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Effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach on Students'

Essay Writing: Second Year Teachers of Written Expression's

Perceptions and Attitudes

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DEDICATION

I thank Allah for granting me the gift of knowledge and blessing us with His mercy.

I dedicate this work to :

My beloved mother, my greatest teacher of compassion, love, and fearlessness, the reason of what I become today. Thank you for your great support and continuous care.

My dear father, who truly loved me, taught me and most importantly, he believed in me.

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ABSTRACT

The present research attempts to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of blended learning approach in enhancing students' essay writing, which has recently become a fundamental concept. Teachers have become subject to a new form of teaching that combines the traditional face-to-face learning with the online learning. Hence, it is hypothesized that they may have a positive attitude towards such type of teaching. The research is conducted through a quantitative method by administering a questionnaire to fourteen (14) second year teachers of written expression at the English Department of English, University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. The obtained results show that the research sample reveals positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of blended learning approach in improving essay writing composition. Thus, the results confirm the stated hypothesis at the beginning of the research.

Key words: Blended learning approach, face to face learning, online learning, teachers' attitudes.

List of Abbreviations

BL:Blended Learning

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

F2F: Face to Face

HE: Higher Education

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important language skills that has to be mastered, especially for English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. It is a critical element in learning any foreign language requires adequate writing practice. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged as the most effective means of communication. Yet, it is viewed as most complex and challenging skill. Currently, teaching writing; precisely essay writing necessitates teachers' observation in order to reduce the numerous obstacles and difficulties encountered in writing essays. Hence, Web-based technologies have been integrated into the teaching and learning environment as a result of technological improvements, resulting in the blended learning (BL) method. Presently, the BL approach has fulfilled a significant place in EFL teaching currently, since it is believed to be advantageous for both teachers and students. Teaching essay writing in this case is not limited to classrooms only, it can be accomplished outside classrooms too through the use of different models of the BL approach. Thus, the current study presents a modest attempt to investigate the relationship between BL and essay writing, exploring teachers' attitudes and perceptions.

1. Statement of the Problem

In EFL learning, the writing skill is recognized as a significant component in learners' academic success. However, most students at the Department of English at 08 Mai 1945 Guelma University have a low writing skill level, and lack of mastery of this crucial skill, even though written expression teachers are always seeking to find the most suitable methods to enhance their students' level of writing essays. This approach provides students with instant access to their courses, rapid feedback from their instructors and it promotes for independent learning. Therefore, the current study tackles main aspects that are related to

second year written expression teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the BL approach on students' essay writing.

2. Aims of the Study

This research aims to investigate second year written expression teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the impact of BL on students' essay writing. It also attempts to determine whether or not the concept of blended learning approach is acknowledged and used by second year written expression teachers. Moreover, it seeks to raise teachers' awareness in fostering learners' ability to write essays.

3. Research Questions

The undertaken research is designed to address the following questions:

1. What are second year written expression teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of blended learning approach on their students' essay writing?
2. To what extent second year written expression teachers are aware of the importance of blended learning approach in enhancing their students' essay writing?

4. Research Hypothesis

In this study, it is assumed that implementing the BL approach into EFL second year written expression classroom has a crucial impact on students' essay writing. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1. Second year written expression teachers may have positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of BL in enhancing essay writing.

H2. Second year written expression teachers may be aware of the importance of BL approach in enhancing students' essay writing.

5. Research Methodology and Design

a. Research Method

The present investigation adopts a quantitative descriptive method to investigate teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of the BL approach in improving students' essay writing. This method has been chosen due to the nature of the study. It aims at testing the research hypothesis using a well structured questionnaire as a data gathering tool. It was addressed to second year teachers of written expression to provide their attitudes towards the impact of integrating BL into written expression courses.

b. Population of the Study

The questionnaire has been distributed to fourteen (14) second year teachers of written expression at the English Department, University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. The sample was carefully selected. The reasons behind looking forward teachers' answers is that they possess the necessary experience and background knowledge that enable them to honestly contribute in the fulfillment of our research gaps concerning the impact of BL on students' essay writing. Moreover, teachers are more trusted and reliable to appropriately fill the questionnaire.

c. Data Gathering Tool

Data collection in the current study is based on the instrumentality of a questionnaire. The reason behind opting for the questionnaire is that this latter enables to truly figure out to which extent teachers are aware of the effectiveness of BL on students' essay writing. It also aids in exploring teachers' attitudes towards the impact of integrating BL in written expression courses on students' quality of essay writing. It thereby enables us to reach answers for the research questions.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

This research is divided into two main parts. The theoretical part that encompasses the first and second chapters, and the practical part which constitutes of chapter three. The initial chapter deals with the BL concept, covering its major definitions, emergence and development overtime, its components along with components of BL model, then it tackles approaches to design a BL course, followed by BL's benefits, its main challenges. The second chapter is devoted to the second variable, that is to say essay writing, covering the concept's most significant definitions, importance and basic elements of effective writing coupled with three different approaches to teaching the writing process. Additionally, it tackles definitions of academic writing as well as the essay. It also deals with stages of writing essays, major types of an essay in addition to common structure of an essay. Then it concludes with major difficulties in academic writing. The third and last chapter is entirely allocated to put teachers' questionnaire under examination. It is dedicated to analysis and interpretation of the findings. Finally, this chapter concludes with general conclusion and some pedagogical implementations.

Chapter One : Blended Learning Approach : An Overview

Introduction

The impact of technology on education in general and language teaching in particular is becoming an observable phenomenon. Accordingly, ‘‘blended’’ or ‘‘mixed’’ learning is a new way that has emerged to help students in learning. It is expected to combine the benefits of F2F and online learning, allowing students to learn in group setting in a classroom with an instructor, as well as from home at a convenient time.

This chapter is devoted to a detailed examination of the concept ‘‘BL’’ as the independent variable of this research. It starts by putting aside numerous definitions of blended learning, its emergence and components ; as well as ; the components of BL model. Moreover, it discusses the approaches to design BL course, the benefits of this approach along with its main challenges.

1.1 Definition of Blended Learning

As a matter of fact, several scholars and researchers have attempted to define BL in different ways, but it is worth noting that BL, hybrid learning, mixed method learning are terms that refer to the same learning approach, in which learning occurs through different types of contact between the teacher and the student. Graham, Allen and Ure (2003 as cited in Graham, 2006, p.04) has presented three major definitions of BL, for example it can be defined as ‘‘combining delivery media, combining instructional methods, and combining online and face-to-face instruction’’. It is obvious that the third definition is the subject of our study, due to the fact that the first and second ones appear to be too broad, referring to any implementation of pedagogical materials in the same physical setting. Again, this definition can be confusing to provide the ‘‘precise’’ meaning of the term. Graham’s (2006) notion can narrow the scope of the term. Graham (2006) defined BL as the mix of direct learning

settings, usually when teachers and students meet in the classroom, to learn with settings based on communication technologies in which they can communicate over long distances (p.04). Simply, the notion of BL refers to the act of joining together virtual and physical resources, where students can have an alternative space to communicate either from standard classroom setting or from long distances.

Another attempt to define BL is that of Thorne (2003) who stated that BL is an educational paradigm that combine e-learning with all of its upgrades resulting from new advancements in technology, with the traditional learning, in order to facilitate classrom engagement (p.16). Moreover, Driscoll (2002) who had a significant contribution to the definition of the term, argues that BL stands for integrating web-based technology with a pedeagogical approach, as well as combining a form of instructional technology with guided instruction, which implies that BL constitutes of a mixture of e-learning with peadagogical teaching techniques. Equally, Valiathan (2002) also supports the Driscoll's concepts of BL by defining it as

a solution that combines several different delivey methods, such as collaboration software, web-based courses, EPSS, and knowledge management practices. BL also is used to describe learning that mixes various event-based activities, including face-to-face (F2F) classrooms, live e-learning, and self-paced instruction (p.01).

In other words, the introduction of new learning technologies such as web-based courses that create a new blending potentials indeed.

BL has been given several terms such as "hybrid" and "mixed". According to Clark and Myer (2003) there is no precise definition of BL. Additionaly, Graham and Allen (2009) state that " by nature, both the terms "hybrid" and "blended" imply a mixing or combining of something. It is that something that people do not always agree upon" (p.562). In other words, no doubt that there is a presently debate about the most appropriate definition of BL

due to the fact that the term has been used differently in diverse situations. However, in this context, many researchers agreed that the term is becoming more controversial because of the lack of generally accepted definition of the term. Thus, the most common definitions of the term ‘‘BL’’ are highlighted as the following:

1. BL courses integrate online with F2F instruction in a planned, pedagogically valuable manner (Vignare, 2007, as cited in Gynther, 2016, p.21).
2. BL consists of F2F sessions and online learning materials that are supported by ICT. (Nokayma, Marsuvra and Yamamoto, 2016).
3. BL is learning outside the traditional classroom using information technology for the delivery of the learning materials (Kim, 2007).

Many scholars have proposed the definition of BL from various perspectives. From a holistic view, it refers to the use of multiple media to deliver an instruction (Kaur, 2012, p.613). This perspective involves the incorporation of instructional media into a traditional classroom or a distance learning settings. BL from an educational perspective refers to any pedagogical course that is designed to combine online and traditional F2F activities, and where an online activity replaces a portion of F2F time. BL is also defined by Lester (2005 as cited in Kaur, 2012, p.613) as a method that is concerned with the integration of two distinct paradigms, synchronous classroom instruction and asynchronous online instruction. Several scholars tend to describe BL from a pragmatic perspective. For example, Kaur (2012) claims that BL is defined as a course that is taught both in classroom and online, and that employs a variety of pedagogic strategies:

- To combine various pedagogical approaches such as constructivism, behaviourism, cognitive learning approaches to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without the use of instructional technology.

- To combine any instructional technology such as CDs, films, web-based training with F2F instructor-led programming.
- To mix or combine instructional technology with actual job tasks in order to create a harmonious effect in terms of learning and working (p.613).

Regarding training perspective, Wexler (2008 as cited in Kaur, 2012, p.02) arrogates that BL is the act of delivering a course through the utilization of a variety of instructional media, such as sales training course that includes pre-reading, lectures, and role playing practices. In addition, Peters (2009) defines BL from chief learning officer perspective, he assumes that this approach is creating the greatest possible learning solution for the target audience by integrating numerous delivery modalities, both synchronous and asynchronous.

1.2 The Emergence and Development of Blended Learning Approach

BL is considered as an innovative teaching method in education, particularly in EFL context. In accordance with literature, studies on BL appeared to have grown significantly from the beginning of the 2010's. Contrary to common assumption as, Halverson et.al (2014) stresses that in the process of teaching in higher education, particularly in the context of EFL, the concept of BL is not a new, rather it dates back to the early of 2000's. But in fact, its roots can be traced back over a century and a half ago, with its meaning evolving in tandem with technological advancements.

