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Department of English



**Investigating Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Alternative Assessment in
Teaching the Writing Skill:**
The Case of 1st Year Written Expression Teachers of English, University of Jijel

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

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2020

**Investigating Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Alternative Assessment in
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Abstract

The present descriptive study seeks to investigate the written expression teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching first year license students of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. It also attempts to discover whether or not the teachers implement alternative assessment in their classes. The study is based on the hypothesis that if the teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment, they would implement it effectively in their classes. The data are collected by means of a questionnaire designed and addressed to twelve teachers of written expression module at the department of English. The study findings showed that though knowledgeable about alternative assessment the teachers were, they did not widely make use of such a new type of assessment, nor was it regular practice in their writing classes. Hence the results rejected the research hypothesis and revealed that despite of the fact that the teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment, they did not implement it widely in their classes. Based on the results obtained, some pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for future research are suggested.

Key words: writing skill, alternative assessment, teachers' attitude.

DEDICATION

In the name of **Allah**, I dedicate this humble work to

My beloved family

To you **MUM** and **DAD**

To you my **Brothers** and **Sisters**

To you my soul mates, my lovely friends,

“Zohra, Youssra, Amira, Youssra, Aicha, Hadjer”

SABER Imen.

Dedication

*This humble work is lovingly dedicated to my sweet and loving parents, my **Father** and my **Mother**, whose affection, love, encouragement, and prayers make me able to accomplish this work.*

*To my beautiful sister, my sweetheart **Insaf**, who has never left my side.*

To my all my family members that I love so much.

*To my childhood friend and sister **Lilia**, who supported me in every step in my life. Thank you.*

*To my adorable and lovely partner **Imen**, thank you for your unconditional support, understanding, and help.*

*To my amazing teacher and supervisor, for her support and guidance. Thank you **Mrs NEGHIZ Safia**.*

*To my wonderful friends, **Maroua, Youssra, Zahra, Aicha** and **Malak**, thank you for your kindness and love.*

To everyone I dearly love and call home.

Yousra Hadji

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List of Abbreviations

EFL English as a Foreign Language

Q Question

WE Written Expression

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study
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5. Hypothesis and Assumptions
6. Research Methodology
7. Structure of the Study

1. Background of the Study

Writing has been known as one of the most important skills for EFL learners and has also been identified as a necessary productive skill that plays an essential role in social, professional, and educational contexts. It is a creative process which allows learners to express their ideas. That is the reason for which learners should know how to write and also should be able to write in different genres. As Rappen (2002) put it, “Writing is a necessary skill for L1 learners and fundamental requirement for L2 learners”. The ability to write is, then, becoming increasingly important in our global community and instruction in writing is thus assuming an increasing role in both second and foreign language education.

Learning how to write is considered to be one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning (Hyland, 2003). Put differently, writing is a complicated process and many learners do face difficulties in learning the writing skill. Such difficulties often relate to a lack of knowledge about the suitable strategies needed to guide them during the process and to help them cope with and overcome the difficulties they may face in writing tasks. Truly, it demands a lot of efforts, practice, and time from the part of learners and teachers alike in order to make the teaching and learning of writing more effective.

An integral part of the teaching/learning activity in EFL is assessment. The latter can be very influential on the quality of writing instruction and may even affect learners’ readiness to learn and develop their writing abilities. For that, teachers should use different techniques and strategies that help them and learners at the same time to make the process of writing easier. Adopting different assessment techniques in the writing process may, then, be very advisable and conducive to learners’ writing development. Using new and different assessment techniques helps the learners strengthen and improve their writing abilities. Hence, currently,

not only teachers are involved in the teaching process, but also the learners. Such a new tendency was highly advocated by theorists such as Farhady (2006), McNamra (2000), Brown and Hudson (1998), who made the idea clear: “ student- centered approaches in language teaching led the field of language testing to a shift of paradigm from traditional to alternative assessment” (as cited in Abolfazli Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2012, p.48). “Alternative assessment represents a direct evaluation of the learners’ performance by using contexts and tasks similar to those in real life, while traditional testing measures performance indirectly, by checking knowledge and abilities outside their real context of usage” (Chirimbu, 2013, p. 6). Therefore, it is very important for teachers to apply assessment strategies that contribute to enhancing students' writing performance and critical thinking, as well as working jointly with learners in order to overcome and hopefully avoid difficulties.

Consequently, this shift in language teaching methods led to adopting several alternative assessment techniques. This shift is thought to enable learners to be involved in the learning process, as well as being active, autonomous, and participate in the learning process. Within the same line of inquiry, Hamayan (1995, p. 48) stated that “Alternative assessment is known as procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom and help both teachers and learners during the learning process”. Therefore, alternative assessment is really needed in teaching writing in order to improve the learners’ mastery of the language and to help teachers in the process of teaching them how to write.

2. Statement of the Problem

Owing to our personal former experience as first year license students, the difficulty of the writing module has had its negative impact on our willingness to learn writing and to prepare for exams. Such reality has come to be confirmed through our informal discussions

with first-year license students at the department of English at Mohammed Saddik Ben Yahia University. Most of the students went further to report their dissatisfaction with the current traditional evaluation and assessment procedures employed by their teachers of the written expression module, and to acknowledge their incapability of producing good pieces of writing. Furthermore, they declared that such traditional methods do not serve them properly and do not meet their needs and interests.

3. Aims of the Study

The present research is mainly carried out to investigate the written expression teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching first year license students of English. It also attempts to know whether or not alternative assessment is implemented in the writing classes.

4. Research Questions

This dissertation attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do the written expression teachers hold about using alternative assessment methods in teaching writing?
2. Do the teachers actually use alternative assessment as a method to teach their students writing?

5. Research Hypothesis

Improving the writing skill is a major goal that concerns teachers and learners alike. The present research is based on the assumption that whether or not the teachers implement alternative assessment in their classes. Thus, it can be hypothesized that if teachers of written expression module had a positive attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment methods, they would implement it effectively in their classes.

6. Research Methodology

This study is purely descriptive and is concerned with exploring the written expression teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment in teaching the learners' writing skill. The term descriptive research refers to the type of research question, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a given topic. It can use a variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables. Given such a descriptive nature, a relevant procedure to be adopted in conducting and gathering data for the study is an online questionnaire for the teachers. To answer the research questions, quantitative data are collected from the teachers' questionnaires in order to discover whether or not teachers implement alternative assessment in their classes

7. Structure of the Study

This study is organized and divided into three chapters. Chapter one is theoretical; it presents some basic definitions in relation to assessment, testing and evaluation, traditional assessment vs. alternative assessment, other types of assessment, alternative assessment methods. Chapter two is also theoretical, it introduces the concept of writing and provides its definition, its importance, and the approaches of teaching writing, the writing activities, criteria of the assessment of the writing skill, and alternative assessment of writing in EFL classes. Chapter three, which is practical in nature, deals with the field work, data analysis and the discussion of the teachers' online questionnaire findings. The third chapter deals some worthy pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for further future research in the light of the findings of the research work.

Chapter 1

Alternative Assessment

Introduction

- 1.1. Basic Definitions: Testing/ Assessment and Evaluation
- 1.2. Traditional Assessment vs. Alternative Assessment
- 1.3. Other Types of Assessment
 - 1.3.1. Formative Assessment
 - 1.3.2. Summative Assessment
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- 1.4. Alternative Assessment Methods
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Conclusion

Introduction

Assessment is considered one of the most relevant aspects in education because it leads the decisions made on students learning process. Any students taking any form of learning would be, in one form or another, subject to assessment. Therefore, assessment is to bridge the gap between learning and teaching. However, assessment is now taking on a new meaning. It should be an active process. As a matter of fact, more methods are used to measure student learning range from traditional standardized testing to a more authentic approach to assessment in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge. Hence, this chapter highlights the concepts of testing, evaluation, and assessment. Also, the chapter sheds light to the movement from traditional assessment towards alternative assessment. Furthermore, the chapter exposes types and methods of alternative assessment.

Basic Definition: Testing/ Evaluation and Assessment

In educational setting, testing, evaluation and assessment are all used to measure how much of the assigned materials students are mastering, how well students are learning the materials and how well students are meeting the stated goals and objectives.

Brown (2004) defines test as a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. Testing measures the level of skill or knowledge that has been reached. Bachman (1990) also defines test as a "measurement instrument designed to elicit a specific sample of an individual's behavior...a test necessarily quantifies characteristics of individuals according to explicit procedures" (p.20). Furthermore, test is a

process that is managed to measure student's ability to perform in a specific field in a certain time with some specific goal. For example, quizzes, exams, and the questions at the end of the lesson.

Bashman (1990) defines evaluation as “the systematic gathering of information to make decisions” (p.21). Thus, evaluation is the process of making judgments about the value of educational programs, projects, materials, or techniques. According to Suskie and Banta (2009) there is a relationship between evaluation and interpretation of the results of assessment to make judgments about the student's achievement of the established learning goals. Moreover, evaluation concerns the global measurements of all the aspects involved in the learning and teaching process through the use of different tools like tests and other means of investigations to get information about learner's performance. In other words, assessment may be used during the process of educational evaluation in order to make these judgments. In the same context, Bashman (1990) considers evaluations are more summative and the evaluation procedure is established by the evaluator.

Airasian (2005) defines assessment as a broad process of collecting, synthesize, and interpreting information in which testing, measurement and evaluation play contributing parts (p.9). Generally speaking, assessment is seen as a task which includes all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter both teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). Hence, assessment demands teacher's observation and analysis of learners work. Thus, assessment is associated to instruction and learning to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen the learners 'achievement.

However, assessment can be provided for different purposes, including putting students into appropriate classes, assessing student progress, and gauging the teaching process..

Briefly, assessment is an essential learning tool that provides relevant measures for many important learning outcomes.

1.2. Traditional Assessment VS Alternative Assessment:

Traditional assessment generally refers to written testing, such as multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank... matching. Dikili (2003) stated that, traditional assessment procedures refer to conventional methods of testing, usually standardized, and use pen and paper with multiple choice and essay items, also traditional assessment focuses on what the student knows and does not necessarily reflect student's experience. Critics have given serious arguments about the unskilled of the traditional techniques such as multiple choice tests, true/ false tests fill the gap, and matching exercises. They point out the lack of real-life knowledge. For example, true/false tests present two choices one of which is true, simply, they offer to student 50% chance of getting the answer correct. To this reasons, they criticized traditional assessment since they are quite limited and dissimilar to real-life language usage. On the other hand, alternative assessment has been introduced as a means of educational reform because of the increased awareness of the impact of testing on curricula and teaching (Dietel, Herman, and Knuth, 1991).

