People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of Letters and English

Developing the Composition Skills of English as a Foreign Language University Learners through Blended Learning

The Case of Second Year BA Students of English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorat Es-Sciences in Applied Linguistics

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2019

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, Rosa and Meghlaoui, who have accompanied me along this journey, supported me and comforted me in the most crucial moments of my life.

I also dedicate this work to my sister and best friend, Amina, for her wisdom, care, and love.

I also would not have completed this work without the sunshine of my life, my brother Mohamed Redha, whose innocent smile and unconditional love gave me the strength to walk the distance.

I also dedicate this work to my eldest brother, Riad, who has always been there for me.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor and mentor, Pr Farida Abderrahim, for her endless patience, precious guidance, and invaluable comments, and without whom I would never have been able to complete this work.

I would also thank the board of examiners who accepted to read this research work and to enlighten me with their comments and recommendations: Pr Riad Belouaham, Pr Mohammed Ouskourt, Pr Youcef Beghoul, Pr Sarah Merrouche and Dr Madjda Chelli.

My deepest thankfulness goes to Dr Ahmed Belhani, the head of the e-Learning cell of the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, for his help and kindness, and without whom I would not have been able to implement the practical part of this research work.

My profound gratitude is addressed to Pr Meghlaoui Dakhmouche, my father, who guided me and helped me with the statistical part of this research work, to Mrs Amina Dakhmouche, my sister, who agreed to give me access to her online course and who greatly helped me with her objective criticism and valuable comments, and to Mrs Rosa Dakhmouche, my mother, for the proofreading of my thesis and for her expertise in course design.

My sincere appreciation is addressed to the Second Year BA students of English (of the academic year 2016-2017) who provided me with valuable data for the practical part of my research work. I truly appreciate their seriousness and commitment to this endeavour.

I particularly thank the colleagues who provided me with their support, advice and friendship throughout this process.

Abstract

The aims of this study is to investigate the satisfaction of Second Year BA students of English with the current method of teaching writing in an Algerian context as well as their opinions about the effectiveness of blended learning in developing the composition skills of English as a Foreign Language university students. A total of 107 Second Year students at the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 participated in this study. To collect the data, two questionnaires and a quasi-experiment are used. An attitudinal questionnaire is designed to gauge the students' overall satisfaction with the current method of teaching. A quasi-experiment involving a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design is opted for, and 32 students participated in the quasi-experiment. An evaluation questionnaire is designed as a complementary tool for the quasi-experiment to assess the participants' attitudes about the blended writing course as well as its strong and weak points. The results of the attitudinal questionnaire show that, on the whole, the students are satisfied with the method used by their teachers; nevertheless, they have expressed the desire to experience a technology-based method like blended learning. The results of the quasi-experiment confirm the hypothesis that if EFL second year BA students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, were trained through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve. The results of the evaluation questionnaire show that the students, not only are satisfied with the blended writing course, but they also want blended learning to become the new approach of teaching writing at the Department of Letters and English. They have expressed their satisfaction in relation to content delivery, active learning, decrease of writing anxiety and enhancement of student-teacher interaction.

List of Abbreviations

ADE: Association of Departments of English

ADSL: Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line

AEW: Academic English Writing

CAI: Computer Assisted Instruction

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CALT: Computer-Assisted Language Teaching

CALT: Computer-Assisted Language Testing

CBI: Computer-Based Instruction

CBLT: Computer-Based Language Testing

CCC: Computer Curriculum Corporation

CCCC: Conference on College Composition and Communication

CD-ROM: Compact Disc-Read Only Memory

CELL: Computer-Enhanced Language Learning

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication

CMS: Course Management System

CRI: Computer-supported Reading Instruction

docx: Microsoft Word 2007/2010/2013 document

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ENIAC: Electrical Numerical Integrator And Calculator

F2F: face-to-face

FL: Foreign Language

ICT/ICTs: Information and Communication Technology/Technologies

IT: Information Technology

L1: First Language

LMS/LMSs: Learning Management System(s)

MLE: Managed Learning Environment

Moodle: Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment

NCTE: National Council of Teachers of English

PDF: Portable Document Format

PLATO: Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operation

SAT: Stanford Achievement Test

SCORM: Sharable Content Object Reference Model

TELL: Technology-enhanced Language Learning

TELUM: Télé Université Mentouri

URL: Uniform or Universal Resource Locator

VARK: Visual, Aural/Auditory, Read/Write and Kinesthetic

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

VUE: Visual Understanding Environment

WE: Written Expression

WEA: Workers Education Association

WebCT: World Wide Web CourseTools

WWW: The World Wide Web/ the Web

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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General Introduction

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Developing academic writing abilities is a demanding task that requires the mastery of several skills and sub-skills, and it becomes even more complex in an English as a Foreign Language context, particularly in Higher Education. It is an intricate process for both learners and teachers in many aspects. For learners, they not only have to struggle with the foreign language structures, which are often difficult to master, but also with the conventions and requirements of academic writing. Learning to write in higher education requires from the learners to acquire a sum of notions and skills that allow them to achieve a series of goals, notably the production of different types of academic texts in various contexts and for various purposes. Achieving those goals requires the implementation of an efficient syllabus and the development of several skills and sub-skills.

From a teacher's perspective, teaching writing is a difficult task mostly because it requires time and careful planning. It is known that to develop students' writing skills teachers have to take into consideration the time factor to achieve their objectives of fully exploring the process of writing. This requires a well-organized methodology that includes the definition of clear objectives, the use of an adequate teaching method, and the utilization of the right elements for its implementation. However, it is not always obvious as how to proceed so. Second, teaching writing needs a clear knowledge of what students are supposed to learn during a particular period of time (one lesson or one term) and for what purpose. Generally, clearly defined objectives based on what students already know or what they have already

acquired as skills provide teachers with the necessary guidelines to appropriately implement instruction and achieve a reasonable rate of success; however, it is once instruction has begun that, sometimes, teachers come across certain gaps left from previous instruction. This often obliges the teachers to fill those gaps, and in turn, this makes them waste valuable time that is supposed to be devoted to help students develop new skills and learn new concepts, and/or respect an imposed program. Even if pedagogically and deontologically speaking it is the duty of the teacher to remedy drawbacks left from previous instruction, the work load that it imposes on the teachers is too heavy to do so. Another aspect that makes teaching writing a difficult task is clear knowledge of who the learners are. This involves knowing the students' needs and expectations in terms of their learning styles and their weaknesses. Currently, what teachers may ignore is that they are teaching a different generation of learners called "the digital natives" as Prensky (2001) coined them. He explained that digital natives are "growing up in our current technology-imbued environment…", and that "… [they] are not only broadly skilled in the use of new technology, but also fully expectant that technology will be available in all aspects of their lives—anytime, everywhere…". Metros (as cited in Stein and Graham 2014, p.11) emphasized that "the one thing we *can* say about today's learners is that they'll go to the Web before the textbook or teacher".

The pedagogy of writing has always been subject to debates and controversies concerning the way to teach writing and the purposes for which it should be taught. Important issues have been tackled concerning the tools to be used to appropriately teach writing. Research findings (Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006; Wilder & Mangillo, 2007; Grosseck, 2009; Anderson, 2010; Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan, 2014) suggested that, with the advance in technology, and particularly in information and

communication technologies, the teaching of writing has moved to a new dimension. Currently, many countries are including more and more information and communication technology tools for the learning/teaching of writing in and out of the classroom, not only to optimize classroom time, but also to give the learners access to a large amount of information and learning tools, to address their various learning styles, and to increase their learning outcomes and their interest in learning the target language. In the last decade, teaching writing has greatly evolved thanks to information and communication technologies for education. Several studies have been conducted on the use of information and communication technologies to learn/teach writing, either in the form of tools to use inside/outside the classroom or in the form of online courses. Later, this led to the emergence of new types of methods, amongst which is blended learning. The coinage "blended learning" first appeared in the business world (Sharma & Barrett as cited in Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013), then it was later used in Higher Education as MacDonald explained (2006), then in language learning and teaching suggesting that the term has become widely used in English Language Teaching after the book *Blended Learning* was published by Sharma and Barrett in 2007. Thorne (2003, p. 2) gave a simpler definition stating that blended learning "blends online learning with more traditional methods of learning and development". However, Kupetz & Ziegenmeyer (2005, p.179-180) defined blended learning in a more elaborate way as "the purposeful arrangement of media, methods and ways of organizing learning situations through combining traditional media and methods with e-learning elements and possibilities".

We are evolving in a changing world, and therefore, as Stein and Graham (2014, p.12) suggested, "we need to respond to this changing world by teaching and learning *differently*." Adopting blended learning as a teaching method not only

requires knowledge of what technology to use, when to use it, and how to use it, but also a probable course redesign. The main issue that this research work is concerned with is that teachers of writing at the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, are dealing with a new generation of students who seem to learn differently from the 20th century students. Therefore, it appears that the way teachers are teaching the 21st century students is no longer appropriate. Those students do not seem to be satisfied with traditional teaching and seem to possess a potential that is not fully exploited due to time constraints, lack of variety of teaching materials, variety of learning styles, and lack of teachers' training in information and communication technologies for education. Based on informal observation and discussions, it has been noticed that English as a Foreign Language university students at the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 are showing more and more interest in the use of Information and Communication Technologies for learning purposes. More students are using mobile technologies like smartphones, tablets, and laptops along with a wide range of software and Internet as complementary or remediation learning tools, and the students seem more comfortable with using those tools in and outside classrooms rather than with more conventional tools like printed dictionaries and textbooks. English as a Foreign Language university students seem even more at ease when their teachers use technological means in the classroom either for explanation purposes or for achieving writing tasks, or by keeping in touch or sending documents and web links via e-mail. It has also been noticed that English as a Foreign Language students seem less attracted by the traditional way of learning/teaching the writing skill. The issue that seems to emerge is that the new generation of English as a Foreign Language Algerian university students are learning in a way that is incompatible with the way they are being taught

and that a technology-based method would be more convenient to these digital natives.

2. Aims of the Study

The present study aims at demonstrating that the traditional way of teaching writing at the university is no longer appropriate considering the advances in technology and the learning styles and expectations of the twenty first century students. It also aims at demonstrating that blended learning can be an effective method to develop the students' composition skills and the solution to the problems teachers of writing meet in their classrooms. In addition, this study seeks to find a way to maximize the time of face-to-face sessions to increase students' written production, give students more opportunity to go through all the stages of the process of writing, increase their motivation and engagement in the classroom, and give special attention to the students who have a low linguistic level.

3. Assumptions

The current research work revolves around three assumptions. The first assumption is that teaching writing to English as a Foreign Language Algerian university students is based on an inadequate method for two main reasons. First, we live in the twenty first century where today's world is governed by information and communication technologies and Web 2.0, the second generation of the first World Wide Web or Web 1.0 and which is an improved version characterized by interactivity and collaboration (Christensson, 2008). Therefore, this has led to an evolution of foreign language learning/teaching in general and the writing skill in particular. In other terms, today's learners are not their teachers, and today's teachers are not their students since most teachers undertook their majors in different periods of time where teaching practices were different from the current ones, and where educational

technology was less developed. Therefore, today's teachers need to *adapt* to the new context of literacy in the twenty first century, particularly that information and communication technologies and Web 2.0 tools seem to have a positive impact on composition. Using these technologies may solve most of the problems students and teachers face in learning/teaching composition, and may even open the way to a new type of instruction that is technology-driven.

The second assumption is that students may not always understand what is expected from them or what they are supposed to achieve at the end of a writing course. Besides, their expectations about learning to write may not always match what their instructors want them to be able to do at the end of a term or an academic year.

The third assumption on which the present study is based concerns the heavy workload the teachers of writing have to achieve. Teachers have so many aspects to deal with when teaching writing that they often cannot teach everything. Teaching composition is difficult and time-consuming, particularly in an English as a Foreign Language context because students often have problems with the foreign language at different levels. Therefore, students who have a low linguistic level cannot cope with the process-oriented approach of teaching writing. Another reason is that following the process-oriented approach to teach composition is time-consuming because this means that the teacher has to guide every student throughout the whole process at each step. When dealing with large groups of students, things become difficult for both the teacher and the learners because teachers need to focus on the linguistic aspect (particularly grammar) and the rhetorical aspect, conventions of essay writing, explaining concepts that are often abstract to learners like the concept of audience, the needs of every single student, different proficiency levels, finding appropriate teaching materials, and providing feedback at all steps of the learning process.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to achieve our aims, we seek to answer the following questions:

1. What place does technology have in learning/teaching composition in higher education?

2. What are the students' attitudes towards Information and Communication Technologies?

3. Are students' satisfied with the current method of teaching writing?

4. Would a combination of traditional teaching and online learning improve the students' composition skills?

5. Would students become more receptive and active in a blended learning environment?

6. Can a blended learning course of writing solve the problems of time constraints, the difficulties related to the writing process and feedback?

In the light of these research questions, we hypothesize that:

1. English as a Foreign Language Second Year students would not be satisfied with the traditional method of teaching writing at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, because of their learning expectations, an incompatibility between their learning styles and the teaching method, and the absence of variety of teaching materials and writing tasks.

2. If English as a Foreign Language second year students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, were trained through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve.

The second hypothesis is broken down into three sub hypotheses as follows:

3. Blended learning would improve the students' writing skills at the sentence level.

4. Blended learning would improve the students' writing skills at the paragraph level.

5. Blended learning would improve the students' writing skills at the discourse level.

5. Means of Research

The present study seeks to develop English as a Foreign Language university students' composition skills at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constanine 1 through blended learning, a method based on the combined use of technology and traditional teaching. The target population of the study are Second Year students who were chosen because, in the Second Year Written Expression syllabus, the students are introduced to essay writing which is complex and requires them to develop many writing skills such as developing an effective thesis statement, writing an effective outline, and so on. The total number of Second Year students at the Department of Letters and English are 373. To test the hypotheses stated earlier, two means of data collection are used: the questionnaire and a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and a post-test involving two groups of students: the control group who is taught through the traditional way of teaching writing, and the experimental group who is instructed through blended learning.

