GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Algeria is aware of the importance of English and its national charter (1976) notes that it is a means to facilitate a constant communication with the world to gain access to modern sciences. The use of English in particular social spheres is linked with political influences, economic opportunity resulting from the globalization process that is steadily gaining ground worldwide. Thus, English allows individuals to open the linguistic gates to international diplomacy, business negotiations, scientific research, academic conferences and tourism. Furthermore, the use of computer-assisted linguistic devices and other tools such as multimedia and websites have significantly affected the field of English Language Teaching worldwide, and Algeria is no exception.

Algeria has adopted English as a foreign language in its schools and higher educational institutions. The introduction of EFL as a compulsory subject-matter in the overall school curriculum regardless of the streams, adds an important facet to the general learning of pupils. Hence, in our specific context, the linguistic level is our main concern. English education tries to cater for the cultural needs of Algerian learners. It allows them to be aware of the world around them. Most importantly, it prepares the individual as a world citizen. However, the field of teaching English as a foreign language is always a subject to different researches which aim at improving its learning process in general and teaching skills in particular.

Learning to write has for a long time been claimed as a very difficult skill to acquire and dreaded by EFL pupils. Writing has become a burden, and produces shallow, boring output. Our pupils are sorely lacking in practice and stimulus for imagination and creativity. So, our pupils generally fail in acquiring this expertise.

Language testing is an important element in the teaching-learning assessment process in the writing classroom. The purpose of the composition task is significant in deciding which scale is chosen to motivate and guide pupils to learn. It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to find a reliable and valid method of measuring the writing ability of an individual or a group. Two important issues in composition evaluation are choice of an appropriate rating scale and setting up criteria based on the purpose of the assessment. In other words, reliable and valid information from both holistic and analytic scoring instruments can tell us much about our pupils' proficiency levels. Findings; however, show that our pupils would benefit more from analytic measures.

The textbook <u>New Prospects</u> includes four writing activities intended to reflect real-life tasks, such as writing simple reports, brief articles, formal and informal letters. Pupils are asked to write short compositions occasionally. The focus in writing classes is on the form of the written product rather than on how the learner should approach the process of writing. Compositions are corrected in terms of grammatical and punctual errors. In a cloze test or a free-response test; the teacher doesn't make efforts to discover his pupils' weaknesses. As a result, his evaluation is approached to be broad, invalid and unreliable. Two simple research questions are formulated to guide this study:

1. Can the holistic scoring provide useful diagnostic information about our pupils' writing ability?

2. How can analytic scoring promote our pupils' writing abilities?

The questions guiding this study have structured information about the unreliability of the holistic assessment. Therefore, the present study aims at finding a method that gives exact and reliable feedback to the teachers and the pupils by providing a hypothesis which calls for an analytic scoring scheme capable of assessing pieces of writing as effective and as objective as possible. The researcher hypothesizes that:

1.   The inefficiency and unreliability of the holistic scoring adopted by teachers may lead to pupils' weak performance in written expression.

2. The ability to design effective, fair and valid writing assessment through analytic scoring.

To enhance score validity of the above hypotheses, the researcher has used a variety of tools. The study has been conducted during the academic year 2009 / 2010, included 32 pupils from 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy stream in Bab El Assa (Tlemcen) secondary school. Three main factors have contributed to the choice of the above-mentioned participants mainly timing (4 hours per week), high coefficient that attributed to English (03), and teaching the same population for two consecutive years. In fact, the participants have been assigned to an experimental test and data have been collected from questionnaires, writing samples and observations. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses have been used to prove the efficiency of the analytic scoring.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

The assessment of writing ability is the single most important snag to practical progress in composition teaching and research. Finding a reliable and valid method of measuring the writing ability is still a matter under investigation. Testers have turned to holistic rating aiming at producing reliable results; unfortunately, holistic assessment is a quick and impressionistic qualitative procedure for ranking samples of writing and not designed to diagnose its weaknesses. In contrast, analytic scoring provides useful diagnostic information about pupils' writing abilities. In other words, it provides more information about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils, and thus allows teachers to tailor instruction more closely to the needs of their pupils. The explicitness of analytic scoring guides offers teachers a potentially valuable tool for providing pupils with consistent feedback. The teacher would benefit from the second strategy over the first one.

To determine the problem that hinders the assessment procedure namely the causes behind the pupils' weak performance in writing, the researcher has used the following tools: data analysis of some written expression samples and questionnaires addressed to third year Literature and Philosophy pupils.

The first chapter is divided into two parts. The first part sets the purpose of this study and offers pedagogical instructions related to the organisation of the third year textbook <u>New Prospects</u>. It also provides approaches of teaching namely Competency-Based Approach which is based on the situation of integration used in written expression tasks. The chapter sheds light on the new writing activities in the textbook and the new guidelines for building tests. The researcher emphasises on third year Literature and Philosophy pupils' written expression results during the academic year 2009 / 2010. As for the second part, it introduces the specific research questions to be answered. It describes variables, tools and procedures the researcher has relied on to shed light on the problematic and highlights how the hypotheses have been tested.

1. 2 Organisation of Third Year Textbook <u>New Prospects</u>

New Prospects (SE 3) is the last of a series of three textbooks designed for the teaching of English to secondary school pupils. The procedures followed here are similar to those adopted for the making of the first two books: At the Crossroads (SE 1) and Getting Through (SE 2). They comply with the recommendations issued in the official syllabus set down by the Ministry of National Education. Its main principles rest on communicative language teaching (CLT) and Competency-Based Approach. The former engages learners in real and meaningful communication, i.e., the learners are given opportunities to process content relating to their lives and backgrounds, and to develop both fluency and accuracy. The latter is explained thoroughly in (1.3.2).

In New Prospects, language learning is a developmental process through which the learners make errors as a natural part of that process, and correct them relying on themselves. The mastery of grammar is the cornerstone of a good command of English. This is not an end in itself, but a means to an end particularly through a constant transliterating of grammar rules into language functions.

New Prospects provides a large number of effective learning tasks through which pupils are brought to notice, reflect and analyse how English is used. The tasks devised provide ample opportunities for learners to interact in the classroom, and negotiate meaning. Most of these tasks involve the use of `discovery learning' (inductive learning), and are intended to enhance individual learning as well as learning with peers. These tasks are devised in such a way as to encourage pupils to use more complex utterances, more fluently and more accurately than in previous years of education. The cumulative effect of the diversity of tasks will enable pupils to gradually recall the language acquired with control and ease during production. The teacher ought to opt for the most appropriate tasks, in accordance with the needs of the classroom, i.e., whether the emphasis should be more on vocabulary building and grammatical structures, or on reading and writing skills. In this pursuit, there will be necessary returns to previously studied aspects of language, to skills and strategies approached during the first and second years. Teachers will expect their pupils to revise, practise and consolidate their knowledge.

1. 3   Methods and Approaches in the Textbook

New Prospects textbook complies with the new English syllabus laid out by the National Curriculum Committee of the Ministry of National Education in March 2006. Its main principles rest on two approaches: communicative language teaching (CLT) and Competency-Based Education (CBE) some of which are developed below.

1. 3. 1 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to the teaching of foreign languages characterized by an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation, the provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning management process, and an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning. CLT engages learners in real and meaningful communication, i.e., the learners are given opportunities to process content relating to their lives and backgrounds, and to develop both fluency and accuracy. New Prospects textbook presents some classroom activities such as role play, interviews, information gap, language exchange, surveys, and pair works, i.e., in the classroom the form of pair and group work requires negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, and role-plays in which pupils practice and develop language functions.

-
1. 3. 2 Competency-Based Approach

New Prospects textbook relies mainly on the Competency-Based Approach, which is both learner - centred and project - oriented. The notion of Competency - Based Education (CBE) emerged in the 1970s in the USA. It has defined educational goals in terms of precise measurable description of knowledge, skills, and behaviours pupils should possess at the end of a course of study. Recent researches have focused on the aspects of vocational training, information technology and its impact on general education.

The characteristics of CBE were described by Schneck in the following terms:

Competency-Based Education has much in common

with such approaches to learning as performance-based and is adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers and the community.

(Schneck, 1978: 143)

The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) is not completely new to the teachers of English, in that most of its aspects were implicitly dealt with in the previous approach. CBA has mainly come out with:

- ➢ A reinforcement of the concept of a competent performing learner, who is part and parcel of the learning process, using the knowledge he acquires for the sake of real performance in appropriate situations.
- ➢ Awareness of his learning and of his progress.
- ➢ A more pronounced independence and autonomy as he is guided and given the tools to do research and use resources others than those brought by his teacher.
- ➢ A change in the teacher's attitude towards knowledge and teaching.
- ➢ A more rigorous planning, integrating teaching and assessment.

A Competency may be defined as the ability of a pupil to accomplish tasks adequately, to find solutions and to realize them in real life situations. Whenever the term competency is mentioned, a "know - how – to act" process is implied. Educationists have always been interested in developing general "know- how" processes and in fixing knowledge acquired in class. This programme will allow the Algerian learner to develop his capacity to think and act according to a vision of a world that he will construct day by day. Schneck (1978) notes that this logic has a series of pedagogical implications such as:

- o **M**aking the school acquisitions viable and sustainable, i.e., learning must be reinvested not only in school contexts, but also in contexts outside the school.
- o **D**eveloping the thinking process of the learner, i.e., to reinforce the cognitive function of school by establishing tight relationships between acquiring knowledge and developing thinking processes.

o **P**resenting learning contexts in relation to the needs of the learner, i.e., to link the development of personal resources and the meaningful situations thanks to the interwoven processes of learning reading, listening, speaking and writing.

o **P**utting an end to disciplinary barriers, i.e., to set transversal competencies in various fields: intellectual, methodological, personal, social and communicational.

A large number of activities in <u>New Prospects</u> stem from the competency-based approach. The units of this textbook offer a variety of activities reflecting real-life situations and prompting the pupils to practise English in creative ways. The tasks have cognitive aspects. The surface levels of cognitive processing involve knowledge, comprehension and application while the deeper levels appeal to analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Every unit contains a number of tasks which have been designed to provide subject-matter knowledge, lower and high order thinking skills, reading strategies and compositional skills. The Competency-Based Approach in the textbook enables the pupils to achieve proficiency in the three competencies, namely interaction, comprehension/interpretation and production, i.e., language skills, grammar, vocabulary, authentic materials, and interaction - based activities are sequenced according to the learners' needs through the situation of integration.

The situation of integration is a way of implementing the competency-based approach, first by mobilizing learning resources and secondly applying them in integrative learning situations. It helps teachers reflect in-depth (in theoretical and methodological terms) on the learning difficulties of their pupils and provide fairer and better learning opportunities for them.

<u>New Prospects</u> textbook implies a 'know-how' (capacities) and 'know-how to be' (attitudes) to deal with any situation to reach pupils' competences, i.e., the resources, such as knowledge, skills and attitudes, are introduced, practised in several applications, and finally reinvested several times in learning situations. Reinvestment in a situation differs from mere application in the sense that it is contextualized and meaningful to the student, and, most importantly, because it requires the use of several types of resources which the pupil must identify and articulate. Indeed, he / she does not

automatically know which resources are to be mobilized and must discover them alone in accordance with the situation presented. The knowledge acquired is operationalised, becomes stable over time because it is internalized, and is ready to be mobilized for and in action (Guide du Professeur, 2007).

1. 4 Skills and Strategies in the Textbook

The present textbook, with its six thematically based themes, will be geared to raising more awareness of the complexities of the English language in terms of lexis and discourse. Thus the texts selected present language in different types and styles: radio interviews, dialogues, news reports, encyclopaedia entries, newspaper and magazine articles, excerpts from works of fiction, poems, etc. The pupils will thus be prepared to interact with various language situations they will encounter in real life. The themes are as follows:

'Ancient Civilizations'. Unit One (pp. 14 – 44).

'Ethics in Business: Fighting Fraud and Corruption'. Unit Two (pp.45 – 73).

'Education in the World: Comparing Educational Systems'.   Unit Three (pp. 74 – 105).

'Advertising, Consumers and Safety'. Unit Four (pp. 106 – 134).

'Astronomy and the Solar System. Unit Five (pp. 135 – 164).

'Feelings, Emotions, Humour and Related Topics'. Unit Six (pp. 165 – 195).

These themes are designed according to streams (see table 1.1). They not only try to cater to the needs of the major Baccalaureate streams but strike a balance between topics related to science and technology and others related to language and humanities as well.

Themes	M – TM – ES – Ec.	L PH – FL
1. Ancient Civilizations		×
2. Ethics in Business	×	×
3. Education in the World		×
4. Advertising, Consumers and Safety	×	
5. Astronomy and the Solar System	×	
6. Feelings and Emotions	×	×

Table 1.1:   3ʳᵈ Year Secondary Education Programme

(Guide du Professeur, 2007: 61)

The Third Year Secondary Education Programme includes six themes. In each of the six themes, there is a focus on an area of knowledge, which develops a specific use of English. Four mandatory themes will be more directly related to each stream, which means that the pupils needn't work on all six themes.

The theme is taught in 24 hours. It progressively develops in pupils the three competencies of interaction, interpretation and production that cover all areas of language (syntax, morphology, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling) through six graded themes. In addition, the graded tasks are of the type to be found in the English paper of the Baccalaureate examination. Thus, they provide the pupils with a gradual familiarisation with the examination requirements for English. Each theme includes the presentation and practice of areas of language with the four skills. Besides, each theme is followed by an evaluation grid to check on the learner's progress. It reviews the pupils' knowledge of the language items presented in the theme and tests their ability to use the skills and strategies through reading passages/texts that appear at the end of the course book. Each theme is structured as follows:

1. 4. 1   Presentation of the Project Outcome

The teacher acts as a facilitator in the presentation of the project outcome. The aim is to get the pupils envisage and agree on the tasks involved, the possible sources of information, the format and content of the end product. In fact, the project is a macro-task composed if micro-tasks. In other words, brainstorming, fact finding, organising and writing up are flash-points designed to chart the pupils' progress in giving shape and consistency to their project.

1. 4. 2   Part One / Language Outcomes

Part one contains two sequences, each of them containing two or three sections subdivided in their turn into rubrics. The two sequences comprise **Listen and consider**, and **Read and consider**. They represent a preview of the language objectives to be

achieved. The purpose of these two sequences is to work through the around-the-text rubric, on the language dimension of the text by the study of grammatical structures, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. What is aimed at is getting the pupils to internalize the thematic and linguistic tools they will make use of in the second part of the theme. Both sequences close with a rubric entitled **Think**, **pair**, **share**. The tasks in this rubric aim at getting the pupils to re-invest in speaking or writing, the thematic and language elements acquired by foregrounding a particular function (advising, comparing, informing, etc).

1. 4. 2. 1   Listen and Consider

Listen and consider begins with Language outcomes, which involves no task but is a preview of the language objectives to be achieved by the end of this part. It deals with listening comprehension. Its purpose is to lead the pupils to listen intently to an aural text, paying particular attention to features of language use, develop an ability to listen for a purpose and respond to a message orally or in writing with accuracy and appropriateness (for example, answering comprehension questions, re-ordering sentences, etc).

This listening task is realised in three steps: first, **Getting started** activity is meant to access and activate the pupils' background knowledge of the topic, and prepare them for the next listening phase. Second, **Let's hear it**, for which a number of tasks are provided to look at language with a magnifying glass, and to focus on specific features of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling i.e. to increase the student's understanding of the sound-spelling relationships that characterise English. Third, **Think, pair, share** tasks call for an interaction with other pupils and their teacher, and each pupil will produce a piece of writing individually, then in pairs, and lastly with other peers in a group.

1. 4. 2. 2   Read and Consider

Read and consider includes six rubrics. Particular attention is given to the development of the reading skill, one of the most demanding achievements not only for this final year of English study at school, but also for future studies at university. To this

effect, a large number of additional materials for extensive reading in the resources portfolio are included.

The first rubric is **Language outcomes**. It reminds the pupils of the linguistic objectives to be achieved by the end of the sequence.

The second rubric, **Getting started**, invites a brainstorming session during which the topic under focus is debated.

The third rubric, **Taking a closer look**, involves reading the text silently and individually, and answering comprehension questions. They may be referential or inferential questions, or they may open up a discussion on comparing native situations with non-native ones. Two types of exploring activities are provided: Grammar Explorer and Vocabulary Explorer. Grammar Explorer aims at studying the grammar of the text: the pupils will be involved in awareness-raising activities related to tenses, prepositional verbs, etc. They will also be given an opportunity to produce messages in correct English. These accuracy-based activities end with a production task which is also meant to focus the learner's attention on grammatical correctness. Vocabulary Explorer caters for the pupil's vocabulary building skills. It deals with word formation and the practice of idiomatic formulae.

The fourth rubric, Pronunciation **and Spelling**, deals with language - related tasks, specifically pointing to the phoneme-grapheme correspondence in English.

The fifth rubric, **Think, pair, share**, focuses on individual work, pair work and group work.

The sixth rubric, **Take a break**, brings a lighter note to the activities carried out up to this point by introducing light jokes, proverbs, songs, etc. It has an intercultural dimension since it points to other people's experiences in their own milieus.

1. 4. 3   Part Two / Skills and Strategies Outcomes

This part includes five main rubrics meant to build compositional skills and communicative strategies in the learners' minds.

1. 4. 3. 1   Research and Report

Research and report deals mainly with learners' outcomes i.e. behavioural outcomes. The tasks are assigned to pupils to work on (individually, in pairs, or in groups) outside the classroom either for feedback to a subsequent lesson, or lead-in to a classroom activity. A number of **written / oral tasks** are suggested: newspaper articles, short stories, poems, speeches, and public statements. The Research and report section encourages interaction/negotiation of meaning, and it is a good preparation for the project.

1. 4. 3. 2   Listening and Speaking

Listening and speaking includes four main rubrics based on discourse-oriented learning rather than language-based study. Accordingly, the pupil is requested to move from language analysis to discourse analysis.

The first rubric, **Before listening**, prepares the pupils for the understanding of an aural text through pre-listening activities, and thus allows them to predict content through a set of questions.

The second rubric, **As you listen**, includes activities requesting learners to listen for gist, for details, and to check their expectations/inferences, confirm or reject them.

The third rubric, **After listening**, is a post-listening stage which involves activities of a more intensive nature. It deals with bottom-up listening and help pupils to give shape and significance to the texts.

The fourth rubric, **Say it in writing**, is a situation of integration allowing the learners to build confidence through the production of material related to the listening content.

1. 4. 3. 3   Reading and Writing

Reading and writing starts with Skills and strategies outcomes to be achieved by the pupils (linguistic, communicative, cognitive), and the levels of reception and production of a message expected. **Before reading**, **As you Read**, and **After reading** focus on the pupils' use of their skimming and scanning skills to make sense of authentic and semi-

authentic materials. In **Writing development** rubric, the pupils will have to express opinions, give reasons, present arguments under vocabulary and grammatical command, i.e., they will demonstrate their sense of organisation, cohesion and coherence, and will draw on appropriate registers to communicate their main message.

1. 4. 3. 4 Project Outcome

The project outcome is the visible and assessable manifestation of the pupils' competencies, i.e. the end result of their command of language and of the skills and strategies they have acquired throughout the theme.

1. 4. 3. 5 Assessment

At this stage, the work of each group is assessed by a board of assessors (one from each group) chaired by the teacher. The session starts with the spokesperson of each group reporting to the class about the work done and presenting the `product' realised for appreciation. The board of assessors will eventually award the First Prize to the best project.

1. 5 The writing Activities in the Textbook

The textbook <u>New Prospects</u> includes four writing activities intended to reflect real-life tasks, such as writing simple reports, brief articles, formal and informal letters.

1. 5. 1 Think, Pair, Share

Think, pair, share generates interaction with pupils and their teacher. The teacher will act as a facilitator and guide intervening in the class where necessary. The pupils work individually, then in pairs, and lastly in groups according to a given situation of integration. They have to produce a piece of writing which is usually a short talk, an expository essay, an article, a presentation, a public statement, an opinion article, wish poems related to studying, description letters, letter replies (sympathy, advice,

recommendations), and so on. An instance taken from the third theme 'Education in the World' from <u>New Prospects</u> shows clearly attempts of pupils writing wishes related to studying and a checklist of recommendations for the Baccalaureate examination. To illustrate, two tasks are proposed to reach such an aim:

- **Task one: Writing Wish Poems**

1. Think about wishes related to studying. Write a draft stanza of four to six lines/verses on a sheet of paper. Then give it to your partner to write her/his own stanza.

A stanza is a part of a poem. It doesn't matter if you repeat the same structures. Pay attention to your rhyme endings, i.e., the repetition of the same sound at the end of the lines/verses. e.g.

> I wish I had a computer in my brain
> To free me from calculating strain.
> I wish my teachers would stop giving us warnings
> I wish my parents would accept

2. With your partner, review your draft stanzas. Then join a group and write a lengthier wish poem.

3. Get a group member to read the poem to the class.

- **Task two:**

Writing a checklist of recommendations for the Baccalaureate examination

1. Individually, prepare a checklist of tips reminding students of what they **should**/ **ought to**, and **must do** during the *Baccalaureate* exam. Use **unless** to give warnings.

The ten things that you should do   *The ten things you must/mustn't do*

2. Review your tips with your partner. Then join a group and together select the most pertinent tips from your checklist. Organise your tips in the form of a leaflet and read them to the class.

(<u>New Prospects</u>, p. 81)__

___

1. 5. 2 Say it in Writing

Saying it in writing allows the learners to build confidence through the production of material related to the listening content such as short accounts, speeches, descriptions, and so on. An example taken from the fourth theme 'Advertising, Consumers and Safety' from <u>New Prospects</u> introduces an argumentative speech stating pupils' opinion about advertising:

- Prepare an argumentative speech stating your opinion about advertising. Use the guidelines that follow:

1. Start with the following topic sentence.

People don't agree as to whether advertising is beneficial or harmful.

2. State people's points of view on the issue.

- **Say what some people think**

Some people are in favour of----------. They think/believe/claim/assert that------

- **Say what other people think**

    However, -----------------------

    They think/believe/claim/assert that -----------------------

3. Take sides

- I am one of those who believe/think/assert that---------------
- Support your argument by giving your reasons.
- Make sure you use appropriate link words: for one thing, for another thing, first, second, finally, as a result…

4. As you develop your arguments, make concessions in order not to sound too intolerant.

5. Review your draft. Then read it aloud to your classmates. This could be the start of a class debate.

(<u>New Prospects</u>, p.127)

One of the best ways of organising/structuring ideas in an argumentative speech, it is the teacher's role to inform the audience about the main points of view on the issue. Once done,

the teacher takes sides in or personalizes the debate by saying what his pupils personally think about the issue.

1. 5. 3 Writing Development

The pupils will have to express opinions, give reasons, present arguments: they will have sufficient vocabulary and grammatical command as well as the required skills to do the writing tasks. They will demonstrate their sense of organisation, cohesion and coherence, and will draw on appropriate registers to communicate their main message. The instance below is a policy statement to inform potential fund contributors illustrated from the second theme 'Education in the World' from New Prospects.

- Suppose you were the manager of **an ethical investment fund**, i.e. a fund which invests only in socially responsible businesses. Write a policy statement to inform potential fund contributors about it. Follow the guidelines below.

1. Think over the opening statement in the diagram below. Select two to four notes from the checklist of expanding notes that follow and develop them into supporting statements.

