

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Tlemcen



**Difficulties in Writing in a Foreign Language**  
**The Case of first Year Secondary School IBN TOFEIL Tlemcen**

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Masters' degree in Didactics and Assessment in English Language Education*

**Presented by:**  
**Mrs .SAIB Houria Nihed**

**Supervised by:**  
**Prof. Ali BAICHE**

**Board of Examiners**

<b>Dr. SEMMOUD . A</b>	President	(University of Tlemcen)
<b>Prof. BAICHE. A</b>	Supervisor	(University of Tlemcen)
<b>Dr . BERRABAH. B</b>	Examiner	(University of Tlemcen)

**Academic Year**

**2016/2017**

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Tlemcen



**Difficulties in Writing in a Foreign Language**  
**The Case of first Year Secondary School IBN TOFEIL Tlemcen**

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Masters' degree in Didactics and Assessment in English Language Education*

**Presented by:**  
**Mrs .SAIB Houria Nihed**

**Supervised by:**  
**Prof. Ali BAICHE**

**Board of Examiners**

<b>Dr. SEMMOUD . A</b>	President	(University of Tlemcen)
<b>Prof. BAICHE. A</b>	Supervisor	(University of Tlemcen)
<b>Dr . BERRABAH. B</b>	Examiner	(University of Tlemcen)

**Academic Year**

**2016/2017**

## **Declaration of originality**

I hereby declare that this work is mine and contains no plagiarism and is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also certify that this dissertation was not taken from others' diplomas of others' universities or institutions.

### **Signature:**

Houriya Nihad SAIB

11/06/2017

# Dedications

*In memory of my father,*

*To my husband and my son*

# Acknowledgements

*First and foremost I thank the Almighty ALLAH who gave me the courage to accomplish this work.*

*I owe thanks to my supervisor Prof. Ali BAICHE for his guidance and support and most importantly for his time .*

*I also thank the board of examiners Dr. SEMMOUD and Dr. BERRABAH for accepting to read and evaluate my work as well as for their comments.*

*Last but not least I acknowledge with a deep sense of gratitude my dearest friend TARI Bouchra who helped me a lot to achieve my humble dissertation.*

*Finally I thank all the participants (teachers and pupils of IBN TOFEIL secondary school) for their collaboration in the present study.*

## **Abstract**

There is a general agreement among scholars that performing coherent and cohesive piece of writing among EFL students is not an easy task. In this regard, the present study aims primary at identifying EFL learners writing difficulties and their sources as well as to find out possible solutions towards achieving effectiveness in writing. The constitution of diverse research instruments including the questionnaire, the and classroom observation help the investigator to have a broad view about the scope of this study. The collected data reveal that students meet difficulties at the level of coherence and cohesion as well as grammar due to the lack of reading and low writing practice. In hope to remedy and decrease these difficulties, a call for solutions are needed.

# Table of contents

Declaration of originality.....	i
Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of contents.....	v
List of Abbreviations.....	vi
List of figures .....	vii
General Introduction.....	1
<b>Chapter One: Theoretical Background</b>	
1.1. Introduction.....	3
1.2. English as a global language.....	3
1.3. The status of English in Algeria .....	5
1.4. Learners and motivation towards English .....	6
1.5. Lack of reading .....	7
1.6. Writing defined .....	8
1.7. The importance of writing in learning .....	9
1.8. Strategies of writing .....	10
1.9. Common EFL learners difficulties in writing.....	12
1.10.1 .Choice of the topic.....	13
1.10.2. Coherence Difficulties.....	14
1.10.3. Cohesion Difficulties.....	15
1.10.4. Grammar difficulties.....	16

<b>1.11. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Data Analysis, interpretations and suggestions</b>	
<b>2.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2. Research methods and design.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2.1. The questionnaire.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.2. 2. Classroom observation.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.3. The sample population profile.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.4. Analysis of the questionnaire .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.5. Discussion of the main findings .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.6. Suggestions and recommendations.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.7.1. Achieving writing by reading.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2.7.2 Using technology for writing.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.7.3 suggested activities for effective writing.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.8. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>38</b>



# **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

USA: United State of America

UK: United Kingdom

TL: Target Language

AS : Année Secondaire

ELT: English Language Teaching

# List of figures

Figure 2.1 The difficulties of the English language.....	23
Figure 2.2 Teacher's evaluation of their pupils' writing.....	24
Figure 2.3 Teachers' use of brainstorming .....	25
Figure 2.4 The frequency of the use of the writing activity.....	26
Figure 2.5 The frequency of the use of the dictionary.....	27
Figure 2.6 Technology use among teachers.....	28

## General Introduction

---

Countless of research works have been written about the teaching / learning of English as a foreign language. It is commonly known that to master the language, EFL learners need to be skillful enough at the four language skills namely; listening, speaking, reading and writing. This latter appears to be the most difficult language skill to be acquired by EFL learners and even by native speakers since it requires much time and effort.

It is approached to have particular criteria that should be respected and obeyed to perform adequate writing tasks. In this vein, teaching/ learning how to write plays a crucial role in language teaching/ learning classrooms. Though its importance, many EFL learners face a serious number of difficulties that prohibit them from constructing satisfactory writing. In this respect, the following research questions are designed:

- 1- Is the English language difficult to be learnt ?
- 2- What sort of difficulties pupils encounter while writing?
- 3- How to overcome the difficulties faced by learners?

For this reason, the following hypotheses have been set:

- 1- For the pupils English is a struggle.
- 2- The difficulties that EFL learners often encounter in writing could be in coherence and cohesion, the lack of reading and writing.
- 3- EFL learners may improve their writing by building their reading and writing habits as well as using technology in the teaching of writing.

Therefore, the present research work attempts significantly to account for which difficulties EFL learners encounter the most in writing, and to which sources

## General Introduction

---

are these difficulties related to along with finding out possible solutions to unveil difficulties in writing. With these objectives in mind, the investigator selects two research instruments; teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation.

This research work is divided into two chapters. The first one displays the theoretical background of the issue in question. It deals with providing various definitions offered to the concept of writing and its importance. Besides, the status of the English language, learners' motivation towards the English language and some strategies for effective writing.

The second chapter is, however, concerned with a detailed description of the research instruments used to undertake this study, and the chosen sample. It deals also with the analysis of teachers' questionnaire and classroom observation. Then, it sets some suggestions and recommendations for overcoming writing difficulties among these learners with the citation of some recommended activities.

## 1.1 Introduction

Writing as a skill has come to play an important role in foreign languages and most importantly English because it seems to help learners to gain proficiency in a foreign language possibly more than the other skills. Therefore in this chapter we will discuss the English language as a global language, including its spread in the eyes of Kachru (1982), then its status in the Algerian context. Furthermore it will speak about the learners and their motivation towards the English language tackling different problems like the lack of reading then providing a considerable definition about writing its importance and its strategies ending with the common EFL crises that learners face in writing counting the choice of the topic, problems of coherence and cohesion and grammar.

