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taking part, not just by the teacher, because interaction is obviously not something you just do to people, but something people do together, collectively.

(Allwright and Bailey 1991: 19)

In sum, one may say that the role of the teacher is as important as the role of the student in the classroom interaction in that nothing can be achieved without the existence of these two salient elements (i.e. the teacher and the student).

Conclusion

Students should be taught to set their writing goals, and to develop effective strategies to reach these goals such as planning, monitoring and evaluating during the task of writing. Consequently, teachers and researchers have to work along new and similar lines in developing a learner-centered curriculum that will stress cognitive and metacognitive growth of students and emphasize teaching of thinking through writing. This should be done from the early stages of education to transform the actually passive students much like drawers in which we stock information retrieved in its initial form in the exam day, into real active learners capable of knowledge transformation, critical in their writing, coherent in their argumentation and reasonable in their judgments.

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both being decision makers in the class.

7. Classroom Management

The classroom can be defined as a place where more than two people gather together for the purpose of learning, with one having the role of teacher. The teacher has certain perceptions about his role in the classroom. This perception, of his role as the key player, results in him, dominating the classroom talk. Teachers also have certain expectations about how business should be conducted in the classroom. In other words, they have certain ideas about how the lesson should proceed, what kinds of question to be asked, what kinds of activity they want students to do, and what they expect students to get out of the lesson. Lessons are judged as good or bad on the basis of whether they turn out the way they were planned and whether the expected outcome is achieved.

However, all teachers know there is often a gap between what they want to achieve and what actually happens; because there are many factors that affect classroom interaction. Besides, one may say, that the students' expectations of the teacher are as important as the teachers' expectations in determining the way a lesson proceeds. In addition, students who see the teacher as the giving end of knowledge and themselves as the passive receiving end may not welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. Such expectations cannot be ignored since they impinge on the classroom atmosphere which systematically affects classroom interaction. As Allwright and Bailey point out:

The success of the interaction between the elements in the classroom cannot be taken for granted and cannot guarantee just by exhaustive planning.

(Allwright and Bailey 1991: 18)

This is because classroom interaction is a co-operative enterprise among participants. Each participant has as much to contribute as every other participant in determining the direction and outcome of the interaction. Allwright and Bailey further point out:

Interaction, in class or anywhere, has to be managed, as it goes along, no matter how much has gone into it beforehand…it has to be managed by every one

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acquired. Once they are outside the classroom, they speak either French or Arabic with their classmates and even with their English language teachers. Another cause which enhances their motivation is the way writing is taught. Apart from the set of sentence structures and sentence constructions given by the teacher and some activities to illustrate them, the students do not have the opportunity to use other techniques to learn writing (laboratories, songs, films, etc). Students will certainly enjoy the learning of writing if such a material is used because it will serve their communicative needs as well as it will give them a sense of achievement.

6. Involvement of students

To involve students in the learning process seems to be a crucial element in the teaching of writing. First-year English students are learning writing because it is part of the prescribed curriculum. But even in this case, however, students are more likely to enjoy the subject and succeed if they are involved in the learning process, have a chance to influence what happens in class and how it happens. A relationship with and among students is very important and should be built. In a trusting relationship, the threat that students have is reduced, and therefore, learning is promoted. Students can learn from their interaction with each other as well as their interaction with the teacher. A spirit of cooperation, not competition, should always prevail.

Furthermore, the student should be part of the learning process. In other words, he should not be isolated, waiting for the others to do the work for him. Paying attention to everything dealing with the lesson which is being undertaken, participating and asking questions whenever he finds difficulties will be of great help. If, for instance, he notices that a certain point has not been mentioned or clearly explained, the student should stop the teacher and ask for further explanations. Moreover, the student should be allowed to bring additional information concerning the lesson which is dealt with, if ever he has any. He should be encouraged and at the same time guided. Working in such a way, the student may overcome his weaknesses and guarantee success in the learning process.

