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The Importance of Formative Assessment in Developing Students' Writing proficiency.

Case Study: Third year LMD Students of English at Guelma University.

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters And English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of Master's Degree in Anglophone Language, Literature and Civilizations.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the most precious people:

My dear parents; “*Mouhamed and Zineb*”, for their endless love, help, and patience

My dear brothers: *Hamza, khaled* and *Oussama*

To my husband “*Faysal*” for his encouragement and care

My lovely cousin: *Salma*

To all my family members

My kind friends with whom I shared nice times: *Fouzia, salima, Zineb,Imen*

BENZOUGHBI Souhaila

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work, to my beloved parents: *Ammar* and *Wassila* who provide me with their interest, and support in my learning path, thank you for everything you have always given me.

To my brothers: *Djamel* and *Ilyes*

To my sister: *Khadidja*

To my dear family without forgetting anyone

To my friend *Souhaila* with whom I shared this work with its best and worst moments.

To my wonderful friends *Salima* and *Zienez* with whom I share good and bad times.

I love you all

ATTIK Faouzia

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ABSTRACT

The current study attempts to investigate the crucial role of formative assessment in improving learners' writing skill in the Department of English, University of Guelma. In order to test the hypothesis that suggest the probability of developing the writing skill through using formative assessment, a descriptive method has been adopted, in which two questionnaires were administrated; the first one was directed to third year LMD students who were assigned randomly, and the second was addressed to English teachers of written expression. The gathered data have shown that formative assessment has a positive impact on developing learners' writing skill, as well as helping teachers to assume greater responsibility for monitoring and supporting their students learning in general and writing in particular. On the basis of these results, the hypothesis is confirmed. In the light of this, students need to be assessed formatively in order to develop their writing proficiency.

Key Words: *formative assessment, writing skill, EFL.*

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AERA: American Educational Research Association

CCSSO: Council of Chief State School Officers

EFL: English as Foreign Language

FA: Formative Assessment

FAST: Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers

LMD: License Master Doctorate

NRCNA: National Research Council of the National Academies

OCED: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SA: Summative Assessment

SLT: Second Language Teaching

STCEAS: Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students

WE: Written Expression

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General Introduction

In the last decade, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) witnesses a radical change due to the new challenges that face both teachers and learners. In this regard, most attempts in Second Language Teaching (SLT) have been directed to minimize those challenges. These attempts are mainly associated within the enhancement of the four skills mainly these productive ones; Speaking and Writing. In academia, writing has become a central criterion for academic success. It is considered to be an important mean of communication and expression of thoughts. Therefore, it plays a fundamental role in our personal and professional lives.

Nowadays, teaching writing becomes a rich field of investigation. In EFL classrooms, teachers need to be well trained to develop student's writings. Teachers are requested to create a motivational atmosphere to push their learners to learn writing and enjoy it; providing different types of tasks and activities is the possible way to arise motivation among learners. Also, it is important to make sure that the adopted approach fits the students' needs. Thus, writing is considered as an integral part in learners' language development.

Formative assessment has emerged as an effective element of classroom instruction. Most definitions of formative assessment underline the idea of collecting evidence of students' learning, and based on this information teaching is modified to better meet students' needs. Teachers' formative assessment plays an essential role because it diagnoses students' weaknesses and strengths. In addition, it may create some kind of interaction between teachers and students, hence, it can play a dual effect, both enhancing students' writing ability and providing them the needed knowledge to write more and better. Consequently, a growing body of research has recommended the use of formative assessment to improve students' writing skill. The present study seeks to explore the effectiveness of teachers' formative assessment and to what extent it is able to enhance students' writing performance.

1. Statement of the Problem

Writing is a complex process which demands cognitive analysis and linguistic synthesis. Most students face many difficulties when trying to be skillful writers. They are always struggling to convey their thoughts and ideas effectively. In fact, there is a pressure on both teachers and learners because of the growing demand for better writing productions. Unlike speaking, writing is not practiced outside the class, so what is learned inside the class is not practiced outside the class and has little chance to be developed outside.

Among the successful tools which have the potential for improving students' writing ability, classroom-based assessment has been highly emphasized. The common assessments of writing depend on standardized assessments and high stakes assessments like summative assessment. However, summative assessment is likely to underestimate students because it provides evidence about students' achievement for the purpose of grading and making judgment. As a result, different solutions have been suggested to minimize students' challenges in writing. In this regard, many educators proved the role of formative assessment in teaching writing. It is assumed that formative assessment or assessment for learning allows teachers to adjust their instructional practices as needed due to the gathered data about students' performance in writing.

2. Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of formative assessment on students' writing skill. Throughout this study we attempt to highlight the importance of formative assessment putting much emphasis on its role in enhancing students' writing proficiency. Moreover, this study tries to provide teachers with insight about how formative assessment can be helpful in teaching writing.

3. Research Hypotheses

If we assess students formatively, their writing skill would be improved.

4. Research Methodology and Design

5. Choice of the Method

To undergo this research, a descriptive method is adopted due to the fact that it is the most appropriate method that fits the stated objectives.

6. Population of the Study

This study will be conducted at Guelma University, Algeria. The target population consists of one hundred ninety eight (198) of third year LMD students. They are chosen randomly. This choice is due to many reasons: First they are the most who are supposed to receive formative assessment. Second, the goal of providing formative assessment at this level is to give students information about their progression in writing since they are supposed to write long essays and thesis in the near future.

7. Data Gathering Tools

In order to investigate the importance of formative assessment in enhancing students' writing proficiency, questionnaires will be administrated for both teachers and students. The students' questionnaire aims to gather information on how formative assessment affects their writing ability, whereas the teachers' questionnaire attempts to demonstrate how teachers assess their students formatively and to see if they are aware about the significance of formative assessment in teaching writing.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

The present research is basically divided into three main chapters. Chapter one and two will be devoted to literature review and the third chapter to the field work. In the first chapter, we will discuss the development of writing over time besides its definition and nature. Then

we will discuss the process of teaching writing including: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. Moreover, we will go through the different approaches that are used in teaching writing. In addition, we will compare writing with other skill; reading and speaking. At the end of this chapter we will talk about some challenges that face students when acquiring the writing skill. Concerning the second chapter, it will deal with assessment as a key component of continuous improvement. Therefore, we will come to define the term assessment, and then we will come through its types: summative, diagnostic and formative. After that we will provide a comparison between summative assessment and formative assessment. In the second chapter, the focus will be placed on formative assessment as a motivational factor for learning. It includes formative assessment's types and strategies in addition to the role of both teachers and students in this process. Finally, we will report how formative assessment facilitates students' writing proficiency. The third chapter will deal with data analysis. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of students' and teachers' questionnaires and ultimately the results obtained in this research work, recommendations, and conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE:

Writing Skill

Introduction

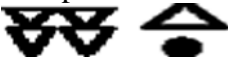
Learning a foreign language requires the mastery of four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This latter is viewed as the most complex process that demands cognitive analysis and linguistic synthesis. For a long time, writing was a neglected area in language teaching especially when oral language took precedence in the classroom over other modalities. For such reason, writing was not emphasized in most foreign language classes. However, nowadays writing becomes an essential component in language teaching (Brookes & Grundy, 1998). In this chapter, we will talk about writing as the most sophisticated language skill. First, it includes a summarized view about the history of writing over time, its definition and nature. The chapter also comprises related theories to teach writing; the product approach, the process approach and the genre approach. In addition, we will discuss the relation between writing and speaking, as well as the connection between writing and reading skill. Finally, we will tackle the various issues and problems that learners may face in acquiring the writing skill.

1. The Development of Writing over Time



Writing as an effective mean of communication witnessed many changes and developments over time. The history of human communication dates back to the earliest era of humanity. The early writing systems were not a sudden invention; they were a development based on earlier symbol systems. Crystal (1999) stated that those representational symbols for ancient cultures are called “*petroglyphs*” or “*pictograms*”. These systems used ideographic and mnemonic signs to convey information.

The first known writing was derived from the two greatest rivers, the Nile and the Tigris. So, Egyptian and the Sumerian (Iraq) are the two civilizations responsible for this total transformation of human development. With the economic growth in Mesopotamia trade was flourished, as such the Sumerians invented cuneiform writing as a mean of communication

(Kramer, 1971). The Sumerian used to impress pictographs onto wet clay which was then dried. In this post, Yule (2010) stated that:

“...these inscriptions are more generally described as cuneiform writing. The term cuneiform means wedge-shaped and the inscription used by the Sumerians was produced by pressing a wedge-shaped implement into soft clay tablets, resulting in forms like .” (p. 214)

Shortly after the Sumerians, the Egyptians were influenced, and they developed a new form of writing. The difference between the two characters can be viewed in the nature of the writing itself; the Egyptian characters are more pictorial than the Sumerian ones which is literatim (Sampson, 1990). However, the system of conceptualizing things and objects is the same. The Egyptian typescripts were called “*hieroglyphs*” by the Greeks in about 500 BC.

Yule (2010) indicated that the Phoenicians writing dates back to 3,500 years ago. Durant (1954) claimed that the Phoenicians did not invent their writing because they derive it from the Egyptian and the Crete. For instance, the Egyptian hieroglyph  which means house becomes later on the following Phoenician one . The Phoenicians alphabet extended into Northern Africa to become the system used by the Arabs, and North West to Greece where they modified further the letters to become the Cyrillic Alphabet of Russia and the Balkans.

McCarter (1974) asserted that the history of the Greek alphabet started when the Greeks borrowed the Phoenician alphabet and adapted it to their own language. Greek is the source of all the modern scripts of Europe, the most widespread descendent of Greek is the Latin script. Hence, the Romans made some modifications to the nature of the letters to become the ones that we recognize and use. The Roman alphabet can be differentiated from other writing systems in that the symbols represent sounds not pictures.






















Egyptian	Phoenician	Early Greek	Roman
			A
			B
			K
			M
			N
			T
			S

Figure 1: Development of Writing (Yule, 2010, p. 217)

2. Definition of Writing

Writing is the most commonly used form of communication. This form is simply about the use of graphic symbols. For Widdowson (2001) “*writing is the use of visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language*” (p.62). That is to say, writing is the production of sentences as instances of usage. So, students need to be aware about the different aspects of language including the graphic system, the grammatical structure, and the selection of the appropriate terminology related to the subject matter. Crystal (1999) stated that “*writing is not a merely mechanical task, a simple matter of putting speech down on paper. It is an exploration in the use of the graphic potential of a language -a creative process- an act of discovery*” (p.214). In the same regard, Bello (1997, p.14 cited in Elshirbini & Elashri, 2013) pointed out that writing is a continuing process of discovering. As such Wells (1986) saw writing as a discovery of one's inner thoughts through the medium of thinking, reasoning, and communication. So, writing is considered as a tool of thinking and learning because when someone writes s/he learns new things.

From a socialist perspective, writing can be defined as a communicative activity. It enables individuals to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings (Maarek, 2009). This view has been reinforced by Boughy (1997, cited in Elshirbini & Elashri, 2013) where he believed

that writing is a social activity used for communicative objectives, this can be explained through the interactive nature of writing where people may become more close to each others.

Pincas (1992, Cited in Ghothbene, 2010) claimed that “*writing is a system of graphic symbols, i.e., letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds we produce while speaking*” (p.125). This view was also shared by Sohel (2014) who stated that writing is the recorded form of speech. However, these opinions cannot deny the fact that writing is much more than the production of graphic symbols, it is about arrangement of symbols according to some conventions. Brookes and Grundy (2009, Cited in Ghothbene, 2010) referred to the complexity of the writing task by reporting that “*it must be worth asking precisely what is difficult about writing and, especially, about writing in a second language*” (P.11). Accordingly, Hedge (2000) argued that most of students feel anxious when they write because most times they feel anxious since that they are prevented from conveying the desired message.

Writing is the most common tool of communication. It is based on the use of graphic symbols that are usually prescribed according to particular conventions. In fact writing is more than producing visible marks; it is a creative process. Writing is considered to be one of the productive skills that help individuals to convey their thoughts and ideas for the sake of communication. It is a complex process in terms of handling four stages: planning, drafting, reviewing and revising. Therefore, learners who are acquiring this skill experience some difficulties for such reason writing should be emphasized in the academic setting.

3. The Nature of Writing

Writing is a mean of communication between people. It should follow some conventions to have a coherent whole called “*text*” (Bader, 2007). Actually, this skill is neither innate nor natural; it must be practiced a lot to be learnt. However, comparing with the natural and spontaneous act of speaking, writing is a difficult activity in both first and second

language learning. Its difficulty descends from many factors classified by Byrne (1988) into three categories, psychological, linguistics and cognitive which overlap to some extent.

The psychological factors are related to the lack of interaction and feedback between the writer and the reader. Concerning the linguistic factors, writing lacks paralinguistic devices such as stress, intonation, gestures, and facial expressions. This imposes a great necessity for careful and precise completion, organization and connection of sentences. Whereas, the cognitive factors are about the formality of the writing instruction i.e., it is important to master the written form of language and learn certain structures (Mekki, 2012).

Writing is a complex skill because it includes more elaborated linguistic systems (morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics and discourse). As writing is message-oriented, the writer needs to interact with the readers through expressing ideas explicitly and conveying information accurately. Collins and Genther (1980, Cited in Ouskourt, 2008) stated that:

Much of the difficulty of writing stems from the large number of constraints that must be satisfied at the same time. In expressing an idea the writer must consider at least four structural levels : Overall text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure (syntax), and word structure ...clearly the attempt to coordinate all these requirements is a staggering job .(p.62).

According to Al-Mutawa and Taisser (1989), writing is a complex cognitive activity which requires different elements. It requires a complete acquisition of alphabet, understanding how letters are combined to form words and the relationship between the word and its meaning, knowledge of the mechanics of writing like speaking, capitalization, punctuation and other writing conventions, mastery of rules that govern sentences, the ability of combining sentences to build an effective paragraph and then essays and finally the formalization with transitions to achieve coherence. In this context, Bell and Burnaby (1984, as cited in Nunan, 1989,) explain:

Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond this sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts. (p.36)

Hyland (2003) pointed out that writing is not an individual activity; it is a social act that fulfills a set of communicative needs and accomplishes particular purpose, he said:

While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also international and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting particular kind of relationship and acknowledging an engagement in a given community. (p.27)

4. Teaching Writing

4.1. Process of Writing

The process of teaching writing consists of four basic stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. They are described as follows:

4.1.1. Prewriting

Prewriting is the getting ready to write, it sets the stage for what the writer wants to write about. It aims to encourage and stimulate students to write. During this stage they can use various strategies such as brainstorming, making notes, organizing ideas and making an outline (Elbow, 1973). According to Hewings and Curry (2003), brainstorming and student discussions are helpful strategies that may be used to collect ideas effectively. Brainstorming means recording thoughts and ideas about a particular topic or problem. It can be done in small groups, whole class or individually. Making notes is another prewriting strategy; it helps learners to organize and write successfully. According to Williams (2003), writing down the important ideas in outline form is a useful pre-writing strategy.

4.1.2. Drafting

According to Harris (1993) and Hedge (2000), drafting is one of the difficult stages in writing since it requires a great deal of attention, application and focus. After the completion of pre-writing activities, the drafting stage is the next step (Williams, 2003 & Tribble, 2003). Drafting is a series of stages during which the student put on ideas on paper in reference to the notes and the plans which are drawn in the prewriting stage. During this stage writers should focus on the actual writing and leave checking both grammatical and spelling mistakes later on (Williams, 2003 & Tribble, 2003).

4.1.3. Revising

Hedge (1988) stated that “*good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar until later*” (p. 23). So, during the revising stage writers should focus on the meaning or the message. Revising can be through adding details, substituting words and phrases, deleting and rearranging. Similarly, Tribble (2003) argued that the main concern of this stage is to complete the content correctly, whereas correcting grammatical and spelling mistakes can be done during the editing stage.

4.1.4. Editing

The last stage in writing is editing. During this stage writers need to check grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, citation and document format. Hewings and Curry (2003) stated that the editing stage involves checking references and formatting the students' writing. In this stage students may employ various strategies to correct their mistakes such as working in pairs or in groups, and use any available resources such as textbooks, dictionaries or computers (King & Chapman, 2003; Hewings & Curry, 2003).

4.2. Approaches to Teaching Writing

There are different approaches to teach writing. The major ones that have been extensively applied in classrooms: The genre approach, the product approach and the process approach. Nunan (1999 cited in Tangkiengsirish, 2006) assumed that “*One of the most controversial aspects of writing pedagogy has been the tension between process and product approaches to the teaching of writing*” (p.1).

4.2.1. The Product Approach

Young (1978) stated that the main focus of this approach is the final written product saying that within this approach “*the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process...*” (Cited in Matsuda, 2003, p.70). In this approach, Controlled compositions are the main used methods. Therefore, Reid (1993) claimed that “*students are taught incrementally, errors are prevented and fluency is expected to arise out of practice with structure.*” (Cited in Tangkiengsirish, 2006, p.3). Nemouchi (2008) claimed that the product approach is based on the imitation of the model texts that are given by the teacher. The model text is always viewed as the starting point. It is used to make the student familiar with the conventions of writing before s/he gets his/her final draft.

In brief, the production of grammatically correct pieces of writing is the central element in the product approach (Mahon, 1992; cited in Nemouchi, 2008). However, Nunan argued (1991) that the main inadequacy of this model-based approach is the fact of disregarding communication and focusing on the evaluation of language accuracy. Hence this approach did not take into account the numerous stages the writer goes through while producing a piece of writing. It gives less interest to the writing purpose due to the emphasis on grammar, syntax, and mechanics. In addition, Learners will be demotivated and anxious when they write because instructors usually focus on the accuracy of the language structures.

So, it is necessary to know that writing is not merely about producing texts for grading, it is a process through which students need to brainstorm, generate ideas and negotiate meaning.

4.2.2. The Process Approach

The Process approach comes as a reaction to the traditional product approach. It started to gain ground in the mid of 1970s. O'Brien (2004, cited in Thanatkun, 2008) defined this approach as an activity in which teachers encourage learners to see writing not as grammar exercises, but as the discovery of meaning and ideas. This approach focuses on the cognitive aspects of writing. Relatively, Arndt (1991, cited in Tangkiengsirisan, 2006,) regarded writing as “*a complex cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual efforts.*” (p.12)

In the process-oriented approach, the emphasis is placed on writing as a process rather than as a final product. This approach views writing as a recursive and a non-linear process (Emig&Zamel, 1983). At this level students tend to revise their productions many times based on their teacher feedback (Raimes, 1991). The following figure demonstrates six recursive procedures that are involved in the production of a text:

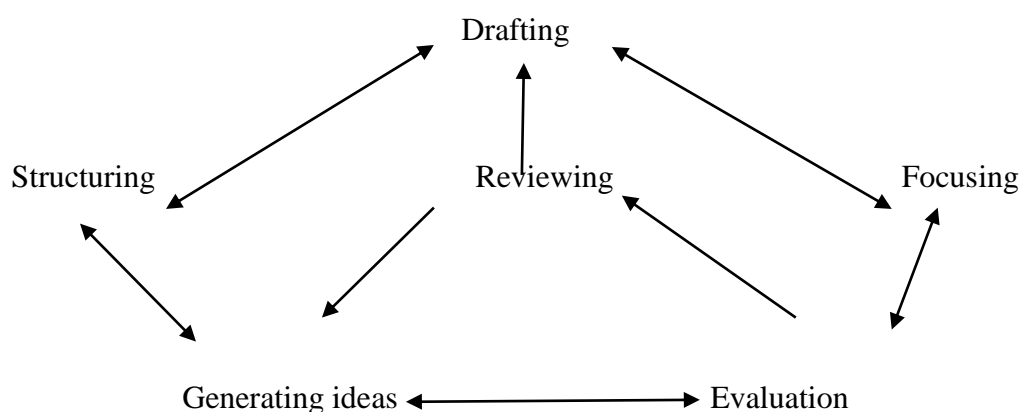


Figure .1 Procedures involved in producing written text From Process Writing (p.4) by White, R. & Arendt. V.1991, Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman.

In this context, the process approach seeks to improve student's writing proficiency through change in teacher' role, s/he no longer act as an examiner but rather as a facilitator.