According to Bailey (1999), traditional assessments are indirect and inauthentic. She also adds that traditional assessment standardize and for that reason, they are one-shot speed-based and norm-referenced. Law and Ecks (1995) underline the same issue and state that traditional assessments are single occasion tests. That is, they measure what learners can do at a particular time. However, test scores cannot tell about the progression of child. Similarly, they cannot tell what particular difficulties the student had during the test. Bailey (1998) also mentions that there is no feedback provided to learners in this type of assessment. The projects are mainly individualized and the assessment procedure is decontextualized. Law and

Ecks (1995) point out most standardized tests assessment only lower-order thinking skills of the learner. Similarly, Simonson et al (2000) state the traditional assessment often focus on learner's ability of memorization and recall, which or lower level of cognition skills. Additionally, traditional assessment tools require learners to display their knowledge in a predetermined way (Bruoldi, 1998).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the application of assessment procedures that are radically different from traditional forms of assessment. So, what are the reasons behind the movement from the use of traditional assessment to alternative assessment?

Alternative assessment is a form of student performance; is referred to as a performance tests. Alternative assessment measures proficiency more than it measures knowledge. Hence, it used to determine what students can and cannot do, in contrast to traditional testing. Furthermore, alternative assessment presents new ways of motivating learners as well as inspiring them to explore themselves. Also, alternative assessment offers teachers a chance to realize their student's weaknesses and strengths in various situations (Law & Ecks, 1995). Alternative assessments assess higher-order thinking skills. Students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they learn. This type of assessment tolls focus on the growth and the performance of the student. That is if a learner fails to perform a given task at a particular time, she/ he still have the opportunity to demonstrate his/her ability at a different time and different situation. Since alternative assessment is developing in context and over time, the teacher has a chance to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the student in a variety of areas and situations (Law and Ecks, 1995).

In all, alternative assessments are mainly occupied the use of standardized test or assessment in EFL classes for the previous reasons we mentioned. Authentic forms like

portfolios, journal, peer and self-assessment have become essential part in the classroom. These forms give students more freedom and sense of control for their own learning. Also, alternative assessment provides teachers with useful information that can form the basis for improving their instructional plans and practices.

1.3. Other Types of Assessment

Assessment allows both instructor and student to monitor progress towards achieving learning objectives. The following types of assessment are the most used in the learning process.

1.3.1. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment has been defined as the process of appraising, judging or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve students' competence (Gipps, 1994). Formative assessment is tightly linked to teaching as it feeds into lesson plans and ensures, optimized, impactful lessons are delivered (Gadsby, 2012). Also, formative assessment refers to tools used throughout a class or course that identify misconception, struggles, and learning gaps, while assessing ways to close such gaps. Formative assessment can help students take ownership of their learning when they understand its goals to be about improving learning, not raising marks (Trumbull and Lash, 2013). Black and William (1998) define formative assessment as the activities taken by teachers to provide feedback on what the students have just performed. As they put it, this kind of assessment serves as a core to improve students' achievement.

1.3.2. Summative Assessment

Summative assessment focuses on reporting achievements and should be based on criteria in order to show extent of realization of each learning outcome (Gardner, 2012, p.89).

Summative as they occur at the end of a lesson, unit, or course and therefore attempt to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, so, it is an evaluation of the sum product of the lesson, it is usually evaluation rather than diagnostic, is carried out by the end of a period to make clear evaluation or judgments about the student's performance (Brown, 1994, p. 402). Likewise, Ouakrime (2000) claims, summative assessment are "the measurement of the extent to which a learner has been able to achieve the perceived aims or objectives of a given language teaching program".

1.3.3. Formal Assessment

Formal assessment is one of the types of assessment; it is defined by Brown (2000, 402) as "exercises or experiences which are designed by teachers to specifically exploit students' skills and knowledge". In addition, McAlpine (2002, 7) stated that "formal assessments are where students are conscious and having knowledge that the task they are doing is for evaluation purposes". In other words, formal assessments are procedures of evaluation planned by teachers to know how well students have learned in their learning process, and to find out the learners' proficiency of the content. Standardized tests are a good example of formal assessment; these tests specify right and wrong answers based on several criteria. There are two primary forms of formal assessment which are: Norm-Referenced Assessments and Criterion-Referenced Assessments. (Brown, 2004, p. 7). Norm –Referenced Assessments are used to compare between a large number of students and an individual student, for example, the test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL), Criterion-Referenced assessments are designed to give feedback in a form of grades. (Brown, 2004, p.7).

Finally, McAlpine (2008) claimed that formal assessments are considered to be more faire than other types of assessments because the students know that they are assessed and they

behave accordingly, but such type of assessment may provoke stress and anxiety for students. (p. 7).

1.3.4. Informal Assessment

According to Brown (2000, 384) “informal assessment are moment by moment incidental and intended ways to judge the performance of the students”. He added “informal assessment is involved in all unplanned evaluative coaching and feedback on tasks that are designed for the purpose of evoking performance”. (p.403). Furthermore, McAlpine (2008) claimed that “in informal assessment there is no limitation regarding the place and the time in which they are conducted”. That is, informal assessment is a sudden and normal form of assessment that happened in everyday classroom activities, and it plays a crucial role for both teachers and learners.

Brown (2000) argued that successful teachers are those who use informal assessment strategies in their classes; these strategies help the teacher to get a clear idea about his students’ progress and to decide what to teach next in the learning process their instructional plans and practices.

1.4 Alternative Assessment Methods

There are many innovative alternative techniques of assessment in teaching and learning the second language. This section sheds light on both concepts of SA and PA, in addition to portfolios and journals.

1.4.1. Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a new alternative technique of assessment in the field of teaching and learning the second language that has been emerged in recent years. One of the classic definitions of self-assessment is: “it is the students’ ability through which they judge their

own learning, specifically their achievements and its results”. (Falshikov and Boud, 1989, 529). Additionally, Boud (1995) defined self-assessment as “a way that helps in rising and increasing the role of learners and make them active in their own learning process”. That is, the learners are involved in the learning process, and they are considered as active students in which they are able of making judgments about their own abilities, achievements, and outcomes.

Andrade and Du (2007) argued that: “self-assessment is a process in which students reflect on and evaluate oneself, the quality of their work and learning, and they perceive strength and weaknesses of their work and revise them suitably”. (p .161).

For Brown (2004, p.276) SA is one of the best methods of alternative assessment and probably the most valuable and rewarding, but such assessment must be designed carefully to help learners reach their potential.

1.4.2. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is one of the methods used in alternative assessment, and it is a very effective learning tool when it is used appropriately. It is considered as a new teaching technique that can take many definitions each focusing on a particular concept but all definitions basically shed light on the same concept.

Brook and Andrade (2013) considered peer assessment as a common technique in which students share thoughts and comments between them and give productive feedback to their peers. (p.1). Whereas, Strijbos and Sluijsmans (2010) stated that “ peer assessment is an educational composition in which students judge or give opinions on their peers’ performance, and which induces students to reflect, discuss, and work together.(p.256). In other words, peer assessment is a learning process where you involve students in it to critique and give feedback to each other on their work. It helps them to develop their skills in

evaluating and providing feedback to their fellow students.). Additionally, Falchikov (2007) reported that peer assessment is the process, in which students give feedback and provide notes and grades to their fellow students' performance based on clear criteria (p.132). Thus, students in the learning process assess and judge the quality and the level of their peers' performance and work using relevant criteria and standards in addition to giving constructive feedback and comments.

1.4.3. Portfolios

One of the most famous alternatives in assessment, especially in the field of EFL is portfolio assessment. So, the question asked here is what is a portfolio assessment?

According to Genesee and Upshur (1996) as cited in Brown (2004) "a portfolio is a focused collection of students' work that shows ... their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas". (p.256). Also, Wolcott (1998) as cited in Weigle (2002) reported that "a portfolio is a purposeful collection of works done by students that exhibits to the students their efforts and progress in a certain field". (p.198). Additionally, Weigle (2002) stated that "in more specific way and in terms of writing assessment, a portfolio is a group of written texts collected for different reasons in a certain period of time". (p.198). That is, *writing portfolio* is a collection of student writing (in print or electronic form) that's intended to demonstrate the writer's development over the course of one or more academic terms. Portfolios include materials such as: essays, reports, poetry, notes of lectures, journals, diaries, and other personal reflections.

Weigle (2002) discussed a number of benefits of portfolio assessment. She stated that there are three main benefits of portfolio assessment. First, it offers chances for reflection and development for self-awareness, which plays a crucial role in the learning process. Second, she added that students increase their sense of ownership of writing and they can select the

content of portfolio correctly, which leads them to a sense of responsibility. Finally, portfolio assessment can be used by students as a basis of self-assessment, if they are given clear criteria and opportunities to assess and evaluate their work while preparing their portfolios (pp. 204-205).

1.4.4. Journals

Years ago, the idea of writing journals did not exist in the field of second language teaching. It was believed that the process of language teaching should be taught under control conditions. Nowadays, journals play a notable role in the process of learning. According to Brown (2004, 260) “a journal is a log (or “accounts”) of one’s thoughts, feelings, reactions, assessments, ideas, or progress towards goals, usually written with little attention to structure, form, or correctness. In other words, journals are writing practices which focus on the expression of students’ opinions, points of view, experiences, and creative thoughts.

Brown (2004, 261) stated that journals serve important pedagogical purposes such as: practice in the mechanism of writing, using writing as a “thinking” process, and communication with the teacher. That is, journals encourage students and empower them to speak more with their teachers and talk about what is in their minds. Accordingly, Brown (2004) argued that the assessment of journals assumed a necessary role in the teaching-learning process. Because most journals are a dialogue between student and teacher, journals give the teachers the opportunity to offer various and unique kinds of feedback (P. 261).

Conclusion

To conclude, assessment is an essential component for effective learning. Therefore, a teacher cannot ensure a student's success without engaging them in different assessment. This is why the researcher in this chapter has focused on assessment on general with some basic concepts related to the topic. In addition, it attempted to highlight the differences between traditional assessment and alternative assessment. Also, the chapter included the types of alternative assessment. However, because the writing skill is regarded as a difficult skill to achieve for EFL learners, the researcher ends up the chapter with some alternative assessment methods.

Chapter 2

The Writing Skill

Introduction

- 2.1. Definition of Writing
- 2.2. The Importance of Writing
- 2.3. Approaches to Teaching Writing
 - 2.3.1. The Product Approach
 - 2.3.2. The Process Approach
 - 2.3.3. The Genre Approach
 - 2.3.4. The Process Genre Approach
- 2.4. Writing Activities
- 2.5. Criteria of the Assessment of the Writing Skill
- 2.6. Alternative Assessment to writing in EFL Classes

Conclusion

Introduction

The writing skill is considered as an important skill that EFL learners are aiming to master since it plays a crucial role in educational experiences or settings. The writing skill has been investigated widely in the field of education. So, the chapter in hand deals with the writing skill explaining its importance in language learning. In addition, the chapter exposes the approaches to teach the writing skill. Besides, it discusses different types of activities that are used to teach /learn writing. The chapter introduces the criteria of assessment of the writing skill and how it could be done. Finally, this chapter ends with alternative assessment of writing in EFL classes.