Two questionnaires, "The Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire" and "The Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course Questionnaire", are used. The students' attitudinal questionnaire is given to several groups of Second Year students at the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constanine 1, before the experiment. The questionnaire aims at investigating the students' attitudes

and opinions towards the learning/teaching of writing. Aspects like the teachers' way of teaching, teaching materials, motivation, expectations and the place of Information and Communication Technologies in the learning/teaching of writing are addressed. The function of the first questionnaire is to provide answers to the questions that this study is concerned with as well as the first hypothesis. The students' evaluation questionnaire is given to the experimental group as an assessing/complementary tool after the students of the experimental group have completed instruction through blended learning. The aim of this questionnaire is to probe the students' perceptions about their experience with blended learning as well as their feedback as online learners. The results of the evaluation questionnaire are used to assess the efficiency of the online course and blended learning as well as their weak points.

The experiment consists of a pre-test administered to both the control group and the experimental group, a period of instruction where the experimental group is taught through blended learning whereas the control group is instructed through the traditional way of teaching writing, and a post-test administered to both groups. The pre-test consists of a writing task where students were asked to write a five-paragraph exemplification essay about a selected topic. The post-test consists of the same writing task which was writing a five-paragraph cause and effect essay about a selected topic. A *t*-test is used to analyse and compare the results of the pre-test and the post-test in order to confirm or reject the second hypothesis, that is if English as a Foreign Language second year students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constanine 1, were trained through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve. The instructional phase is based on an online course hosted by Télé Université Mentouri, the platform of the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, and on face-to-face lectures with the

experimental group. The students who participated in the quasi-experiment are second year students from two groups taught by the researcher.

6. Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first three chapters deal with the literature survey; the five last chapters are devoted to the practical part of the study. Chapter One, "Educational Technology and Technology-based Instruction", provides an overview on the history and the role of technology, particularly of information and communication technologies, in education. The chapter also introduces important aspects in relation to information and communication technologies as well as Computer Assisted Language Learning. Chapter Two, "Learning/Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language Composition in Higher Education in the Digital Age", tackles the issue of teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language in relation to its complexity, limitations of the traditional method, and the need to rethink pedagogy in relation to information and communication technologies. Chapter Three, "Blended Learning in an English as a Second/Foreign Language Context", introduces a new approach to language teaching called Blended Learning, and proposes it as a new approach to teach English as a Second/Foreign Language writing. Chapter Four, "The Students' Perceptions and Attitudes about the Learning of Composition and the Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Developing Composition Skills in Higher Education", deals with the results of the Students' Attitudinal Questionnaire in order to yield information about the teaching of writing at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1. Chapter Five, "An Online Course of Writing for English as a Foreign Language Algerian Second Year University Students", describes the online course that was used for this study and

introduces key aspects related to it. Chapter Six, “The Blended Written Expression Course”, discusses the results of the quasi-experiment that is implemented for this study. Chapter Seven, “The Students’ Evaluation of the Blended Course “Writing for English as a Foreign Language Second Year University Students”, deals with the results of the Students’ Evaluation of the Blended Course Questionnaire in relation to the online course that was used for this study and to the blended learning writing course in general. Chapter Eight, “Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations” highlights sseveral important issues about the findings of this study, recommendations for implementation and for further research, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter One: Educational Technology and Technology-based Instruction

Introduction

In the twenty first century, technology has become such an inherent part of our lives that we implicate it in almost the smallest actions we undertake, be it at the workplace, at school and the university, or at home. We use technology for communication, entertainment, education, and many more fields to a point that this notion has come to imply many things to many people. Recently, more precisely during the last two decades, technology has come to play a significant role in education thanks to the rapid growth of Information and Communication Technologies, to the extent that more and more educational institutions in several countries have started to include technology in the learning/teaching process not only as a tool to enhance it but also as a philosophy that involves complex dynamics. That has led to the rise of a modern approach to how learners are supposed to learn in response to a fast growing world where information and communication are exchanged and shared in a blink of an eye for multiple purposes and contexts and also to the demands of a transforming world where literacy skills and individuals are rapidly changing raising an inherent necessity to change the nature of education in the twenty first century.

1.1. Educational Technology

Educational technology is an important field in modern society as it has come to significantly impact education at different levels. This section will first clarify the term “technology”, then it will provide a brief history of educational technology and will particularly focus on information and communication technologies.

1.1.1. Definition of Technology

The word ‘technology’ is a word we employ, in a certain restriction, in our daily life in various contexts for various purposes. If one wants to look for a definition of the word ‘technology’, numerous descriptions will be provided according to the understanding of each individual. For example, the Merriam-Webster online dictionary provides some definitions of technology as follows: “the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area”, “a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge”, or “the specialized aspects of a particular field of endeavor”. At this level already, it can be noticed that the variation in definitions occurs at the level of the conceptualization of technology in terms of knowledge application, process, or aspect of a particular realm. In a more academic sphere, Reddy and Zhao (1990) and Wahab, Rose, and Osman (2012) explained that defining the notion of technology is not an easy task as it represents many things to many people in many disciplines; therefore, no particular description of technology was agreed on by researchers. Bozeman (2000, p.628) provided that “the most common view of technology is ‘‘a tool’’”, but he further added that technology has also come to enclose “knowledge of its use and application” (p.629). On this basis, Ramey (2013), for instance, defined technology as “a body of knowledge devoted to creating tools, processing actions and extracting of materials”, and further extends her definition to types of technology, bringing another complexity on how one can view technology. She distinguishes the following categories: *communication technology, construction technology, assistive technology, medical technology, information technology, business technology* and *educational technology*. For example, Ramey (2013) viewed communication technology as a sum of information and communication processing tools that convey information across a

wide variety of areas and individuals. Thanks to these tools, communication, which is employed to transmit notions and concepts and to share data, will be accomplished through the use of smartphones, fax, computers, and so on to keep connection with family members and friends, for instance. Another example is information technology which is described as an array of hardware and software instruments applied to collect information. Ramey (2013, para.13) added that "information technology tools help in providing the right people with the right information at the right time." A further example is educational technology which is some kind of technology that seeks to enhance achievement through the conception and the use of a range of technological procedures and resources. Educational technology is a scholastic field in which people are trained to achieve broader comprehension and acquisition of information, and it betters the learning process since it motivates the learners and boosts individual learning as well as facilitates access to academic data.

It is clear that, despite the few descriptions provided above, the notion of technology encompasses a variety of considerations related to the vast array of fields where technology is employed, which may generate confusion. This section aimed at providing clarifications and precisions on how the word 'technology' is employed in various contexts and for various purposes rather than at providing a clear-cut definition of technology. Therefore, one has to be cautious in employing the right terminology to avoid confusion and misconceptions, particularly when undertaking research in the field of education. In the coming sections, reference to technology will be made in terms of the kind of technology used in higher education, and particularly in English language teaching; terminology such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), educational technology, technology for education, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and e-learning will be used when required.

1.1.2. A Brief History of Educational Technology

It can be assumed that the use of technology in education is a phenomenon pertaining to the twentieth and the twenty first centuries with the appearance of the television, the computer, and more sophisticated tools that we are currently using. Yet, the use of technology for educational purposes is "as old as the notion of classroom itself" (Kherbach, 2013). Tracing back the timeline of the history of technology use in education is not an easy task since, as reported by Bates (2014, para.3), "technology has always been closely linked with teaching", and still according to him, its history can be tracked 2500 years ago. In her article "The Ultimate History of Technology in Education", Parson (2017) established a timeline that starts from the mid-seventeenth century up to the twenty first century, which makes about 400 years of technological development. Much can be said about the kind of technology that has been used for educational purposes since the mid-seventeenth century until the present day; however, this section will present only the main lines about the development of instructional technology highlighting some major innovations from the late 1700's until the 1960's. The remaining part of this section will provide a particular focus on the utilisation of the computer as an educational technology from the 1960's until the 2000's, still from a general perspective. The present timeline about the development of educational technology was mainly established in the context of the United States since it is considered a pioneer in educational technology.

The first technological innovation in the field of education occurred in the mid-seventeenth century with the introduction of the modern library (Parson, 2017); however, important innovations in educational technology started to appear by the end of the eighteenth century with the invention of the first pencil, which was modernized

by the beginning of the 1900's (Popova, 2013). In the 1800's, slates, chalk and blackboard were introduced as well as the magic lantern, the latter becoming more popular as an educational tool. Though it was first invented in 1646 and was meant for entertainment purposes, the magic lantern represented a major technological achievement for education, and is regarded as "the forerunner of the modern slide projector" **(**The Magic Lantern Society, n.d); its use became very popular in classrooms in an attempt to improve learning (Parson,2017). By the end of the nineteenth century, around 1873, Remington Arms Company developed the first mechanical typewriter, and around the 1890's, typewriters were introduced in elementary schools (Bivins, n.d.). Educational technology developed more rapidly in the 1900's than in the last two centuries. In 1902, Charles Urban started showing the first educational films in schools, some of which were used in biology classes, and in 1911, Thomas Edison produced some films on the main stages of the American Revolution which were shown in classes (Saettler, 2004). Films involved only images, but it is later, by the end of the 1920's, that sound was included in motion pictures **(**Haran, 2015). At the beginning of the 1920's, radio was introduced as an educational tool; Haran (2015, para.29) provided that "in 1923 Haaren High School in New York City became the first public school to use the radio in classroom teaching." Cuban (1986, p.22) explained that the educational programmes aired on radio stations were "viewed as a supplement to teacher instruction." In the 1930's, the overhead projector made its appearance, first in the US Army for training, and later in classrooms (Haran, 2015), and it had become to be widely used in schools, and "provided teachers with a more **convenient alternative to the blackboard" (Parson, 2017). It is starting from the late 1940's and beginning of the 1950's that technological growth began to accelerate, and momentous educational technology came first with the**

introduction of the headphones particularly in language laboratories and were used as part of listening activities mainly about language drills, then video tapes and television were introduced into the classroom, and that really took instruction to another dimension. Concerning educational television, reports say that it was first used in 1939 in public schools in Los Angeles and in the State University of Iowa (Haran, 2015); however, the use of educational television became more popular in the 1950's and the 1960's, and that led to a rapid growth of educational channels as a response to the fast growing student population and a shortage of trained teachers (Thomas & Kobayashi, 1987; Saettler, 2004; Januszewski & Molenda, 2008; Haran, 2015). Still in the 1950's period, the teaching machine, promoted by the Behaviourist B.F. Skinner in 1954, was used in the classroom, introducing the concept of "programmed learning" that was induced from "discovering and controlling the variables of which learning is a function" (Skinner, 1958, p.270). Skinner's teaching machine was based on "principles of conditioning that imply controlling the student and what he learns and rewarding the student, reinforcing, or confirming the correct response as soon as it is made" (Klausmeier & Lambert, 1961, p.279). At the beginning of the 1970's, other innovations in educational technology involved the introduction of the handheld calculator in mathematics and the scantron that was invented by Michael Sokolski in 1972. The scantron utilized "imaging technology to read the answer sheets which had dots that were coloured in with a No. 2 pencil", and was intended for an effective and rapid grading of multiple choice tests (Parson, 2017, para.26).

The biggest and greatest revolution that took place in educational technology undoubtedly occurred with the coming of the computer. Computers first appeared in the mid-1940's with the introduction of the first operational

computers namely the MARK 1 in 1944 at Harvard and ENIAC (Electrical Numerical Integrator And Calculator) in 1946 at the University of Pennsylvania (Molnar, 1997), and were first used in the military field. However, it is **in the 1960's that computers were introduced in education thanks to the launching of computer-assisted instruction (CAI), a project initiated in 1963 by Richard Atkinson and Patrick Suppes from the Institute of Mathematical Studies in the Social Sciences at Stanford University, and which first started as a "drill-and-practice system … in elementary mathematics and reading" (Saetller, 2004, p.308). Computer use was extended to language arts in 1967 with the founding of the Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) by Patrick Suppes, Richard Atkinson, and William Estes and the development of CCC materials that contributed to enhance students' grades in standardized tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) (Saettler, 2004, p.308). Another project that introduced computers in education was the PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operation) project that started in 1960 at the University of Illinois. Donald L. Bitzer, a Ph.D electrical engineer, was the initiator of the first version of PLATO in collaboration with a mathematician from the same university,** Peter Braunfeld (Van Meer, 2003; Saettler, 2004). PLATO was **"**the first computer system designed especially for general educational use" (Van Meer, 2003, p.3), and which included a "drill and practice" methodology. In other terms, PLATO

> incorporated course material into larger interrelated conceptual packages. If a student found the material easy or familiar, she could "leapfrog" through a course in a minimum of lessons. Students who needed more time and explanations found themselves directed back and forth through the total sequence of lessons until the concept was mastered. (Van Meer, 2003, p.3)

PLATO was then the first system that attempted individualized instruction and self-paced learning, and subsequent more advanced versions of this system were developed. **Of course, other projects about computer use in education were initiated in the 1960's, but the Stanford University CAI as well as PLATO projects are regarded in the literature as the most significant examples, which explains their use as instances in this section. It has to be mentioned that the type of computers used in the 1960's were mainframe computers, that is large big units like in the case of the PLATO project that "**ran on its own special hardware consisting of a central computer and terminals**" (**Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p.57), and these computers had a limited impact on students' achievement in addition to being very expensive (Haran, 2015). A new revolution in the computer industry occurred with the coming of the microcomputers in the mid-1970's (Molnar, 1997; Saettler, 2004), and by the introduction of the first personal computer by IBM[1] at the beginning of the 1980's (Saettler, 2004). Many researchers indicated that there had been a rapid growth in the popularity of microcomputer use in schools and universities, and more and more teachers, students, and parents showed a great enthusiasm concerning this new educational technology. The popularity of microcomputers in the 1980's is related to the fact that they offered more possibilities for teaching and learning through a variety of software including simulations, tutorials, games, problem-solving, and word processing (O'Neil & Perez, 2003; Teo, 2011). Computer use in education was further reinforced by the coming of the CD-ROM in the mid-1980's (Brock, 1994; Parson, 2017). The CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) "provided a massive storage medium for text and graphics"

[1] IBM (International Business Machines) is one of the most important information technology companies in the world which provides a large choice of hardware and software (Rouse, 2016).