The people and organisations who put their money into our fund want us to invest in ethical ways, and we work hard to make their desires a reality
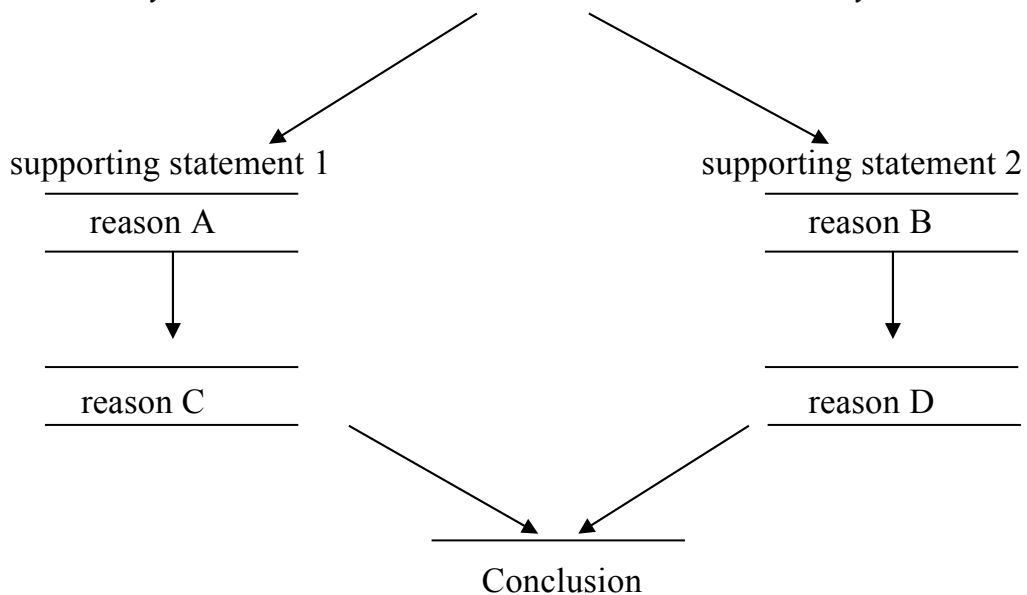
supporting statement 1   supporting statement 2

reason A   reason B

reason C   reason D

Conclusion

Diagram 1.1 : An example of a written expression plan in New Prospects. (p.69)

Expanding notes

• avoid companies that endanger the environment:

 • refrain from investing in certain sectors -- tobacco, arms   manufacturing, nuclear power, or uranium extraction.

• not place money in companies that lack ethical labour standards (E.g. using child labour, bad working conditions ...).

• choose to invest in well-managed companies (transparent financial accounting).

• invest in companies that balance economic growth with social responsibility:

2. Write supporting statements in the diagram. Then jot down reasons to explain /illustrate your statements.

3. Write your first draft of the policy statement using the relevant information in your diagram.

(New Prospects, pp. 69-70)

The instance above is a policy statement to inform potential fund contributors. The teacher informs his pupils about the significance of the opening statement and how to develop it into supporting statements. He also guides the pupils' draft of the policy statement using the relevant information in the diagram.

1. 5. 4 The Project

The project is the visible and assessable manifestation of the pupil's command of language outcomes and skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and strategies they have acquired throughout the theme. The project designing procedure runs parallel to the unfolding of the theme. The pupil is trained to design his proper project following these reminders:

- **Brainstorming** is aimed at getting the pupils to envisage and agree on the tasks involved, the possible sources of information and the format and content of the end product.

- **Fact finding:** most of the activities at this stage take place outside the classroom. The pupils enquire about where and how they will get the information they need (the Internet, a survey, an interview...) and about the equipment they may want to use (cassette recorder, picture camera, drawings...) as well as the places (a museum,

a business company...) they may have to visit. They may not have to meet in class at all.

- **Organising:** this is where the feedback of the pupils is made use of in a rational and efficient way. The class is divided into groups. Each group appoints a spokesperson who will make the final report to the class at the end of the project. All the groups should agree on the tasks assigned to each of them.

- **Writing up:** this activity will preferably take place between school hours provided each group manages to find a time and a place of its own. This will involve not only writing in correct English but editing, i.e., what colours to use, how much space will be devoted to illustrations, how much to text and negotiating with possible opinion clashes as well. The teacher's role at this stage is one of soft monitoring.

- **Assessing:** at this stage, a board of assessors assess the work of each group, i.e., the product of each group is reported by a spokesperson for appreciation and it is for the board of assessors to award the First Prize to the best project.

(Guide du Professeur, 2007: 69-70)

In this context, it is the teacher's task to adapt the proposed projects to his learners' level bearing in mind the lack of documents and the limited access to internet. In this vein, this point is highlighted by Baiche in the following words:

> **The difficulty with the projects is the lack of information and documents that practically do not exist in our schools. The inevitable thing then at this level is that pupils are indirectly sent to cyberspaces.**

(Baiche, 2008-2009: 163-164)

The example of this situation is given in the proposed project in (table 1.2) below from <u>New Prospects</u>.

Designing an educational prospectus

1. Carry out research into the British and the Algerian educational systems. Choose a level (preferably Secondary Education or Higher Education) and find information about such aspects as:

- organisation
- curriculum
- school year / holidays
- types of exams and qualifications

2. Compare the two educational systems.

Get help from the web sites of the Ministries of National Education and Higher Education

   www.meducation.edu.dz   www.mesres.dz

- State education in Britain   www.dfree.gov.uk
- Private education in Britain   www.isis.org.uk

3. Draw diagrams (E.g. statistics) to illustrate the information.

4. Synthesize the information in a prospectus and give an oral presentation of 3 or 4 minutes comparing the two systems.

Alternative project outcomes

- A leaflet for University Open Day
- A portfolio of academic correspondence (university registration forms, advertising leaflets, college regulations, school charters, school reports…)
- A short educational guidebook for students

Web sites

www.unesco.com

www.wallacefoundation.org

www.developmentgateway.org

www.koubida.fr

www.espacefr-education.com

www.informant.net

Table1.2 : An example of project work in <u>New Prospects</u>. (p.103)

1. 6   The New Guidelines for Building Tests

Teaching and testing are closely interrelated. A test is a necessary evil that serves many purposes. It helps teachers set academic standards for their learners and provide them with feedback about the learning progress in general and the teaching process in particular. Flavell notes that

A test is seen as a natural extension of classroom work, providing teacher and student with useful information that can serve each as a basis for improvement.

(Flavell, 1983: 1)

Testing the examinees focuses mainly on the various types of tasks introduced, explained, and illustrated as far as the competency-based approach is concerned, i.e., the approach provides practitioners with a framework containing the target competencies, namely interacting, interpreting, and producing.

1. 6. 1   Recommendations

The new recommendations set by the Ministry of Education assert that tests are not only based on the official syllabus, the official instructions and their formation but also on test elaboration, i.e., secrecy, originality, correctness, acceptance by all, meaning, sources, model answers, and scoring scale.

1. 6. 2   Objectives of the Examination Paper

The English examination paper aims at evaluating the candidates' ability to understand and do tasks in connection with a reading passage, either adapted or authentic, based on a topic selected from the syllabus. Its main purpose is to mobilize the appropriate resources to express themselves reasonably and correctly in a given situation.

1. 6. 3 Organisation of the Examination Paper

The examination paper revolves around the same theme, to be in accordance with the philosophy of the competency-based approach, i.e., tests provide examinees with opportunities to learn and re-use while taking the test. The examination paper is made up of two parts: Part one is divided into text interpretation and text exploration. The former focuses on the global and detailed understanding of a reading passage through a number of comprehension-type tasks. The latter deals with mastery of language. It contains tasks of vocabulary, morphology, grammar, discourse, and sound system. Part two consists of exposing the examinees to a situation of integration designed according to a set of criteria and indications. A situation of integration requires authentic documents and well-formulated, comprehensible instructions rather than questions. The situation needs to be meaningful and motivating, close and adapted to the learners' level, in accordance with the target competence and supported by some tips (hints) to guide the learners. Thus, a target situation integrates linguistic resources. The table below indicates criteria and indicators when assessing a situation of integration:

Criteria	Indicators
1. **Relevance**	Learner's production aligns with requirements of a situation: • **Format**: a letter / e-mail / invitation / instructions … • **Objectives**: to inform / to describe / to complain … • **Targeted language**: functional language and vocabulary
2. **Semantic coherence**	• Meaningful • Logic in the information given • Originality and development of ideas • Organized / well-structured sentences
3. **Syntactic coherence and correct use of linguistic elements**	• Correct use of grammar: tenses, word-order • Subject-verb agreement • Spelling, capitalization and punctuation
4. **Excellence (creativity – vocabulary – wealth)**	• New ideas, varied vocabulary items, absence of repetitions and redundancy, legible handwriting, neatness

Table 1. 3:   Assessing a Situation of Integration

(BAC Guide, 2008: 13)

1.7   3rdYear Literature and Philosophy Pupils' Written Expression Results

For the purposes of this study, the researcher displays the following table, which sheds light on 2ⁿᵈ year Literature and Philosophy pupils' written expression results during the academic year 2008 – 2009, i.e., a year before the research takes place. A sample of 32 pupils has been evaluated each term on their writing quality and performance, note that written expression is scored on 5 marks:

	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
First term	16	3	6	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
Second term	11	4	7	6	4	0	0	0	0	0
Third term	17	2	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1. 4: 3ʳᵈ Year Philosophy Pupils' Written Expression Results / 5 points

From the above table, more than 28 pupils (90.63%) have been awarded a failing score of 2 or below which confirms clearly the weak writing quality, inefficiency of the composition correction, and inconsistent tests to measure the writing ability. What is noticeable, pupils under investigation demonstrate fundamental weaknesses in writing skills, i.e., an inability to comprehend the question or to respond meaningfully to the topic, unfocused, illogical incoherent or disorganized ideas with no relevant support and persistent errors in word choice, mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

1. 8 Research Methodologies

The study is based on the problematic statement, research questions, research hypotheses, research objectives, the study participants, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

1. 8. 1 Statement of the problem

Writing is an art and no easy endeavour. In general, the quality of EFL writing has deteriorated among secondary school pupils in literary as well as scientific streams. Many pupils are not adequately prepared to cope with the written expression section. One of the main problems is that the pupils lack the skills to write an academic essay. On this matter,

Shabaya claims that **"pupils need to develop metacognitive awareness strategies in order to develop their writing**". (Shabaya, 2005: 43).   If learners can acquire these

metacognitive skills through meaningful writing assignments, they will need considerable practice over time to improve their writing abilities and performance.

The present study is concerned with EFL pupils' writing performance at 3rd year secondary level. At this level, the pupils are preparing to leave school to continue their further studies at university. In this vein, Benmoussat notes that

> **The Third Secondary Year (3ème AS) is, in effect a very decisive and probationary period for most pupils because of the Baccalaureate. Considering the case of pupils at this level, both the teaching objectives and pedagogical instructions aim at the learners to have more practice in all four skills, yet with extra emphasis on the writing skill because of the Baccalaureate exam. At the end the Third Secondary Year the pupils are expected to move from skill-getting to skill-using.**

(Benmoussat, 2003: 127)

Since it is important for the pupils to do well in the writing tasks, it is also important for EFL teachers to assess their pupils' writing efficiently and accurately to ensure that their assessments depict correctly the pupils' performance in writing. EFL teachers' assessment of pupils' writing can greatly influence pupils' attitudes for future learning because learners can be easily confused by unclear, vague or ambiguous responses and can become frustrated with their writing progress and their preparation for their examinations. Alternatively, pupils can be positively motivated if the assessments given to their classroom written work can help predict their actual performance in examinations. Unfortunately, a clear set of universal guidelines does not exist that guarantees such a supportive and positive experience for all pupils. School teachers may be using different ways and methods to assess their pupils' writing tasks, depending on the instructions given by the Ministry of Education. Cohen states that **"writers and raters differed in many notions**

related to the assessment of writing," (Cohen, 1994: 312). Apart from that, pupils (writers) and their teachers (raters) differed in their recognition interpretation of salient points in a writing topic.

The present study is concerned with the scoring procedures used for assessments of writing in Algerian secondary schools. It proposes two scoring methods. The two scoring methods chosen are the holistic scoring method and the analytic scoring method. A study, which looks into different assessment of writing performance and their score relationship, has been carried out by many researchers. They have used the generalisability theory to estimate the reliability of writing scores derived from holistic and analytical scoring methods. The details of these studies are discussed in Chapter Two. Objective and reliable scoring strategies for performance assessments remain the more basic issues, especially for writing products.

1. 8. 2   Research Questions

Nowadays, "**the ability to write is becoming widely recognized as an important skill for educational reasons,"** (Weigle, 2002: 1). In foreign language setting, learning to write has for a long time been claimed as a very difficult skill to acquire and dreaded by pupils. Writing has become a drag, and produces shallow, boring output. Our pupils are sorely lacking in practice and stimulus for imagination and creativity. Learning to write an academic essay is far from a natural ability. Yet, our pupils generally fail in acquiring this expertise.

Language testing is an important element in the teaching-learning-assessment process in the writing classroom. Hughes states that "**The best way to** "**the best way to test people's writing ability is to get them to write,"** (Hughes, 2003: 83). He argues that the problems in testing writing ability concerns representative tasks, eliciting a valid sample of writing ability and ensuring valid and reliable scoring. Based on Hughes' statement, Weigle claims:

> **" designing a good test of writing involves much more than simply thinking of a topic for test takers to write about and then using our own judgment to rank order the resulting samples".**

(Weigle, 2002: 2).

The purpose of the essay task is significant in deciding which scale is chosen to motivate and guide pupils to learn. It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to find a reliable and valid method for measuring the writing ability of an individual or a group. Unfortunately, the choice of the right essay writing evaluation criteria remains problematic.

Two important issues in essay evaluation are choice of an appropriate rating scale and setting up criteria based on the purpose of the assessment, i.e., reliable and valid information from both holistic and analytic scoring instruments can tell us much about our pupils' proficiency levels. Findings indicate that our pupils would benefit from analytic measures.

In testing written language, pupils are asked to write short essays occasionally. As emphasized by Harrison**, "the aim is to assess the student's ability to apply in actual situations what he has learnt".** (Harrison, 1983: 7). The focus in writing classes is on the form of the written product rather than on how the learner should approach the process of writing. Essays are corrected in terms of grammatical and punctual errors, i.e., in a cloze test or a free-response test; the teacher doesn't make efforts to discover his pupils' deficiencies and weaknesses. Therefore, his evaluation is approached to be broad, invalid and unreliable. Specifically, the study addresses the following two research questions:

1. Can the holistic scoring provide useful diagnostic information about our pupils' writing ability?

2. How can analytic scoring promote our pupils' writing abilities?

1. 8. 3   Research Hypotheses

The questions guiding this study have structured information about the unreliability of the holistic assessment. Messick claims that the validity of testing is **"an integrated evaluative judgement of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of actions and inferences based on test scores", (**Messick, 1988: 13).

Thus, the present study aims at finding a method that gives exact and reliable feedback to the teachers and the pupils by providing a hypothesis which calls for an analytic scoring scheme capable of assessing pieces of writing as effective and as objective as possible. The teacher hypothesizes that:

1. The inefficiency and unreliability of the holistic scoring adopted by teachers may lead to pupils' weak performance in written expression.

2. The ability to design effective, fair and valid writing assessment through analytic scoring.

1. 8. 4   Research Objectives

The need for this study arises from a professional desire to better serve our pupils. This study therefore sets out to find out a valid and reliable method for assessing pupils' written expression. Worthy of mention is that for the purpose of this research undertaking, analytic scoring method can design the deficits in writing, proposes remedies and provides guides for evaluating an existing assessment situation.

1. 8. 5   Research Design / Methods / Procedures

To enhance score validity of the above hypotheses, the researcher used a variety of tools. The study was conducted in 2009 / 2010 academic year. The participants included 32 pupils from 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy stream in Bab El Assa secondary school. Three main factors contribute to the choice of the above-mentioned participants mainly timing (4 hours per week), high coefficient and teaching the same population for two consecutive years. The population was assigned to an experimental test. Data were collected from questionnaires, writing samples and observations. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to prove the efficiency of the analytic scoring.

1. 8. 5. 1   Sampling

For the purposes of this study, Cohen (2000) states that a valid sample is very important as it represents the whole population in question. Therefore, the study involves

a sample of 32 pupils from 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy stream who contributed greatly in highlighting the problematic of weak performance in writing. To ensure the presence of the population, the researcher prepared a questionnaire about the difficulties his pupils face in written expression. The questionnaire aims at locating the pupils' deficits or needs in the above-mentioned skill. The population (2/3 girls and 1/3 boys) go through a writing composition to be corrected collectively so as to make some reflections.

1. 8. 5. 2   Data Collection

The researcher tries to devise appropriate data collection, and be aware of the capabilities of instruments to provide useful and usable data. In order to find the answers to the two research questions, the researcher collected data from writing compositions awarded to his population, the construction of a more restrictive questionnaire instrument which was administered to the same population, and a questionnaire addressed to his colleagues in the same secondary school where the study was conducted during the academic year 2009 /2010. The use of a questionnaire allowed the adoption of a more remote stance from the problematic under investigation.

1. 8. 5. 3   Data Analysis Procedures

Seliger and Shohamy claim that the usefulness of data analysis is to "**sift, summarize, and synthesize the data for the purpose of arriving at the results and conclusion of the research".** (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 201). The researcher addressed questionnaires and the test to his pupils so as to investigate the main reasons that make them perform weakly in the written expression section. He also addressed a questionnaire to his colleagues to detect the hindrances that impeded the pupils' progress in writing.

1. 8. 5. 3. 1   The Pupils' Questionnaire

The usefulness of questionnaires is stressed by Wilson and McLean who state that

> **the questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze.**

> **(**Wilson and McLean, 1994: 245)

Thus, the 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy pupils' questionnaire is organized under open-ended questions especially dichotomous questions requiring 'a yes/no response'. The dichotomous questions, according to Cohen et al., are useful as they: **"compel respondents to come off the fence on an issue and it is possible to code responses quickly, there being only two categories of responses."** (Cohen et al., 2000: 250). The designed questionnaire is intended to investigate the problems pupils generally meet in written expression, evaluates pupils' weak writing performance, and suggests solutions to overcome these weaknesses.

1. 8. 5. 3. 2   Observations

The participants for the current study were observed before, during and after the implementation of the analytic assessment. The initial observations demonstrated that many pupils not only had problems with basic writing skills, grammar and spelling, but also with putting their ideas into logical order. Most of their writing lacked transition words or a variety of sentence structures. After diagnosing the pupils' weaknesses, the researcher introduced the test to encourage better writing. The data got from observation confirmed the disappearance of their writing frustrations and therefore their attitudes towards writing have partially changed.

1. 8. 5. 3. 3   Assignments

The textbook <u>New Prospects</u> includes four writing activities in each theme (Think, pair, share / Say it in writing / Writing development / The project) intended to reflect real-life tasks.

It is of paramount importance to encourage pupils perform well in composition writing so as to measure their evolution from one composition to another. What is worth reminding is that pupils have been encouraged to classify their written work in a file to check their improvement. Therefore, assignments allow them to recognize their errors and deficit through the teacher's feedback. Such a feedback policy requires the teacher to play a dominant role in responding to student writing, and as a result, opportunities for instructive evaluation. The findings of the study suggest that some errors of indentation, punctuation and organization have been avoided.

Before administering the five compositions to pupils, the researcher has explained each step thoroughly, encouraged them to feel free to write without any kind of stress and has focused on tests ratings for the purpose of text quality. The aim of grading is not a text scribbled with red, but a constructive feedback to the pupil and the teacher.

During the period of the research, the participants from 3rd year Literature and Philosophy went through five tests: in the pre-test, pupils were asked to write a composition about 'Ancient Civilizations' to diagnose their level of proficiency in written expression. Whereas each of the three formative tests, pupils were exposed to teaching and assessing specific criteria.

Formative evaluation was used to contribute the pupils' writing through provision of information and performance. In other words, the first formative test, pupils were invited to write their second composition, which was about the second theme 'Ethics in Business'. They were assessed according to relevance and adequacy of content, compositional

organisation and paragraphing. The second formative test, they were evaluated according to coherence and cohesion (style) and adequacy of vocabulary (diction). In the third formative test, the participants were also instructed to write a composition about the theme of 'Education in the world' and assess it in terms of grammar and mechanics. The post-test was considered as a summative assessment intended to elicit evidence regarding the amount or level of knowledge, expertise or ability.

1. 8. 5. 3. 4 The Teachers' Questionnaire

Polio states that **"the obvious benefit of using a survey is that a large number of participants can be studied,"** (Polio, 2003: 55). To find out how much the teachers know about teaching writing strategies and the problems they have confronted when assessing and scoring pupils' compositions, the researcher has conducted a questionnaire for his colleagues in the same secondary school. The questionnaire has been organized under open-ended questions especially dichotomous questions requiring 'a yes/no response' where 2 scales were assigned to each item.

1. 9   Conclusion

In spite of the fact that the newly designed ELT textbook <u>New Prospects</u> suggests four writing activities in each theme, many pupils are not adequately prepared to cope with the written expression section. Most of them write poor, vague, ambiguous and unclear compositions. Yet, they generally fail in acquiring this expertise. Therefore, language objectives and expectations are far from being reached. To improve and remedy the situation, great efforts are needed to correct pupils' compositions. The focus in writing classes should be on how the learner approaches the process of writing rather than on the form of the written product. The teacher should discover his pupils' weaknesses and avoids wasting too much time on correcting grammatical and punctual errors. The more exposure and opportunities that the pupils have to practise their writing will increase their ability to generate, organize and make writing easier and faster for them.

The next chapter presents the construct prior to reviewing relevant studies about how to assess the writing skill. It introduces the use of the frequent adopted methods. The analytic method has been given importance.

Notes to Chapter One

1. **Assessment** is a systematic approach to collecting information and making inferences About the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course on the basis of various sources of evidence. Assessment may be done by test, interview, questionnaire, observation, etc. In other words, it is a method for analyzing and describing student learning outcomes or program achievement of objectives. Good assessment requires feedback to those who are being assessed so that they can use that information to make improvements. A good assessment program requires using a variety of assessment instruments each one designed to discover unique aspects of student learning outcomes and achievement of program objectives.

2. **Curriculum** is an overall plan for a programme. Such a curriculum usually states:
    - the educational purpose of the programme, in terms of *aims* or *goals.*
    - the content of the programme and the sequence in which it will be taught, (*syllabus*)
    - the teaching procedures and learning activities that will be employed (*methodology*)
    - the means used to assess student learning (*assessment* and testing)
    - the means used to assess whether the programme has achieved its goals (*evaluation*)

3. **Evaluation**: When used for most educational settings, evaluation means to measure, compare, and judge the quality of student work, schools, or specific educational programs. For example, evaluation of student learning requires that educators compare student performance to a standard to determine how the student measures up.

4. **Rubrics:** A set of categories that define and describe the important components of the work being completed, critiqued or assessed. Each category contains a graduation of levels of completion or competence with a score assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria need to be met to attain the score at each level.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

Despite the significant effect of Competency-Based Education on English language teaching in Algeria, pupils' writing ability is still very weak. This is due to a lack of time allotted to writing and difficulty to teach and assess it.

In assessing the writing ability, it is vital that teachers need to be aware of the potential of the evaluation criteria being adopted. This chapter focuses on the factors of assessing writing ability. It describes the attributes of grading methods, the two ways for test marking and distinguishes between the two types of scoring instruments, holistic and analytic. These instruments are not only used to indicate the pupils' achievements of the instructional objectives of a specific study but to measure the extent to which pupils have mastered the specific skills acquired in a formal learning situation as well. Subsequently, pupils either pass or fail the test. In a rather practical way, the degree of success or failure is deemed important to both the pupils and the teacher.

Testers turned to holistic rating aiming at producing reliable results; unfortunately, some educators regard holistic grading as lacking uniform precision since there is a requirement to globally judge pupils' compositions and not designed to diagnose their weaknesses. Indeed, without precise assessment tools, teachers may assess written compositions subjectively and inconsistently. By contrast, analytic grading involves the breaking down of a written composition into components. Each component is assessed separately and then amalgamated with the scores from other components to derive an overall grade. Analytic grading can provide a comprehensive outline of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' writing performance. Thus, it allows teachers to tailor instruction more closely to the needs of their pupils. The explicitness of analytic scoring guides offers teachers a valuable tool for providing pupils with consistent and direct feedback.

2.2   Assessing Writing Ability

Assessing writing plays a dominant role in defining pupils' proficiency, diagnosing

their strengths and weaknesses, and realizing how much pupils' have achieved. The purposes of assessment are to make inferences about language ability and decisions based on the inferences.

For a long time, writing ability has been tested in the forms of multiple choices and grammar completion. Studies have also shown that writing tests are often highly correlated with concurrent objective tests. Conversely, most EFL professionals these days believe that it is better that students are tested by directly writing a composition on a certain topic.

Assessing writing ability involves three types of factors: test makers, test takers, and test raters. According to Cohen, assessing writing ability

> **"…has been described as complex interaction among three sets of factors: the knowledge that the test makers has about how to construct the task, the knowledge that the test takers have about how to do the task, and the knowledge that the test raters have about how to assess the task".**

(Cohen, 1994: 308)

When assessing written language, teachers do not equip their pupils with efficient tools to produce good compositions. They also do not care about the suitable method to achieve this aim. Thus, researchers have been developing several approaches and stating their arguments to defend their choices.