Further, s/he is expected to provide total different forms of feedback including written feedback, teacher–students conferencing and peer feedback. Additionally, in order to compose coherent texts teachers need to provide extensive aid to their learners through implementing certain process model of writing instruction like the one shown in figure 2:

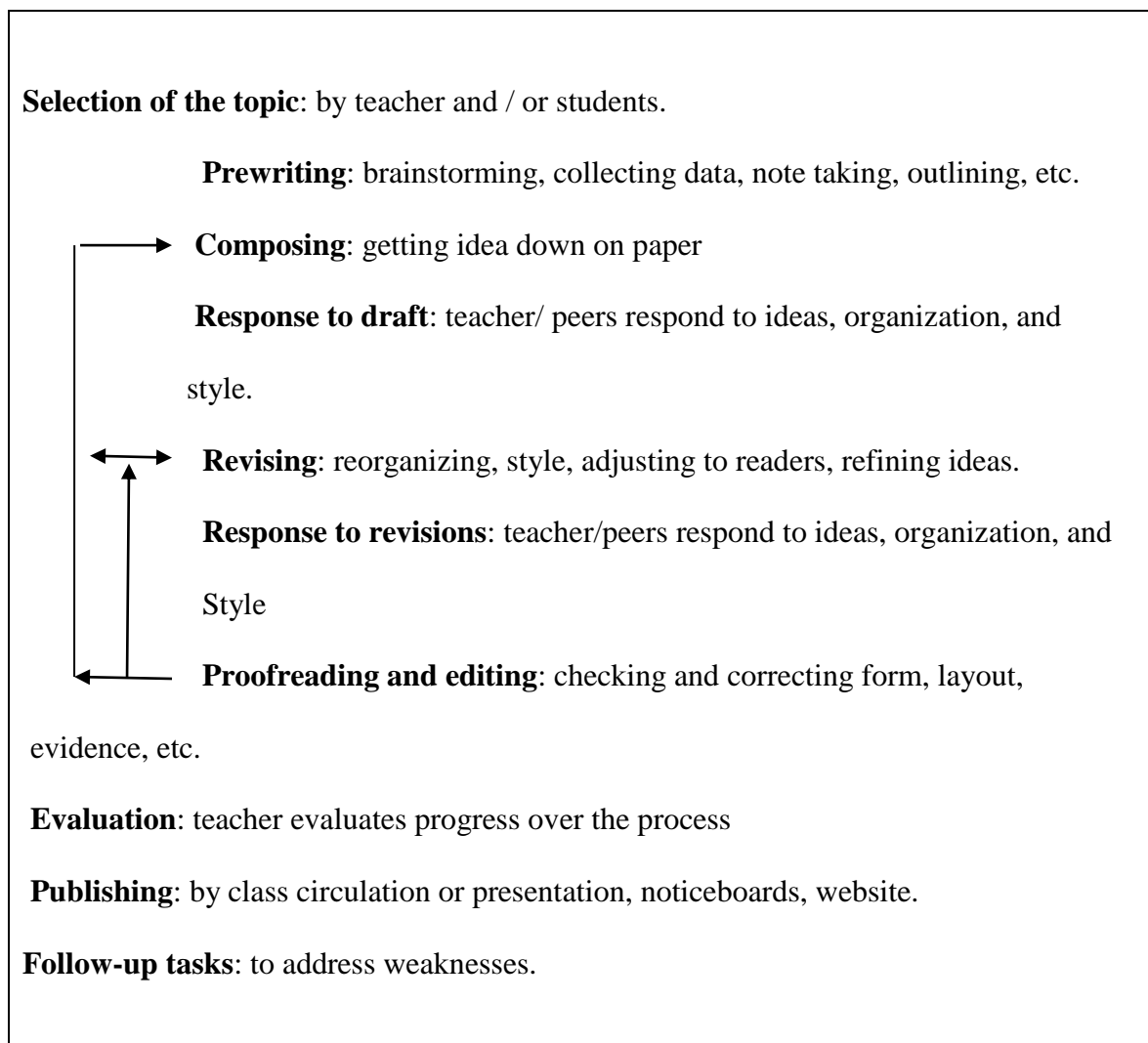


Figure 2: A Process model of writing instruction. Hyland, K. (2003, p.11)

4.2.3. The Genre Approach

It is irrational to discuss what the genre approach stands for without dealing with the term genre. Swales (1990 cited in Tribble, 1996) defined genre as: "*a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes*"(p. 46). In other

words, the writers follow certain conventions to organize their messages so that readers can recognize their purposes.

In the mid of 1980s, the genre approach gained considerable attention. It is assumed that it is an extension to the product approach. The focus of this approach is to integrate the knowledge of a particular genre and its communicative purpose, these help learners to produce texts to communicate with others in the same discourse community successfully.

According to Badger and White (2000), genre writing reflects a particular purpose of a social situation and allows students to acquire writing skills consciously by imitation and analysis of each writing genre. Accordingly, Hyland (2003) claimed that there are two fundamental issues developed here; first, language is functional, i.e. it is used to achieve certain goals. Second, language is situational, i.e. it occurs in a particular social context, and thus cannot be understood outside its context. So, when adopting such approach, students should not only focus on the text, but also on the context in which this text is produced.

The genre approach has a great contribution in teaching writing, however it was highly criticized. In this regard, Kamler (1995) highlighted the narrow emphasis on language and text, and its lack of attention to the instructional and disciplinary context in which texts are constructed. Hence, the genre approach undervalues the learners' skills to produce texts and makes them passive.

5. Writing with Others Skills

5.1. Writing and Reading

Writing is not an isolated skill; it requires the presence of other skills. Reading is one of these skills where it goes hand in hand with writing. Writing and reading complement each other; we cannot deal with the first without manipulating the second. Thus, the more someone reads; s/he enhances his/her writing ability in terms of enriching the background knowledge including vocabulary, grammatical structure and rhetorical features of texts. Accordingly,

Stosky (cited in Bader, 2007) stated that “*Better writers tend to be better readers...and better readers tend to produce more systematically mature writing than poorer readers*” (p. 9).

According to Harris (1993) there is a mutual relationship between reading and writing. This connection can be explained in that the two skills are social activities that have the same purpose which is communication. Moreover, both of them give-and-take i.e., writers can learn much about writing by reading, and readers can learn much about reading by writing. In other words readers cannot read if writers do not write. Likewise, writers cannot write if readers do not read.

Despite the fact that writing and reading are mutually dependent, they are different because writing is a productive skill whereas reading is a receptive one. This means that writing is a process of putting meaning on the written page, however; reading is a process of getting meaning from the written page.

5.2. Writing and Speaking

Speaking skill can be defined as “*The process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts.*” (Chaney & Burk ,1998, p.13). Writing and Speaking is said to be productive skills, but in fact they are different in various aspects. O’Grady et al. (1996) argued that speaking and writing are two different language modes, he said:

Speaking and writing are different in both origin and practice spoken language is acquired without specific formal instruction, whereas writing must be taught and learnt through deliberate effort . . . (p.591)

Likewise, Essberger (2001) assumed that when we learn our own (native) language, learning to speak comes before learning to write i.e., the act of speaking is automatically learned whereas writing is not that natural task. Raimes (1994) shared the same viewpoint and affirmed that we learn to speak our first language without any instruction, while most people

are taught how to write in their L1. Moreover, he indicated that the difference between writing and speaking can be stated in the formality of these two skills, he said “*writing is more formal and compact, while speaking is more informal*” (p.35).

Byrne (1988) highlighted the main differences between writing and speaking in the following table:

Table 1: Differences between speech and writing Byrne (1988, p. 3).

SPEECH	WRITING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes place in a context ,which often makes references clear(e.g. 'that thing over there') • Speaker and listener (sin) contact. Interact and exchange roles. • Usually person addressed is Specific • Immediate feedback given and Expected (a) verbal: a question, comments...murmurs, grunts. (b) Non-verbal: facial Expressions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates its own context and therefore has to be fully explicit. • The reader does not present and no interaction possible. • Reader is not necessarily known to writer. • No immediate feedback possible. Writer may try to anticipate reader’s reactions and incorporate them into text.

6. Problems and Challenges with Writing Skill

Writing is a challenging task. For such reason the ability to write is not possessed by all the speakers of a language, it requires special talents. Levine (2008) in his book: *Developmental Variation and Learning Disorders*, identifies some neurodevelopmental problems and their potential impacts on writing. He classified them into attention problems, Spatial ordering problems, sequential ordering problems and memory problems. These problems can be summarized in the inability to organize ideas, mastery of vocabulary, and

also mastery of grammar. Nevertheless, there are other difficulties which are related to stylistic and mechanical skill. The former is linked to the ability to manipulate sentences and use language, whereas the latter is associated with the ability to use language conventions correctly such as punctuation and spelling.

Writing problems can be also connected to other factors such as school setting. In schools, students are expected to write well, but they are not taught to do so. Teachers do not try to develop students' writing so that students are obliged to use whatever strategies they have. Cerbin (2001) pointed out that students often have to write about topics that are unfamiliar to them. Consequently, students are more likely to be interested in their work when they have some control over the selection of the topic. Moreover, some of the problems are teacher-centered rather than student-centered. Here, writing often becomes a low priority for most teachers because of timing. In this respect, Cerbin (2001) noted that students perceive writing as a routine rather than as a meaningful learning experience.

The problem within student underachievement in writing can be attributed to many factors:

- 1) Students have a poor attitude towards writing because of the previous failed writing experiences (Cumberworth & Hunt, 1998).
- 2) Students are not motivated to use the writing process and they lack a cognitive awareness about the purpose of writing (Cumberworth & Hunt, 1998).
- 3) Students encounter difficulties due to many factors like spelling and hand writing problems, poor mechanical skills, a fear of exposing their feelings.
- 4) Inadequate teacher training and reliance on ineffective past practices, daily time constraints, as well as a lack of immediate and positive feedback (Adams and others, 1996).
- 5) An insistence by many teachers that writing be accomplished in a silent, non-interactive environment (Accomando and others, 1996).

Conclusion

This chapter is a general overview of writing. It opened with a brief history of writing. Then it explored the nature of writing as a complex cognitive activity, social act, and as a language skill. This chapter outlined the numerous approaches to teaching writing. Besides, it highlighted the relationship between writing and reading as well as writing and speaking. At the end, the chapter concluded with some challenges learners meet while writing.

CHAPTER TWO: FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The traditional view of classroom assessment provides no means for growth or improvement. Therefore, it is potentially argued that assessment can play a significant role particularly when the teacher adopts formative assessment. In the present chapter, we will provide a general overview about assessment and its types; diagnostic, summative and formative. At this level we will distinguish between summative and formative assessment. Then, we will review the most basic elements of formative assessment including its definition, types, stages and strategies. In addition, we will investigate both teachers' and students' role in this process. This chapter will end with how formative assessment facilitates learning and teaching writing.

1. Assessment

Assessment is a tool of gathering qualitative and quantitative evidence for how well students are progressing i.e., it seeks to find out the students' strengths and weaknesses that help them to determine their personal goals and progress. Black & William (1998) linked assessment to all activities that teachers and learners carry out to get information that can be used to diagnose learners' progress and adjust teaching. This idea can be demonstrated through the following figure:

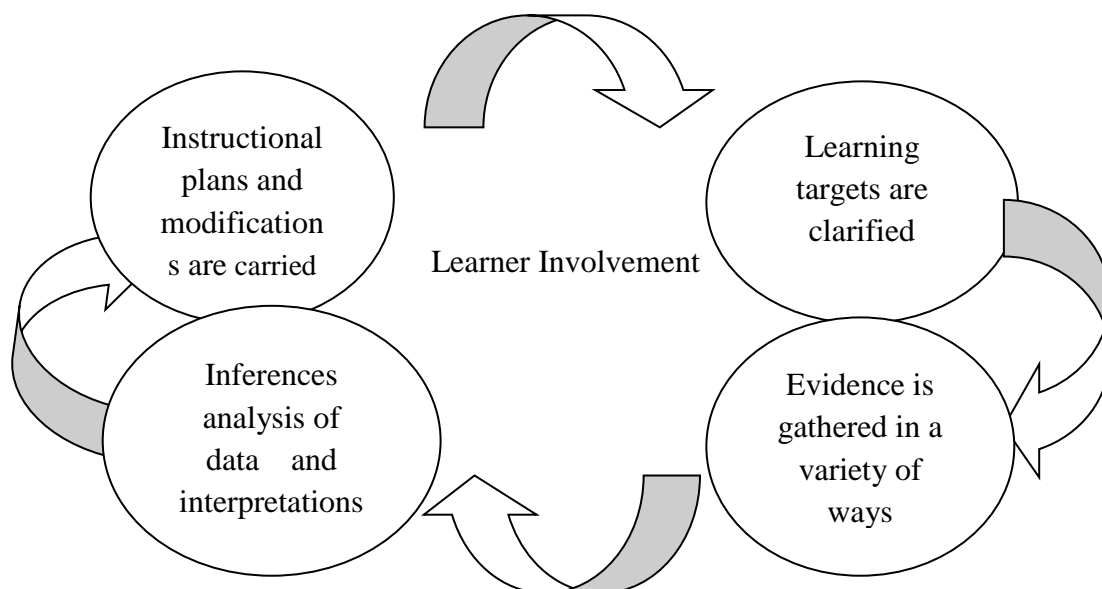


Figure 1: Classroom Assessment Cycle McMunn (2011)

Assessing students is an integral part in education. In fact there are various reasons behind the use of assessment. According to Popham (2011) the application of assessment motivates learners in terms of using tests as motivational devices to do their best. For teachers, it helps them to monitor learners' progress; relatively, they can determine whether learners make adequate improvement or not. However, in case of failure teachers need to adjust their lessons and perhaps modify their instructional approach. Stiggins & Conklin (1992) considered assessment as a means of conveying information to learners and teachers in order to make decisions that include:

- Diagnoses of the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners.
- Diagnoses of class and group needs.
- Grouping learners for instruction within or across classes.
- Identifying and selecting learners who are in need of special services.
- Assigning grades on report cards.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of their instructional effort.
- Communicating instructional objectives or achievement expectations.

- Communicating social or inter- personal expectations.
- Controlling learner behaviors and motivation.
- Enhancing test-taking skills.(p.179)

1.2. Types of Assessment

1.2.1. Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment takes place at the beginning of a unit. Swearing (2002) assumed that it is adopted to determine prior knowledge about learner's current knowledge of a subject in terms of strengths, misconception, and skills. Based on this assumption the instructor can remediate learners and adjust curriculum (what to teach and how to teach) in order to meet each student's unique needs. Diagnostic assessments can be performed through many forms. It involves formal measurements (e.g. IQ/aptitude tests) that are used to establish a starting point for evaluation, or informal measurements such as observation, discussions, questioning, interviews...etc.

1.2.2. Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment (hereafter SA) is set at a particular time (at the end of the instructional unit or at the end of the semester) to determine what students know and do not know. In this context, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2005) maintained that:

Summative assessments are used to measure what students have learnt at the end of a unit, to promote students, to ensure they have met required standards on the way to earning certification for school completion or to enter certain occupations. (p.21)

SA takes place after the learning has been completed. It provides information that sums up the teaching and the learning process. It is used by teachers to measure students' performance in learning. This type of assessment involves standardized tests that are

infrequent and isolated. SA can be used as part of the grading process where grades are usually seen as an outcome that indicate whether the student has an acceptable level of knowledge or no. It uses formal measurement like end-of-unit or chapter tests and end-of-term or semester exams, labs, assignments, projects and presentations to evaluate the learning outcomes.

1.2.3. Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment (hereafter FA) is part of the instructional process. When it incorporates into classroom practice; it provides the needed information to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. FA usually takes place during the learning experiences; it aims to build a cumulative summary of student achievement. It is used to monitor students' ongoing progress and to provide immediate and meaningful feedback. In the following discussion we will stretch the meaning of FA besides its basic elements.

2. Formative Assessment Vs. Summative Assessment

Assessment is a key element in the educational process; it can be used to achieve a variety of purposes; therefore, there are many forms of assessment in teaching. The most common ones are SA and FA. Regarding SA, it measures what students have learnt through testing and examination. However, FA refers to frequent and interactive assessments of student progress and understanding. The differences between summative and formative assessment are precised effectively with Knight (2001), he indicated that SA is used for judgment and FA for improvement.

Torrance and Pryor (2002) suggested that '*summative assessment is generally considered to be undertaken at the end of a course or programme of study in order to measure and communicate pupil performance and (latterly) accountability*' (p.8). Brown (1999) reinforced Torrance and Pryor's suggestion; he argued that SA "*tends to be endpoint, largely numerical and concerned mainly with making evaluative judgment*" (p.6).

Consequently, SA refers to any activity that takes place at the end of a course or program, it ends by attributing scores or grades on students' performance for the purpose of measurements rather than improvement.

In contrast, FA or assessment for learning occurs during the course. It enables students to improve their learning in general. Formative tests are not graded, they are used as an on-going diagnostic tool, hence, the teacher employs the results of FA to modify and adjust his/her practices, in order to reflect the needs and the progress of learners (Swearing, 2002). In this regard, Harlen (2008) illustrated that the key aspects of FA are as follows:

- Evidence is gathered about ongoing learning activities that can be used to make decisions about further learning.
- The evidence is judged in terms of progress toward the detailed lesson goals. These goals may vary for different individual pupils or for groups and so comparison between pupils is not sensible or justified.
- Pupils are aware of their lesson goals and can help in deciding their next steps toward the goals.
- The process is cyclical and ongoing; information gathered is used as an integral part of teaching and learning.
- No judgment of grade or level is involved, only the judgment of how to help a learner take the next steps in learning. Information gathered frequently by the teacher will be able to feedback to correct any mistake judgment (p.139).

FA is an ongoing process; it focuses on students' progression rather than giving grades. The gathered information is usually used to adjust teaching procedures. Black et al (2003) stated that classroom based formative assessment

...can occur many times in every lesson .It involves several different methods for encouraging learners to express what they are thinking and several ways of acting on such evidence. It has to be within the control of the individual teacher and for this reason; change in formative assessment is an integral and intimate part of the teacher's daily work. (p.2)

Black et al. (2003) clarified that FA is an essential component during teaching. It can be used frequently through using various methods. These later help the learners to reflect their thinking concerning particular task. For further clarification, Douglas and Nancy (2007) stated the main differences between FA and SA in the following table:

Table 2: Comparison of formative assessment and summative assessment (P.4)

	Formative assessments	summative assessments
Purpose	To improve instruction and provide student feedback	To measure student competency
When administered	Ongoing throughout unit	End of unit or course To gauge their progress
How students use results	To self-monitor understanding	toward course or grade-level goals and benchmarks
How teachers use results	To check for understanding	For grades, Promotion

In the light of the previous table, FA is an ongoing assessment, reviews, and observations in a classroom. They are used to improve instructional methods and provide student feedback. However, SA is used to assess students at the end of unit or at the end of the year. The goal of SA is to decide about the student level meanwhile FA is used to improve student level.

Taras (2005) explored the relationship between FA and SA. She criticized Black and William (1998) for putting too much emphasis for not investigating the connection between SA and FA. According to Taras (2005) assessment cannot be formative if summative judgment has not preceded it. In other words, SA serves as a starting point or foundation for FA; if a learner uses the judgments to make a change, FA takes place i.e., there must be judgment of a product. Thus, based on Taras (2005) regard FA is a combination of SA and feedback. In this context, Sadler (1989 cited in Taras 2005, p.471) declared that *"Feedback requires knowledge of the standard or goal, skill in making multi criterion comparisons, and the development of ways and means for reducing the discrepancy between what is produced and what is aimed for"*. Relatively, feedback implies that there is a gap between the learners' current status and the required standard. Here the teacher needs to provide SA as a first step, and then the next step is to implement methods to reduce the gap between where the learner is and where he needs to be.

3. Formative Assessment

3.1. Definition of Formative Assessment

Throughout history FA gained gradual attention in teaching and learning. It became a particular focus of educators and researchers during the 1980s. Socrates is the early operator of FA, he used to provide his students with questions and use their responses to evaluate their learning. In the article of the *American educational research association* [AERA], Scriven (1967) used the term FA and clarified its efficiency in the educational setting.

The issue of solidifying a unique definition of the term FA was problematic. It is argued that it used to gather information that can contribute to adjust the teaching program (Andraide & Cizek, 2010). Likewise, Black and Wiliam (1998 a cited in in Irons 2008) pointed out that FA is “*All those activities undertaken by teachers and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide formative feedback to shape and develop the teaching and learning activities in which both teachers and students are engaged...*” (p.8).The basic principle of FA is the provision of information about learners’ performance (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

Additionally, FA is viewed as a tool of improvement rather than grading. Torrance and Pryor (2002) support the assertion that FA can make a considerable difference to the quality of student learning. Black and William (1998) claimed that FA provides evidences that can be used to change teacher’s method in order to improve learning. Therefore, FA refers to frequent and interactive practices that aim to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately.

The common view is that FA takes place during instruction. It is defined by FA for Students and Teachers [FAST], a department of the Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO] as “*a process used during instruction to provide feedback for the adjustment of ongoing teaching and learning, it is used for the purposes of improving student achievement related to instructional objectives*” (James, 2008). Popham (2008) claimed that FA is a planned process during which the teacher or students use assessment-based evidence to adjust ongoing learning and instruction. Sadler (1989) shared the same view describing formative assessment as a systematic process to continuously gather information and provide feedback about learning while instruction is underway.