(Brock, 1994, p.144), and since microcomputers were becoming more powerful and provided more memory capability, CD-ROMs were the answer to the increasing demand for a larger capacity of data storage at that time. Hence, the CD-ROM, as an educational tool, allowed for a variety of instructional uses involving "instructional and simulations software, … encyclopedias, directories, and bibliographic references" (Brock, 1994, p.150), and allowed students to store audio and video materials that could be used for varying purposes **(**Parson, 2017).

At the beginning of the 1990's, educational technology developed in a way no one could have imagined in the former decades with the launching of the Internet for public use (Bates, 2014; Haran, 2015) and of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee, and which is "a global networked environment of interconnected documents and data accessible through the Internet" (McPherson, 2010, p.5). In 1993, the first Internet browser, Mosaic, was put into use, and in 1999, Google was created (Bates, 2014). In the mid 1990's, the first learning management systems (LMSs), like WebCT, were developed **(**Bates, 2014). LMSs are software that enable the creation of an online environment where learning and teaching take place through the creation, management, and delivery of online courses, and were some tools can be used such as discussions forums, file exchange, and many more (Haran, 2015). The development of LMSs led to the emergence of the concept of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and by the end of the 1990's, this led to a paradigm shift in the conception of education where "traditional classroom experiences were being "ported" online, rede-signed (or at least reconfigured) for computer-mediated delivery, and distributed via the Internet" (Davis, Carmean, & Wagner, 2009, p.4). Finally, at the beginning of the 2000's, the World Wide Web (commonly referred to as the Web) evolved from its first generation, Web 1.0 into a more sophisticated version Web 2.0, a term that first

appeared in 2004 during a conference brainstorming session involving Tim O'Reilly and Media Live International (O'Reilly, 2005). The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, as Hargadon (2010) claimed, have "dramatically [altered] the 21st-century landscape in education, shaping how students approach learning, how educators approach teaching, and, increasingly, how educators are interacting with, and learning from, each other." In other terms, Web 2.0 remodeled the concept of education by giving it a virtual dimension where technology has become intrinsically rooted into the notions of teaching/learning and teacher/learner, and where the question of using educational technologies has become a fait accompli. Indeed, in the last seventeen years, many changes in education have occurred at both the theoretical and implementation levels. Some of these changes will be later discussed in this chapter and in the other chapters of the literature review.

It is important to mention that the aim of the present section was to provide a different perspective on technology use in education by underlining the fact that this concept is not as recent as one might think. It is thanks to the rapid growth of technology innovation worldwide, the innumerable studies and research in the field of technology and education, and the trivialization of technology use, particularly in the last two decades, that technology for education has come to receive more attention and to be considered an important area to develop. The coming sections of this chapter will focus on ICT, particularly information and communication technologies for education (ICTE), and some concepts that have come to develop around them. Some concepts related to the practical part of the current study, such as Web 2.0 technologies and LMSs, will be presented in more details in this chapter.

1.1.3. An Overview of Information and Communication Technology in Education

Introducing educational technology undoubtedly leads us to deal with ICTs particularly that we are living in the digital age where information and communication have reached a vertiginous expansion. Since it is said that ICTs have changed instruction and the very nature of learning, therefore, it is necessary to describe what ICTs are about and how they have become a major aspect in today's instructional paradigm. The present section will focus on these aspects and will provide an overview of ICT in terms of definition both in general and in the context of education, historical development, types, evaluation in terms of benefits and limitations, and challenges.

1.1.3.1. Definition of Information and Communication Technologies

In the available literature on ICTs, no universal definition is provided, for several authors and researchers present various descriptions of ICTs according to their very own understanding. According to Loveless and Ellis (2001) and Zuppo (2012), the acronym ICT (or ICTs) is used differently in various sectors, and can even differ in interpretation within a single subject itself. Therefore, in this section, some definitions were selected to illustrate these variations in the interpretation of the term ICT.

To start with**,** UNESCO (2002, p.13) defined ICTs as "the combination of informatics technology with other related technologies, specifically communication technology." From another perspective, Conole and Oliver (2007, p.4) referred to ICTs as "the broad range of technologies that are used in education." Florian and Hegarty (2007, p.8), with another viewpoint, mentioned that the term ICT can be substituted by terms such as 'information technology', 'computer technology' or just 'technology'. They add that "this, in turn, can include reference to hardware (the

machinery), software (the kinds of programs that are available) or networks (communicating with others).” With a slight difference, Zhang and Barber (2008, p.325) defined ICTs as “computer-based technology that contains information and/or has electronic communication facilities, in particular Internet-based technologies.” Christensson (2010), by providing more specificity, viewed ICTs as “technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. It is similar to Information Technology (IT), but focuses primarily on communication technologies. This includes the Internet, wireless networks, cell phones, and other communication mediums.” In the same vein, Perron, Taylor, Glass and Margerum-Leys (2010, p.1) considered ICTs as “technologies used to convey, manipulate and store data by electronic means.” They further added that these technologies can comprise “e-mail, SMS text messaging, video chat (for example, Skype), and online social media (for example, Facebook). It also includes all the different computing devices (for example, laptop computers and smart phones) that carry out a wide range of communication and information functions” (Perron et al., 2010, p.1). With a broader yet less simplistic perspective, Zuppo (2012, p.13) provided that “the primary definition of information and communication technologies revolves around the devices and infrastructures that facilitate the transfer of information through digital means.” In a more simple and rather seemingly elaborate interpretation, Giles (2017) noted that the appellation ICT could be examined from two perspectives: “information and communication technology” or “information, communication and technology”. In his view, Giles considered that ICT stands for the second option since it allows a more extensive explanation. He further interpreted the acronym ICT in terms of “information – (or data) in paper or electronic format”, “communication – in person or electronically (electronic communications), in writing or voice, telecommunications, and

broadcasting", "information technology (IT) – including software, hardware and electronics", and "communications technology – including protocols, software and hardware". To add more clarity to his interpretation of the term ICT, Giles (2017, para.5) made an analogy with a plumbing system explaining that

> a plumbing system is made up of storage tanks and pipes. Water is stored in the storage tanks and flows through the pipes. ICT is made up of information technology (storage tanks) and communications technology (pipes). Information (stored water) is stored using information technology (storage tanks) and a communication (flowing water) reaches the recipient through communications technology (pipes).

Finally, Rouse (2017) considered ICTs as "the infrastructure and components that enable modern computing." She added that "the term is generally accepted to mean all devices, networking components, applications and systems that combined allow people and organizations (i.e., businesses, nonprofit agencies, governments and criminal enterprises) to interact in the digital world." This last definition not only involves aspects or elements present in the previous definition, but also encloses the human aspect in reference to people and organizations.

1.1.3.2. Information and Communication Technologies in Education

- **Development of ICT in Education**

Information and communication technologies have significantly impacted society and have become so deeply rooted in all its aspects that nowadays we are taking of "e-society", "e-commerce", "e-learning", and many more, and this due to the growing use of Internet and the Web (Bouarab-Dahmani & Tahi, 2015). Society is not

alone to have been affected by ICTs, individuals too. To be an effective and successful member of an "e-society", it is vital for people, particularly the young ones, to develop technological literacy to evolve and even survive in a world governed with an increasingly sophisticated and evolved technology (Snoobik, 2012). What is meant then by technology literacy is "the ability to use, manage, assess, and understand technology" (Snoobik, 2012, p.297).

In the 1960's, some researchers and advocates of computer technology envisioned computers as the solution to the issues of education, and some even thought of replacing the teachers by computers in the classrooms. But that could not happen imagining "students sitting behind computer terminals for much of the day have largely not occurred in mainstream schools and most would not like this to be realized" (Bouarab-Dahmani & Tahi, 2015, p.607). That was probably due to the type of computer technology and pedagogy that prevailed at that time. With the appearance of the first personal computers (PCs) in the 1980's, the benefits of computer technology came out with much promises (Samra, 2013), but it is in the last decade of the twentieth century that a 'technological effervescence' occurred since, as Bouarab-Dahmani and Tahi (2015, p.603) explained, the 1990's is considered "the decade of computer communications and information access" thanks to the widespread of "internet-based services" namely electronic mail and the Web. Meanwhile, the floppy disk was replaced by the CD-ROM which became "the standard for distributing packaged software", like encyclopedias, and which has allowed the low-cost and easy distribution of such software. This led the teachers to more efficiently use technology to enhance learning and to provide more justifications for investment in the sector of technology. By the end of the twentieth century, ICTs rapidly evolved and began to impose themselves in several fields, particularly the sector of education, challenging

the educators and officials. Thus, the integration of ICTs in instruction has become a fait accompli and even has come to be considered vital not only for academic success but also for professional realization (Yilmaz & Bayraktar, 2014).

ICTs have deeply affected learning and teaching as concepts and as processes. In the last few years, learning has evolved from passive to active learning, an evolution generated and encouraged by learning theories such as connectivism and constructivism (del Campo, Negro, & Nunez, 2012). In the same way, the notion of classroom also evolved in the paradigm of learner-centered teaching, and thanks to modern technology, the classroom is no more limited to a physical location but has become "a receptacle without walls, completely open and global" (del Campo, et al., 2012, p.1090). Just as the notion of learning has changed, so has the concept of teaching, though, one has to acknowledge, this evolution has always been there since teaching came into being, but the difference is that, in the digital age, change operates at the speed of the light, and teachers have constantly to cope with this change by adjusting their views and practices about teaching (Samra, 2013). From a general perspective, modern educational technology has two main goals: "to increase productivity and solve problems in teaching/learning processes (Bouarab-Dahmani & Tahi, 2015, p.607).

- **Rationale for using ICTs in education**

Integrating technology in the learning/teaching process has an unyielding rationale. Snoobik (2012) and El-Mowafy, Kuhn, and Snow (2013**)** argued that, in a technology driven society, the nature of learning has changed and has become a social and more active process where the learners are more aware of their capacities and their goals and build their learning experience on other people's experiences. In this process, the teacher is no longer the 'information dispenser' but a guide and facilitator

acting towards the achievement of the learners' goals. In addition to that, it appears that the digital society has created a technological divide between two types of individuals: the "digital natives", who were born and who have grown up surrounded by digital media, and the "digital immigrants", who were born prior to digital media but who started to interact with modern technologies as adults and to adapt to a more digitalized life (Prensky, 2001). The point here is that, by transposing digital natives and digital immigrants in an educational context, we can infer that the teachers (digital immigrants) adopt a pedagogy that is incompatible with the way their students (the digital natives) actually learn (Bouarab-Dahmani & Tahi, 2015). The notion of digital natives will be more discussed in another section.

- **Types of ICTs and their benefits**

Several types of ICTs can be applied for instruction. Some researchers classify them in terms of learning technologies such as e-learning, blended learning, and mobile learning; others see them as media such as video conferencing, webcast and CD-ROM (Joseph, 2012, p.428). Other types of ICTs include learning management systems (LMSs) or virtual platforms, videos, blogs, wikis, and forums (El-Mowafy et al. 2013).

Research has shown that ICTs have several benefits for educational purposes. Subramaniam (2013) provided the major advantages of ICTs and suggested that they, particularly computers, are ideal for educational activities that involve important interaction such as games, simulations, and animations, and for providing individual and self-paced instruction. They also allow the customization of teaching materials "to cater for students of diverse backgrounds and abilities" (Subramaniam, 2013, p.2225). In addition to that, they are appropriate for developing the learners' problem-solving

and decision-making skills. ICTs are also very helpful for the teachers since they can be used as “a supplementary tool to classroom teaching”.

- **Limitations of ICTs for Education**

Even if ICTs for education are considered advantageous, they have some limitations. del Campo et al. (2012) suggested that ICTs may negatively impact the teacher-student communication by monopolizing the teacher’s attention that has to be more focused on the learners particularly for motivating them. Moreover, ICTs enable the teacher to deliver information faster but this requires the learners “to process a huge amount of information, which does not always have a positive impact”. More importantly, when assigned homework that require gathering and compiling information, the students are often tempted to plagiarize others’ work that is available online. Joseph (2012, p.429) added that “financial constraints due to the ever-changing needs of technology; leadership challenges, infrastructural demands and support continue to hamper the effectiveness of technology, particularly in Third World countries”. Technical problems (a computer freezing during a PowerPoint presentation), “multi-tasking” (managing the classroom, evaluating the students, constant search for new material, and so on), and developing effective technology literacy (for both teachers and learners) are other limitations of ICTs for education (Samra, 2013).

Two main cautions have to be observed when integrating technology in instruction. First, technology should be a tool not an end. It has to be used to solve educational problems and should be selected for particular purposes, i.e. to achieve educational objectives (Fischer, 2012; Joseph, 2012; Bouarab-Dahmani & Tahi, 2015). Second, it should create a meaningful learning and teaching experience (Joseph, 2012). Finally, for a successful integration of technology in instruction, El-

Mowafy et al. (2013, p.2) recommended that “To gauge learning and teaching efficiency, a continuous evaluation of content and use of new technologies in teaching should be regularly performed”.