2.1. Definition of Writing

The writing skill has been defined and explained by many researchers and from different points of views.

The writing skill is the fourth of the four language skills; it is classified as a main skill that is necessary for EFL learners. The Cambridge dictionary (2005) defined writing as “the skill or activity of producing words on a surface”. In addition, Widdowson (1978) stated that “writing is the use of visual medium to manifest the graph logical and grammatical system of language” (p.62). As such, writing is a way to produce instances and use them in daily life, and it is an act of making up correct sentences and to convey them with visual mediums by marking them on a paper or a surface.

Similarly, Byrne (1988) explained the concept by the following: “when we write, we use graphic symbols: that is, letters or combination of letters which relates to the sounds we make when we speak” (p.1) .Yet, in writing, we don’t just produce random symbols and graphs, but also we should use the suitable skills and arrange the words to form correct sentences. As Byrne (1998) stated, “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). Furthermore, Brown (2001) claimed that writing is a process of thinking and

such process requires special skills. Moreover, he claimed that writing can be revised before it is released in order to get a clearer meaning, and not every speaker can develop this skill naturally (p.335). Rivers (1981) believed that “the process of writing means carrying information or expressions of original thoughts and ideas in a logical sequence in the new language”. Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2002) argued that “writing is a complex process which consists of different stages”.

2.2. The Importance of Writing

Among the other skills, writing is seen to be a basic requirement for human beings since it is needed in our daily life. Learning how to write is a challenge for EFL learners. Kroll (1997)) claimed, “improving students’ writing abilities will help them in both social and academic life”. In addition, Hedge (1998) asserted that “writing is an aid to learning”. (p.7). Many researchers in the field have come to emphasise its importance and how it stimulates thinking, how it helps students to concentrate, and how it organises their thoughts. For example, Zamel (1982) viewed that the importance of writing in that it represents the process of exploring our own thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself what are these thoughts (p. 195). Similarly, Reid (1993, p. 49) suggested that “writing is a form of learning that induces EFL learners to acquire new things and to improve their level”. Harmer (2004) claimed that there is some importance of writing in the sense that “writing is often useful as a preparation for other activities”. Also, he stated that “writing may provoke language development and reinforce the language that has been thought before” (pp. 31-33). Finally, writing skills are important part of communication. Good writing skills help to communicate the message clearly and easily.

2.3. Approaches to Teaching Writing

Foreign language teachers face certain problems in teaching the writing skill for many reasons. However, teaching writing has seen numerous approaches since the eighties. The focus has changed. Teachers and students have become aware of the fact that writing takes particular forms in different contexts. To this reason, four main approaches are used and reported in the literature: the product, the process, the genre, and the process-genre approaches.

2.3.1. The product approach

The product approach is a “traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually is presented and analysed at an early stage”. (Gabrielatos, 2002, p.5). Teaching writing using the product approach involves four stages which are familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. In familiarization, the role of the teacher is to make the students aware of certain features of particular text. In the second step, by giving exercises on grammatical features and related vocabulary, the teacher controls the activity of the student. After words, in guided writing, the student writes a text which is similar to the model text. The last stage, students write another similar text by themselves (Badger and White, 2000, p. 153-154).

The student’s final product should be a coherent and an error-free text, and to achieve that the student will imitate, copy, and transform a model text. (Nunan, 1988, p. 249 as cited in Pasand and Haghi, 2013, p. 76).

2.3.2. The Process Approach

Kroll (1997) defined the process approach as an umbrella term for many types of writing courses; what the term captures is the fact that student writers engage in their writing tasks through a cyclical approach rather than a single shot approach. Hence, students are not expected to produce and submit complete and polished responses to their writing assignments

without going through stages of drafting and receiving feedback on their drafts, followed by revision of their evolving texts. The process approach provides a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does instead of what the final product looks like (Applede, 1986, p. 60)

Brown (1994) suggested three stages of writing in which the process writing approach tends to be framed:

- **The pre-writing:**

The pre-writing stage encourages the generation of ideas, which can happen in numerous ways:

- ✓ Reading(extensively a passage)
- ✓ Skinning or scanning
- ✓ Brain storming and listing
- ✓ Clustering(begin with a key word, then add other words using free associations)
- ✓ Discussing
- ✓ Free writing

- **The drafting and the revising stage:**

The drafting and the revising stages are the core of the process writing.

Several strategies and skills apply to the drafting and revising process in writing:

- ✓ Getting stated(adapting the free writing technique)
- ✓ Monitoring of ones' writing (without premature editing and pay attention to grammar, wording....)
- ✓ Pre-reviewing for content (accepting and using classmate's comments)

1.3.3. The Genre Approach

The genre approach considers writing as a social and cultural practice. Moreover, relevant genre knowledge needs to be taught explicitly in the language classroom. Genre approach emphasizes more on the reader, and on the conventions that a piece of writing needs to follow in order to be successfully accepted by its readership (Munice, 2002)

Harmer (2007) supported that genre approach represents the norms of different kinds of writing. Hence, Students who write within a certain genre need to pay attention to a number of factors. They need to know the topic, the conventions and the style, as well as, the context. As stated by Nunan (1998, p. 280), “different genres of writing are typified by a particular structure and by grammatical forms that reflects the communicative purpose of the genre”.

According to Cope & Kalantzis (1993), the genre approach to writing consists of three phases:

- ✓ The target genre is designed for the students.
- ✓ A text is jointly formed by the teacher and student.
- ✓ A text is independently constructed by each student.

1.3.4. The Process -Genre Approach

The process genre approach is a combination of the process approach and the genre which can be used by teacher to improve student’s writing skill (Babolola, 2012, p.2). Writing in this approach is considered as a series of stages leading from a particular situation to a text, with the teacher facilitating the student’s progress by enabling appropriate input of knowledge and skills (Badger and White, 2000, p. 160). This approach allows students to study the relationship between purpose and form for a particular genre as they use the recursive processes of prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing. By using these steps, students will become aware of different text and of the composing process (Balbase, 2012, 2-3).

According to Badger and White (2000), teachers are expert writers of many genres, and a key feature of this approach is that they should draw on their own knowledge of, and skills in, particular process genres. Hence, different genres require different kinds of knowledge and different sets of skills. Badger and White stated that the development of writing will vary between different groups of learners because they are at different stages of their writing development. Learners who know a lot about the production of a particular genre, and are skilled in it, may need little or no input. Some groups of learners will have a good awareness of how the potential audience may constrain what is written. Other groups may lack knowledge of what language is appropriate to a particular audience, or the skills in deciding whom the potential audience may be, what input is needed will depend on their particular group of learners

2.4. Writing activities

Because the process of writing is active and requires a conscious search for meaning, Easley (1989, p. 11) defined writing activities as one means of facilitating reflection and learning. For designing writing activities, the most six appropriate activities for outdoor education curricula are the following:

- Journals
- Free writing
- Descriptions
- Literary responses
- Letters and essays

Lindermman and Andrew (2001) stated a series of questions for instructors in order to facilitate the development of such activities:

- Why am I asking my students to write? (To prepare for a discussion? To encourage reflection?)
- What type of writing is appropriate for my purpose? (Free writing? Journaling?)
- How do I want the students to complete the assignment? (On their own? In groups? In stages?)

After answering these questions, the second step is to prepare a description of the writing activity for the students. In the other hand, students have to write about anything that comes into their minds. They should write continuously, and in sentences, rather than lists. Then, students can select a sentence or idea of what they produced and use it as feed for a second session. Finally, students might share what they have written in a discussion.

On the other hand, Hyland (2003, p. 113) stated that “types of activities are basically two kinds, either real-world task, they are based on communicative target objective learners, or pedagogic tasks, they are designed to develop learners’ knowledge and composing skills”. Furthermore, Hyland (2003, p. 120) claimed that “graphical tasks are those tasks which deal with basic writing mechanics such as: handwriting, keyboarding, spelling, and punctuation”. Those tasks help in developing the mechanics of writing and they provide support for writers. Finally, Hyland (2003) talked about language scaffolding, he stated that “scaffolding refers to providing support for students as they build their understanding and that teachers are the ones who can help learners to write without assistance and increasing their competence as they move toward independence”, he added that “scaffolding tasks are designed to gradually increase learners’ independence as well as control”. (p. 123-124).

2.5. Criteria of the Assessment of the Writing

Since writing is considered as an important language skill for both professional and academic needs, it is necessary and highly needed to know the way of assessing and testing this skill in a correct and effective way. The processes of assessment and evaluation are known to be difficult and complicated to be done by teachers. Williams (2003, p. 301) claimed that “assessment is a very complicated process and the lives of teachers would be much simple if the assessment and evaluation were a simple reaction or response to the students’ work”. He added that “assessment is about the performance of all students and not only one student. Therefore, in order for writing assessment to be effective, it needs understanding what underlies assessment” (Williams, 2003, p. 301). Here are some factors in assessing writing.

- **Validity:**

Validity refers, as cited in Williams (2003), to the “match between what is being taught and what is being measured” (p.301). That is, validity means the relationship between what teachers teach their students and what is being measured. Also, valid writing assessment will measure only what was taught. Williams (2003, p. 302) claimed that “valid assessment will not measure something that was not taught by teachers... and that in order for teachers to achieve validity, they must teach writing and to assess what is taught”. In addition, Weigle (2002, p. 49) believed that “in writing assessment it is necessary to know which ability the test is attempting to measure, and to what extent the test is really measuring that ability and not another one”.

- **Reliability**

Reliability is key factor in writing assessment and evaluation. It is defined by Williams (2003, p. 304) as “the consistency of the comparison to the pre-established standard”. Weigle (2002, p. 49) stated that reliability to how much measurements are consistent or compatible across different characteristics of a testing situation. Reliability is a necessary part in assessment and

it is difficult to be achieved. Williams (2003) argued that “reliability does not occur in a spontaneous way and it is built by decreasing arbitrariness and subjectivity.” (p.304). For that, we can say that it is necessary to make writing assessment and evaluation more reliable for students as stated by Williams “to reach reliability teachers needs to agree on what composes good writing and what does not”.(2003, p.305).

2.6. Alternative assessment of writing in EFL

Alternative assessment offers a wide variety of options that are real-world tasks for students to develop their writing skill and also their critical thinking. Authentic tasks, therefore, involve students in problems that are similar to those encountered in real life situations. According to Dietel, Herman, and Knuth (1991) wrongly selected assessment strategies such as traditional paper tests are disadvantageous to students and this affect them negatively.

While a traditional test is aimed to take a snapshot of what the student knows, the authentic assessment task encompasses students in activities that actually make learning more meaningful and builds on the student’s present knowledge and skills. As a student is engaged in assessment tasks provided by the teacher, both learning and assessment will occur. Berry (2008) states that the most common AA tools are observations, experiments, journals, portfolios, exhibitions, oral presentations, interviews and projects. Alternative assessment tasks require learners to produce or demonstrate their own learning with product-oriented assessment.