Formative assessment is concerned with how judgments about the quality of student responses (performances, pieces, or works) can be used to shape and improve student's competence by short-circuiting the randomness and inefficiency of trial-and-error learning (p.120)

We can conclude that FA is a process of gathering information during the instruction in order to adjust teaching and improve learning. This idea can be summarized in Cowie and Bell's definition (1999) of FA where it is defined as "*the process used by teachers and students to recognize and respond to student learning in order to enhance that learning, during the learning*" (p.537). This definition was illustrated with Heritage (2008) argument:

The purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback to teachers and students during the course of learning about the gap between students' current and desired performance so that action can be taken to close the gap. (Cited in Filsecker & Kerres, 2012 p.4)

Feedback is a central element in FA. Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggested that feedback must answer three major questions asked by a teacher and/or by a student:

- Where am I going? (What are the goals?)
- How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?)
- Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?) (p. 86)

Feedback is about reducing the gap between the present state and the target state. Hattie and Timperley (2007) acknowledged the importance of providing feedback within the learning and teaching context. However, feedback is ineffective when it is provided in a vacuum (Hattie and Timperley, 2007), because it is mostly efficient when it is related to a specific assignment and goal.

3.2. Types of Formative Assessment

3.2.1.Planned formative assessment

Cowie and Bell (1999) stated that planned formative assessment is semi-formal. It happens at the beginning or at the end of the topic. It is set for the purpose of providing information about students' thinking that will be later on used to improve learning. These gathered evidences are interpreted so that the teacher and/or learners act on this information with reference to the topic itself, with reference to the learners' previous performance and with reference to how the learner and the teacher are ready about the next step of learning. Similarly, Hall and Burke (2004) shared the same idea of improving learning through planned formative assessment.

As it is demonstrated in the figure 3, the teacher gains the information from the activity which is given to students, those information are interpreted either by the teacher or by the learner, and finally the learner acts to get the information on the topic itself

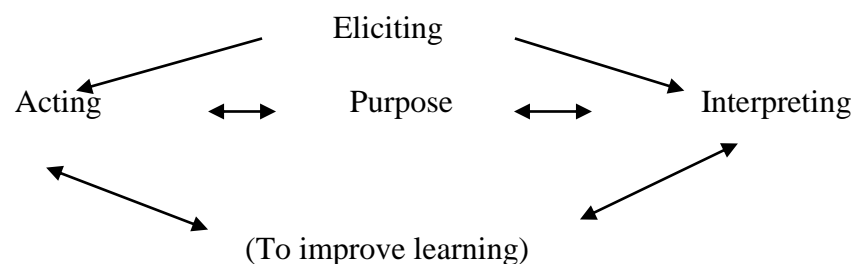


Figure3: Planned Formative Assessment (Adapted from Cowie and Bell, 1999, p.103).

FA is a continuous process integrated into instruction. The main target of this cycle process is to “close the gap.” This is because FA aims to close the gap between where the learner currently is and the intended learning goal. Starting by eliciting evidence of learning; the teacher can use a variety of strategies while teaching to knowhow students' learning is evolving towards a goal. After that, the teacher examines the evidence to determine the status of student learning: what the students understand, what their misconceptions are, what

knowledge they have or do not have, and what skills they are or are not acquiring. At this level, the teacher responds to the evidence through descriptive feedback; s/he gives cues to the students about what they can do to progress in order to close the gap. However, providing feedback is not only attributed to teachers but also to peers because they can also provide feedback that helps their classmates to improve learning. In addition to external feedback from teachers and peers, students get feedback about their own learning through self-assessment. As a result of feedback teachers decide about the action they will take, so they will make adjustments through selecting appropriate strategies to move forward.

3.2.2. Interactive Formative Assessment

Interactive formative assessment occurs during teacher–pupil interaction (Cowie & Bell, 1999). The major actions that happen in this form of assessment are noticing, recognizing, and responding. For instance, a teacher may organize a group work. Then he notices the learners' thinking and acting on the base of prior knowledge or prior subject mainly through comments and questions i.e., s/he notices how learners did the activity or how they interacted with each other. Finally, the teacher recognizes the significance of the information for the sake of improving learning. Unlike planned formative assessment teacher response is immediate. Interactive formative assessment can be explained in the following figure of Cowie and Bell (1999):

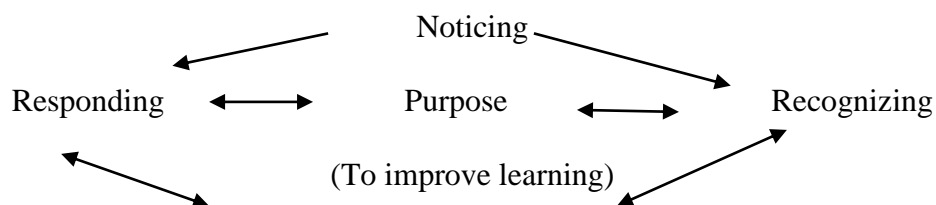


Figure 4: Interactive Formative Assessment (Cowie and Bell, 1999, p.107)

3.3. Stages of Formative Assessment

3.3.1.Pre-Formative Assessment

Green (2010) stated that the teachers' role during this period is to design instruction based on pre-assessment tasks. These tasks provide evaluative information about students' background knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, these pre-assessment tasks seek to help teachers to focus on areas of misunderstanding as well as elements that are not yet learnt. Teachers also can draw their instructional objectives based on the outcomes of those assessments for future planning. Furthermore, pre-assessment helps students to develop their learning through adjusting their learning strategies.

Pre-formative assessment is considered to be an early stage to prepare students forward learning, so that students will be motivated and smoothly engaged into learning. During this stage, questioning is the most dependent strategy that help to have clear idea about students' prior knowledge (Green, 2010).

3.3.2. Formative Assessment During Instruction

This form of FA occurs during the act of teaching and learning in classroom. It seeks to provide information about how well students are progressing and to decide whether to move forward or backward instruction. Also, it explores the individual abilities that need further explanation and practice. Similarly, Green (2010) asserted that assessment during instruction helps teachers to identify students who are struggling to learn certain concepts. Moreover, assessment during instruction encourages students' self-assessment so that students' motivational sense will be raised via learning new knowledge and skills.

The use of FA during instruction relies on many strategies like questioning. This later is a reliable way to identify learner's lacks so that teachers have the opportunity to correct or reteach the non-mastered subjects. In other words asking questions helps teachers to

demonstrate learners' knowledge. Therefore, McMillan (2007) pointed that questions should be an integral component during instruction because they have many advantages. They offer an opportunity for discussion and interactions between teachers and students. Thus, students can develop a degree of understanding as well as teachers can analyze their students thinking.

3.3.3. Formative Assessment After Instruction

FA after instruction has been defined by McMillan (2007) as "*last assessment*" (p.103). For him it seeks "*to identify areas in which students could use a bit more clarification, practice, or reinforcement before a summative assessment*" (p.10). Habitually, students' assessment reveals in a form of grades. In contrast, according to McMillan (2007) teachers who apply FA still have opportunity to improve learning before it is over (SA takes place then). Post instruction strategies summarize all what has been taught, they involve questioning strategies to highlight students' weaknesses; in order to be avoided in summative conclusions.

3.4. The Strategies of Formative Assessment

3.4.1. On –The –Fly

Pinchok and Consultant (2009) defined On–The–Fly formative assessment as "*the teacher changes course during a lesson to address misconceptions before proceeding with the designed instructional sequence*" (p.5). In this context, this technique enables teachers to address misconceptions by changing the direction of the lesson and engaging the student to think about their conceptions. On-the-fly assessment is more interactive; it focuses on gathering information about student learning whenever possible in any student-teacher interaction (Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006). For instance, to address a misconception a teacher might use questions to identify the source of misunderstanding. In such programs, the strategy of employing more discussions, asking more concept-eliciting questions have greatly enhanced teachers' knowledge about students' thinking and understanding (Crumrine&

Demers, 2007). Likewise, Heritage (2007) argued that on-the-fly assessment occurs spontaneously during the course of a lesson; it aimed to identify misconceptions that might need to be addressed. Thus, on-the-fly assessment can increase student motivation by making learning an enjoyable experience. This motivation improves students' learning because they will be actively engaged in learning (Boddy et al., 2003).

3.4.2. Planned-for Interaction:

Planned-for interaction formative assessment involves deliberate planning on the part of the teacher (Furtak, 2008). This means that the teacher decides in advance how s/he will draw out students' thinking during the course of instruction. Within this strategy a teacher designs ways to identify the gap between students' prior knowledge is and what they should know. For example, the teacher might deliver prepared-in-advance tasks to students in order to recognize students' conceptions during an activity in a classroom. It is argued that planned-for questioning strategies can be an effective tool for FA (National Research Council of the National Academies, 2007). So, planned-for interaction assessment means that the teacher makes his plan and preparation of the lesson before he delivers it to the learners.

3.4.3. Curriculum-Embedded

Furtak (2008) explains that embedded formative assessment are formal and immediate practices inserted into curriculum, it is designed to help teachers to check students' understanding at key points during instruction and reflect on the next steps to move students forward in learning. In the same sense Furtak (2008) indicated that providing feedback about students' performance is immediate actions that are designed by the teacher to address deficient areas. So, teachers or curriculum developers may embed assessments in the ongoing curriculum to intentionally improve learning.

3.5. The Role of Teachers and Students in Formative Assessment

FA is a partnership process; it involves the division of responsibility between teachers and learners to accomplish a learning goals. This supported by Heritage (in Better: Evidence-based Education, 2011), she said that “*Power and responsibility in the classroom is not just the teacher’s prerogative, but is distributed*” (p.18). In this sense there is tension among researchers concerning the role of teachers and students (Torrance and Pryor, 1998). So, in the following section we will investigate the roles of both teachers and students in FA.

3.5.1. The Role of Teachers in Formative Assessment

Heritage (2007) argued that for effective application of FA there should be an effective teacher. Relatively, Pinchok and Consoltant (2009, pp12-13) reported that “*teachers will need to optimize their knowledge in their domain area.*” Thus the teacher should set different objectives, know how he will reach these objectives, and finally test whether he succeeded to convey his knowledge to his students or not.

There are many experts who stress the necessity of feedback. As many researches have reviewed, teacher feedback is beneficial; it helps students to understand their current learning and provides hints, suggestions, or cues for them to act on. Accordingly, black and William (2003), Gipps and Stobart (2003), Harlen (2005) and Sadler (1998) have strong support for the notion that teacher feedback is an opportunity to develop student learning. Thus, feedback is seen as crucial component in FA in terms of: First, it is an essential resource for teachers to shape new learning through adjusting their instruction to make sure that learning is on track. Second, feedback is also an essential resource so the students can take active steps to advance their own learning. In this regard, Kulger and De Nisi (1996, cited in Elliot, 1999) founded that feedback was directly associated with improvement in 60 % studies examined.

The teacher’s role in FA can be revealed in creating situations where the students can act as participants, so they can acquire the habits that enable them to share responsibility for

learning and assessment (Cowie, 2005). Here, Cowie (2005) reinforces the idea of that students undertake their learning; mainly by being participant agents in assessment through developing metacognitive judgment skills (self-assessment skills). In contrast Carless (2007) perceived the teacher as “*the key mediator in enhancing students learning*”(p.172). Black and William (1998) have described two possible ways in which teacher mediates. First, teacher can build student capacity to assess themselves and assess each others, and second the teacher can control the learning situation. In reference to Carless, Black and William (1998), the act of mediation involves students’ ability to assess themselves, their peers, their works, and their understanding. Moreover, it involves teacher’s necessity to be well equipped in order to meet learners’ needs.

According to Brook (2011) the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students [STCEAS] should be developed i.e., teachers should be skilled in using FA results when making decisions about students learning, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement. In other words teachers should be experienced in identifying what item should be measured, analyzing student work, and determining the next step in instruction. In addition, teachers who practice FA are also expected to support students to acquire the skills needed to enhance learning (Dixon & Haigh, 2009). Similarly, Heritage (2011) pointed out that teachers must create a collaborative and supportive classroom environment for students, in which questioning, constructive feedback, and self-assessment are perceived as nonthreatening.

3.5.2. The Student Role in Formative Assessment

Since FA is a partnership process, it does not involve only teachers but also students. In this process students became active processors; they develop metacognitive strategies (self-assessment) that help them in thinking about their own learning while they are learning. In the light of this, students can generate internal feedback that tells them when they need to make

adjustments to their learning strategies. It involves thinking about learning, and can deepen students' understanding of their own learning. Students' role also includes peer-assessment where students give feedback to their classmates in order to make progress toward the lesson goal.

4. Formative Assessment Facilitating Writing Proficiency

FA has a great importance in the whole educational process. Recent researches have indicated positive results on the effectiveness of FA across many schools (National Research Council of the National Academies, 2007). Black and William (1998), stressed FA status reporting that it is a powerful contributor to student learning since it improves standards of learning. Yorke (2003) suggested that the act of assessing formatively has an effect on the teacher as well as the student. In FA, assessors learn about how well students are progressing so that they can tailor their teaching accordingly. FA helps to create a learning community; with peer assessment students are more likely to be open about their peers, they are considered as resources for checking the quality of their peers' works as well as the possibility to discuss their learning needs with peers or with their teachers (Black and William, 1998).

FA can provide information for academics on the areas where students are experiencing difficulties. Thus, the collected information helps to focus teaching efforts on students' weaknesses (Marshall & Drummond, 2006). Furthermore, FA enhances academic motivation that will ultimately engage students in learning. FA also enhances learners' autonomy as they use feedback. As it is indicated by Marshall and Rowland (1998), there is an opportunity to enhance the process of independent learning. In this regard, FA helps students to learn new skills mainly through involving them in the learning process. Therefore, students will understand their own learning and develop appropriate strategies for learning.

As it is indicated before, we cannot deny the importance of FA in the learning and teaching process as a whole. In writing, most researches have long taken the beneficial impact of formative assessment for granted. Currently, the most visible and influential assessments of students' writing involves summative assessments. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that these assessments make writing instruction more effective in order to improve students' writing. Such periodical assessments have harshly criticized in terms of time-consuming because teachers and students often must wait months before results are available. As an alternative, many scholars have appreciated the role of FA in facilitating student' writing, developing thesis, organizing paragraphs, choosing appropriate vocabulary and manipulating sentences.

Ainsworth and Viegut (2007, as cited in Grover Tuttle 2009) claimed that FA enhances students' writing. This can be showed through the continuous growth which is an important aspect of FA; students' writing will be developed through the provision of formative feedback. This later is non-evaluative, specific, timely, and related to the learning goals. In other words, formative feedback is more than providing learners with evaluative judgments (grades) about their achievement. Accordingly, Sadler (1989) argued that knowledge of results or grades is insufficient to improve learners. Guenette (2013) proved that formative feedback is a critical strategy for correcting incorrect task strategies, procedural errors, or misconceptions.

FA is not one single tool; it is a series of events and actions that are used constantly. Successful teacher assessors tend to carefully select right tool at the right time in order to inform instruction and support the learners. Observations, Conferences, Student Self-evaluations are the most used tools to assess learners formatively during the writing instruction. Concerning observation, it is the foundation of a teacher's assessment work.

When teaching writing, teachers are likely to observe students who are engaged in certain writing task in order to know their strengths and needs. Taking notes is the most dependent teacher's strategy when s/he observes his/her students in the writing activity. As a result, the gathered information from teacher notes help to plan supportive classroom learning experiences.

In Conversations, a teacher may conduct surveys, interviews, or conferences to elicit information about the status of student writing. These strategies may help to gauge effective evidence about students writing preferences or their attitudes toward the followed approach and techniques when teaching writing. The common conversational tools teachers use for FA is writing conferences; teachers often talk with students about the processes they use to select a topic for a writing piece or the writing strategies they learned. In other words, teachers and students discuss specific information about their written productions in order to help both of them to better understand where the students are and to identify the next steps. Student self-evaluation is another important component of FA; it helps to elicit student perspectives on their own writing. Students may reflect on progress toward a goal, or on processes used for writing. Self-evaluations encourage students to monitor their own learning. It is a source of information on student learning through which learners can revise or plan for future learning experiences, highlight writing challenges and to set goals for future learning.

To sum up, the impact of FA in writing can be shown in the ability of clarifying learning intentions and goals. It creates classroom community through effective classroom discussions and questions. Moreover, it encourages learners due to the use of feedback; this later makes students undertake their learning. Assessing writing formatively helps both teachers and learners to elicit evidences about learning and teaching through a variety of tasks for the sake of adjustment and progressions. As a tool of improvement, FA enables students to become self-regulated and autonomous learners.

Conclusion

FA is a powerful tool for both teachers and students. It tells the teachers about the effectiveness of their instruction, and the students about their strengths and weaknesses. In this chapter we tackled the issue of assessment as an integral component in the educational system besides its types briefly. Then, we distinguished between SA and FA as the most common used once. Related to the stated objectives of our research, we focused in this chapter on the basic elements of FA, its meaning, types, stages and strategies. In addition, we investigated the role of teachers and students in FA and finally its impact on students writing skill.

**CHAPTER THREE: FIELD
INVESTIGATION**

Introduction

The present chapter is concerned with data collection and analysis. It provides a description of the research method, instrument and procedure that are used in this research. In addition, it presents the analysis of data gathered by students' and teachers' questionnaire and their interpretation. Data analysis is reported in tabular and graphic presentations so that results will be clearer. By the end, we will suggest some points which are recommended to be applied by the teachers in order to improve students' writing skill.

1. Students' Questionnaire

1.1. Aim of the Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to seek information about the extent to which FA is used in classrooms; it also investigates the impact of this process on learners' writing skill, and how it improves it.

1.2. Sample choice

In this questionnaire, we have chosen randomly a sample of 136 students out of 198 registered in the third year at English department, Guelma University.

1.3. Description of Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire is composed of three (03) sections; each section contains sub-sections:

- **Section 1:** The first three questions include background knowledge about learners' age, gender, and their level in English.
- **Section 2:** This section is about the writing skill (from 4 to 13 questions); it investigates students' opinions about writing skill and their preferences concerning teachers' correction or feedback.

- **Section 3:** This section is concerned with the development of the writing skill through teachers' formative assessment (14 to 20 questions). It is about students' views and opinions towards their teachers' formative assessment, and to what extent it is helpful.

1.4. Administration of the Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to be answered by third year LMD students at the department of foreign languages, Guelma University. It was distributed on 15-16 of March 2016. This questionnaire was administered randomly to one hundred thirty six students, but only one hundred fifteen were handed back.

1.5. Analysis of the Results and Findings

Section One: Background Information

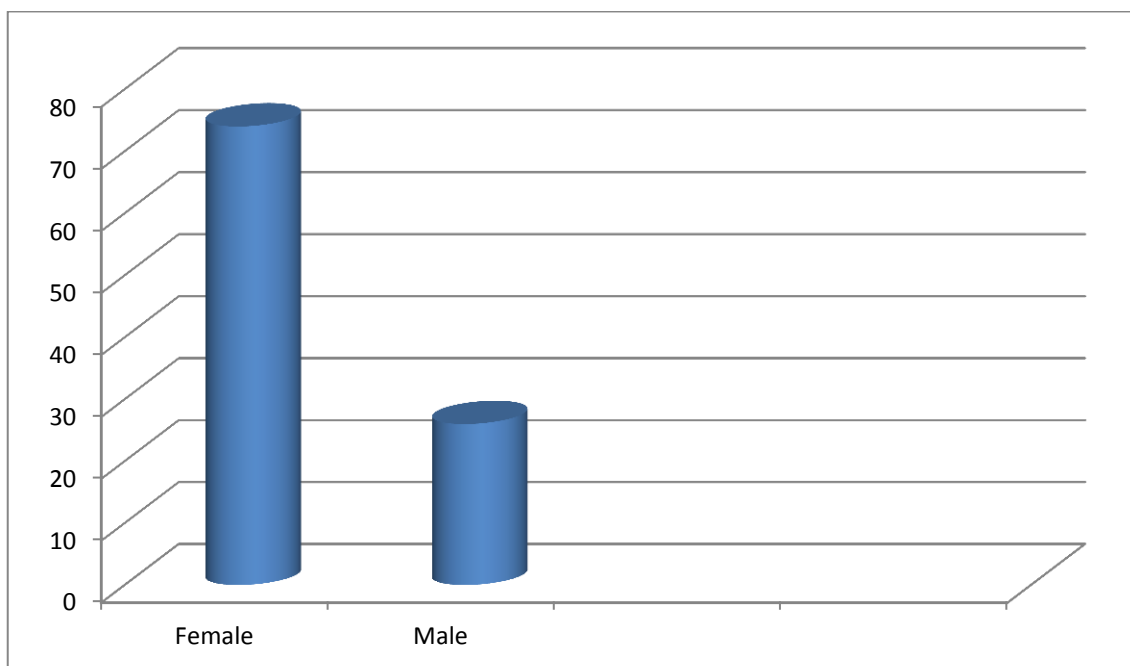
Question 1: Age

The subjects are aged between 21 and 26 years old.