Pappas (2015) established a series of successive periods that might provide insight into the origins of BL. The periods started in 1840's with Sir Isaac Pitman's lancement of the initial distance education course. Pitman's method was all about shorthand texts that are delivered to his students via mails, students are required to return them back in order to be assessed and graded. Yet, in 1858, the University of London, launched the first learning distance course. A century later, in the 1960's and 1970's, main frame computer-based training began, thousands

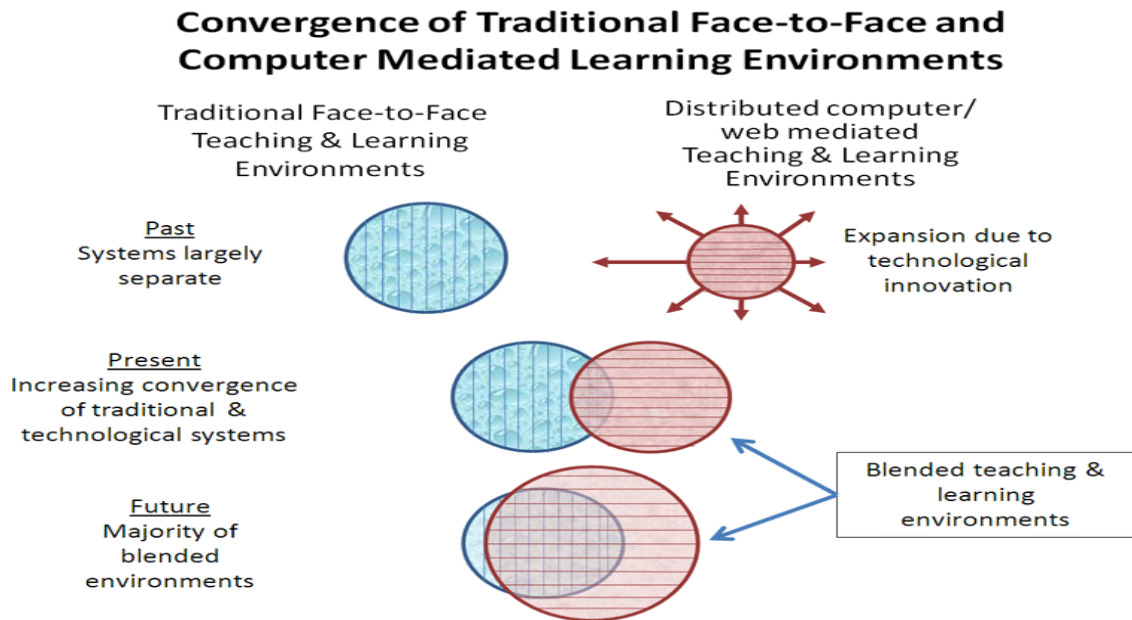
of employees were instructed and accessed knowledge using systems such as PLATO, which still exist till today.

In the 1970's and 1980's, TV-based technology was employed to the educational field in which "Learners were able to communicate with their peers, watch the instructor on TV, and address any questions or concerns sending them by mail" (Pappas, 2015). In other words, TV-based technology assists both instructors and students in the way that they are no longer obliged to be physically present in order to communicate with each other.

Continuously, as a result of the technological development, so did BL strategies evolved. In the 1980's, 1990's period, CD-ROMs were first used by schools and organizations to provide more interactive learning experiences (Pappas, 2015). However, when discussing BL as a concept, it should be remembered that the first generation of web-based instruction started in 1998's, where organizations could easily publish content, e-learning tests, and assignments via the web, so that students could access them with a single mouse click. Finally, he confirmed that from 2000's till the instant time, the combination of F2F with e-learning resulted the emergence of what is called the BL approach.

To sum up, the incorporation of technologies into the course of EFL teaching and learning, also known as BL, has become a popular topic in many educational forums and programs. In fact, BL has become a "buzzword" in the language teaching. However, it has been in use for about two decades, and its meaning has evolved significantly throughout that time (Sharp et al., 2006, as cited in Sharma, 2010, p.456). Thus, the Figure below 1.1 presents the convergence of both methods.

Figure 1.1 The trends of BL (Graham, 2006, p.05).



As shown in the above Figure, the concept of BL is not novel, instructors have been combining and mixing materials and teaching methods for decades. However, today's definition of BL might be slight different from its old one. Hence, what is now meant by BL is the mixing of F2F teaching with online resources, content and assignments. The former interpretation of BL is the result of the increasing convergence of traditional and technological systems into teaching / learning process.

1.3 Components of Blended Learning

According to the prementioned definitions of BL, it is usually consisted of two key components : F2F learning, and online learning. The former refers to the conventional context in which teachers and students interact face-to-face in a contact teaching situation (Kaur, 2012). Whereas online learning allows students to interact through learning materials without having to be physically present with their peers and instructors.

1.3.1 Face to Face Instruction

In order to explain and clarify complex subjects that require teacher /student interaction, expert observation, culture building, team building, networking, business problem solving or materials to be presented by an instructor or facilitator, traditional classrooms afford the opportunity for teachers and students to interact F2F in the same space (Woodaal, 2010). He also uses the term Instructor-Led Training (ILT) to refer to both on-site and classroom training. Moreover, he sees a live classroom as a location where unpublished material can be shared, and students can participate in peer and group work discussions. As a result, students are more involved through the added materials that provide clear insights to the challenging concepts and theories

According to Lalima and Dangwal (2017, p.131), BL facilitates synchronous communication through a traditional classroom-teaching approach, in which students have ample opportunity to communicate with their teachers and peers. All partakers in this approach may receive rapid feedback, which is crucial factor for the teaching-learning process. Students make official or casual interactions with their peer groups and participants in class discussions. This type allows students to make connection with the course material through the use of printed materials or ICT assisted learning (e-learning, e-books, videos...etc).

1.3.2 Online Learning

Woodaal (2010) proposes a virtual classroom, emphasizing the fact that it allows students and teachers to be present at the same time even if they are in separate locations. As a result, students who are not physically present in the classroom can benefit from the learning process. This mode supply students with a learning environment of the classroom, in which they can access at any time from any location. Heedless of geographic limitations, the student can take place in virtual conferences with his/her teacher and peers in cyberspace. Students

and teachers interact digitally, using computer screens and virtual microphones to see and hear each other.

Educational platforms and spaces are designed to assist students in overcoming the constant daily classroom anxiety and uncompromising timetable. It also conserves time for students who work and are unable to attend classroom sessions. Webinars present another component of BL in which students engage in virtual conferences to discuss various topics. They are all linked via various software programs, such as skype, google talk and social media. E-tuition or conferencing is another effective method, particularly for students who come across some difficulties while attending an online learning or even during classroom sessions. Therefore, students can have personal teachers and receive personalized learning instruction without being constrained by the actual classroom or school calendar. Numerous records and videos are obtainable on Youtube and other search engines to clarify the multiple educational challenges that students might encounter while learning. Furthermore, virtual laboratories are quite beneficial in professional training. The most important aspect in BL is the online assessment, which is based on the essence of readiness. It enables students to receive instant feedback and provides a transparent and fast formative evaluation (Lalima and Dangwal, 2017, p.131).

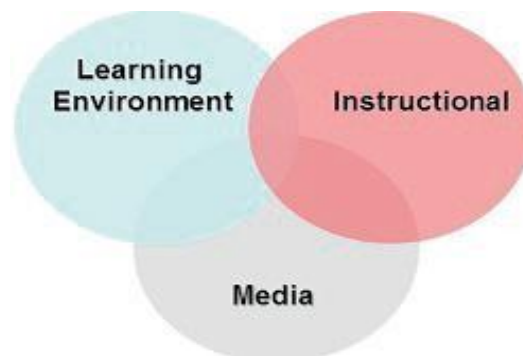
Woodaál (2010) emphasizes that BL's components are complementary, and they can fit the new interest through presenting a successful combination of F2F and online instruction while also providing students with assistance when needed.

1.4 Components of Blended Learning Model

In this regard, Hancock and Wang (2012 as cited in Kaur, 2012, p.02) propose a model to describe BL components. This model can be used to evaluate and integrate these individual components. It creates a learning environment in which students can connect with their

teachers and peers either in a traditional classroom setting or through an online setting. Both learning modes depend on the content and course objectives. The components are presented in Figure 1.2 (Hancock and Wang, 2012, as cited in Kaur, 2012, p.02).

Figure 1.2 Components of Blended Learning



(Hancock and Wang, 2012, as cited in Kaur, 2012, p.02)

1. 4.1 Learning Environment Component

The goal of BL, according to the above mentioned model is to ensure the most efficient use of the benefits of each environment (synchronous and asynchronous) and to make the best use of the various resources in order to meet the instructional and learning objectives (Holden and Westfall, 2006, p.31).

1. 4.2 Media Component

Media usually refers to vehicles that are used to deliver lessons. However, instructional media varies ; some are more appropriate for synchronous or asynchronous environments than others. Furthermore, a particular delivery medium can not substitute for the specified course material. The best benefit of any delivery medium choice may then influence course design. Yet, choosing the most appropriate media would not affect the learning outcomes ; rather, teaching strategies do (Holden and Westfall, 2006, p.31). Hence, Kaur (2012) states that the

medium is not restricted to technology, and the following are examples of media employed in BL :

- a) Stand alone, asynchronous or synchronous online learning / training.
- b) Performance support tools (knowledge management tools).
- c) Traditional classroom, labs or other ‘‘hands-on’’ experiences.
- d) Reading assignments, CD6ROMs or other self-paced learning.

1. 4.3 Instructional component

Holden and Westfall (2006) claim that instructional component is set to choose the best instructional methods for achieving the learning objectives that themselves create these methods. Then they make certain that the course content is delivered in a timely and efficient manner. Therefore, preserving instructional quality is critical when developing BL.

1.5 Approaches to Design Blended Learning Course

BL is gaining its popularity while at the same time making the learning environment more valuable by supplying it with online teaching resources. Despite this increased interest, the notion of BL remains a controversial subject. Resultly, Higher Education (HE) teachers have produced multiple interpretations of the term, as well as distinct design approaches. For many teachers in HE Institutions who are new to the concept of BL, deciding on the appropriate design approach for a BL course carries on to be a huge difficulty (Alammary et al., 2014, p.440). Through investigating multiple processes of designing a BL course, three distinct design approaches were identified : low impact blend (adding extra activities to an existing course), medium impact blend (replacing activities in an existing course), and high impact blend (building the blended course from scratch). Categorizing these techniques into three distinct approaches has been made according to possible adjustments of the current teaching program and student learning experience (Alammary et al., 2014, p.443).

1.5.1 Low impact blend

Low impact blend stands for adding extra online activities to a regular F2F course. According to Kaleta et al. (2007 as cited in Alammery et al., 2014), most teachers who develop blended courses incorporate online components into their regular courses without removing any of the pre-existing activities. This phenomenon is called as " the course-and-a-half syndrome"(p.127).

Additionally, Kaleta et al. suggested that adding more online tasks to designed courses is common when inexperienced teachers attempt to design for the first time a BL course. These teachers attempt to maintain the advantages of the BL by just adding to their existing courses instead of reconsidering the entire course objectives in the context of a BL mode. However, adding activities in different circumstances is a result of pedagogical need, which constitutes a valuable addition to the standard course.

McCarthy (2010) for example, adds an online activity to a course entitled *Imagining Our World* in order to motivate his students communicate more with their peers. He asks his students to send their assignments online to Facebook and comment on their peers assignments, in addition to the standard teaching approaches of lectures and tutorials. The resulting discussions are then transformed into a real classroom setting to help students build relations based on their online interactions. McCarthy's goal of inclusion online activities is to improve students' F2F interactions. He assesses his performance through weekly student comments, pre-and post-semester questionnaires, and project-specific reflections at the end of the semester. He notices that the added Facebook engagement provides a platform for students to develop preliminary academic and social connections with their mates while also addressing a variety of learning needs.

1.5.2 Medium-Impact Blend

Concerning medium-impact blend, pre-designed courses are rebuilt by substituting some F2F activities with online components. This strategy is based on the premise that some aspects of the course would be more effective as online activities. In other case, the left F2F sessions are kept unchanged, while in others, the in-class activities are modified (Twigg, 2003).

An illustration of this approach is the makeover of second year political science course by Garrison and Vaughan(2011). Three one-hour lectures each week were scheduled for the course. The teacher noted that the same four or five students who attended the online lecture dominated the case studies covered in the class. The three lectures were reduced to two in addition to an online discussion that was added under the replacement approach. The teacher separated the students into small groups and dominated the discussion time using a learning management system. Students were also given information regarding the nature, frequency and length of their contributions. The credit for the discussion was increased to 10% of the final grade by the teacher which is really motivational for students. As a result of this replacement, students were engaged in more sustained and valuable discourse.