1.1.4. Some Examples of Modern Educational Technologies

As it was explained in the previous sections, modern technology includes a vast array of tools that are used for educational purposes. In this section, only Web 2.0 tools, learning management systems (LMSs), and word processing will be focused on for practical matters.

1.1.4.1. Web 2.0 Tools

Web 2.0 is the second generation of the World Wide Web and can be defined as “a read-write web” **(**Dougherty as cited in Kujur & Chhetri, 2015, p.134). Web 2.0 can be defined within the scope of two elements: as “a platform, with applications and files stored on the Web rather than on a user’s desktop; in this arrangement, software is a service (and often a free service) rather than a product” and as “participation; the Web is now the participatory Web, the social Web, the read-write Web**”** (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011, p.204). Web 2.0 is a platform “where the user has more interaction” and has “a flexible web design, creative reuse, updates, collaborative content creation and modification” that help support its salient feature, collaboration (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015, p.135). The differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 lie in the fact that Web 1.0 is similar to a library where users go to find information in books. In Web 1.0, information is only available if users go online, that is to use Internet. Web 2.0, on the other hand, is “read/write” where users “have become active participants and content creators. They not only find information on the Internet, but they also create and share content” (An, Aworuwa, Ballard & Williams, 2009, p.1).

Figure 1.1. illustrates the difference between Web 2.0 and Web 1.0:

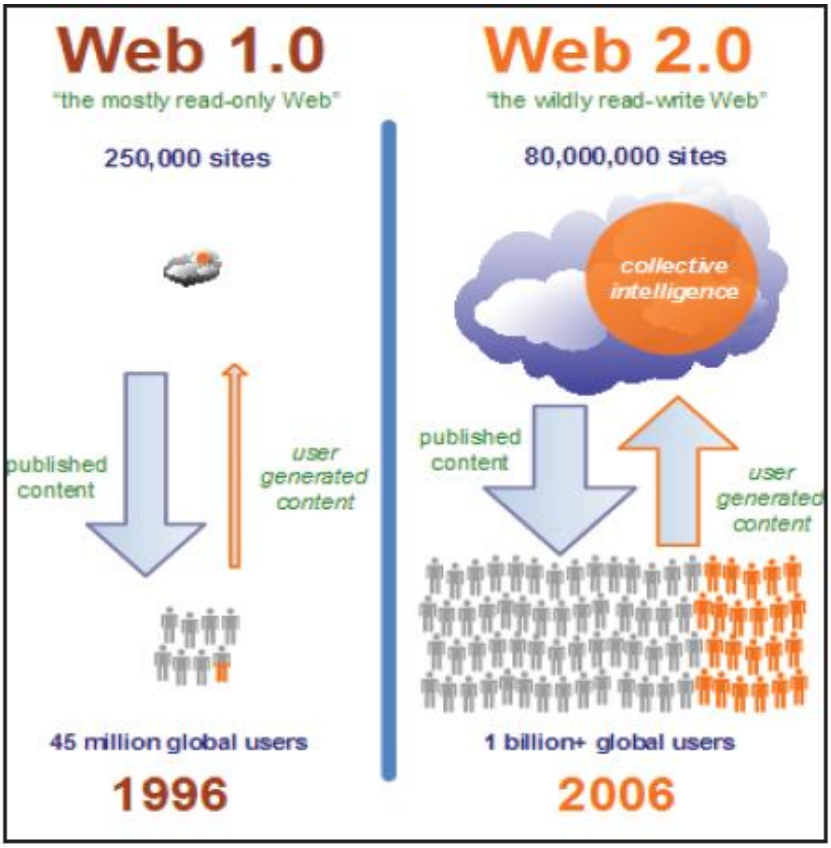


Figure 1.1. Comparison of Web1.0 & Web 2.0 (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015, p.135)

Web 2.0 technologies are numerous; they include blogs, wikis, podcasting (audio and video), social bookmarking (for instance del.icio.us), social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), Online Discussions, Google Documents, YouTube, photo sharing/tagging and many more (An et al., 2009; Kumar, 2009). They enable the users to evolve in a networked virtual environment where they can publish content, connect, and share that content with other user with similar interest all around the globe. Web 2.0 technologies are featured by "openness, user participation, knowledge sharing, social networking and collaboration, user-created content, and folksonomy" (An et al., 2009, p.1). Unlike Web 1.0 in which web sites provided "one-way communication—from the website owner to an audience" (Darwish & Lakhtaria,

2011, p.205), Web 2.0 tools provided a more interactive and collaborative dynamic which rapidly made these tools very popular among web users, and in a short while have become widely used for educational purposes. Many Web 2.0 tools are used for learning and teaching such as wikis, blogs, forums, chat tools, YouTube, email, just to cite some. For instance, a wiki is "a freely expandable collection of interlinked Web pages, a hypertext system for storing and modifying information- a database where each page is easily edited by any user with a form capable Web browser client" (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011, p.206). In other terms, a wiki can be compared to "a public website, or public web page, started by one person, but which subsequent visitors can add to, delete or change as they wish" or to put it in a simple manner, "a wiki is like having a publicly accessible word processing document available online, which anyone can edit" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p.93). One of the well-known wikis is Wikipedia which "demonstrates aspects pf social software: it is collaborative …, displays multiple authorship, a,d is 'owned' by anyone" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p.94). Wikis are widely used for language teaching particularly for collaborative writing (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007) since they are user-friendly and flexible, and therefore they "enable learners to become part of an active learning community" (Aydin, 2014, p.208). Wikis have several benefits for language learners such as fostering collaborative language learning, increasing motivation, developing cultural axareness, encouraging autonomous learning, and developing inquiry learning and critical thinking (Aydin, 2014). Another example of Web 2.0 tools is the blog (the shortening of *Web log*), which is "an online journal usually displayed on a Web site that contains entries listed in reverse chronological order. Blogs combine text, images, hyperlinks, and in some cases, audio to provide information on a specific topic" (Hricko, 2008, p.88). Blogs "enable users, without requirement of any technical skill,

to create, publish and organize their own web pages that contain dated content, entries, comments, discussion etc. in chronological order" (Darwish & Lakhtaria, 2011, p.206). Blogs are often used in language teaching and come in three types: *class blog, tutor blog,* and *student blog* (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007) and several studies showed that blogs positively impact language learning and teaching such as helping students cope with language complexity, grammatical correctness, and fluency (Ahluwalia, Gupta, & Aggarwal, 2011, p.30). Chat tools are also Web 2.0 tools that have been integrated in language teaching practices. Students are widely acquainted with chat programs; they are constantly keeping in touch with other users through Facebook, Gmail chat, Twitter and the like using written communication. In education, chat is used to provide interactive learning, meaningful instruction, enhanced communication and collaboration, and a more timely assessment of the learning effectiveness in comparison with traditional methods" (Peters, 2008, p.94). For instance, in pedagogies that promote collaborative learning, the chat tools nurture learner brainstorming and questioning, presenter clarifications and explanations, role-play and private one-to-one mentoring. They can foster the collection of immediate responses to an idea from learners around the globe" (Bonk as cited in Peters, 2008, p.94). A final example of Web 2.0 tools for language learning is the online forum. Online forums, or as they are also called "discussion boards" or "message boards", "online discussion groups", "bulletin boards" or "web forums", are "[discussion areas] on a website whereby members can post discussions, read and respond to posts by other forum members. A forum can revolve around any subject in an online community" (Kaur, 2011, para.8). Forums are tools that "enable users of a website to interact with each other by exchanging tips and discussing topics related to a certain theme" (Kaur, 2011, para.1).

On the whole, web 2.0 tools have a positive impact on instruction as they favour “interaction, communication and collaboration, knowledge creation, ease of use and flexibility, and writing and technology skills” (An et al.2009, p.3). They also “add value to existing practice, enhance the learning process, and gratify different types of learners” (Kumar, 2009, p.313). Nevertheless some cautions have to be observed when teaching with Web 2.0 tools. An et al. (2009) suggested two major guidelines: “Do NOT introduce too many technologies new to students in one semester” and “Do NOT use multiple technologies that do the same thing” (p.4).

1.1.4.2. Learning Management Systems

With the emergence of online learning, learning management systems started to be used, and concepts such as “virtual learning environment” or “virtual campus” have come to be extensively used. Learning management systems (LMS or LMSs), also called Course Management Systems (CMS), Managed Learning Environment (MLE), or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), are “basically software for designing and managing a learning environment. LMSs used by universities facilitate the management of courses and information sharing, and can include Web 2.0 applications such as blogs and wikis” (Huijser & Sankey, 2011, p.283). To put it simply, a LMS is “a software environment that enables the management and delivery of learning content and resources to students” (Sen, 2011, p.107). LMSs have become widespread in higher education and are used “to assist in the delivery and management of learning-related material such as course notes, lecture recordings, e-assessments, and discussion forums, etc.” (El-Mowafy et al., 2013, p.4). LMSs are very convenient because of “their continuous availability from any location given access to the internet. LMS can be used for both the delivery of fully online courses as well as the enhancement of traditional face-to-face classroom teaching” (El-Mowafy

et al., 2013, p.5). Many LMSs exist such as Moodle, WebCT (World Wide Web Course Tools), Blackboard, and First Class; however, this section will focus only on describing Moodle.

Moodle (modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment) is software that was launched by Martin Dougiamas in the 1990's, and is provided as an open source software. It can be downloaded from the Web, and has features that enable customization according to the needs of teachers and learners (Hu & Wang, 2008, p.679). With Moodle, "a collection of tools for assessment, communication, the delivery of content, group work and the administration of student groups" are available for teachers (Kukulska-Hulme & Jones 2012, p.78), and help to create a virtual classroom (VC), a "learning environment that exists solely in the form of digital content that is stored, accessed, and exchanged through networked computer and information systems" (Huijser & Sankey 2011, p.283).

Moodle is very popular and resourceful as it is ideal for blended courses thanks to its "template-based, user friendly nature, multimedia support, student progress tracking and feedback options" (Şahin-Kızıl, 2014, p.177). Teachers have access to a battery of module such as *Lesson module, Quiz Module, Glossary Module, Forum Module, Assignment Module, and Gradebook Module.* Moodle has several advantages. Şahin-Kızıl (2014) conducted a study on blended learning involving Moodle in an English course for Turkish engineering students, and the findings suggested that it enabled the learners to have more control of their learning, enhanced their language learning experience, improved their grammar and vocabulary, and enabled the teacher to provide timely feedback on students' learning via Moodle. Şahin-Kızıl also reported that, through Moodle, writing was the skill that improved the most thanks to collaborative writing activities that occurred through the forum

module. On the whole, Moodle is an LMS that has a good potential for language courses particularly in EFL. It gives the instructors the appropriate tools to build an effective learning environment.

1.1.4.3. Word Processing

Word processing has been used in language teaching, and more particularly in ELT, since the 1980's. Montague (1990) reported that, in 1985, the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Instructional Technology acknowledged the importance of computer in teaching the writing process. Montague explained that before 1985, most word processing software were majorly concerned with the mechanical aspects of writing such as editing and revision. However, the development of word processing applications at that time started to take into account "the cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in composition by helping writers think about, generate, develop, and evaluate ideas" (Montague, 1990, p.39), and, consequently, this had an impact on the teaching of writing.

Since the mid-1980's and onward, computers started to change the principles of teaching writing, and a new rationale was developed in favor of word processing as an effective tool to assist the instructor in developing the writing skills of the learners, and this rationale perfectly fitted within the process-oriented approach paradigm. Montague (1990, p.17) argues that "the combination of writing process … which emphasizes the recursive nature of the writing experience, and word processing, which allows the writer to engage in the recursive process and plan and revise while writing, makes the student's writing experience more like that of a real writer".

Word processing can assist student writers to cope with the challenges of the writing process. Because of the recursive nature of writing, "the computer as a writing tool can facilitate the interactive and dynamic nature of the writing process"

(Montague, 1990, p.20). Word processing can particularly help with the revising and editing phases of writing. Daiute (as cited in Montague 1990) suggested that, for successful writing instruction, it is primordial to consider writing as a cognitive process, a social process, and a physical process. This way, by using word processing to 'take care' of the grammatical and organizational problems in students' writing, more focus will be given to the communicative aspect of writing. In the same vein, Rubin (as cited in Montague, 1990) argued that "by providing tools that facilitate writing and revising, and by creating communication environments that naturally encourage writing, computers may actually be able to offer new opportunities for learning by doing that are not available in noncomputer classrooms" (p. 22).

According to Montague (1990), word processors have many educational advantages: they are motivating, enable the learners to produce "legible copies" of their assignments, increase the quantity and quality of students' writing, and to save multiple drafts. Writing process software comes in many types, and Montague (1990) identified, inter alia, spelling and grammar checkers, software to check diction and style, and applications to assist students with the different stages of the writing process.