2.2.1 Definition of Test

A test is any procedure for measuring ability, knowledge and performance. Seemingly, this definition encompasses all the main components of a test. Firstly, a test is a method consisting of a set of techniques, procedures and test items that constitute an instrument of some sort. Secondly, a test has the purpose of expressing evaluative qualifiers such as good, fair, poor and so on. Thirdly, a test is intended to measure a person's

ability or knowledge. In other words, who are the testees and what is their linguistic background knowledge?

One can argue that it is not easy to devise an adequate language test that accounts for the different linguistic variables. Such a preparation is time-consuming, expensive and requires expertise. A good test advocates practicality, reliability and validity. Put simply, a test can measure what it intends to measure if these three criteria are carefully met. In this respect, Flavell (1983) remarks that if the teacher is unaware of the relationship between the content of a test and the consistency of the results it gives, is in danger of writing tests which produce misleading information about the testees.

2.2.2 Test Approaches and Formats

Assessing written language is based on two dominant approaches: indirect and direct assessment of writing. The former is a test taker's "**correct usage in sentence-level constructions and spelling and punctuation via objective formats like multiple choice and cloze tests".** (Coombe et al., 2007: 71). The latter is a test taker's "**ability to communicate through the written mode based on the actual production of written texts"** (ibid). In the same vein, direct writing assessment integrates all elements of writing.

For the formats of the direct assessment of writing, there have been two types of writing: free writing and controlled writing tasks. The former type requires test takers

> **"to read a prompt that poses a situation and write a planned response based on a combination of background knowledge and knowledge learned from the course".**
>
> (Coombe et al., 2007: 76)

In other words, pupils are asked to respond to a real-life situation combining the knowledge acquired from the course with their basic background. The latter asks pupils to "**manipulate content that is provided in the prompt, usually in the form of a chart or diagram"** (ibid).

2.2.3 Test Specifications

To ensure that pupils are given a chance to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, the test must be carefully designed and guided by test specifications that are clearly defined. A test's specification "**is a detailed description of exactly what is being assessed and how it is being done". (**Coombe et al., 2007:7). It is worth mentioning that details of the language competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities to be tested must be outlined. The item types, number of items, test formats and rubrics as well as the content through which the evaluation will be made, must be established to ensure that the results will illustrate as accurately as possible the pupils' competence in the use of the language.

One should also note that test specifications force explicitness about the design decisions in the test. The specifications should include the length and structure of each part of the test. It also includes the type of materials with which pupils will have to engage, the source of such materials if authentic, the extent to which authentic materials may be altered, the response format and how responses are to be scored.

2.2.4 Authenticity

A good language test is supposed to employ formats and tasks that "**reflect   real-world situations and contexts where test takers would authentically use the target language".** (Coombe et al., 2007: 7). Therefore, authenticity is referred to as "**the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task".** (Bachman and Palmer, 1996: 23). Test authenticity may be present in the language of the test, items, topics and tasks. It is worth remembering in this context that the language in the test should be as natural as possible. Contextualized and thematic organization to items is needed. Topics need to be relevant and interesting for the learner and tasks ought to reflect real-world situations.

2.2.5 Practicality

There are some practical considerations that should be taken into account when administrating a test among which financial means, time constraints, ease of administration and scoring. In the same line of thought, practicality, clarified by Brown, denotes that an effective test

> **is not excessively expensive, stays within appropriate time constraints, is relatively easy to administer, and has a scoring procedure that is specific and time-efficient.**

(Brown, 2004: 19)

Harrison insists that a good test "**should be as economical as possible in time (preparation, setting and marking) and in cost (materials and hidden costs of time spent)".** (Harrison, 1990: 13). In other words, a test that requires a considerable budget is impractical. A test that takes hours and hours to complete is also impractical. A test that takes a few minutes for a pupil to complete and several hours for the rater to correct is impractical. A test that lacks instructional value and is too complex may not be of practical use to the teacher.

2.3 Attributes of Grading Methods

Many different types of evaluation may be effective depending upon the design of specific course materials and goals. Admittedly, good grading methods are characterized by the following attributes:

2.3.1 Reliability

One of the main principles of a language assessment is reliability which is necessary for validity as "**reliability is an essential consideration in testing and is a prerequisite for test validity".** (Weigle, 2002:49). The criterion of reliability in testing refers to the consistency of test scores. If a test does not measure consistently, it can not measure

anything well. Needless to recall that a test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or it is used by different people. In general, if people get similar scores on parallel forms of a test, i.e., using different forms of a test which try to measure the same skills and abilities using the same method of testing, equal length and level of difficulty, this suggests that the test is reliable.

2.3.1.1 Test Reliability

In a writing test, the topic, the expected discourse mode of the response, the number of writing samples a candidate is asked to provide can affect the test reliability. Moreover, test reliability is also affected by the adequacy of the sampling tasks, poor student motivation, test formats, content of the questions and time given for test takers. It is impossible to make a perfectly reliable test unless test makers should be confident that there are clear test instructions and no vague items. Otherwise the test reliability will be reduced. Brown supported this idea. He insists that "**poorly written test items that are ambiguous may be a further source of test unreliability".** (Brown, 2004:22).

2.3.1.2 Student-Related Reliability

If a test taker uses test strategies and is too familiar with the content as he / she has taken the test so many times the score could improve. Conversely, changes within the learner like additional learning or forgetting and influences such as fatigue, sickness, anxiety, emotional problems may cause the learner's score to deviate from the score that reflects his / her actual ability.

2.3.1.3 Rater Reliability

In the assessment of writing proficiency, one can acknowledge that rater reliability is problematic due to a variety of traits involved which are not easy to describe. However, "**a careful specification of an analytical scoring instrument can increase rater reliability".** (Brown, 2004:21). Ratings and raters are used to refer to the judgments and those who make

them. The human error or subjectivity may occur in the scoring process and affect the reliability of the test's results, which is confirmed by Baker, who states that **"in the case of subjectively scored tests such as composition, the biggest barrier to reliable assessment is the inconsistency of the scorer".** (Baker, 1989: 60).

In the scoring process, there are two types of rater reliability: inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability. Therefore, the researcher will not focus on them through the questionnaires addressed to markers.

2.3.1.3.1   Inter-Rater Reliability

Inter-rater reliability refers to the degree to which two or more examiners give the same test performance the consistent marks. It is neither practical nor possible for two or more scorers to mark the same script due to the constraints of time and cost.

2.3.1.3.2   Intra-Rater Reliability

Intra-rater reliability refers to the degree to which the same marker gives the same evaluation of the ability when he or she marks an evaluation on two or more different occasions. A tantalizing idea is worth mentioning here that the reliability becomes questionable when the examiner allows much variation. Hence, this problem is unavoidable in the process of marking compositions. In the same vein, Brown advocates that there is a way to reduce the intra-rater unreliability when scorers

" **read through about half of the tests before rendering any final scores or grades, then to recycle back through the whole set of tests to ensure an even-handed judgment".**

(Brown, 2004: 21)

2.3.2   Validity

One of the most important aspects of testing and measuring is validity. It is a complex and multi-faceted concept. A test is said to be valid if it really measures what it is supposed to measure. In the same vein, Henning defines validity as the "**appropriateness of a given test or any of its component part as a measure of what it is purported to measure".** (Henning, 1987: 89).

Validity is related to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores. Messick claims that validity is

> **" an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores".**

> **(**Messick, 1988: 13)

As far as writing assessment is concerned, it is not valid to give a writing test that asks students to write a genre they have not studied and allow insufficient time to plan and develop a topic. These aspects will be examined in Chapter 3 via the analysis of the test and the analysis of the data obtained from the markers and test takers.

A number of different procedures can be applied to a test to estimate its validity. Such procedures generally seek to determine what the test measures, and how well it does so. Of capital importance for the classroom teacher are types of validity and their brief explanation in relation to writing. The researcher will limit his investigation to consider the most common kinds involved in his study: content validity, face validity and scoring validity. This, however, is by no means to say that the importance of other types of validity mentioned especially construct validity could be neglected.

2.3.2.1   Content Validity

Content validity is the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behaviour domain to be measured. Hughes states that

> **a test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned.**

(Hughes, 2003: 26)

Content validity is based on the degree to a test adequately and sufficiently which particular skills it sets out to measure, what is called measures the content specification. In other words, it measures the degree to which a test covers all the content that was taught in the manner in which it was taught, i.e., how well the content of your test matches the content of your classroom instruction. Flavell argues that

> **The content specification is important because it ensures as far as possible that the test reflects all the areas to be tested in suitable proportions and also because it represents a balanced sample, without bias towards the test material which happens to be available.**

(Flavell, 1983: 11)

Content validity is of vital importance for the teacher sets his own tests. However, one of the most common complaints of learners is that their tests often do not measure what they've been taught. Very likely, the reason behind the poor test performance is that their test lacked content validity. Although the learners may have acquired all the goals and objectives the teacher emphasized, the test may not have measured them. A tantalizing question is worth mentioning here: How can this happen? For a test to have content validity, it must reflect the goals and objectives of the lesson and give the same emphasis to your goals and objectives. In other words, content-valid tests ask learners to do what they have learned in class. Moreover, many classroom tests over- or underemphasize

certain content areas compared with the emphasis and amount of time devoted to that content during instruction. To put it another way, content-valid tests measure what teachers teach and learners learn. They ask learners to do what was modelled, coached, and practised during instruction.

In sum, content validity must conform closely to course objectives. If a course objective states that pupils will be able to apply theories of practice to case studies, then an evaluation should provide them with appropriate cases to analyze.

2.3.2.2 Construct Validity

Construct validity is a judgment based on the accumulation of correlations from numerous studies using the instrument being evaluated. It refers to whether a scale measures or correlates with the theorized psychological scientific construct that it purports to measure. In other words, it answers the question: are we actually measuring what (the construct) we think we are measuring?

This form of validity is based on the degree to which the items in the test reflect the theory or the construct on which the test is based. For example, in language proficiency the greater the relationship which can be demonstrated between a test of communicative competence in a language and the theory relating to this concept, the greater the construct validity of the test.

2.3.2.3 Face Validity

It is of paramount importance that whatever method of assessment is employed you must accurately measure the skill or knowledge that the method seeks to measure. It is also important that evaluations exhibit face validity. This refers to the degree to which elements of the evaluation appear to be related to course objectives.

Face validity refers to surface credibility or public acceptability. It is often considered to be a non-technical aspect of validity and as a result it is often not rated as

highly as other types. With reference to face validity in writing, Hyland notes that "**an assessment should be based on an actual writing sample and be relevant to students' out-of-class writing needs"**. (Hyland, 2003: 217). A related point worth raising here is that face validity will be high if test takers encounter a test that contains clear items, clear directions, and tasks in relation to course work and within the allotted time limit. One way of finding out more about face validity is to ask teachers and students concerned for opinions and views about the test. This ccu1d be done either formally by means of a questionnaire or informally by discussion in class or staff room.

2.3.2.4   Scoring Validity

In language assessment, one can assert that it is useless having excellent items if the responses are scored invalidly. On the face of it, "**it is not enough to elicit writing in a valid fashion, as the rating of that writing has to be valid too".** (Hughes, 2003:32).

Conversely, the purpose of measuring test taker's writing ability is incomplete if the raters of the written work overemphasize on mechanical features as spelling and punctuation. Scoring validity is closely related to reliability. In the scoring process of writing, scoring validity may be affected by subjective marking. Therefore, this study will investigate scoring validity in terms of the rater's attitude towards pupils' spelling or grammatical errors in their writing.

2.3.3   Relationship between Reliability and Validity

A brief and precise explanation of the relationship between reliability and validity is presented as follows:

> **"reliability is the agreement between two efforts to measure the same trait through maximally similar methods. Validity is represented in the agreement between two attempts to measure the same trait through maximally different methods".**

> **(**Campbell and Fiske, 1959: 83)

In other words, the relationship between the two qualities of a language test: reliability and validity, is rather complex. These two aspects are complementary in the sense

that they identify, estimate and interpret different sources of variance in test scores. Put simply, "**a test cannot be valid unless it is reliable, and it is quite possible for a test to be reliable but invalid".** (Alderson et al., 1995: 187).

2.4   Testing Written Language

Testing, being such an important part of the teaching – learning process, is one of the concerns of many teachers who are involved in test design, construction and administration. In order to have good, reliable, valid achievement or progress assessment, the test should reflect the teaching objectives, the contents and the methodology of instruction; in other words, there must be a coincidence between instructional objectives and testing strategies.

2.4.1   Historical Background of Testing Writing

Bachman acknowledges the crucial role of language testing in supplying vital information for the field of (applied) linguistic research when he mentions one important use of language tests as an indicator **"of abilities or attributes that are of interest in research on language, language acquisition, and language teaching".** (Bachman, 1990: 54).

The practice of testing in general can be assumed to date back to the seventeenth century; records of an assessment of people's linguistic abilities can even be found in the Bible. However, it was not until the Second World War that the idea of language testing as a distinct activity existed. Early approaches to language testing as a systematic or scientific practice were based on the principles of psychometric testing, i.e., the use of closed testing questions in combination with a ready-made set of methods and criteria for analysing and evaluating language tests, and on the ideas of structural linguistics.

Present-day approaches to language testing differ considerably from those of the psychometric era. Two "shifts of interest" in language teaching were identified, and had an

impact on language testing since the end of the 1970s. Among them is a growing interest in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and, in the course of this development, in the use

of language to achieve specific tasks in specific situations. This strong emphasis on language in use is reflected in a more general fashion in frameworks of communicative language competence or ability, and of communicative language testing. Recent discussions of the concept of language test focus on a variety of issues such as test fairness, and its influence on test validity or the ever increasing significance of computer-based language testing.

Assessing writing dates back to 1873 when Harvard University administered its first written exam in English composition. Prior to that time, English departments held oral examinations to test student abilities and accomplishments. This long and acrimonious debate between proponents of oral and written examinations ended early in the twentieth century with written exams finally claiming victory because they were viewed as more objective and more fair.

The recent history of writing assessment is separated into three overlapping waves. The first wave was roughly a 20-year period that began around 1960 and continued until 1980. During that time period, the objective multiple-choice test dominated large-scale assessments. The second wave, roughly set in time from 1980-1988, was the period when the holistically scored essay gained prominence. Around 1990, the third and current wave built on and expanded the second. The "one essay" model was replaced by writing collections known as portfolios.

Testing writing is a very important testing device. Its widespread grew out of the back to the psychometric movement which occurred in the period from approximately the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. The "psychometric" approach with its standardised tests such as multiple-choice items, and its emphasis on validity and reliability emerged as a reaction against the traditional testing of an essay which was regarded as highly subjective and reliable. The integrative approach emerged in response to charge that many of the educational systems lacked the fundamental academic skills of writing. The purpose of

essay tests was to integrate educational tests more meaningfully into instructional process by emphasizing the importance of communicative language testing as a remedy and as

a substitute to the psychometric approach.

In sum, the birth of the psychometric and the integrative approaches has ensured two factors: objectivity and reliability. Yet, it is worth mentioning that these approaches ignored totally the real assessment of the writing skill. Their main purpose is to avoid the side effects which covered the measurement of such a type of task. However, by the emergence of the modern approach in language testing, some researchers tried to develop a new technique that should accompany it. Clearly, the appropriate selection of the measurement device may lead to a better and acceptable testing procedure. The development of the modern approach, however, has brought a new flavour to writing assessment. The essay test has given a formal status to language testing. It has been thought as being the most appropriate technique that can make pupils demonstrate their abilities in writing. Such a test emphasises on language performance (content, style, organization of ideas, and paragraphing) more than language competence (mastery of language such as grammar, vocabulary and mechanics).

2.4.2   Subjective and Objective Tests

In language assessment, we strive to ensure two types of tests: objective and subjective. This classification of subjective and objective tests does not refer to types of tests but to two different ways for test marking:

According to Alderson et al. (1995), objective tests known as standardized tests are used for **"multiple-choice, true/false, error-recognition, and other item types where the candidate is required to produce a response which can be marked as either correct or incorrect",** (Alderson et al., 1995: 106). In other words, test items that can be evaluated objectively have one correct response pattern. An advantage to including selected-response items in objectively scored tests is that the range of possible answers is limited to the options

provided by the test writer. So, the test taker cannot supply alternative and acceptable responses.   Scorers do not need to exercise judgment in marking responses correct or

incorrect. They generally mark a test by following an answer key. In some cases, objective tests are scored by scanning machines and computers. Even though objective tests are problem solving in testing a large group of pupils in a very short period of time, and that these kinds of tests may have face validity: In this context, McNamara notes that

> **" the extent to which a test meets the expectations of those involved in its use, e.g. administrators, teachers, candidates, and test score users; the acceptability of a test to its stakeholders".**

(McNamara, 2000: 133)

These tests do not serve to test almost everything in language learning. They test recognition only. They do not promote critical thinking, there is no possibility of creativity and thus there is a restriction as to what can be tested. With these tests students do not have the opportunity to show that they can communicate, have discussions and perform in the language. Therefore, they are not much used in testing the productive skills of speaking and writing. In sum, an objective test cannot really supply information of how much the student knows about a topic or how well he can perform a given task or solve a given problem. In contrast with objective marking, subjective marking is used for marking tests of writing and speaking where the scorer's subjectivity plays more than a role.

Subjective tests have the advantage of measuring language skill naturally, almost the way English is used in real life. However, many teachers are not able to score such tests quickly and consistently. In other words, a subjective test is one in which the scorer has to exert a judgment. These are difficult and time consuming. There is not one possible answer and the teacher has to decide how to score his pupils' abilities. In this respect, we test the communicative aspects of language such as the content, style, organisation of ideas, and paragraphing. The quality of the essay answer can be regarded from two sides: the

substance of writing, and language form. The teacher's objectives in constructing an essay-type question are: (1) to measure the pupil's progress toward the instructional objectives of

a specific study, and (2) to measure his specific strengths in each component of the essay, i.e., to measure his abilities in grammar, mechanics, organisation of the ideas and style. The pupils' products are evaluated holistically. Such an evaluation is mainly recognised as informal. An informal evaluation is the type of evaluation which is broad and global. Some studies have shown that the evaluation is considered to be subjective whenever it carries the some characteristics.

2.4.3   Characteristics of Subjective Tests

Essay marking is a subjective intellectual exercise in which the score reliability can be influenced by many factors such as the test design, the marker's interpretation of the marking criteria, the procedure, and the method used in the marking process. In this respect, subjective tests have some positive characteristics but they are counterbalanced by other negative ones:

2.4.3.1   Unreliability in Scoring

A number of scholars in the field of language testing and assessment asserted that the reliability of a test is its scoring consistency. Lado notes that "**a test with scores which fluctuate very much does not test anything".** (Lado, 1961: 31). Test reliability is an essential characteristic of a good test. A reliable test will yield consistent and non-contradictory results. It is worth noting that the more comparable the test scores are, the more reliable the test is. Conversely, if a test is unreliable, the scores a test taker obtains should not be relied upon to measure their achievement. A test can be unreliable because of scoring errors. A test of low reliability is a waste of time for both teachers and pupils since it permits no conclusion to be drawn. Unreliable tests are no better than assigning pupils random scores. On a reliable test, you can be confident that someone will get more or less the same score, whether they happen to take it on one particular day or on the next.

Whereas, on an unreliable test, the score is quite likely to be different. It is worth noting that methods of testing which demand a more subjective assessment of the pupils' performance, such as composition writing, can be seen as lacking in reliability.

Testing writing is a type of examination in which the pupil is asked to discuss, enumerate, compare, state, evaluate, analyse, summarise, or criticise writing. Such a test allows the pupil to compose his / her own relatively free and extended written responses to problems set by the teacher. In this respect, testing these responses may consist of single paragraphs or may be full essays in which the pupil is rated not only on his use of grammatical structures and lexicon of the target language but also on his coherent ideas and their organisation. Grades for such free responses tests may also take into account the pupil's employment of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, paragraphing and even handwriting. Subsequently, we cannot evade giving our personal opinions in such a type of test. In the same vein, Corder notes that

> **"Our judgements on an essay or a précis are almost inevitably influenced by our opinions of its content or lexical structure, or in an extreme case, whether we agree with what the writer has said".**

(Corder, 1985: 360)

Such judgements have been subject to criticism. Test errors are always random and it is possible that the same exam paper will be given different scores in different occasions. To back up this idea, inconsistent scoring directly contributes to test unreliability.

In sum, scorer reliability cannot be stable characteristic of a test, and therefore the assessment will be impressionistic, and difficult to quantify. Frankly speaking, no amount of proofreading will guarantee test reliability. But why would such a thing be desirable if reliability is ultimately called into doubt? To answer this question it is necessary to look at the second characteristic of subjective test.

2.4.3.2 Lack of Validity

The test would be invalid if representative samples from the whole syllabus (whether they are grammar points, vocabulary items or skills in reading, writing, listening or

speaking) were not present. It is important not simply to test those areas which are easy to test. Similarly, a test of writing skills may seek to identify and test individually sub-skills,

such as punctuation, by using multiple-choice questions, for example. This may be relatively simple to construct and administer, and reliable to score; but, it may not give us a valid picture of the pupil's overall writing ability. In short, there is a clear tension between reliability and validity. In order to be valid it is necessary that the test be as reliable as possible. However, a reliable test need not have any validity at all.

Another problem inherent in validity is the need to test only what you want to test. If the answer to a comprehension question on a listening or a reading test requires the pupil to write a long-winded answer. Then, this is equally a test of their ability to write long-winded answers as it is of their comprehension of the text. In actual fact, the candidate may have perfectly comprehended the text and the answer to the question, but be unable to express themselves clearly enough to satisfy the test requirements. Then again, if language ability is being examined, the test should not require a special knowledge of, or interest in, the topics dealt with in the test. A writing question on the topic of 'Civilizations' presupposes the background knowledge to write it. This is all very well if the pupils have this knowledge, but invalidates the test if they do not.

One source of invalidity is the test itself, although there is a lot which can be done to limit problems. Firstly, the test is regarded as invalid when areas to be tested are uncovered. Secondly, it is possible for the pupils to misinterpret a question or find it ambiguous, and then it will be impossible to limit the range of possible answers. In this respect, the pupils are sometimes unfamiliar with the format and techniques of the test they are to take as the teacher may have not prepared them in advance and they do not know how to tackle such tasks. Seemingly, the classroom teacher who is supposed to measure the pupils' writing abilities dismissed the methodology of writing an essay. In such a situation, the test is considered as invalid even if the question seems clear and has a direct relation with the courses they have been taught. Thirdly, the test lacks validity when the teacher cannot know which criteria he has relied on in his scoring procedure. In this vein, the scoring procedure

will be inevitably broad and inexact in the absence of an analytical specification of a scoring scheme. In the same line of thought, Corder points out:

> **" When we consider that a learner has done a good translation or a good essay we do not know very precisely what quality or qualities we have mastered and we are far from confident that our measure is a valid one".**

> (Corder, 1985: 358)

The test would seem valid if it deals with the essay as a kind of verbal communication. We must take into account all the essay components such as content, form, grammar, vocabulary (word-choice), style, and mechanics. It is not to assume that a given score on language form necessarily allows conclusions to be drawn about the pupil's language performance. In this vein, if the essay is designed to reveal the pupil's performance in one component, then it will be impossible to communicate his ideas as precisely and correctly as possible, and therefore he cannot reach language performance. The assessment needs to engage with the communicative purpose and overall coherence and organisation of the pupils' output, i.e., in testing an essay we need to know not simply the pupil's ability in writing correct English, but also how he can communicate his thoughts. If tests only focus on localized errors such as grammar errors, they will not show the teacher how well pupils can write in English to express meaning.

In sum, the classroom teacher can validate his test when he sets forth the objectives of the task he wants his pupils to perform. Unfortunately, he can invalidate it when his pupils are not well-informed of how to deal with the problem imposed and how their responses are to be scored. It is, therefore, the classroom teacher who should select the test materials and administrate them properly so as to validate his performance; otherwise, the scoring procedure will be inefficient.

2.4.3.3   Difficulty of Interpretation

Interpreting test scores is not an easy task. From a subjective perspective, our pupils approach tests differently, and adopt diverse strategies mostly incorrect or ambiguous. Therefore, teachers' conclusive results may seem highly misleading and difficult. According to Bachman (1990), responding to a subjective test is determined by the use of two writing factors: styles and strategies. Every test taker is able to express his own opinion freely and interpret information in any way he wants. In the same way, the teacher is able to evaluate the quality of his own opinion and interpretation as well as the organisation and logic of his opinion. Style and strategies are, then, common factors which the teacher finds as real obstacles in his interpretations. Styles are those general characteristics of both intellectual functioning and personality type that especially pertain and differentiate anyone from someone else. Strategies are specific methods of approaching a task for achieving a particular end planned designs for controlling and manipulating information.