1.5.3 High-Impact Blend

BL course is designed from the ground-up in high- impact blend approach. Full design, total design and radical change are all terms used in literature by Harriman(2004) and Hofmann (2006) to characterize this approach. They outline a popular way of using this approach. Instead of looking at the entire course, they suggested that the teacher looks at each individual learning outcome. Also, the teacher must choose the optimum method for delivering each outcome. Teachers can get the most effective blend of technology and develop better curriculum by using this method at learning outcomes level. According to Biggs (1996), this technique has approved to be identical with the common model of

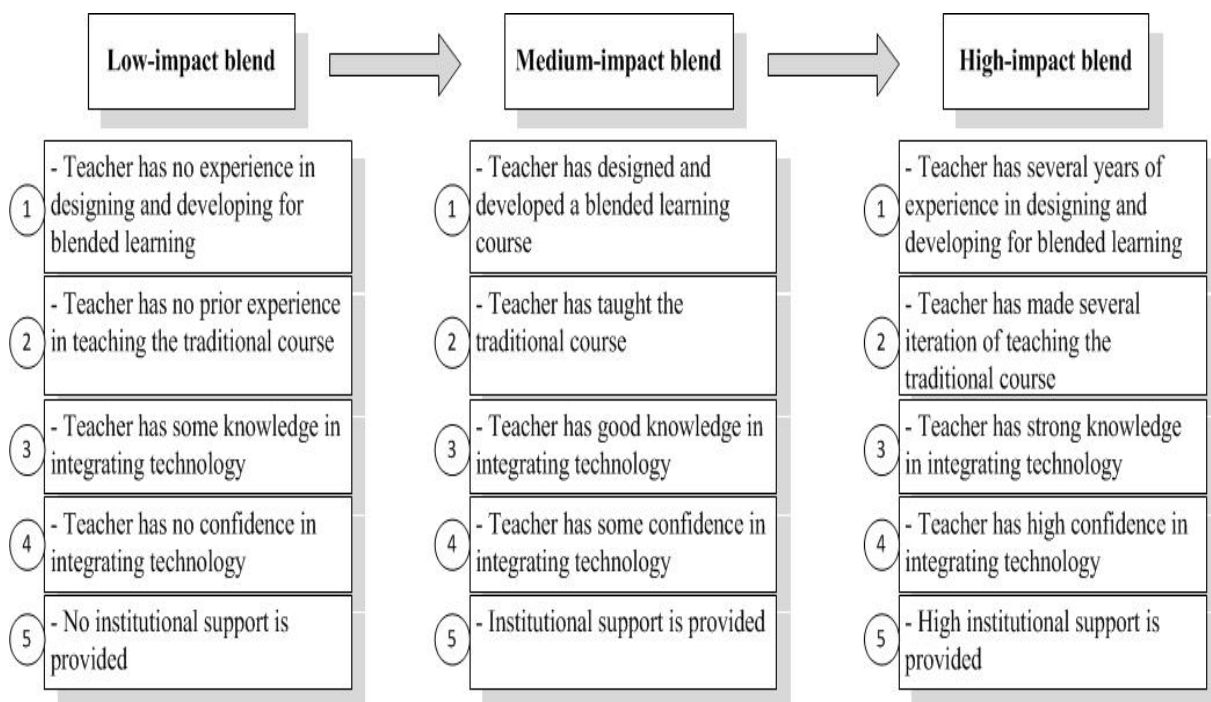
curriculum development, which is also known as constructive alignment in which assessment tasks are aligned with the learning outcomes.

Hofmann (2006) has also stated that it is a mistake to believe that changing an already existing course will take less time than creating a new one, and that course creators should create the entire course from scratch without being hesitant of “slaying the sacred cows” of successful traditional programs. (Hofmann, 2006, p.33).

Therefore, the following Figure 1.3 presents the main factors that impact the selection of BL course design.

Figure 1.3 Factors that influence the selection of BL design approaches

(Alammary et al.,2014, p.448)



1.6 Benefits of Blended Learning

In fact, multiple studies have demonstrated benefits of BL for both educators and students in their language acquisition. Ju and Mei (2018) argued that this type of approach assists teachers in improving their teaching methods and provides more options for the collaboration with their students, it also encourages them to pursue other forms of professional development and training. Hence BL is extremely advantageous for teachers in the way that through the use of the mixed content, teachers can explore new ideas and create their own course that reflect their teaching philosophy according to the needs of their students.

As Huang, Ma, and Zhang (n.d) pointed out that BL is primary known for its flexibility of providing multiple resources that are available to students without any limitations and restrictions. What is more, it gives teachers the opportunity to choose and develop different learning methods and contents that fit the purpose of their students' needs. Simply put, no single delivery method is ideal for all types of learning, for one thing, different subject matter typically requires different learning methods. BL allows to address learning objects in the manner most appropriate for the students needs being addressed.

Moreover, Garrison and Vaughan (2008) believed that through BL courses, students are more likely to be independent learners who communicate and share their knowledge with others, since BL, frequently, includes group activities in the online sessions. It also featured both motivating and authentic assignments that enable students to see their activities as "real" or "useful" ones, this will surely lead to increase effort, focus and a genuine desire to complete the task.

Kaur (2012) in his turn, highlighted the several benefits of BL that can be beneficial for the field of education. According to him, BL is a shift from a passive to a more active one, in which the educational focus transfers from the teacher to the learner. It also allows students to

participate in a variety of learning situations that encourage them to develop different learning skills.

The benefits mentioned in relation to academic writing are thought to be superior than others. Writing is considered as the most challenging skill to improve, especially for EFL learners. Academic writing as a distinct genre with all of its characteristics has proven to be even more difficult for university students to master. Because of this complexity, students must be given adequate time to practise such skill, as the proverb says "practise makes perfect".

However, Jack (2009, as cited in Sayed, 2012) agreed on the fact that time is viewed as an obstacle for the learning process, he states that most teachers can not devote classtime to writing since it requires a lot of practise. Therefore, it is hard to ensure effective academic writing in the traditional classroom because students are generally provided by a few activities to complete under time constraints, and often, even the teacher's feedback is misinterpreted. Thus, expanding learning through the use of BL strategy would encourage students to think more deeply about the activities they need to solve, to practise more and to have enough time for any reasoned conversations. In general, anxiety and motivation are the two key factors that influence the learning of a foreign language (Liu and Haung, 2010).

As a result, BL not only reduces learning anxiety, but it also improves motivation due to its bimodal nature. In a study conducted by Liu (2013), who uses the BL approach for an academic writing course, she discovered that using the BL method significantly reduces students' anxiety, particularly during the online course. She noted that both the teacher and the pupils were allowed to send and receive messages, as well as submit the sources at their leisure. Furthermore, the students felt more at ease and capable of asking questions and engaging with their peers and instructor more easily.

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Furthermore, Al fiki (2011) stated that BL increases students' engagement and involvement. It also improves students' performance and their learning process. Another worth mentioning benefit of the BL approach is that it fosters individual learning by providing rapid feedback, saving time and motivating students. Furthermore, he stressed that in hybrid classes the course website provides easy access to all course materials including syllabi, lecture notes, assignments sheets and other hard copy handouts (pp.24-26).

Many research studies have demonstrated those benefits of BL. According to Oblender's (2002) study, BL increased the percentage of students who were punctual in their daily attendance to (99%) from the whole students. While Milheim's (2006) study discovered some of the benefits of BL, including immediate feedback for students, flexibility of handling different content subjects depending on the circumstances. All in all, from the prementioned benefits, it becomes evident that BL model has a better chance to motivate both the student and the teacher to carry on the learning process.

1.7 Challenges of Blended Learning Approach

Although BL provides multiple benefits, it also creates a number of challenges due to its complex nature. These challenges have an impact on the quality of both teaching / learning

and hinders the development of its use in variety of settings. Therefore, they must be considered when designing a BL course. Generally, these challenges range between design, cultural, technical, and organizational issues.

Hofmann (2011) presented some challenges that encounter the use of BL including ensuring participants' ability to use a variety of technological materials successfully. That is to say, both instructor and student need to possess some technological knowledge to appropriately use such approach, in addition to the administration and control of learners' progress.

Other challenges include changing teachers' attitudes towards BL approach, due to the fact that some teachers may be resistant to adopt any new teaching methodologies, particularly, those involving technological material. This resistance might arise as a result of a given society's norms, which may regard internet use as a threat to its culture. (Sait et al.2003, as cited in Alebaikan and Troudi, 2010). Hofmann (2011) added that establishing a direct link between the medium of delivery and performance goals is a huge obstacle that face teachers when designing a BL course. Besides, ensuring that online resources provide interactivity rather than just instructing learners. Additionally, other challenges are related to evaluation, observation, and classroom management

In Al-Jarf's (2005) study, he mentioned that some students did not take the online instruction seriously since the BL method was not used by other instructors at the college. Therefore, the need for cultural adaptation, the need to create a balance between novelty and production, the role of learners self-discipline, self-organization, and the skill to handle the digital world are among the difficulties and challenges which might have some results that affect the quality of the learning process.

Hofmann (2011) stated the main obstacles that defy BL approach, as follows :

- Ensuring students and teachers' ability to use the technology.
- Resisting the idea that technology is used simply because it is available.
- Overcoming the idea that blended is effective.
- Redefining the role of the facilitator.
- Managing and monitoring participant progress.
- Looking at how to teach, not just what to teach.
- Matching the best delivery medium to the performance objective.
- Keeping online offerings interactive rather than just “talking at” participants.
- Ensuring participant commitment and follow-through with “non-live” elements.
- Ensuring all the elements of the blend are coordinated.
- Some adults experience some computer-related phobia
- Frustration, confusion, anger, anxiety and similar emotional states which may
- be associated with the interaction can adversely affect productivity, learning, social relationships and overall well-being.
- Various difficulties in evaluation, monitoring and class administration

Conclusion

In EFL education, the vast majority of students struggle when they attempt to transfer their ideas into pieces of writing due to many reasons. Thus, technological developments aims at decreasing the amount of these difficulties. Undeniably, the BL approach is known to be the most identical method followed by teachers around the world when delivering knowledge. This radical addition the educational system witnessed, resulted a significant impact on EFL teachers. Regarding this issue, this chapter presented a general overview of the concept of BL.

CHAPTER TWO: ESSAY WRITING

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Chapter Two : Essay Writing

Introduction

Writing is an important skill that helps students to communicate effectively through expressing their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in a comprehensible and clear manner. It includes all the knowledge and abilities to express ideas through written words. In this context, it has a crucial role in helping EFL students to master the language. Writing essays is generally regarded as one of the hardest tasks to be accomplished by students. In many university departments, both graduate and undergraduate students are required to organise ideas to a specific topic into coherent written forms. Therefore, the acquisition of appropriate essay writing techniques becomes essential for students, particularly when essays are part of their final assessment.

This chapter is composed of two main sections. The first section deals with writing skill, its definition, its importance and the approaches to teaching it, as well as the basic elements of effective writing. The second section is concerned with essays. It gives the definition of an essay with its main types, and the main stages to write it. Then it discusses the status of EFL learners' essay writing. In addition to the basic structure of essay and the most common difficulties in writing it.

2.1 Definition of Writing

Thousands of years, writing appeared to be the most popular form of communication. Thus, it can be widely defined from different views and perspectives. Sampson (1985) defined writing as "to write" might be defined, at a first approximation as : to communicate relatively specific ideas by means of permanent visible marks" (p.26). So then, writing symbolizes communicating any result of mental activities including thoughts and beliefs proportionately via endless number of symbols and letters.