## 1.2 English as a global language

The English language plays an important role in education globally. As Crystal (1997: 110) says **“English is the medium of a great deal of the world’s knowledge, especially in such areas as science and technology. And access to knowledge is the business of education”**. This quotation clearly illustrates the significance of the English language in technology and science. Indeed, English does not only provide access to the aforementioned domains but it is also considered as a lingua franca, where people with different mother tongues communicate with each other through English.

In the same vein of thought English opens doors in the academic world. , if the best program in the field where English is native language. It will give the chance to study with the top scholars. Western universities are more and more captivating visiting scholars, students and professors from all around the world, and their common working language is English. As well as studying and teaching, attending international conferences and publishing in foreign journals are on some

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

of the key steps to success in academia. In order to speak at these conferences or publish in these journals, English is essential.

There are many reasons why English has become so popular. One of them is that English has become the language of business. Another important reason is that popular American culture (like movies, music, and McDonald's) has quickly spread throughout the world. It has brought its language with it.

Kachru has divided the English language into three-circle model of world Englishes which is viewed by kandiah in the following way:

**The world has become more and more pluralistic since the independence of many British colonies after second world war as discussed by many professional, has pluralized English by moving it a way from its birth place and original home England and setting it in new places.**

kandiah (1998:01)

It means that English is no more the property of its owners but it becomes also the language of other peoples. Therefore Kachru's model (1985) remains one of the most influential models for grouping the varieties of English on the world.

He describes the spread of English in terms of three concentric circles: the Inner circle which refers to the traditional bases of English, dominated by the mother tongue varieties, where English acts as a first language and the countries involved are: USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Then the Outer circle which consists of the earlier phases of the spread of English in non-native settings, where the language has become part of a country's chief institutions, and plays an important second language role in a multilingual setting. The countries included are the former colonies of the UK or the USA, such as Malaysia, Singapore, India, Ghana, Kenya and others.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

Finally the Expanding circle refers to the territories where English is learnt as a foreign language. The territories do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle. English is taught as a foreign language as the most useful vehicle of international communication. Consequently, English now is overwhelmingly wide spread in international settings used in international organizations as well as academic world .

### 1.3 The Status of English in Algeria

English language in Algeria is taught at the level of middle schools, secondary schools and at the level of universities, all departments have the module of English which is taught for specific purpose. The secondary school (the sample under investigation) adopted the competency based approach. In this contexts Benadla (2013:168) states that: **‘the goal of CBA is to modernise and develop education to face globalisation requirements. This reform, thus, introduces new dimensions related to globalisation like introducing ICT’s use and focusing on foreign languages teaching without falling into the trap of losing one’s identity and acculturation’**. Indeed the CBA implementation in Algerian schools has brought significant improvement.

The CBA has been introduced in the educational system since 2003, the key concept of the competency bases approach is ‘competency’; it is used in this context to refer to the acquisition of a know-how which integrates and mobilizes a set of capacities, skills and an amount of knowledge that can be used effectively in various problem-solving situations.

The implementation of CBA approach in the Algerian educational system in general and the ELT classroom in particular has, by cause and effect

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

relationship, given rise to a radical change in the national curriculum guidelines, elaboration of new textbooks from middle school to secondary level .

### 1.4 Learners and motivation towards English

It is generally acknowledged that the teaching of English in Algeria is very difficult, teachers are facing many problems in making the learning occurs, learners are not motivated to study English since they are not exposed to it, they meet it just in classrooms, but once out everything is overlooked, they don't take the English language seriously. They consider it a dead language. They think that it is a waste of time to learn a language which they don't need when entering university; because they will study in French. However when the problem is narrowed every learner face many constraints in learning English. It seems that there is no magical receipt because the French language is the language that dominate all the fields , it is called the syndrome of French, that is to say; the colonialism in Algeria had a great impact on the society and education, learners are more and more interested in this language than English.

When it comes at the level of language aspects in the secondary school, the writing skill is considered as a foe for certain teachers, though it is badly taught so, the learners will not make efforts to write. They are satisfied by what the teacher proposes. Motivation is the key of all the success. In this context Harmer stresses this point and claims that:

**People involved in language teaching often say that students who really want to learn will succeed whatever circumstances in which they study. They succeed despite using methods which experts consider unsatisfactory. In the phase of such a phenomenon, it seems reasonable to suggest that the motivation that students bring to class is the biggest simple factor affecting their success.**

Harmer (2006: n.p)



## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

In this respect teachers must create a cozy and pleasant atmosphere in order to enhance learners to learn. Most EFL learners are not motivated in writing for a number of reasons.

First, fear of making mistakes, that is, fear of not being able to achieve their goals especially in contexts of competence or efficiency . Second, it could be related to the fact that they feel weak and never improve. The state of protections and therefore they become persecuted by failure. Thirdly, there are some learners who are doubtful to show their productions; they purposely hide their weaknesses and often do not finish intentionally as they feel a beforehand failure.

Moreover, when the learners are scared in writing; this can lead to negative thought and may impede their efforts in doing their best. Harmer (2006:55) points out the fact that’ **writing anxieties are very dangerous since they can result in negative attitudes towards writing**”. He claims that teachers are called to build what we call ‘writing habit’ among these kinds of learners.

### 1.5 Lack of reading

Reading is a very complex process of which all aspects cannot yet be described. Besides, there is not only one type of reading process. According to reading purpose, conditions and competence reading styles. Reading appears to be helpful in developing the writing skill, evidence have shown that better readers are better writers, in this vein Baiche (2015:434) states that “**students’ major problems are linked to limited vocabulary, awkward grammar and expressing themselves**”. In fact grammar and vocabulary remain the most encountered problems faced by pupils.

Therefore poor reading gives bad results on the writing. Raimes (1994:42) stresses the point that “**the more our students read, the more they**

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns, organizational flow, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language”. Reading is the accurate remedy for developing the writing skill.

### 1.6 Writing defined

writing is the one of the four language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is defined by English club (2003) as **“the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form”**. It means that writing is used to interact and express ideas in the written form through using letters, expressions and sentences to form a coherent paragraph. In this vein Widowson (2001:32) states that **“writing is the use of visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language”**. That is to say, writing is the production of sentences as instances of usage.

learners need to master the structure of the language, its grammar and the convenient vocabulary items related to the subject matter. In fact the writing skill is a complex process and difficult to learn, it does not require the mastery of the grammatical patterns but also the rule of writing such the organization and development of ideas, also choosing the right vocabularies and attrances to build a style which is suitable in the subject matter. To prove this, it is stated that:

**Writing is a very complex cognitive activity in which writers must show control over content, format, sentence, structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation, i.e., control at the sentence level. Besides, writers must be able to structure and integrate information cohesively and coherently within paragraphs and texts.**

Bell and Burnaby (1997:148)

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

The above definition confirm that the writer needs to master and control all aspects of the language integrating coherence and cohesion .