Question 2: Sex distribution

Table 3: Sex Distribution

Response	Number	Percentage
Male	30	26%
Female	85	74%
Total	115	100%



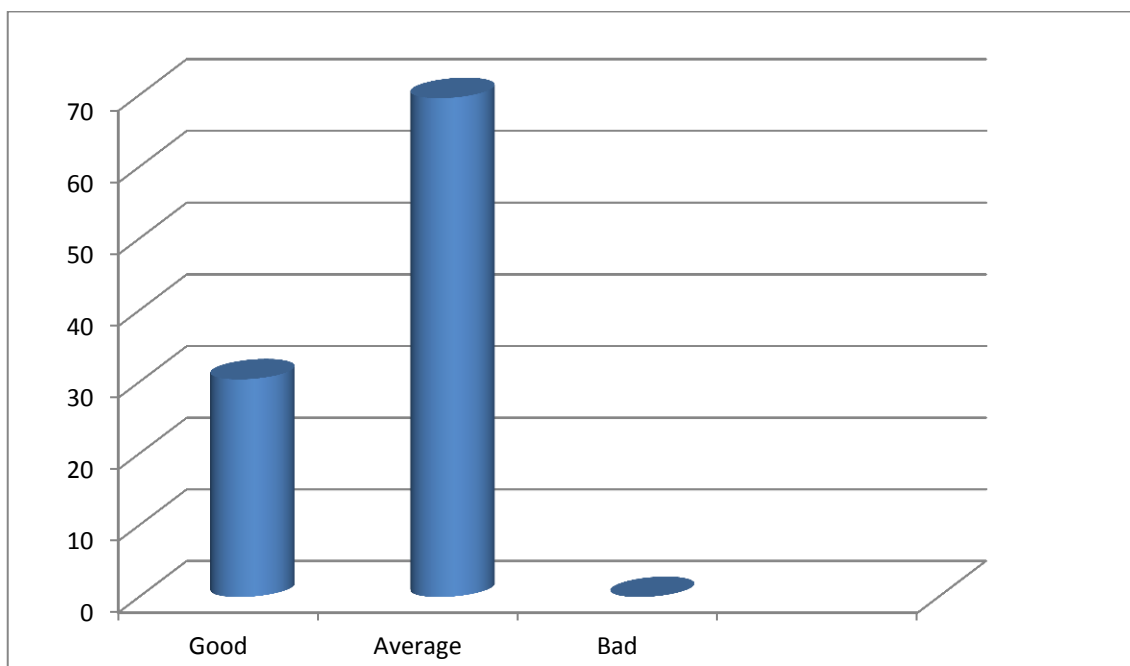
Graph 3: Sex distribution

The results show that out of 115 participants 26% are males and the rest are females (74%).

Question 3: How could you describe your level in English?

Table 4: Description of Students' level

Response	Number	Percentage
Good	35	30.4 %
Average	80	69.6 %
Bad	0	0 %
Total	115	100 %



Graph 4: Description of Students' level

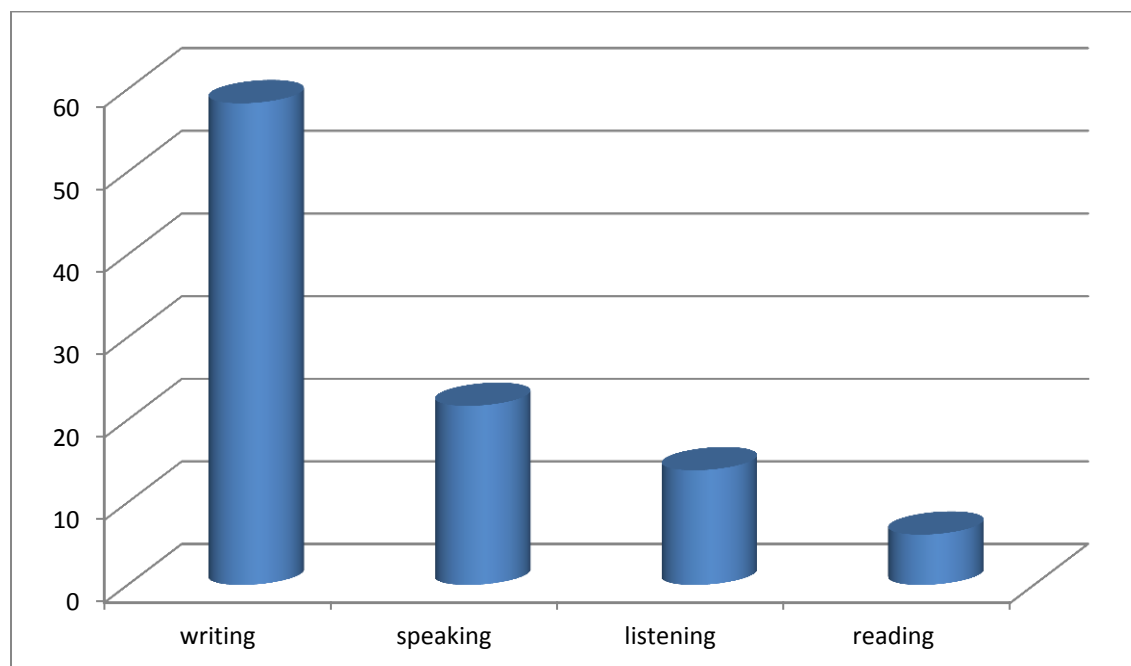
The results of this question show that 69, 6% of the respondents have average level in English while only 30, 4% are good. This can be related to the learners themselves or to many other factors such as teachers' experience and learning environment including staff and learning materials.

Section Two: Writing skill

Question 4: Which skill do you have problem with?

Table 5: Students' Most Difficult Skill

Response	Number	Percentage
Writing	67	58.3 %
Speaking	25	21.7%
Reading	7	6.1 %
Listening	13	13.9 %
Total	115	100 %



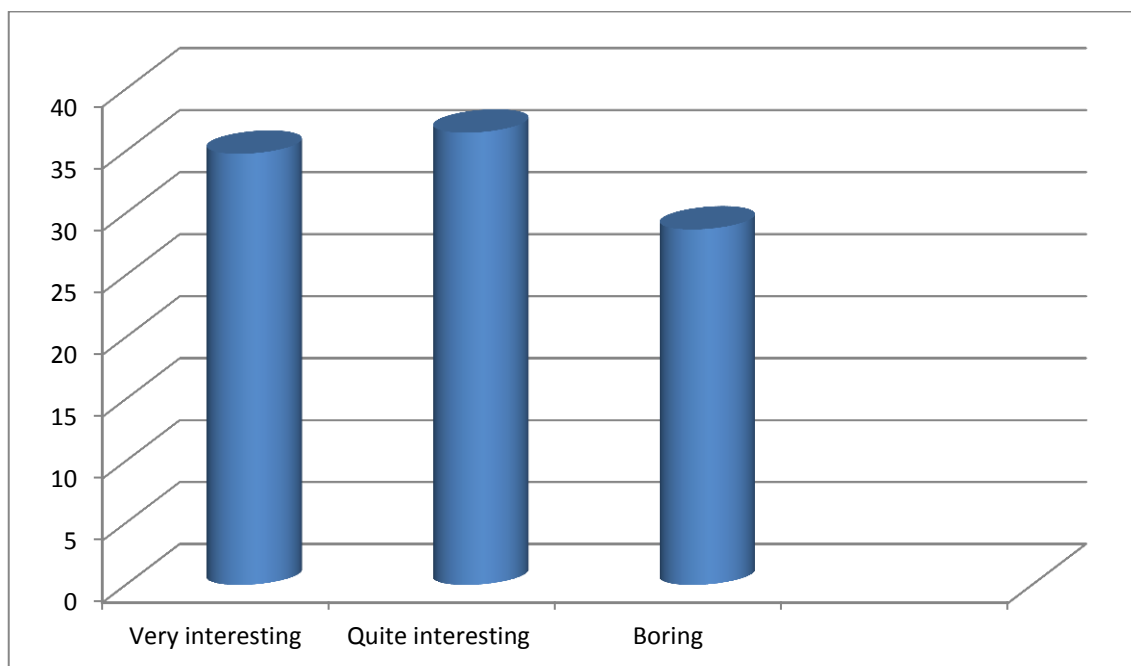
Graph 5: Students' Most Difficult Skill

From the results more than the half of the students (58,3 %) are facing difficulty with writing skill and this can be attributed to the different linguistic systems it involves as Collins and Grenther (1980) argued. However, 21,7% of the students have problem with the speaking skill. This may be linked to the lack of participation in classroom. While, reading and listening take the lowest percentage: 6,1 % and 13% respectively.

Question 5: How do you find the course of “Written Expression?”

Table 6: Students' opinion about “Written expression” course

Response	Number	Percentage
Very interesting	40	34.8 %
Quite interesting	42	36.5 %
Boring	33	28.7 %
Total	115	100 %



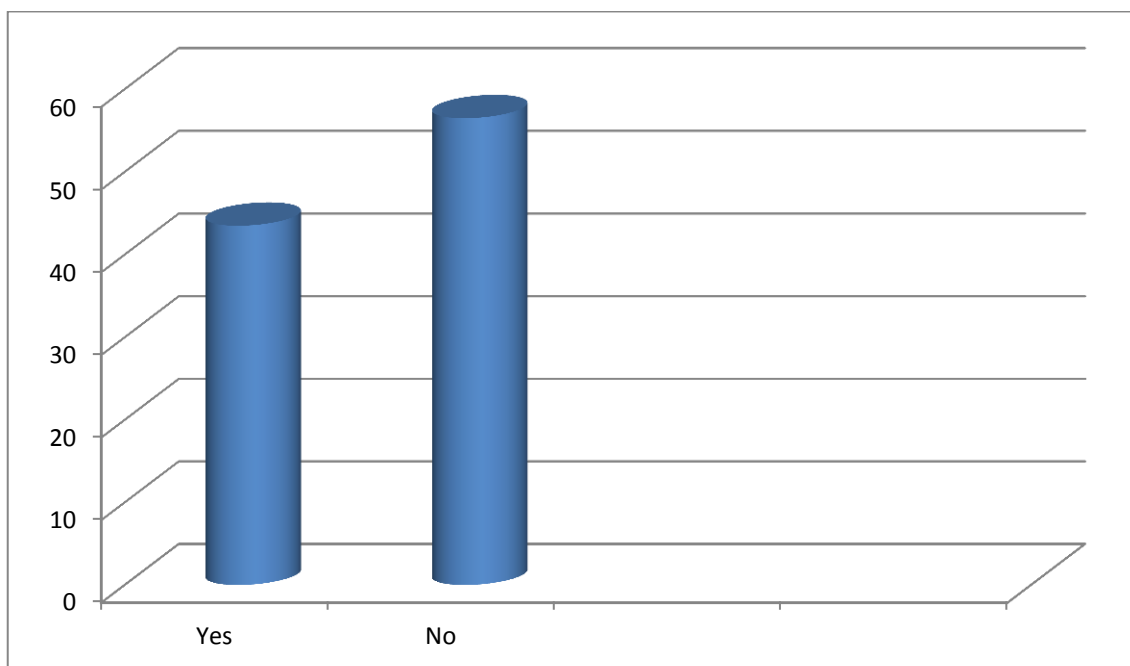
Graph 6: Students' Opinion about "Written Expression" Course

This question attempts to know students views concerning written expression course. The results show that 36.5% of the students consider written expression course quite interesting because of many factors. Around 34.8% of them consider it very interesting course since they need to write in order to communicate. However, the other students see it as boring course by percentage 28.7%.

Question 6: Do you think that writing is an easy task to learn?

Table.7: The nature of writing skill

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	50	43.5 %
No	65	56.5 %
Total	115	100 %



Graph.7: The Nature of Writing Skill

The Table above shows that 43.5 % of the subjects perceive writing as an easy task to perform. This may imply that they are just escaping the “No” answer that requires justification because if they said “Yes” answer, they need to explain why? .However, 56.5 % of the respondents view that writing is a difficult task and their justification can be demonstrated in the following answer.

Question 7: In case of “No”

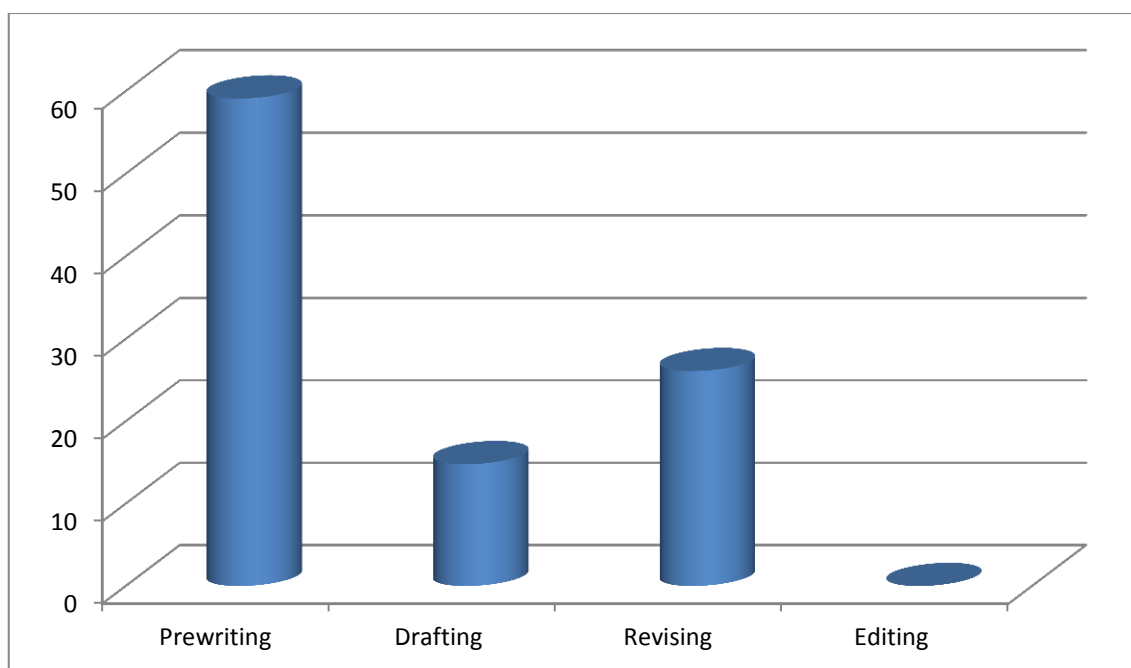
Only 60 out of 65 students who answered “No” to question 7 and they gave explanation as follows:

- “Writing needs great knowledge of vocabulary” (40students)
- “Because writing consists of many grammar rules” (12 students)
- “It needs time” (3 students)
- “It requires different techniques and good style” (3 students)
- “The teachers focus more on students’ oral performance “(2 students)

Question 8: Which one of the writing stages you don’t follow?

Table 8: Stages that are Not Followed When Writing.

Response	Number	Percentage
Prewriting	68	59.1 %
Drafting	17	14.8 %
Revising	30	26.1 %
Editing	0	0
Total	115	100 %

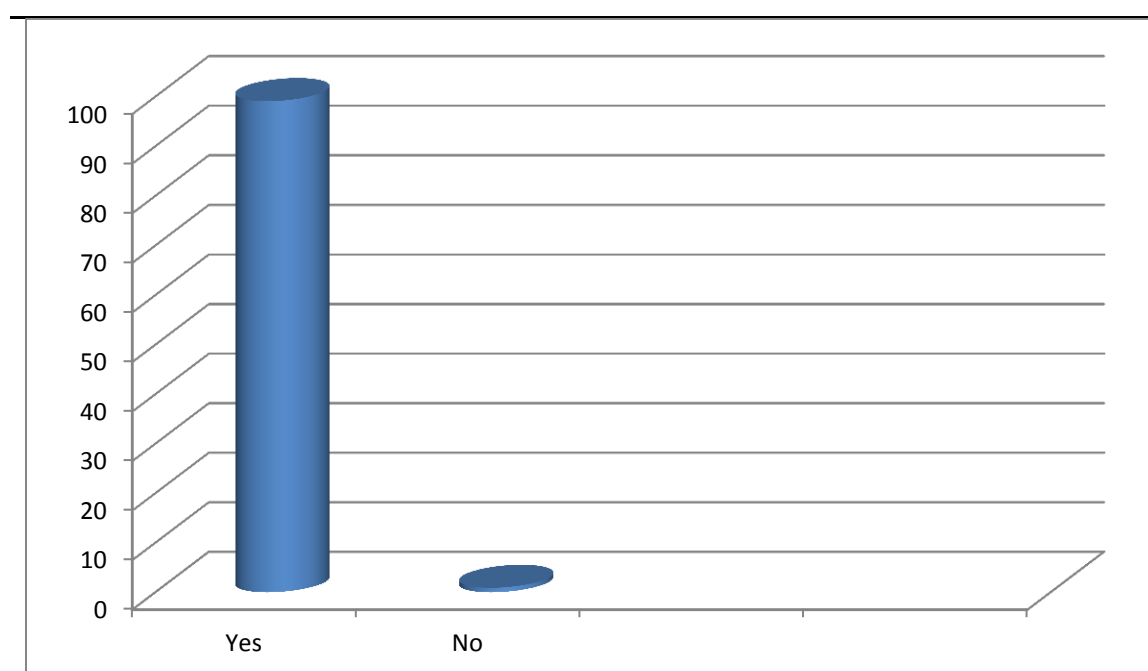
**Graph 8: Stages that Are Not Followed When Writing.**

From the table and graphic representation, it is indicated that 59.1% of the respondents do not proceed the stage of prewriting and around 26.1% do not proceed the revising stage. However, 14.8 % of them seem careless about the drafting stage whereas there is no one who does not proceed the editing stage. These results mean that most of students give less importance to the prewriting stage because they lack brainstorming strategies which are considered very helpful by Hwings and Curry (2003); moreover they write just for the sake of grading without revising both the form and the content.

Question 9: When you commit mistakes in writing composition, do you like to be corrected?

Table 9: Students' Preferences toward Teacher' Feedback When Writing

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	114	99.1 %
No	1	0.9 %
Total	115	100 %



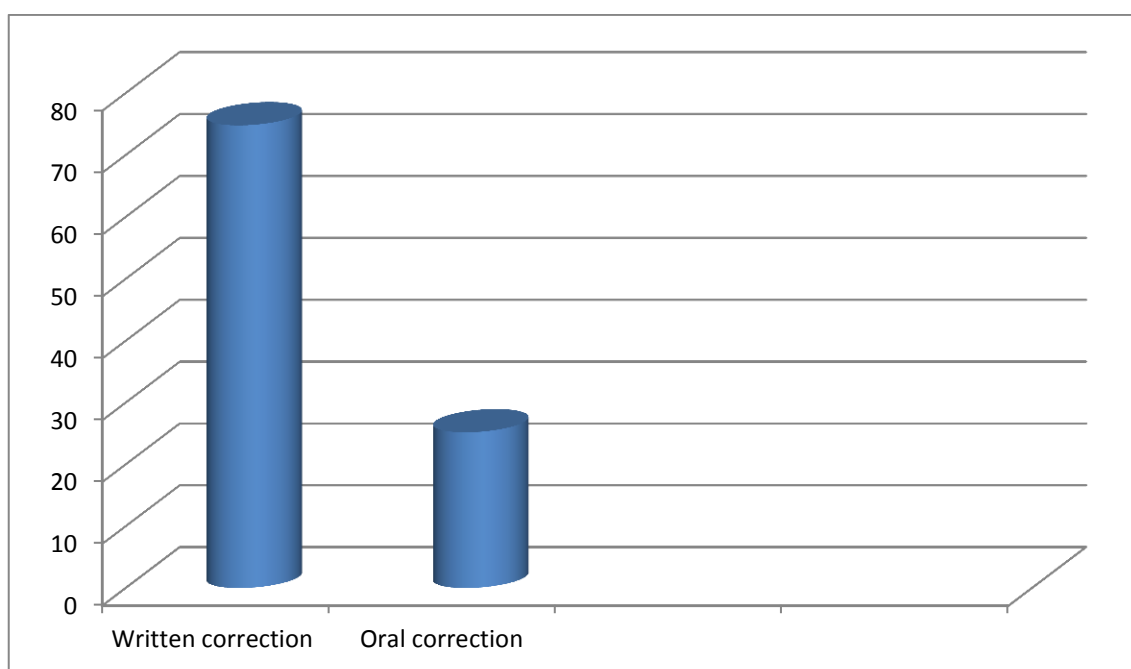
Graph 9: Students' Preferences toward Teacher's Feedback When Writing

The table above indicates that the majority of the students (99.9 %) acknowledge the importance of teacher's feedback when they commit mistakes in writing. This idea was reinforced by Hattie and Temperly (2007). However; only 0.9% does not like to be corrected. This can be explained in terms of students' fear from committing mistakes latter.