In more recent context, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) argued that both instructors and learners are able to use word processors creatively. They explained that "Teachers can prepare, create, store and share materials for their classes by using a word processing program, and learners can use a word processing program both inside and outside the classroom, to practise grammar and other language points" (p.15). Dudeney and Hockly (2007) added that, taking into account that, in the twenty-first century, most teachers and students are quite familiar with basic functions of word processors as well as creating, storing, and saving documents on computers or

other devices, teachers can integrate word processors into instruction inside or outside classroom, and that using word processors such as *Microsoft Word* and *OpenOffice* would be extremely beneficial for both teachers and learners. One particular function of Microsoft Word (which was used for the practical part of this study) is enabling the teacher to use TrackChanges. Dudeney and Hockly (2007) explained that, Microsoft Word has a certain tools called 'document tracking' or 'versioning' which enable users to share documents where any changes operated by the users are "highlighted in a different colour and identified by their initials (or by the user name used to install the word processor originally)" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p.19). Therefore, a document 'tracked' on Microsoft Word displays "any changes made by the second writer (format changes, word order, deletions, inserted comments, and so on) … for the original author to see" (Dudeney and Hockly, 2007, p.19). Figure 1.2 illustrates TrackChanges on Microsoft Word:

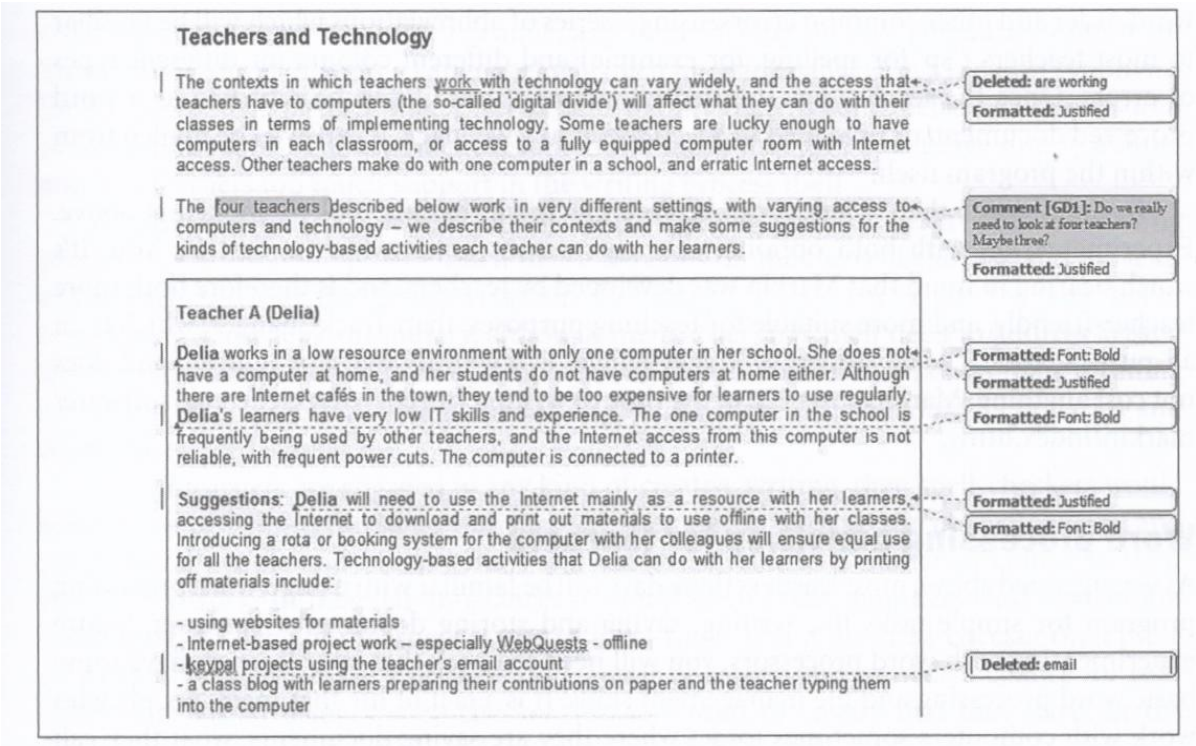


Figure 1.2. TrackChanges on Microsoft Word (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p.19)

1.2. Major Emerging Concepts in Modern Education

The rapid growth of ICTs has significantly impacted the modern society by leading to major changes particularly in the educational sector where the concepts of 'teacher', 'learner' and 'classroom' have come to embrace a new connotation because of the emergence of two major notions: the digital natives as opposed to the digital immigrants, and pedagogy 2.0.

1.2.1. Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants

A major concept that has emerged with the rapid development of digital media is the "digital natives" that was first introduced by Prensky in 2001. Also called "net generation", "Net-Geners," "Gen-Xers", "Millennials", "Generation C" (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008), "Z Generation" and many other appellations, these individuals were born after the 1980s and "grew up with the internet and have a strong familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies" (Spiliotopoulos, 2008, p.15). The digital natives evolve in a digitalized world where the computer, Internet, smart phones, digital camera, digital games and social networks are present everywhere and have been integrated in the digital natives' daily lives (Babo, Rodrigues, Lopes, Oliveira, Queirós , & Pinto, 2012)

Digital natives are described as multitaskers, technology savvy, and prone to use digital media in all aspects of their lives. Latchem and Jung (2010, p.208) explained that "Navigating websites, [digital natives] seek hyperlinks to reach cyber destinations rather than reading logically from the top of the screen. They download music from the Internet rather than buying CDs. They watch videos on smartphones or PCs rather than TVs and they use tools such as Facebook to access cyber meeting places". The concept of net generation transcends daily routine and has integrated the

educational sector. Digital natives are seen at universities and colleges swarming the campus with their smartphones communicating, creating, and sharing content with others on social media such as Facebook. Smartphones have become so rooted in their daily practices that, now, no teacher will deny that digital media have long invaded the classroom. With this 'digital invasion', teachers and educational institutions in general are being challenged by technology which has transformed the learning style of twenty-first century learners and which is "characterized by: preference for receiving information quickly and the ability to process it quickly, a bias towards multitasking and non linear access to information, a heavy reliance on ICTS for information access and communication active involvement" (Forment, Guerrero, & Poch, 2010, p.183).

With the emergence of the concept of digital natives, Prensky (2001) came out with another concept, the "digital immigrants", those who were born before the coming of digital media and who became acquainted with this technology as adults. Digital immigrants are those who teach the digital natives, that is the teachers, and the educational system they evolved was not designed for digital natives (Prensky, 2001). With this dichotomy of digital natives and digital immigrants, a "digital divide" has been created between teachers and learners, "threatening" the established norms (Millard, Howard, Gilbert, & Wills, 2010). Today's students feel the "need to interact with technology in order to maintain an interest in their environment" (Doolan, Mehigan, Tabirca, & Pitt, 2010, p.117), and mostly expect that technology will be part of their classroom. The question now is what to do? "Should this younger generation be made to learn in the old ways or do we need to reconsider our methods, uses of technology and content?" (Latchem & Jung, 2010, p.208). There is no straightforward answer to this question, but to follow the logic of Regueria and Rodriguez (2015), "In this context it makes no sense to use old teaching methods with new educational

materials and resources" (p.195). Besides, as today's students seem to learn differently from their predecessors, their teachers, and prefer "getting information quickly. They prefer graphics over texts, instant gratification, frequent rewards and work best online" (Regueria & Rodriguez, 2015, p.196). Therefore, it is necessary that teachers rethink pedagogy so it is 'tuned' with the learning style, needs and expectations of their students, the digital natives.

Major cautions should be observed concerning the digital natives. Though Prensky (2001) posited that they are good users of technology compared to the digital immigrants, this does not imply that the digital natives are technology experts. It also raises another issue about the tendency to generalize the digital natives' coinage to all learners of the twenty-first century. For instance, DeVoss, Eidman-Aadahl, and Hicks (2010) argued that considering today's learners as a homogenous group is a fallacy. They mentioned the example of Siva Vaidhyanathan, a media studies scholar who disclaimed the label "digital natives" explaining that through his teaching experience with young people at tertiary level, he observed important variations in how the so-called digital natives used digital technology. Vaidhyanathan warned educators about using umbrella terms which do not account for those learners who either have not access to digital technology or do not possess the necessary skills to use them (DeVoss et al. 2010). Another misconception that teachers have to be careful with is that "simple access to technology tools will not ensure that students learn to be effective, thoughtful, and ethical digital writers" (DeVoss et al. 2010, p.28). Moreover, today's learners may not be aware of the educational value of ICTs or may not be used to utilize technology for learning (Cerioli, Ribaudo, & Rui, 2012). McNaught, Lam and Ho (as cited in Cerioli et al., 2012) analysed the use of a wide range of digital technologies by today's learners, and concluded that "students are

indeed “digitally ready” but “there is no strong empirical evidence that students are committed to eLearning” (p.273).

As the world is rapidly changing and technology is becoming more and more rooted in the lives of today’s learners, “academic institutions will need to gear themselves to offering flexible learning programs through various technologies” taking into account that “the net generation’s thinking and expectations are shaped by their experiences as net citizens and participants then they will bring those expectations into the educational context where Web 2.0 which is geared around interaction” (Motteram & Brown, 2009, p.124). Therefore, educational institutions have to “integrate *appropriate* technologies” into existing education paradigm and that focus should not only be on the technology, skills and knowledge mandatory to implement technology-based instruction but also on “the skills and knowledge needed to support a blended learning environment that makes appropriate and targeted use of technologies that support the overall learning goals” (Olney, Herrington & Verenikina, 2009, p.48).

1.2.2. Pedagogy 2.0

The expansion of Web 2.0 and Web 2.0 tools and applications in today’s society has generated much change in the way society members communicate, create, and share information. As such, “the expanding lexicon of Web 2.0 applications (podcasts, web logs, wikis, mashups, etc.) signal changes in the learning landscape, where learners are active participants, creators of knowledge, and seekers of engaging, personal experiences” (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008, p.10). The evolution of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has therefore shifted the role of users from consumers to producers, thus creating a new type of Web users “prosumers” amongst which learners. These changes then urged the need to adopt a new type of pedagogy that McLoughlin and

Lee (as cited in LeNoue & Stammen, 2011, p.215) called *Pedagogy 2.0* and which takes advantage of technology media in their various forms.

Pedagogy 2.0 is defined as an interplay of approaches and strategies "that differs from teaching as a didactic practice of passing on information; instead, it advocates a model of learning in which students are empowered to participate, communicate, and create knowledge, exercising a high level of agency and control over the entire learning process" (Lee & McLoughlin, 2010, p.390-391). Pedagogy 2.0 represents a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses *content* which increases thinking and cognition, *curriculum* that should be dynamic, open to negotiation and mixing formal and informal learning, *communicati*on from peer-to-peer and supported by various digital media, *learning processes* that are situated, dynamic and inquiry-based, *resource*s, *scaffolds* supported by peers, teachers, and communities, and learning tasks that are authentic, personalized, learner-driven (McLoughlin & Lee as cited in LeNoue & Stammen, 2011, p.215-216).

Pedagogy 2.0 revolves around the principles of social constructivism, connectivism, and learner-centeredness. It seeks to develop the learners' "self-determination" by accounting for their motivation, abilities, and need for flexibility. Learner-centeredness is at the core of pedagogy 2.0 as today's learners, the "net generation", are "forcing a change in the model of pedagogy, from a teacher-focused approach based on instruction to a student-focused model based on collaboration" (Tapscott as cited in LeNoue & Stammen, 2011, p.216). The "net generation" or the "digital natives" are viewed to pertain to a "culture of self" and expect that, in education, pedagogy will cater for their personal wants and needs, and also seek autonomy and connectivity in learning for a better control of their learning environment (LeNoue & Stammen, 2011).

There is a rising need for adopting pedagogy 2.0 because, as Bonk (as cited in LeNoue & Stammen, 2001, p.217) argued, "the learning clientele is becoming more and more diverse each day…. This diversification stems from many factors, including increased access to learning, lifelong learning pursuits, recertification needs, immigration, longer life spans, better course marketing, and so on". Moreover, because of the persistent global challenges, Saavedra and Opfer (as cited in Scott, 2015) claimed that today's learners have to sharpen their skills and improve their learning strategies to acquire the necessary twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking, the ability to communicate effectively, innovating and solving problems through negotiation and collaboration. Therefore, it is vital that educators have to rethink current pedagogy to accommodate the rapid changes and challenges of modern societies, and to achieve that higher-order thinking skills have to be harnessed to meaningful and active learning. Scott (2015, p.2) criticized the traditional instructional approach for generating "indifference, apathy and for most learners, boredom" and considered it as "highly ineffective for teaching twenty-first century skills". Scott suggested that research provided examples of some types of pedagogy that appear to be more successful developing the students' understanding of the twenty-first century skills.

The final word is that, educators are forced to go with the stream of pedagogy 2.0, particularly in higher education, and accept the forcing change of the current university into *university 2.0* as Kulakli and Mahony (2014) coined it. It is highly probable that no escape from the shift to pedagogy 2.0 is possible, for "internet is becoming the dominant infrastructure for knowledge exchange among people and new generations of students …[who] require new forms of learning platforms and

communication channels while they already use them in their social life" (Kulakli & Mahony, 2014, p.650-651).

1.3. Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Since the emergence of computers in the last decades, a keen interest has grown to use them for language learning and teaching, but it is until the appearance of the first personal computers in the 1980's that they really brought with them promises for language learning and teaching, and very recently more possibilities with the widespread of Internet and digital media. The pedagogy based on computers has come to be known as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

1.3.1. Definition and History of Computer-Assisted Language Learning

Basically, CALL means "using computers to support language teaching and learning in some way" (Egbert, 2005, p.3). It can also mean "s*oftware tools* designed to promote language learning", "a *field* that covers the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning", and "optimal, technology-enhanced *language teaching and learning environments;* that is, language and content settings in which technology was used as effectively as possible to support learning" (Egbert, 2005, p.3). Chapelle (2010) referred to it as "a variety of technology uses for language learning including CD-ROMs containing interactive multimedia and other language exercises, electronic reference materials such as online dictionaries and grammar checkers, and electronic communication in the target language through email, blogs, and wikis" (p.66). Other terms are used to refer to CALL: *Computer Assisted Instruction* (CAI), which is the oldest label of CALL, *Computer-Based Instruction* (CBI), *Computer-Assisted Language Teaching* (CALT), *Computer-Assisted Language Testing* (CALT), *Computer-Enhance Language*

Learning (CELL), *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning* (TELL), *Computer-Based Language Testing* (CBLT) (Egbert, 2005; Yang, 2010), and many more. As Yang (2010) suggested, the label CALL will be used in this section for "the sake of brevity and convenience" include the abovementioned terms as well as *e-learning.*

A rich literature exists on the history of CALL, and it appears that CALL history has witnessed three major phases: behavioristic or structural CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL, and each phase ascribes to a certain level of technology as well as a certain pedagogical approach (Warschauer, 1998).