### 1.7 The Importance of Writing in learning

The writing is very important in every fields, and the most essential field is education. Learner who has good writing has a fruitful future behind him and empowering the knowledge writing can give an aid to learners by:

- Enhancing their problem solving and critical thinking.
- Developing integration of process, content, and skills.
- Developing organizational strategies depending on the form of the writing.
- Developing the skill of inquiry ( which includes:collecting and evaluating information, comparing and contrasting, imagining situations from another perspective, building argument for a particular position or point of view, learning the importance of not only asking questions of others but of ourselves, of not only revising the information we receive but being willing to revise the questions).
- Increasing decision making abilities.
- Developing a healthy skepticism which leads to exploration of ideas, an enlarged world view and a confident imagination

In the same line of thought, Suleiman (2000:155) asserts that **“writing is a central element of language, any reading and language arts program must consider the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, assessment procedures, and language development.”** This assertion shows clearly the value of writing.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

Effective writing skills may enhance students' chances for success (Alexander, 2008). In debating the significance of writing to learning, Suleiman (2000) also stresses that writing is an essential factor of language. Any reading and language curriculum must think about the multidimensional nature of writing in instructional practices, evaluation procedures, and language development. One major implication of the use of writing purposes to develop the writing construct is that there may be processing models for each distinct level of writing purpose (Lee & Kantor, 2005).

At the most advanced stage, writing becomes a personal tool for transforming one's own experiences and knowledge (Bereiter, 1980). As they become more proficient writers, students move gradually from **“knowledge-telling”** to **“knowledge-transformation”** (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987: 5–6). Knowledge-telling is most typical of less proficient writers and involves writing content that could in principle also be conveyed orally. Knowledge-transformation is more complex; the writing process is used as a way to extend ideas and reasoning and as a vehicle for the development of knowledge, philosophical ideas, and personal awareness.

### **1.9 Strategies of writing**

Strong writing is not just an option but a necessity, it is an augur of academic success and a basic need for participation in civic life, however every year adolescent graduated from secondary schools are unable to write at the basic level, many of them because they lack the basic literacy skills to fit the developing demands of the high school curriculum (Kamil, 2003; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). In other words, there is a lack of the mastery of such skills.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

The following eleven elements of present writing instruction found to be effective for helping adolescent students learn to write well and to adopt writing as a tool for learning. It is important to note that all of the elements are promoted by rigorous research.

- **Writing Strategies**, which involves teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions
- **Summarization**, which involves explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts
- **Collaborative Writing**, which uses instructional arrangements in which learners work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions
- **Specific Product Goals**, which assigns students specific, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete
- **Word Processing**, which uses computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments
- **Sentence Combining**, which involves teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences
- **Prewriting**, which engages students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition
- **Inquiry Activities**, which engages students in analyzing immediate, concrete data to help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task
- **Process Writing Approach**, which interweaves a number of writing instructional activities in a workshop environment that stresses extended

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing

- **Study of Models**, which provides students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing.
- **Writing for Content Learning**, which uses writing as a tool for learning content material

It will be harder for students to utilize strategies to write a coherent summary or persuasive essay if they are not fluent in the basic -level skills. At the same time, students who have difficulty with either these skills or higher-level writing strategies will find it difficult to write to learn.

### 1.10 Common EFL learners difficulties in writing

Learning a foreign language can not be separated from creating errors, even native speakers are not free from doing mistakes. The error is natural, however, errors made by the learners and the native speaker is different. The difference is described by Corder (1973 :1) States that the native speakers recognize their errors. On the other hand, learners do not always recognize their errors, thus when their attention is drawn to it, they often cannot correct it, and they often commit another in trying to do.

There are several factors that cause students to commit errors, errors connecting with the errors made by the language learners. In the study of English errors Richard (1974: 174), points out that error are not only caused by the interference from the mother tongue, but also what he calls overgeneralization ignore of the rules restriction, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized.

According to Dullay (1986), errors can be useful feedback for the teachers. Writing skill is seen as language skill which is the most difficult and complex because it requires widely perception and involving thinking process and need good understanding on grammar and structures which extensive the common errors observed in the high school which are the choice of the topic, grammar, problem of coherence and cohesion .

### **1.10.1 Choice of the Topic**

Choosing a topic of interest is the first major step the student should start with. Some researchers have examined the backwash of writing topics on EFL writing achievement . In this vein Huang (2008) highlights the fact that the difficulty of the essay topic in examination is an important aspect that can hinder students' ability to write. He finds that the more familiarity the topic is, the more EFL can succeed in their writing. When the writing topic is familiar by the student Student writer, s/he will have more opportunity to generate ideas with the support of Evidence.

However, when the topic is unfamiliar, there would be an obstacle in the flow of ideas and therefore, it will result in poor writing and sometimes no writing is finished . In a similar vein, Lee (2008) reaches the conclusion that writing performance is greatly affected by task-related elements including topic familiarity which is perceived differently by each individual writer. It is safe to say that Huang and Lee (2008) go onto claim that the writing topic has an effect on the students' writing performance.

Essentially, Gradwohl and Schumacher (1989) stress the fact that learners have significantly more knowledge on the topics they select themselves compared to those teacher-selected ones. This fact is also confirmed by other researchers who find students-selected writing topics will motivate them to write, and building up positive attitudes towards target language writing (TL). Shippen. et.al. (2007) do a

## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

survey regarding students' performances of essay writing topics. They conclude that learners prefer writing about contemporary events, teen issues, hobbies, celebrities, to quote a few.

In this respect, Teachers' role is to bring enjoyable subjects and real life situations or just giving the freedom of choice. In this vein, Byrne (1991: 10) says that **“some learners feel secure if they are allowed to write... for such students, writing is likely to be an aid to retention, if only because they feel more at ease and relaxed”**

### 1.10.2 Coherence Difficulties

Coherence refers to the logical connection between the elements of the sentence that should be connected in coherent order. Since the conceptual meaning of English sentences mainly depends on word order, so the arrangement of the parts of a sentence is especially important to accurate expression of ideas. A coherent sentence is easy to understand and does not contain any ambiguity with its conformity to grammar rules and usage.

The issue of coherence as Harmer (2004) argued that coherence is an important element in writing because when the text is coherent the reader can understand at least two things: the writers' purposes and the writers' line of thoughts. In addition, he also claimed that coherence is achieved by the way in which a writer sequences information.

The problem of coherence among EFL learners is believed to be the most difficult that learners often commit. In this regard, a number of researchers in the Arab world have spotlight students' coherence problems in writing. In this vein, Qaddumi (1995) finds out that Arab students' writings reveal that repetition,



## Chapter One: Theoretical Background of The Writing skill

---

parallelism, sentence length, lack of variation and misuse of some cohesive devices are the major sources for their incoherent and textual deviation.

### 1.10.3 Cohesion Difficulties

As for cohesion Haliday and Hasan (1976:4) states that “**the concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text**” it means that the relation that occur between lexis and grammar Without cohesion, a written work can seem choppy and may not flow well Here are four main components of cohesion: relevance, order, linking and words repetition of key words.