Both teachers and pupils' performance in any task is strictly personal. The pupil can never approach the stimulus from a unique viewpoint, even if he axes familiar with it. He cannot evade supporting his own opinion, rather than that of the teacher. His teacher, on the other hand, cannot evade supporting his own opinion rather than that of the pupils. His subjective interpretation of the pupils' responses seems somehow intuitive.

2.4.3.4   Difficulty of Scoring

One of the most troublesome aspects of assessing writing for many teachers is assigning scores to their pupils' work. Scoring is derived from their intuition or personal opinions. This point is highlighted by Brown in the following terms: **"Judgements are rather impressionistic and difficult to quantify. They are rendered in rather global terms"**. (Brown, 1987: 249). One reason for this difficulty is that many teachers feel much more comfortable in the role of supportive coach than of evaluator. Another reason is that teachers sometimes begin their assessment with some idea of how many points a particular assignment is worth. However, they neglect how those points should be awarded, i.e., the

criteria they should use to grade their pupils' work. For these reasons, teachers need to have a systematic process for assigning scores to written work and some sort of written rubric that outlines the criteria for grading. Rubrics vary along two dimensions: whether they are general or specific to an assignment, i.e., whether a single score is given (holistic scale) or whether points are given for different aspects of writing, such as content, organization, and use of language. The ability to respond to a written work involves some writing skills such as grammatical ability, lexical ability, mechanical ability (punctuation, spelling, capitalisation,), stylistic skills, and organisational skills (analytic scale). In sum, holistic scales are faster and efficient. Analytic scales tend to be somewhat reliable, and certainly provide more useful feedback to pupils as scores on different aspects of writing can tell students where their respective strengths and weaknesses are.

2.5 Rating Scales

The evaluation of writing ability has become increasingly important in recent years because the results of such evaluations are used for a variety of administrative, instructional, and research purposes. One of the first decisions to be made in determining a system for directly assessing writing quality is what type of scoring procedure will be used: should a single score be given to each text, or should the different features of a text be scored separately?

There have been a number of marking procedures used for examining reliability as a whole. These marking procedures include: multiple ratings, peer-marking, blind scoring, double-marking, cross-marking and even computer versus human marking. These marking procedures have a number of merits and advantages. Indeed, they not only shorten the marking time, increase pupils' engagement in learning and improve pupils' high-order skills but they promote intra rater reliability and consistency of scoring as well. Conversely, the marking procedures related to composition marking remain problematic. One of the early written product marking procedures was to develop scales, or sets of answers, to rank pupils' essays from the most elementary to the most sophisticated.

Teachers have adopted different scoring scales to the testing of a composition in search of an objective and reliable assessing procedure. The assessment of written expression, thus, has witnessed the emergence of four different methods: Short-Type Essays, Multiple-Scoring Method, Error-Count Method and the Analytic Scoring Method. These methods differ from one another. The focus of this study will be on holistic and analytic rating scales.

In evaluating any written expression either holistically or analytically, teachers have had to address a number of concerns to assign a final score to a writing product. Some of these concerns include the need to attain valid and reliable scores, set relevant tasks, give sufficient writing time, set clear essay prompts, and choose appropriate rhetorical modes.

However, two main related concerns in essay evaluation literature are the appropriateness of the scoring criteria and the standard required. There is no single written standard that can be said to represent the 'ideal' written product in English. Therefore, we cannot easily establish procedures for evaluating EFL writing in terms of adherence. Even narrowing the discussion to a focus on academic writing is fraught with complexity.

2.5.1 Holistic Scoring Scale

Holistic scoring has been widely used in writing assessments. For holistic scoring rubrics, elaborate score descriptors are usually developed for several score levels, and the writing qualities of an essay are usually represented by an overall rating, i.e., the pupil's work as a whole is assigned by a final mark.

2.5.1.1 Theoretical Background and Rationale

The holistic approach has been established in Great Britain by Wiseman and his colleagues. It was known as the 'Demon Method' (Wiseman, 1949). In the United States, it was known as 'the Educational Testing'.

Over the past four decades, teachers have tended to assess writing with holistically. Holistic grading involves making an assessment of the quality of a complete written composition. It involves assigning a global grade (percentage, rating, letter, etc.) as a measure of the pupils' level of writing performance. Holistic grading for writing is appropriate when the purpose of assessment is to obtain a broad perspective about the writing proficiency of a pupil. It is preferred by many teachers as a quick and efficient way of assessing pupils' writing.

A holistic scale "**is based on a single, integrated score of writing behaviour".** (Cohen, 1994: 314). Huot, on the other hand, states that a holistic scale "**employs a reader's full impression of a text without trying to reduce her judgment to a set of recognizable skills".** (Huot, 1990: 201). In other words, it aims to rate the overall proficiency level.

In a typical holistic scoring session, each writing sample is read quickly and then judged against a rating scale, or scoring rubric, that outlines the scoring criteria. Holistic scoring rubrics generally consist of 4 to 10 levels. Each level corresponds to a score and a set of descriptors. These descriptors in the rubric can be either general or fairly specific. Holistic scoring is an economical scoring since readers are required to make only one decision (i.e., a single score) for each writing sample.

Holistic scores are obtained by comparing individual pupil compositions to model ones, representing good, fair, and poor responses to the assignment. The instructor selects several pupil compositions that exhibit high, average, or low achievement. These models then become the standards by which the instructor and one or more graders evaluate a group of compositions. Each evaluator reads the pupil paper quickly and determines whether it is stronger or weaker than its closest equivalent among model compositions.

Holistic scoring is done on a four-point scale. Three model compositions are chosen: the 4/3 model is above average, the 3/2 model is average, the 2/1 model is below average. A pupil composition that is better than the 4/3 model receives a 4. A paper not as good as the 4/3 model, but better than the 3/2 model, receives a 3, and so on. The rater makes only two

decisions:

1) which model essay is most like the pupil's composition to be scored, and

2) whether it is better than or worse than its model counterpart. When the grader has determined the score of a pupil composition, the grader marks the appropriate number in one corner of the front page. The qualities each number stands for are as follows:

- The **4** composition is directly related to the assigned topic. The composition will focus on a central idea and show a sure grasp of logical progression. It will be substantiated with specific examples or details and will demonstrate the writer's ability to select effective, appropriate words and phrases. The writer is able to construct and organize sentences and make careful use of transitional devices. His paper will be free of serious mechanical errors.

- The **3** composition is logically and adequately developed. This composition should contain most of the qualities of good writing itemized in the discussion of the 4 composition. It differs by lacking the real distinction of the latter. It may contain a thesis that is rather awkward or tedious. Many examples may be used or occasionally used inappropriately. Word choices and sentence structure should show competence, but may falter occasionally. There may be some mechanical errors, but these should not be numerous or reveal a lack of basic competence.

- The **2** composition will meet only the basic criteria, and those in a minimal way. The paper should present a central idea with sufficient clarity so that the reader is aware of the writer's purpose, but it may take some effort to isolate the writer's point. The organization must be clear enough so the reader can see how the writer means to achieve her purpose, but the organization may be weak. The composition should provide evidence, but it will probably be underdeveloped or poorly related to the central idea. Mechanical errors will be more frequent.

- The **1** composition will show very little competence. The thesis will be difficult to locate or incomprehensible. The paper will not focus on the assigned topic. Instead of a logical progression, there may be underdeveloped points. The mechanical errors will be so substantial as to bring into question the writer's grasp of the most basic compositional and grammatical skills.

2.5.1.2   Strengths and Weaknesses of the Holistic Scoring Scale

Holistic scoring is considered by some to be the most consistent and reliable method of scoring writing. It takes much less time to do, i.e., each reader of a holistically scored composition reads it quickly, matching its quality to that of one of the model compositions. With the models firmly in mind, a holistic grader's first impressions of a composition are highly reliable. Perkins claims that "**holistic scoring has the highest construct validity when overall attained writing proficiency is the construct assessed**". (Perkins, 1983: 652). According to Perkins, holistic scoring emerges from the limitations of the single score, which gives useful ranking information but no details. In other words, holistic scoring cannot provide useful diagnostic information about a pupil's writing ability. Cohen asserted that "**reducing the results of writing to a single score makes the outcome less reliable than with ratings including a series of scores".** (Cohen, 1994: 316). Indeed, a single score does not allow raters to distinguish between various aspects of writing such as control of syntax, depth of vocabulary, and organization.

2.5.2   Analytic Scoring Scale

According to Ferris & Hedgcock, an analytic scale

> **"relies on a rating guide that separates and weights textual components such as content, organization, cohesion, style, vocabulary, grammar and the like a priori so that the rater's criteria are focused and prioritized before the scoring process begins".**
>
> (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998: 238).

Instructors who use analytic scoring view writing as a demonstration of many isolated skills that when graded separately and added together will result in an appropriate evaluation of the piece. The approach considers writing to be made up of various features such as creativity, grammar, succinct expression of concepts, and punctuation, each of which is scored separately. An analytic writing score is made up of a sum of the separate

scores. It is often a weighted sum developed after multiplying each score by numbers

representing the relative importance of the features the instructor wishes to emphasize.

2.5.2.1   The Nature of the Analytical Assessing Method

The Analytic scoring is an approach to grading writing. It has been established as a reaction against the holistic scoring scale. It is a psychometric method used to promote the scoring of the composition's reliability. Lado (1961) claims that it relies on the Atomistic Approach, i.e., the breaking down of the complexities of language into segments.

In 1974, Diederich developed analytic scoring to rate students' essays in five features: quality and development of ideas, organization, style, wording, and mechanics, which last could be subdivided into grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Being diagnostic in nature, this type of assessment provided teachers with useful information on the strengths and weaknesses of their students' writing.

In 1981, Jacobs and her colleagues developed one of the best-known analytic rubrics. In their rubrics, essays are rated on five different rating dimensions of writing quality, each having a different weight: content (30 points), organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), language use (25 points), and mechanics (5 points).

In 1990, Weir developed the Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP). The TEEP framework consists of seven 4-point scales that cover four aspects of communicative effectiveness (relevance and adequacy of content, compositional organization, cohesion, and adequacy of vocabulary for purpose) and three accuracy dimensions (grammar, mechanical accuracy/punctuation, and mechanical accuracy/spelling).

In 1991, Hamp-Lyons developed the Michigan Writing Assessment. Its framework contains three 6-point scales: ideas and arguments, rhetorical features, and language control. This study covers five major analytic rating dimensions including development, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In a sense, this framework is similar

to the Jacob et al. (1981) five-dimension rating scheme. One noteworthy difference, is that the language use dimension is further divided into two sub dimensions of sentence variety / construction and grammar/usage accuracy.

Analytic grading involves the breaking down of a written composition into components. Each component is assessed separately and then amalgamated with the scores from other components to derive an overall grade. Texts might be rated on such features as content, organization, cohesion, register, vocabulary, grammar, or mechanics. Thus, analytic scoring schemes provide more detailed information about a test taker's performance in different aspects of writing. The explicitness of analytic scoring guides offers teachers a potentially valuable tool for providing writers with consistent and direct feedback.

2.5.2.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Analytic Scoring Scale

According to Cohen, the strengths of the analytic scale lie in both

> **"guarding against the possibility that raters will collapse categories during the rating process and training of raters is easier when there is an explicit set of analytic scales".**

(Cohen, 1994: 317)

Seemingly, analytic scoring scale helps instructors keep the full range of writing features in mind as they score. A composition that is poorly punctuated may present a good analysis of a problem and strongly state a position. The punctuation may overwhelm the instructor to the degree that s/he fails to notice the achievements in the composition. It also allows pupils to see areas in their compositions that need work when accompanied by written comments and a breakdown of the final score. Its diagnostic nature provides pupils with a road map for improvement. The following guidelines may be useful to maximize the effectiveness of analytic scoring:

- A written analytic scale helps to define grading criteria clearly. It can foster an understanding of what is expected and how it will be assessed.

- Criteria are weighted according to their relative importance.

- Formative feedback in the form of marginal and end comments is most effective when the comments are balanced. Good writing is tough to do, and most pupils feel inadequate about their writing skills from lack of practice.

- Instructors can downplay the possible confrontational effect of grading by being sensitive to such issues as using sarcasm in their comments.

However, there are also some negative effects of analytic scale. Cohen notes that **"there is no assurance that this scale will be used according to the given criteria; halo effect may occur; etc".** (Cohen, 1994: 317). In other words, component scales may not be used effectively according to their internal criteria, resulting in a halo effect in which one component score may influence another. The major disadvantage of analytic scoring is that it takes longer than holistic scoring since readers are required to make more than one decision for every writing sample, i.e., teachers are usually required to make many separate judgments about one piece of writing. Furthermore, not all pupils actually make their way through the analytic comments written on their papers. Some of them will not be able to make profitable use of those comments on succeeding writing assignments.

Critics of analytic scoring also point out that even experienced essay judges sometimes find it difficult to assign numerical scores based on certain descriptors. Therefore, qualitative judgments about coherence, style, and so on are not always easily accommodated by analytic scoring methods. Negative feedback can be pedagogically destructive, i.e., teachers who combine analytic scoring with confrontational or unclear comments, especially about issues of grammar, may actually inhibit pupils' growth. According to Madson,

> " **a major problem with the analytic approaches is that one never knows how to weight each error, or even each area being penalized".**

(Madson, 1983: 21).

Madson criticized the analytic approaches to the scoring of an essay in the sense that they do not agree on how to weight its different areas.

2.6   Conclusion

It is regrettable that many programs in composition and TEFL in Algeria do not include an assessment course. Thus, many teachers enter the classroom without a thorough grounding in assessment issues. A thorough understanding of assessment issues should be part of every teacher's knowledge base. Teachers should become more knowledgeable about writing assessment as part of their ongoing professional development.

Teachers have developed and administered several essay tests as well as numerous scoring scales for the sake of reducing the effects of subjective judgements and scores unreliability. However, sources of error inherent in any measurement situation include inconsistencies in the behaviour of the pupil being assessed, variability in the administration of the test and differences in raters' scoring behaviours. Teachers claim that no test score is perfectly reliable because every testing situation differs. They also note that there is no need to create the perfect essay test. Examiners will always differ in their judgements of the quality of a piece of writing. If we accept that writing is a multidimensional, situational construct that fluctuates across a wide variety of contexts, then we must respect the complexity of teaching and testing it.

Whatsoever the complexities, the inclusion of the analytic scoring scale into the field of assessing written language has oversimplified and trivialized writing as the mere ability to memorize discrete bits of language. Such a method is assumed to maintain validity in relation with reliability if used adequately.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. **Analytic scoring** (testing): a method of scoring that separates and weights different features of the test taker's performance on a writing task and assigns separate scores to each feature. The commonly analyzed features in writing tasks include content, organization, cohesion, style, register, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

2. **Holistic scoring** is a method of scoring where a single score is assigned to writing samples on the basis of an overall impressionistic assessment of the test taker's performance on writing task as a whole.

3. **Reliability** (in testing) a measure of the degree to which a test gives consistent results. A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people.

4. **Validity** (in testing) the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purposes for which it is intended. A number of different statistical procedures can be applied to a test to estimate its validity. Such procedures generally seek to determine what the test measures, and how well it does so.

CHAPTER THREE

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CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS

3. 1   Introduction

The assessment of pupils' written expression in a way that presents more information in terms of their weaknesses and strengths has not been given much importance by classroom teachers. The gap in classroom assessment of writing is growing wider due to the fact that less amount of attention has been paid to evaluating the effect of scoring scales from the perspective of compromising the teachers and pupils' goals.

To enhance score validity of the research questions and hypotheses set forward in the first chapter about the poor performance of his pupils in written expression, the researcher employed considerable experimental tools to achieve effectiveness in assessing. To reflect the effectiveness of scoring scales in writing classes, the present chapter seeks to renovate an instructional method of writing through data collected from both teachers and pupils' questionnaires, writing samples and observations.

To create a guideline to assess pieces of writing as objectively and as informatively as possible, the analytic scoring scale was employed for rating the writing samples. The analytical model gives the most objective information about improving teaching and feedback because all the components are evaluated separately. The inclusion of the analytic method may help us know exactly why our pupils write poor compositions and what kind of assistance is needed.

To reach the main objective of this experimental research, the pupils' compositions have been thoroughly analysed. Both teachers and pupils have completed two questionnaires intended to investigate the problems pupils generally encounter in written expression. Then, the findings of the questionnaires are compared to those of the tests administered to the researcher's pupils.

3. 2   Instruments

To enhance score validity of the research hypotheses, the researcher has used a variety of tools. Their purpose according to Cohen et al. **"is to ensure that researchers can devise**

appropriate data collection instruments for themselves, and be aware of the capacities of such instruments to provide useful and usable data", (Cohen et al., 2000: 245).

In order to find useful and usable answers to the two research questions, the researcher has employed some instruments for collecting the relevant data:

- A questionnaire has been addressed to the researcher's pupils (see Appendix 1).
- A questionnaire has been addressed to teachers (see Appendix 2).
- Test papers concerning written expression with respect to 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy pupils (see Appendices 3 and 7).

3. 2. 1 Questionnaires

The main reason behind choosing questionnaires as one of the instruments in the present study is due to the popularity of the questionnaire used among educational researchers in general regardless of its being **"quite labour-intensive in construction and analysis"**. (McDonough, J. and McDonough, S. , 1997: 171).

Both the questionnaires addressed to pupils (test takers) and teachers (markers) are organized under dichotomous and open-ended questions.

3. 2. 1. 1 The Questionnaire Addressed to Pupils

The 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy pupils' questionnaire is organized under nine dichotomous questions requiring 'a yes / no response' and two open questions expressing simple comments when necessary. The designed questionnaire is intended to investigate the problems pupils generally meet in written expression, evaluates their weak writing performance, and suggests solutions to overcome these weaknesses.

Taking into account our pupils' level of English and the limitation of time allotted to completing the questionnaire, the eleven semi-structured questions are related to

reliability and validity. In other words, the main concern in **part 1** (six questions) is validity.

- For instance, question 1 is related to the instructions of the written task, i.e., face validity and reliability.

- Questions (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) are to elicit pupils' opinion on the content of the task. They focus on our pupils' comments on their weak performance in written expression, i.e., content validity.

Student-related reliability is concentrated on in **part 2** consisting of four questions about the writing assessment in class. In addition, test reliability is concerned in this part. For instance, in question 9, *do you think one correction session is sufficient to improve your level in writing?* concerns time limit which is most of the time against those who do not perform well on a test.

The last question in **part 3** is designed to elicit information from test takers about possible solutions to improve their weak performance in written expression.

3. 2. 1. 1. 1   The Pupils' Responses to the Questionnaire

The responses received from the 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy pupils show that they have learned English for 6 years, as they started English in the middle school. What is; however, remarkable is that all pupils consider English as a primary subject.

As for the three parts of the questionnaire that has been designed for them, responses show that the main focus of pupils' answers is on validity and reliability that will help to assess their writing proficiency.

All the pupils (100%) confirm that they have learned how to write compositions with their teacher. Unfortunately, the instructions of the tasks are unclear for them to understand

the written test. Admittedly, when asked whether the content of the written task (question 2) is related to what they learn in class, all the pupils state that the content of the task is related to the textbook <u>New Prospects</u>, which shows that the content validity is probably good.

For question 3, 27 of the participants (84.37%) claim that they do not make a plan or an outline before starting writing. They do not write their rough draft first and then transfer it. Unfortunately, they do not know the rating scales.

The fourth question to which most of them (26 pupils), i.e., (81.25 %) agree is about whether their level in written expression is good, average or weak. In other words, the 26 pupils agree that it is weak, although 6 pupils (18.75 %) disagree and confirm that it is medium.

For question 5, thirty two pupils (100 %) argue that the weak level in a written expression's test is a reasonable challenge. They confess that they have met problems in vocabulary and grammar. 25 pupils (78.13 %) say they have difficulties in generating ideas. 23 of them (71.86 %) hold the view that spelling is a real dilemma when writing composition. 9 pupils (28.26 %) admit that understanding the topic is their major handicap.

The only question in the first part of the questionnaire to which half of the pupils (50 %) agree is concerned with their real deficit in punctuation.

The following bar - graph shows our pupils' problems when tackling a written expression test:
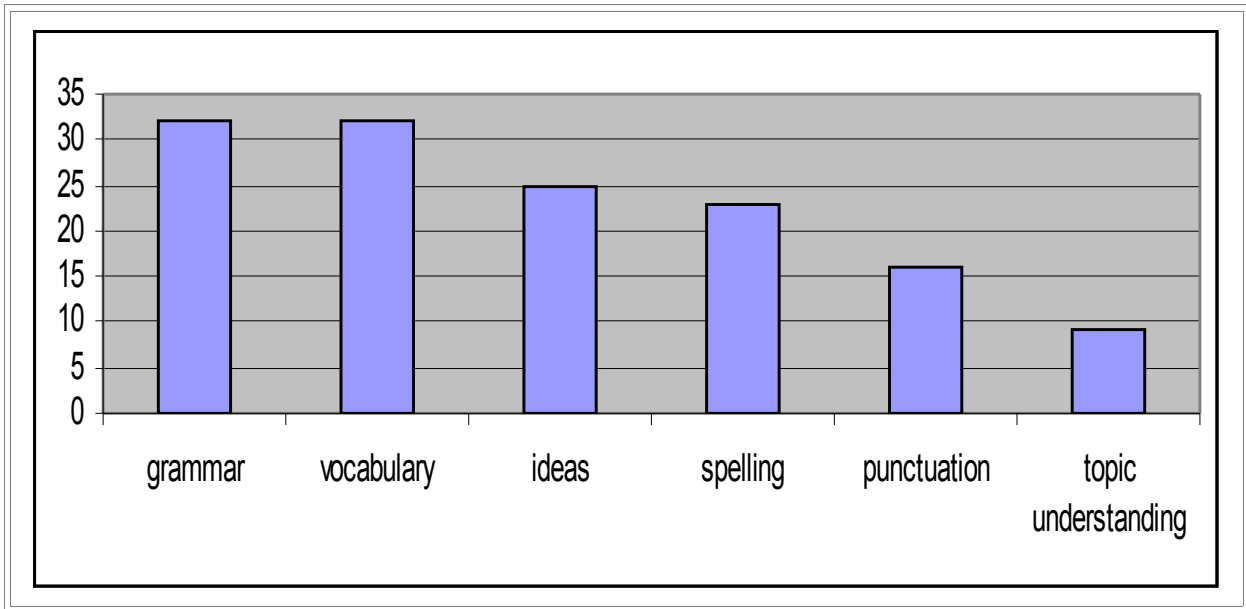
Bar-graph 3.1:   3rd Year Pupils' writing difficulties

As far as the written expression test is concerned, the bar – graph shows that our pupils usually meet problems in grammar, vocabulary, generating ideas and spelling.

For question 5 which is about the main reasons behind our pupils' weak level in written expression, 10 pupils (31.26 %) confess that the main reason is their poor basic background. The same number holds the view that they totally marginalise the writing skill. Seven of them (21.87 %) say that their weak performance is representative in their actual writing ability mainly because of the insufficient time allotted to written expression and scarce writing practices. The remaining pupils (5) state that the way of the researcher's teaching of the writing skill is not authentic enough and, therefore, their level remains unsatisfactory. This is an issue of face validity (see 2.3.2.3).

According to pupils' responses to the above questions so far, the content validity and face validity are satisfying.

In responses to part 2, it can be easily seen that question 7 has been given a 'yes' answer by more than half of the number of the participants: 87.50 % of the pupils say they correct compositions at class with their teacher. Only four of them (12.50 %) disagree and argue that the way of undertaking it has a negative effect on learning the

writing skill. 81.25 % confess that their teacher adopts a holistic correction. In other words, the teacher doesn't check the answer key to the task and to compare it with pupils' own production. Moreover, if the teacher does not explain how to write acceptable answers to the task, test takers will not know their marks for the writing section. Only 18.75 % state that the teacher sometimes adopts the analytic correction when he classifies pupils' mistakes and shows them how to avoid these mistakes.

For questions 9 and 10 asking about whether one correction session is sufficient to improve their level in writing, and whether they do a remedial work after the correction session, all the pupils disagree and ask for a remedial work which will not affect their normal studies and therefore improve their performance in writing.