As writing is regarded to be one of the most difficult skills to acquire, Byrne (1988) argued that transforming your ideas into letters and words in order to communicate with others is a complex process, writing can never be just the act of producing sounds and words, it is broader than only putting words down together, rather, writing should be defined as combining symbols and sounds with the goal of forming conventional meaning (p.01).

From the same angle, Bell and Burnaby(1984) argued that a writer must commit to an extreme degree to a certain specific variables, including control over content,format,sentence structure,vocabulary,punctuation,spelling and letter formation at the sentence level. Regarding beyond it, the writer must be competent in producing and forming information into meaningful and wellstructured pieces of writing.Therefore, writing is absolutely not that easier task to be accomplished (as cited in Nunan, 1989, p.36). Henceforth, being able to write well is not a naturally acquired skill. Harmer (2004) confirmed that writing is not a naturalistic ability like speaking, and it must be acquired in order to develop the capacity of being a good writer (p.03). Another way of saying that writing is a complex skill that must be learned and practiced in different instructional settings.

Furthermore, Westood (2008) considered writing as "complex thinking that must integrate multiple components including the topic or theme, choice of words, organisation, purpose, audience, clarity, sequence, cohesion and transcription" (p.56). He also added that the ability to write for different purposes relied heavily on proper vocabulary, knowledge of syntactic structure and suitable techniques for the writing process (p.56-57).

2.2Importance of Writing

Writing is a fundamental skill in the field of EFL learning and teaching. Both teachers and learners should be aware of the importance of this productive skill for the reason that it has advantages on both sides. Hence, many scholars and linguists have discussed the importance

of writing. Byrne (1988) believed that writing skill is an effective tool of communication, since it assists the learners in sharing and expressing their ideas and backgrounds. Furthermore, it is explained by Carroll (1990) that writing is humanity's most crucial invention that helps expressing ideas, beliefs, feelings, arguments and explanations in a reasonable and permanent manner (p.01).

Handle on Education (2016) presented the importance of writing as follows:

- Writing makes a person powerful and influential in the world through the ideas he write.
- Writing is an active process that gives the students an opportunity to practice. It concentrates on personal experience, feeling, and observation.
- Writing improves self-confidence and participates effectively in life.
- Writing develops your intellectual ability to explain a complex position to readers and helps you refine your thinking when you give others feedback.
- Writing equips us with communication and thinking skills.
- Writing motivates student to improve reading comprehension, which is the better writer is the one who read more.
- Writing allows people to communicate with each other, which permit people to meet from the near and far distance through their thoughts.

2.3 Basic Elements of Effective Writing

On the one hand, effective writing is an essential skill to have as a student and it is one of the most significant skills to develop in the learning process. Academic writing, on the other hand, necessitates particular elements and traits that make it more effective and clear. Some essential characteristics of effective writing are listed below:

2.3.1 Organization

Well-structured and organized writing is generally easy to read and comprehend. When writing assignments, students should organize their ideas into a logical structure that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. The major goal of well-formed and organized writings is to assist the reader in understanding and believing what you're saying ; as supported by Starkey (2004) who states

By following [an organized method of writing] you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence. He or she will be able to see how the various points you make in your[piece of writing] work together and how they support your ideas (p.02).

Hence, it is preferable for the student to make that piece of writing as easy to absorb as possible during the writing process, and if the text is not provided in a well-organized structure, the text will certainly have less impact on the reader.

2.3.2 Vocabulary

The impact of vocabulary on learners-comprehension and writing has been acknowledged to be a central feature. It is an integral aspect of language teaching and learning, particularly when learning a foreign language. Kane (1988) argued that the best way to learn and improve vocabulary is reading. Since the writing process might be lengthy, writers may come across unfamiliar words; they should not use or continue until they have thoroughly check them. It means that learning vocabulary is a process in itself; it necessitates the writer's efforts, just as building requires solid materials, writing needs sophisticated and accurate language and terminology (p.336). Thus, the students have to know how to choose the appropriate words for their writing (Norish, 1983 and Almirow 2005, as cited in Alfaki, 2015, p. 45). Hence, choosing the appropriate words is the finest technique for a student to accurately explain

his/her ideas through writing, which in turn guarantees that the reader comprehends what the writer has written.

2.3.3 Cohesion and Coherence

According to Halliday and Hasan(1976) the different parts of paragraphs are linked together by cohesive ties.They also claim that cohesion is a criterion used to determine whether a text is well-connected or simply a collection of sentences that are unrelated.Besides, it is worth noting that cohesion is not concerned with the content of the text, rather with the meaning between the sentences. So, the successful interpretation of a text can be achieved through the cohesive devices (p.40).

Coherence is critical factor in allowing the reader to follow the flow of ideas and the writer's intended meaning. Muray and Hughes (2008) noticed that in any type of writing, coherence is likely the most significant factor.It is important in academic writingwherebysuccess or failure is evaluated based on the reader's ability to understand your ideas and lines of argument.In addition, they declare that a good writer is the one "who sticks his ideas together as links in a chain,each link connecting the one before it with the one after.If any links are missing,the connections become unclear and the argument structure break down" (p.45). To put it simply, the reader can follow the writer's chain of thoughts and make sense of what he/she is reading through the clear connection of ideas.

2.3.4 Mechanics

In composition, the appearance of words, how they are spelled or arranged on paper is referred to as "mechanics". It is a matter of mechanics, for example, the first word of a paragraph is indented (Kane, 2000, p.15). According to standard writing conventions, a sentence should start with a capital letter and end with a full-stop punctuation (period, question mark or exclamation mark). These conventions or mechanics are very

important in composing a good quality piece of writing, because it does not matter how original students' ideas are, if a student can not express them in a clear and accurate manner, he will not be able to write a good quality piece of writing. Starkey (2004) addresses writing mechanics in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

Hartwell (1985, p.109) defined grammar as " the branch of linguistics science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and form utilization of formal language patterns". It means that grammar is concerned with the formation of grammatically correct words and sentences. Capitalization and punctuation marks are integral parts of written English. According to Murray and Hughes (2008) :

They indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. A well punctuated and capitalized piece of writing should make your work easier to read and understand and will therefore help it make a more favorable impression on your readers (p.185).

To sum up, capitalization and punctuation marks help to get rid of misunderstandings, also they will have a positive impact on the readers.

Furthermore, due to the reason that spelling is an aspect that many teachers in EFL context focus on when evaluating students' work, it is one of the factors that students must consider when dealing with writing. Correct spelling lends credibility to ones's work. Not only the reader will notice that the author is well-educated, but he will also notice that he is meticulous in his work. For a good piece of writing, proper spelling is crucial. Harmer (2007) stated that although incorrect spelling does not always prevent a written message from being understood, it can have a negative impact on the reader's judgment. Bad spelling can be mistaken for the

lack of education or care. As a result, we conclude that motivating students to read a lot will help them improve their spelling (p.325).

2.4 Approaches to Teaching Writing

There have been several approaches to teaching writing in EFL field, and their functions differ depending on the objectives that each approach is based on.

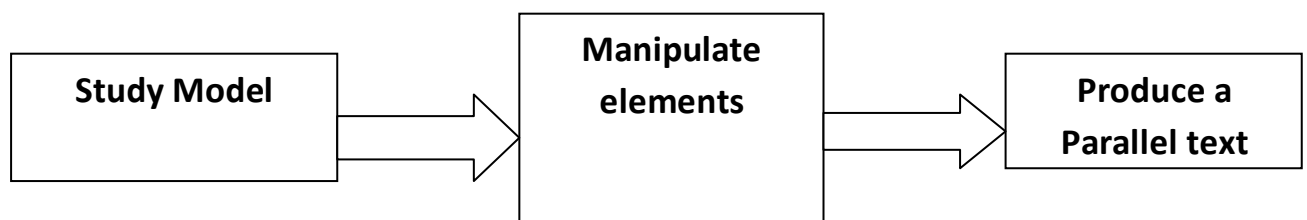
2.4.1 The Product Approach

Broadly speaking, the product approach as its name indicates, focuses on the final results of the writing process. It is a traditional approach that was spread out over a large area during the 1960's. According to Raimes(1983) it is also called the controlled-oriented approach, she claims that when teaching writing through this approach, learners are generally provided by a set of sentences to copy and edit, with the mastery of several aspects that should be considered while writing, including spelling, grammar and syntax among others (p.06).

Moreover, Byrne (1988) stated that product approach's main focus is the control over learners' written work in order to eliminate the amount of mistakes (p.21). Indeed, this type of approach focused on the final output with an emphasize on the structure and syntax, while a little attention is given to the steps of writing process. As well as, White (1988) summarized the procedure for this approach as follows :

Figure 2.4 The Product Approach Stage

(Retrieved from White, 1988)



2.4.2 The Process Approach

The process approach is an approach which emerged in response to the shortcomings of the product approach in 1970's, and it gradually replaces it. The process approach's core concerns are diametrically opposed to the product approach's. It focuses on how writers start and finish their writing rather than the final output. Raimes (1983) claimed that all writers must choose how to begin and structure their work (p.10).

According to Hariston (1982):

We can not teach students to write by looking only at what they have written, we must also understand how that product come into being, and why it assumed the form it did.

We have to try to understand what goes on during the act of writing... if we want to affect its outcomes. We have to do the hard thing, examine the intangible process, rather than the easy thing, evaluate the tangible product (p. 84).

This quotation implies that in order to enhance students' level of writing, we must consider the stages he/she goes through in the writing process instead of only focusing on the last product without questioning how it becomes the way it is. However, Badger and White (2000) criticized the process approach, because it views the writing process as the same for all writers, regardless of what is being written or who is writing it, and since it places inadequate emphasis on the purpose and social context of the piece of writing. Yet, the process approach is generally accepted and used because it allows students to comprehend the procedures involved in writing and to acknowledge that what students bring to the writing classroom, contributes to their ability to write.

2.4.3 The Genre Approach

According to White and Badgar (2000) the genre based approach is known to be an extension of the product approach. It became popular in 1980's, coupled with the idea that studying diverse sorts of written texts may assist students writers. They also state that the genre writing reflects a specific purpose of a certain social situation where students can acquire writing skills through conscious imitation and analysis of each writing genre.

Correspondingly, Hyland (2003) asserted that there are two major issues developed here ; first language is functional, i.e, it is used to achieve specific goals. Second, language is situational, i.e, it occurs in a specific social setting, and thus can not be understood outside of that setting. So, while using this approach students should not only focus on the text, but also on the context in which the text is produced.

2.5 Definition of Academic Writing

Academic writing is a type of writing that is used to complete a specific assignments and requirements in an academic context(universities and colleges),and it is, generally, distinguished by its own set of rules and characteristics.Hence, this type of writing designed for students in university is much different from non-academic ones.It is considered as a more demanding and sophisticated exercise.Oshima and Hogue (1998)state :

Academic writing as the name implies, is the kind of writing that you are required to do in college or university.It differs from other kinds of writing such as personal literacy, journalistic, or business writing.Its differences can be explained in part by its special audience, tone and purpose (p.02).

In the same path, Oshima and Hogue (2007) declared that academic writing focuses on the type of second language learner found in high school, college, and university settings. It is distinct from creative writing which includes writing stories, as well as personal writing which is the kind of writing letters or e-mails. Since academic writing is formal, the writer should not use slang or contractions. In addition the writer should make effort to write complete sentences and organize them in a logical manner (p.03).

However, Bahar (2014, p.213) tended to define academic writing from a narrow perspective arguing "academic writing refers to all the considered principles while conducting and reporting an academic research" (as cited in Akkaya and Aydin, 2018, p.129).