- **Relevance:** A simple way to build cohesion or flow between sentences is to look at the meaning of a sentence and compare it to the point of the next sentence. They should be related yet not the same. If the two sentences are not closely related, the readers’ attention, because they will be lost. If the two sentences are identical, no information is added to the work and the reader will be annoyed.
- **Order:** Writers should always pay attention to the order of the ideas in the paragraph. Every paragraph should have a main idea (typically stated in a topic sentence). To maintain cohesion, all sentences within a paragraph should relate to this main idea.
- **Linking /transition words:** transition words can help a paragraph flow more smoothly. They help the reader to see the transition from one idea to another.
- **Repetition of key words:** repeating key terms related to the main idea of the paragraph makes an invisible rope for readers to follow. The reader needs to occasionally be reminded of the focus the idea.

### ▪ 1.10.4 Grammar Difficulties

Crystal (1992:35) defines grammar as “an analysis of the structure of language”. Without grammar there would be single out words. .In the same vein Cunningsworth (1987:18) contends that **“few, if any, writers on language learning would disagree that the internalization of grammar rules is central to language learning and that any teaching programme which omits grammar is not really teaching language in the full sense of the word”**. There must be an important attention on grammar in language teaching and learning. Also Crystal (1990) regards grammar as the skeleton, and Rivers(1991:3) the framework within which language operates drawing an analogy between the grammar of a language and a” boneless chicken”.

However when learning a foreign language learners are bound to make mistakes, because they not master the grammar rules very well. Hence, researchers like Brown (2002); and Aronoff & Fudeman (2006) affirmed that making errors are unavoidable problems in foreign and second language acquisition.

In Overall terms research has confirmed that learners have problems in the area of content, organization, manifest in spelling errors, punctuation errors, capitalization errors and inability to differentiate the use of present from past tense.

### 1.10 Conclusion

From what has been previously mentioned, the mastery of the writing skill is an important and complex task that needs a lot of efforts, hence, both teachers and learners need essential information that makes the teaching/learning of the writing skill casier and important .

The following chapter is, however, a case study that deals with a detailed description of the selected sample as well as the research instruments.

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the situation under investigation as well as the research design and instruments. In the present work two research instruments are used and the methodology of each one are explained. The data gathered in this chapter are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Last but not least, the main results drawn from this research are summarized and related to the research questions put by the researcher to check its validity. Finally, some suggestions and recommendations are proposed to overcome the writing difficulties.

## 2.2 Research Methods and Design

The present research work is a case study. The latter is defined by Yin (1994:13) as **“an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident...[and] relies on multiple sources of evidence”**. In this research, the researcher chooses to use a case study. The aim behind this choice is to provide an in depth understanding of the current phenomenon and how teachers consider their pupils' writing performance.

The researcher attempted to answer the 'what' and 'how' questions. Thus the exploratory case study seems to fit the current research work. Indeed such type of case study focuses on the investigation of a problem to understand the issue to bring ideas about the way of improving the existing situation.

following the case study, two research instruments are designed for data collection to answer to the foregoing research questions. These are a questionnaire conducted with EFL teachers at IBN TOFEIL secondary school as well as a

## Data Analysis, Interpretations and Suggestions

---

classroom observation of first year secondary school pupils. The purpose of using more than one instrument of research is to gather information from diverse sources and study the population from different angles.

### 2.2.1 The Questionnaire

In order to have a better understanding of the difficulties of writing in the secondary school, the researcher administered a questionnaire to 21 teachers of English at IBN TOFEIL secondary school. The questionnaire is by definition a research instrument that researchers use for the collection of data. It encompasses written questions that are of different types. The first type is close ended question which requires answers with 'yes' or 'no'. Multiple-choice question is the second type which involves a set of responses and the respondents are required to select one answer or more. Both close-ended questions and multiple choice questions provide quantitative data. The third type is open-ended question which is the most used in the questionnaire of this research work that requires a long answer. That is to say the respondents express their ideas freely without being restricted to select a certain opinion as in multiple-choice questions. This type of questions provide qualitative data.

It should be noted that the current questionnaire is divided into two rubrics and each one consists of a set of questions (see appendix A).

### 2.2.2 Classroom observation

The second research tool employed in this study is a classroom observation. The latter is defined as:

**a formal or informal observation of teaching while it is taking place in a classroom or other learning environment. Typically conducted by fellow teachers, administrators, or instructional specialists, classroom observations are often used to provide teachers with constructive critical feedback aimed at improving their classroom management and instructional techniques.**

The Glossary of Education Reform (2013)

## Data Analysis, Interpretations and Suggestions

---

Needless to recall that for observation there are different types of which the researcher opted for an unstructured participant observation. An unstructured observation does not involve any schedule and no specific points or preparation of any plan are required. In participant observation, the researcher becomes, or is, part of the group that is being investigated. Participant observation has its roots in the ethnographic studies. (adapted from Hamzaoui's lectures 2017).

The reasons and the purposes behind the choice of classroom observation as a main gathering data tool of this research are: to give clear insights about what is happening in classroom, it is a useful tool that allows observing different behaviors, to note and describe the inside picture of teaching and learning within the process approach.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the writing difficulties students most encounter while writing and whether EFL students consider writing in English difficult to achieve. Thus, classroom observation is the most appropriate tool that enables the observer to have a close look at this phenomenon. It is also designed to measure the extent to which EFL teachers facilitate the process of writing.

Classroom observation has taken place from March 4th, 2017 to April 15th, 2017 with two classes (1AS1 and 1AS 2) of First Year students of English at IBN TOFEIL secondary school of Tlemcen. Since we were restricted by time, we attended only six (6) sessions, each session took 1 hour and all the sessions have been conducted by two different teachers. The class contained an ideal number of students (60).

The observation that the investigator depended on was taken the form of an unstructured, participant observation because no schedule programme was involved and the observer was part of the group that is being investigated.

It was observed that most of times the selection of topic for writing activities was made only by the teacher. The first time of observation, the

## Data Analysis, Interpretations and Suggestions

---

researcher gave them a picture and asked them to describe it. Afterwards, the teacher did a brainstorming providing them with some adjectives that help them in the description and thus they give sentences about the picture ( it is a nice place, magical place, it is a peaceful house ...etc.,. see appendix B)

It is also observed that the teacher explained to them the topic by following the steps using brainstorming, the steps of writing a paragraph(introduction, body and conclusion)...ect. He also helped them in the combination of the ideas with a time limit of 30 minutes. They first used a rough paper and then rewrite it properly.

The first four sessions that the researcher have attended were mainly based on pair and individual work since the teacher asked their students either to work in pairs or to work individually. In that time, the observer walked around these groups whenever it was possible to observe how they write, the strategy they follow when they write, the way they exchange ideas, What was also observed is that the teacher relied on the use of the board to explain the topic and to give examples. It should be noted that the teacher relied on translation since learners asked from time to time the translation from French to English.

### **2.3 The Sample Population Profile**

The sample population in this research was selected randomly which means that the whole population had the chance of being selected to participate in the present study.