Question 10: Which type of correction would you prefer when you write?

Table 10: The Type of Correction Students Prefer

Response	Number	Percentage
Written correction	86	74.8 %
Oral correction	29	25.2 %
Total	115	100 %

**Graph 10: The Type of Correction Students Prefer**

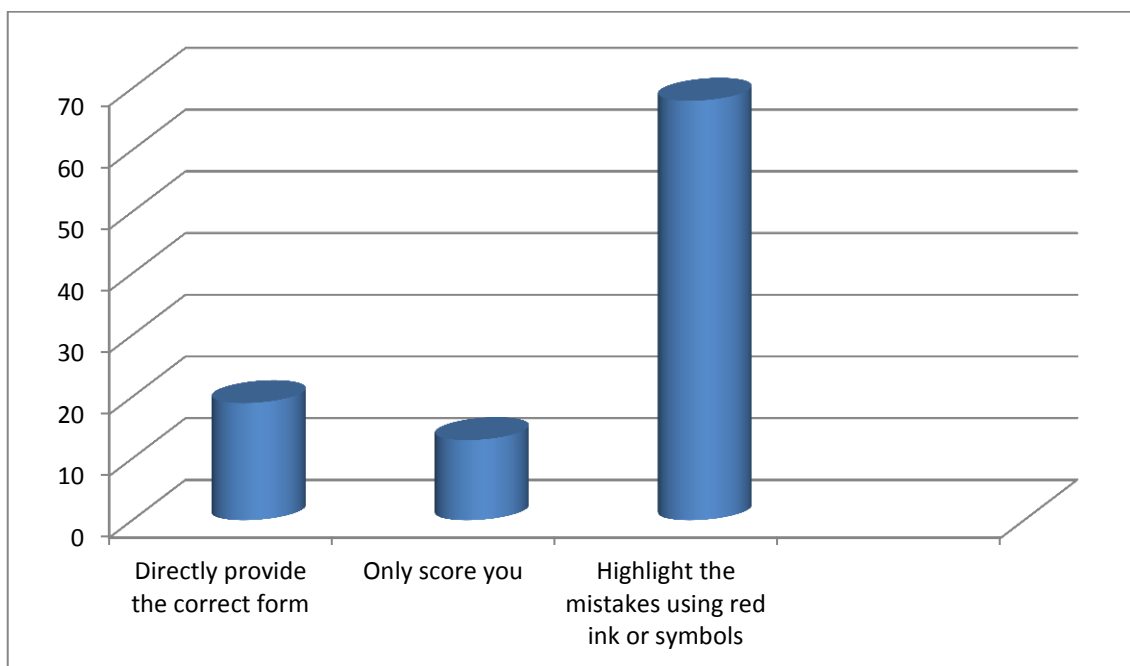
The results show that 74.8.6 % of the respondents prefer written correction when they write. However, 25.2 % of the subjects like to be corrected orally.

Question 11: How does your teacher of written expression correct your writing?

Table 11: The Way Used While Correcting Students' Writings

Response	Number	Percentage
Directly provide the correct form	22	19 %

Only scores you	15	13 %
Highlights the mistakes using ink or symbols	78	68 %
Total	115	100 %



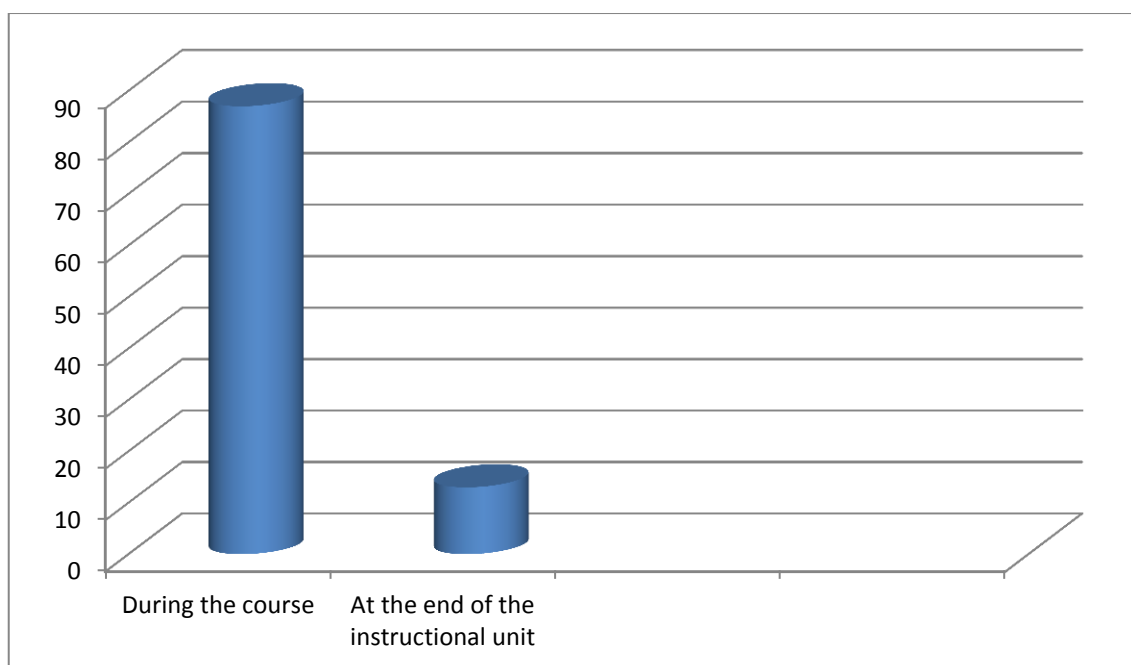
Graph 11: The Way Used by the Teacher to Correct the Students' Writings

The result shows that 68% of the students said that their teacher highlighted the mistakes using ink or symbols. However, 19% of them said that their teacher directly provide the correct form whereas 13% of them said that s/he only scores them.

Question12: When would you prefer to be corrected?

Table 12: Students` Attitudes towards the Time Feedback/ Correction should Take Place

Response	Number	Percentage
During the course	100	87 %
At the end of the instructional unit	15	13 %
Total	115	100%



Graph 12: Students` Attitudes towards Time of Correction

From the results above 87% of the students preferred to be corrected during the course of teaching writing while only 13% preferred to be corrected at the end of the instructional unit.

-Justify

Only 40 out of 100 students who gave justification to their answer “A” to question 12 and gave explanation as follow:

- “To not forget the correct form” (15 students).

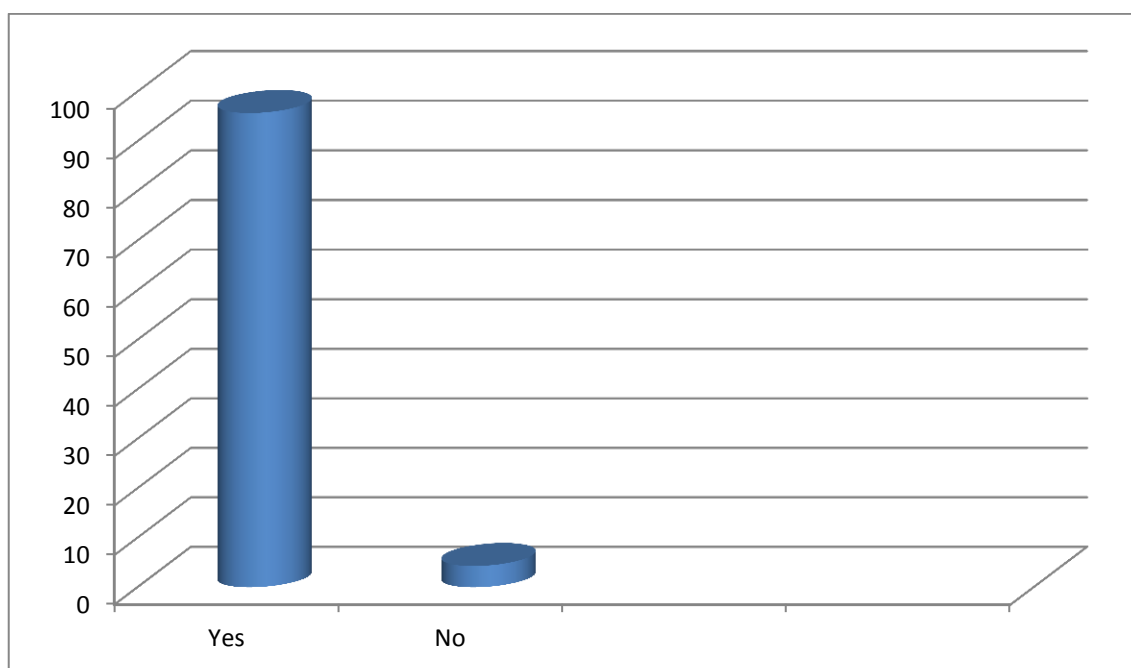
- “To improve learning and develop understanding” (10 students).
- “To discover my weaknesses” (8students).
- “To exchange different views” (7 students).

Only 8 out of 15 students who answered “B” to question 9, they gave explanation as follow:

- “To do not interrupt my classmates and teacher” (3 students).
- “Because I feel shame to be corrected in front of others” (5 students).

Table 13: The Necessity of Developing the Writing Skill

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	110	95.7 %
No	5	4.3 %
Total	115	100 %



Graph 13: The Necessity of Developing the Writing Skill

The results point out that the majority of students (95.7%) consider that developing the writing skill is necessary, whereas only 4.3% do not think that developing the writing skill is

necessary. From this result we can deduce that most of students view writing as a very important skill which needs development, elaboration and practice.

Question 14: In case of “yes”

Only 80 out of 110 students who answered “yes” to question 13 and gave explanation as follows:

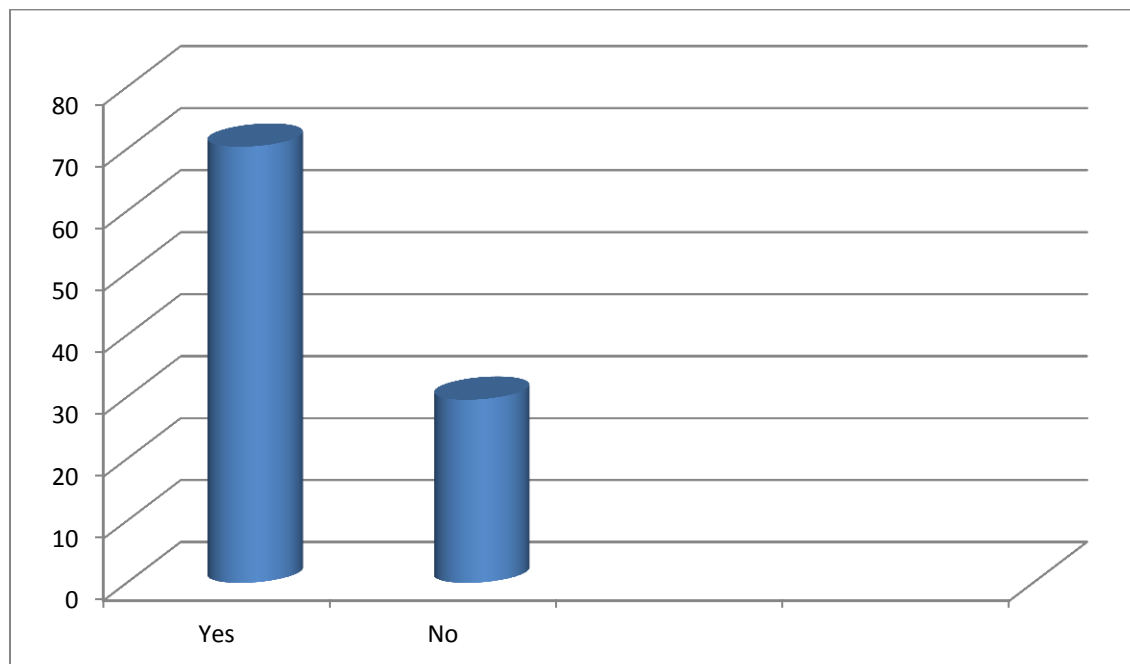
- “Because writing is needed in academic career: writing dissertation, reports, essays...” (25 students).
- “Developing writing skill is necessary for job application and writing letters (15 students).
- “Because writing helps shy students to express their thoughts and feelings” (10students).
- “To write effectively and avoid mistakes” (17 students).
- “Because writing is another mean for communication” (13students).

Section three: The Role of Formative Assessment in Developing the Writing Skill

Question15: Does your teacher of written expression implement formative assessment (continuous evaluation) during the writing course?

Table 14: The implementation of Formative Assessment during the Writing Course

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	81	70.4 %
No	34	29.6 %
Total	115	100 %



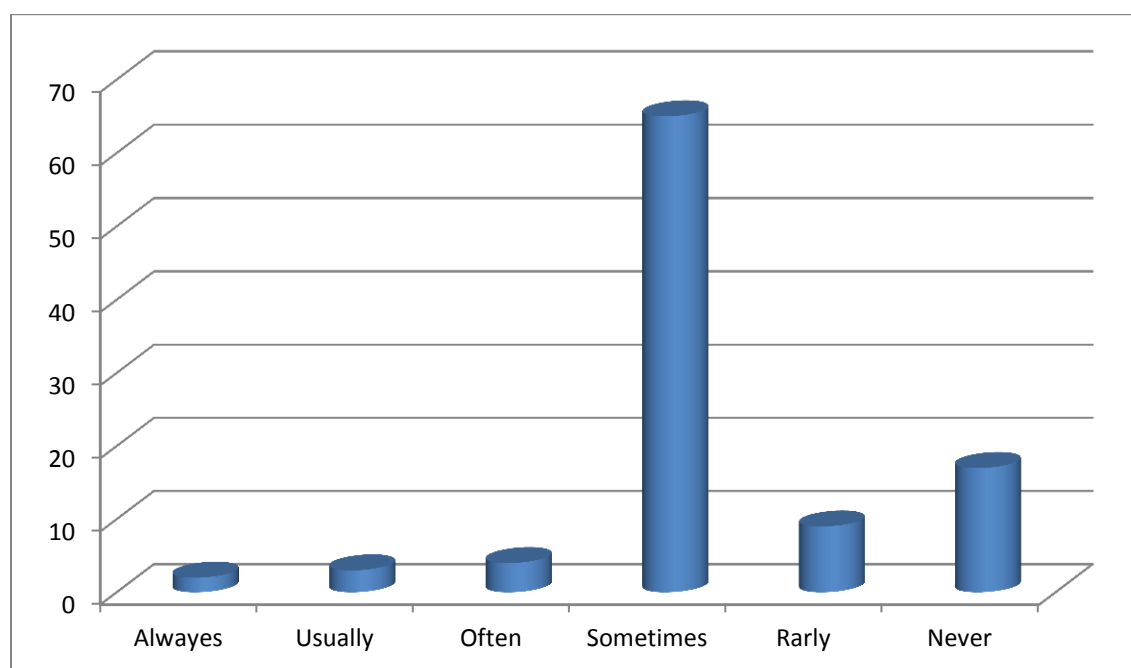
Graph 14: The Implementation of Formative Assessment during the Writing Course

The table above indicates that the majority of respondents (70.4 %) say that formative assessment is implemented during the writing course. This agreement refers to the role of formative feedback that helps in discovering learners' strengths and weaknesses as well as adjusting teaching (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2007). However, 29.6% claim that formative assessment is not employed.

Question 16: How often do you receive formative assessment in writing?

Table 14: Frequency of Teachers` Formative Assessment in Writing

Response	Number	Percentage
Always	2	2 %
Usually	3	3 %
Often	5	4 %
Sometimes	75	65%
Rarely	10	9 %
Never	20	17 %
Total	115	100 %

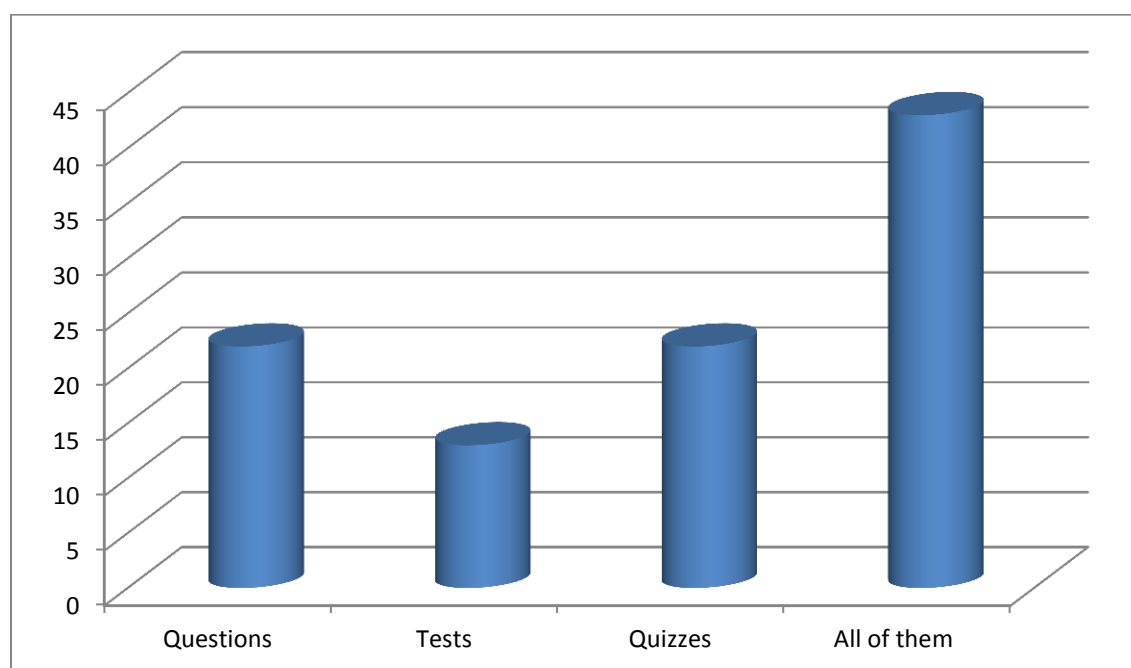
**Figure 14: Frequency of Teachers' Formative Assessment in Writing.**

The results show that the majority of students 65% sometimes receives FA from their teachers while 9% said that they never receive it. However, 4% said that they often receive FA. 3% of the respondents said that they usually receive FA and 2% said that they always receive it. From these results, it is obvious that FA is not stressed a lot in the writing course.

Question 17: Does your teacher assess you using:

Table 15: Teacher' Techniques of Assessment

Response	Number	Percentage
Questions	25	22%
Tests	15	13%
Quizzes	25	22 %
All of them	50	43 %
Total	115	100 %



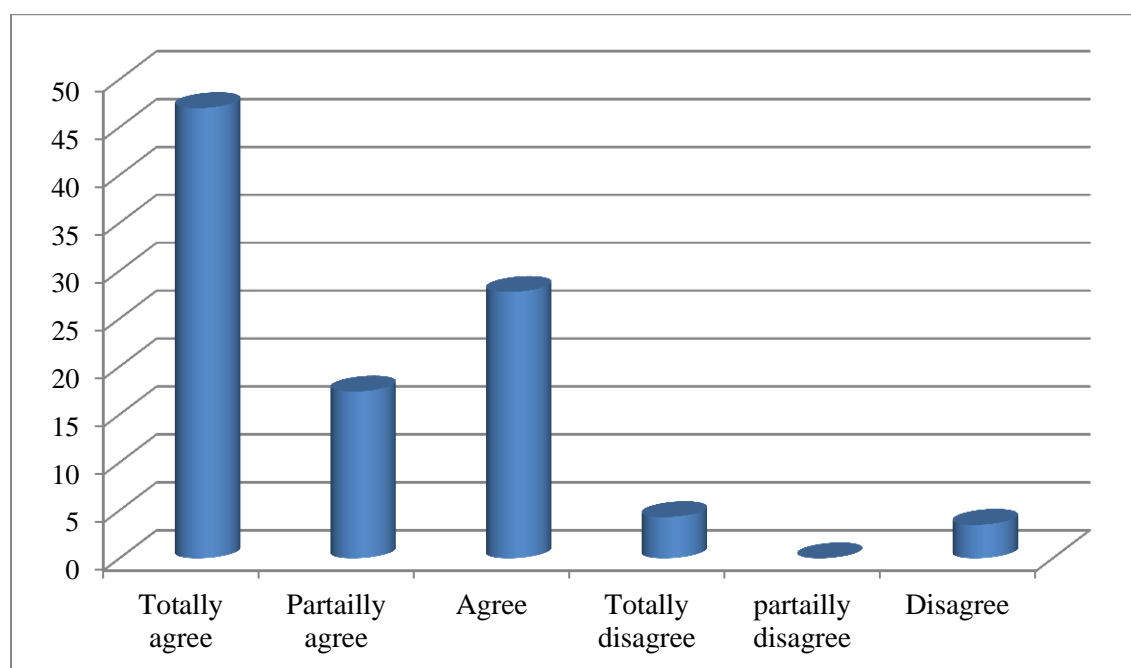
Graph 15: Teacher' Techniques of Assessment

The majority of students 43% determine that their teacher uses questions, tests and quizzes in assessment, while 25 % of the subjects answer that their teacher uses quizzes and questions by equal percentage 25 %. The rest reply that tests are most used when their teacher assess them (13 %).

