is the layout, sometimes it is the structure of the arguments, etc. In the beginning, I would mention, for example, I would say word order, the order of words is not correct; try to figure out a better one, or the correct way

to do it. I would say for example tense. I would underline, and write tense. Later after they get accustomed with the areas, or the way to correct, we'll be using symbols, only symbols. So instead of writing "tense", I would write "T".

**Researcher:** Do you think that feedback is important to students' progress?

**Teacher:** It depends. It depends. My job is to give feedback, but whether students act on it is not my problem.

When do you think feedback is beneficial for students

It is when students act on it. When they study the areas in which they failed, for example if we say "tense", students should start working on the use of tenses. They should not just say, yes this time I used the past simple just because I have thought that the action happened in the past, and it is not a problem, so they minimise the importance of the feedback given. There were many times where I gave remarks about capitalisation, but students they do not care about the form. Not all students. Some of them keep doing the same mistakes. So effectiveness depends on so many things, among which is whether students pay attention, want to get better, value the kind of feedback we give them, etc.

**Researcher:** On the basis of your experience in correcting and commenting on students' writing, do you feel that students take into consideration your feedback?

**Teacher:** that's what we were talking about. There are some, let's say that the most studious students, they pay attention. I can see that there is some effort; I can see that. The most motivated students are the most studious, the smartest, the highest achieving students.

**Researcher:** Could you give us an idea about the type of feedback that you give to your students?

**Teacher:** I've said I started giving explicit feedback in the form of classifying the errors of the students for the students to discover the errors themselves. So they know it's a problem of agreement between subject and verb, so solve it. Later, it has been only underlying. I think it

has to do with what you are doing, and I have a sample here. Later on, it became only a form of underlying. I can give it to the same student who has made the error, or to other students to discover the errors that have been done by the other student. Why, because sometimes the students can not see the error he is making. Shall I continue talking about the feedback, and how it serves?

**Researcher:** Yes, of course

**Teacher:** In some sessions, I gave students the same productions they have done, with my comments or just implicit feedback, and asked them to produce a better version, but before doing that, they had to correct the mistake first. There was a session also, in which we have written a model, paragraph or essay, each class had its own paragraph. They chose one randomly, they write it on the board, and then they try to produce a better version, then see who is going to be the best in doing that. It is a form of competition.

**Researcher:** do you think these techniques are effective?

**Teacher:** I do not know. Writing has to do with practice. You can not do something and expect it to be a magical thing.

**Researcher:** Do you usually seek to raise your students' awareness to the objectives and competences they are supposed to develop in the writing course?

**Teacher:** are you expecting me to tell you I was ideal all the time? So, given the fact that we were limited by time, you can tell students about these things, competences and objective they need to achieve. But the time given is not enough, and does not serve the aim of the setting. So I was, for example telling them to respect the rules of capitalisation; I was telling them to write in a more formal way, and not in the way they did. And we have practiced all those things. We have been comparing two texts, a text which was written in an informal style, and a text, which was written in an informal style, and then we extracted the differences of each one. So these things we will try to achieve good results in terms of the quality of

writing for all the students, but we need a lot of work from the parts of students and teachers, and even with the time dedicated for the writing modules.

#### Section Two: Learner Autonomy in Writing

**Researcher:** Do you think that the writing course currently in use is effective in fostering writing as a habit among students?

**Teacher:** it is not defined. The course is not really defined. You can not expect to find a writing syllabus. There is practice, only practice. They would give you a general aim, which is to make students write academic essays, and that's enough for you. So you give students all the kinds of practice and activities they need to achieve this aim. In the License curriculum, there is such an aim, but not in third year.

**Researcher:** Do you feel that students accept your evaluation of their written performance?

**Teacher:** how am I supposed to know?

**Researcher:** do your students complain about the marks you give them?

**Teacher:** it has never happened to me.

#### Section Two: Learner Autonomy in Writing

**Researcher:** Do you feel that the writing course you teach provides students with sufficient practice?

**Teacher:** I said that the time given is only one hour and a half. I give practice. I make sure that everyone in the class is writing; it is very important, under my supervision. They write in each class. In each session there is practice, and they have been doing this since the beginning. Each class is a writing session; the second first class is for testing.