One may conclude by saying that language learning method/approach is neither learner-centered nor teacher-centered, but rather teacher-learner centered, with

and the size of the group.

It is also advisable for a teacher not to be indifferent or distant in interest or feeling. On the contrary maintaining a friendly atmosphere in class is strongly recommended. Providing opportunities for mutual, open, free and emphatic communication between the students and himself seems to be of great interest. To do this, the teacher needs to have genuine trust and acceptance of the other person (i.e. the student) as a valuable individual.

Furthermore, writing is used for a purpose. Consequently it has a place in all courses. Yet, it is the democratic teacher who can actually give equal opportunities to each individual in class (i.e. providing the best as well as the weakest students with the chance to express themselves). This means that the aim of a writing teacher must be to try and make the weak student realize his potential (i.e. reaching a good level of proficiency), without doing the student an injustice. In other words, in such instances, the writing teacher is expected to find ways of making the task more manageable for the weak student. However, this must not be done to the detriment of the good student. Said differently, the latter has not to be neglected on account of his good level, he, too, has to be helped and trained by the teacher.

In addition, it is recommended to the writing teacher not to assume superiority and omniscience, i.e. the quality of possessing complete knowledge. This assumption of superiority is unfair to the students. Today, knowledge about writing is only one of the requirements of a good writing teacher. More importantly, it proves indispensable that teachers also have a broad background knowledge of the social environment that influences their students. This increased responsibility of learning the writing skill does not fall entirely on the teacher. The student will also assume some part of responsibility for the learning process.

Nowadays, the student is no longer a passive receptacle into which the teacher pours knowledge. On the contrary, he is required to participate actively in the learning process. Teachers can only facilitate this process, using ways to stimulate the students (such as games, songs, poems, tapes, films, etc) and other various techniques to enhance students' motivation. Unfortunately nothing is done. First, in their environment, students have no opportunity to use the knowledge they have

differences in ability students bring with them into the classroom. He is, nonetheless, responsible for motivating them and ensuring that they become involved in learning EFL.

All persons have preferences for ways of learning. These preferences are called individuals' learning styles. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to be aware of his students' different learning styles, and their preferred way of getting instruction. For this, the teacher needs to select from among a wide range of possible techniques and courses of action, precisely those which are appropriate to the circumstances of the teaching / learning situation. Indeed, it is very important that teachers learn to adapt. In so doing, they can offer their students not a single technique which may or may not be effective, but the best possible choice of instructional mode for the particular variables that operate in each individual learner.

Furthermore, it may be necessary to abandon the day's lesson plan because of unforeseen difficulties raised by the students. The principle is that if, at any point during the lesson, the teacher's pre-arranged lesson and the students' needs are in conflict, it is the learner's needs which should have priority. It may also be necessary to study first the basic patterns (i.e. the simple sentences) because students will not produce satisfactory sentences in writing unless they first master the simple sentence, hence the importance of going from easy to more difficult and simple to more complex when teaching. Numerous simple sentence patterns can be taught. For instance, it is easy to teach the following: simple subject and verb plus a predicate, object, or optional adverb.

In learning the above patterns, students learn a number of things about the grammatical structure of English. When the teacher feels the learners have gained some mastery over the basic patterns, he then can move on more complex activities where the students are asked to expand those patterns.

5. Teacher- Learner Relationship

It is important for a language teacher to be fair, democratic but not authoritarian. While being fair, however, he has to be firm. In other words, the teacher has to impose a certain measure of control over the class, according to the type of activity

Besides, it is advisable for a writing teacher to be aware of individual differences among the students such as age, sex and attitudes. Since the students differ in the value they place upon education, in their aspirations and the response they make to particular teachers and methods, it is thus recommended to the teacher to take the responsibility of reconciling these attitudinal variations among the students.

It is also important for the teacher of writing to attempt to create a positive attitude towards himself by showing some fairness, friendliness firmness and a strong belief in teaching. Indeed, it is generally assumed that a student who develops a negative or a positive attitude towards the teacher will inevitably develop the same attitude towards the taught subject; which either deters or promotes the learning process.