Behavioristic or structural CALL was developed in the 1950's and was implemented in the 1960's and 1970's; it is regarded as a sub-component of the extensive field of computer-assisted instruction (CAI). Based on the behaviorist learning model, this type of CALL promoted repetitive language drills which were called drill-and-practice (or, pejoratively, as "drill-and-kill") (Warschauer, 1998). In this model that was particularly prevalent in the United States, the computer was regarded as "a mechanical tutor which never grew tired or judgmental and allowed students to work at an individual pace" (Warschauer, 1998, p.57). Even if structural CALL progressed in the long run to the personal computer, it was originally designed and implemented in the time of the mainframe. Warschauer (1998) explained that "The best-known tutorial system, PLATO, ran on its own special hardware consisting of a central computer and terminals and featured extensive drills, grammatical explanations, and translation tests at various intervals" (p.57).

The second phase of CALL emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's and corresponds to the communicative stage, which emerged because of the rejection of the behavioristic approaches to language teaching at both the theoretical and pedagogical level and because of the advent of the personal computer that offered new

and considerable possibilities for individual work (Warschauer, 1998). Advocates of communicative CALL underscored that computer-based activities had to center on using forms rather than merely analyzing the forms themselves, teach grammar inductively, "allow and encourage students to generate genuine utterances rather than just manipulate prefabricated language, and use the target language predominantly or even exclusively" (Warschauer, 1998, p.57). Popular CALL software conceived in the communicative stage of CALL involved "text reconstruction programs (which allowed students working alone or in groups to rearrange words and texts to discover patterns of language and meaning) and simulations (which stimulated discussion and discovery among students working in pairs or groups)" (Warschauer, 1998, p.57).

Although communicative CALL was regarded as an innovation compared to behavioristic CALL, it was heavily criticized by the late 1980s and early 1990's for its improvised and incoherent use of computers that isolated the learning process by strictly treating it from a pure cognitive view (Warschauer, 1998). Therefore, a shift was undertaken in language use in authentic social contexts and which was promoted by approaches such as Task-based, project-based, and content based approaches which aimed at integrating the language skills and language skills learning in more authentic contexts. This view led to the emergence of integrative CALL which aimed at integrating various skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as well as technology entirely into the language learning process (Warschauer, 1998). Table 1.1. best summarizes the three phases of CALL:

Stage	1970s-1980s: Structural/ behavioristic CALL	1980s-1990s: Communicative CALL	21st Century: Integrative CALL
Technology	Mainframe	PCs	Multimedia and Internet
English-Teaching Paradigm	Grammar-Translation & Audio-Lingual	Communicative Language Teaching	Content-Based, ESP/EAP
View of Language	Structural (a formal structural system)	Cognitive (a mentally-constructed system)	Socio-cognitive (developed in social interaction)
Principal Use of Computers	Drill and Practice	Communicative Exercises	Authentic Discourse
Principal Objective	Accuracy	And Fluency	And Agency

Table 1.1. Summary of the Three Phases of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (Yang, 2010, p.909)

1.3.2. Types of Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CALL and computer technology in general have been influenced by three theoretical movements: structural, cognitive, and socio-cognitive (Yang, 2010). The following section will describe the type of CALL programs that were used in each approach.

The first CALL programs consisted of grammar and vocabulary tutorials, drill and practice programs, and language testing instruments that were used within a computer-as-tutor model (Yang, 2010). These programs were developed to offer immediate positive or negative feedback to learners on the formal accuracy of their responses, and were designed in the fashion of the structuralist approach which stressed that repetition of drills was vital for language learning.

The other types of CALL programs were designed on the cognitive/constructivist principles of language learning "where learners construct new knowledge through exploration of "microworlds", which provide opportunities for problem-solving and hypothesis-testing, allowing learners to utilize their existing knowledge to develop new understandings" (Yang, 2010, p.911). In the cognitive view, computers were

considered “things to be controlled” rather than things that controlled learners. Yang (2010) explained that the computer supplied tools and resources that learners had to use to carry out a task in a simulated environment, and he provided the example of Papert's Turtle Logo program where learners program a turtle to carry out their instructions.

The third type of CALL programs falls within the socio-cognitive approach to CALL. This approach “moves from learners’ interaction with computers to interaction with other humans via the computer” (Yang, 2010, p.909). The socio-cognitive approach to CALL emphasizes meaningful interaction in authentic discourse communities, and thanks to the development of computer networking, the computer was regarded as a vehicle for interactive human communication. Computers, then, were used to access and organize information through databases, spreadsheets, and word processors, for instance (Yang, 2010). As it was explained in a previous section, word processors were used for instance to assist learners in the stages of the writing process.

Another categorization of CALL programs was suggested by Wyatt (as cited in Burston, 1993, p.47-49) and which includes: instructional, collaborative, and facilitative. Instructional CALL programs intend to teach specific linguistic subsystems such as vocabulary morphology, and grammar and are considered the most familiar form of CALL. Collaborative Call programs aim at eliciting “foreign language usage as part of some goal-directed activity”. Wyatt suggested adventure games and role-play simulations as the best known examples of collaborative CALL. The third category, facilitative CALL programs, shares some aspects of the two previous types of CALL: “they have an intrinsic linguistic focus” and are “inherently goal oriented”. The difference with facilitative CALL is that they “exploit existing

software tools (such as e-mail, database retrieval) as an aid in language usage" (Burston, 1993, p.48), but word processing is the most used software in facilitative CALL as it can be used at various levels. For instance, at the beginners' level, word processing can be applied for the linguistic aspect. Short texts can be for vocabulary expansion (e.g. synonyms, antonyms) and grammatical transformations: singular/ plural, positive/negative, declarative/interrogative, active/passive, etc. At an intermediate level, word processing can be used to develop the writing skills such as drafting and editing (Burston, 1993).

1.3.3. Modern CALL

With the evolution of ICTs, CALL too has evolved. Yang (2010) explains that, three types of CALL models exist: computer supported classroom teaching, hybrid teaching (also called blended learning), and completely online course or e-learning. Modern technology then not only has integrated learning and teaching models but also has shaped them (Yang, 2010). Technology has created more possibilities for language learning and teaching, particularly with Internet and the Web.

The Internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) have transformed the role of computers for language learning at the end of the 20th century from a tool of information processing to a tool of communication (Warschauer, 1998). It became possible for language learners to communicate with other learners or speakers of the target language both synchronously and asynchronously. Synchronous or "real-time" communication can be achieved either using special software programs for local area networks, such as *Daedalus Interchange* by Daedalus Inc. or via the Internet, using a wide range of chat media. Warschauer (1998) reported that "computer-assisted discussion over local area networks has been especially popular in the United States,

in foreign language, ESL, and English composition classes" (p.64). Warschauer (1998) further explained that research on the use of computer-assisted discussion for language teaching has focused on the questions of participation, language use, and writing improvement, and results of various studies suggested that "computer-assisted discussion… is dramatically more balanced than face-to-face discussion, … with far less domination either by the teacher or by particularly vocal students" (Warschauer, 1998, p.64). The studies also showed that the language used in computer-assisted discussion tended to be more "lexically and syntactically complex than in face-to face discussion", and this is explained by the fact that "the written nature of computer-mediated communication, … allows more planning time than oral communication and adopts more written syntactical features" (Warschauer, 1998, p.64). On the other hand, asynchronous discussions (with a delayed message system such as electronic mail), have been used for various purposes in second language learning and teaching, particularly for university writing classes (Warschauer, 1998). In addition to the Internet, the World Wide Web has provided the learners with many advantages such as "access to an unprecedented amount of authentic target-language information, as well as possibilities to publish and distribute their own multimedia information for an international audience" (Warschauer, 1998, p.65).

On the whole, many studies reported that CALL has many advantages compared to traditional teaching and learning. Liu (2013) suggested that CALL provides motivation and autonomy for learners, flexible learning, immediate and detailed feedback, reducing anxiety, and enhances student involvement and participation.

With all what has been said so far, CALL appears to have much to offer for language teachers. Yet, Yang (2010) recommends that, if instructors have to adopt

modern CALL, they must master some basic conceptions and skills. As modern pedagogy sees the teachers as facilitators, this implies that they must be more that 'knowledge givers'. They must be "aware of a variety of material available for improving students' language skill … need to know how to teach learners to use the material effectively … have to be able to respond to the needs that students have, not just what has been set up ahead of time based on a curriculum developer's idea of who will be in the classroom" (Yang, 2010, 912). Some of the basic skills suggested by Yan (2010) include: word operating and editing, electronic communication, simple internet front-page making, web resources searching, reorganizing and reusing, e-exercising and e-testing.

Conclusion

Educational technology has always been one of the major aspects in the development of education, particularly in the 20th Century. The appearance of the first personal computer in the 1980's offered new perspectives for both the learners and the teachers, thus introducing education in a new era. However, it is with the rapid evolution of Web 2.0 technologies and Information and Communication Technologies that education has been inevitably involved in a transformational process which is taking place all over the world. Therefore, the educational sector, particularly in higher education, has dramatically changed not only in the way instruction is delivered but also in the way learners and teachers interact with each other. Indeed, these new technologies have significantly transformed the concepts of learning and teaching.

Chapter Two: Learning/Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language Composition in Higher Education in the Digital Age

Introduction

Since the late 1960's, the writing skill has regained its place in the second/foreign language classroom. Much research, then, has been undertaken on the nature and the processes that make up this skill. Unlike speaking, writing was investigated to be a more complex task linguistically, cognitively, psychologically and culturally. Hence, many approaches and methods to teach writing succeeded and/or overlapped each other over more than thirty years, and the major approaches to writing appear to be the Product Approach, the Process Approach, and the Genre Approach, each bringing its advantages and challenges. However, with the rapid growth of ICTs, and ICTs for education in particular, it appears that important changes have occurred in language learning and teaching. With the emergence of concepts such as digital natives and pedagogy 2.0, it appears that Product, Process, and Genre approaches, or the combination of the three are no more sufficient to appropriately teach EFL learners particularly in an Algerian context.

2.1. The Complexity of the Writing Skill

Writing is one of the most important skills in English Language Teaching since the learners' academic success is highly dependent on their good command of this skill. Yet, writing is characterized by its complexity which is generated by the several dimensions and the language context where it occurs.

2.1.1. The Dimensions of Writing

Writing has always been regarded as a vital skill since it represents not only the key to academic success but also to professional achievement. Since it has gained special attention in the last decades of the twentieth century, writing has come to be viewed from various perspectives. Linse (2005) explained that "because writing is

multifaceted, it is only logical that it evokes different images" (p.98). This suggests that, when looking for definitions of writing in the literature, one should not be surprised to find varying descriptions as some researchers view writing as a cognitive process, others as a social act, and some others as the combination of various elements. For example, Flower and Hayes (1980) saw writing as "a problem-solving, cognitive process" (p.22). Odell and Cooper (1980) considered writing as "the ability to address diverse audiences in order to accomplish diverse purposes" (p.40), whereas Taylor (1981) viewed it as "a creative discovery procedure characterized by the dynamic interplay of content and language: the use of language to explore beyond the known content" (p.6). Some other researchers, such as Rose (1983)**,** defined writing in more restricted contexts like in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and described it as "the complex ability to write from other texts-to summarize, to disambiguate key notions and useful facts and incorporate them in one's own writing, to react critically to prose" (p.119). From a rhetorical perspective, Silva (1990, p.14**)** depicted the concept of writing as "a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. Learning to write, then, involves becoming skilled in identifying, internalizing, and executing these patterns". At the beginning of the twenty-first century, conceptualization of writing started to change with the evolution of pedagogy of composition into approaches that are more learner-centered, and accordingly, writing has come to be considered as a "communicative social act" (Reid, 2001, p.29).

Some researchers provided multi-component descriptions of writing such as Jalilifar (2008) who argued that writing entails both the process of writing and its product. He also explained that writing is an act which is bound by audience and text genre, and more importantly, it is highly influenced by aspects such as language

proficiency, cultural differences, and rhetorical issues. With a more detailed description, Westwood (2008) considered writing as "complex thinking that must integrate multiple components including the topic or theme, choice of words, organisation, purpose, audience, clarity, sequence, cohesion and transcription" (p.56). He further went into his description stating that "competence in writing in different genres and for different purposes relies heavily on possession of adequate vocabulary, knowledge of syntactical structures, and appropriate strategies for planning, composing, reviewing and revising written language" (Westwood, 2008, p.56-57).

The aforementioned conceptualizations of writing already provide noticeable clues on the complexity of writing. Writing is indeed a multifaceted process that entails not only the act of writing itself but also its cognitive, rhetorical, social and cultural dimensions which all contribute to its complexity. Cognitively speaking, writing is viewed as a demanding task because of the mental workload it imposes on the writer. In her work "Cognitive and Linguistic Factors in Writing Development", Drijbooms (2016) provided a good description of the different aspects related to writing. She viewed writing as "a complex activity involving the orchestration of a variety of processes" (p.11), and explained that, to underscore the various procedures that underlie a writer's composing process, referring to models of writing helps to understand its complexity. One of the most prominent models of writing on which Drijbooms based her description of the cognitive dimension of writing is the model of Hayes and Flower (1980), a model which still remains a valid reference. Hayes and Flower (1980) partitioned their model into the task's environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing process in which they identified three subprocesses of the composing process and their organization (Figure 2.1.).