Based on the analysis above, it can be judged that both student-related reliability and test reliability are problematic as most of the test takers' performances are affected in these aspects. Most of the participants claim that they are not familiar with the analytic correction. Unfortunately, they do not know the marks for the written expression task and judgment of their performances.

Part 3 is a section where pupils are asked to express themselves freely by proposing solutions to overcome their difficulties in writing. As a matter of fact, it is far from a satisfying positive one and needs to be enhanced. Most of participants beg the teachers' kindness to allot extra time to review their basic knowledge of the English language through reading small passages. Some of them insist on using visual aids to produce pieces of writing. Others view the point of an extra test done for the purpose of reinforcing writing performance.

3. 2. 1. 1. 2   The Interpretation of the Pupils' Responses

The interpretation of the pupils' responses confirms one major thing: their writing ability is still very weak. The matter is due to a lack of time allotted to writing as opposed to most of the class time distributed to and occupied by a great number of listening, reading

and speaking activities. The shortage of pages concerning writing in various textbooks is noticeable and makes Algerian teachers find it difficult to teach composition. In addition to the classroom, there is no real context in Algeria where learners can use or practise their writing skills, which increases the difficulty of designing and scoring. As whether or not their performance is really representative, their true writing ability remains unclear. The teaching of writing needs to be reviewed and investigated thoroughly, i.e., we need to enable secondary school pupils to enhance their English basic knowledge and basic skills.

As far as the pupils' responses to the questionnaire are concerned, all of them recognize that they had learned how to write compositions in their normal classroom instruction. Unfortunately, the instructions of a written test seem to be unclear. As for the content of the task, most of them state that it is related to the textbook New Prospects. Admittedly, all of them argue that they do not make an outline before starting writing. They also do not write their rough draft first and then transfer it. Unfortunately, they will not be able to know the rating scales and scores. In other words, classroom instruction in the use of prewriting strategies is intended to equip pupils with means of retrieving, organising, and developing their initial and subsequent responses to a writing prompt. If pupils are encouraged to generate writing plan before they start composition writing, their plans can raise their writing scores. A broad question may be asked in this context: Can writing quality be predicted by assessing the quality of accompanying writing plans? There are features in writing plans that may ascertain whether writing plan quality, as another variable, predicts writing scores. This will be discussed thoroughly in chapter four.

Most of the pupils agree that their level in written expression is weak. They also confess that they have met problems in vocabulary, grammar, generating ideas, spelling, punctuation and understanding of the topic. According to pupils' responses, the main reasons are their poor basic background acquired in the Middle School, orientation, insufficient time allotted to written expression, scarce writing practices in-class or at home and neglect to the writing skill in general. Another main issue is the way of correcting the pupils' compositions, i.e., although compositions are collectively corrected in a session, most of the teachers adopt a holistic correction. They don't check the answer key to the task

and compares it with pupils' own production. Furthermore, since the correction is impressionistic, no remedial work is handled. As for the last part, pupils proposed solutions to overcome their difficulties in writing. Most of the participants suggested extra time to review their basic knowledge of the English language through reading and analysing small passages, learn how to organise a composition in terms of the form and content and an additional test which may influence positively their writing performances.

3.2.1.2   The Questionnaire Addressed to Teachers

There are two types of questions in the questionnaire addressed to teachers (see Appendix 2) including both eight dichotomous questions and three open-ended questions. Open-ended questions **"put the responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly into respondents' hands"**. (Cohen et al., 2000: 255). The questionnaire has been administered to ten teachers who have an experience and knowledge in English language teaching and testing.

There are also three parts in the questionnaire addressed to the teachers. In part 1, content validity and face validity are investigated, based on four dichotomous questions as well as one open-ended question. For instance, in question 1, d*o you teach your pupils how to write compositions in your normal classroom instruction?*

Part 2 contains four dichotomous questions and one open - ended question. Rater reliability (see 2.3.1.3) is the main concern of this part. For instance, in question 8, h*ave you ever learned or been trained how to score compositions? Question* 9 *Do you follow the marking instructions or rating scales while marking? And question 10 If not, how do you mark?*

The last open-ended question designed in part 3 is intended to elicit information from markers about the strategies used to improve their pupils' weak performance in writing. The question aims at both teaching and assessing writing.

3.2.1.2.1   The Teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire

In the responses of the questionnaire addressed to teachers, the researcher has found that the teachers are aged from 27 to 52, their teaching experience varies from 5 to 30 years and their marking experience varies from 3 to 17 years in the baccalaureate exam.

Part 1 concerns content validity and face validity. In response to the first 'yes – no' question, all the participants (100%) chose 'yes' as their answers. They confirm that they have taught their pupils how to write compositions in their normal classroom instruction. Admittedly, when asked whether the content of the written task (question 2) is related to what they have taught to their pupils, all the teachers agree. All of them state that the content of the task is related to the textbook <u>New Prospects</u> and clear for them to understand quickly. It is also possible for their pupils to complete the task with the lexical and grammatical items they had learned. This shows that the content validity is good. What is noticeable is that the second question has received a positive response from all the teachers, which is approximately consistent with pupils' responses (100 % for yes and 00 % for no).

 The third question to which all the teachers (100 %) agree was about whether their pupils' level in written expression is good, medium or weak. They agree that it is weak, which corresponds with the results of analyzing most of test takers' responses.

For question 4, the teachers have seen their pupils' weaknesses at different stages. All of them confess that their primary problems are in relevance and style. 8 of them (80 %) have said they have difficulties in paragraphing. 6 of them (60 %) hold the view that coherence is a real obstacle when writing a composition. Half of them (50 %) admit that they face difficulties in mechanics. 40 % say that their real deficit has been punctuation. The pupils' weak level in writing is displayed in the following bar – graph:
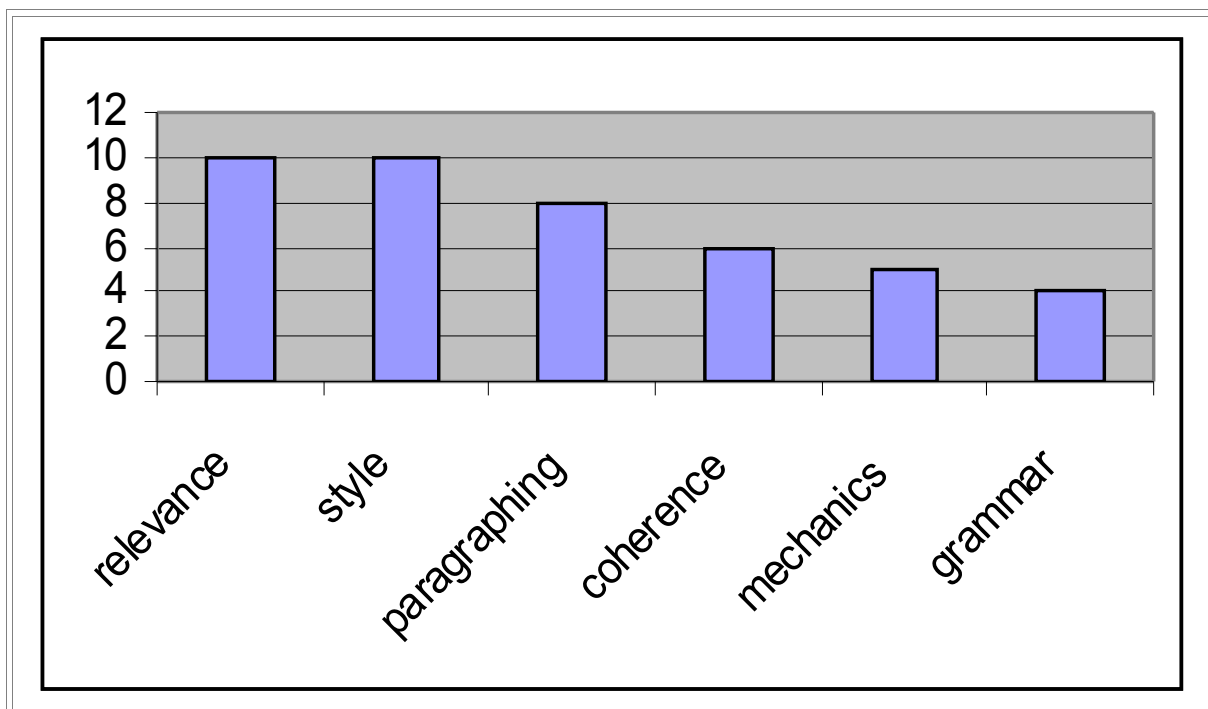
Bar-graph 3.2:   3ʳᵈ Year Pupils' writing difficulties according to teachers

The bar – graph shows that relevance, style and paragraphing are real challenges to pupils. It is noticeable that the difficulty level is higher than the normal classroom level. The main reason is that lower level pupils have found it difficult to complete the tasks.

For question 5 which asks about the main reasons behind their pupils' weak level in written expression, all the teachers confess that the main reasons are pupils' negative attitudes towards the writing skill. The same number hold the view that time allotted to the teaching and assessing writing is insufficient. Seven of them (70 %) say that their weak performance have been inherited from the middle school, i.e., their basic background remain weak. Six of them accuse the syllabus programmers not to devote much importance to writing activities.

From the analysis above, it can be said that validity is satisfying so far according to teachers' responses, which corresponds with the results of analyzing pupils' responses. Comparing the data, the researcher found that most of them show agreement on the questions related to validity which occurred in both questionnaires, especially about whether the content of the task is related to the English textbook New Prospects.

In responses to part 2, six teachers (60 %) convey that they correct their pupils' compositions in class; while, four of them state timing does not allow them to do so. This is roughly inconsistent with test takers' response (87.50 % agree).

When asked whether they use a holistic or analytic method (Q7), all those who agree insist on the former because it saves time and energy.

All the teachers (100 %) choose 'no' as the answer to question 8 asking whether they have ever learned or been trained how to score compositions. In this case, the rater reliability may be problematic, as subjectivity (see 2.4.2.) is involved in the process of assessing and may reduce the reliability of the test's results.

Question 8 is a closed-ended followed by an open-ended question (Q9) asking about whether teachers follow the marking instructions or rating scales while marking and if not how they mark. Of the 10 markers (40 %) claim that they follow the marking instructions strictly. 20 % state they follow rating scales basically while marking. The rest say 'no' as they argue that such things as pupils' imagination, handwriting, and use of grammar should be taken into account while marking. When asked if not how they mark, 20 % argue that the marker should take some criteria into consideration: the required length should not be taken account of, the errors caused by inappropriate use of grammatical and lexical items and errors made by carelessness should be treated differently. They also insist on exchanging writing scripts with others teaching in different grades and scoring them by judging the content rather than handwriting.

Part 3 is a section where teachers are asked to propose strategies to improve their pupils' performance in writing. Admittedly, all the respondents agree on extra hours for the teaching and assessing of the writing task, i.e. , where teachers are enabled to correct individually and collectively their pupils' compositions during a particular correction session. 80 % of them insist on reading as a useful basis to improve writing.

3.2.1.2.2   The Interpretation of the Teachers' Responses

The interpretation of the teachers' responses confirms that their pupils misuse grammatical and lexical items, paragraphing, organisation of ideas, spelling mistakes and lack of imagination for a real piece of writing. Therefore, their writing ability remains weak. All the teachers confess that unbalanced unit plan in the textbook New Prospects reduces their role in assessing writing. Indeed, it is practically difficult to understand the contents of the writing activities even with the teacher's help. In this context, Baiche (2008 - 2009) confirms the comments above when he says that: **"the ability to work autonomously is then by concrete evidence almost nil"**. (Baiche, 2008-2009: 167).

Based on the data analysis above, all the teachers assert that they have taught their pupils how to write compositions in their normal classroom instruction. They insist that continuing practice is needed to foster and promote pupils' writing skill. For Q2 asking about whether the content of the written expression task is related to what they have taught, all of them say 'yes'. Pupils can benefit from many aspects such as putting knowledge into practice and realizing English is not only a subject for them at school but a language used for communication. All the markers argue that writing skill is crucial for their pupils.

However, the results show clearly their pupils' failure when they have to write a composition. This is due to their pupils' negative attitudes towards the writing skill and the insufficient time allotted to the teaching and assessing writing. Another main issue is the way of correcting the pupils' compositions. Some teachers devote little importance to corrections because of time. Those who initiate to correct compositions in a correction session, provide some general remarks and impressions. In other words, it is a purely holistic assessment without any focus on the form and the content. They sometimes give much attention to mechanics without any comments on organization, diction, style and other aspects. The pupils themselves do not show any concern to such correction since they do not understand both the teachers' remarks and symbols of the correction code. What makes our pupils neglect the written expression task is the absence of homework. The

majority of teachers do not give remedial works at home mainly because of the heavy programme.

The researcher has also found that rater reliability is problematic due to the fact that all teachers are not trained to score compositions, which reduces the rater reliability. In addition, not all of them follow the marking instructions strictly (question 8) although most of the respondents said they follow the marking instructions and realize that marking written scripts varies from teacher to teacher. In other words, not all of them employ the same criteria while marking, in which case they are marking at high risk of increasing rater unreliability (see 2.4.3.1). The scoring validity is at risk as well, as 20 % of them say they deduct marks because of the criteria mentioned in responses. Furthermore, for the questions in relation to reliability occurred in both questionnaires, the researcher has found that there exist a similarity between the responses received from them.

3. 2. 2 Test papers

Most of EFL teachers find writing a complicated skill to teach, which, more or less, affects the pupils' learning outcomes. Nonetheless, writing stands a problem not only in the composition but open-ended questions and dialogue completion as well. The problems of teaching writing can be found in such questions as how to teach pupils to write, how to give feedback to their test papers, and how to assess these tests. The focus in writing classes is on the form of the written product rather than on how the pupils should approach the process of writing a composition. In general, pupils are asked to write on topics using the structures given in a relevant theme.

The purpose of examining the test papers concerning the composition (see Appendices 3 and 7) is to confirm the pupils' weaknesses in writing, investigate the validity and reliability of the testing and undertake the experiment of an analytic correction. First of all, the researcher has designed two different tests. Both of them are in the form of a baccalaureate exam paper. The first test consists of a reading passage, followed by the text

type, multiple choice questions, ordering sentences as they occur in the reading passage, true / false statements, references questions, matching pairs and a controlled composition. The second test consists of a text, inference questions, gap filling and a free composition. Based on the scores (see the table below), of the 32 pupils in the first test, 24 of them (75 %) have got 10 and above. 8 of them (25 %) got below the average. What is noticeable in the second test, the results are far from satisfying. Only 5 pupils (15.63 %) have bee awarded 10 and above; while, the remaining 27 (84.37 %) have been inconsistent:

	Test 1		Test 2	
Scores	**> 10**	**≤ 10**	**> 10**	**≤ 10**
	08	24	27	05
Percentages	25 %	57 %	84.37 %	15.63 %

Table 3.1:   3rd Year Tests' Results

Based on the results displayed on the table above, the majority of pupils have difficulties to organise their thoughts when paragraphing (test 2). It is advisable to spend much more time on pre-writing tasks. What the researcher also remarks is the involvement of the majority of participants in direct questions. They are good in relating words to visual elements (test 1).

The initial two tests' results demonstrate that many pupils have problems with basic writing skills. They are unable to put their ideas into logical order. Most of their writing lack transition words or a variety of sentence structures. The majority of them misinterpret the writing prompts. Consequently, they have written an incorrect composition. Above all, their writing reveals problems with form and organization. Since many are not familiar with the pre-writing, drafting and revision stages in the writing process, they do not know how to begin to write a composition. Noticing that the pupils had a problem in writing, the researcher has tried to understand what can be accomplished in a classroom setting to encourage better writing. Therefore, he exposes them to a series of tests to identify the weak areas in order to provide an analytic correction to each writing criterion. Indeed, he has   focused on an

an assessment procedure for a valid and reliable correction of his pupils' compositions.

3. 2. 2. 2   The Assessing Procedure

Assessing writing usually refers to assigning a grade to the pupil's composition. Both teachers' responses and evaluations are tools to help pupils improve their writing. Assessment helps teachers decide what the important elements of a writing assignment are. On the other hand, it helps pupils gauge their performance and progress relative to the criteria for each writing assignment.

Assessment is part of a process that begins with the initial design of the course, when the teacher makes decisions about when and why writing assignments will be made. The learning objectives of each assignment will determine how evaluation occurs. Thus, the teacher needs to determine the relative value of each of its elements, or the criteria for assessment. The rankings of these criteria should be made clear to his pupils in an effective prompt.

The researcher has adopted the analytic assessing procedure. The "Analytic" model involves the breaking down of a written composition into components. Each component is assessed separately, i.e. , separate scores for each criterion and then amalgamated with the scores from other components to derive an overall grade. Texts might be rated on such criteria as quality and development of ideas, i.e. , ideas and arguments or relevance and adequacy of **content** , compositional **organisation** , coherence and cohesion **(style)** , wording / phrasing or adequacy of vocabulary for purpose **(diction)** , language use or sentence structure **(grammar**) , mechanical accuracy - punctuation / spelling - **(mechanics)**. (Diederich (1974) , Jacobs (1981) , Weir (1990) , Hamp-Lyons (1995)).

Thus, analytic scoring schemes provide more detailed information about a test taker's performance in different aspects of writing. It offers teachers a potentially valuable tool for providing writers with consistent and direct feedback on separate traits in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

The researcher has explained each step thoroughly before administering the five compositions to his pupils. He has encouraged them to feel free to write without any kind

of stress and has focused on tests ratings for the purpose of text quality. The aim of grading is a constructive feedback to the pupil and the teacher.

3. 2. 2. 3   The Analysis of Compositions

During the period of the research, the pupils have been exposed to five tests: a pre-test (diagnostic assessment), three formative tests (formative assessment) and a post-test (summative assessment). Formative assessment aims to contribute to student learning through provision of information about performance. On the other hand, Summative assessment aims to elicit evidence regarding the amount of knowledge, expertise or ability. An assessment can serve both formative and summative functions. The information from the continuous and ongoing assessment is used to inform pupils about their strengths and limitations in writing and to improve writing instruction. It can also serve primarily summative purposes if the information arising from the writing is used to provide judgment of learning, i.e., reporting to pupils about their performance in writing. In this light, each criterion in the different tests is assessed separately and allotted a separate score. The mark is then amalgamated with scores from other criteria to derive an overall grade on a scoring grid (see Appendix 6).

The participants from 3rd year Literature and Philosophy have gone through five tests: in the pre-test, pupils have been asked to write a composition about 'Ancient Civilizations' to diagnose their level of proficiency in written expression. Whereas each of the three formative tests, pupils have been exposed to teaching and assessing the above-mentioned criteria. In other words, in the first formative test, pupils have been assessed according to relevance and   adequacy of content, compositional   organisation   and paragraphing. In the   second formative test, they have been evaluated according to coherence and cohesion (style) and adequacy of vocabulary (diction). In the third formative test, they have been assessed according to grammar and mechanics. The post-test was

considered as a summative assessment intended to check whether the analytic procedure has been useful or not.

3.2.2.2.1 The Diagnostic Assessment

At the beginning of the research, the teacher has explained the syllabus thoroughly to the participants from 3rd year Literature and Philosophy. He has also shed light on the different writing activities that the textbook comprise. Then, he has administered the diagnostic test. Pupils have been asked to discuss in few lines about the rising and disappearance of civilisations (see Appendix 3) to diagnose their level of proficiency in written expression. What is noticeable, all the pupils under investigation have demonstrated fundamental weaknesses in writing skills. In addition to this, they ignore the nature of mistakes they make. In other words, they can not distinguish between the mistakes related to quality and development of ideas, compositional organisation, coherence and cohesion, adequacy of vocabulary, sentence structure and mechanical accuracy. Being unaware of the writing process, many other mistakes have been recorded among which word order, repetitions, the misuse of auxiliaries, tenses, Arabic structures.

It is, therefore, assumed that the pupils' weakness in the writing task has some causes related to the pupils themselves and others related to the textbook:

Most of them think in Arabic or in French. Consequently, they try to apply Arabic structure to English which doesn't help them at all because this increases the number of mistakes they make. For instance in the first sentence: *appeared in the world many civilisation;* in the third line: *the civilization develop with develop the time*.

Some pupils are not interested in the topic they are asked to write about. As a result, their pieces of writing won't be very successful and they will lack flavour. This mistake has recorded in one of the pupils' papers: *civilization appered and flawrish as a result of due to along seas vally and disapered because wors and ill*.

Other pupils have many interesting ideas but they are ill - equipped to deal with the subject either because they don't know enough vocabulary in English or because their language is distorted. So, the teacher fails to understand their ideas.

Some pupils have a tendency to write too much. They are not conscious of the negative effects of having a long sentence. Indeed, one of the pupils writes: *In the past appeared civilization ancient like Greek civilisation and different civilization for example. chinese and Indus valley. civilization Sumerian and Egyptian.* Many pupils believe that when they write long, complex sentences, they are likely to get a good mark, but they fail to understand that the English style is simple and it requires simple and short sentences.

Many pupils don't revise what they write. As a result, they tend to make "silly" mistakes which could be avoided like in the following instance: *first of all, there is many are civilization appeared in the past.*

Some pupils lack confidence in themselves. So, they feel that writing a composition is a waste of time because they will get a bad mark whatever they write. They also believe that the mark allocated to the productive task is too low.

Many pupils are unwilling to work in pairs mainly because they are shy. Consequently, their chances to improve their level decrease.

The researcher has also noticed from the diagnostic test that the types of writing tasks in the textbook New Prospects are "recognition tasks" because they don't really test the pupils' ability to write. There's no progression in dealing with the writing tasks. It's more logical to start with reordering sentence parts, then reordering sentences in a paragraph, dehydrated sentences, proof reading, then guided writing and writing as a process. This way, the pupils are gradually prepared to write a whole paragraph. The pupils don't feel trained well enough to write a complete composition from beginning to end (lack of vocabulary, no mastery of the language, inability to use linkers properly and so on…). Another main reason

is rooted in the over loaded programme, i.e., teachers feel frustrated and have no chance to practise many writings during the year. The table below displays the summary of the writing criteria for the diagnostic test:

	Characteristics of the writing criteria
Content	Poor knowledge of topic, leading to short compositions with limited development of ideas, elaboration or explanatory detail.
Organisation	Poor organization of the writing with little sense of introduction, development, or conclusion. Little evidence of effective links made between paragraphs.
Diction	Limited use of topic-related vocabulary, reflecting an inadequate range of vocabulary. Some errors in word choice and word form.
Style	No cohesive ties (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical)
Grammar	Sentence construction often over-complex in length, or over-co-ordinated. Frequent errors in agreement, tense, number, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and deletions.
Mechanics	Poor mastery of basic conventions, including frequent spelling errors, and limited use of internal sentence punctuation. Sentence demarcation: initial capitalisation and final full stop largely incorrect.

Table 3. 2: The Summary of the Writing Criteria for the Diagnostic Test

The findings of the analysed criteria show an inability to respond meaningfully to the topic, unfocused, illogical incoherent or disorganized ideas with no relevant support and persistent errors in word choice, mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

Then, the researcher has assessed each writing criterion separately and has allotted a separate score. The table below displays the pupils' results for the diagnostic test.

Criteria Pupils	Content (05)	Organisation (03)	Style (03)	Diction (03)	Grammar (03)	Mechanics (03)	Total /20
01	0.5	00	00	00	01.5	0.5	**02.5**

02	02.5	0.5	01	00	01	01.5	**06.5**
03	04	02	01.5	01	01.5	01	**11**
04	01.5	0.5	01	0.5	0.5	0.5	**04.5**
05	01.5	0.5	0.5	00	00	0.5	**03**
06	03.5	02	01.5	01	0.5	01	**09.5**
07	03	01	01.5	01	0.5	01	**08**
08	01	01	0.5	0.5	0.5	00	**03.5**
09	02	01.5	01	0.5	00	0.5	**05.5**
10	02.5	01	01.5	01	01	0.5	**07**
11	02	01	01	0.5	00	0.5	**05**
12	04	02	02	01	01	01	**11**
13	03	01.5	01.5	0.5	0.5	01	**08**
14	02	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	00	**05.5**
15	02.5	01	0.5	00	00	0.5	**04.5**
16	01.5	0.5	0.5	00	00	00	**02.5**
17	02.5	0.5	01	0.5	0.5	0.5	**05.5**
18	03.5	02	01.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	**08.5**
19	03.5	02	01	0.5	0.5	01	**08.5**
20	02	01	0.5	00	00	0.5	**04**
21	03	01	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	**07.5**
22	04	02	02	01	0.5	01	**10.5**
23	03	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	0.5	**07**
24	02	01	01	0.5	01	0.5	**06**
25	02.5	02	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	**06.5**
26	03	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	01	**07.5**
27	01	0.5	01	0.5	0.5	00	**03.5**
28	01	0.5	0.5	00	0.5	0.5	**03**
29	01	0.5	01	00	0.5	0.5	**03.5**
30	04	02	02	01	01	01	**11**
31	03.5	02	02	01	01	01.5	**11**
32	01	0.5	01	00	0.5	00	**03**

Table 3. 3: The Pupils' Scores for the Diagnostic Test

Based on the scores displayed on the table above, the pupils have demonstrated fundamental weaknesses in the different criteria. For the whole results, the displayed table clarifies how the majority of pupils fail to get the average.