**Researcher:** what do you mean by testing?

**Teacher:** we can consider the first time as instruction, or an introduction into a new type of essay, I give them to practice later, and then in the second class they are tested. They deal with writing professionally.

**Researcher:** Do you feel that your students have sufficiently grasped the concept of writing as a process?

**Teacher:** overall, no. They haven't understood that, but for the proficient students, you can see that. You can see the way they plan their writing compositions, how they draft, and how they exchange, and ask. So they go through so many steps.

**Researcher:** Which step or steps of the writing process do you are the most challenging to the student?

**Teacher:** it's, let's say brainstorming. I would not say the most difficult; it is challenging. The other one is editing.

**Researcher:** Why

**Teacher:** Let's start with brainstorming. The first reaction you get from your students when you give students a writing a task is that they do not have enough information about the topic, or they are not intresting. So they stop thinking about the topic. If they get really interested in doing that, and let's say brainstorm or discuss the topic, they will be interested in the topic, and will start writing. Editing is about the form and the content of the topic given. They rush into writing the final product thinking that the way they think in writing is thae same as in speaking. In writing, you have todraft and redraft in terms of many things related to both the form and the content.

**Researcher:** Which aspects of the written production do you think is the most problematic to the student?



**Teacher:** it is hard to tell. You can find all types of difficulties. For the great students, it is grammar; it is also the organisation of ideas. For good students, they want to find the best expression that cause them to get a good mark.

**Researcher:** Do you feel that students' collaboration in producing a written text is beneficial to students.

**Teacher:** just at the beginning, exchanging ideas, brainstorming; otherwise, they are relying on each other. We need to know what individual students can do.

**Researcher:** Do you think that students may benefit from the feedback provided by their peers as well?

**Teacher:** They do. There would be a kind of competition. Most students do not like to be corrected by others. If you tell them other students will correct you, they will do their best to avoid making mistakes; it creates competition. Though we do not personalise mistakes, sometimes we say do not write your names; just give a symbol, when we prepare for peer correction, but it creates competition.

**Researcher:** Is there any difference between the writing tasks that you usually assign inside the classroom and those you assign as homework?

**Teacher:** this year I have never assigned homework.

**Researcher:** As far as writing is concerned, do you think that your students have a feel about the process they are making with regard to writing?

**Teacher:** most students are not, if it's globally speaking.

**Researcher:** Do you think that your students are sufficiently aware about their individual difficulties in writing?

**Teacher:** some of them can tell you I'm not good in this aspect; I know I make many mistakes; I'm not good at tenses. Some of them come to me in the follow up of my feedback, when they should correct themselves. They show me the way they corrected it. They start ask:

why didi you do this? I can not get it; how can I make this better, because I think it is all right.

**Researcher:** Once they have completed the writing course, do you think that your students are capable of predicting the level of their potential performance in a standardised test?

**Teacher:** like TOEFL? they have never seen one.

**Researcher:** Have you noticed that sharing pieces of creative writing with teachers and other students have become a clear tendency among some students at least?

**Teacher:** Last year, a student gave me a product; it was a short story. It was in Arabic, but it was very creative. This year, i have some students, who try to include many genres in their writings. When you read them, you notice that they are quoting some authors and from famous novels, especially when there is a conversation involved. I have some example from this year, some students who have been so creative. They intelligently integrate information. When I find examples like these, I invite the student to share the way they produce, and why I like their work.

**Researcher:** Do your content module colleagues provide you with positive feedback about your students' writings?

**Teacher:** No one has done that, but as I am content module teacher. Sometimes you think the students have never studied writing before. They focuss on giving content to the teacher, as they are telling the teacher we want to tell you that we know the content; we know the material you have given us. They focuss on this, not on decorating. Decoration is second in importance. This is the problem, not that they do not know; they rush into giving information, and achieving the final result.