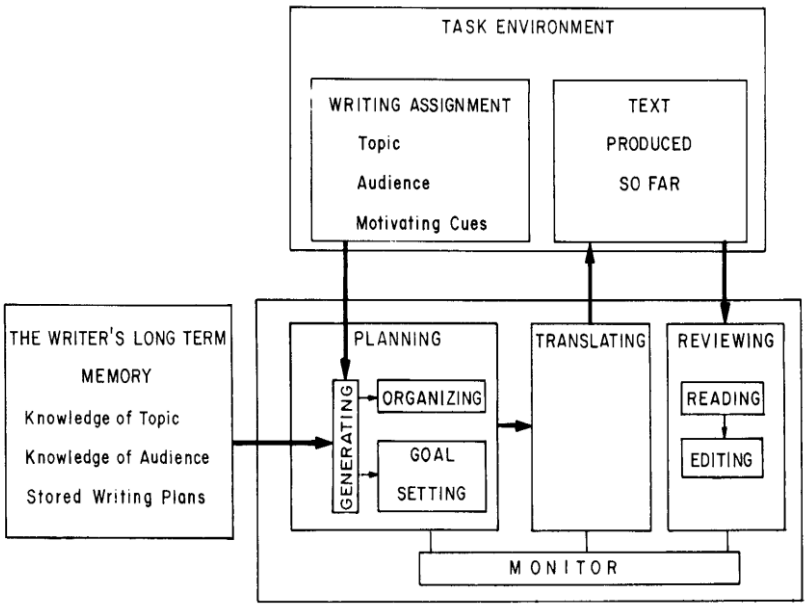


Figure 2.1. Hayes and Flower's (1980) Model of Writing (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.11)

Hayes and Flower (1980) explained that the task's environment refers to anything that can influence the task performance involving the writing assignment, the audience, and the writer's motivation. The writer's long-term memory involves knowledge of a variety of topics, audiences, and writing plans. The writing process consists of three other processes: planning, translating, and reviewing. Planning is a subprocess where information is retrieved from the task environment and the long-term memory, and which will be used "to set goals ad to establish a writing plan to guide the production of a text that will meet those goals" (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.12). To put it differently, planning consists of three subprocesses: *generating* (Figure 2.2.), *organizing* (Figure 2.3.), and *goal-setting*.

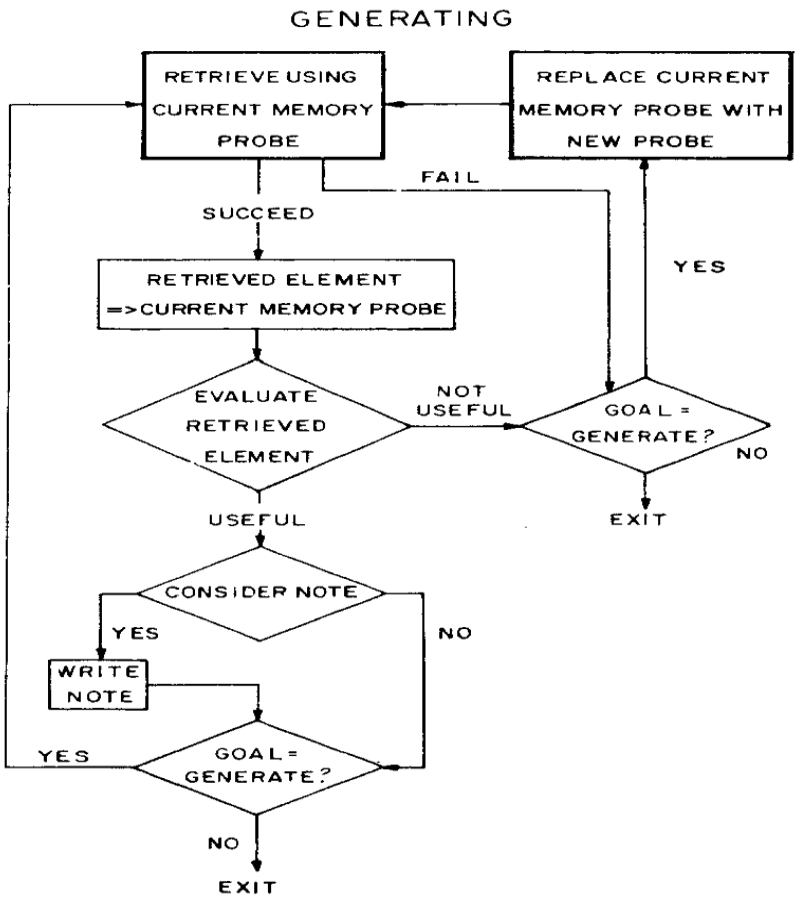


Figure 2.2. The Generating Process in Planning (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.13)

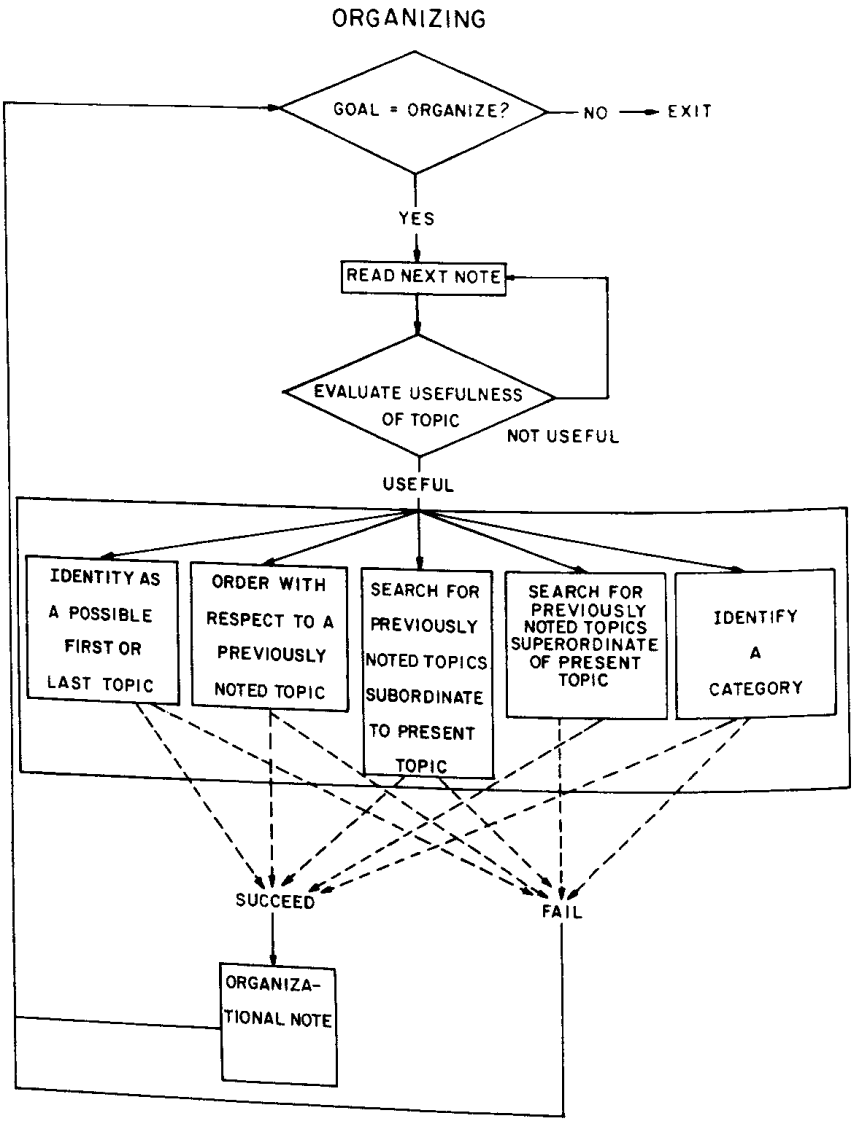


Figure 2.3. The Organising Process in Planning (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.14)

Translating is the second process of the writing process, and it involves linguistic transformation of ideas that were retrieved from the long-term memory and forged in the planning process into grammatically acceptable sentences as it is illustrated in Figure 2.4.:

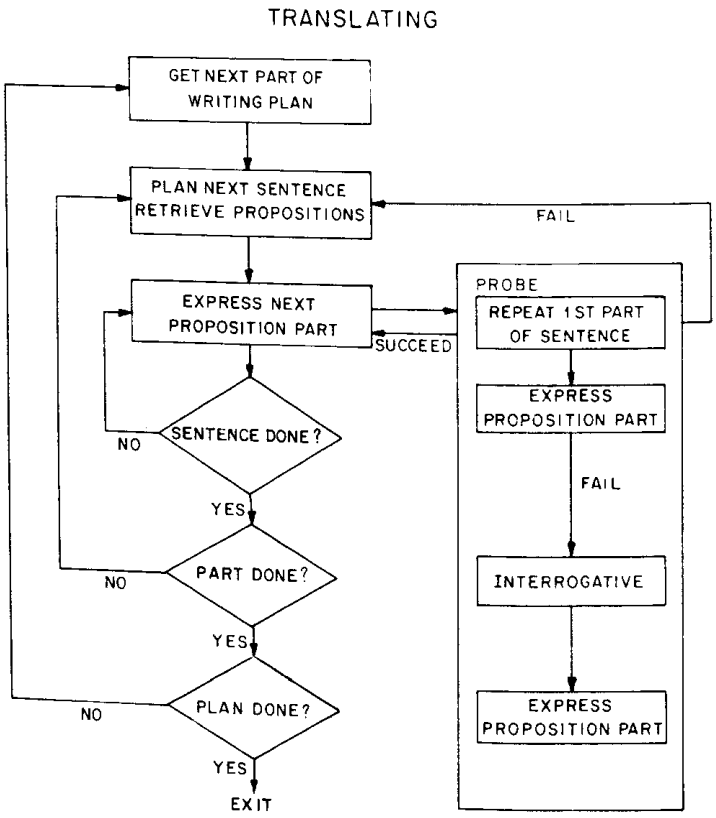


Figure 2.4. The Translating Process in Hayes & Flower's Model (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.16)

The last subprocess of the writing process is reviewing (Figure 2.5.) which involves the writer into reading and editing the written text in search of inconsistencies of "writing convention", "inaccuracies of meaning", and evaluation of correspondence with the goals set in the planning process (Hayes & Flower, 1980).

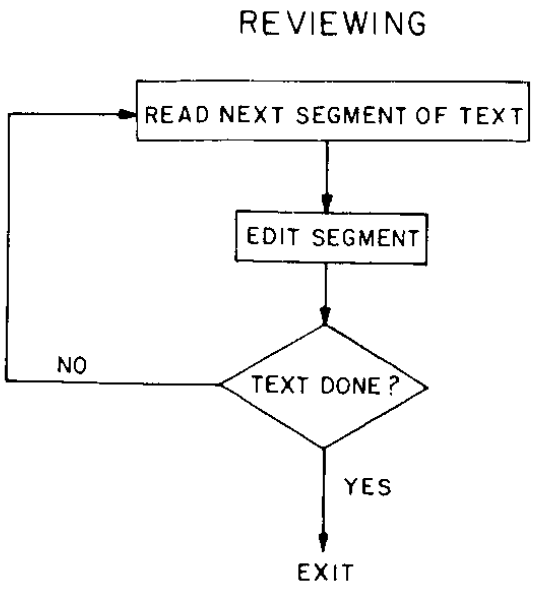


Figure 2.5. The Reviewing Process in Hayes & Flower's Model (Hayes & Flower, 1980, p.17)

Drijbooms (2016) highlighted that the three subprocesses of the writing process do not operate in *"strata mode"* but rather are "recursive operations that occur in complex patterns throughout written composition" (p.12), a vision that can only provide more insights about the complexity of writing. Other researchers such as Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggested a complex model for writing that involves two approaches: knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming. Knowledge-telling is an approach that novice writers follow when writing, and it is "a model of how discourse production can go on using only these sources of cues for content retrieval−topic, discourse schema, and text already produced" (p.7); in other terms, novice or immature writers produce a "stream-of –consciousness" form of writing that is missing organization, and they simply "convert the writing task into telling what they know about the topic" (Graham, Harris & Olinghouse, 2007, p.218). Knowledge transforming, on the other hand, is "a process … in which the thoughts come into existence through the composing process itself, beginning as inchoate entities

("driblets") and gradually, by dint of much rethinking, taking the form of fully developed thoughts" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p.10). In other words, knowledge-transforming is a strategy used by skilled writers who have moved beyond knowledge-telling by considering their writing from a more elaborate perspective whereby they examine their ideas in relation to some goals and to the audience, and rework their written texts both pragmatically and rhetorically (Drijbooms, 2016).

The model of writing suggested by Hayes and Flower (1980) was later revised by Berninger and Swanson (1994), Berninger and Amtmann (2003), and Berninger and Winn (2006) as credited by Drijbooms (2016); however, the most interesting revision concerns the model of Berninger and Winn, *The Not So Simple View of Writing*, and which involves three important processes, transcription, text generation, and executive functions, which are networked in the working memory as illustrated in Figure 2.6.:

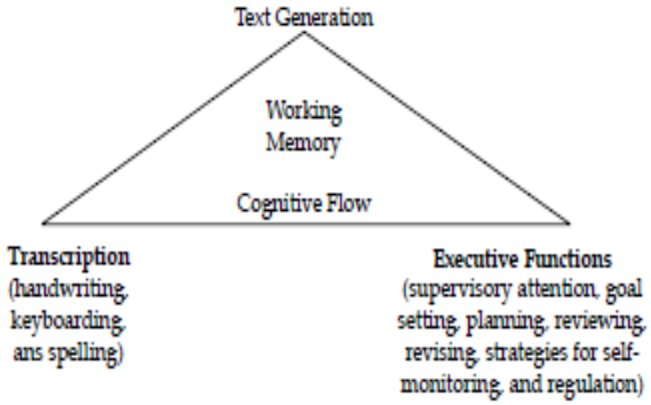


Figure 2.6. Berninger and Winn's (2006) *The Not So Simple View of Writing* Model (Drijbooms, 2016, p.13)

Working memory refers to "the system or systems that are assumed to be necessary in order to keep things in mind while performing complex tasks such as reasoning, comprehension and learning" (Baddeley, 2010, p.136). Executive Functioning

> involves the conscious, purposeful, and thoughtful activation, orchestration, monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of strategic resources, knowledge, skills, and motivational states to achieve a desired goal. This involves analysis (e.g., sizing up the demands of the situation), decision making and planning (e.g., selecting or devising a plan of action), attentional control (focusing and maintaining attention as well as inhibiting interfering behaviors), coordination of cognitive resources, and flexible application (e.g., adjusting plans and goals to meet changing situations). (Graham et al., 2007, p.217)

By adding the concept of working memory and executive functions to explain the cognitive dimension of writing, one can realize how writing is a mentally demanding and complex task. Writing exerts on the writer such mental workload that it was found to critically influence the writer's performance. In their study on classifying the mental workload levels during writing process via examination of online writing features, Yu, Epps, and Chen (2013) argued that mental workload, which is "the load on the finite amount of working memory when people are processing information for a task", represents "an important factor during writing, [and] may affect the writing efficiency and user experience" (p.1). Yu et al. further explained that, as a consequence of the restricted amount of cognitive assets, the writing process overworks the working memory. They added that because writing is cognitively demanding, this results in a high mental workload which in turn lowers the writer's experience as well affects her/his performance.