Teachers targeted in this study are twenty-two (22) secondary school teachers with a teaching experience that ranges from 6 years to 20 years and they teach the three levels: first, second and third years. It is safe to assert that these teachers hold a Licence degree.

As for pupils under investigation, they are first (1<sup>st</sup>) year students enrolled during the academic year 2016-2017. Besides, they are between 14 and 16 years old.

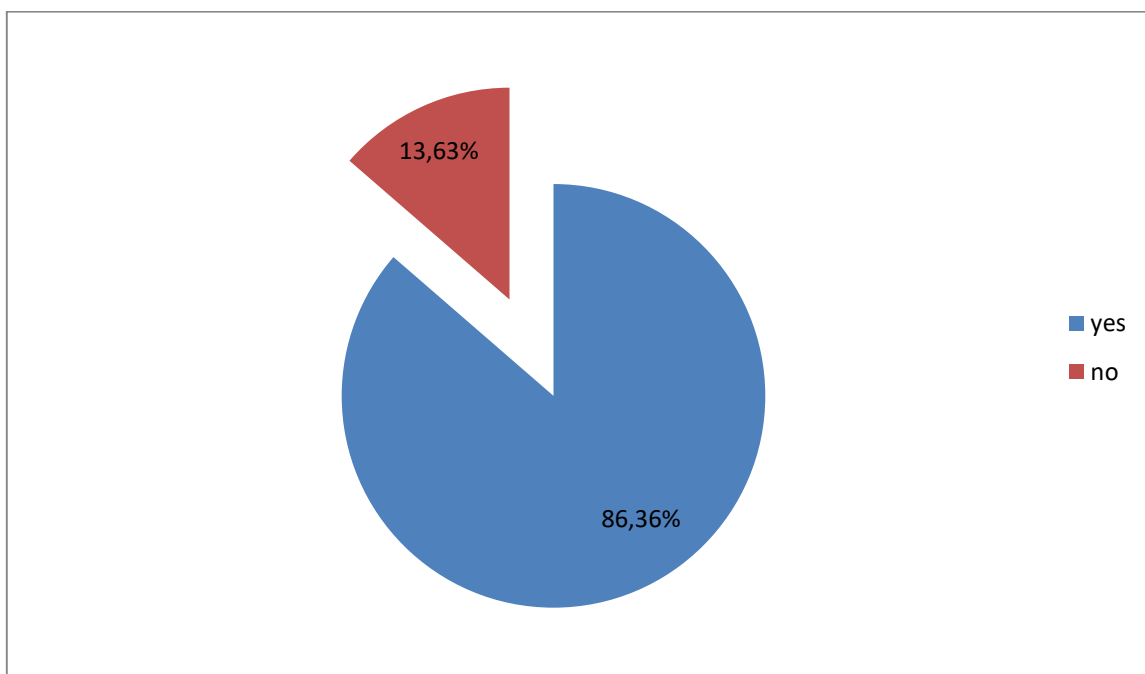
### 2.4 Analysis of the questionnaire

After administering the questionnaire to the sample, the researcher analysed this questionnaire both qualitatively and quantitatively. The following goes into detailed about the analysis.

#### Rubric 2: The Situation of Teaching the Writing Skill in Secondary Schools

**Question One:** Do you think that the English language is difficult to be learnt by your pupils?

This inquiry intends to gather information on the English language and how much is difficult. 86.36% of participants indicate that English is difficult to be learnt because the French language dominates the current Algerian linguistic situation. But 13.63% of them believe it is not.