4. Teaching Methodology and Techniques

If we consider writing to be an important part of the language learning process, since it enables the student to improve his written skills, the question that arises is the following, what is the methodology which has the best fit, the closest match with all the variables (mainly the learner himself, his profile, his level of proficiency, his motivation and attitudes to learning). It is worth mentioning first, that the individual teacher needs to acquire the widest and deepest understanding of all these variables he is likely to encounter in the writing teaching/ learning situation. The teacher needs to select, device and operate for any given situation. In this context Finocchiaro (1982:11) posits: *Language teaching will always remain an art in the hand of enthusiastic, competent, caring teachers.*

It is impossible to decide what appropriate method in the teaching of writing is. This highly depends on the relationship which exists between the teacher and student and also how the classroom is organized. Therefore, it is the teacher who can decide on the model to follow and how to structure his course having in mind a number of parameters such as the learner's age, interest and objectives of the course to be achieved.

It is generally agreed that students learn a subject at different rates and with quite different levels of completeness. The teacher is not held responsible for the

sential component in the teaching/ learning process. Today, the teacher of writing should be aware of the students' needs which constitute a major source of information for his course design. What do the students want and need to get from the writing course? Have they chosen to have the course or are they here simply because it is required? Do they need writing for learning, for communicating or both?

These are all important questions the teacher should discuss with his students at the beginning of the course for two main reasons. First, this will help him select and present materials in the most appropriate way. Second, by voicing their needs, students will clarify them in their own minds and be able to formulate concrete goals to work toward. Then, being aware of the learning preferences of his students, and having his own preferred way of instructing, the teacher can make adjustments to accommodate the students needs (Boylan 1984). The more a teacher knows about the students' personal approaches and personal concepts, the better he will adapt his teaching strategies to his students. In so doing, teachers can promote and foster successful learning.

To sum up, the role of the writing teacher is to employ the adequate writing teaching strategies in order to raise students' awareness of the target language. In addition, his role is also to use the appropriate processes (i.e. the way to plan, organize, manage and carry out a writing teaching programme) in order to have motivated students on the one hand, since motivation goes hand in hand with the positive attitudes towards a good and successful learning (Harmer 1984), and successful results on the other.

3. Teacher's Accountability

To achieve an atmosphere of interest, enthusiasm and mutual support in one' classes is not easy. It is energy and time consuming. It involves failures and successes, and an acceptance of each individual strengths and weaknesses, including one's own. But before all, the teacher must be willing and eager for learning to be an exciting and creative experience. This means that he must show respect for all the students' ideas, encourage them to think for themselves and make their ideas essential to the lesson. He must promote positive learning interactions among students.

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and techniques, the involvement of students, the teacher-student relationship and the classroom management.

1. Teacher Training

Today, although the process of teaching is more learner centered (i.e. the learner is the first element involved in the process and therefore deserves much attention), the teacher plays a crucial role in the whole process. It is worth mentioning first, that in order to prepare prospective teachers adequately, it may be time to create and organize teacher training programmes during the last year of "Magister" because these would be teachers at university level with no teaching experience and no training at all. Training will encourage them to adopt a developmental perspective and will enable them to improve their teaching as well as their social skills, attitudes and self-awareness.

In addition, the extent, nature and quality of the teacher training will crucially affect the quality of teaching. Teacher training should focus its attention on classroom practice, and should have as its primary goal the improvement of the teacher's practical efforts to bring about effective learning on the part of the learners. Practical techniques should be developed. Such techniques are both those common to all branches of teaching and those that are specific to the teaching of writing. These techniques include an adequate command of the "module" (writing course), a teacher will have to teach. Also, information component, in which the teacher draws in the very considerable body of knowledge about education, teaching sociology, psychology, etc, (Stevens 1980). When there is some form of teacher preparation, there should be a relationship between the nature of the programme and the real needs of future teachers. Besides teacher training, it is also important to stress the teacher's crucial role.