Question 18: Do you agree that formative assessment is useful?

Table 16: Usefulness of Formative Assessment

Response	Number	Percentage
Totally agree	54	47 %
Partially agree	20	17.4%
Agree	32	27.8 %
Disagree	4	4.3 %
Totally disagree	5	3.5 %
Partially disagree	0	0 %
Total	115	100 %

**Graph 16: Usefulness of Formative Assessment**

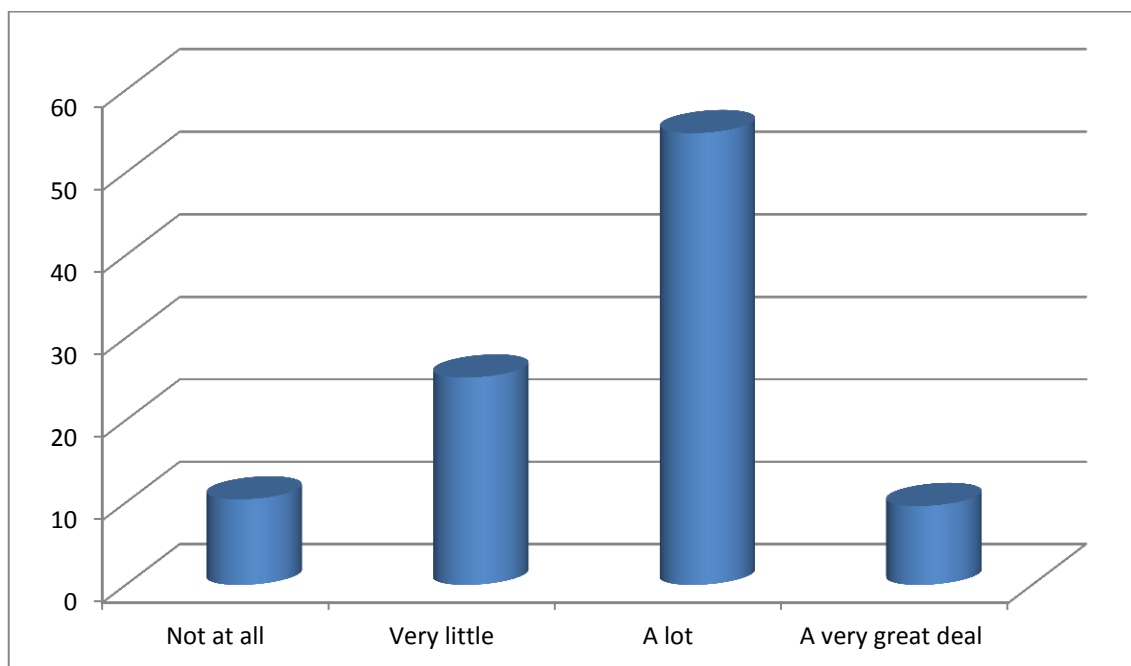
The results show that the majority of students (47 %) agree that FA is useful, whereas only 3.5% who are disagree with its efficacy. The views are between partially agree (17.4%), agree (27.8%), and disagree (4.3%), and 0%partially disagrees. These results mean that most students realize that FA is important to enhance their level. This finding was confirmed by many researchers and educators like Black and William (1998) who see FA as a powerful

contributor to learning. While the others who consider that FA is not effective they think that there are others practical techniques for improvement.

Question.19: To what extent does the teacher's formative assessment during the course help to improve your writing?

Table 17: The Improvement of Students' Writing Proficiency through Formative Assessment.

Response	Number	Percentage
Not at all	12	10.4 %
Very little	25	25.2 %
A lot	32	54.8 %
A very great deal	4	9.6 %
Total	115	100 %



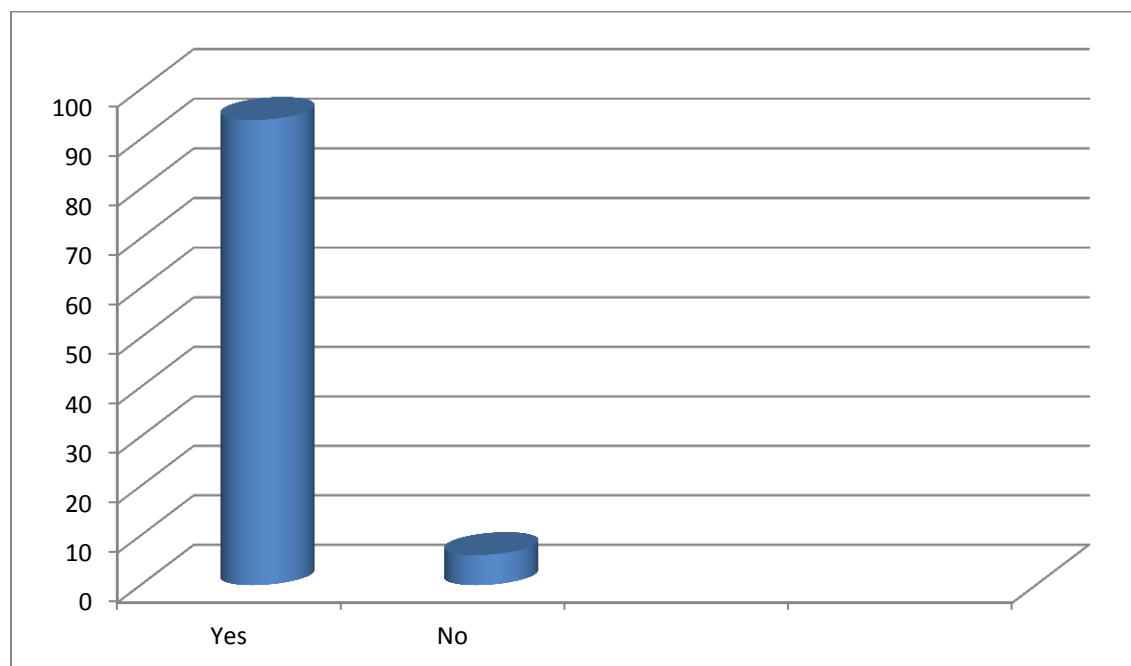
Graph 17: The Improvement of Students Writing Proficiency through Formative Assessment

From the results above the majority of the respondents 54.8% acknowledge the importance of teacher's FA in improving students' writing. However, 25.2 % of the respondents opted for the choice of "very little", and 10.4 % of the subjects answer by "not at all" and the rest 9.6 % respond by "very great deal". These findings imply the students' awareness about the effectiveness of FA in developing writing.

Question 20: Do you think that formative assessment (continuous evaluation) has an impact on language proficiency (writing skill)?

Table 18: The Students' Opinion about the Impact of Formative Assessment on their Language Proficiency.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	108	93.9 %
No	7	6.1 %
Total	115	100 %



Graph18: The Students' Opinion about the Impact of Formative Assessment on their Proficiency.

The findings show that the majority of subjects 93.9 % believe that formative assessment is beneficial and helps them in enhancing their writing skill .However, the minority (6.1%) thinks that it doesn't improve their level in writing. The findings imply that FA is a key element to improve students' writing due its continuous growth and the provision of formative feedback (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2007).

1.6. Summary of the results and findings from students questionnaire

The analysis of the gathered data demonstrates that students' most difficult skill is writing (58.3%); they perceive it quite interesting (36.5%) because they think that it is a complex process due to the fact that producing adequate composition requires going through different stages: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. Here, it is found that the majority of students do not follow both prewriting stage (59.1%) and revising stage (26.1%). These results indicate learners' interest about grades at the expense of the quality of their productions in terms of brainstorming, outlining and revising the gathered ideas. 95.7% of the subjects stress the priority to enhance one's level in writing because it is needed in communication as well as it helps in expressing thoughts and ideas. As such, the majority of students support teacher's written correction (84.8%). In fact most of them prefer to be corrected during the writing course (87%) thinking that it is the best way to not forget the correct form in addition to discover their weaknesses. This latter implies their positive attitudes towards formative assessment which is implemented constantly (70.4 %). In reference to that, the participants are aware about the usefulness of formative assessment and its impact in improving their writing skill (93.9 %).

2. Teachers' Questionnaire

This questionnaire attempts to identify teacher's role during the writing course and the most common problems they face in teaching this skill. It also seeks to identify the different strategies used to overcome their problems. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the effectiveness of FA and its impact on developing writing skill.

2.1. Administration of the questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire was conducted on 17 March 2016. It was addressed to the teachers of written expression course. Our sample consists of 10 teachers but only 6 questionnaires were handed back.

2.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into three sections; it is made up of 18 questions which include both open ended and close ended questions.

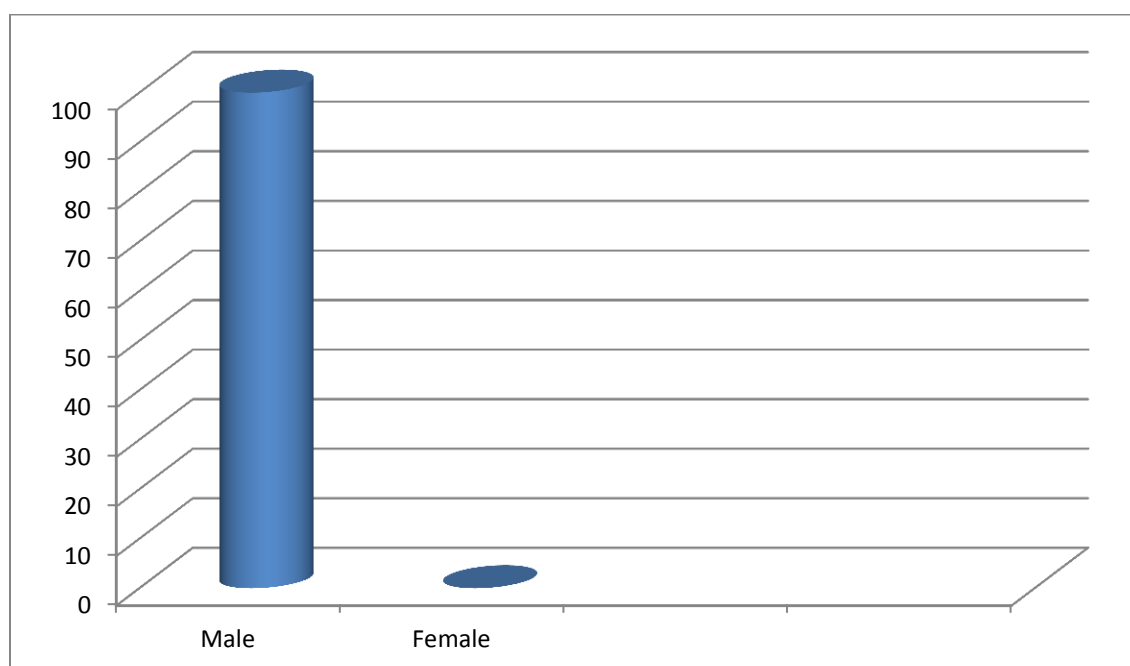
- **Section One:** this section aims at gathering general information about the sample .It consists of three questions about teachers' gender, qualification, and their teaching experience.
- **Section Two:** This section deals with the writing skill, it consists of eight questions (4 to 11 questions). It aims to collect information about writing skill and the different difficulties that learners face when they produce any piece of writing. In addition it, investigates the teachers' role in teaching writing as well as how they treat difficulties.
- **Section Three:** it is entitled formative assessment; this section is composed of ten questions (11to20 questions). It investigates the implementation of formative assessment in the teaching process; it also aims to find out the influence of teachers' formative assessment on students' writing proficiency.

2.3. Analysis of the questionnaire

Section One: Background Information

Question 1: Sex distribution**Table.19: Sex Distribution**

Response	Number	Percentage
Male	0	0%
Female	6	100 %
Total	6	100%

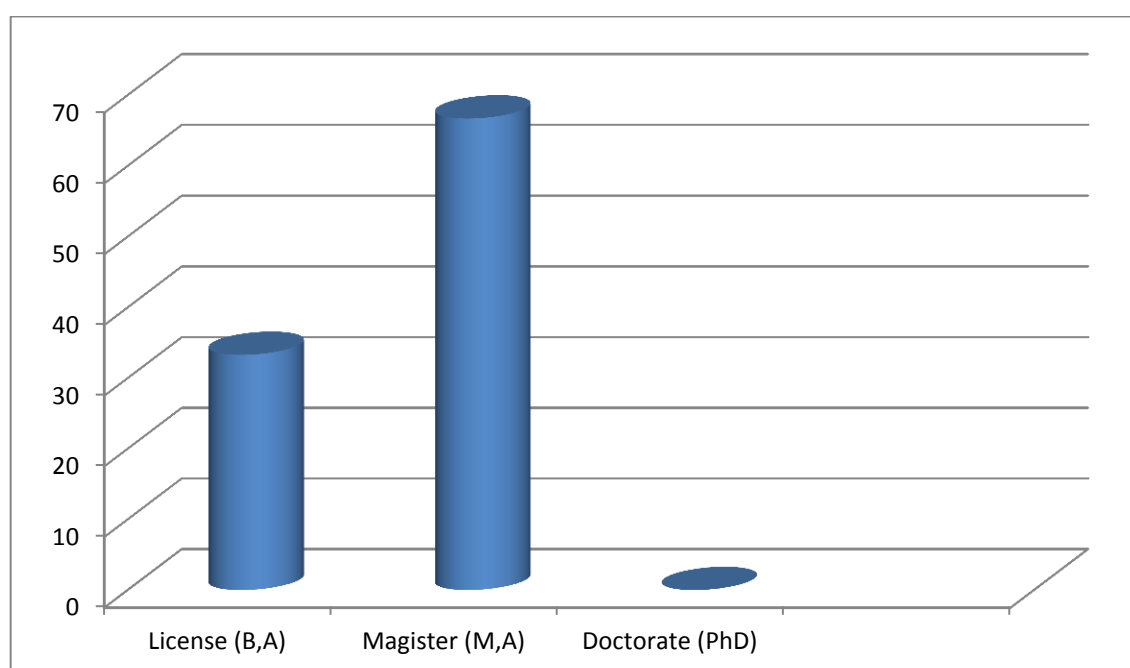
**Graph.19: Sex Distribution**

From the results, our sample is 100 % females.

Question 2: Teacher 'Qualification

Table 20: Teacher ‘Qualification

Response	Number	Percentage
License (B.A)	2	33.3 %
Magister (M.A)	4	66.7 %
Doctorate (PhD)	0	0 %
Total	6	100 %

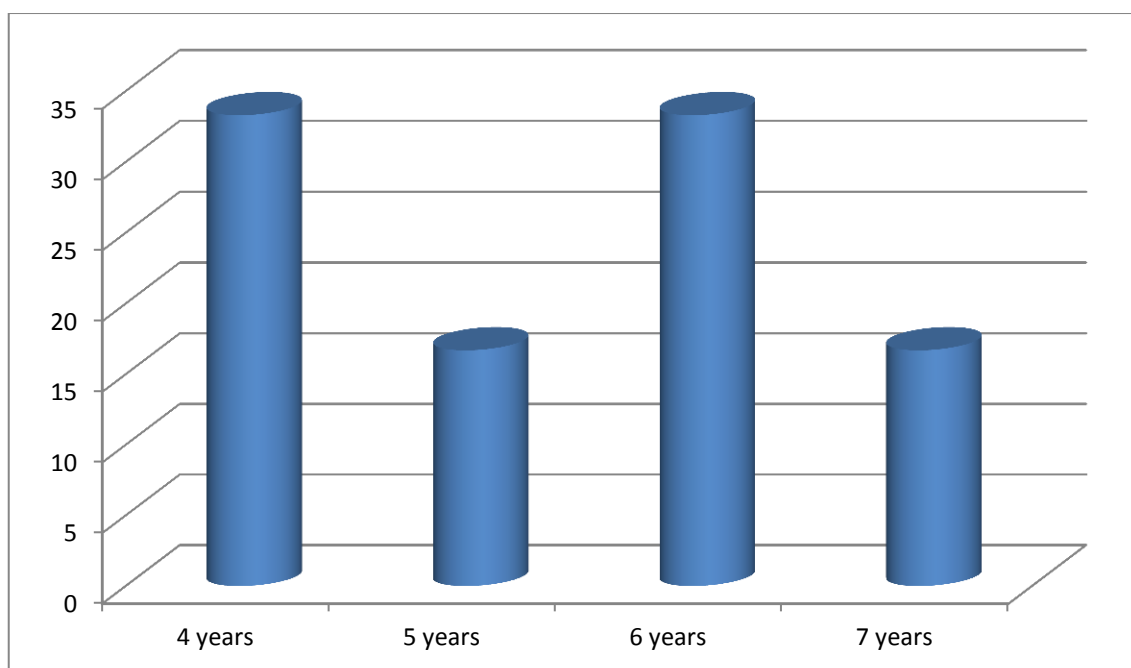
**Graph 20: Teachers' Qualification**

As the table indicates the sample is highly qualified for teaching; most of the teachers have a magister degree (M.A) 66.7%, while 33.3% of them have license degree (B.A) and no one have the doctorate degree (PhD).

Question 3: Years of experience

Table 21: Teachers Experience in Teaching

Response	Number	Percentage
4 years	2	33.3%
5 years	1	16.7 %
6 years	2	33.3 %
7 years	1	16.7 %
Total	6	100 %

**Graph 21: Teachers Experience in Teaching**

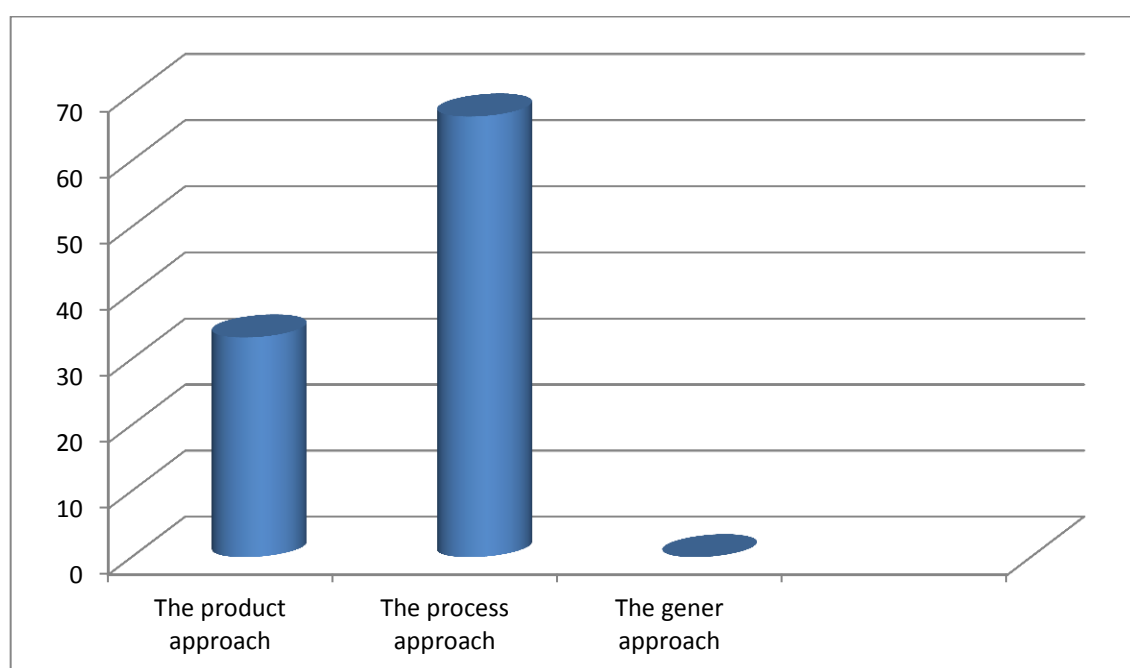
As the table shows, the respondents have been teaching from four to seven years. This implies that they are experienced in teaching English in foreign language classrooms.

Section two: The Writing Skill

Question 4: Which approach do you use in teaching the writing skill?