As a conclusive summary to what has been discussed so far, one can deduce that academic writing is utilized to complete various assignments in an academic settings, it must meet particular requirements and address a specific sort of audience.

2.5.1 Definition of Essay

Warburton (2006) declared that the act of writing an essay is at the center of education. Whatever the subject you are studying, you will be required to write an essay. If you do not, you will probably never be able to connect the various threads of what you have learned. He adds that students are generally graded based on their essays in many different areas, including literature, history, and philosophy. Besides, he stresses on the idea that students will never achieve in such areas if they can not write good essays, especially under exam conditions (p.07).

Connelley and Forsyth(2011) defined an essay as "...an essay is a formal piece of writing and as such, it has certain conventions'" (p.08). To put it another way, an essay is a formal piece of writing that has specific rules that must be followed. It is an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their understanding of a certain topic as well as their background

knowledge. The definition of McClain and Roth (1998) is slightly different from the previous one. According to them, through an essay, learners will be able to acquire how to investigate a particular topic, make decisions, use reasoning and evidence to create an argument supporting that decision, and produce a coherent whole (p.01).

To conclude, an essay is a particular genre of writing that is at the heart of academic writing. It is a type of university assignment that is delivered as a continual evaluation or in quizzes and exams. It is an issue of great importance for students because it determines their grades and academic reputation. "Essays are written by students to show their teachers their understanding of issues in their subjects ; in the field of Applied Linguistics they are the most common means of assessments on Masters Courses." (Huntson and Oakey, 2010, p.217).

2.5.2 Stages of Writing Essays

Oshima and Hogue (1988) affirmed that the process of writing an essay is identical to that of writing a single paragraph composition, i.e. one should brainstorm his/her ideas, creates ideas, and write several draft until achieving a finished product that he/she can be proud of (p.113).

According to Oshima and Hogue (1998) the writing process is divided into four stages, each with its own set of steps. In the pre-writing stage, a series of steps have been devised to be followed. First, select and narrow a topic. After deciding on a topic of interest, one must narrow it down as much as possible to focus on a specific aspect of that broad subject. After choosing and narrowing a topic, the second step is brainstorming. Basically, there are three useful brainstorming techniques : The first is to list words or phrases that come to mind in a short period of time, or to write freely about the topic. The aim of free writing is to generate a large number of ideas without regard of grammar, logic, or organization. The last technique is

clustering, which is about writing our topic in the center of the paper, then write all ideas that comes to mind around it in balloons (Oshima and Hogue, 1988, p.03).

After choosing the topic, narrowing it down and brainstorming ideas, the planning or outlining stage follows, where one organizes ideas. This stage also provides a number of detailed steps. First, create a sub-list that divides the concepts in the ‘‘communication problem’’ and cross off items that are not relevant to the topic. Second, one writes the topic sentence, which is the most essential since it expresses the main point of the writing. Third, outline the major elements in order to plan ideas, and then begin writing easily (Oshima and Hogue, 1988, p.08).

Following the pre-writing and planning stages come the writing and revising stage. Basically, writing is not perfect from the first time. This is why it takes many drafts to improve a particular piece of writing. This stage is also accompanied by a set of steps. The first step is to write the first rough draft. Usually, this step reminds you of the focus of your topic. At this stage, grammar, punctuation, or spelling mistakes are not considered. Rather, the main focus is on jotting down as much information about the topic as possible. Finally, you are ready to write the final copy, in which we write neatly and formally (Oshima and Hogue, 1998, p.10).

However, Harmer (2004) claims that the amount of attention you pay to these stages of process is highly dependent on the type of writing, the medium we are using, the topic and length of our piece ; as well as ; who we are writing for (p.06).

2.5.3 Major Types of Essay

According to John (2020) essays are divided into four main categories, each serves a different purpose; though some have similar structures. Narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive are the four types of essays.

- **Narrative Essay**

This sort of writing necessitates the author's ability to tell fascinating stories about anything. To put it in other way, it is a condensed version of a novel. Students must exhibit their ability to be innovative in this type of essay. Thus, it demands the usage of strong adjectives on a regular basis. Such use of adjectives aids the author in creating a compelling vital picture of the story and improves the audience's expectations from the subject. Although the primary goal of this type of essay is to convey compelling stories, there are much more goals if it. In a well crafted narration, there should be a point " written between lines". To state it simply, the text should convey clear messages. By stating hidden meanings and messages between lines, the author stimulates the attention of his readers to read the whole story as it piques readers' curiosity (John, 2020).

- **Descriptive Essay**

Briefly, in a descriptive essay the author selects a certain subject, experience, feeling or idea to describe for readers. This style same like narrative essay requires the author's subjective and creative thinking where he is expected to print a vivid picture in readers' minds. Another aspect of writing a descriptive essay that must be carefully considered is word choice. A descriptive paper should elicit specific emotions in the reader an relate them to the topic at hand. Finally, the topic should be explained using simple terminologies. When the reader grasp the subject completely, the author becomes sure that he authored a fantastic descriptive piece of writing (John, 2020).

- **Expository Essay**

An expository essay is a style of academic writing that provides solid information and facts to help readers grasp the subject matter. This sort of writing necessitates the author's use of

valid proof to ensure the reliability all of the material presented in the article. Opinions or personal ideas on a subject have no place in this type of essay. A good paper will use analysis that is based on real facts about the subject. The author's main purpose is to use clear logic and facts to inform and educate the audience. For instance, a post on "How to Write an Academic Essay" can be classified as expository writing (John, 2020).

- **Persuasive Essay**

Writing a persuasive paper requires taking on the character of a salesmen (or saleswoman). You can express a viewpoint, a project, or an idea, and then sell it to your reader (s). The rationale behind how you provide information to the reader (s) should be impenetrable, leaving no doubt in their minds that what you're saying is the only truth they need to know. To avoid coming across as aggressive, properly craft your points and conceal your sales pitch in a well-thought-out language. You can employ logical tactics, emotional tactics, or a combination of both to defend an argument, depending on what you're trying to argue (John, 2020).

2.5.4 Common Structure of an Essay

Livingston (2012) states that "no matter what the purpose of the essay is, the basic structure is always the same". Hence, learners should be aware and adhere to the three basic parts of the essay format : an introduction, a body and a conclusion. In the same light, Taylor (2009) affirmed each component's significance in the essay. The introduction states the claim which is justified in the middle, while the conclusion restates and summarizes (p.92).

- **The Introduction**

Oshima and Hogue(2007) highlight that "the introductory paragraph, or introduction, is the first paragraph of an essay. It has two functions :(1) it attracts the reader's interest and (2) it

introduces the topic of the essay"(p.150).They add that, an introduction is the opening paragraph of an essay,which gives the readers their initial impression and motivates them to continue reading the essay.Generally, introductions provide a brief background so that you can slowly prepare the reader for the main focus of the whole paper.

Moreover,the most important part of the introduction is the thesis statement, in which your main topic or ideais mentioned.As a whole,the introduction is devided into two parts : the general statement(the hook), which is made up of one or two sentences that present a general background and attract the reader's attention,while the specific statement (the thesis statement),is about the essay's core idea or aim (Oshima and Hogue, 2007, p.150).

- **The Body**

Oshima and Hogue (2007) pionted out that the body of an essay is made up of one or more paragraphs.Each body paragraph has a topic sentence and several supporting sentences.It may or may not have a concluding sentence.Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement. (p.152).

In addition to what has already been mentioned ; Robitaille and Connelly (2007) stressed that the standard paragraph pattern of topic sentence, supporting sentences and conclusion is followed in the body paragraph in any essay (p.101).Usually, each body paragraph has at least three supporting sentences that expand on the topic sentence through the use of illustrations and examples.

In the body part of the essay each paragrah directly explains one of the ideas that have been declared in the thesis statement. Hence, the number of the body paragraphs depends on the ideas of the thesis statement. In most academic writing, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of the paragraph, whereas in professional writingit is not necessarily to start with the topic sentence (p.101).

• **The Conclusion**

The conclusion is the last paragraph in the essay. The role of the concluding paragraph, according to Zemmach and Rumisek (2005) is :

- Summarizing the main points of the essay.
- Restating the thesis using different words.
- Making final comment about the essay's main idea.
- Emphasizing an action that the writer would like the reader to take (p.74).

Therefore, a conclusion should not introduce new ideas, rather, it only restates the most important points that have been discussed in the essay.

2.5.5 Major Difficulties in Academic Writing

Generally, EFL learners confront a variety of problems and difficulties when they attempt to write academic writings.

2.5.5.1 Vocabulary

In academic writing, having a large vocabulary is crucial. Wilkins (cited in Schmitt 2010, p.03) declares that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". However, students may struggle with vocabulary in writing because it is critical to explain ideas using exact or synonym words. Moreover, it is difficult for students to select proper terminology that corresponds to the academic goal. Similarly, Seely (1998) identified three problematic areas of vocabulary : active vocabulary that is commonly used in writing, passive vocabulary that is recognized to learners through their reading but it is never utilized in writing, in addition to the never heard or known vocabulary. These types however can move from one location to another, i.e, a vocabulary that has never been heard or known can become a passive or active vocabulary and vice versa.

2.5.5.2 Spelling

Correct spelling of words is a crucial aspect of any written work, due to the English language's intricate spelling system which has 26 letters that represent 44 different sounds, EFL students may make spelling mistakes. Another cause of spelling mistakes is when students write words that are incorrectly spoken. Many words are regularly misspelled, according to Connelly (2012, p.553). It could be a foreign term, a word with silent letters or a word with an uncommon letter combination. Students frequently slur sounds and fail to pronounce every letter when speaking, due to the reason that they are used to hear them mispronounced. Hence, spelling mistakes in academic writing are improper due to the confusion it results between homophonic terms because sometimes a writer may fail to convey key ideas which leads the reader to doubt the writer's skills and the quality of his written product.

2.5.5.3 Grammar

When it comes to academic writing, grammar is one of the most difficult and perplexing components of any language. It is utilized to appropriately and efficiently express thoughts. According to Thornbury (1999) grammar is defined as "description of the rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meaning that these forms convey" (p.13). This means that learners who construct ungrammatical structures may impair communication with readers. Seely (1998) stated that grammatical errors in sentence formation may undervalue students' writing, and he emphasizes the need of certain techniques for an accurate sentence such as, the proper usage and placement of verbs, objects, adverbs and coordinating conjunctions. Overall, students who pay close attention to grammatical precision will be able to convey the intended ideas.

2.5.5.4 Punctuation

The proper placement of punctuation marks makes students' writing easier to read and understand, and it prevents readers from being confused while reading. Therefore, following standard punctuation conventions is critical in academic writing. According to Sedy (1998), obeying the rules and restrictions of punctuation when writing is challenging for students, and the most common mistakes they make while writing are about the placement of the comma.

To summarize, EFL learners' academic production may be affected by a lack of knowledge and awareness of the prementioned concepts. As a result, it would harm their scores in assignments. Such type of mistakes might represent a careless and undervalued writer, as well as an irrelevant and underappreciated piece of writing. Students can overcome such difficulties and improve their written compositions by practicing regularly.

Conclusion

Based on what has been said, it can be concluded that writing essay is a difficult skill that necessitates the attention of both learners and teachers. Furthermore, improving essay writing skill remains one of the most significant challenges that EFL students face. The above chapter is a general overview of the concept of writing essay. It outlines the definition of both concepts, it also explores the major approaches to teaching writing, in addition to the elements that make it more effective one. Moreover, it highlights the definition of an essay, its types, the steps and the common structure of writing them as well as the status of EFL learners in writing essays. The chapter concludes with some difficulties learners meet while writing.