Scores	00 ⟶ 07.99	08 ⟶ 09.99	10 ⟶ 11.99	≤ 12
Pupils	22	05	05	00

Table 3. 4: The Pupils' Total Scores for the Diagnostic Test

Out of the 32 pupils, only five (15.62 %) have been awarded 10 and above. To shed light on the above – mentioned obtained scores, the following tables analyse each criterion in details:

Scores	00	0.5	01	01.5	02	02.5	03	03.5	04	04.5	05
Pupils	00	01	05	03	05	05	05	04	04	00	00

Table 3. 5: The Pupils' Scores for the Diagnostic Test (relevance and adequacy of content)

	Scores	00	0.5	01	01.5	02	02.5	03
P u p l i s	Organisation	01	09	08	05	09	00	00
	Style	01	07	13	07	04	00	00
	Diction	09	14	09	00	00	00	00
	Grammar	06	18	06	02	00	00	00
	Mechanics	05	16	09	02	00	00	00

Table 3. 6: The Pupils' Scores for the Diagnostic Test

(Organisation, style, diction, grammar and mechanics)

The results displayed above show that the criteria have the highest degree of failure to the overall average writing score (> 02.5 for the content and > 01.5 for the rest of the criteria). In other words, the findings reflect that pupils have problems in the adequacy of vocabulary (100 %), grammar (93.75 %), mechanics (93.75 %), style (65.62 %), content (62.50 %) and compositional organisation (56.25 %).

In sum, the researcher has assumed that his pupils have a low achievement in written expression. They do not perform well in an essay-writing course. To help solve such weaknesses, it is then recommended to the teacher to help them write on a regular basis and engage them in an analytic teaching and assessing pieces of writing. In other words, the teacher should provide the writing classroom with a sense of achievement rather than a feeling of frustration. To reach his intermediate aim, the researcher has administered three formative tests intended to increase the pupils' writing ability. Each criterion in the three

tests has a correction code (see Appendix 5).

- The first formative test, pupils were assessed according to relevance and adequacy of content, compositional organisation and paragraphing.
- The second formative test, they were assessed according to grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.
- The third formative test, they were evaluated according to coherence and cohesion (style).

3.2.2.2.2 Formative Test – 1 –

3.2.2.2.2.1 Assessing Relevance and Adequacy of Content

The researcher explains the task to his population. He has administered his first composition about the most important arguments and counterarguments in favour of ethics in business so as to assess both relevance and adequacy of content and paragraphing.

When evaluating the content of such a composition, several criteria have been taken into account:

1. Grades (04 , 04.5 and 05) are awarded for a very well – written composition. It is clear in thought, easily understandable by the reader and also interesting. The pupil does not array from the main subject. The ideas are fresh and the reader gets the answers to all of his / her questions. The content is sometimes surprising and there are details in the arguments and counterarguments that enrich the main idea. The attention of the reader is kept and held till the end.

2. Grades (03 and 03.5) are awarded to a good piece of writing. Some aspects are stronger. The pupils might not respond to the topic with the whole ideas. Poor knowledge of topic, leading to short compositions with limited development of ideas, elaboration or explanatory detail.

3. Grades (02 and 02.5) are awarded to a satisfactory piece of writing. One can see that the pupil tries to explore the subject but manages just to grasp the main ideas in a shallow manner. The key words and structure are hard to detect. The ideas can be clear but shallow. Several aspects remain unclear for the reader and the reader does not get all the answers to his or her questions.

4. Grades (01.5 and below) are awarded to a weak piece of writing. It has no central idea or it is very unclear. To understand the text completely, the reader has to invent details. The piece of writing contains the following problems:

a. The pupil seems to explore the topic, but has not quite decided yet, what the main idea of the text should be.

b. The amount of information is limited or insufficient. The length of the composition is not adequate to the level of the pupil.

c. The written production is rather a list of ideas. It lacks in detail or does not have any details at all.

d. The reader finds it hard to understand the key points of the written production.

e. The text of the composition can be repetitive, unconnected and random array of thoughts with no connecting ideas.

5. No grade is awarded because the piece of writing is totally off – topic and irrelevant, i.e., the answer bears almost no relation to the task set.

In sum, the pupils' answers could be interpreted as highly acceptable (1), i.e., the entire composition stays on topic; the main idea is well – developed and relevant to the task set. They could also be seen as minimally answering the question (2), i.e., the majority of the composition stays on topic; there is an attempt to develop the main idea. There is knowledge of the topic (3), i.e., there is an attempt to address the topic but no main idea. There is also a limited knowledge of the subject (4), i.e., the answer is of limited relevance to the task set. The pupils' answers could be off – topic, i.e., the answer is totally inadequate.

3.2.2.2.2.2   **Assessing Compositional Organisation**

The pupils have been evaluated on the organisation and unity of paragraphs. As far as organisation is concerned, the test papers are scored as follow:

1. Grades (02.5 and 03) are awarded for a composition with an overall shape and its internal pattern is clear. Organizational skills are adequately controlled. In other words, ideas are logically organized and connected with clear transition.

2. Grades (01.5 and 02) are awarded to a piece of writing with some organizational skills in evidence but they are not adequately controlled.

3. Grades (0.5 and 01) are awarded to a very little organization of the content. Structure is not sufficiently controlled.

4. No grade is awarded because there is no apparent organization of the content.

The procedure in allotting a mark to paragraphing is summarised as follows:

1. Grades (02.5 and 03) are awarded for a composition with a clear direction, i.e., introduction, body, conclusion and thesis statement are present.

2. Grades (01.5 and 02) are awarded to a piece of writing with an attempt at introduction, body and conclusion, but no clear thesis statement.

3. Grades (0.5 and 01) are awarded to a composition lacking introduction, body and conclusion but some cohesion at sentence level.

4. No grade is awarded because there is no direction and no cohesion at sentence and paragraph levels.

In sum, the majority of sample compositions have revealed little sense of textual organisation, either at whole text level or at paragraph level. However, a small number of students display a simple textual organization of their compositions. There is an introduction

which presents ethics in business; a body in which the pupils discuss the arguments and counterarguments in favour of ethics in business; and a conclusion which presents the pupils' view point. In the introduction, students have used certain opening clauses e.g. *'There isn't the least doubt that'* and '*No one can deny that'* which were effective beginnings. Organisation at inter and intra paragraph level have been considerably less secure. Despite the pupils sometimes using some linguistic connectives within each paragraph such as *because, but, therefore, as a result, so, finally* to emphasize the relationship between ideas and to establish coherence, there are no links between paragraphs and thus logical sequencing across the text is not apparent. Furthermore, few pupils have used an introductory or topic sentence for a paragraph.

3.2.2.2.3   Formative Test – 2 –

The pupils have also been assessed on grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. Pupils have been exposed to their errors through the analytic scoring grid (see Appendix 6). With the help of the teacher's correction, assistance and feedback, pupils could gradually get rid from the above – mentioned errors.

3.2.2.2.3.1   Assessing Grammar

The pupil would be given a full mark if the composition is devoid from grammatical inaccuracies. There is evidence of superior control of language. The pupil would be awarded half of the mark if there are some grammatical inaccuracies. He would be penalised in case of inaccuracy in all grammatical patterns (see Appendix 5).

3.2.2.2.3.2   Assessing Vocabulary

One key factor when evaluating vocabulary is the amount of words used. The words carry the message and the ideas. The more words in the composition, the more advanced the pupil's vocabulary is. Furthermore, vocabulary somewhat reflects the amount ideas. The pupil might have a

lot of ideas that are not expressed due to lack of vocabulary. The most common reason for making mistakes in words was the intention to use more uncommon words. The pupils' test papers are scored on adequacy of vocabulary as follow:

1. Grades (02.5 and 03) are awarded for a composition with almost no inadequacies in vocabulary; only rare inappropriacies and circumlocution. There is a wide range of vocabulary and no awkward expressions.

2. Grades (01.5 and 02) are awarded to a piece of writing with some inadequacies in vocabulary, some lexical errors, but still comprehensible.

3. Grades (0.5 and 01) are awarded to a composition with frequent lexical inappropriacies, repetition and frequent awkward expressions that impede understanding.

4. No grade is awarded because vocabulary is inadequate, poor word choice, no sentence variety and complexity.

3.2.2.2.3.3   Assessing Mechanics

When evaluating the correct use of language, the researcher categorized the mistakes into: a) spelling mistakes; b) punctuation mistakes; c) capital letter mistakes.

Pupils have had worse punctuation results mostly because they have used more complex sentence structure and more compound sentences. Furthermore, the amount of mistakes is not connected with the type of text. Therefore, one can teach it independently without using a text. On the other hand, spelling mistakes are not as common as punctuation mistakes. So when we talk about the poor writing skills of pupils, we should talk about poor punctuation. Spelling mistakes were vaguely connected with the overall amount of words and the grade for the content. A pupil could have more words in total and fewer words mispelt than a pupil who did not write as many words. The richer the content and the more words the pupil writes, the fewer spelling mistakes. One can always hope that every pupil

would write without mistakes, but that is unfair towards them. They must be encouraged to look up words in dictionaries and other materials.

The procedure in allotting a mark to punctuation, capitalization and spelling is summarised as follows:

1. Grades (02.5 and 03) are awarded for a composition with almost no inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling.

2. Grades (01.5 and 02) are awarded to a piece of writing with some inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling.

3. Grades (0.5 and 01) are awarded to a composition with low standard of accuracy in punctuation and spelling.

4. No grade is awarded because of the ignorance of conventions of punctuation and inaccurate spelling.

3.2.2.2.4   Formative Test – 3 –   (Assessing Style)

To implement style assessment for learning in the writing classroom, the researcher focused on assessing coherence and cohesion. Coherence refers to overall semantic

structure unity of text. It comprises the development of ideas orderly, continuity and consistency of facts with reference to the previous ideas and relevance to new ones. Cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the linking relationship that is explicitly expressed in the surface structure of the text. It is achieved by the use of variety of lexical and grammatical items within sentences in the text. Learning how to use cohesive ties (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical) adds a facet to the general coherence of writing. The procedure in allotting a mark to style is summarised as follows:

1. Grades (02.5 and 03) are awarded for a composition with satisfactory use of cohesion resulting in effective communication.

2. Grades (01.5 and 02) are awarded to a satisfactory piece of writing although occasional cohesive deficiencies.

3. Grades (0.5 and 01) are awarded to a composition with unsatisfactory cohesion which may cause difficulty in comprehension of most of the intended communication.

4. No grade is awarded because of the total absence of cohesion. Writing became fragmentary.

3.2.2.2.5   The Summative Assessment

At the end of the research, the teacher has administered the post – test. Pupils have been asked to write a composition about the Algerian Educational System (see Appendix 7) to check the credibility of the hypothesis. What is noticeable, all the pupils have become accustomed to the process of writing. They have also eradicated their negative attitude towards composing through analytic scoring scale. What is more, they have demonstrated a fundamental improvement in writing a composition. In addition to this, they have become aware of the nature of mistakes they made. In other words, they could distinguish between the mistakes related to coherence, organisation, diction, style, sentence structure

and mechanical accuracy.   Being aware of the writing process, many of them start to ask for correction and remedies after each writing production. Moreover, their scores have improved greatly.

The table below displays the 3rd year Literature and Philosophy pupils' summary of the writing criteria for the post – test:

	Characteristics of the writing criteria
Content	Good knowledge of topic, leading to long compositions with development of ideas, elaboration or explanatory detail.
Organisation	There is an overall shape, a clear internal pattern and cohesion at sentence and composition levels.
Diction	Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare

	inappropriacies and circumlocution.	
Style	A satisfactory piece of writing although occasional cohesive deficiencies.	
Grammar	Evidence of control of language although some grammatical inaccuracies.	
Mechanics	Some inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling.	

Table 3. 7: The Summary of the Writing Criteria for the Post – Test

The findings of the analysed criteria show that the pupils have managed to write at least average compositions. They are now able to respond meaningfully to the topic. They have started to develop logical organized ideas with correct sentence structure.

Then, the researcher used the scoring grid to assess each writing criterion separately and allotted a separate mark. The table below displays the pupils' results for the post – test:

Criteria / Pupils	Content (05)	Organisation (03)	Style (03)	Diction (03)	Grammar (03)	Mechanics (03)	Total /20
01	01.5	01	01	0.5	01	01	06
02	03.5	01	01.5	01	01.5	01.5	10
03	04	02.5	02	01.5	02	01	13
04	02	01	01.5	01	01	01	07.5
05	01.5	01	01	0.5	01	01	06
06	04	02	02	01.5	01.5	01	12
07	03.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	11
08	01.5	01.5	01	01	0.5	0.5	06
09	03	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01	10
10	03	01.5	01.5	01.5	01	01.5	10
11	02	01.5	01	01	01	01	07.5
12	04	02	02.5	02	01	01.5	13
13	03.5	01.5	01.5	01	01.5	01.5	10.5
14	02	01.5	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	07
15	02	01	01.5	01	0.5	0.5	06.5
16	02	01	0.5	01	0.5	01	06
17	02.5	01.5	01.5	01	01	01	10
18	03.5	02	01.5	01	01	01	10
19	03.5	02	01	01.5	01	01	10
20	02	01.5	01	01	01	0.5	07
21	03	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	10.5
22	04	02.5	02	01.5	01.5	0.5	12
23	03.5	02	01.5	01	01	01	10
24	02.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	10

25	02.5	02	01	01	01.5	0.5	**08.5**
26	03	01.5	01.5	01.5	01.5	01	**10**
27	02	01	01	01	0.5	0.5	**06**
28	02	01	01	01	0.5	01	**06.5**
29	01.5	01	01.5	01	0.5	01	**06.5**
30	04	02	02	01.5	01.5	01.5	**12.5**
31	03.5	02	02	01.5	01.5	01.5	**12**
32	01.5	01	01	0.5	01	01	**06**

Table 3. 8: The Pupils' Scores for the Post –Test

Based on the scores displayed on the table above, the pupils have managed to overcome their weaknesses in the different criteria and have succeeded to write at least an average composition. For the whole results, the displayed table clarifies the total scores for the post – test.

Scores	00 ⟶ 07.99	08 ⟶ 09.99	10 ⟶ 11.99	≤ 12
Pupils	13	01	12	06

Table 3. 9: The Pupils' Total Scores for the Post – Test

Out of the 32 pupils, eighteen (56.25 %) have been awarded 10 and above. To shed light on the above – mentioned obtained scores, the following tables analyse each criterion in details:

Scores	00	0.5	01	01.5	02	02.5	03	03.5	04	04.5	05
Pupils	00	00	00	05	08	03	04	07	05	00	00

Table 3. 10: The Pupils' Scores for the Post –Test (relevance and adequacy of content)

	Scores	00	0.5	01	01.5	02	02.5	03
P u p l i s	Organisation	00	00	10	12	08	02	00
	Style	00	01	10	15	05	01	00
	Diction	00	03	16	12	01	00	00
	Grammar	00	07	11	12	02	00	00
	Mechanics	00	07	15	10	00	00	00

Table 3. 11: The Pupils' Scores for the Post – Test

(Organisation, style, diction, grammar and mechanics)

The rating of the post – test writing papers have yielded positive results based on the analytic scoring scale (Weir, 1990). In other words, the findings (≤ 01.5) reflect that the pupils' level has improved, i.e., compositional organisation (68.75 %), style (65.62 %), content (59.37 %), grammar (43.75 %), the adequacy of vocabulary (40.62 %), grammar (43.75 %), mechanics (31.25 %).

3.3   Summaries of the Findings

First of all, the researcher has made an analysis of the numerical data obtained from the closed – ended and open – ended questions in both the questionnaires addressed to pupils and teachers as "**most questionnaires are designed to be evaluated numerically, and are amendable to fairly simple counting techniques",** (McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 178). As for the eleven questions answered by pupils and teachers, the researcher has classified the answers to each question in order to extract information concerning the research questions, i.e., he has checked how many types of answer have been given to the same question to prove or disapprove the two research questions.

Secondly, the test papers regarding written expression with respect to 3rd Year Literature and Philosophy pupils of Bab El Assa Secondary School have been analyzed for the main purpose of investigating the efficiency of the analytic scoring scale. In addition, the researcher has examined the different criteria regarding writing assessment as well as the selected compositions from the English textbook <u>New Prospects</u>.

Thirdly, the researcher has moved to the assessed compositions and compared the grades of the five tests. At the start of the study, in the diagnostic test, all the pupils have shared common difficulties. Their compositions tend to be very short, often a single paragraph, and thus undeveloped. They comprise a few sentences, and revealed pupils struggling to articulate basic ideas about the topic. It is worth noting that there is an inability

to sustain and develop the main idea. The vocabulary used in the compositions has been heavily reliant on vocabulary items introduced in the title. It is evident that pupils had only

a limited vocabulary repertoire which has matched the topic of the composition. This lack of topic-related vocabulary has hindered the ability of the pupil in articulating his or her ideas. There is a tendency to produce over-long sentences, creating sentences with too many ideas per sentence. One cause of these long sentences has been excessive chaining of ideas through simple co-ordination, particularly '*and*' or '*but*'. More surprisingly, the compositions have shown numerous incidences of grammatical and spelling errors. Omitted verbs, subject-verb disagreements, and spellings reliant on phonic reproduction of English sounds are common. The majority of pupils are generally unaware of how to demarcate sentences correctly with an initial capitalisation and a terminating full stop. What is more, there has been very limited use of internal sentence punctuation such as the comma or the semi-colon.

Lastly, the researcher has employed the analytic assessing procedure in both formative tests and summative assessment to study how helpful and useful as expected it should be and is in practice. More than half of the pupils have written longer pieces, have introduced more ideas and have made a better attempt at arguing a case. Some of them have demonstrated basic mastery of sentence constructions. Control of sentence structure has been generally secure.

It is worth noting that the rhetorical components (content and organization) led to relatively higher score reliability than did the four linguistic criteria (style, diction, grammar and mechanics). In sum, contrary to the hypothesis that holistic scoring scale which is inefficient and unreliable, a higher level of score reliability and validity has been achieved when the compositions have been marked analytically. One possible explanation for the relatively higher score reliability for analytic rating is that the teacher has relied on assessing thoroughly the six criteria.

3.4 **Conclusion**

The findings of this chapter favour the analytic assessment over the holistic scoring. The results of the tools are clear answers that the use of the analytic scoring scale can provide pupils and teachers with valuable information to improve the validity of the interpretations and fairness of decisions based on composition scores. As the researcher expected, the findings suggest that the analytic scale results in higher score reliability despite the lack of rater training. Seemingly, the analytic assessment is a consistent remedy as it provides pupils with the opportunity to assess and correct their errors.

Another conclusion we can draw is that some pupils still meet problems in writing. This failure is partly linked to general malaise in teaching and learning. In addition, there seems to be several contradictions between the objectives officially stated and how teaching is actually performed. Neither the approach nor the teachers' methodologies really favour the teaching of writing. In order to be more objective, such observations have to be analyzed and the results interpreted. Pupils are offered neither suitable learning conditions nor sufficient time for acquiring adequate knowledge. If such conditions were available, pupils' learning would be fostered and their performance improved. Low achievement in writing may be due to many causes such as the lack of correlation between teaching objectives, classroom practices and holistic evaluation norms. Besides the inadequacy of teacher training programmes, learners' dependence on the teacher represents another handicap which is another topic that deserves further research.

It is then the teachers' responsibility to draw learners' attention on the importance of writing in English. Therefore, chapter four proceeds to give some recommendations and suggestions related to the writing process and writing assessment, i.e., an

attempt to realize an effective writing teaching and assessment through testing and scoring guidelines.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. **Diagnostic test** is designed to provide information about L2 learners' strengths and weaknesses. It may be used to find out how much L2 learners know before beginning a language course to better provide an efficient and effective course of instruction.

2. **Feedback** refers to comments or other information that learners receive concerning their success on leaning tasks or tests, either from the teacher or other people.

3. **Formative test** is given during a course of instruction. It informs both the learner and the teacher how well the learner is doing. A formative test includes only topics that have been taught, and shows whether the learner needs extra work or attention. It is usually a pass or fail test.

4. **Summative test** is given at the end of a course of instruction. It measures or sums up how much a learner has learned from the course. A summative test is usually a graded test, i.e., it is marked according to a scale or set of grades.

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CHAPTER FOUR

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1   Introduction

Despite the use of several assessing methods in the "teaching – learning" process, the field of writing assessment is still a problematic.

In assessing EFL composition, analytic rating has proved to provide more consistent and efficient results as it separates and weights different features of the pupils' performance on a writing task and assigns separate scores to each feature. Therefore, it provides them with feedback and useful diagnostic information about their writing abilities. The effectiveness of such an assessment is highly dependent upon the classroom teacher who is in charge of planning, directing and assessing procedures and techniques in the classroom writing instruction.

The present chapter will propose some recommendations and suggestions which may help pupils overcome the difficulties they encounter in written expression. It calls for an attempt to realize an effective writing teaching and assessment through testing and scoring guidelines. This chapter will be divided into three main parts. The first part will be concerned with pedagogical implications. The second part suggests some remedies to the existing hardships related to the writing process. This part will endeavour to recommend adequate ways to teach pre-writing and while-writing strategies. The third part will propose the analytic scoring scheme, criteria and procedures to improve the writing effectiveness and bring positive change in the teaching – learning of the writing skill.

4.2 Guidelines for Teachers

4.2.1 Teacher's Role

The role of the teacher is seen as highly significant the implementation of change. One of the things teachers need to modify is their deadly routinized way of teaching. If teachers want to act as effective agents of change based on their own self-evaluation, self-improvement and self-introspective skills, they need to be well-trained and prepared to exercise control over their teaching and to critically question educational reforms.

Paradoxically, many teachers in our educational institutions are so focused on teaching that they do not have time to notice if their pupils are learning. In this respect, collaborative development is necessary to keep the process of reflection open to critical comments and improve teaching effectiveness. Collaborative development is of paramount importance to novice teachers who can benefit from the experiences and insights of well-formed and well-trained teachers.

Turning to the practical side of the organisation of teacher education development sessions, these should be envisaged as meetings of groups of colleagues working in the same institution (intra-group sessions) or in different institutions (inter-group sessions).

From the managerial standpoint, teacher education development sessions should be scheduled on the teacher's timetable, specifying term calendar, dates and frequency of meetings, so that they become integral part of the teacher's professional duties. Indeed, some aspects of this approach are more fruitful and insightful when placed under the supervision of a monitor (a coordinator issued by the General Inspectorate of English -1992-).

Though, at present the learning / teaching process is deemed to be learner-centred, the teacher still remains the pivotal element in the whole process. In this very specific context, it

is worth remembering the motto-like teaching process; a teacher is a P.L.E.F.T.E.R., put forward by the General Inspectorate of English to specify teacher's role specifications. The acronym P.L.E.F.T.E.R. (Hamzat El Wasl, 1980) stands for the following:

- **P**lanner, i.e., the teacher sees planning and structuring of learning activities as fundamental to success in teaching and learning.
- **L**inguistic model, i.e., the model learners should imitate.
- **E**valuator, i.e., the teacher assesses the learners' progress.
- **F**acilitator, i.e., the teacher simplifies the learning process.
- **T**eam member, i.e., the teacher takes part in cooperative activities and team work.
- **E**ducator, i.e., the teacher serves as an example suitable for imitation.
- **R**esearcher, i.e., the teacher is expected to keep up with the latest development in the field of language learning.

However, this account reflects partially what the teacher, as a practitioner and researcher, ought to do with respect to the requirements of the teaching profession. More importantly, the teacher should account for the specifities of the teaching situation. The teacher is in a better position to know what his pupils need, what their interests are, and what should be done to adjust these needs and interests to the requirements of the school curriculum.