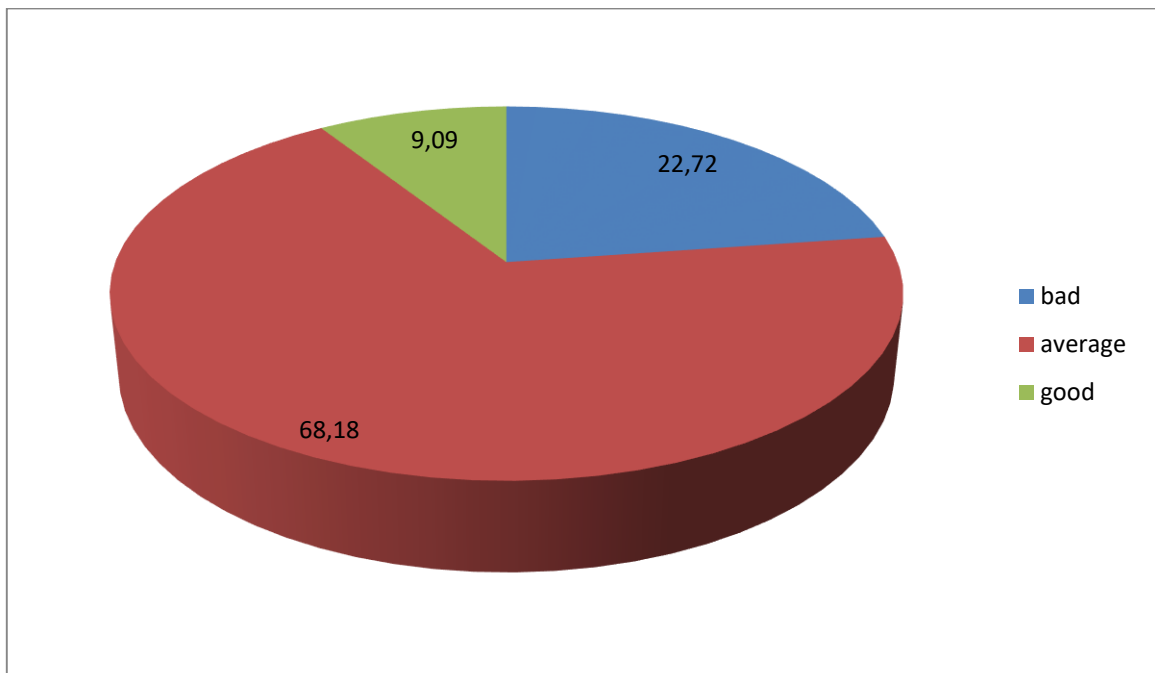


**Figure 2.1** the difficulty of the English language



**Question Two:** How do you evaluate your pupil's writing?

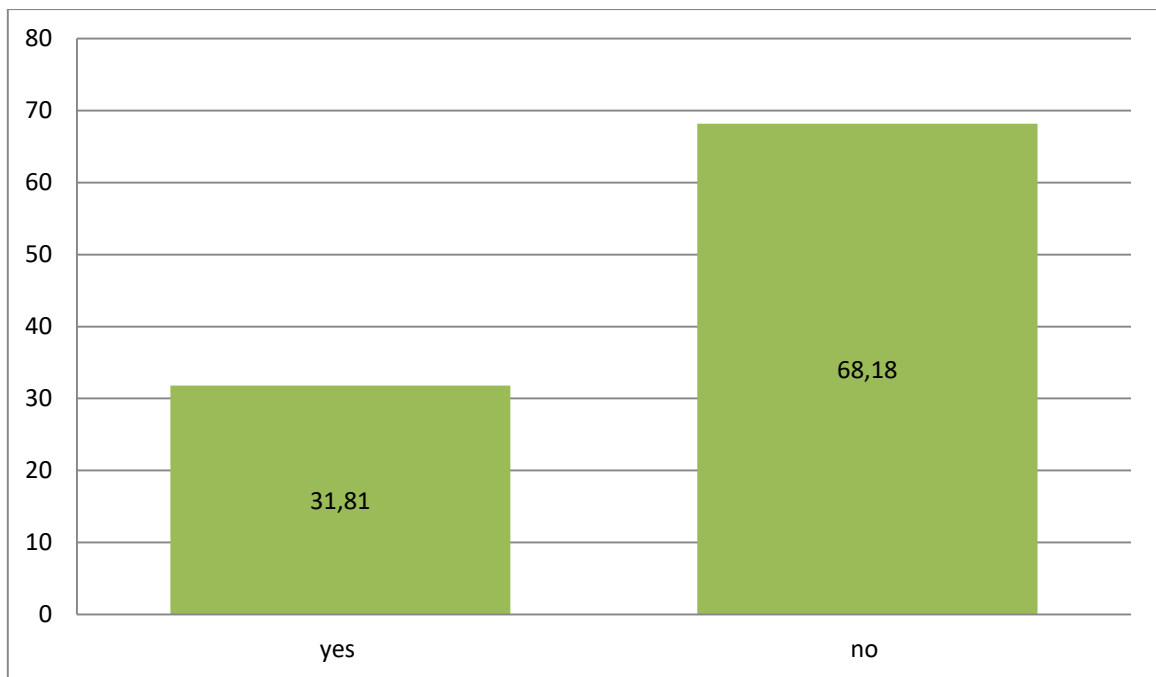
To elicit data about teachers' evaluation of the writing skill among their pupils, they are first asked to evaluate such skill. The results revealed that the majority of teachers ,i.e., 68,18% consider their pupil's writing as average. However, 22.72 % of them view it as bad and the two remaining (9.09%) see it as good. The following figure illustrates such findings.



**Figure 2.2 Teachers' evaluation of their pupils' writing**

**Question three:** Do you usually brainstorm in the pre-writing?

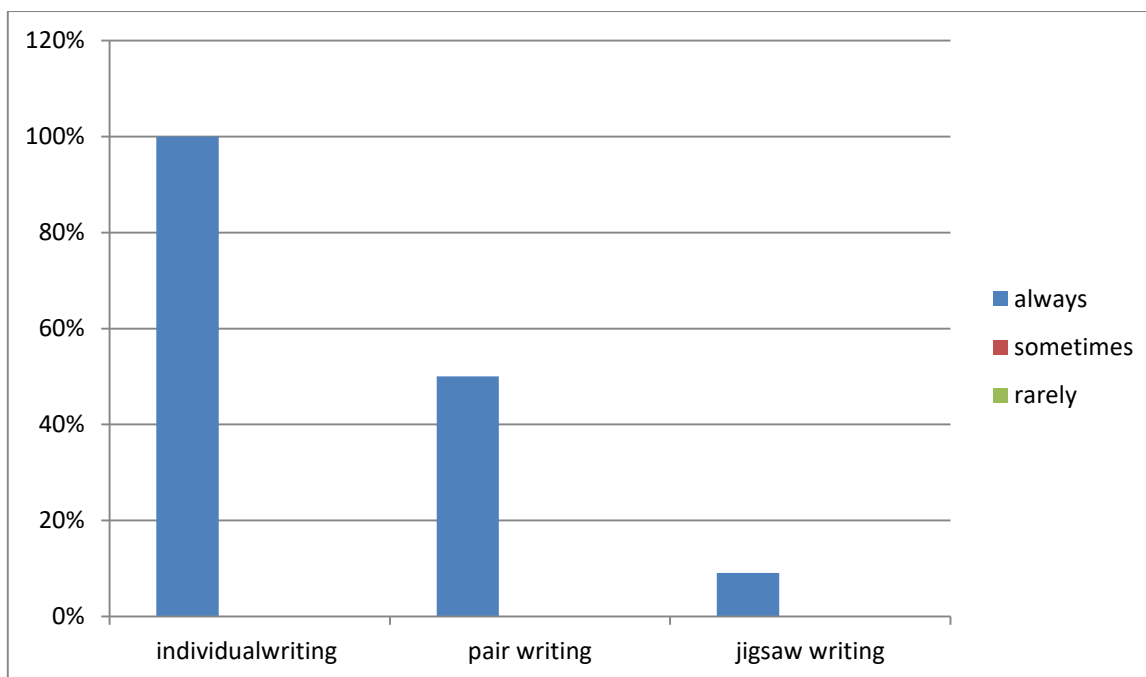
This question attempts to bring information about whether or not teachers brainstorm in the pre-writing. The findings show that 68.18% answer that they do not brainstorm widdershins the others ( 31.81%) reply that they do. What follows show these findings



**Figure 2.3 Teachers' use of brainstorming**

**Question four:** How often do you employ the following writing activities in your class?

The central aim behind this question is to know what type of writing activities teachers give to their students to perform. The findings exhibit that all the informants (100%) always use individual tasks of writing. As for the pair writing half of them, i.e, 50% declare that they sometimes ask their students to do pair work and 9.09 reply that they rarely use jigsaw writing. The subsequent table show these results.



**Figure 2.4** The frequency of the use of the writing activity

**Question five:** What are the topics that you encourage your pupils to write about?

When asked about the nature of topics preferred by teachers. Nearly the majority of teachers answered that they encourage their students to write about environment, pollution and economic crisis. Others mentioned that they are not free to suggest topics since they are obliged to follow the syllabus.

**Question six:** What are the difficulties that your pupils face in writing?

The researcher gathered different answers concerning the difficulties among pupils of which lack of vocabulary, and cohesion lack of mastery of grammar rules, coherence difficulties, complexity of the writing task and fear of failure.