2. Teacher's Role

Using the audio lingual method, the teacher's role was that of: *Combination drill sergeant and orchestra conductor*, as was ironically expressed by (Silberstein 1987).

It would be clearer, first of all, to consider the role of the teacher as being an es-

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5. Lack of materials

Lesson and exercise writing books which may help students overcome their deficiencies are generally not available. As a result writing activities do not occur very often whether in class or at home and consequently students do not have frequently the opportunity to make use of the learned structures and pattern constructions seen in the writing course. Moreover, tape recorders and language laboratories exist in the language section but unfortunately not used in the teaching of writing. Very often, the only accessories a teacher uses are a blackboard and a piece of chalk. Finally, students' motivation and attitudes towards the English language learning in general and the writing skill in particular deserve special attention.

6. Students' motivation and attitudes

One of the causes of the students' writing weaknesses is their negative attitude towards this skill. They show low motivation towards the writing course and this may be due to the fact that the 1st year syllabus is a review of what has been studied in the previous years and therefore boring. In addition, writing in English as a foreign language for students whose mother tongue is Arabic implies writing in a completely different script, different word order and different culture.

To conclude, one may say that the linguistic variables as well as the affective ones can affect the teaching of writing. We can understand that such variables can contribute to the success of an EFL enterprise as much as they can contribute to its failure. English writing presents quite a number of problems in the Algerian university classroom. Such factors as out-of-class stimuli, time needed to learn, a well-prepared classroom teacher and the method if all are taken into consideration, they may help students overcome the problems identified.

Possible solutions

In the hope to eradicate or at least minimize most existing problems encountered in writing by first-year English students, we will endeavour to suggest a more adequate way of teaching writing trying to give some proposals regarding the teacher training, the teacher role and accountability, the teaching methodology

to write about a topic of no interest to them and so they do not find much to write about. Moreover, students when asked to perform only In English in the writing course feel they are deprived from their natural way of expressing themselves (Ysui: 1995). This type of anxiety inhibits their use of the target language and deprives them from opportunities of language use. Finally, most students in the 1st year feel lost when being given free activities. They prefer the teacher's guidance in order to feel secure and comfortable. Besides, time devoted to this skill is also a cause to this low achievement

3. Time devoted to writing

With regard to timing, it should be noted that only three hours a week are allocated to the teaching of writing which is a quite insufficient time. Writing is often relegated to a homework activity and thus an out-of-class activity. Three hours are not enough to learn writing and make use of it appropriately especially when we know that the new entrants to university were used to the communicative approach and then have done little writing practice. Time allotment is then an important factor in the teaching of writing which may either hinder or improve learning. Another cause which impinges on the teaching of writing is the large classes and mixed ability groups.

4. Large classes

The fact is that big class size represents an impediment to language teaching. In large classes, there may be big differences in students' level, learning skills, learning speeds, and interests. It is commonly agreed that" *no class is completely homogeneous in terms of level."*(Wajnryb, 1992: 36); nevertheless, large classes with mixed abilities constitute challenges for both teachers and learners. Baker and Westrup (2000) and Prodromou (1992) state a number of aspects related to large and mixed ability classes. There is a little space for the teacher to turn around, and not enough space for the students to move or interact with their mates during the lesson. Teachers have difficulties keeping every one' attention; they do not have enough opportunity to help weaker students and above all, they may have more problems of discipline to tackle. Another important factor in students' weak writing proficiency is the lack of materials.

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the same time and length limits. The paragraphs were corrected and graded and helped in identifying students' weaknesses. Second, two questionnaires were administered to both teachers and learners. Finally, a third instrument; the interview to teachers was also used in this research. Thus, on the basis of the results obtained, many factors (linguistic and non-linguistic) affect negatively the teaching process. Regarding the causes of EFL first year students' low achievement in writing, one may say that they are manifold. One of these reasons is:

1. Communicative Language teaching in pre-university curriculum

With the adoption of the communicative approach to language teaching in the pre-university curriculum, writing as a skill has been neglected for many years. This approach claimed the supremacy of the spoken word over the written one. Thus, being interested in communication, the student may neglect language forms and be satisfied with the use of deviated forms since they transmit his message, but the danger is that these forms may be acquired and even fossilized. The drawback of this approach will be reflected in writing where students will produce pieces of writing full of mistakes and language misconstructions that may hinder comprehension.