Table.22: Approaches to Teach Writing

Response	Number	Percentage
The product approach	2	33.3%
The process approach	4	66.7 %
The genre approach	0	0 %
Total	6	100 %

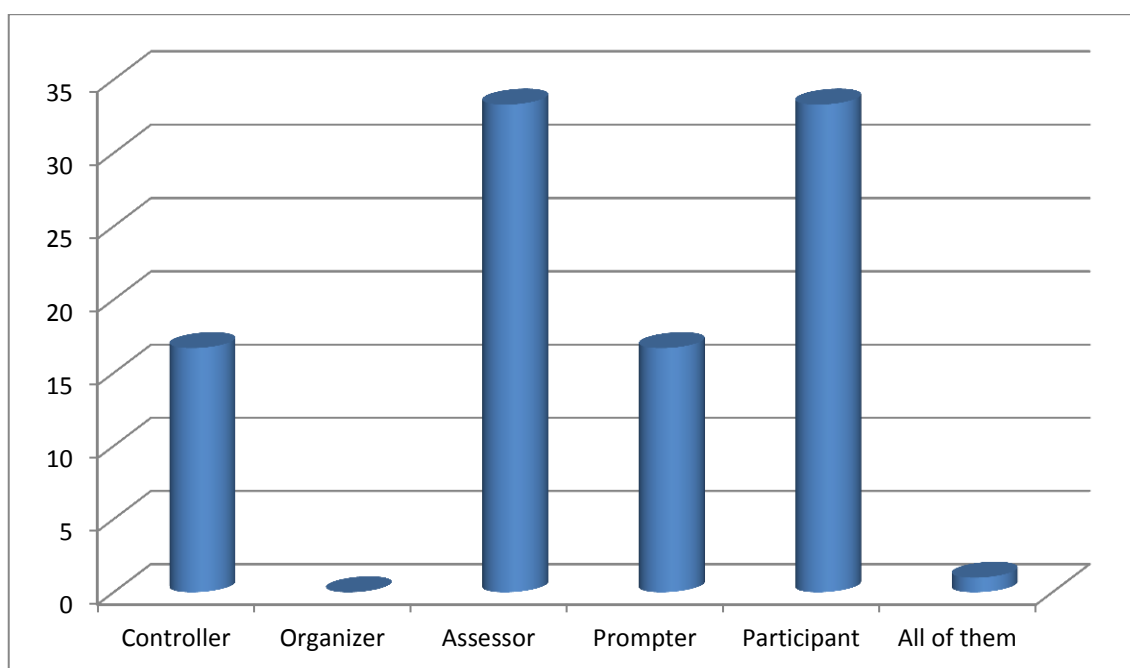
**Graph 22: Approaches to Teach Writing**

The findings determine that the process approach is the most adopted while teaching writing (66.7%). This advocates the efficiency of this approach as it helps learners to improve their writing, and allows teachers to check students' understanding and provide feedback whenever necessary. However, 33.3 % of the respondent teachers use the product approach because they emphasize the grammatical correctness of students' production. Nevertheless, no one opted for genre approach.

Question 5: What role do you play in the writing course?

Table 23: The Teacher Role in the Writing Course

Response	Number	Percentage
Controller	1	16.7 %
Organizer	0	0 %
Assessor	2	33.3 %
Promoter	0	0 %
Participant	2	33.3%
All of them	1	16.7%
Total	6	100%

**Graph 23: The Teacher Role in the Writing Course**

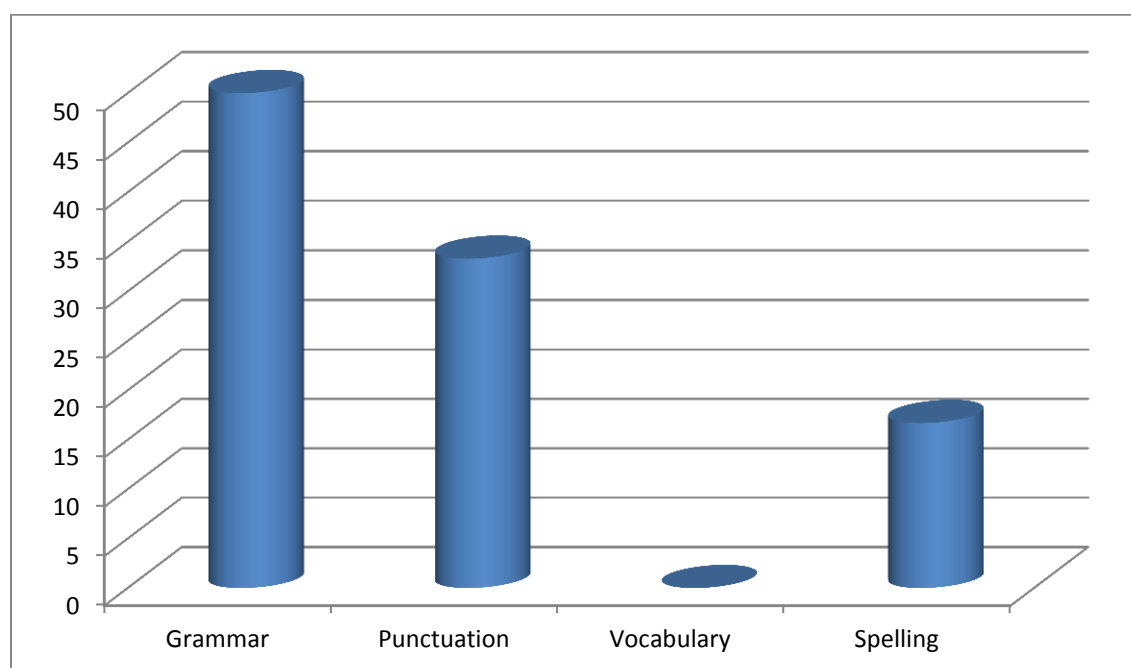
This question seeks to know teacher's role during the writing course, the results show that most teachers stand as assessors and participants by equal percentage 33.3%. The reason behind this choice is to create motivational atmosphere for learning and to know learners' strengths and weaknesses. However, one teacher chooses the role of controller (16.7%) and no one select promoter and organizer. Through teachers' answers there is only

one teacher (16.7 %) who advocates that she plays all the roles thinking that it is a good way to promote learning.

Question 6: What are the most common writing difficulties your students come across?

Table 24: Types of Difficulty

Response	Number	Percentage
Grammar	3	50%
Punctuation	2	33.3%
Vocabulary	0	0%
Spelling	1	16.7%
Total	6	100%



Graph 24: Types of Difficulty

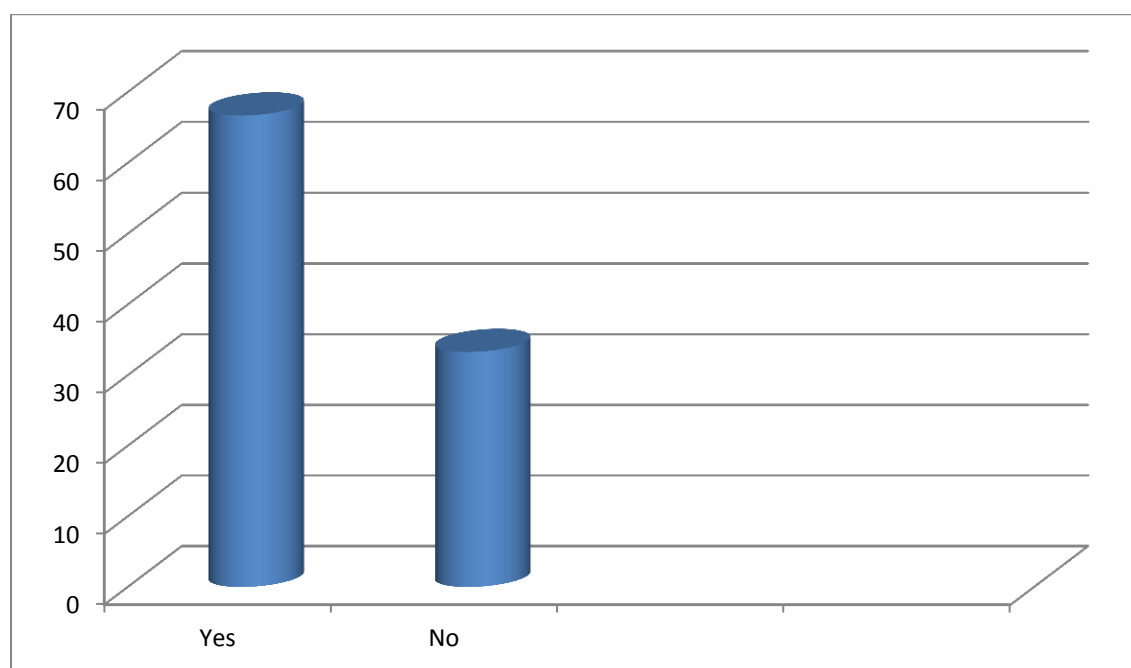
According to the teacher responses, it is noticed that half of student (50%) face difficulties in grammar; whereas, 33.3 % have problems with punctuation and 16.7 % of them find difficulty in spelling. However, none of the respondent teachers choose

vocabulary. This implies that major difficulties lies in areas of grammar and punctuation mainly because of the extensive rules and lack of practice.

Question 7: When you teach writing, do you follow the sequence of planning, drafting, editing and the final draft?

Table25: Proceeding through writing stages

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	66.7%
No	2	33.3%
Total	6	100%



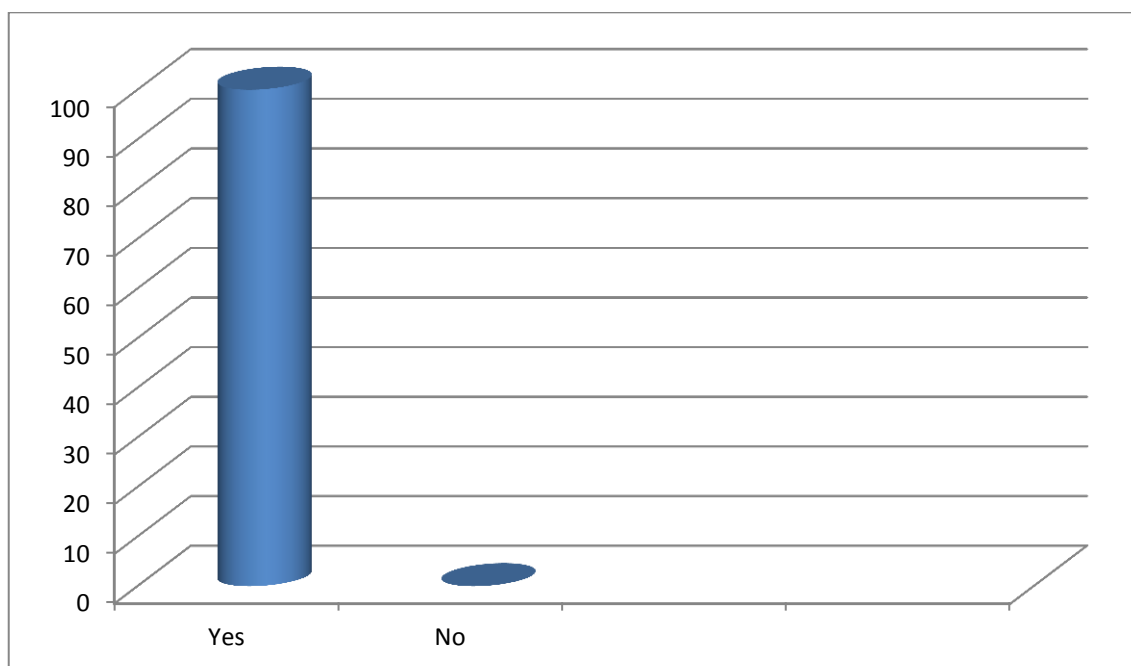
Graph25: Proceeding Through Writing Stages

In order to help students to produce well organized products, the majority of teachers (66.7%) proceed through the writing stages. While 33.3 % of them do not follow the writing stages when teaching writing.

Question 8: Do you offer a constructive feedback on what have been written down?

Table26: Teacher's Feedback on Students' Writings

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	100%
No	0	0%
Total	6	100%



Graph26: Teacher's Feedback on Students' Writings

The findings show that all the respondent teachers (100 %) provide constructive feedback for students when they write. This refers to the importance of teacher feedback believe and its impact on students' writings like what Hattie & Timperley (2007) assume.

Question 9: If "yes", why?

Only 3 out of 6 teachers provide the purpose for answer "yes" of question 8 as follow:

- "teacher feedback is useful in helping students to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses in writing"
- "when we provide feedback to students they benefit from their errors and get rid of many mistakes when they write again"

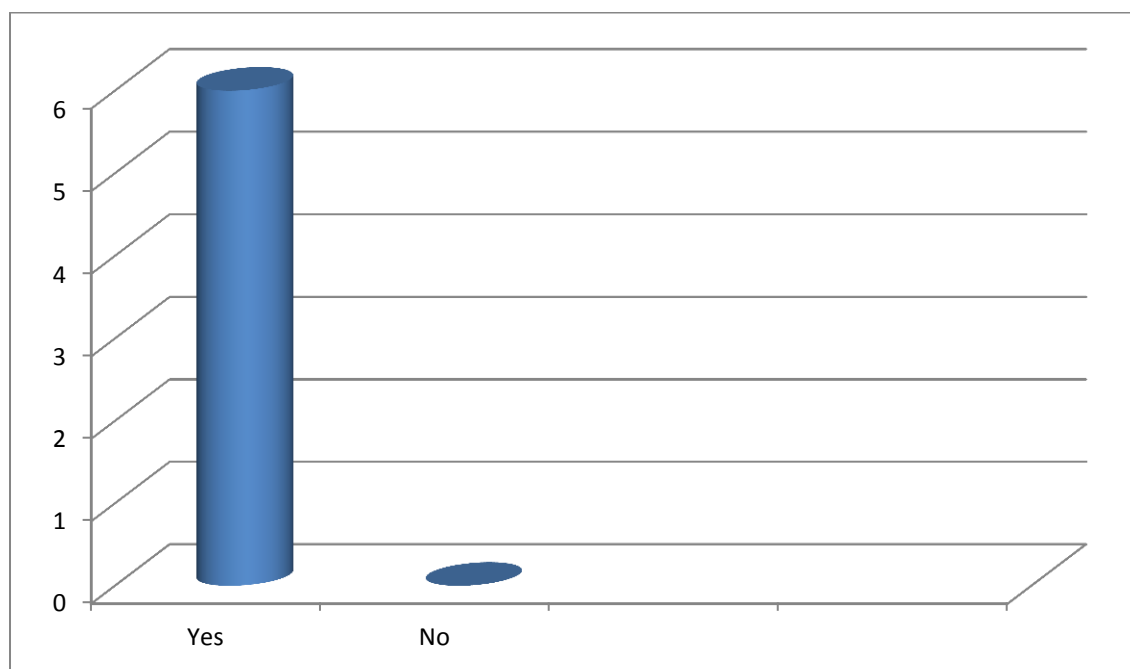
- “giving feedback will give students directions on how to correct, revise, and edit their writing so there will be development of their writing ability”

Section three: The Role of Teacher in Formative Assessment

Question 10: Do you provide assessment for your students?

Table 27: The Provision of Assessment.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	100%
No	0	0%
Total	6	100%



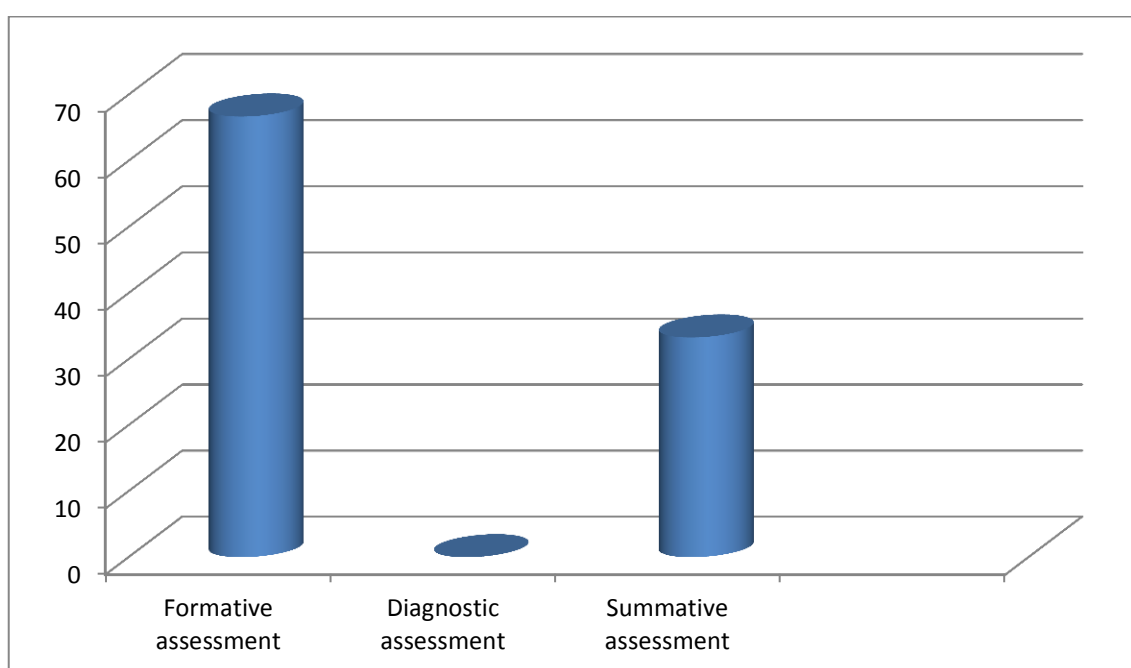
Graph27: The Provision of Assessment.

This question intended to get insight about whether teachers provide assessment for their students in classrooms or not. The results indicate that all teachers assess their students by percentage (100 %). This clarifies the importance of assessment in academic achievement.

Question 12: Which form of assessment do you provide for your students in the writing instruction?

Table 28: Types of Assessing Students Formatively in Writing

Response	Number	Percentage
Formative assessment	4	66.7%
Diagnostic assessment	0	0%
Summative assessment	2	33.3%
Total	6	100%

**Graph28: Types of Assessing Students in Writing**

This question seeks to determine which type of assessment teachers tend to use in writing. Most teachers advocate the application of formative assessment when they teach writing (66.7 %), and 33.3 % of them prefer to use summative assessment. However, no one choose diagnostic assessment. These responses highlight in fact that the teachers' focus on ongoing improvement of students (FA) besides the final decision about their levels (SA).

Question 13: What does it mean for you formative assessment?

This open ended question aims to know whether teachers are aware about what formative assessment stands for.

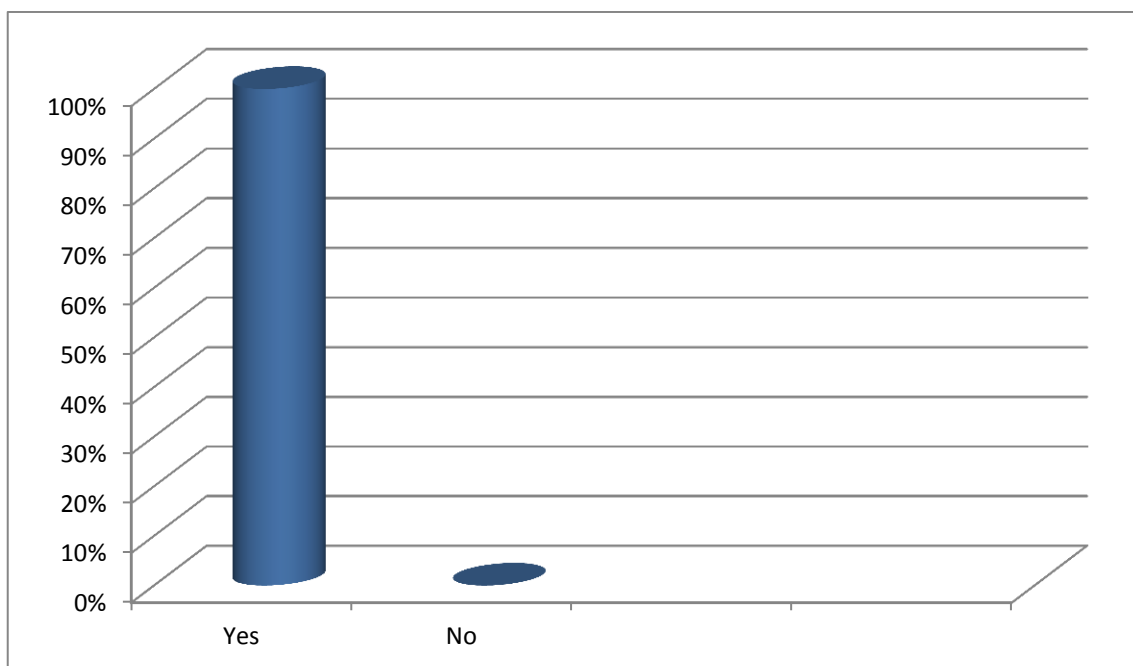
Only three teachers (50 %) out of six teachers answered and their responses can be summarized as follows:

- Formative assessment is continuous process of giving feedback on what learners do or perform in the class; it can be formal as it can be informal.
- It is ongoing assessment where the teacher make assessment about what has been learned in order to check the student understanding.
- Formative assessment is the opposite of summative assessment; it is done during the learning process not at the end of the course or the instructional unit.