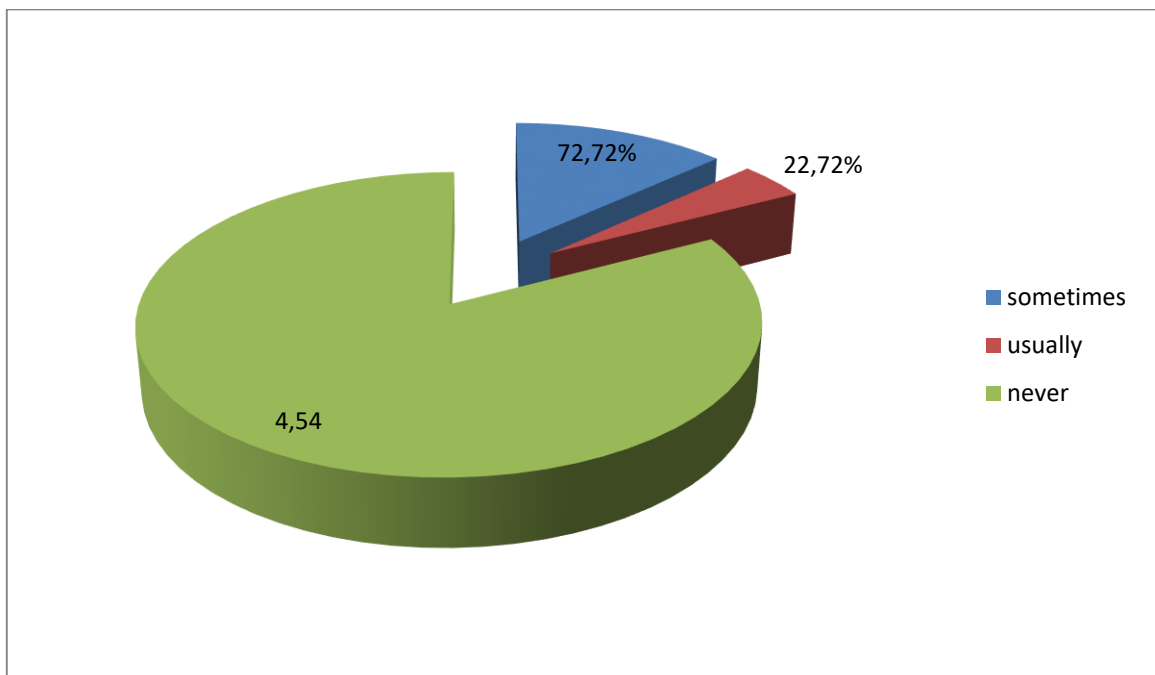
**Question seven:** How often do you ask your pupils to use the dictionary?

This question aims at providing information on the frequency of using dictionaries in the classroom. 72.72% of teachers respond that they sometimes ask

## Data Analysis, Interpretations and Suggestions

---

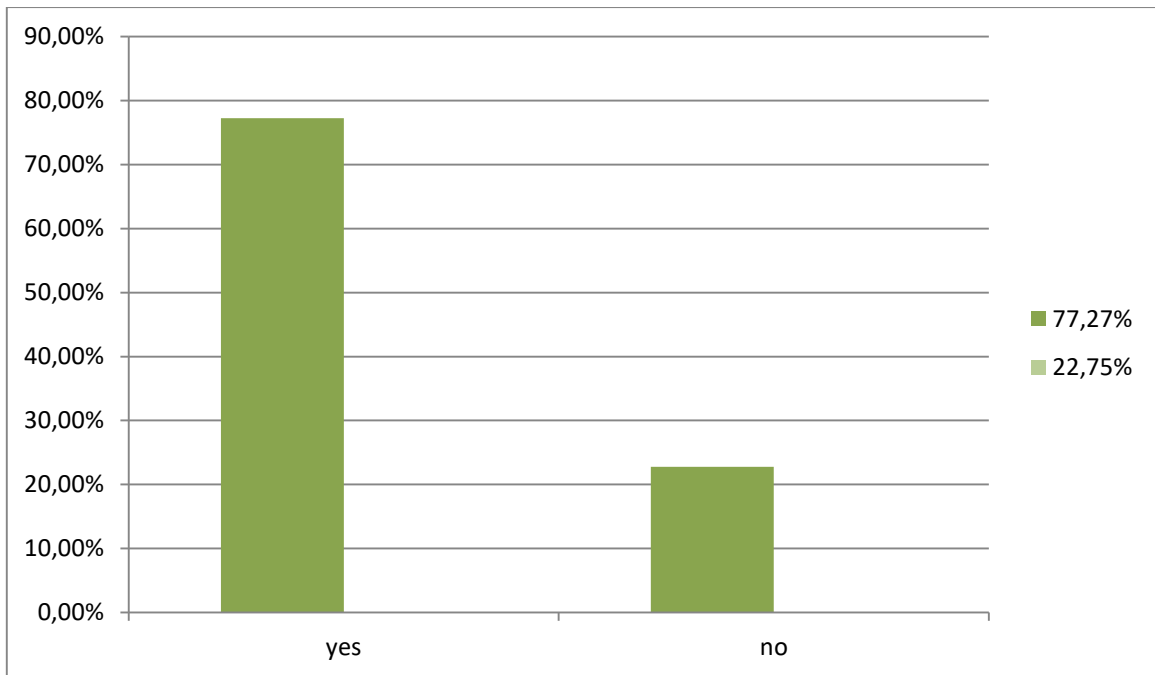
their students to use their dictionary, 22.72 % of them usually ask them to do so and only 4.54% never require pupils to do so.



**Figure 2.5** The frequency of the use of the dictionary

**Question eight:** Do you use technology to encourage them to write?

The purpose of such a question is to see whether teachers use technology in the classroom. 77.27% of teachers are for the use of technology. When they are asked about the kind of technology they utilize. Nearly all of them indicate the use of internet; data show; videos and movies. While 22.72% of respondents do not use technology. The following figure reveals clearly the findings



**Figure 2.6 Technology use among teachers**

**Question nine:** What can be done to overcome the writing difficulties?

As far as this question is concerned ample suggestions are recommended by teachers who are well aware of their students shortages. Some of the respondents propose reading as a corner stone of students development of writing. Others suggest giving more importance to the language, fostering group work and cooperative learning.

### 2.6 Discussion of the Main Findings

The concern of this section is to state significantly the findings obtained from the research tools that were intended to identify EFL learners writing difficulties and sources, and to account for some thinkable resolutions to unveil these difficulties from their writing. Regarding these objectives, the researcher's interest is to check whether the research hypotheses are valid or not.

With regard to the first hypothesis which states that the English language is difficult to be learnt by EFL students, insightful results were obtained. First, the findings attained from teachers' questionnaire reveal that the that English language is difficult to be learnt because the French language dominates the current Algerian linguistic situation. Second the analysis of classroom observation shows that the majority of students find after a long period of learning English still have shortages in the English language and they cannot write a full correct English sentence without mistakes. The obtained data from these research instruments combine to confirm the first research hypothesis.

As far as the second research hypothesis is concerned, the researcher hypothesized that students encounter difficulties mainly in coherence and cohesion difficulties, in addition to the lack of reading. It was reflected from both teachers' questionnaire (see question six and nine in appendix A) that the majority of the participants regard the lack of reading as the main source behind poor writing. Therefore, it is safe to mention that the second research hypothesis is confirmed.

In order for EFL learners to overcome difficulties in writing, the investigator hypothesized the idea of building learners' reading and writing habits as well as using technology in the teaching of writing. The collected data from teachers' questionnaire shows that the majority of them state that reading helps in improving writing, and others regard employing innovative techniques to better

writing performance. These findings paved the way to say that the third research hypothesis is valid.

### 2.7 Suggestions and recommendations

In fact, the respondents have mentioned some activities that break down difficulties in writing. In this respect, this section attempts basically to bring into light the necessary activities and suggestions for enhancing EFL learners' proficiency level in writing.