CHAPTER THREE: FIELD INVESTIGATION

Introduction	
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Chapter Three:Field Investigation

Introduction

The current chapter describes the field work of the study and the analysis of the collected data. It is devoted to teachers' questionnaire description, data analysis and results' summary. Therefore, the questionnaire's main purpose is to investigate teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the effectiveness of BL approach on essay writing. Following that, analysis and interpretation of the results are obtained in order to confirm or reject the research hypothesis. Moreover, the results provide answer to the research questions.

3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

3.1.1 Population of the Study

The present study targets EFL second year teachers of written expression, during the academic year 2021/2022, at the Department of English University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. In order to collect the needed data about teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the effectiveness of the BL approach on essay writing, a questionnaire was distributed to fourteen (14) teachers of second year written expression module. The sample was purposively selected to answer the questionnaire.

Certain considerations guided the selection of the sample. Firstly, since the main focus is on the effectiveness of BL approach on learners' essay writing, and this latter is introduced to students in their second year, where they are trained the whole year to master this fundamental skill. The second reason is teachers' long experience, maturity besides their guaranteed sensitive treatment of our questionnaire.

3.1.2 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

The research questionnaire is based on the theoretical part of this study. It comprises twenty-four (24) questions that are organized into four sections, each one focusing on a

particular objective. The questionnaire includes different types of questions, ranging from dichotomous questions, open-ended questions and multiple choice questions where teachers are allowed to select more than one option.

The first section, named ‘‘general information’’, is made up of three (03) questions. It attempts to obtain general information about teachers, asking about the degree they hold (Q1), seeking to know about their teaching experience as English language teachers in general (Q2), and as teachers of written expression module in particular (Q3).

The second section, "teachers' attitudes towards BL", consists of six (06) questions that are related to BL. Questions (04,05 and 06) are concerned with teachers' familiarity, usage and frequency of the use of BL approach in their teaching. (Q07) aims at eliciting teachers' preferable method of teaching written expression module. (Q08) is designed to identify the main reasons for adding online sessions for written expression module. The last question in this section (Q9) is designed to explore the challenges that teachers face when teaching an online course.

The third section entitled "teachers' attitudes towards essay writing", combines six (06) questions, it deals with the essay writing in order to investigate teachers' attitudes about some aspects of essay writing, such as ; whether learning how to write essays is important or not, and the main reasons behind its importance (Q10 and Q11). (Q12) aims at exploring teachers' opinions about their students' level in writing essays. The following question's (Q13) focuses on different approaches teachers use when teaching written expression module in general and essay writing in particular. Furthermore, teachers are asked whether their students are familiar with common essay structure or not(Q14). The last question aims to collect information about the different difficulties that students face when writing essays.

The last and most consequential section of the present questionnaire deals with the impact of BL approach on essay writing. It comprises nine (09) questions (from Q16 to Q24). Concisely, this section explores teachers' opinions and views about the impact of the BL approach on essay writing. Starting with gathering teachers' views on whether they support the integration of BL approach into their courses or not (Q16). In (Q17), teachers are asked to specify if BL motivates their students in composing their essays. In addition, (Q18 and Q19) are devoted to know multiple interpretations on how does BL enhance students' essay writing. (Q20), aims at manifesting to what extent does BL approach help students in writing essays, according to teachers' different opinions. (Q21, Q22) were addressed to shed light on whether BL help students to overcome their essay problems or not, then teachers' views about the level of their students' essay writing proficiency after implementing BL into their written expression courses are collected. For (Q23), teachers were asked if they agree to recommend BL for other teachers who are not yet aware of it. Finally, question twenty four (Q24) is set to get further information about the topic as it gives opportunity to teachers to add other suggestions and comments.

3.1.3 Administration of Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered on the 8th of May 2022 at the Department of English, University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. It was distributed to fourteen (14) teachers of second year written expression module and was accomplished in almost two weeks due to our University's triggering system ; all teachers teach only one week F2F. The majority of teachers answered the questionnaire at the end of their sessions.

3.4.1 Analysis of Results and Findings of Teachers' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Question One: Degree

Table 3.1

Teachers' Degree

Options Number	Percentage	
Master	02	14.29%
Magister	10	71.42%
Doctorat	02	14.29%
Total	14	100%

From the results shown in Table 3.1, it is indicated that the majority of teachers, with the rate of (71.42%) hold Magister degree, while Master and Doctorat degrees occupy the rest of the percentage in equal proportion (14.29%) for each. The degree held by teachers demonstrates their competency and ability to provide reliable data. It also aids in collecting various opinions from different levels.

Question Two : How long have you been teaching English language at the University ?

Table 3.2

Teachers' Professional Experience

Years	Number	Percentage
Less than 06 years	04	28.58 %
More than 06 years	10	71.42%
Total	14	100%

Concerning the years of teaching English at the University, the findings displayed in Table 3.2 reveal that (71.42%) of the questioned teachers have been teaching English for more than six (06) years, which indicates that they are experienced in teaching English. Only (28.58%) of them have been teaching English for less than six (06) years ; it implies that they are new to

the field of English teaching. Yet, the attained experience is partly reliable and dependable to rely on as far as the analysis of the designed questionnaire is concerned.

Question Three : How long have you been teaching written expression ?

Table 3.3

Teachers' Experience of Teaching Written Expression

Years	Number	Percentage
From 01 to 05 years	12	85.71%
From 05 to 10 years	02	14.29%
Total	14	100%

According to Table 3.3 the overwhelming majority of teachers (85.71%) stated that they have taught written expression module from one to five years, this implies that they did not have much experience in teaching writing skill, that is why they need to acquire more experience in teaching this module. Only (14.29%) of them taught this module for more than five years. Hence, the results denote that all teachers have reasonable teaching experiences in written expression module, at least for one or two years ; in addition, they have a background knowledge about the writing skill.

Section Two : Teachers' Attitudes towards Blended Learning

Question Four : Are you familiar with the term ‘Blended Learning’ ?

Table 3.4

Teachers' Familiarity with The Term ‘Blended Learning’

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	85.71%
No	02	14.29%
Total	14	100%

This question sought to know teachers' familiarity with the term BL. As shown in Table 3.4, out of fourteen (14) teachers, twelve (12) of them stated that the concept of BL is already known to them. However, the two (02) other teachers responded negatively. This means that those teachers have never heard about the BL approach. The findings revealed that the majority of teachers had clear knowledge about the recently used (BL) approach and their answers would be of a valuable contribution to the present work.

Question Five : Do you use BL in teaching written expression ?

Table 3.5

Teachers' Usage of Blended Learning

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	07	50%
No	07	50%
Total	14	100%

The aim behind this question is to know whether second year teachers of written expression use the BL approach in their courses or not. It is concluded from the prementioned Table 3.5 that (50%) from the whole sample opted for yes. This entails that these teachers recognize the importance and advantages of the BL approach, besides they find it effective in learners' essay writing improvement. Equally, (50%) of them answered by no, which might be linked to many reasons including the lack of the necessary equipment and the shortage of teachers' experience with technological materials.

Question Six : If yes, how often do you use it ?

Table 3.6

Frequency of Teachers' Use of Blended Learning

Option	Number	Percentage
a-Always	0	0%
b-Often	02	14%
c-Sometimes	06	43%
d-Rarely	0	0%
Did not answer the question	06	43%
Total	14	100%

According to the results reported in Table 3.6, (43%) of correspondents assumed that they sometimes use BL in their written expression classrooms. This means that these teachers have some difficulties in using the BL approach permanently, while two (02) teachers with the percentage (14%) claimed that they often use it. This is may be due to the availability of some motives for such use. Non of the respondents confesses that he/she always uses BL for his/her teaching. Unfortunately, (43%) of teachers did not even answer the question, which indicate that these teachers might be among those who do not use this method during their written expression sessions.

Question Seven : Do you prefer the traditional face-to-face or the blended learning method in teaching written expression ?

Table 3.7

Teachers' Preferred Method of Teaching Written Expression

Option	Number	Percentage
Face-to-face learning	08	57.14%
Blended learning	05	35.72%
Both	01	07.14%
Total	14	100%

As it is indicated in Table 3.7 the majority of teachers (57.14%) declared that F2F learning is their preferred method. It may imply that they encounter several challenges during online learning. Also, it may insinuate that these teachers are not yet ready yet for adopting a new method of teaching. Only one teacher (7.14%) preferred both of them ; i.e. he/she is satisfied with both modes of teaching, which denotes that this teacher is able to succeed in achieving some teaching performance in both educational types. While (35.72%) confirm their preference to teach through the BL environment rather than F2F due to its multiple advantages in enhancing their students' essay writing proficiency.

Question Eight : According to you, what are the main reasons behind adding an online session in written expression module ?

Table 3.8

Reasons behind Adding Online Sessions in Written Expression Module

Option	Number	Percentage
a-Because the time allowed in classroom is not enough	05	35.72%
b-To be up-to-date with modern teaching methods	03	21.43%
c-To add extra activities for students	04	28.57%

d-To encourage learners to learn independently and be responsible for their own learning	02	14.28%
Total	14	100%

As it is displayed in Table 3.8, the majority of teachers (35.72%) assert that they usually add online sessions due to insufficient time allowed for written expression lecture. This indicates that online sessions provide more flexible time for the accomplishment of the objectives of matter. Only (21%) teachers opt for option (b), this denotes that that these teachers are acknowledged by the fact that they need modern methods of teaching. Option (c) was selected by four (04) teachers (28.57%). This statistic implies that these teachers add online sessions mainly to supply their students with extra activities in order to improve their essay writings. A very low percentage (14.28%) of teachers add online sessions to enable their students to be responsible for their own learning process.

Question Nine : If you ever taught an online course, please select the challenges you faced while teaching ?

Table 3.9

Challenges while Teaching Online

Option	Number	Percentage
a-Lack of teachers' experience when implementing blended learning	02	14.28%
b-Students' challenges of self-discipline and self-regulation to carry out their education remotely	04	28.58%
c-The lack of regular net connection, access to computers and connectivity	06	42.86%
d-Poor integration and	02	14.28 %

 planning for a blended
 learning course

Total

14

100%

This question's main aim is to highlight the most common challenges teachers of written expression face when they teach online. The first and last options were selected with equal proportions (14.28%) for each. This denotes that these teachers are not yet well acknowledged of teaching via web based approaches. Besides, it reflects that these teachers usually face problems and challenges when teaching online due to their improper planning and virgin experience with online teaching methods. The second option (b) includes problems of self-discipline and self-regulation misplayed by students when learning remotely, it was selected by four (04) teachers (28.58%) which presents the vast majority of the sample. This implies that students' immature and irresponsible treatment towards their learning remains to be the first threat that threatens their learning achievements and educational success. The irregular net connection and access to computers is ticked by the absolute percentage (42.86%) of teachers as displayed in Table 3.9, which asserts that the bad quality of internet is the biggest problem that teachers encounter when teaching online, besides the absolute fact that it has a significant negative impact on EFL students in general.

Section Three: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Essay Writing

Question Ten: Do you think that learning how to write essays is important for your students ?

Table 3.10

Teachers' Opinions about the Importance of Writing Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	100%
No	0	0%
Total	14	100%

Our objective through this question was to discover teachers' opinions towards the importance of essay writing. The results from Table 3.10 showed that all teachers of the sample (100%) agreed on the importance of writing essays for their students. It seems that all teachers are aware of the significance of writing essays as a skill to be mastered when learning English as a foreign language.

Question Eleven: If yes, is it important because ?