In fact, the low linguistic ability of our students may stem from this teaching approach which tries to build the students' communicative competence neglecting their linguistic competence. But, while teaching emphasizes the development of the student's fluency in this approach, the examination standards still favors accuracy over fluency. Thus, the student finds himself at a loss between these orders of priority. The second cause of low achievement in writing is anxiety.

2. Anxiety

Some applied linguists have noted the existence of a writing anxiety from which students suffer deeply. These causes of anxiety mainly concern grammatical and lexical accuracy; students are afraid of making mistakes and so getting low grades, as a result they find it difficult to get started or to finish a paragraph. In addition, students are worried by organizing the ideas into a well-structured outline comprising: an introduction, a body and a conclusion. What also adds to their anxiety is

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before attending university, frequently remain deficient in the ability to use accurately, meaningfully and appropriately the language, and consequently to understand its use in communication, whether in the spoken or written mode. In effect, students' results in classroom, homework activities, and examinations, make it clear that their writing is far from satisfactory. Teachers report students' inability to construct appropriate error-free sentences. Likewise, when writing they seem to be unaware of the basics of writing such as the mechanics of writing (e.g. capitalization, punctuation), grammar (e.g. subject-verb agreement, use of pronouns) and vocabulary (e.g. frequently using anglicized borrowings from French). Students' compositions are merely a list of ideas lacking cohesion and coherence. To have a clearer idea about the first year university students' writing proficiency level, Ourghi (2002) carried out a research work in the foreign language department and analyzed short texts written by new university students during the academic year (1999-2000). He distinguished two proficiency levels: low-intermediate (nearly 80% of the new students) and high-intermediate (around 20% of the new students).

Students' low achievement in writing after a quite lengthy English learning process leads to question the suitability of the present teaching methodology, learners' attitudes and motivation towards the writing skill, the availability of time and opportunities to teach/learn, and the adequacy of resources and materials. The aim of the present work is to identify first-year English students' deficiencies, discover the causes behind these lacks and find out possible solutions to help students improve their writing proficiency level and better cope with academic writing.

Then, in order to identify the causes of first-year English students' failure in writing, and find out possible solutions to help them improve their writing proficiency level, we believe that triangulation is a valuable tool that enhances validity. The aim of triangulation is to gather multiple perspectives on the situation being studied. The present research has used the following methods to gather data: first, three production tasks (paragraph writing). As far as this method is concerned, two groups of fifteen students were selected from the first-year students of the English section 'Licence degree'. They were involved in a production task administered at the beginning, the middle and the end of the academic year on the same topic with

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depending on the teacher's field of knowledge competence, experience and own analysis of students' needs.

However, the ability to write appropriately and effectively is something which evades many people in their native languages as well as in foreign languages in spite of the time devoted to the teaching and learning of this skill. An important question may arise then; why is writing found to be difficult to learn?

In effect, Byrne (1988) explains that the difficulty in writing stems from three kinds of problems:

➢ *Psychological*, caused by lack of interaction and feedback between the reader and the writer.

➢ *Cognitive,* because the organization framework of our ideas in written communication has to be mastered.

➢ *Linguistic,* because in writing we have to express ourselves in a clearer and more grammatical manner than in speech, to compensate for the absence of certain features of spoken language such as gestures and facial expression.

So, the writer has to handle many components at the same time: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, audience, purpose and the writing process. And the combination of all these components makes writing a sophisticated and a difficult skill.