#### 2.7.1 Achieving writing by reading:

To improve the writing, it is first recommended choosing the right word and sentence structure to convey the ideas in a concise and precise manner. In this vein King (n.d) says that **'if you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot)**. It means that for good writing reading is the key essential to it.

In the same line of thought, Baiche (2015:477) adds that **'... for those who start reading early in their infancy, they generally have no difficulties when it comes to writing skills and can manage the activity be it in their native language or in a foreign language'**. That is to say, when reading is from the young age, the learners will not have difficulties in writing because s/he has enough knowledge to help him/ her to write a coherent composition.

The following points are important to improve the writing skill:

- Revising the principles of writing: grammar and spelling,
- Writing and practicing regularly,
- Reading a lot from authentic materials,
- Providing feedback with peer,

- Joining a workshop,
- To eliminate unnecessary words from the writing,

### **2.7.2 Using technology for writing**

Technology has an impact on social life, though every one should have a gadget in his pocket in order to be fashionable.

Aparantly it works very well in the field of education since it helps learners to develop their writing. it is proved that students with i-pad access have the chance of passing the writing portion. Students are more confortable with using tablet and ipad more than pen and paper which is called paperless education.

Furthermore, there are several apps that are planned for ipads which develop their literacy skills, these are presented in the form of interactive books and reading games designed to help learners enjoy reading so that it can help them for writing.

New technology is an effective way to catch students' attention and interest. Consequently, the researcher believes that it is high time to forget old and traditional methods of learning. Now it is time for paperless education.

### **2.7.3 Suggested Activities for Effective Wrting**

The following activities are suggested to improve students' essay writing in terms of coherence.



## Data Analysis, Interpretations and Suggestions

---

### **Activity one:**

Write an outline for a paragraph on one of the following topics or on a topic of your choice. Then, edit your outline for unity and coherence and write your essay. Exchange the essay you wrote with a partner. After that, look for the use of the cohesive devices you have learned about.

(Adopted from Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay, Dorothy E Zemach & Lisa A Rumisek, p86).

### **Activity Two:**

Write a simple outline of yourself or your life. First, outline only the main body paragraphs. Your main ideas could include physical characteristics, your personality, habits, family, places you have lived, jobs you had things you like or dislike and so on. Then, write an introduction and conclusion for the outline you created, and exchange these with a partner. Make comments on your partner's paragraphs.

(Adopted from Academic Writing from Paragraph to Essay, Dorothy E Zemach & Lisa A Rumisek, p77)

With these tasks, students happen to reach a satisfactory level in writing that enable them, hopefully, to construct whatever piece of writing they wish to establish.

### 2.8 Conclusion

The present chapter accounts for describing the situation under investigation. Moreover, it gives a detailed description of the research design and instruments that are used to collect data about the issue of writing. The data gathered in this chapter are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Then, the main findings are discussed for the sake of confirming the researchers' hypotheses. In this point, the researcher has adopted some activities to be put into operation within the teaching of writing.

# General Conclusion

Writing as one of the most important language skills needs to be learned at a very early stage due to its complexity. Its complexity resides primary on the ability to write meaningful sentences that carry specific functions and meanings. For this reason, it is a challenging task for EFL learners and native speakers to achieve a satisfactory level in writing. In this regard, the study sheds some light on the difficulties that EFL learners happen to meet in writing and to see which sources these difficulties are related to.

In this concern, the first chapter embodies the diverse definitions of the concept of writing as a language skill by various scholars, followed by the status of the English language, and some strategies for effective writing. Then, it identifies common writing difficulties that maybe encountered by these learners along with sources behind these difficulties.

The second chapter covers the employed research tools that have been selected for the fulfillment of this research work with data. It also represents the quantitative and the qualitative data collected and analyzed by the researcher owing to the research instruments. This chapter exhibited some suggested activities and practical recommendations to boost EFL learners' proficiency level in writing.

The findings indicate that the majority of learners face coherence and cohesion difficulties in writing. The vast majority among both students and teachers relate these difficulties to the lack of reading and low writing practice. They mention that in order for a better writing, one should read and practice writing. In this line of taught, the researcher outlines a number of activities to enhance and ensure clarity and relatedness in writing.

## Bibliography

Aronoff, M.&Fudeman, K. (2005). *What is Morphology?*  
Fundamentals of Linguistics University of Malaysia  
International Journal of Humanities and Social Science vol.  
3 No. 11

Baiche, A. (2015). *A Proposal to Develop Reading Habits among  
First-Year EFL University Students in Algeria.* *Academic  
Research International Vol. 6(3) May 2015*

Benadla, L. (2013). *The Competency Based Language Teaching in  
the Algerian Middle School: From EFL Acquisition  
Planning to its Practical Teaching/Learning.*  
Tlemcen University, Algeria. AWEJ Volume.4 Number.1,  
2013 [www.englishclub.com/writing/what.htm](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/what.htm)

David. C (1997 2nd ed.). *English as a global language.* New York:  
Cambridge University Press

Hand B., Hohenshell L., Prain V., *Instructional Science* 35(4)  
(2007) 343(31)

Kamil, M. L. (2003). *Adolescents and literacy: Reading for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education

Lee Y., Kantor R., *Dependability of new ESL writing test scores: Tasks and alternative rating schemes* (TOEFL Monograph Series no. 1). Princeton, NJ: ETS, 2005.

Snow, C. E., & Biancarosa, G. (2003). *Adolescent literacy and the achievement gap: What do we know and where do we go from here?* New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Suleiman M. F., *The process and product of writing: Implications for elementary school Teachers*. ERIC Digest, ERIC Identifier ED 442299, 2000

*The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members* (2013)

<http://edglossary.org/classroom-observation/> 6 June 2017.

Widdowson, H. G. (2001). *Teaching a language as communication*. (12TH ed) .Oxford: Oxford university press.



# Teachers' questionnaire

---

## Appendix A

This questionnaire aims at collecting data concerning teaching writing at the level of secondary school. Thus, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions .Thank you for your help.

### 1- Teachers' profile

Experience:

Diploma:

### 2- the situation of teaching the writing skill in secondary schools

1-Do you think that the English language is difficult to be learnt by your pupils?

- Yes

-

- No

2-How do you evaluate your pupils' writing?

- bad

-Average

-Good

3-Do you usually brainstorm in the pre-writing?

## Teachers' questionnaire

---

-Yes

-No

4-How often do you employ the following writing activities in your class?  
Always, sometimes or rarely.

-Individual writing

-Pair writing

-Jigsaw writing

5-What are the topics that you encourage your pupils to write about?

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

5-What are the difficulties that your pupils face in writing ?

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

6-How often do you ask your pupils to use the dictionary ?

-Never

-Sometimes

-usually



## Teachers' questionnaire

---

8-Do you use technology to encourage them to write? If yes, what kind?

-Yes

-No

7-What can be done to overcome the writing difficulties?

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

***Thank you so much***

# Appendix B