Table 3.11

Reasons behind the Importance of Writing Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
a- Essay writing is very important skill in developing students' critical thinking	07	50%
b- Essay writing helps students in expressing their feelings and beliefs easily	02	14.28%
c- Essay writing encourages the students to practice their other skills	04	28.58%
d- Essay writing works like a boost that motivate students to produce their best	01	07.14%
Total	14	100%

Table 3.11 shows that half of the sample (50%) believed that writing essays helps students in developing their critical thinking, since writing is at first a thinking process. This may

confirm that consistent essay writing promotes students' thinking, by making it sharp and effective. (28.58%) of teachers opted for essay writing would encourage students to practice their other skills. Taking the case of reading skill, the quality of students' written essay is generally dependent on the amount of their reading. Hence, teachers are aware to the fact that, in order to produce an effective piece of essay, students will be motivated to develop their grammar and enrich their vocabulary as well. (14.28%) of teachers assumed that essay writing is important to help students in expressing their ideas and beliefs easily, this indicates that it might be helpful technique for students to clarify and sort out ideas and information. However, only (7.14%) stated that essay writing works like a boost that motivate students to produce their best.

Question Twelve: Do you think your students' level in writing essays is ?

Table 3.12

Teachers' Perceptions towards their Students' Level of Essay Writing

Option	Number	Percentage
a- Excellent	0	0%
b- Good	03	21.43%
c- Average	10	71.43%
d- Low	01	7.14%
Total	14	100%

Table 3.12 displays that the majority of teachers (71.43%) described their students' level in writing essays as average, which indicates that they face some difficulties when writing their essays. Only (21.47%) of them described it as good. It can be noticed that their students master to some extent, the basic elements, rules and principles of writing essays. While only one teacher (7.14%) thought of his/her students' level as low. However, none of the respondents consider that their students are excellent in writing essays. The findings reveal

that students' level is just medium and the process of writing essays is really a troublesome skill for most students who can not produce acceptable compositions. Hence, these students need more practice, more effective and stimulating teaching methods to improve their writing skill.

Question Thirteen: Which approach do you use to teach essay writing ?

Table 3.13

Approaches in Teaching Writing Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
a- Product approach	05	35.72%
b- Process approach	07	50%
c- Genre approach	01	7.14 %
d- All of them	01	7.14%
Total	14	100%

As shown in Table 3.13, half of the sample (50%) declared that they follow the process approach, which requires to go through stages of planning, drafting, reviewing and editing. Thus, it enables students to reflect in a recursive manner to produce an intended piece of writing. Moreover, they allow their students to make multiple revisions for their essays and provide much time for feedback. (35.72%) of teachers use the product approach in their teaching, these teachers usually focus on the final draft that their students submit as a complete composition. (7.14%) opted for the genre approach. Nevertheless, one teacher opt for the three approaches (7.14%). The findings can revealed that all of the given approaches are important and serve to improve students' writing skill ; yet the degree of importance differs from one approach to another.

Question Fourteen: Are your students familiar with the structure of an essay (introduction, body and conclusion) ?

Table 3.14

Students' Familiarity with the Structure of an Essay

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	13	92.86%
No	01	7.14%
Total	14	100%

Table 3.14 indicates that the majority of teachers (92.86%) claimed that their students are already familiar with the structure of an essay. This entails that they acquired the rules of essay structure, considering that an essay starts with an introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion. However, only one teacher (07.14%) claimed that his/her students are not acquainted with the basic structure of essay. This could be due to the fact that it is their first year to be introduced to such type of compositions.

Question Fifteen: What are the most typical difficulties your students usually face when writing essays ?

Table 3.15

Teachers' Views about Students Difficulties in Writing Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
a- Structure	02	14.28%
b- Grammar	06	42.86%
c- Vocabulary	03	21.43%
d- Spelling	03	21.43%
Total	14	100%

In response to this question, teachers opted for more than one choice since students may have different difficulties at the same time. According to the findings in the Table above, (42.86%) of teachers claimed that grammar is the major obstacle for their students when writing essays, this may result from the misapplication and of extensive grammar rules. While (21.43%) opted for vocabulary as another main difficulty, which implies that without having a rich vocabulary in mind; students would confront a variety of issues while writing their essays. With an equal percentage (21.43%) of teachers declared that spelling is another difficult concept for their students to grasp when it comes to essay writing. This indicates that students disregard the value of reading and writing in order to improve their spelling. Only (14.28%) of teachers admitted that structure is among the difficulties that students face while writing their essays. This means that providing students with theoretical lessons is insufficient, rather they must engage in a variety of related activities. These findings clearly show that teaching essay writing is a difficult and demanding task, as it necessitates teacher dealing with a large number of issues in order to assist their students in overcoming such difficulties and providing adequate composition skills; which can be achieved through the best method of teaching.

Section Four : Teachers' Attitudes towards The Impact of Blended

Learning on Essay Writing

Question Sixteen : Do you support the integration of BL to teach essay writing ?

Table 3.16

Teachers' Support to Integrate Blended Learning to Teach Essay Writing

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	71.43%
No	04	28.57%
Total	14	100%

Almost all teachers (71.43%) affirmed that they support the integration of BL approach to teach writing essays. This denotes that the majority of teachers recognize the paramount importance of BL approach in the improvement of their students' essay writing. This also suggests that teachers attempt to encourage such type of learning. While (28.57%) of teachers responded negatively to the question. This might be due to number of reasons including : teachers do not have an idea about how to apply BL in their courses, they do not know how to utilize technological aids in their teaching process or simply they could be technophobic.

Question Seventeen : If yes, does BL motivate your students in writing essays ?

Table 3.17

Teachers' Perception towards Blended Learning and Motivation to Write Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	07	50%
No	04	28.57%
Did not answer	03	21.43%
Total	14	100%

Table 3.17 illustrates that half of the sample (50%) believed that BL could be a motivational tool for students to write essays. (28.57%) of the respondents argued that they do not view BL as a method that would motivate their students. While (21.43%) did not answer the question. The aforementioned results reveal that teachers are aware of the fact that their method of teaching can affect their students' motivation, interaction and performance as well, especially when it comes to the task of essay writing. Thus, most teachers agree that BL can increase students' motivation in writing their essays.

Question Eighteen : Do you think that BL enhances students' essay writing ?

Table 3.18

Teachers' Views about The Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Enhancing Students' Essay Writing

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	71.43%
No	03	21.43%
Did not answer	01	7.14%
Total	14	100%

This question is grounded on the main hypothesis of the current study, it is designed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of BL in enhancing essay writing. According to the above results, (71.43%) of the participants approved that BL has a positive impact on developing EFL students' essay writing. In opposition, (21.43%) of teachers considered BL as not helpful in enhancing their students' compositions. The former view of the respondents assume that BL is an effective technique that boosts students to ameliorate their level in essays. While the latter may prefer the traditional method of teaching. To sum

up, the results of this question reveal that most of teachers have a positive attitude towards the implementation of BL to enhance essay writing composition.

Question Nineteen : If yes, would you please state how ?

Teachers' Explanation

As this question is an open-ended one, different answers were provided:

- BL approach gives further opportunities for students to practice writing inside and outside the classroom.
- Extra time, more space, and more activities are added to enhance students' motivation to compose better pieces of essays, since practice is at the heart of writing essays.
- BL is absolutely useful to improve such skill. Moreover, through BL, students can use checklists, online grammar and spelling checkers, plagiarism software which will help them succeeded in writing their essays.
- BL helps in producing autonomous learners who can depend on themselves; especially when it comes to vocabulary and collecting the necessary information about a specific topic.
- BL approach is an efficient method to overcome students' hesitation and anxiety to write, and then they can be creative in their writing.

Question Twenty : To what extent does BL approach help your students in writing their essays ?

Table 3.20

Assistance of Blended Learning for Students' Writing Essays

Option	Number	Percentage
a-A very great deal	0	00%
b-A lot	05	35.71%
c-A little	06	42.86%
d-Not at all	0	00%
Did not answer	03	21.43%
Total	14	100%

When teachers were asked about the amount of assistance BL supplements students with when they write essays, (35.71%) of them claimed that BL helps their students a lot in writing their essays since they can not deny the fact that BL is an important method to teach and develop essay writing. Moreover, these teachers agreed that BL approach is considerably beneficial for students as far as essay writing is concerned. Moving to option (c) which was selected by six teachers (42.86%), this might suggest that the larger number of teachers are accustomed only to the typical traditional F2F teaching, or they lack the needed equipped knowledge to appropriately adjust to newly emerged approaches (BL) of teaching. No one choose either ‘a very great deal’ nor ‘not at all’, while (21.43%) did not answer the question.

Question Twenty-One : Do you think that BL can help your students to overcome their problems in essay writing ?

Table 3.21

Teachers' Impression about Blended Learning aid in Overcoming Essay Writing Problems

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	09	64.28%
No	05	35.72%
Total	14	100%

According to data presented in Table 3.21, nine (09) teachers (64.28%) endorsed that the integration of the BL approach into their courses would help students overcome their problems in essay writing and improve this central skill. Only (35.72%) of them declared the opposite, this means that they rely only on the F2F method of teaching to assist their students reducing the amount of difficulties they might encounter while writing their essays. Yet, teachers' perceptions towards implementing BL remain quite positive since the majority answered by yes. This denotes that, most teachers are up to modern techniques of teaching written expression module specifically, and EFL generally with the goal of helping their students improving their essay compositions.

Question Twenty-Two : What are your perceptions towards your students essay writing after implementing BL approach ?

The current question is designed to elicit fourteen (14) teachers' attitudes in order to obtain precise insights and accurate results about the subject under investigation. A significant percentage of teachers (08 out of 14) has provided answers that are presented as follows :

- After implementing blended learning approach, I have realized that this process has strongly impacted their motivation towards the writing process, in the sense that blended learning has prevented them from getting and receiving immediate feedback.
- Improve their skills and be able to express their ideas, points of view and feelings more effectively, also it enhances discussion skills.

- It helps students produce correct sentences, write essays free of mistakes, enriches students' vocabulary.
- It helps students produce more appropriate structure, coherent and cohesive essays and respecting forms...etc.
- It is a good strategy to implement it; however it requires more time, efforts, successive confrencing with students, too much correction. Another problem can be faced by learners is the lack of training in using e-tools of writing.
- Personnaly speaking, I have never practiced such method for I am completely aware that students shall not well embrace it. Face-to-face is much better and results are well observed.
- I think that face-to-face is better.
- I have positive perceptions towards such approach of teaching.
- I have exprencied this method of teaching.

Question Twenty-Three : Doyouagree toadviceteachers who are not familiar with BL to use it ?

Table 3.23

Teachers' Attitudes about Advicing Other Teachers to Use the Blended Learning Approach

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	85.71%
No	02	14.29%
Total	14	100%

As it is in shown in Table 3.23, the absolute majority of teachers (85.71%) answered by yes ; which means that they agree to recommend the BL implementation to other teachers

who are not yet introduced to the concept. This insinuated that they are aware of both the great importance of this newly adopted approach in addition to its crucial impact in developing certain skills, including essay writing. A very low percentage (14.29%) answered by no. This implies that these teachers do not recognize the positive influence of BL on the educational field.

Question Twenty-Four : You are mostly welcome for any further suggestions or comments concerning our topic !

Further Suggestions

This question is an open one, it is about further information and suggestions concerning the effectiveness of BL in enhancing essay writing. Only three teachers (21.43%) out of fourteen have added suggestions. They are presented as follows :

- When challenges of BL approach are solved, I will adopt and support the tendency towards its use.
- I think that BL enhances essay writing, but unfortunately I have never tried it that's why I was unable to answer some of your questions.
- Students should transfer daily life skills of using mobile applications to educational purposes and get used to implement them to develop their skills in learning EFL.
- Teachers should engage in training workshops to help them design appropriate electronic writing tasks, assignments and quizzes.

3.1.5 Summary of Results and Findings from Teachers' Questionnaire

The section about the general information displayed that almost all teachers taught English for many years, so they are experienced teachers. This denotes that they are proficient enough in teaching writing (see Table 3.3).