Alternative assessments tools such as portfolios, journals, conferencing, peer and self-assessment can be used in writing courses. Hamayan (1995) stated that, besides the activities that yield the alternative assessment, teachers can select the most appropriate alternative assessment to implement in their class taking into account the steps to apply them, the way to

use them and the outcomes they can achieve with their use as part of the lesson in the everyday class.

- *Self-assessment* engages students in their own formative assessment process, they compare their work using established criteria provided by the teacher and work on their own improvement (Brown, 2004)

- *Peer-assessment*: Brown and Hudson (1981) agree that peer assessment offers some benefits such as direct involvement of students on their own learning, the encouragement of autonomy, and increased motivation. It is essential to work on activities where students learn to share knowledge but also have the ability to judge and criticize the work of their classmates.

- *Portfolios*: Arter and Spandel (1998) illustrates that portfolios are a focused collection of students' effort alongside their learning process. Brown (2004) mentions that the material portfolios might include: essays, reports, journals, diaries, test score... moreover; the portfolio can also serve as a link between students, teachers' peers, and authorities created with pride which displays student's uniqueness.

- *Journals*: Brown (2004) in his study confirms that the concept of free writing was confined almost in developing essays on assigned topics. Today journals occupy an important role that allows students develop a self-reflection. Students can articulate their thought when they are judged later by the teacher. Sometimes, journals are confused sets of language with no particular point, purpose or audience.

- *Projects*: Berry (2008) claims that projects offer useful data about learners' understanding, awareness of specific learning areas, and skills to apply in particular studies. Most written projects need learners to assume an

investigation process in which they work in groups or separately to select a topic, design a data collection process, examine and organize the data collected, and then display the results.

Conclusion

Writing is considered as a challenging and difficult skill in comparison to the other skills. Students should master it and be aware of its nature; they should know its components, and its importance. Teachers as well should be competent and engage their students in the learning process of writing in order to promote and improve their writing abilities. So, issues related to writing skill were discussed; its basic definitions, its importance, approaches to teaching the writing skill, in addition to writing activities, last but not least the criteria of assessment of writing in EFL, and alternative assessment to writing in EFL.

CHAPTER 3

FIELD OF WORK AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

3.1. Research Methodology

3.2. Participants and Sampling

3.3. Description and Administration of the Questionnaire

3.4. Analysis of the Questionnaire

3.5. Discussion of the Questionnaire Results

3.6. Limitations of the Study

3.7. Pedagogical Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

Conclusion

Introduction

The chapter in hand is practical in nature. It aims at investigating the teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment as a new method in developing the writing skill. In order to confirm/refute the hypothesis, quantitative research was conducted through a questionnaire. It starts with the research methodology, approach, participants and sampling, a description of the research tools, of the aim of such a tool, and of its development. Then, the analysis and discussion of the data gathered are subsequently presented with details. Finally, the chapter ends with listing some of the limitations of this study, in addition to some recommendations and suggestions for future research in relation to the issue being investigated.

3.1. Research Methodology

Creswell (2012) stated that research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or an issue. Hence, methods can be understood to relate principally to the tools of data collection and analysis. Methodology has a more philosophical meaning, and it usually refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research (Bloxtter, Hughes & Tight, 2006, p.58). This section specifically explains the process of data collection.

In the present study, which aims at investigating the written expression teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching first year license students of English, a quantitative approach has been opted for to conduct this study about the role of alternative assessment in the development of writing. This study took place at the English Language Department at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. We considered this type of approach as the most appropriate for such study since it allowed us to

get quantitative information from the participants (teachers) by eliciting their perceptions and attitudes through a questionnaire. Therefore, we will rely on a descriptive method to achieve the purpose of the study. In the field of second/foreign language research, findings (results) are based on data collection methods. For that, we can define data collection methods as methodologies employed to gather data from a targeted selected group of people to assess predefined parameters by analyzing the data and gaining rich insights about the study. Thus, in the present study, we relied on a questionnaire in order to address the study aims and research questions.

3.2. Population and Sampling

Dawson (2002, p. 47) claimed that “a sample is when researchers involve a small number of people to participate in their research work; this number should be manageable.” Hence, the target population for this study was all teachers at the department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. In our study, and in order to treat the problem and hopefully reach the study aims, twelve (12) teachers of first year who have so far taught written expression at the department of English have participated in the study by responding to the online questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of a series of questions meant for the purpose of gathering information from a group of respondents. Moreover, a questionnaire can include close-ended questions, open-ended question, or a mixture of both. Brown (2001, p. 6) defined questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they react either by writing out their answers”. (as quoted in Dorney, 2003, p.3). Questionnaires are very practical and efficient in comparison with other research tools as they save much time, effort, and money. Collecting research data through online questionnaires (online platforms and emails), is a relatively effective survey alternative. According to Wright (2004,

p.418) “ these novel data collection strategies can collect large amounts of data from participants in a short time frame; similarly , they also seem to be feasible in collecting data on sensitive issues or with samples which are generally hard to reach”.

3.3. Description and Administration of the Teachers Questionnaire

The present study is descriptive and is mainly conducted for the purpose of collecting quantitative data oriented to meet the objective of the study. The questionnaire is mainly constructed for the sake of describing the teachers’ attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment in teaching first year license students of English the writing skill. More precisely, the present questionnaire is a research tool which it is given to the persons concerned (written expression module teachers) to answer a series of questions. Henceforth, the gathered data aim at finding out whether the teachers of the module consider the different alternative assessment tools as an effective way for developing the writing skill, whether or not they make use of such methods of assessment in their classes.

The questionnaire was put available online and administered to all teachers of the written expression module at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University Jijel. Only 12 teachers answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire was put for a period of two (2) weeks, from August 14th to 27th, 2020.

The questionnaire items have been designed with consideration of the research questions and in relation to the theoretical part of the current study. It consists of twenty two (22) questions divided into three (3) sections: the first section consists of four (4) questions dealing with general information about the teachers, the second section consists of eleven (11) questions dealing with teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching of the writing skill, while the third section consists of seven (7) questions dealing with the teachers’ attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment and its role in teaching writing. The chapter then aims at getting

insights on how teachers view the use of such new assessment orientation during the writing process.

Two types of questions are used in this questionnaire: which are close-ended and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions come in a multitude of forms, including: multiple choice, check boxes, and ranking questions. Each question type does not allow the respondent to provide unique or unanticipated answers, but rather, choose from a list of pre- selected options. A list of yes/ no answers was used in this questionnaire; moreover, multi-choice questions were also given to enable the participants to choose or to tick the appropriate answer options. They are explanatory in nature, and they offer the researcher rich, quantitative data. They provide the researcher with an opportunity to gain insights on all the informants' opinions, which could not be understood or implied from close-ended questions. Furthermore, such questions were meant for paving the way for reaching conclusions as to why the respondents opted for such specific options and what all that could imply.

3.4. Analysis of the Questionnaire Results

In what follows, all the teachers' responses to the addressed questionnaire are exposed subsequently. The results are reported and displayed accordingly.

In this section, the teachers were asked to give information on the educational degree they hold their work experience and work status. Respondents were also asked about their students' level in written expression.

1st Question: The Teachers' Degrees.

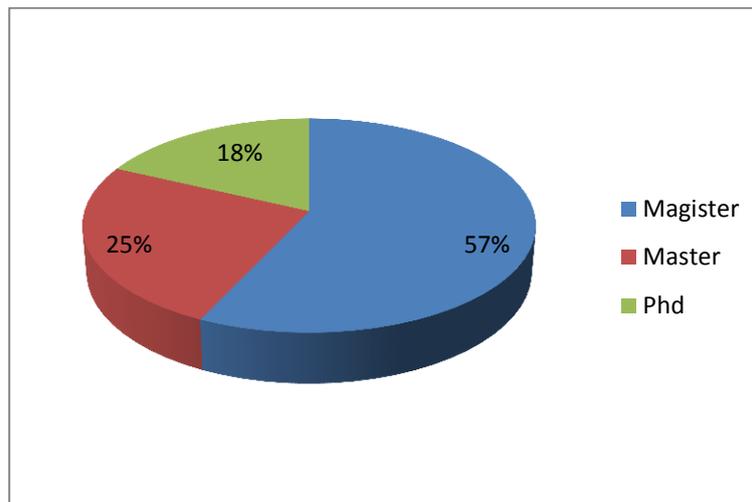


Figure.3.1. Teachers' Degrees

The first question was addressed to know the teachers' degree. The results obtained revealed that seven teachers (57%) had a magister degree, three teachers (25%) had a master degree, and two teachers (18%) had a doctor of science degree. We can say that some teachers are permanent and others are part-time. This can point to the fact that there is a considerable number of part-time written expression teachers at the department of Jijel. They might be teaching other levels like secondary school or middle school. However, they might be not really experienced in teaching at the university as the permanent ones.

2nd Question: How long have you been teaching the written expression module?

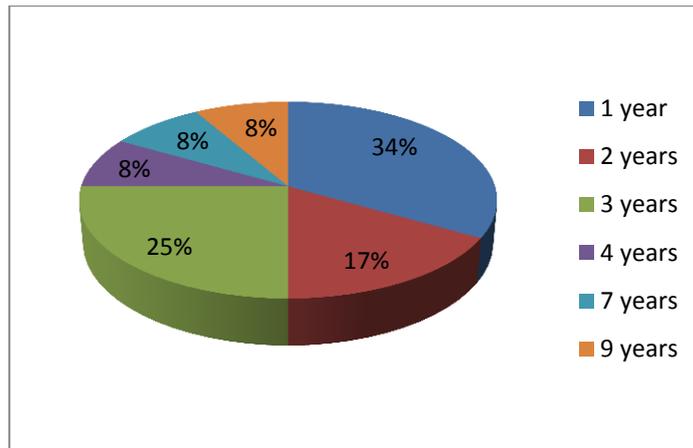


Figure.3.2. The Teachers' Experience in Teaching Writing

Concerning the third question, the teachers were asked about the years they spent in teaching the writing module. The results obtained show that four teachers (34%) had two (2) years' experience; three teachers (25%) stated that they teach the written module for three (3) years. Two teachers (17) had two (2) years' experience, only one teacher (8%) had four (4) years, also one teacher (8%) had seven (7) years' experience and finally one teacher (8%) had nine (9) years' experience of teaching the writing skill. The results show that the majority of teachers do not have enough experience in teaching the writing module, which might in turn mean lacking knowledge about the different writing assessment practices in the class.

3rd Question: How many students do you have on average in 1st year license classes?