**Researcher:** Do you have specific memory about any student who benefited the most from your course?

**Teacher:** I don't expect someone to become a good writer after only three or four months.

**Researcher:** Do you think that the themes that you assign to your students are capable of sparking life-long interest?

**Teacher:** the topics I give are authentic, but the students can not say they cannot talk about them easily; they can not find ideas easily, they require some work from the students. I focus on the originality of ideas.

## Résumé

Cette étude a examiné le rôle des pratiques d'évaluation de l'écriture dans le développement d'autonomie d'apprenti en écriture. Pour adresser ce problème, deux instruments de recherche, à savoir un questionnaire des étudiants et un interview d'un enseignant, ont été conçus et administrés dans le département de la langue anglais à l'université de Mohammed Seddik ben Yahia pendant l'année scolaire 2018\2019. Le questionnaire des étudiants a été administré à un échantillon de soixante (60) étudiants d'anglais en troisième année. Les apprentis d'EFL ont été choisis au hasard sur la base de l'avantage. Pour Passer examiné les réponses des étudiants, une interview d'enseignant a été conduite avec un enseignant d'expression écrit au même département. Les analyses des résultats de recherche ont révélé qu'une majorité légère des réponses a indiqué que l'évaluation utilisée au cours d'écriture est assez transparente pour encourager l'autonomie d'étudiants en écriture. Cependant, une comparaison fâchée des réponses des étudiants avec les résultats de l'interview d'enseignant a révélé que le cours d'écriture souffre des faiblesses sérieuses qui impactent négativement son efficacité dans l'encouragement de l'autonomie d'apprenti en écriture. Ces faiblesses peuvent être résumées à quatre points : l'insuffisance du temps attribué pour la pratique, la faible fréquence et l'inefficacité de réaction, l'improvisation des tests et faible niveau dans l'évaluation de pair. En plus, les réponses de l'enseignant ont suggéré que l'édition de la connexion entre la transparence entre les critères d'évaluation et l'autonomie d'étudiants d'encouragements est plus problématique par écrit dans les modules contents du programme d'études.

## ملخص

تعالج هذه الدراسة دور ممارسات تقييم الكتابة في تطوير استقلالية المتعلم فيها. وسيلتنا بحث، استطلاع الطالب و مقابلة المعلم، تم تصميمها و إدارتهما في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحي خلال السنة الأكاديمية 2019/2018 لمعالجة هذا الموضوع. استطلاع الطلاب تم إجراءه على عينة عشوائية مكونة من 60 طالبا في اللغة الإنجليزية للسنة الثالثة تم اختيارها وفق معيار التلاؤم. من أجل القيام باستطلاع الطلاب تم إجراء مقابلة مع أحد أساتذة التعبير الكتابي في نفس القسم. أظهرت تحاليل نتائج الدراسة أن غالبية بسيطة من الردود قد أشارت إلى أن التقييم المستخدم في دروس الكتابة واضح كفاية لتعزيز استقلالية الطلاب في الكتابة. على العكس من ذلك، أظهرت مقارنة ردود الطلاب مع نتائج مقابلة المعلم ان دروس الكتابة تعاني نقاط ضعف خطيرة تؤثر سلبا على فعاليتها في تعزيز استقلالية المتعلم في الكتابة و يمكن تلخيصها في أربع نقاط: الوقت الغير كافي المخصص للممارسة و التطبيق، ضعف تواتر ردود الفعل و بالإضافة الى هذا، اقترحت ردود .عدم فعاليتها، البداهة في تصميم الاختبارات، و المستوى الضعيف في تقييم الطلاب المعلم أن مسألة الصلة بين شفافية معيار التقييم و تعزيز استقلالية الطلاب في الكتابة هي المسألة الأكثر إثارة للمشاكل في محتوى مقاييس المنهج الدراسي.