The findings of the second section showed that the majority of teachers assert that they are familiar with the concept BL. Half of these teachers make use of such approach in their written expression classrooms; yet the frequency of using it varies from one teacher to another (see Table 3.6). Concerning teachers' preferred method, teachers claimed that they are unwilling to some extent to use the BL, since they prefer the traditional F2F method of teaching. All teachers assume that there are certain reasons for supplying online sessions into their classrooms sessions; the most common ones are: the time allowed in classroom is not enough and to encourage learners to learn independently and be responsible of their own learning. Regarding this, teachers also state that they are defied by a considerable number of challenges when teaching, which is mainly due to the lack of regular net connection along with access to computers, besides students' challenges of self-regulation and self-discipline to carry out their education remotely.

According to the results of the third section, all teachers believed that writing essays is a fundamental process for their students. Precisely, they are extremely aware of the fact that essay writing can assist their students in a variety of fields, such as developing their critical thinking and expressing their feelings and beliefs easily (see Table 3.11). In fact, teachers' evaluation of their students' level in writing essay is between average to good; this latter could be improved even more with practice and experience. The majority of teachers affirm that their students are familiar with the common structure of essay. With this in mind, most of them use different approaches of teaching writing essay according to students' needs and objectives. Furthermore, all informants claim that their students have certain problems and difficulties when writing their essay compositions; they reveal that these issues are resulted from the inappropriate use of structure, misspelled words, poor vocabulary...etc (see Table 3.15).

The results of the last section "Teachers' Attitudes towards the Impact of Blended Learning on Essay Writing", revealed that teachers of written expression at the Department of English, University of Guelma have positive attitudes to a considerable extent towards BL implementation. Similarly, almost half of the participants approved that BL motivates their students in writing essays, where approximately all teachers endorsed that BL enhances their students' essay writing, in terms of adding extra time and more activities to write. In addition, most of teachers have agreed on recommending on other teachers to use such approach in teaching written expression.

3.1.6 Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

- This study revealed teachers' attitudes about the effectiveness of BL approach in enhancing students' essay writing. Thus, the following implications and recommendations are hereby presented :
- Teachers are also asked to emphasize to students the importance of mastering essay writing, including essay writing as an instruction in exams is one of the effective way to encourage students to write more essays. This is not only required for teachers of written expressions to do, but it is also possible for teachers of other modules.
- Implementation of BL as an approach in teaching writing should be encouraged by administrators and embraced by educators in an effort to continually improve higher education system of teaching.
- Teachers should be careful in choosing the right blending mode that should be based on their students' needs, technology skills and learning capabilities.
- In order to create an effective BL environment, other participants in teaching / learning process; primarily higher authorities at the level of Guelma University are concerned with helping both teachers and students to achieve this effective BL

environment; specifically, resolving internet and online learning platform access problems.

- More importantly, students must adopt to 21st Century developments, as most educational systems around the world rely on BL programs.
- Both teachers and students should be aware of the critical importance of the BL approach in essay writing. in this regard, students should perform more discipline and interest towards using technology for their learning.

3.1.7 Limitation of the Study

Despite the fact that the present research has been accomplished; it can not be done without encountering some serious difficulties and research limitations. First, this study is limited in the number of written expression teachers' sample at the English Department of Guelma University. As a result, the findings can only be generalized to the targeted population and not to a larger one. Though we were eager to test and experiment some BL models in EFL classes, particularly written expression ones, in order to give both teachers and students the opportunity to explore real BL environment; yet, the difficulty access to the internet make the idea more difficult and complex for both sides. In addition, with respect to teachers' opinions, although they were informed that their answers will be highly important for the validity of the research, few of them just answered randomly or even did not answer to the main important questions. Another limitation is the lack of authentic/primary sources related to the second chapter, when only the process of searching for a reliable sources took days and nights. Sometimes ending up with no valuable resource to be exploited since it is an original and current topic.

3.1.8 Suggestions for Further Researches

The current study explored teachers' attitudes about "Effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach on Essay Writing" in a descriptive study where we used a questionnaire as a data gathering tool in order to investigate teachers' attitudes towards its effectiveness. However, it would be better to use an experimental method for data gathering that may lead to make the sample larger. Moreover, future researchers may deal with the impact of BL approach on enhancing students' speaking skills, decreasing students' anxiety as well as can be a crucial experimental research in relation to the use of BL approach in EFL classrooms.

Conclusion

This chapter tested the hypothesis and revealed answers for the questions through the views and opinions gathered using the questionnaire. The statistical analysis of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of written expression teachers at the Department of English have positive attitudes and are aware to some extent about the role of BL approach in improving essay writing. In addition, this chapter provided the teachers' suggestions toward the topic of the research. Furthermore, it offered some pedagogical implications and further researches.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The current study provided some interesting insights concerning teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of BL approach on their students' essay writings. Therefore, it attempted to raise teachers' awareness towards the importance of efficiently implementing BL on second year EFL written expression courses, and the different attitudes teachers reveal about it. Findings gathered from the practical phase insinuated that teachers hold positive attitudes towards the prementioned subject.

1/ Teachers believe that BL is a good strategy to implement as it enriches students' vocabulary to compose more essays and helps them to produce more correct sentences and essays free of grammatical mistakes.

2/ Teachers appreciate the integration of BL to teach essay writing due to the reason that BL aids students in producing more appropriate structure of essay, writing more coherent and cohesive pieces of writing and respecting the form of an essay.

3/ Teachers think that after implementing BL, students' motivation increased in terms of producing more essays and sending them online to their teachers for correction and evaluation.

4/ BL enhances students' discussion skills to express ideas, points of view and feelings easily since it is web-based and students do not feel anxious and ashamed when sharing diverse opinions.

5/ BL requires more time, effort and conferencing with students in order to make them familiar with new teaching materials that BL involves.

6/ According to teachers, the efficient implementation of BL into essay teaching courses necessitates successive training workshops for teachers in order to guarantee that they are acknowledged with new online teaching materials and to design appropriate tasks and quizzes of essay writing for students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly requested to voluntarily fill in this questionnaire, which is a part of a research work for the accomplishment of Master dissertation. We are carrying out an investigation about teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of blended learning approach on essay writing. Your collaboration is very important for the validity of the research. We thank you, in advance, for your consideration.

Please tick (☐) the appropriate box(es) and make full statements when needed.

BENOUARETH Amani

MESSAADIA Imen

English Department

University of Guelma

Section One : General information

Q1. Degree Master

Magister

Doctorat

Q2. How long have you been teaching English language at the University ?

.....years

Q3. How long have you been teaching written expression ?

.....years

Section Two : Teachers' Attitudes towards Blended Learning

NB. Blended Learning refers to a language course that combines the traditional face-to-face classroom instructions and an online learning.

Q4. Are you familiar with the term ‘‘Blended Learning’’ ?

Yes

Q5. Do you use Blended Learning in teaching written expression ?

Yes No

Q6. If yes, how often do you use it ?

a-Always	
b-Often	
c-Sometimes	
d-Rarely	

Q7. Do you prefer the traditional face to face or the blended learning method in teaching written expression ?

Face-to-face learning Blended learning

Q8. According to you, what are the main reasons for adding online sessions in written expression module ?

a-Because the time allowed in classroom is not enough	
b-To be up-to-date with modern teaching methods	
c-To add extra activities for students	
d-To encourage learners to learn independently and be responsible for their own learning	

Q9. If you ever taught an online course, Please select the challenges you faced while teaching

a-Lack of teachers' experience when implementing blended learning	
b-Students' challenges of self-discipline and self-regulation to carry out their education remotely	
c-The lack of regular net connection, access to computers and connectivity	
d-Poor integration and planning for a blended learning course	

Section Three : Teachers' Attitudes towards Essay Writing

Q10. Do you think that learning how to write essays is important for your students ?

Yes No

Q11. If yes, is it important because?

a-Essay writing is a very important skill in developing students' critical thinking	
b-Essay writing helps students in expressing their feelings and beliefs easily	
c-Essay writing encourages the students to practise their other skills	
d-Essay writing works like a boost that motivates students to produce their best	

Q12. Do you think that your students' level in writing essays is ?

a-Excellent	
b-Good	
c-Average	
d-Low	

Q13. Which approach do you use to teach essay writing ?

a-The product approach	
b-The process approach	
c-The genre approach	

Q14. Are your students familiar with the structure of an essay (introduction, body, and conclusion)?

Yes

No

Q15.What are the most typical difficulties your students usually face when writing essays ?

Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Four : Teachers' Attitudes towards the Impact of Blended Learning on Essay Writing

Q16. Do you support the integration of blended learning to teach writing essay ?

Yes No

Q17. If yes, does Blended Learning motivate your students in writing essays ?

Yes No

Q18. Do you think that blended Learning enhances students' essay writing ?

Yes No

Q19. If yes, would you please state how ?

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

Q20. To what extent does Blended Learning approach help your students in writing their essays ?

a-A very great deal	<input type="checkbox"/>
b-A lot	<input type="checkbox"/>
c-A little	<input type="checkbox"/>
d-Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q21. Do you think that blended learning can help your students to overcome their problems in essay writing?

Yes No

Q22. What are your perceptions towards your students' essay writing after implementing blended learning approach ?

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

Q23. Do you agree to advise teachers who are not familiar with blended Learning to use it ?

Yes

No

Q24. You are mostly welcome for any further suggestions or comments concerning our topic !

.....
.....

Thank you for your cooperation !

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف مواقف المعلمين تجاه فعالية تأثير التعلم المدمج في تعزيز كتابة مقال الطلاب, الذي بدوره يمثل مفهوما أساسيا لانجازاتهم الأكاديمية. يخضع المعلمون لشكل جديد من أشكال التدريس يجمع بين النهج التقليدي وجها لوجه بالإضافة للتدريس عبر الانترنت. و من ثم, فانه من المفترض أن يكون للمعلمين موقف ايجابي تجاه هذا النوع من التعليم. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على أداة بحثية كمية من خلال تقديم استبيان لأربعة عشر (14) معلما في السنة الثانية تدريس تعبير كتابي في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية, جامعة 08 ماي 1945, قالمة. تظهر النتائج المتحصل عليها أن عينة البحث المتكونة من المعلمين تكشف عن سلوكيات إيجابية تجاه فاعلية نهج التعليم المدمج في تحسين تكوين كتابة المقالات. وبذلك فإن النتائج المتحصل عليها تؤكد الفرضيتين المذكورتين في بداية البحث .

الكلمات المفتاحية: نهج التعليم المدمج , التعليموجه لوجه, سلوكيات المعلمين ,تعليم على الانترنت.

Résumé

La présente recherche tente d'étudier les attitudes des enseignants à l'égard de l'efficacité de l'approche d'étude mixte dans l'amélioration de la rédaction d'essais des élèves, qui est un concept fondamental pour leur résultat scolaire. Les enseignants sont soumis à une nouvelle forme d'enseignement qui combine le traditionnel face à face avec celui en ligne. Par conséquent, on suppose qu'ils peuvent avoir une attitude positive envers ce type d'apprentissage. La recherche est menée par une méthode quantitative en administrant un questionnaire à quatorze (14) professeurs de deuxième année d'expression écrite au Département d'anglais, Université du 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. Les résultats obtenus montrent que l'échantillon de recherche d'enseignants révèle des attitudes positives envers l'efficacité de l'approche d'étude mixte dans l'amélioration d'essais. Ainsi, les résultats confirment l'hypothèse énoncée au début de la recherche.

Mots clé : L'approche d'étude Mixte, Face à Face apprentissage, Les attitudes d'enseignants, Apprentissage en ligne.