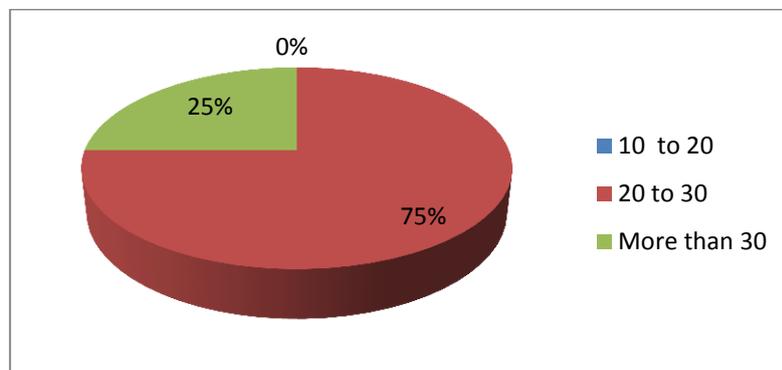


Figure.3.3. Class Size

Assuming that classrooms should be filled to capacity, teachers in question four were asked about the numbers of students in their classes. The majority (75%) of population stated that in each class there are 20 to 30 students while the rest (25%) stated that there are about 30 or more students in each class. None of the respondents opted for the first option. This clearly points to the fact that the teachers work in somehow non- favorable conditions, which might make the implementation of alternative assessment methods in the writing class not easy.

4th Question: How do you describe your students' level in the written expression module?

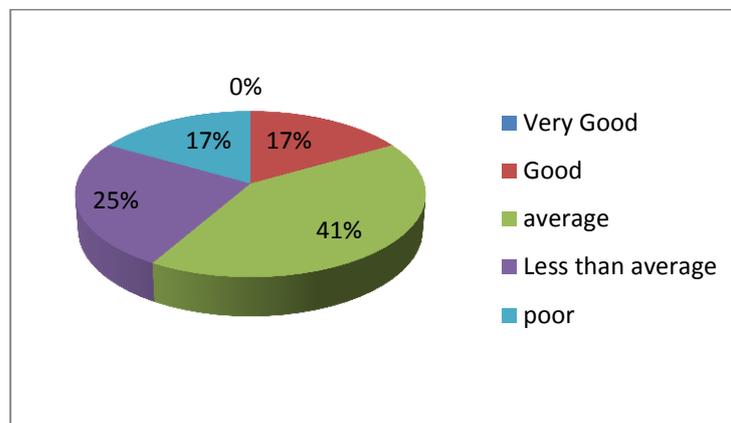


Figure.3.4.The Teachers' Estimation of the Students' Writing Abilities

The fifth question was addressed to know about the students' level in the written expression module. The results obtained revealed that (41%) of the teachers evaluated their students' level as being "average". This simply means that the majority of the teachers are not fully satisfied with the students' level. (25%) of the sample evaluated their students' level as "less than average", which in turn means that there is a serious problem in learning the written expression module. Only (17%) of the population qualified their students' level as being "good". (17%) of the respondents claimed that the level of their students is "poor", and none of the teachers evaluated their students' level as being "very good". From the gathered data, it

is evident that the majority of the students seem to have a low proficiency level and problems and difficulties in the written expression module.

Section Two: Teachers' Attitudes towards the Teaching of the Writing Skill.

1st Question: Do you consider the writing skill as being central to the students' foreign language mastery? If yes, please say why?

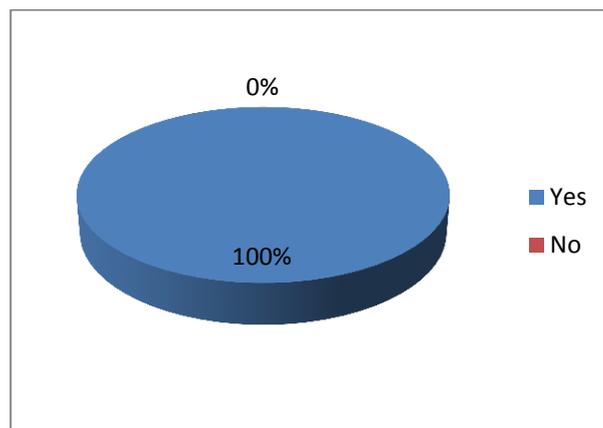


Figure 3.5. The Teachers' Views on the Importance of Writing in Foreign Language Mastery

This first question was addressed to identify whether the teachers consider the writing skill important for students to master the language and become competent. The result obtained revealed that, the whole population 100% (12 teachers) answered with “Yes”, while nobody of the teachers 0% answered with “No”. This simply revealed that all the teachers agreed on the same opinion. From the data gathered, it is clear that the teachers are aware of the importance of the writing skill for students' mastery of the target language.

The teachers in this question were also asked to explain why they considered the writing skill as being central to the students' language mastery. Some of the teachers justified that by saying that the writing skill is important for students and communication. A teacher said: “Writing develops the learners thinking skill; it promotes proficiency, and it is a tool of communication”. A considerable number also justified their opinion saying that writing is the

hardest skill among the other skills and it is one important aspect of language and language use, while a teacher said: “writing appropriately is the single most distinguishing skill between literate and illiterate people. This is because people can learn how to speak a language easily, but learning to write takes more time and effort”. It can be understood that the questioned teachers are more or less aware of the centrality of the writing skill to foreign language mastery. This implies that they do hold positive attitudes towards such a skill and its importance for students’ foreign language development.

2nd Question: To what extent do you think you are knowledgeable about the different approaches to teaching writing?

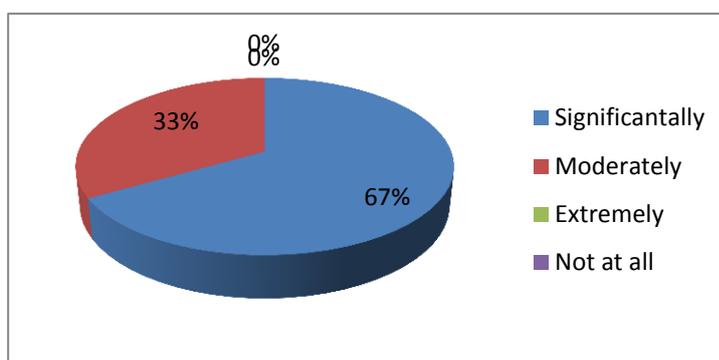


Figure3.6. The Teachers’ Estimation of their Knowledge about the Writing Approaches

The aim behind this question was to determine the extent to which the teachers’ are knowledgeable about the different methods employed to teach writing. The result obtained revealed that almost the majority of the teachers (67%) responded by “significantly”, which simply means that the teachers know most of the approaches to teaching writing. (33%) of the population responded by “Moderately”, which means that a considerable number of the population knows a little about the different teaching approaches. None of the teachers answered by “extremely” or “not at all”. From the gathered data, and as claimed by the informants, we can say that the teachers are not extremely knowledgeable about these approaches, a claim that needs to be confirmed from the upcoming answers to the questions.

3rd Question: What specific approach to writing instruction do you actually adopt in your classes? Please justify your answer.

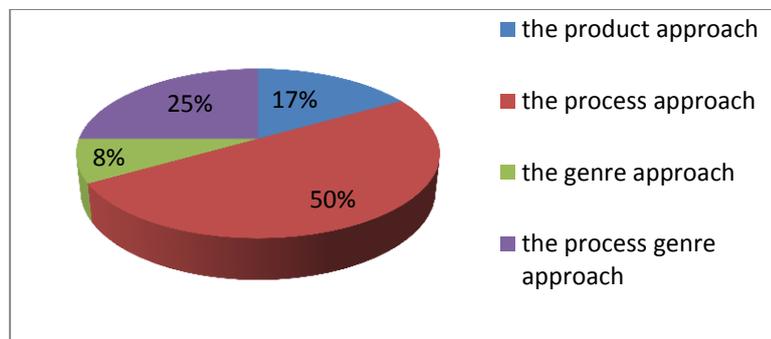


Figure. 3.7. The Writing Approaches Adopted by the Teachers

This question aimed at obtaining different opinions of teachers about the writing approach they adopt in teaching their students writing, and the reason for which they opted for it. The results obtained revealed that (50%) of the population used “the process approach”, (25%) of the population opted for “the process genre approach”, (17%) stated that they used “the product approach”, while only (8%) opted for “the genre approach”. The result obtained show that a considerable number of written expression teachers have a positive view about “the process approach” and they opt for it in their classes.

In this question, the teachers were asked to justify their answers. Two of the teachers said that they used the process approach because it helped them watch their students’ progress throughout writing different drafts”; the second teacher said that the teacher had the opportunity to support his students in every stage of the writing process. As for the “process genre approach”, a teacher said that the process genre approach enhances the learners’ ability and make them more knowledgeable. Moving to “the product approach”, a teacher supported his/her choice by saying: “the product approach helps students not only to develop their writing skills, but their analytical skills too, because they learn to analyze the discourse, lexis and grammar of a given text”. Finishing with “the genre approach”, a teacher justified his/her

choice by saying that the genre approach helps students to write within a specific genre. It could be deduced, from the results obtained, that almost the majority of the teachers prefer to opt for both “the process approach” and “ the process-genre approach”, a situation that supports alternative assessment since these two approaches do favor using alternative assessment and allowing students to use their classmates’ comments and instructions. This is not yet confirmed because adopting such approaches does not necessarily mean implementing alternative assessment tools. The teachers may be lacking knowledge about the specificities of such approaches, of which alternative assessment is part.

4th Question: Do your students respond positively to the choice of such an approach?

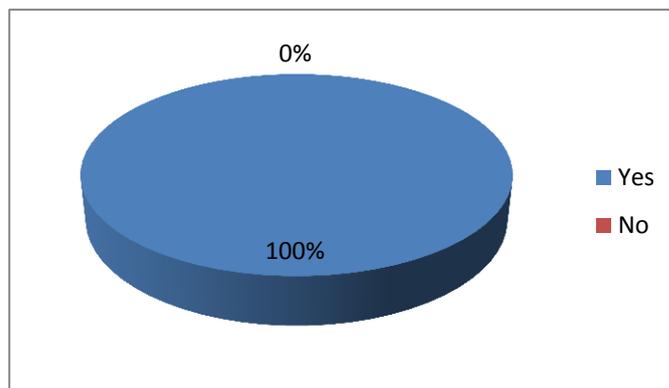


Figure 3.8. The Teachers’ Opinions about their Students’ Response to the Adopted Approach

The aim behind this question was to see whether the teachers of the written expression module knew how to choose the most appropriate approach for their students or not, and also to discover if their choice helped the students in the learning process. The whole population of 12 teachers (100%) answered with “Yes”, which means that the students responded positively to their choice of approach, while none of the teachers (0%) answered with “No”. From the above data, it is clearly shown that the teachers think they have succeeded in adopting the

appropriate approach to teaching writing to which their students positively responded, a result that remains questionable and that needs to be confirmed from the teachers' coming answers.

5th Question: How do you describe your role in the writing class?