Problem areas

The present work highlights the EFL teaching process in general and the teaching of writing in particular as being still a subject of hot debate and discussion among researchers. It is obvious, therefore, that language as a means of communication and a vehicle of information would in all probabilities be a delicate item to deal with. Writing, as one of its axes reveals some specificities quite complex to grasp. This is why, this study deserves special attention to the teaching of this skill

This work attempts to give a clear picture of the teaching of writing to first-year EFL students in the English section at Tlemcen university. It should be noted that most of these students who have received at least seven years of English teaching

remain the same. The language based modules are taught until the second year. What is new in this system is the introduction of the content modules such as civilization and literature in the 1st year as well as research methodology and computer science.

The Writing skill at university level

Writing is one of the four basic language skills, a productive one along with speaking. It is taught as a separate module during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of graduation. The teaching time allocated to it is three hours a week. The official curriculum draws the broad lines of the syllabus: in the 1st year students are expected to use correctly grammatical rules and sentence pattern as well as appropriate vocabulary and good organization of ideas. This is done through a focus on practice of the basics of the writing system, sentence construction and paragraph writing (topic sentence and supporting sentences). In the 2nd year, the student is assumed to be able to master the sentence and paragraph structures and is once again exposed to essay writing introducing the different writing techniques and modes of discourse. Coming to the 3rd year, writing is a newly introduced module in the English section at Tlemcen university. It is labeled academic writing where students are introduced to research methodology and creative writing. They are expected to learn to use academic style and the techniques of summarizing, paraphrasing, and analyzing before moving to learn how to write a thesis. The know-how to write an abstract, a general introduction, a general conclusion and references is necessary at this level. The aim of the academic writing course is to prepare students for self-generated contents.

The aim of the written expression course is to prepare EFL students for the class or home assignments they are required to write, the examination they are going to take in the various modules of their curriculum, or the projects they are required to present at the end of their studies without losing the objective of preparing a future English teacher. But though the official curriculum provides the guidelines of the written course, it leaves the teacher free to make decisions concerning module goals, content, teaching materials and method used. As a result, the written expression course is taught through distinct principles and practices

The evolution of EFL studies at university level

Before the 1980s, the time spent for a 'licence' was three years; the enrolled students were Baccalaureat holders with a minimum score of 12/20 in English and an overall average of 11/20 in the Baccalaureat examination. Priority was given to literature students i.e. students from "serie lettres". The motives of English students at that time according to Bouhadiba (2000) were more integrative and cultural than vocational i.e. students showed a desire to achieve proficiency in the target language to take part in the target community, in other words the learner showed interest not only in the target language but in the culture as well. The situation started to change by the mid-eighties. At that time the Ministry of education became involved in the design of new teaching methods based on the communicative approach. And by the beginning of the nineties the advent of computing in Algeria permitted a new system for the registration of university entrants (still in use). The baccalaureat holders were oriented to the English 'Licence' by computer on the basis of their scores obtained in the Baccalaureat exam, the choices they made and the Baccalaureat option. The motives became more instrumental than integrative / cultural i.e. to get a job (Bouhadiba 2000). Regarding the university teaching staff, it consisted of Algerian teachers trained locally. The amount of time to complete a 'Licence' changed also, it was extended to four years. The first year aimed at consolidating the basis of the language already acquired in secondary schools. Therefore, the modules students were concerned with dealt mainly with the teaching of the target language system and skills: grammar, written expression, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and oral expression in addition to phonetics, linguistics and the Arabic language and literature. The language based modules were taught until the 2nd year only, except for listening comprehension and oral expression which were kept in the 3rd year. Content modules such as civilization and literature were taught in the second, third and fourth years.

Thereafter, a new system was born in the 2000s in the Algerian university: the LMD system (i.e. Licence – Master – Doctorat) which reduced the amount of time to complete a 'Licence' to three years and which has been effectively adopted by all Algerian universities in 2008/2009. The modules students are concerned with

message to the reader (White 1987) so, it is a discovery process but more crucially it is a thinking process.