Interestingly, and perhaps contrary to common sense, some teachers have touched on a striking phenomenon that has turned to become commonplace in many schools: to offer extra remedial lessons to the pupils. Such an endeavour is worth praising, and deserves encouragement and support if it carries out on a regular basis, and officially scheduled on the teacher's time-table. Unfortunately, it interests only those who have the financial means and can therefore afford such a compensatory teaching.

Another factor is part of the teacher's duties, is the feedback learners receive from the teacher on their performance. Feedback can be either positive or negative: positive feedback

is performed with a variety of strategies such as acknowledging a correct answer, indicating an incorrect answer, praising and encouraging, expanding and modifying a pupil's answer and repeating. It is common knowledge that these strategies are very dependent on the experiences the teacher brings and the ingenuity and empathy with which he approaches pupils. They often dispose pupils with negative personality traits to overcome their fear, anxiety, timidity and shyness and thus place them at the same pace as the other learners. Another way of great supportive effect is the cooperative effort and sympathetic atmosphere that can lead reluctant pupils to look forward to English lessons, which, in turn, help establish friendly contacts with the English language environment. Our teachers need to understand that action research can play a major role in giving a renewed sense of purpose; our learners need to be handled with care so that they can play their part fully.

In the same line of thought, according to Mahili (1994) the issue of pupils' indiscipline can be traced to the parents' role and the nature of relationship they hold with their off-springs. Parents often exaggeratedly spoil their kids; this excessive affection and indulgence, leads to indiscipline. Needless to say, this problem is alarmingly increasing, and consequently many teachers have lost their enthusiasm, and spend more time and energy dealing with behaviour management rather than actual teaching. Teachers must realise their responsibilities and fulfil their duties so as pupils consider their conduct worthy of emulation. Parents should not overindulge them to the extent that their children devalue moral conduct, humility and civility and become unrestrained.

Looking forward to the changes of the twenty-first century, one wonders what professional qualities will be needed for successful and skilful teaching. Of particular interest among the traditional qualities are flexibility and creativity. Our rapidly changing society requires flexibility, the ability to adapt oneself to new ideas and experiences. Teachers should work together to gain the benefit of one another's experiences and insights. Next, creativity, the capacity to create in an imaginative way processes and schemes, is a

cardinal attribute by which professional competence can be developed and improved further. Just as these attributes of character are desirable today, so in the future they will surely continue to be decisive in determining skilled teaching.

4.2.2 Teachers' Training

Taking the findings and results into consideration, the researcher proposes some recommendations for the purpose of overcoming the weaknesses of teaching writing:

What is the most problematic about the testing of the writing skill, is that almost all of the teachers are not trained how to mark papers in a writing test today, which therefore is within the bounds of possibility that the rater reliability is undermined. In this case, training teachers is of great importance. Although the secondary school teachers are very busy with their teaching every day, for the sake of giving their pupils a reliable and fair test results, the Ministry of Education should take the responsibility for training the teachers. According to Alderson (1995), the procedures of training teachers of writing comprise "**designing the rating scale, setting the standard and finally holding the standardization meeting**". (Alderson, 1995: 111). In this light, the Ministry of Education should improve the marking instructions so as to reach high scoring validity. After revising the marking instructions, there an official document demonstrates that all the teachers must follow the marking instructions, and sharing similar criteria while marking, i.e., teachers have to be consistent with themselves, which could contribute to the intra – rater reliability.

4.3 Proposals to Teach Writing in the Textbook <u>New Prospects</u>

The main business of most writing classes is to help pupils become more confident and proficient writers. Most writing teachers emphasize learning to write appropriately for a variety of purposes to a variety of audiences in a variety of situations. Writing instruction has been matured into a process that is able to accommodate pupils' need to plan, brainstorm, seek feedback, and revise their work. Most importantly, a few key determinants of producing quality writers stand out, including teaching pupils how to plan for writing (via pre-writing), to combine sentences, and to engage in the process of inquiry as they learn to

write. Teaching pupils to use one or two stages of the writing process enhances their writing abilities significantly. Thus, a compelling rationale for using the writing process as a method

of instruction in all classrooms is provided and in so doing, helping our pupils develop the skill they need to communicate for the future.

Writing is a process that is made up of several different elements: Invention (Pre-Writing), Organization, Writing, Revising, and Editing. However, these elements overlap with one another; they aren't separate stages. Successful writers are constantly going through these different elements. Skilful writers continually remind themselves of this process, and they constantly monitor their writing, re-engaging themselves with their work. When we speak of the writing process, we are talking of the writer's unconscious and conscious creativity and the process that writing textbooks generally define structurally. This process is often treated as a linear one that, if followed step by step, will lead to a successfully written product.

According to Weigle (2002), the whole writing process can be divided into the prewriting, writing, and rewriting or revising phases. In the **pre − writing** phase, pupils might try to clarify:

- what they want to write about
- how they think and feel about their topic
- how they want to approach their topic
- what other materials and notes they might need
- how to organize these materials
- what kind of audience they are writing for

Pupils plan the content and organization of their paper during this first phase. In the **writing** phase, they implement their plan, working out the details and fine-tuning their

thoughts. In **rewriting** or **revising**, they review what they have written and consider how and where their writing can be improved.

4.3.1   Pre – Writing Strategies

The pre – writing phase consists of generating the topic of the composition, generating specific details for the composition, organizing the composition and determining the purpose of writing and who the audience is, i.e., pupils brainstorm to generate ideas for writing.

Charts, graphics and web stories may help develop a word list for writing, decide the type of writing, audience and determine the purpose for writing.

The purpose of pre – writing is to generate notes that will give pupils some strategies for writing their first draft. For most pupils, starting a draft, without the results of the pre – writing phase, leads to poorly constructed writing. Prewriting is not an isolated event, but the way to look ahead to drafting and revising, enables any piece of writing to grow. It is also a systematic thinking process that helps pupils probe what they will write. Besides this, it uses some techniques to determine what rhetorical approach to take and how to plan for implementing it. Planning enables them to explore a topic from different perspectives, engage their imagination and creativity and discover original ideas.

The writing task begins when pupils receive their writing assignment from their teacher. The first step is to make sure they understand the assignment. To do this, Weigle (2002) has recommended them to review the requirements of the assignment. The requirements might be stated as a short essay question. According to him, to understand the writing task, we should ask and answer the following kinds of questions:

- What type of assignment is this?
- What is its purpose?
- Who is the audience for this assignment?

- How will the assignment be evaluated?
- What are my goals in undertaking the assignment?

Answering the last question is important because it determines the level of effort we put into the writing task. However, not all writing projects warrant the same level of effort. Pupils may ask their teacher for clarification if they are not sure of the importance of individual assignments. Some directive wording can help our pupils understand their writing assignment and decide what approach to take to write it such as *define*, *list*, *order*, *arrange*, *describe* ,*classify*, *summarise*, *use*, *compare,* and soon.

No matter what the writing task, pupils should target an audience for their writing assignment. Many pupils assume that the teacher is the primary audience for any piece of writing. Although he may be their audience for a composition, he or she may also expect them to write for their classmates. In addition to this, they need to understand their purpose writing. Purpose bridges the gap between audience and content. It includes what the teacher intends to accomplish in the writing and how he / she wants the reader to use the information. The teacher sometimes plays the role of a guide especially when developing an audience profile, i.e., what questions to ask to get the necessary information to profile your audience and how this information affects your planning and writing decisions. For example, the audience profile will tell you the following:

- how much information to convey.
- what kinds of details to include.
- how much time to spend in writing
- what writing strategies to use
- how to organize pupils' information
- what words and style to use to communicate with the audience.

In sum, pre – writing activities join the pupils in thinking, speaking and working on the topic assigned. In other words, its goal is to determine the scope of pupils' writing task and prepare to write their first draft.

4.3.1.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming means coming up with ideas of how to approach a topic. Set a time limit and write down in list form every word or phrase that comes to you about the composition topic. The

teacher in such a task acts as a facilitator and jots down all the ideas on the board so as to enable his pupils concentrate on the content. Brainstorming enables pupils to find ideas that may be submerged in the mind, memory, and intuition. It's a form of free association in writing to stimulate a chain of ideas, a technique that teaches them how to think in writing. Pupils can brainstorm with others or by themselves. When they brainstorm, they create a list of ideas and associations to help them think through their topic. In brainstorming, pupils can follow some strategies:

- Set a specific time limit, suspend any critical mind that edits ideas and write without criticizing what you write for the entire time you set. Just keep writing until your time is up.
- Use plenty of space in which to write so you don't run out of space before you run out of ideas. Using writing implements such as colours sometimes opens up your creative thinking and stimulates ideas.
- Select a word, phrase, or idea. When you are ready to begin, set your time and write down everything that occurs to you for that word, phrase, or idea.
- Write everything down immediately without judging its worth because ideas will come rapidly.

When your time is up, take a break from your brainstorming for a few minutes. When you return to your list, circle the ideas or phrases that interest you. This preliminary list can give you key phrases, words, and ideas. The more you brainstorm, the merrier material you will generate for your writer's mind. You can then consciously begin organizing your ideas. You can even try free writing (see 4.3.1.2) to form some good ideas for your assignment. What is more is that brainstorming brings knowledge, memory, and creativity to your writing assignment.

The following example taken from <u>New Prospects</u> text book illustrates better what brainstorming is. The pupils are asked to write about the Algerian Revolution War.

- The teacher asks for the help of his colleague, the teacher of History, to tell them briefly the topic above in Arabic language.

- He can ask if someone in the classroom remembers what the teacher was speaking about.

- Then, he asks his pupils to write down notes of ideas which the discussion will generate later on. Time is suggested, for instance, as ten minutes for this step.

- The teacher chooses a sample and considers the circumstances associated with time, scene, events, battles, martyrs, and so on.

- Once again, they can exchange their notes with each other.

4.3.1.2 Free writing

Free writing is a term used to describe what is essentially free-association writing, where the writer starts in one direction or another but lets the writing take whatever direction it seems to want. Free writing involves jotting down on paper all of the ideas pupils have on a particular topic before they even begin to read about it. Like brainstorming, free writing taps into pupils inner resources to find their individual knowledge, memory and intuition. To begin free writing, choose a set time for the activity, such as 10 or 15 minutes. Pupils can select a sentence or idea from their brainstorming session and write that sentence at the top of the page. They ought to begin writing and don't evaluate what they are writing. They should not worry about errors caused by either inappropriate use of grammatical and lexical items or mechanical inaccuracies. Pupils' goal is to think in writing about their topic. They can also use some kind of framework for this process to be more productive. For instance, they can ask themselves the questions below about the topic and answer them:

- What interests me about this topic?

- What do I already know about this topic?

- Where can I get more information on this topic?

In sum, directions for free writing are simple and pupils usually do it easily the first time they try. In the following example taken from (Theme one, <u>New Prospects</u>, page 17), pupils have been asked to complete the dialogue from what they have heard from a radio interview about ancient civilizations.

- The teacher asks them to write fast for a limited period of time (five or ten minutes).
- He tells them not to stop moving their pens to make sure new words help generate ideas.
- He also encourages them to write for the whole time period since good ideas often come late in the writing process.
- He advises his pupils not to worry about spelling, punctuation, organization, or style since they are the audience.

4.3.1.3 Clustering

Clustering is a type of pre – writing that allows pupils to explore many ideas as soon as they occur to them. It allows them to begin without clear ideas. To begin to cluster, choose a word that is central to their assignment. For example, if pupils were writing about the value of education, they might choose the word "expectations" and write that word in the middle of their sheet of paper. Circle it and write words all around it, circle each word and connect new words to previous ones with lines. When you feel you have exhausted a particular avenue of associations, go back to your central word and begin again. Clustering does not take the place of a linear, traditional outline; but, it allows pupils to explore ideas before committing them to a particular order. For instance, in (Theme one, <u>New Prospects</u>, page 16), it is advisable that teachers circle the phrase 'the wheel of Ancient Civilizations' on the board, then asks his / her pupils to say all what comes to their mind. He / she could encourage responses from his / her pupils. After that, the teacher groups responses on the

board in the form of a map with a number of subtopics originated from the central phrase. Once the map is complete, a class discussion will decide the best order and which points will be suitable for the written production.

4.3.1.4 Journalistic Technique

Journalists have six important questions they need to answer about any story they report: who, what, when, where, why, and how. By answering these questions, journalists can be certain that they have provided the most important information about an event, issue, or problem to their readers.

Keeping a journal in written expression can help pupils connect various pieces of information. It is a place for them to think and to learn. The journal is seen as an opportunity to explore, to experiment, or to imagine unique ways of approaching writing assignments.

The journal is a place in which pupils can write and feel safe doing so. No one need see it unless they want to share it with a larger audience. It will rarely contain finished pieces. Later it may become the source for more formal writing assignments.

By sharing a journal with the teacher, the pupils will make him aware of any success or failure they encounter. Journals are not graded. They aim at developing speed and fluency. Pupils feel free from the pressure of grades. Through journal writing, pupils are given an opportunity to explore, develop and communicate their ideas. Journal writing is a stimulating activity where the pupils can criticize and give opinions about teaching. In sum, the journal can be a place to stow away ideas for future creative writing assignments.

4.3.1.5 Reading

The reading and writing processes are related to each other. Hirvela (2004) points out **"One of the best ways to improve writing is to improve reading, and vice versa"**, (Hirvela, 2004: 11). They should be taught together as a combination of skills that can increase learning in all areas. In brief, the ability of the language learners to express themselves extensively in their own words can be obtained from what they read. The more

they read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idiom, sentence patterns, organisational flow, and cultural assumptions of native speakers of the language. In other words, writers learn the rhetoric of the language and writing styles through reading, i.e., a writing style does not come from actual writing experience, but from reading. Reading

fosters critical thinking and leads towards developing ideas for their own compositions. To write a composition based on reading, pupils may develop a deeper understanding of the reading passage and help learn other techniques of quoting, summarizing, paragraphing, expanding ideas and debating.

For example, the teacher can take the text of the reading skill from (Theme two, <u>New Prospects</u>, pages 54-55) as a modal to write a composition about counterfeiting. Pupils can relate what they have read to real life in Algeria. In writing what they have read, they can discuss the journalist' idea "Necessity knows no law" and react to this idea by agreeing or disagreeing.

4.3.2   While – Writing Strategies

To describe the pupils' writing process is to ensure the steps that they ordinarily follow when writing a composition. How do they get started? Do they write several drafts or just one? If they revise, what sort of things do they look for and what sort of changes do they tend to make? How do they edit and proofread, and what types of errors do they most often find?

4.3.2.1 Planning an outline

Outlining is just another way to organize pupils' ideas and can be used at every stage of the writing process. Outlining may be informal and formal. An informal outline represents a scratch list of points they want to make. Ideas are simply jotted down in an order that appears to make sense to the pupil in thinking about the topic. A formal outline, on the other hand, may contain complete sentences that expand the major and minor supporting statements for the clearly delineated thesis statement. To summarize, outlining can help pupils plan and manage their writing assignment in several ways:

- It helps them organize information.
- It facilitates sharing information with their peers and their teacher to see if they are on the right track.
- It helps them to think in writing as they are deciding what to say for their first draft.

4.3.2.2 Peer Writing Groups

In most process-writing classes, a small group of pupils regularly meet in class to share their writing with each other and help each other advance their writing through helpful discussion and positive suggestions. Such peer writing groups may vary in size from three to five pupils each, depending on class size, length of class meeting and instructor intention.

4.3.2.3 Drafting

Writing is a complex process subject to drafting, revising, editing, and review. These techniques are used for improving composition writing.

Drafting is a term that describes the stage where the writer really starts writing. The teacher allots some time for his pupils to work on drafts in class which is a supportive environment. We always expect early drafts to be rough. When we read them we attend to larger intentions (topic, organization, evidence) and skip over surface problems (spelling, punctuation, wordiness). To begin the first draft, pupils will find themselves cycling through some basic activities such as interpreting their notes and organizing their ideas. Some of them may go back to the pre-writing to generate more ideas or read for more information.

- The first draft is the initial attempt to organize their thoughts in writing. It is more complete than an outline where they can elaborate their ideas in complete sentences and paragraphs. Pupils disregard spelling, punctuation, and grammar, which are writing mechanics. In this draft, they may focus on getting their ideas (content) down in a way that reflects their outline.

- The second draft is written for the purpose of being reviewed by the classmates and

then handled to the teacher. Pupils can discover ways to improve their content and decide to move, delete, or add. In other words, second drafting is another way refining pupils' ideas.

4.3.2.4 Feedback

There is a close relationship between drafting a piece of writing and revising what pupils write. If they have received feedback from their peers about this draft, the first thing they will want to do before revising is to evaluate these comments. Not all comments will be equally relevant or valuable. Some would say your writing is perfect; while, others seem overly critical in unproductive ways. Pupils should only those that will improve their writing. Special attention is given to any comments they might have received from their teacher.

Pupils seek feedback to begin the revising process. They can get feedback from others on whether what they have written is suitable. Although many pupils are reluctant to take the time to get feedback, getting an objective opinion about their draft gives them valuable information they can use in revision. A way to get valuable feedback is to give their teacher or classmates a checklist of items they particularly want feedback on. The checklist may be in planning, organizing and revising:

- Is sufficient information provided?
- Is the general idea sufficiently developed?
- Does the conclusion return to the general idea and review the major ideas?
- Does the format of the composition promote clear understanding?
- Are there mechanical errors the pupil should correct?

4.3.2.5 Revising

Revision is conceptual work, i.e., how ideas are organized, how an argument works, whether it's well supported and what to include and exclude from a composition. During and

after their writing, pupils should check to see what needs to be added, deleted, or rearranged. They also need to check your organization, focus, and purpose.

The revision stage comprises adding, rearranging, removing and replacing. In the first stage, pupils need to look for ideas they didn't use, areas they could expand on and what the reader needs to know. In the second stage, pupils' piece of writing may need rearranging, i.e, such arguments would flow better if they reordered their paragraphs. In the third stage, one of the ideas may seem irrelevant and should be removed. In the last stage, to bring the piece of writing to life, pupils need stronger examples and quotations to support their arguments, i.e., if an idea isn't working, they try to rewrite it.

4.3.2.5 Editing

Editing is primarily sentence level work. Pupils need to make sure that their ideas are articulated clearly, precisely, and correctly for a given audience. It requires that they perform a more complex check of their composition, evaluating its content, organization, stylistic effectiveness, grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and appropriate documentation conventions. In other words, pupils review systematically certain features of their writing:

Content: Is pupils' information complete and appropriate?

Organization: Did they order their information logically?

                     Did they provide transitions indicating that order?

Style: Is the style consistent?

                     Do the sentences flow effectively?

                     Did they use accurate vocabulary and appropriate diction?

                     Are the mechanics correct?

When editing, pupils should go through their composition line by line, and make sure that each sentence, phrase and word is as strong as possible. They need to check whether they have used the same word too many times, whether any of the sentences are hard to understand, which words they could cut to make a sentence stronger, whether sentences are

grammatically correct, whether everything is spelt correctly and whether they have used punctuation marks correctly. The table below displays some guidelines for editing and revising:

	Guidelines
Mechanics	1. Sufficient and accurate punctuation. 2. Correct spelling
Style	1. Word precision 2. Wordiness 3. Omitted words 4. Nominalization: use of nouns where a verb would be better 5. Level of formality of words -- consistency 6. Redundancy 7. Sentence patterns 8. Sentence length
Structure	1. An overall pattern of organization or structure 2. Devices to indicate structure: indentations, spacing 3. Pronoun agreement 4. Verb agreement

Table 4.1: Guidelines for Editing and Revising a Composition

In sum, editing is the process of recognizing and identifying problems in the writing. Revising is the process of changing the items to produce clearer and more effective writing.

4.4   Suggestions to Assess Writing in the Textbook <u>New Prospects</u>

Assessing any piece of writing requires discipline, patience, and self-examination of every stage of the writing process using a selected list of criteria. Huot (1990) asserts that analytic scoring is one of the main procedures for directly assessing writing ability.

4.4.1   The Analytic Scoring Scale

Analytic rating scale has been used to assess pupils' writing abilities. It separates and weights different criteria of the pupils' performance on a writing task and assigns separate scores to each criterion. The major advantage of analytic rating is to give pupils feedback

and provide useful diagnostic information about their writing abilities. The results of rating one scale may influence the rating of another.

Raters tend to value some components including both rhetorical features such as content or organization and linguistic features such as grammar and mechanics. Diederich explains that "**This weighting had no basis in research, but it seemed reasonable to give extra credit for the qualities these teachers wished to emphasize".** (Diederich, 1974: 54). In other words, each teacher puts different emphases on these components.

The marking scheme should be carefully studied before any attempt to test our pupils' writing abilities. Harrison (1990) states that:

> " **The marking scheme should be thought out at an early stage in the development of the test, since it is in principle a forecast of what the pupils will produce and so affects what is to be included in the assessment".**
>
> (Harrison, 1990: 111)

According to Harrison, pupils need to know how they will be scored. Therefore, they will be aware of the type of test they were supposed to respond to. In other words, they should be encouraged to produce a piece of writing without fear of being penalised for an unknown procedure. The table below shows a clear description and characteristics of the analytic scoring scale:

Content (05 pts)	Organization (03 pts)
- The answer bears almost no relation to the task set. Totally off topic and irrelevant. *(00)* - Answer of limited relevance to the task set. Attempt to address the topic, but no main idea. *(0.5 / 01 / 01.5)* - Relevance to the task set, though redundant information. Attempted elaboration of ideas. *(02 / 02.5)* - Most points elaborated / supported. *(03 / 03.5)* - Relevant and adequate answer to the task set. All major points elaborated / supported. *(4 / 4.5 / 05)*	- No apparent organization of the content and no direction. *(00)* - A very little organization of the content. Structure not sufficiently controlled. No clear direction. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some organizational skills in evidence but not adequately controlled. Noticeable direction. *(01.5 / 02)* - An overall shape and clear internal pattern. Logically organized and connected ideas with clear transition and clear direction. *(02.5 / 03)*
Style (03 pts)	**Diction (03 pts)**
- Total absence of cohesion. Writing became fragmentary and ambiguous. *(00)* - Difficulty in comprehension because of unsatisfactory cohesion. Some ambiguous words. *(0.5 / 01)* - A satisfactory piece of writing although occasional cohesive, grammatical and mechanical deficiencies. *(01.5 / 02)* - Satisfactory use of cohesion. A clear and accurate composition. *(02.5 / 03)*	- Inadequate vocabulary, poor word choice, no sentence variety and complexity. *(00)* - Frequent lexical inappropriacies, repetition and awkward expressions. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some inadequacies in vocabulary and some lexical errors, but still comprehensible. *(01.5 / 02)* - A wide range of vocabulary and no awkward expressions. *(02.5 / 03)*
Grammar (03 pts)	**Mechanics (03 pts)**
- Inaccurate grammatical patterns. *(00)* -Frequent grammatical inaccuracies. *(0.5/01)* - Some grammatical inaccuracies. *(01.5 / 02)* - Almost no grammatical inaccuracies. *(02.5 / 03)*	- Ignorance of punctuation conventions and inaccurate spelling. *(00)* - Low standard of accuracy in punctuation and spelling. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling. *(01.5 / 02)* - Almost no inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling. *(02.5 / 03)*

Table 4.2:   The Analytic Scoring Scale (taken from **Weir, 1990)**

4.4.2   The Analytic Assessing Criteria

The composition is a kind of verbal communication that needs all the properties which constitute its fundamental basis. Mahili (1994) points out:

> **"Some teachers tend to impose themselves as authorities and make comments reflecting the application of an ideal standard rather than having a set of criteria for marking".**

(Mahili, 1994: 24)

According to Mahili, providing the pupils with the different criteria of evaluation is the most crucial fact before undertaking scoring procedures.