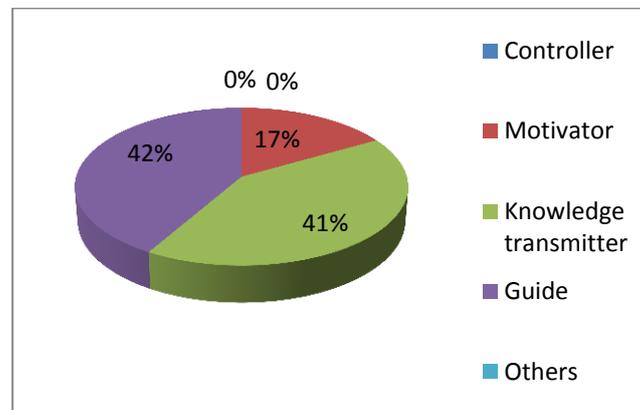


Figure 3.9. The Teachers' Role in the Writing Class

The fifth question was concerned with the teachers' role in the writing classes, whether they described themselves as controllers, motivators, knowledge transmitters, guides, or others. As reviewed before, the aim behind this question was to explore the role of the teachers during the writing process. The figure above shows that (42%) of the teachers' answers revealed that they described themselves as "Guides" since the teachers intervened regularly to help their students and make sure they guided them appropriately. (41%) of the teachers responded that they described themselves as "knowledge transmitters" since they were the sole source of knowledge for the students. (17%) of the teachers believed that they were "motivators". On the other hand, none of the teachers opted for the role of "controllers". Hence, we can conclude that the writing classes were not all teacher-centered and not all learner-centered. As such, it can be understood that not all writing classes were supporting alternative assessment practices as these latter go hand in hand with learner-centered teaching environments.

6th Question: What kind of activities do you actually opt for in your writing classes? If others, please specify.

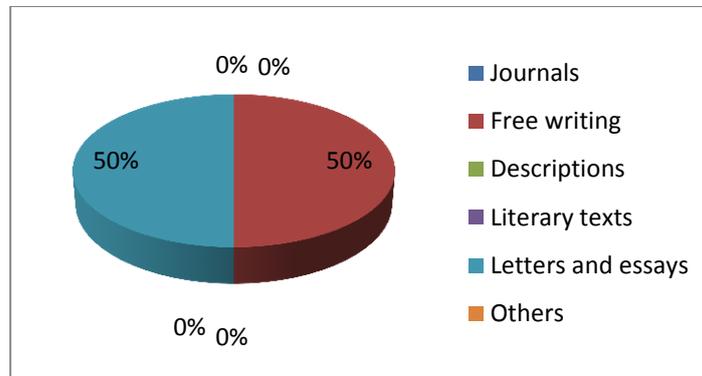


Figure 3.10.The Teachers' Choice of Classroom Writing Activities

This question was formulated in order to know the different kinds of writing activities the teachers usually opted for during the writing classes, and whether they varied in the activities or not. The result obtained shows that there were only two responses for this question with equal percentages. (50%) of the population declared that they opted for “free writing” and the other (50%) of the population declared that they opt for “ letters and essays”, while none of the teachers opt for journals, descriptions, and literary texts. It could be deduced from the results that the written expression teachers preferred to opt for both free writing and letters and essays only, and were not that eclectic in using classroom writing activities, a situation that might provoke boredom and disinterest with students.

7th Question: During the writing tasks, do your students work: individually/ in pairs/ in groups?

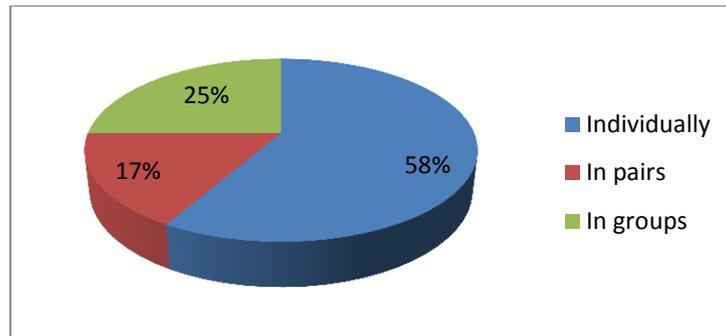


Figure 3.11.The Teachers’ Adopted Working Technique during the Writing Tasks

This question was addressed to diagnose the teachers’ adopted way of working in the classroom during the assignments. The aim behind asking this question was to get a clear idea about the teachers’ preferred working arrangement and thus deduce the teachers’ solicitation of any kind of cooperative and collaborative work during the writing tasks. Such collaboration would likely mirror alternative assessment practices of which peer assessment is part. It is observed from the figure above that (58%) of the teachers stated that their students worked “individually”, (25%) of the teachers of the teachers stated that their students worked “in groups”, while (17%) of the teachers opted for working “in pairs”. It could be deduced that more than half of teachers preferred to engage their students’ in working by their own rather than in groups or in pairs. The teachers somehow privileged individual work, which implies that they do not really involve students in sharing and working together. This can confirm the previously cited interpretations, which relate to the teachers’ limited knowledge about the process and genre orientations.

8th Question: How do you respond to your students’ committed errors?

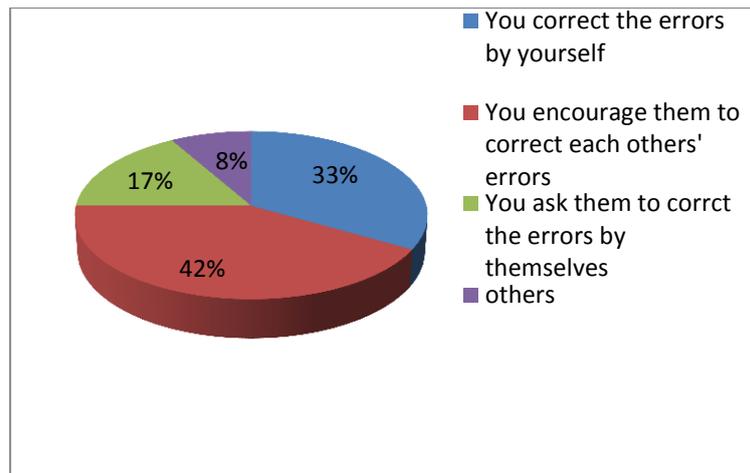


Figure 3.12.The Teachers Response to their Students' Committed Errors

This question was devoted to investigate the way the teachers responded to their students' committed errors, and thus understand whether they used alternative assessment or not. According to the results, 42% of the teachers declared that they encouraged their students' to correct each other's errors while (33%) of the teachers declared that they corrected their students' errors directly by themselves. 17% of the population declared that they asked the students to correct the errors by themselves, and 8% of the teachers declared they opted for other ways. Hence, it is clear that almost half of the population do prefer to encourage the students to correct each other's errors, which means that students will be active and autonomous rather passive and reluctant; a considerable number of the teachers preferred to correct the errors for their students directly without engaging them.

9th Question: As for assessment, what specific assessment procedures do you generally opt for when teaching your students writing?

The aim behind this question was to explore different assessment procedures adopted by the teachers in the writing classes, and whether they varied or not. This question was formulated to measure the degree of regularity of using various procedures in writing classrooms. The results obtained shows that a considerable number of the teachers declared

that they used both peer-assessment and self-assessment. As for the rest of the teachers, their answers differed. Some of them declared that they used formative and summative assessment; others opted for group challenges, classroom competitions, and writing essays about specific topics. As for the rest of the teachers, they declared that they used quizzes and exams. From such findings, we can say that not all the teachers used alternative assessment procedures in their classes.

10th Question: Do you think your students face difficulties when learning to write? Yes / No, please say why.

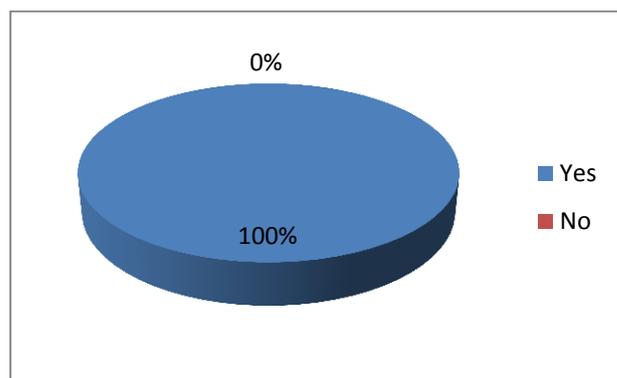


Figure3.13. The Teachers' Opinions about the Existence of Students' Writing Difficulties

The results obtained showed that the whole teachers answered with “Yes”, which means that all the students faced difficulties when learning to write while nobody of the teachers answered with “No”. We can say that the writing process is a difficult one and that the writing skill is considered as the most challenging skill among the rest of the skills; that is why it plays a crucial role in the learning process and it is very important for the students to master with the help of their teachers of course. From the gathered data, it is evident that all the teachers agreed on the fact that their students encountered serious problems when learning to write, a reality that has come to confirm the already stated research problem.

Teachers in this question were also asked to explain why their students faced difficulties in writing. The majority of the teachers justified this by “the lack of vocabulary, grammar mistakes, and punctuations”, a teacher said: “they do lack vocabulary items to express their ideas, they make a lot of grammar mistakes, they face difficulties in applying punctuation fittingly”. A considerable number of teachers linked the difficulties faced by the students to “the lack of motivation and disinterest”, a teacher said: “ I don’t have a definite answer for this question, but I think that the most of the students are disinterested and unmotivated to engage in any kind of written production”. As for the rest of the teachers, they justified this by the lack of practice and the focus on the product rather than the process which results poor quality of the writing style.

11th Question: What kind of difficulties do you face while teaching writing?

The aim behind this question was to explore the difficulties faced by the teachers while teaching writing. Teachers were asked to explain what kind of difficulties they faced in the teaching of writing. Teachers in this question gave different answers: some of the teachers linked the difficulties they face to the large size of classes (overcrowded classes); other teachers said that they faced difficulties in addressing their students’ needs and the choice of the topic; the rest of the teachers said that they faced difficulties in motivating their students to write.

Section Three: Alternative Assessment

1st Question: what is your widely adopted type of classroom writing assignment?

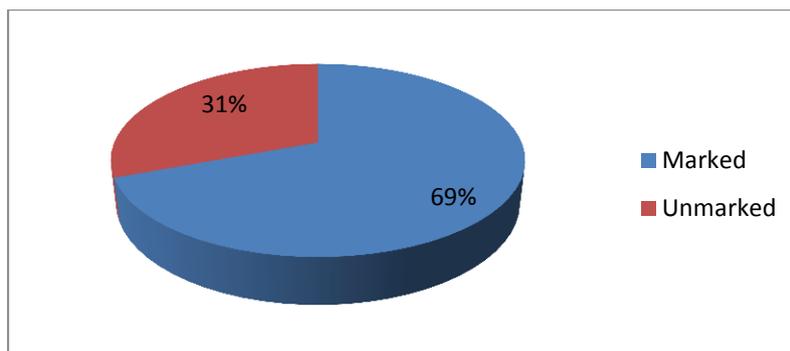


Figure3.14.The adopted type of classroom writing assignment

The question was formulated to know which type of writing assignment was the most used by teachers. Hence, assignment creates teaching and learning opportunities to think and learn about ideas, topics, and questions about specific content in the curriculum. From the figure above only 3 teachers (31%) ticked the unmarked box which means that most teachers (69%) marked their students' writing. In other words, teachers preferred to give a score or mark to their students instead of giving them only corrective feedback. This implies that the majority of teachers prefer the traditional way of assessing students' written productions, rather than the modern alternative delineation. This indicates that even teachers want to change their way in assessing students' writing but they still face some challenges related to the use of alternative assessment.