Question 14: Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?

Table 29: The Implementation of Formative Assessment

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	6	100%
No	0	0%
Total	6	100%



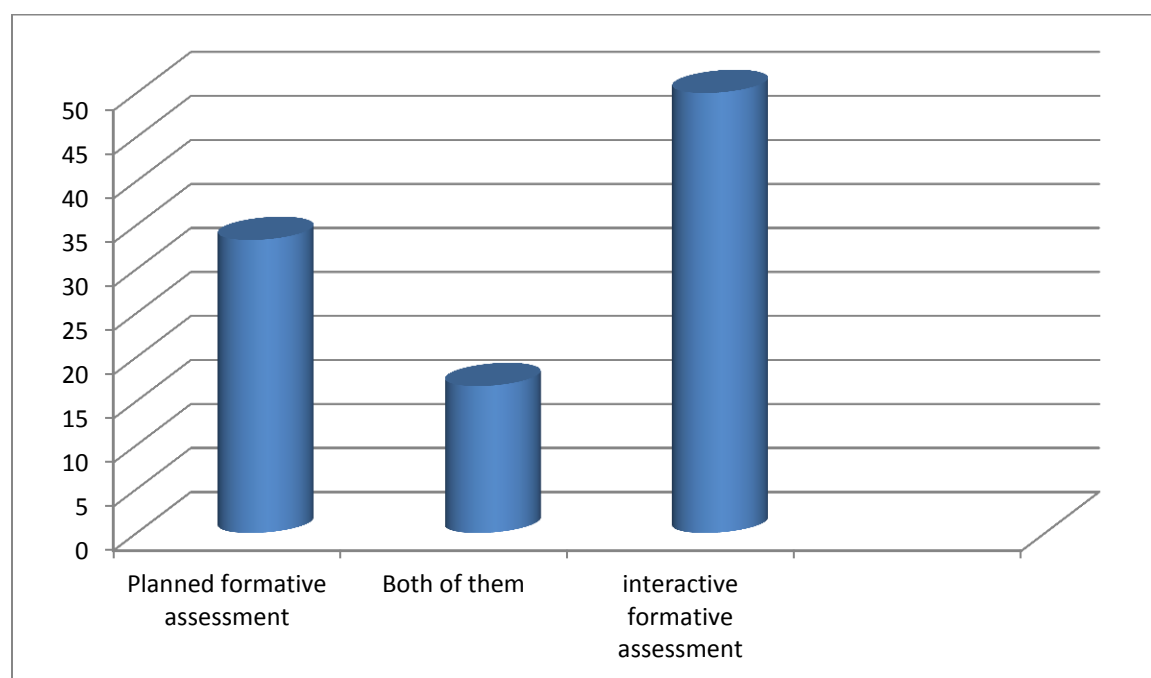
Graph 29: The Implementation of Formative Assessment

Concerning the implementation of formative assessment, all the respondent teachers implement FA in their classroom (100 %). This means that they are aware of the efficiency of FA in both learning and teaching; they consider it as a tool of improvement that helps them to achieve their goals and improve their students' level.

Question 15: Which type of formative assessment do you use?

Table 30: Types of Formative Assessment that Teachers use

Response	Number	Percentage
Planned formative assessment	2	33.3%
Interactive formative assessment	3	50%
Both of them	1	16.7%
Total	6	100%



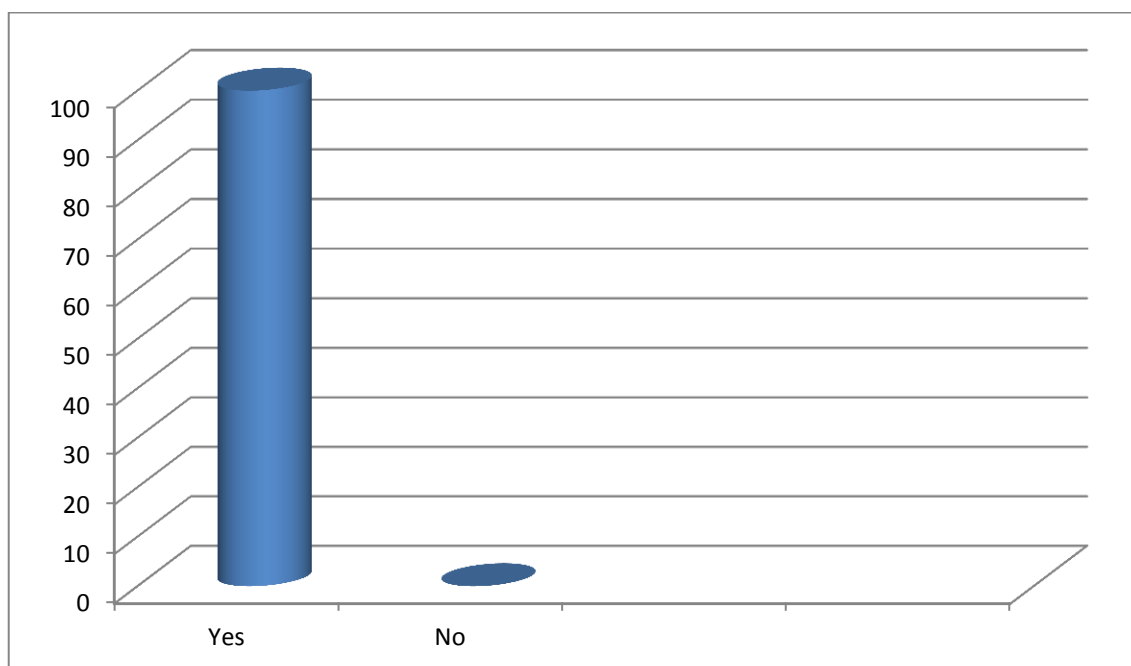
Graph30: Types of Formative Assessment that Teachers Use

As the table demonstrates, interactive formative assessment is the most used type of FA by the teachers in classrooms (50%). They believe that it enhances teacher–student interaction as Cowie and Bell (1999) determined. Whereas, 33.3 % of them use planned formative assessment because they value time which is a challenging factor. However, one teacher uses both of them (16.7 %) because she used to plan practice assignment at home and when she comes to classroom she organizes either group work or pair work.

Question 17: When you teach writing, do you use certain strategies to assess your students formatively.

Table31: Strategies of Assessing Students Formatively

Response	Number	Percentage
A	6	100%
B	0	0%
Total	6	100%



Graph 31: Strategies of Assessing Students Formatively

This item seeks out whether teachers use certain strategies to assess their learners formatively or not. From the results it is noticed that all of them use strategies in assessing their students formatively (100%).

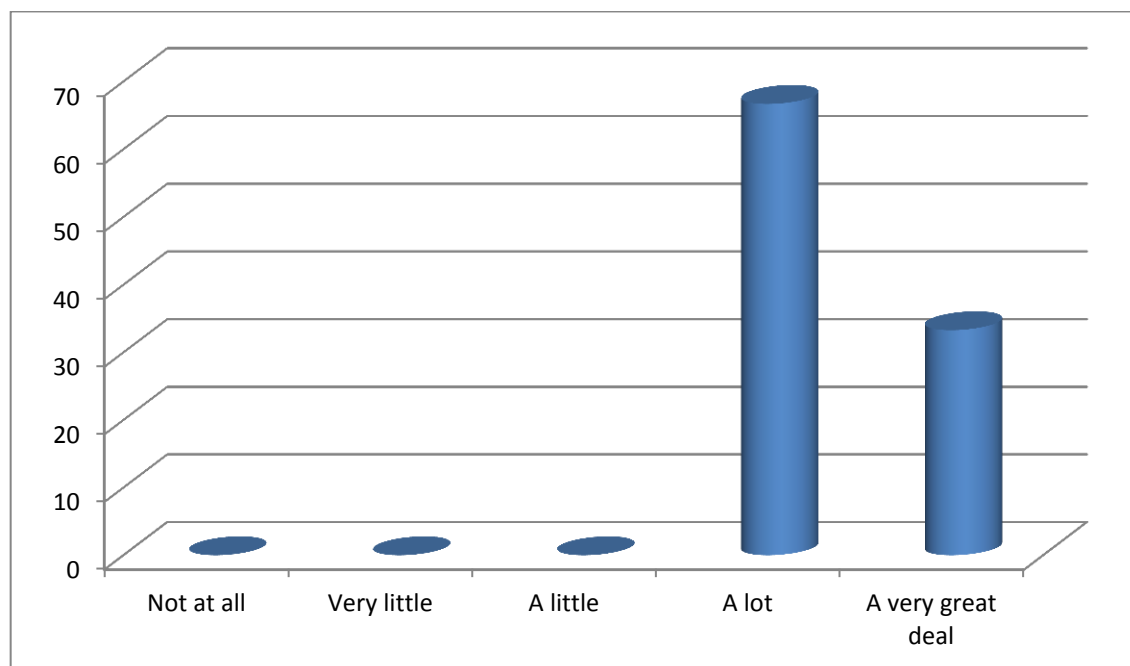
For “yes” answer, teachers were asked to suggest some of the strategies that they use, these strategies are listed below:

- Class work, home work sheets, class presentation, and writing activities.
- Preparing different activities in order to check student understanding.
- Verbal feedback/ written feedback, conferencing, and written summaries of lessons.

Question 18: To which extent is formative assessment important in teaching writing?

Table 32: The Importance of Formative Assessment in Writing

Response	Number	Percentage
Not at all	0	0%
Very little	0	0%
A little	0	0
A lot	4	66.7%
A very great deal	2	33.3%
Total	6	100%



Graph32: The Importance of Formative Assessment in Writing

Formative assessment influence on student writing can be revealed in the table above. As it is indicated 66.7 % of the respondent teachers see that FA helps them a lot in teaching writing. In addition, 33.3% of the subjects acknowledge the importance of FA claiming that it has a very great deal. However, no one choose “*very little*”, “*not at all*” and “*a little*” because they cannot deny the fact that FA is important technique to teach and develop writing.

Question 20: How can formative assessment enhance the student’s writing proficiency?

This question intends to show the impact of FA on the student writing proficiency. According to teacher responses, this impact can be explained in terms of:

- Formative assessment really enhanced the students’ writing proficiency by learning from mistakes, comments, self-correction or pair work.
- FA helps learners to improve their writing skill through the provision of feedback which help them to know their weaknesses and strengths.
- FA offers better opportunity for students to discover and meanwhile correct their errors when they write.

- FA helps teachers since it helps them to gather data about their students whether they are mastering their learning goals or not during the writing instruction. .

2.4. Summary of the Results and Findings from the Teachers

Questionnaire

After the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire, it is illustrated that most teachers adopt the process approach to teach writing, as such while teaching they go through different stages of writing-prewriting, drafting, revising and editing- in order to help learners to produce well-structured production, as well as to overcome many difficulties mainly in grammar (50 %). From the teachers' responses, we can see that feedback and assessment are an integral part of their everyday classroom teaching and in particular teaching writing. In fact, these tools are the key element of students' progression because they encourage and consolidate learning. From the gathered data, it is showed that formative assessment is highly implemented when teaching writing (66.7 %). This over dependency refers to the nature of this type of assessment; it is argued that FA is an ongoing process that helps both learners and teachers in terms of improvement of learning and adjustment of teaching. According to most teachers, interactive FA is very helpful because it involves some strategies that develop students writing like conferences and group work etc. So, based on the teachers' views, it is convenient that formative assessment influence positively students writing skill.

Conclusion

In this chapter, two research instruments has been analyzed. Therefore, the analysis of students' questionnaire shows that students have positive attitudes towards the necessity of developing their writing skill as well as their positive preferences of teachers' correction during the writing course. This means that students are aware of their teachers' formative assessment in enhancing their writing skill. Concerning the analysis of teachers'

questionnaire, it is argued that that teachers play important role during the writing process, particularly, they emphasize the importance of implementing formative assessment when they teach writing because it is the appropriate way to improve their students' written production.

Suggestions and Recommendations

For skilled and confident writers, formative assessment and formative feedback are considered very powerful and potentially constructive learning tools. Then the main recommendations we need to address are that:

- Summative assessment should be reduced.
- Teachers need to improve the quality of formative feedback.
- Ensure that data gathered at classroom are used formatively.
- Invest in training and support for formative assessment.
- Enhancing the knowledge of practices in writing assessment and developing evidence-based practices.
- When students receive feedback about their writing, writing improves.
- Teachers need to modify instruction when it is needed.
- Ensure that teachers are well prepared to teach writing effectively.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this study we attempt to explore the impact of formative assessment on learners writing proficiency in EFL instruction. This study deals with third year LMD English students at Guelma University. Throughout this research, we hypothesize that teachers' formative assessment can improve students' writing ability. To collect data, a descriptive method is followed where two questionnaires are used; one for teachers and one for students.

The present study is a total of three chapters; the very first two chapters are related to the review of literature, while the third chapter is concerned with the practical part of investigation. The first chapter of this research introduces the most basic concepts and elements related to the writing skill including its different definitions, nature, relations with other skills and approaches of teaching it. This chapter provides an insight about learners' difficulties in writing production. The second chapter provides a detailed description of formative assessment; it deals with its definitions, types, stages, strategies, and the role of both teachers and students in this process. In addition, it deals with the identification of whether teachers' formative assessment enhances students' writing performance.

The practical part includes a deep analysis of teachers and students questionnaires. The obtained results confirm the stated hypothesis which. Related to the gathered data, formative assessment has a positive impact on learners' writing proficiency. From the students' questionnaires, it is approved that most students face difficulties during the writing process. As such, they have positive attitude toward teachers continues guidance and correction. In addition, this study found that the majority of teachers are aware about the importance of the implementation of formative assessment during the writing instruction. As well as their appreciation of its positive influence on students' writing skill.

The study shows that students need to be continuously assessed in order to improve their written production. Thus, teachers' formative assessments is considered as a mean

through which evidences are provided in order to enhance the students learning and thereby their writing performance. This later can be achieved through the adaptation of various methods and approaches so that students' written production will be enhanced. As a result, teachers should incorporate formative assessment as an effective teaching tool of everyday classroom input.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The Students' Questionnaire

Dear students, you are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire. We are carrying out an investigation about **The Importance of Formative Assessment in Developing Students' Writing Proficiency**. Your answers are very significant for the validity of the research we are undertaking. As such, we hope that you will give us your full attention and interest. Please, tick (√) the choice that corresponds to your answer or give full answer(s) where the gaps provided.

Thank you, in advance, for your collaboration.

Benzoughbi souhaila

Attik faouzia

Department of English

University of 8 May 1945. Guelma

Section one: Background information

1- Age:years.

2- Sex:

Male

Female

3- How could you describe your level in English?

Good

Average

Bad

Section two: The writing skill

4- Which skill do you have problem with?

a. Speaking

b. writing

c. Reading

d. Listening

5. How do you find the course of “Written Expression”?

Very interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quite interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boring	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Do you think that writing is an easy task to learn?

a. Yes

b. No

7. If “No” please, justify your answer?

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.....

8. Which one of the writing stages you don't follow?

Prewriting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drafting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Revising	<input type="checkbox"/>
Editing	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. When you commit mistakes in writing composition, do you like to be corrected?

a. Yes

b. No

10. Which type of correction would you prefer when you write?

a. Written correction

b. Oral correction

11. How does your teacher of written expression correct your writing?

Directly provide the correct form	<input type="checkbox"/>
Only scores you (give you a mark)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highlights the mistakes using ink or symbols	<input type="checkbox"/>

- If others, please specify?

.....

.....

12. When would you prefer to be corrected?

a. During the course

b. At the end of the instructional unit

- Justify:

.....

.....

13. Do you think that developing writing skill is necessary?

a. Yes

b. No

14. If "Yes", please, explain why?

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.....

Section three: Formative assessment in developing the writing skill

15. Does your teacher of written expression implement formative assessment (continuous evaluation) during the writing course?

- a. Yes b. No

16. How often do you receive formative assessment in writing?

Always	
Usually	
Often	
Sometimes	
Rarely	
Never	

17. How does your teacher assess you? Using:

- a. Questions
- b. Tests
- c. Quizzes
- d. All of them

18. Do you agree that formative assessment is useful?

Totally agree	
Partially agree	
Agree	
Totally disagree	
Partially disagree	

19. To what extent does the teacher's assessment during the course helps to improve your writing?

- a. Not at all
- b. Very little
- c. A lot
- d. A very great deal

20. Do you think that formative assessment (continuous evaluation) has an impact on language proficiency (writing skill)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Because:

.....

.....

.....

Thank you

Appendix 2

The teacher's questionnaire

Dear teachers,

This questionnaire is intended to gather data about the importance of formative assessment in developing students' language proficiency (Writing skill). We shall be, therefore, very grateful to you if you could share with us your considerable ideas, opinions, and experience about this subject matter .you are kindly requested to answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box and comments when necessary.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Benzoughbi souhaila

Attik faouzia

Department of English

University of 8 May 1945. Guelma

Section one: Background information:

1. Gender:

Male Female

2. Qualification:

License (B.A)

Magister (M.A)

Doctorate (PHD)

3. Years of experience:

Section two: The Writing Skill

4. Which approach do you use in teaching the writing skill?

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

5. What role do you play in the writing course?

A controller	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organizer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prompter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What are the most common writing difficulties your students come across?

- a. Grammar
- b. Punctuation
- c. Vocabulary
- d. Spelling

7. When you teach writing, do you follow the sequence of planning, drafting, editing and the final draft?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Do you offer a constructive advice on what have been written down?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. If "yes", why?

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.....

10. Do you think that correcting students' written production is efficient?

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.....
.....

Section three: The role of teacher in formative assessment

11. Do you provide assessment for your students?

a. Yes b. No

12. Which form of assessment do you provide for your students in the writing instruction?

a. Formative assessment
b. Diagnostic assessment
c. Summative assessment

13. What does it mean for you formative assessment?

.....
.....

14. Do you implement formative assessment in your classroom?

a. Yes b. No

15. Which type of formative assessment do you use?

a. Planned formative assessment
b. Interactive formative assessment
c. Both of them

16. When you teach writing, do you use certain strategies to assess your students formatively?

a. Yes

b. No

-If yes please, suggest some of them:

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

18. To which extent is formative assessment important in teaching writing?

Not at all	
Very little	
A little	
A lot	
A very great deal	

20. How can formative assessment enhance the student’s writing proficiency?

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Thank you.

Résumé

La présente étude tente d'enquêter et d'examiner le rôle crucial de l'évaluation formative dans l'amélioration des compétences en matière d'écriture et rédaction des apprenants. L'étude actuelle a été faite au niveau du département d'anglais de l'université de Guelma. Afin de tester notre hypothèse, nous avons utilisé une méthode descriptive où deux questionnaires ont été administrés; le premier a été dirigé vers cent quatre-vingt-dix-huit étudiants de la troisième année LMD qui ont été désignés d'une façon aléatoire, et le second a été adressé à dix professeurs d'anglais de l'expression écrite. Les données recueillies ont montré que l'évaluation formative a un impact positif sur le développement des compétences des apprenants en matière d'écriture et de rédaction, ainsi l'évaluation formative aide les enseignants à assumer une grande responsabilité afin de surveiller et de soutenir l'apprentissage de leurs étudiants en général et l'écriture d'une façon particulière. Sur la base de ces résultats, l'hypothèse confirme que les apprenants doivent être évalués formativement afin de développer leurs compétences d'écriture.

Mots clés: *Evaluation formative, compétence de l'écriture et de rédaction.*

ملخص

تحاول هذه الدراسة إبراز الدور الفعال للتقويم المستمر في تحسين مهارة الكتابة للمتعلمين في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية جامعة قلمة. من أجل اختبار فرضيتنا استخدمنا المنهج الوصفي حيث استعنا باستبيانين؛ وجه واحد لمائة وثمانية وتسعون طالب من طلاب السنة الثالثة نظام " ل م د" الذين تم اختيارهم بشكل عشوائي، والثاني وجه إلى عشرة من أساتذة التعبير الكتابي للغة الإنجليزية. النتائج التي حصلنا عليها قد بينت لنا ان التقويم المستمر له تأثير إيجابي في تطوير مهارة الكتابة للمتعلمين، فضلا عن أنه يساعد الاساتذة على تحمل مسؤولية أكبر لرصد ودعم تعلم طلابهم بشكل عام والكتابة على وجه الخصوص. على أساس هذه النتائج، فان الفرضية المطروحة في هذه الدراسة قد تأكدت ووضحت حاجة الطلبة إلى التقويم المستمر من أجل تطوير كفاء تهم الكتابية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقويم المستمر، المهارة الكتابية.