Most researchers in the field of assessing English as a foreign language agree on some criteria which constitute the fundamental components of composing assessment. Lado (1962) claims that:

> **"There are things that can be measured in connection with content, the points of information to bring out, the organization and sequence in which these points are, the formal signals given the reader to guide him in understanding the topic fully".**

(Lado, 1962: 248)

Lado insists that teachers should value some components including rhetorical features such as content and compositional organization as well as linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar or together (style) and mechanics. Content is defined as the degree to which ideas and opinions are clear, complete and well developed; writing is relevant to the topic. Organization is defined as the degree to which the structure suits the topic with a

planned opening and closing, and supporting details that enrich the theme. Style is defined as transitions that tie the details together, i.e., the choice of structures and lexical items to

give a particular flavour the piece of writing. Voice consists of three elements: a clear sense of writing to be read, individual way of writing, and effective message involved in the topic. The following table shows the scoring report of each criterion:

	The scoring report of the writing criteria
Content	- The composition contained a fully developed controlling idea that was consistently focused on the assigned topic, genre, and purpose and addressed all aspects of the assigned task. Supporting ideas were relevant to the topic and were fully elaborated throughout the response. The response contained specific examples and details that fully addressed reader's concerns and perspectives. - The composition contained a well developed controlling idea that was consistently focused on the assigned topic and addressed the assigned task. Supporting ideas were relevant to the topic and genre. The response contained specific examples and details that addressed reader's concerns and perspectives. - The composition contained a controlling idea with a generally consistent focus on the assigned topic and purpose and addressed the assigned task. Supporting ideas were relevant to the topic. Some parts of the composition were developed, but other parts were only partially developed. There was sufficient information to provide a sense of completeness. - The composition contained a minimally developed controlling idea with a limited focus on the assigned topic. Supporting ideas were general and undeveloped. Ideas were listed. The response

	lacked sufficient information due to brevity or repetition. Some details were irrelevant or inappropriate to the assigned topic. • A controlling idea was not established. There was no focus on the assigned topic. The majority of details were irrelevant. Development was lacking due to the brevity of the response or unclear supporting ideas.
Organization	• The overall organizational plan was appropriate. Ideas were logically and appropriately sequenced within paragraphs and across parts of the composition. The introduction set the stage, and the conclusion provided a sense of closure. Ideas were grouped logically. Varied and effective transitional elements were used to link all elements of the response. • The overall organizational plan was appropriate. Ideas were logically sequenced across parts of the composition. The introduction set the stage, and the conclusion ended the piece of writing without repetition. Related ideas were grouped together. • The overall organizational plan was generally appropriate. There was a generally clear sequence of ideas. The introduction was appropriate, and the conclusion was clear. • The organizational plan was formulaic and inappropriate. There was minimal evidence of sequencing. The composition had an ineffective introduction or conclusion. Unrelated ideas were grouped together. Transitions were formulaic, repetitive, or ineffective.

	• There was no evidence of an organizational plan. The sequence of ideas was unclear. The composition lacked an introduction and conclusion. Ideas were not arranged in a meaningful order. Transitions were lacking or inappropriate. There was insufficient writing.
Style	• Carefully crafted phrases and sentences created a sustained tone. Varied, precise, and engaging language was used throughout the composition. A consistent and appropriate voice was used. A variety of sentence lengths, structures, and beginnings were used. • Language and tone were consistent with the writer's purpose. Word choice was precise and engaging. Attention to the audience was demonstrated in the introduction, body, and conclusion. Sentences varied in length and structure. • Language and tone were generally consistent with the writer's purpose. Word choice was generally engaging with lapses into simple language. Awareness of audience was demonstrated in the introduction, body, or conclusion. There was some variation in sentence length and structure. • Word choice was simple, ordinary and repetitive. The writer's voice was inconsistent and indistinct. There was little variation in sentence length and structure. • Language was inappropriate to the assigned task. Word choice

	was inaccurate, imprecise and confusing. There was no attention to the audience.

Conventions **(Vocabulary Grammar Mechanics)**	• Simple and compound sentences were clear and correct with correct end punctuation. Usage and mechanics were correct in a variety of contexts. Errors were infrequent in all components and did not interfere with meaning. • Simple sentences were correct with correct end punctuation. Usage and mechanics were consistently correct with few errors in any component. • Simple sentences were generally correct with generally correct end punctuation. Usage and mechanics were generally correct with some errors. Few errors interfered with meaning. • Minimal control was demonstrated in sentence formation. Sentence structure was awkward, and end punctuation was missing or incorrect. There were frequent errors in usage and mechanics which interfered with meaning. • There were incorrect sentences. End punctuation was incorrect or lacking. There were frequent errors in usage and mechanics. Errors interfered with or obscured meaning.

Table 4.3 : The Scoring Report of the Writing Criteria

4.4.3 The Analytic Assessing Procedure

The analytic assessing procedure involves the breaking down of a written composition into different criteria. Each criterion is assessed separately, i.e. , separate scores for each criterion and then amalgamated with the scores from other components to derive an overall grade. What is more is that analytic scoring procedure provides more detailed information about a test taker's performance in different components of writing. It also offers teachers a potentially valuable tool for providing writers with consistent and direct feedback on separate traits in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

4.4.3.1 The Scoring Procedure

Assessment is deals with the initial design of the course. To determine how evaluation works, it is the teacher's task to make decisions about when and why writing assignments will be made and the learning objectives of each assignment. Therefore, the teacher needs to determine the relative value of each of its criteria. The rankings of these criteria should be made clear to his pupils in an effective prompt.

The scoring procedure is divided into two steps: the macro-structural and micro-structural procedures.

- In the first step, the teacher deals with relevance and adequacy of content. It tackles the gist of the answer. He makes use of his own answer to the paper and compares it with those of his pupils. The answer presents ideas, and each idea is allotted a grade. The amount of grades constitutes the general mark allotted to the relevance of content.

The composition topic (Theme two , "Ethics in Business" , New prospect , Page 64) asks pupils to select the most important arguments and counterarguments, and develop them into a paragraph in favour of ethics in business. The table below shows the main ideas and the scores for each idea:

The major points of the answer	Score

	(05 pts)
1. Ethics has everything to do with business.	0.5
a. Business is a human activity and should, therefore, comply with moral standards.	0.5
b. Business activities should have a code of good practice to ensure fairness.	0.5
c. Greed may result in unfair competition and exploitation.	0.5
2. Ethics has nothing to do with business.	0.5
a. The world of business is a jungle. So, you need money to make money.	0.5
b. Respect of an ethical code may limit production and competition.	0.5
c. Ethics can undermine the value of hard work and freedom.	0.5
3. If we accept that people do business with each other for profit, they should not neglect their labour's rights and safety regulations.	01

Table 4. 4 : The Teacher's Answer Model for Relevance and Adequacy of Content

The teacher makes a general reading of the whole answer to see whether or not the pupil writes on the topic and search the points of discussion.

- The second step in scoring the composition answer, the teacher deals with the five remaining criteria, i.e., compositional organization / paragraphing and conventions (style), the adequacy of vocabulary, sentence structure and mechanical accuracy. The micro-structural assessing procedure divides the composition into five components. Each component is graded separately.

4.4.3.2 The Counting Procedure

The assessing procedure permits the teacher to judge the quality of each scoring component by a grade. At the end of each composition, he counts all the obtained grades and mentions them in a scoring grid (see appendix 6).

The typical characteristics of papers receiving each score – superior (< 14), strong (< 12), adequate (< 10), marginal (> 10), very weak (> 07) and incompetent (> 04) - are summarized below from high to low grades:

- **Superior**

- addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task.
- explores the issue thoroughly and in depth.
- is coherently organized, with ideas supported by well-chosen examples.
- has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language.
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

- **Strong**

- clearly addresses the topic, but may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively.
- show some depth and complexity of thought.
- is well organized and developed with appropriate reasons and examples.
- displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language.
- may have a few errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

- **Adequate**

- addresses the topic, but may slight some aspects of the task.
- may treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.
- is adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas that demonstrate adequate facility with syntax and language.
- may have some errors that distract the reader.

- **Marginal**

- distorts or neglects aspects of the task.
- lacks focus, or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking is poorly organized or developed
- does not provide adequate or appropriate details.
- has an accumulation of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

- **Very Weak**

- indicates confusion about the topic or neglects important aspects of the task lacks focus and coherence, or often fails to communicate its ideas.

- has very weak organization, little development provides simplistic generalizations without support, has inadequate sentence control and a limited vocabulary.

- is marred by numerous errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

- **Incompetent**

- suggests an inability to respond meaningfully to the topic.

- is unfocused, illogical, incoherent, disorganized and undeveloped.

- provides no relevant support.

- has serious and persistent errors in word choice, mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.

For instance, the pupils' scores for the post - test (see table 3. 8), pupil (05) has been awarded 06 / 20 as a total score. The teacher may use the scoring grid below to show the pupil exactly where he has weaknesses:

Criteria	Grades
Content	01.5
Organization	01
Style	01
Diction	0.5
Grammar	01
Mechanics	01
Total Score	**06 / 20**

Table 4. 5 : A Sample of a Scoring Grid

According to the total mark (06 / 20), the composition is very weak. It may demonstrate a lack of understanding of the writing assignment. There may be serious problems with organization. Ideas may not be developed. It may also show problems with

 clarity, integration or coherence. There may be numerous errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure that the writer's ideas are difficult to follow.

4.5   The Management of a Correction Session

After correcting and scoring his pupils' compositions, the teacher has to review every thing related to the topic during a correction session. He may include a checklist to record the common mistakes to be taught as remedy after coping with the correction.

During the correction session, the teacher may remind his pupils about the written expression topic or even write its plan on the board. He can create a sense of competition between them through good remarks without an emphasis on their errors. The correction can be done individually or collectively:

4.5.1   Individual Correction

Individual correction aims at making each pupil aware of his / her mistakes and solving the problems faced when writing a composition. The use of the checklist where the teacher has already recorded his pupils' mistakes is of great importance at this level. He can choose one of his / them to correct his / her errors under the guidance of the teacher and his peers' responses. Thus, individual correction would improve the whole class performance. One inconvenience of the above – mentioned correction is time-consuming.

4.5.2   Collective Correction

The majority of teachers in the collective correction phase aim at detecting their pupils' errors for the sake of avoiding them in future attempts. The collective correction is done in two ways:

- A collective elaboration of a new composition aims at motivating weak learners and involving them the correction process. It strengthens in them the ability to respond to

a written work that involves some writing skills such as grammatical ability, lexical ability, mechanical ability (punctuation, spelling, capitalisation,), stylistic skills, and organisational skills.

- A classmate's composition is written on the board. The teacher reads the written production slowly and it is for the rest of the audience to decide on the mark. Then, he compares the awarded marks in a motivating atmosphere. After that, he let them proceed with correction at sentence and paragraph levels. The sentence level refers to effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language and devoid from errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure. The paragraph level refers to coherent organization, with ideas supported by well-chosen examples.

4.5.3 Remedial Work

Remedial teaching is devised to address problems pupils are having with previously taught material. In this context, it is meant to treat the pupils' weaknesses by supplying some remedial exercises related to coherence and cohesion. It is advisable to do remedial tasks directly after the correction session.

4.6 Recommendations to Improve Pupils' Writing

Based on the major findings of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions are proposed for teaching and assessing the writing skill:

- First, teachers are advised to update their writing theories and approaches, i. e., they are in need of enhancing their writing instruction. Only when they are informed of the updated knowledge, they will be able to apply it and benefit their pupils. They should also be encouraged to receive training in writing evaluation.

- Second, the majority of teachers disapprove writing assessment. Thus, they should design writing tasks to monitor their pupils' learning progress, implement writing

instruction and give feedback to pupils in the classroom..

- Third, writing is a process-dominated approach that can be learnt and practised. The pupils could take too much time in reading, thinking, discussing, planning, organizing, composing, revising and rewriting. In other words, they need assistance, encouragement, advice, and support from the teacher. By working on improving specific aspects of their writing, the researcher suggests:

1. **Learn from your mistakes:** Watch for patterns of strengths and weaknesses in your writing. Consciously and methodically work on improving them.

2. **Analyze examples of good writing:** By understanding how other writers have succeeded in writing effectively, you can improve your strategies. Keep a notebook of writing samples.

3. **Look for writing opportunities in your class:** When you participate in a group assignment, volunteer to write summaries of group decisions.

4. **Keep a journal or writing log:** Keep tabs of your writing plan and your improvement. Set aside 10 or 15 minutes daily to review what you are focusing on and practicing.

5. **Write:** You won't learn to write by reading a book on writing if you don't practise what you have learned. Learning to write is like learning to play an instrument: you get better only by setting your goals and practicing your lessons. Your writing will improve through your consistent and concerted effort to improve it.

6. **Read:** By reading short stories, booklets, pamphlets and brochure, you will be able to identify solid writing models and improve your sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary.

Finally, to improve the current writing teaching and learning, this study can trigger curriculum designers to think of a solid and large – scale research to overcome practical difficulties in writing classroom instruction.

4. 7   Conclusion

This concluding chapter has proposed some recommendations and suggestions which may help pupils overcome the difficulties they encounter in written expression. It has also focused on the analytic scoring scheme, criteria and procedures as tools to improve the writing effectiveness and bring positive change in the teaching – learning of the writing skill. Such a scoring scale (the analytic assessment) requires making as many separate judgments about one `piece of writing'. The analytic assessment considers writing to be made up of various features, such as relevance, grammar, organization of ideas, expression of concepts, and punctuation, each of which is to be assessed separately. Therefore, it can ensure a positive feedback and help the teacher to keep the full of writing features in mind as he corrects the written expressions. It also allows the pupils to see areas in their compositions that need work when accompanied by written comments and remedy. Its diagnostic nature provides pupils with a road map for improvement.

Notes to Chapter Four

- The acronym **P.L.E.F.T.E.R.** is used by the General Inspectorate of English to define the role of the teacher. It means Planner, Linguist model, Evaluator, Facilitator, Team member, Educator, and Researcher.

- **Composition** is a piece of written work produced to practise the skills and techniques of writing. In language teaching, two types of writing of writing activities are sometimes distinguished:

  Free composition, in which the pupils' writing is not controlled or limited in any way.

  Controlled composition, in which the pupils' writing is controlled by various means, such as providing questions to be answered, sentences to be completed, or pictures to describe.

- **Writing processes** are the strategies, procedures and decision – making employed by writers as they write. Writing is viewed as the result of complex processes of planning, drafting, reviewing and revising.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The importance of English on political, economic and communicative grounds has led Algeria to reform its educational system through the adoption of Competency – Based Approach in 2003. Yet, despite the introduction of this new approach, our pupils generally fail to use the foreign language and acquiring the expertise of the writing skill is far from satisfactory. Writing has become a burden, and produces shallow, boring output. Our pupils are sorely lacking in practice and stimulus for imagination and creativity.

The present research is an attempt to investigate the pedagogical tools for improving our pupils' writing ability through an effective assessing system. Finding a reliable and valid method of measuring the writing ability is still a matter under investigation.

The traditional assessment (holistic rating) of pupils' writing still has a legitimate place in the English language arts, but could not be the secure means of assessing writing since it is a quick and impressionistic qualitative procedure for ranking samples of writing and not designed to diagnose its weaknesses. In contrast, analytic scoring provides useful diagnostic information about pupils' writing abilities since it involves the breaking down of a written composition into components. Each component is assessed separately and then amalgamated with the scores from other components to derive an overall grade. Analytic grading can provide a comprehensive outline of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' writing performance. Thus, it allows teachers to tailor instruction more closely to the needs of their pupils. In terms of the general layout, the work comprises four chapters.

As a result of the findings of the present research, there has been an improvement in the overall quality of the pupils' writing mainly due to the analytic assessing criteria and procedures. An emphasis has been given to the teaching of writing since it is a complex task and not something that automatically happens. Classroom instruction, guidance and individual feedback are needed for best results. On the other hand, writing

conventions should be matured into a process that is able to accommodate a pupil's need to plan, brainstorm, seek feedback, and revise his / her work. Most importantly, A few key determinants of producing quality pupils stand out, including teaching them how to plan for writing (via pre-writing), to combine sentences, and to engage in the process of inquiry as they learn to write. Teaching them to use even one or two stages of the writing process enhances their writing abilities significantly. Together, these findings provide a compelling rationale for using the writing process as a method of instruction in all classrooms and in so doing, helping our pupils develop the skills they need to communicate for the future.

This dissertation has been an attempt to show that writing instruction has been ignored. Therefore, the quest for a valid and reliable assessing system may increase adequate attention to classroom writing instruction and develop activities that cater to all learning styles. Teachers should not deprive pupils of the opportunity to learn to write. They should also be open-minded so as to receive more training and information about updated pedagogies and theories. On the other hand, teachers are unable to fight against preconceived notions and conventions by themselves but need support from governments, schools, their peers, pupils and parents. Governments and schools should encourage teachers to overcome any obstacles and actively offer necessary assistance. With their support, teachers are able to improve themselves and then benefit their pupils.

In general, the first research question of the present study shows that the traditional method of evaluating written language proficiency is insufficient and that no other type of assessment is completely reliable. To close this gap, future research can be devoted to investigating valid, reliable, and non-biased means of assessment that can be easily implemented in schools. Although the second research question has bee introduced to show the benefits of the analytic assessment over the holistic one, further research can be conducted on how the analytic type of measurement can be modified to suit EFL writing needs.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix 1

Pupils' Questionnaire

The following questionnaire seeks to gather data about pupils' writing difficulties. You are kindly invited to answer the following questions by putting a cross (X) in the appropriate box or expressing your comments when necessary.

1. Do you learn how to write compositions at class with your teacher?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. Do you think the content of the written expression task is related to <u>New Prospects</u> textbook?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

3. Do you make a plan or an outline before starting writing?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. How do you evaluate your level in written expression?

   Good ☐   Average ☐   Weak ☐

5. Where do you usually meet problems in a written expression's test?

   Understanding of the topic ☐   Spelling ☐   Punctuation ☐

   Grammar ☐   Vocabulary ☐   Ideas ☐

6. What are the main reasons behind your weak level in written expression?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Do you correct compositions at class with your teacher?

Yes ☐   No ☐

8. If yes, how does your teacher correct your compositions?

an analytic correction ☐   a holistic correction ☐

9. Do you think one correction session is sufficient to improve your level in writing?

Yes ☐   No ☐

10. Do you do a remedial work after the correction session?

Yes ☐   No ☐

11. Which solutions do you suggest to improve your weak performance in written expression?

………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………..

Thank you very much   ☺

Appendix 2

Teachers' Questionnaire

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a cross (X) in the appropriate box or expressing your comments when necessary so as to identify pupils' writing weaknesses through an atomistic assessing system.

Male ☐   **Female** ☐

Teaching Experience: ☐ years   **Place of Work:** …………………………………

1. Do you teach your pupils how to write compositions in your normal classroom instruction?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. Do you think the content of the written expression task is related to what you teach?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

3. How do you evaluate your pupils' level in written expression?

   Good ☐   Medium ☐   Weak ☐

4. Where do your pupils generally meet problems in a written expression's test?

   Grammar ☐   Mechanics ☐   Paragraphing ☐

   Relevance ☐   Style ☐   Coherence ☐

5. What are the main reasons behind your pupils' weak performance in written expression?

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Do you correct your pupils' compositions in the classroom?

Yes ☐   No ☐

7. If yes, what method do you adopt to correct your pupils' compositions?

a holistic method ☐   an analytic method ☐

8. Have you ever learned or been trained how to score compositions?

Yes ☐   No ☐

9. Do you follow the marking instructions or rating scales while marking?

marking instructions ☐   rating scales ☐

10. If not, how do you mark?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………..

11. What strategies do you use to improve your pupils' level in written expression?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thanks for your cooperation   ☺

Appendix 3   - A pupil's writing sample -

Diagnostic Test	
NAME: *Wafaä Abderrahmane* **Class**: 3 PH 2 Nov. 8th, 2009.	

Topic: Civilizations rise and disappear without leaving any trace. Discuss.

AW – VT – ?	... append in the world many civilization is originate
N.O – P.	the past a ancient : like civilization indus ,
W.O – P. CAP.	civilization chinese , civilization india and
W.O.	civilization egyptian , but the civilization decolop
?	with devolop the time , the main reasons of
SP. AGR	blloming flourish is append near rives and
P. – SP.	devolop indiffrent domans but the civilization
NF – AW. W.O.	disappeand because the war and epidemis , the political
	problems .
VT – SP.	the civilization leaving many suiss ere
P. Rep.	graving and drawing and mosques .

Appendix 4

The Analytic Scoring Scale (taken from **Weir, 1990**)

Content (05 pts)	Organization (03 pts)
- The answer bears almost no relation to the task set. Totally off topic and irrelevant. *(00)* - Answer of limited relevance to the task set. Attempt to address the topic, but no main idea. *(0.5 / 01 / 01.5)* - Relevance to the task set, though redundant information. Attempted elaboration of ideas. *(02 / 02.5)* - Most points elaborated / supported. *(03 / 03.5)* - Relevant and adequate answer to the task set. All major points elaborated / supported. *(4 / 4.5 / 05)*	- No apparent organization of the content and no direction. *(00)* - A very little organization of the content. Structure not sufficiently controlled. No clear direction. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some organizational skills in evidence but not adequately controlled. Noticeable direction. *(01.5 / 02)* - An overall shape and clear internal pattern. Logically organized and connected ideas with clear transition and clear direction. *(02.5 / 03)*
Style (03 pts)	**Diction (03 pts)**
- Total absence of cohesion. Writing became fragmentary and ambiguous. *(00)* - Difficulty in comprehension because of unsatisfactory cohesion. Some ambiguous words. *(0.5 / 01)* - A satisfactory piece of writing although occasional cohesive, grammatical and mechanical deficiencies. *(01.5 / 02)* - Satisfactory use of cohesion. A clear and accurate composition. *(02.5 / 03)*	- Inadequate vocabulary, poor word choice, no sentence variety and complexity. *(00)* - Frequent lexical inappropriacies, repetition and awkward expressions. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some inadequacies in vocabulary and some lexical errors, but still comprehensible. *(01.5 / 02)* - A wide range of vocabulary and no awkward expressions. *(02.5 / 03)*
Grammar (03 pts)	**Mechanics (03 pts)**
- Inaccurate grammatical patterns. *(00)* -Frequent grammatical inaccuracies. *(0.5/01)* - Some grammatical inaccuracies. *(01.5 / 02)* - Almost no grammatical inaccuracies. *(02.5 / 03)*	- Ignorance of punctuation conventions and inaccurate spelling. *(00)* - Low standard of accuracy in punctuation and spelling. *(0.5 / 01)* - Some inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling. *(01.5 / 02)* - Almost no inaccuracies in punctuation and spelling. *(02.5 / 03)*

Appendix 5

The Analytic Correction Code

Criteria	Symbol	Type of error
Content	Amb. Om. Rel.	Ambiguous Omission Relevance
Organization	Ind. Misord. W.O.	Indentation Misordering Word order
Style	Av. A. W. Cl. Cohr. Cohs. Conf. L1 T.	Avoidance Add a word Clarity Coherence Cohesion Confusable Native Language Transfer
Diction	Missel. W.C.	Misselection Word choice
Grammar	AGR Mis. Art. Mis. Prep. V. F. V. T. W. F. X.	Subject – Verb agreement Misuesd article Misused preposition Verb form Verb tense Word form Omit this
Mechanics	CAP. P. SP. UL.	Capitalization Punctuation Spelling Unnecessary letter

Appendix 6

The Analytic Scoring Grid

Criteria / Pupils	Content (05)	Organisation (03)	Style (03)	Diction (03)	Grammar (03)	Mechanics (03)	Total /20
01							
02							
03							
04							
05							
06							
07							
08							
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10							
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30							
31							
32							

Appendix 7   - A pupil's writing sample -

Summative Assessment

NAME: ......Biouti Fatima........   **Class:** 3 PH 2   April 25th, 2010.

Topic: The Algerian educational system consists of three levels (primary, middle and secondary). You have just completed the third level. Write a composition in which you describe the level you liked best. You may talk about the following:

- Souvenirs
- Friends
- Teachers
- Programmes
- Exams
- Happy / sad events

Sp.	In this century of globalisation, the world devellaped
W.O.	always and work hard for good education. The best
	escample is the ministry of education in Algeria.
	In Algeria, the educational system is diveded into
	elementary (primary school), comprehensive (middle school),
	hight school (secondary school) and college (University).
V.F.	In my opinion, the best days for all pupils is the
P.	scholar days, in each level they know many things
A.W.	in their life. The best level for me secondary school
	becouse I think I won many classmates and make
Sp.	many souvenirs with them. I remember my self
	and my friends laught so much in lessonses under
VF. - Amb.	table until teacher don't look us. In addition to this,
AW. - Sp.	always cheat in testes and eat in class and don't
AV. rep. - UL	make our activity, learnt with gather. My teachers
R. Sp.	work very hard for ours, they always awarnes all

W.O.
V.F.
Cl.

...pupils. personality. I lived many events sad and... ...happy., like my girl friend celebrate birthday with all... ...friends., sad event my friend grand father died and... ...another friend her father died.

Sp.

......I wish all my friend succed in Bac escam and... ...in their life., for teachers I hope for all good luk in... ...work life.

Sp.