2nd Question: What kind of assessment do you actually prefer to opt for in your writing classes?

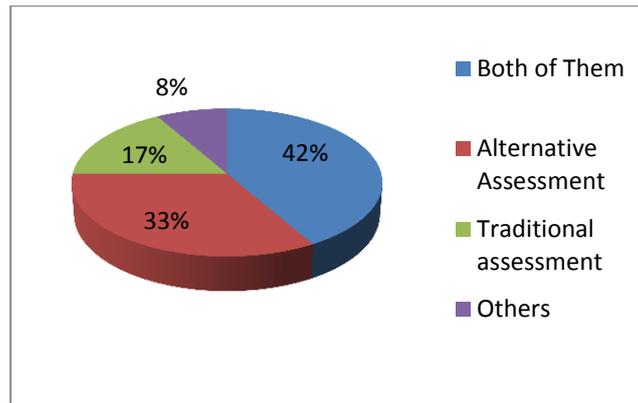


Figure 3.15. The Teachers' Preferred Type of Writing Assessment

This question was devoted to investigate the teachers' preferred type of assessment in their writing classes. The aim behind asking this question was to see how much teachers were aware of using different assessment types. From the results obtained, (42%) of the sample declared their tendency to the use of both assessments (traditional and alternative). Thus, teachers believed that students generally performed better when they were engaged in both assessments; (33%) of the participants claimed that their learners held positive attitudes toward the use of alternative assessment, which positively relates to the belief that alternative assessment is more helpful in developing the writing process. However, (17%) of the sample preferred the use of traditional assessment which involve the use of tests, quizzes, and homework as the means for evaluation. (8%) of the participants chose other kinds like performance tests, formative and summative assessment. As in the previous question, it obvious that using the traditional assessment is still considered the most reliable tool for assessing students' writing but does not mean that teachers are not using their best to change the way they assess students in order to help them developing their authentic skills that are demanded by real-life situations, and to give them a chance to engage a variety of learning styles, and also to increase their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.

3rd Question: How important is such a type of assessment in teaching your writing skill?

The questionnaire was addressed to get a clear idea about the importance of the chosen type of assessment. The results obtained show the advantages of each type. Teachers who used both types (traditional and alternative) stated that using both types helped students enhance their learning and make them aware of the differences between such tools. Others who only used alternative assessment claimed it helped learners become autonomous and helped teachers have a deep understanding about learners' progress. Besides, they believed that alternative assessment had a great importance since they do not know students' weaknesses unless you assess them; they also considered it beneficial in making them alert and taking responsibility over their learning. In addition, teachers admitted that through such type, students can become more responsible and enthusiastic. Moreover, teachers stated that such type of assessment focuses not only at the end of the product but rather on the mastery of some writing strategies and addressing the requirements of the audience. Two teachers did not answer clearly this question. This indicates that the majority of teachers agreed on the importance and centrality of alternative assessment to students' writing development. Teachers believe that these forms of assessment can also help them to achieve complex objectives and learning skills, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, in their students, while also allowing them to maintain accurate and detailed documentation of students' progress across the course semester or academic year.

4th Question: What specific assessment tools do you use the most in your writing classes?

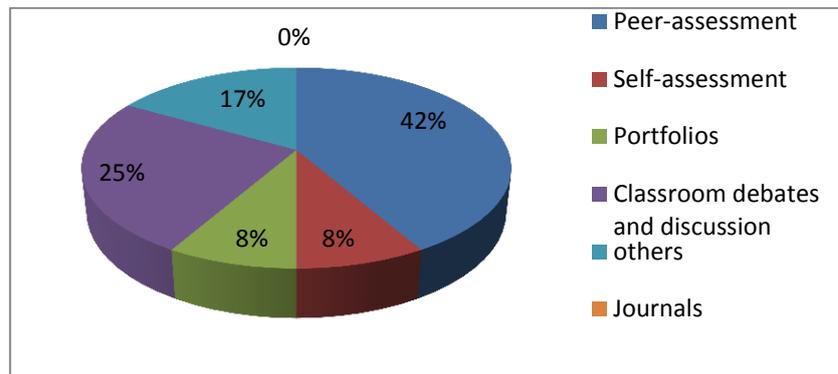


Figure.3.16.The Teachers' Widely Used Assessment Tools

This question was designed for written expression teachers to know about their specific assessment practices and methods used in their writing classes. Interestingly, (42%) stated that they used peer-assessment the most; furthermore, (25%) preferred classroom debates and discussions. Moreover, (17%) chose peer, self-assessment and classroom debates and discussions at the same time. However, (8%) of the sample chose the use of portfolios and the same percentage (8%) declared the use of self-assessment while none of the participants chose the option *journals*. Hence, it is clear from the data gathered that the majority of teachers preferred the use of peer-assessment over the other tools, so the logical explanation is that most teachers are more familiar and knowledgeable about it if comparison to other tools. More importantly, they do not opt for variety in adopting alternative assessment procedures.

5th Question: Which of the aforementioned assessment tools/procedures do your students positively react to?

This question was devoted to investigate the students' preferred alternative assessment tools. According to the results, 3 teachers said that peer-assessment is the most used tool, whereas 4 teachers stated that classroom debates and discussions are the tools students work better with. However, only 2 teachers from the sample said self-assessment, 3 participants

from 12 did not give a clear answer. In other words, we noticed that both students and teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of alternative assessment tools.

Question 6: How often do you implement alternative assessment tools in teaching the writing skill?

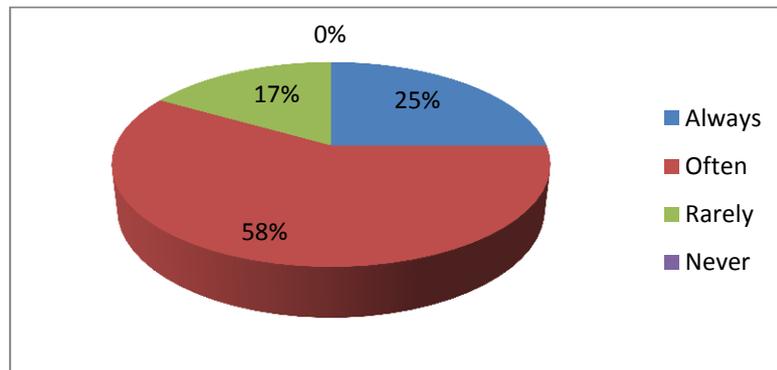


Figure.3.17. Frequency of Teachers' Implementation of Alternative Assessment Tools

Concerning this question, the teachers were asked about the frequency of the implementation of any alternative assessment tools in teaching the writing skill. And this will in turn confirm whether the teachers really used alternative assessment in their writing classes as they asserted in the fourth question of this section. Figure3.17 illustrates that out of the four options the first option (often) received the highest percentage (58%), while (25%) claimed that they always implement the alternative assessment tools in teaching the writing skill. Moreover, (17%) of the participants aid that they rarely implement alternative assessment tools while no one from the participants picked the *never* option. From the teachers' answers, we can deduce that alternative assessment tools are actually implemented by some teachers, but not repeatedly and regularly. This indicates that a number of teachers are aware of the value of using alternative assessment, but again confirms the aforementioned interpretations holding that the teachers may not be fully applying the process and genre approaches to writing instruction.

7th Question: Could you please add some suggestions and recommendations as for the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching writing?

The last question dealt with the teachers' suggestions and recommendations for the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching writing. It aimed at showing the teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment methods in order to give help to students to develop their writing skill. It can be noticed from the results that most teachers agree with the use of alternative assessment methods in classroom with taking into consideration the two factors of time and effort that can affect the implementation of alternative assessment. Even teachers who did not opt for alternative assessment highly advised using it at university level because it makes learners more comfortable with the target language. However, because writing is a process, it requires varying assessment tools to make the process effective. Furthermore, teachers who answer this question stated that alternative assessment is a way for telling students that they are mature enough to be held accountable for what they do. This means that writing is best learned through putting too much time and effort in the process rather than relying on the teacher to make miracles for students. Moreover, alternative assessment is very useful since it helps to determine what students can do, and what they cannot do. In other words, the teachers said there should be a variety in terms of assessment methods, so the teachers should opt for and actually use alternative assessment methods in order to help and encourage students to master particular writing genres. Also, some teachers believed that such methods like portfolios are very helpful in showing how the students' progress in the process of learning the writing skill. From such results, we can conclude that alternative assessment methods are very effective and valuable for EFL learners as advocated by the written expression teachers. However, between theory and practice, the gap may, by and large, be hard to bridge.

3.5. Discussion of the Questionnaire Results

This part of our dissertation is entirely devoted to the discussion of the results obtained from the teachers' answers. The data gathered from the teachers' online questionnaire aided in having a clear and convincing idea about their attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment. According to the teachers' answers in the first section, it is noticed that the teachers are not quite satisfied with their students' level and that their students had a low proficiency level in the written expression module.

The second section of the questionnaire was concerned with the teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of the writing skill. The first addressed question was concerned with teachers' opinion about the importance of the writing skill for their students to master the foreign language. As expected, all of them acknowledged the importance and the centrality of writing to foreign language mastery. Questions 7 and 8 of the same section showed that half of the teachers preferred their students to work individually, which means that the teachers do not involve their students in sharing and working together, and they privileged individual work. Moreover, a considerable number of them encouraged their students' to correct each other's errors, so the students will be active and autonomous. The ninth question was addressed to explore the assessment procedures used by the teachers when teaching the writing module. The results obtained show that a considerable number of teachers opted for both peer-assessment and self-assessment, which are both alternative assessment tools; the teachers support the use of alternative assessment tools, but they did not opt for it regularly and repeatedly in their classes.

The third section was concerned with the teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment in the writing module. The third question addressed the importance of these types of assessment to teaching the writing skill; the results obtained showed the importance of each type; teachers who used both of them (Alternative Assessment and Traditional Assessment)

claimed that both of the types make students aware of the differences between such tools, and that teachers who used alternative assessment only claimed that will make the students autonomous. The fourth question addressed the teachers' most used tool in the writing classes. Hence, the answers differed and the majority of the teachers preferred to use peer-assessment among the rest of the tools (self- assessment, portfolios, debates, and journals). As for the sixth question, the results obtained showed that a considerable number of teachers often used alternative assessment in their classes but not always, and there are some teachers who never used such a type in their classes.