Writing has also been defined as the activity of transforming thought into language since it has the advantage of making thoughts appear on a piece of paper or other and permitting the revision and restatements of these thoughts as explained in Harris (1993: 12)

It is almost as if the act of writing makes thought visible and tangible; this in turn, provides the opportunity for revision and refinement because the thoughts are there on the page to be worked on.

Finally, writing is referred to as the most difficult skill because it requires both mental and physical efforts on the part of the writer this is why a great and specific attention should be given to it in language teaching; and before going any further, we need to define teaching

What is Teaching?

Teaching is a personal activity, and therefore many individual teachers bring to it very different assumptions and beliefs about the nature of effective teaching. A general definition of teaching is provided by Corder who explains that:

The simple term teaching is too vague in its meaning. In its popular use it refers most often to the activity of the teacher in the classroom in his interaction with his students.

(Corder 1973: 11)

Teaching is referred to in this way as too indistinct and not clearly identified though it is considered as the usual interaction of the teacher with his students in the classroom. Indistinct because the science of language teaching has not reached the point of being able to consistently demonstrate the suitability of one methodology over another for all teachers and all students and all settings. In order to have a diagnosis of the factors that enhance the teaching of the EFL writing skill, such related variables as the approach, the teacher and the learner have to be taken into consideration.

Likewise different approaches to English teaching have been adopted since the independence. Moving from the Grammar Translation Method to the Audio-Lingual or Direct Method, and then the Communicative Language Teaching, all efforts are targeted to one aim: adequate teaching/ learning of foreign languages among them English. However, and despite huge efforts devoted for so many years at improving learners' achievement in EFL, the results are still unsatisfactory. Our centre of interest in the present work is the teaching of writing to first year EFL students at university level and its elaboration towards better learning. Writing deserves its fair share of specific attention in language teaching. Yet, to have a clearer idea about the subject matter discussed, key words definition is first provided.

What is Writing?

If we look for the general meaning of writing in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1996) for example, "writing" is explained as "*the activity or the skill of producing linear sequences of graphemes in time*". Likewise, in the Cambridge Encyclopedia of English Language, writing is seen as a graphic system used for communication as defined in Crystal (1995:257):

Most obviously writing is a way of communicating which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression.

We can see that the above definitions describe writing as a mechanical activity neglecting the most important part of it i.e. the mental process in which the writer is engaged. In fact, it is this cognitive aspect which is highly emphasized nowadays namely in the educational context. Writing is also a creative process which enables learners to describe facts, express ideas and impart knowledge to an 'unseen' audience. The essential idea is that:

Writing involves knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose and skills in using language.

(Badger and White 2000: 157 158)

Thus, writing requires from the writer (or the learner) the mastery of conventional writing mechanics and of organizational devices in order to write effectively. More, it involves discovering ideas and ways of organizing them to convey a

An Analysis of Teaching Writing to First- Year EFL Students at Tlemcen University – ALGERIA-

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Abstract

In Algeria, the teaching of English as a foreign language is of great importance in academic, professional and international domains. It has been given much concern after the advent of the globalisation process. However, and despite huge efforts devoted for so many years at improving learners' achievement in EFL, the results are still unsatisfactory whether in the spoken or written mode.

Our centre of interest in the present research work is the teaching of writing to first-year EFL students at the English section of Tlemcen University (ALGERIA) and its elaboration towards better learning. This work attempts to investigate about the current EFL writing skill teaching. It aims first, at identifying first-year English students' writing difficulties; second, discovering the causes behind these difficulties and finally finding out possible solutions that are hoped to alleviate the problem and help students improve their writing proficiency level.

Key words: Writing skill – Teaching / Learning – EFL Students – University Level

Introduction

In Algeria, English is a second foreign language. It is neither a medium of instruction, nor used in government, or involved in any societal function. It is a foreign language in the sense that it is learned at school and at university for further studies, job requirements etc…. Nowadays, the English language is witnessing an increased interest in Algeria for economic reasons as well as international exchanges. This is why the teaching of English as a foreign language is of great importance in academic, professional and international domains. Algeria has brought in changes into her educational system so as to achieve the desired goals.