To finish with, the results obtained from this questionnaire showed that alternative assessment is not widely used in the first year license writing classes at the department of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia- Jijel, and that some teachers are still relying on traditional assessment. Yet, the teachers expressed their willingness to use such a new type of assessment in their classes. Besides, the teachers do hold positive attitudes towards the use of this type of assessment, especially peer-assessment, and they consider it as an important tool that helps their students' to ameliorate their writing skill.

3.5. Limitations of the Study

Following the general thought that "No investigation is perfect", no research is meant to be out of criticism. Based on this assumption, the present study faced some obstacles that resulted in some limitations.

- The Covid-19 pandemic: the pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total closure of schools, universities, libraries and colleges. As a result, the researchers were obliged to cancel the classroom observation sessions and to solely rely on the teachers' questionnaire.

- The questionnaire is an effective research tool in descriptive studies; it is not, however, particularly suited for research that requires a significant amount of open-ended questions.

- The limited number of teachers: there were only 12 teachers who filled out the questionnaire a higher number could have increased the quality of the research.

3.6. Pedagogical Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

As it has been revealed by the analysis of the data, and in compliance with the forgoing, it is important to state some points to be considered in the future use of alternative assessment. Accordingly, the following suggestions and recommendations would help both students and teachers for beneficial use of alternative assessment in learning and teaching how to write.

- Teachers should focus more on alternative assessment, with its different tools, rather than on traditional assessment. Thus, this will help students develop meaningful and applicable skills, and advance their knowledge of the *how* over that of the *why*.

- The role of the teacher should be crucial; he/she must manage the class, but act as a guide and even as a co-learner. This will hopefully motivate students to write and will put them in the route for autonomy.

- Teachers should use many different processes and strategies for classroom assessment, and adopt them to suit the assessment purpose and needs of individual students.

- Students should be involved in the learning process; they should work with teachers in choosing the best tool.

- Teachers should be more responsible for preparing lesson plans and educating students at all steps. Teachers must be able to instruct in a variety of subjects and enrich students with engaging lessons plans.
- Students might work in pairs or groups in writing activities (because when they assess the writing of each other, they become more motivated and therefore, learning is likely to occur).
- We suggest that teachers provide a checklist in cooperation with the students on which type of assessment would make learning to write more interesting and motivating as it would be a more objective evaluation.
- Teachers should take into consideration the students' needs, interests, and abilities (students with lower ability may be less capable than their peers. So, teachers should be aware of such specificities and should incorporate the necessary changes and refinement needed for their writing development).

Conclusion

The main concern of the third chapter was to analyze, present, and discuss the results of the data gathered from the questionnaire employed in the present study. A teachers' questionnaire was used to describe the teachers' attitude towards the use of alternative assessment in the EFL classes. The chapter starts with some key components of the questionnaire, adding to that the presentation and the discussion of the questionnaire results. It has also discussed some limitations, and finally, some suggestions and pedagogical recommendations were given about the use of alternative assessment in teaching and learning writing.

General conclusion

Writing is considered as an important part and an essential element of the learning process. However, it is considered as a difficult task to acquire since it does not involve only the language system. Assessment is a key component of all educational programs of measuring

the learners' success. One way to develop students' writing skill is the use of alternative assessment tools in the writing process. Alternative assessment is a concept that includes measurement of knowledge that is significant and meaningful. It is also used to determine what student can do and cannot do. In other words, alternative assessment measures applied proficiency more than it measures knowledge. In fact, many researchers proved that implementing alternative assessment in teaching writing is influential to develop learners' written productions.

The situation under study is related to investigate the written expression teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment in teaching the writing skill in order to get a clear view of students' needs, with reference to 1st year license' teachers at the department of English at the University of Jijel. The current research work was conducted in the form of a case study.

The overall research work consisted of three chapters. The first and second chapters dealt with the theoretical framework of the study while the third one covered the practical side of this investigation. As far as the theoretical part is concerned, the first chapter provided some key concepts related to assessment in general. It provided the history of assessment with a reference to traditional and alternative assessment with its types and methods. The second chapter spotlighted an overview of the writing skill. It tackled some definitions, the importance and approaches related to writing skill. Also, it provided a description of the writing activities and criteria of the assessment of the writing skill, and alternative assessment of writing in EFL classes. Correspondingly, the third chapter reported the aspects of the case study, thus, the researchers presented the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the gathered information as well as a discussion of the main results. Lastly, the chapter supplied some limitations and a set of suggestions and recommendations that can contribute to the effectiveness of alternative assessment in the writing domain.

The findings show that using alternative assessment in teaching writing is important for EFL students, and teachers should include its different forms in order to guide learners and to discover their needs and wants. It was observed that the majority of written expression teachers were interested in using alternative assessment in teaching writing. Moreover, they considered alternative assessment as an opportunity to improve students' writing proficiency through giving them different tasks using different methods. Still, such a type of assessment was not fully and holistically approached and practised in the writing classes. The findings showed that though knowledgeable about alternative assessment the teachers were, they did not widely make use of such a new type of assessment, nor was it regular practice in their writing classes.

Other findings of this study revealed that some teachers are still using traditional assessment because some learners are still facing some barriers in using alternative assessment and this might be due to the lack of experience. This may justify the students' low writing proficiency level and their dissatisfaction with their teachers' assessment practices. Also, the results showed that the majority of teachers preferred the use of peer assessment tool among the others because learners are more motivated when peer assessment process was implemented during the writing activities.

To sum up, the findings of this study respond to the previously formulated research questions. The teachers of written expression had a positive attitude towards the use of alternative assessment to develop the students' written productions. Thus, teachers and students should work together and support the use of alternative assessment in order to ensure that alternative forms of assessment are effectively implemented in such a way as to satisfy both the teachers' and the students' needs.

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Appendix

The Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is part of a research work aiming at exploring teacher's attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment in teaching the writing skill with first year license teachers.

We would be most grateful to you if you cooperate with us by responding to the present questions. Your answers will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Please provide the necessary information either by putting a tick in the appropriate box or by providing full comments when necessary.

Section One: General Information

1) Degree(s) held

2) How long have you been teaching the written expression module?
.....

3) How many students do you have in average in first year license classes?

a) 10-20

b) 20-30

c) More than 30

4) How do you evaluate your students' level in written expression?

a) Very good

b) Good

c) Average

d) Less than average

e) Poor

Section Two: Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of the writing skill.

5) Do you consider the writing skill as being central to students' foreign language mastery?

Yes

No

- If yes please say why?

.....

6) To what extent do you think you are knowledgeable about the different approaches to teaching writing?

a) Extremely

b) Significantly

c) Moderately

d) Not at all

7) What specific approach to writing instruction do you actually adopt in your classes?

a) The product approach (focus on the final product)

b) The process approach (focus on the processes and strategies)

c) The genre approach (focus on the genre and social community)

d) The process genre approach

- Please justify your answer?

.....

8) Do your students respond positively to the choice of such an approach?

Yes

No

9) How do you describe your role in the writing class?

a) Controller

b) Motivator

c) Knowledge transmitter

d) Guide

e) Others

- If others, please specify.....

10) What kind of activities do you actually opt for in your writing classes?

a) Journals

b) Free writing

c) Descriptions

d) Literary texts

e) Letters and essays

f) Others

- If others, please specify.....

11) During the writing task, do your students work?

a) Individually

b) In pairs

c) In groups

12) How do you respond to your students' errors?

a) You correct the errors yourself

b) You encourage them to correct each other's errors

c) You ask them to correct the errors by themselves

d) Others

- Others, please specify.....

13) As for assessment, what specific assessment procedures do you generally opt for when teaching your students writing?

.....

14) Do you think your students find difficulties when learning to write?

Yes

No

- Please say

why.....

15) What kind of difficulties do you face while teaching writing?

.....

Section Three: Teachers' attitudes towards the use of alternative assessment and its role in teaching writing.

16) What is your widely adopted type of classroom writing assignment?

Marked

Unmarked

17) What kind of assessment do you actually prefer to opt for in your writing classes?

a) Traditional assessment

b) Alternative assessment

c) Both of them

d) Others

- Others, please specify.....

18) How important is such a type of assessment in teaching your students writing?

.....

- Please specify.....

19) What specific assessment tools do you use most in your writing classes?

a) Self-assessment

b) Peer-assessment

c) Portfolios

d) Journals

e) Classroom debates and discussion

f) Others

- Please say why.....

20) Which of the aforementioned assessment procedures/tools do your students positively react to?

.....

21) How often do you implement alternative assessment tools in teaching your students writing?

a) Always

b) Often

c) Rarely

d) Never

22) Could you please add some suggestions and recommendations as for the use of alternative assessment methods in teaching writing?

.....

Thank you.

Résumé

La présente étude a enquêté sur les attitudes des enseignants en expression écrite à l'égard de l'utilisation de méthodes d'évaluation alternatives dans l'enseignement d'anglais aux étudiants de la première année licence à l'université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. Il tente également de découvrir si les enseignants mettent en œuvre ou non une évaluation alternative dans leurs classes. Cette étude est basée sur l'hypothèse que si les enseignants avaient des attitudes positives envers l'utilisation de l'évaluation alternative, ils mettraient en œuvre efficacement dans leurs classes. Les données sont collectées au moyen d'un questionnaire conçu et adressé à douze professeurs de module d'expression écrite au département d'anglais. Les résultats de l'étude ont montré que bien que les enseignants connaissant les évaluations alternatives, ils n'utilisaient pas largement ce nouveau type d'évaluation, et ce n'était pas non plus une pratique régulière dans leur classe d'écriture. Par conséquent, les résultats ont rejeté l'hypothèse de recherche et ont révélé que, malgré le fait que les enseignants avaient des attitudes positives envers l'utilisation de l'évaluation alternative, ils ne l'ont pas largement mise en œuvre dans leurs classes. Sur la base des résultats obtenus, quelques recommandations pédagogiques et suggestions pour de futures recherches sont suggérées.

المخلص

تهدف الدراسة التي بين ايدينا الى اكتشاف مواقف اساتذة التعبير الكتابي اتجاه استخدام طرق التقييم البديلة في تدريس طلبة السنة الاولى مقياس التعبير الكتابي بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى- جيجل. كما تهدف الدراسة الى اكتشاف ما اذا كان الاساتذة يطبقون التقييم البديل في فصولهم ام لا. كما تستند الدراسة الى فرضية انه اذا كان لدى الاساتذة مواقف ايجابية اتجاه استخدام التقييم البديل فانهم سيطبقونه بفعالية في فصولهم. في ما يخص الجانب النظري قمنا بجمع البيانات عن طريق استبيان مصمم ووجه الى اثني عشر استاذ في مقياس التعبير الكتابي لقسم اللغة الانجليزية. اظهرت النتائج انه على الرغم من دراية الاساتذة بأهمية التقييم البديل الا انهم لا زالوا لا يستعملونه على نطاق واسع و بطريقة منتظمة. بناء على النتائج المتحصل عليها ختمت هذه الدراسة بتوصيات من اجل البحوث المستقبلية واقتراحات و نصائح للطلبة و الاساتذة