As it was earlier mentioned, writing not only involves mental aspects but also rhetorical, social, and cultural dimensions. Since the present study focuses on writing in higher education, description of the abovementioned dimensions will be undertaken from an academic view. Academically speaking, writing is defined as "the language

used by the educated and is needed to function at the university level and beyond" (Uribe, 2008, para.2), and it involves "multiple complex features of English required for long-term success in public schools, completion of higher education, and employment with opportunity for professional advancement and financial rewards" (Rumberger & Scarcella, 2000, p. 1). Writing is an elaborate task since it is the sum of various elements: linguistic, rhetorical, psychological, social, and cultural. Academic writing has to be accurate and well organized, goal-oriented, destined to a specific audience, and has also to respect social and cultural conventions. Fairly anyone can learn to speak a second or foreign language outside colleges and universities, but not everyone can become a proficient academic writer. For this reason, writing has to be taught, which is not the case for speaking. For Harmer (2007), writing is taught for two main reasons: writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing. Writing-for-learning is utilized as an "aide-mémoire", as Harmer called it, and is used to reinforce the language learners have studied, particularly for learners whose learning style is a combination of visual and kinaesthetic. Additionally, writing can be employed as a preparatory activity for other tasks, and in this case, it is called "an enabling activity" (Harmer, 2007, p.112). Concerning writing-for-writing, this involves teaching writing as a skill and making the students become proficient writers of different types of texts, some of which are used in real such as emails and letters. Therefore, writing-for-writing implicates teaching the students "language use, … text construction, layout, style and effectiveness" (Harmer, 2007, p.112). Writing as a skill is composed of other sub-skills; these were identified by Palmer (as cited in Keshta and Harb, 2013) as follows: *graphical or visual skills* which concern, for instance, spelling and text format; *grammatical skills*, which involve the learners' effective use of sentence structures; *expressive or stylistic skills*, which concern the students' capacity to

communicate meaning according to a variety of styles; *rhetorical skills*, which were subsequently divided into invention, arrangement, diction, memory, and delivery; and *organizational skills*, which have to do with the students' ability to organize ideas into paragraphs and essays logically and germanely.

To explain the other dimensions of academic writing, a classification of dimensions of knowledge related to academic English elaborated by Uribe (2008) will be referred to. Uribe identified three major dimensions: linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological. Since the cognitive dimension has already been described in a previous section, the two other dimensions will be focused on in the present one. For Uribe (2008), the linguistic dimension of academic English involves five areas: phonological, lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistics, and discourse. Except for the phonological area, all the other components can be applied to academic English. Uribe (2008) described the lexical area as the "knowledge of the ways academic words are formed with prefixes, roots, and suffixes, the parts of speech of academic words, and the grammatical constraints governing academic words" (p.3). The grammatical area represents "knowledge that enables EL´s to make sense out of and use the grammatical features (morphological and syntactic) associated with argumentative composition, procedural description, analysis, definition, procedural description, and analysis" (Uribe, 2008, p.3). It also involves "knowledge of the grammatical co-occurrence restrictions governing words; Knowledge of grammatical metaphor; Knowledge of more complex rules of punctuation" (p.4). In his classification, Uribe (2008) considered the sociolinguistic area as "knowledge of an increased number of language functions" (p.4). Those functions pertain to both non-academic contexts where English is used including, for instance, apologizing and making requests, and to academic contexts where a variety of genres are emphasized such as in expository and

argumentative. The discourse area, as Uribe suggested, has more to do with "knowledge of the discourse features used in specific academic genres including such devices as transitions and other organizational signals … [which] help EL´s develop their theses and provide smooth transitions between ideas [in writing]." The second dimension of academic English that can be applied to academic writing is sociocultural/psychological dimension. Uribe (2008) explained that this dimension involves "social and cultural norms, beliefs, values, attitudes, motivations, interests, behaviors, practices, and habits ... They grow, take shape, and change in the larger social context where academic English happens" (p.4).

2.1.2. Importance of the Writing Skill in an English as a Foreign Language Context

The ability to communicate through the written medium is considered a crucial aptitude for learners, not only academically but also professionally. All over the world, universities have adopted new policies to train students so they can graduate with reliable and satisfactory competencies (Sulisworo, Rahayu, & Akhsan, 2016). In an EFL context, university students have to develop various skills and sub-skills both at the paragraph level and at the discourse level so they could be able to write different academic genres such as articles, reports, and so on **(**Ahmed, 2016). These skills will enable the students to realistically and efficiently communicate through writing in various contexts, particularly in the work field. As a skill, writing is essentially a productive task, and to competently develop this skill, EFL students have to acquire the appropriate thinking strategies, linguistic knowledge, proper knowledge of writing conventions, a good lexical repertoire as well as good command of the language grammar (Erkan & Saban, 2011). Added to that, because of the complexity of writing, student writers, particularly "unskilled writers especially in the early stages

of learning, require motivational, social, cognitive and cultural input before producing the final written product" (Challob, Abu Bakar, & Latif, 2016, p.229).

Writing is a task that requires time and considerable cognitive and linguistic efforts which vary from one writer to another. At university, the basic skill of writing is to produce meaningful sentences that will be the building blocks of a paragraph, which is the basis of essay writing. However, this is not sufficient as the students have to orderly arrange a chain of sentences so they can represent a meaningful piece of thought. This requires important cognitive efforts as the students have to balance the grammatical, lexical, and syntactical, and pragmatic elements of sentences. To be able to write an adequate academic essay, EFL students have to acquire other discourse writing skills in addition to the sentence writing skills, and these involve knowledge of cohesive devices, rhetorical features of academic genres, a clear thesis, appropriate support for the thesis, and awareness of the audience, without forgetting style and appropriate word choice. Consequently, acquiring the aforementioned skills and being able to concurrently apply them to produce academic discourse represents an overwhelming challenge not only for the EFL learners but also to their instructors.

Many factors contribute to make the development of academic skills a strenuous task for EFL learners, particularly learners whose L1 is Arabic. These factors are linguistic, rhetorical, psychological/affective, and cultural. Linguistic factors often represent the major part of the difficulties Arab students face when learning to write as they are caused by contrastive differences between Arabic and English. Poor vocabulary stock in English is the most common difficulty that EFL learners struggle with. Adas and Bakir (2013) argued that although many Arab speaking learners understand English, they face major difficulties in appropriately expressing their ideas as a result of lack of sufficient vocabulary repertoire as well as lack of creativity in

writing. This finding is corroborated by Abu Rass (2001), Al-Khasawnah (2010), Abdulkareem (2013), and Ibnian (2017). Another reason for poor vocabulary stock is related to lack of reading. In his study on the causes of Algerian writing deficiency at Djilali Liabes University, Sidi Bel Abbes, Bouchefra (2015) found that the population of his study showed a low rate of readership, and that the proportion of readers had to be even more reduced since regular readers tended to read in French or Arabic. Bouchefra made an observation concerning the amount of reading on a national scale and explained that low readership is a national problem in Algeria, which is quite alarming knowing that "reading is a vital input source for any EFL student, and its lack or absence has a devastating effect on students' academic pursuit" (Bouchefra, 2015, p.96). In addition to vocabulary problems, Arab speaking learners face major difficulties with the grammatical features of the FL (Ibnian, 2017). For instance, Hamzaoui Elachachi (2015) reported in her study that Arab speaking learners have serious problems with word order, auxiliaries, articles, pronouns, prepositions and genitive constructions.

Rhetorical factors also represent a major difficulty to Arab speaking learners. Hansen (2017) defined a rhetorical feature as "any characteristic of a text that helps convince readers of a certain point of view. Writers use a host of strategies to construct texts that are logically ordered, that establish their credibility and that appeal to their target audience" (para.1). Major rhetorical features, according to Hansen, are textual form and organization; word play that operates at the phrase and sentence levels and which include, for instance, parallelism and alliteration; and figurative language which comprises "figures of comparison (metaphor, simile and analogy), figures that describe something by its associations (metonymy and synecdoche) and figures of irony (verbal, situational and dramatic irony; sarcasm; hyperbole and

litotes)" (Hansen, 2017, para.5). In her study involving Algerian students, Hamzaoui Elachachi (2015) revealed that, even though the students were conscious of the major features of the structure of written discourse, that is introduction, body, and conclusion, the students were more inclined to use some features of Arabic such as coordination (which was favored over subordination), the use of repetition and metaphorical style, beginning with universal statements, and ending with some kinds of formulaic or proverbial statements. Therefore, subordination, conciseness, and direct style that characterize English writing are problematic to Arab speaking learners.

Psychological/affective factors are not without their share of problems for Arab speaking learners. The language learning process is seen to be highly affected by psychological/ affective factors as Krashen (1982) and Price (1991) argued. Krashen (1982) suggested the Affective Filter Hypothesis which explains the psychological and affective fluctuations that occur in language learning, and stressed that psychological/affective factors such as anxiety and motivation have a deep impact on L2 acquisition. The major psychological/affective factors that create challenges to Arab speaking learners (and EFL learners in general) in learning to write are writing anxiety, attitudes and beliefs towards writing, motivation, and incompatibility of students' learning styles with the instructor's teaching style and/or the instructional method. Writing anxiety, also called writing apprehension, is defined as "a general avoidance of writing and of situations perceived by the individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Hassan, 2001, p.4). Challob et al. (2016) viewed it as "negative perceptions towards writing" (p.229) and they argue that it causes poor writing performance. For Holloday (as cited in Hassan, 2001, p.4), the most probable causes of writing anxiety

are the neurolinguistic traits of language processing, poor skill development, inadequate role models, lack of an understanding of the composing process, and an authoritative, teacher-centered, product-based mode of teaching.

In addition to writing anxiety, attitudes and beliefs towards writing also create problematic situations for Arab speaking learners. Alluhaybi (2015) argued that learners' affective variables and attitudes significantly impact their writing. An attitude is defined by Graham, Berninger, and Fan (as cited in Alluhaybi, 2015, p.371) as "an affective disposition involving how the act of writing makes the author feel, ranging from happy to unhappy". Alluhaybi (2015) suggested that several studies, such as Faigley, Cherry, Joliffe, and Skinner (1985) and Burning and Horn (2000), proved that learners' attitudes and beliefs fundamentally affect their writing behavior. Other studies showed that learners' attitudes and beliefs and their writing performance affect each other. For example, Knudson (as cited in Alluhaybi, 2015) found out that learners with positive attitudes towards writing outperformed learners with negative views of writing. A study conducted by Kear, Coffman, Mckenna, and Ambrosio (2000) showed that a good writing performance generates positives attitudes and beliefs about writing. Another psychological/affective factor that affects Arab speaking learners' writing is motivation. Brown (2001) stressed the indisputable role of motivation in foreign language learning and that successful language learner is ensured by appropriate motivation. Highly motivated learners achieve more success that poorly motivated learners, as Gardner (as cited in Alajab & Hussain, 2015) put out, and when motivated learners have "reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, [expend] effort, persists in the activities, [attend] to the tasks, [show] desire to achieve the goal, [enjoy] the activities, etc." (Gardner as cited in Alajab & Hussain, 2015, p.134). Several studies were undertaken on the effects of motivation on Arab

speaking learners; for instance, a study conducted by Gupta and Woldemariam (2011 as cited in Alajab & Hussain 2015) on the influence of motivation and attitude on the writing strategy use of undergraduate EFL students showed that highly motivated participants exhibited significant degrees of enjoyment, confidence, perceived ability, and positive attitude towards efficient writing instruction as well as effective use of writing strategies. Another study on the impact of motivation on writing was undertaken by Jdeitawi, Noh, and Abdul Ghani (2012). The results of their study showed a significant positive correlation between motivation and writing.

The last factor that psychologically impacts the development of Arab students' writing skills is a mismatch between learners' learning styles and instructors' teaching styles. It is well-know that we all learn in different ways; some people acquire knowledge better when hearing it while others need visual aids to grasp information. In language learning, in general, students learn in various manners, and experienced teachers quietly know that students' learning styles are an important element in language learning. A learning style is defined as "the complex manner in which, and conditions under which, learners most effectively perceive, process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn" (James and Gardner as cited in Awla, 2014**,** p.241). A teaching style, on the other hand, is based on "[teachers'] educational philosophy, their classroom's demographic, what subject area (or areas) they teach, and the school's mission statement" (Quinonez, 2014, para.1). Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork (2008) stressed that "learning will be ineffective, or at least less efficient than it could be, if learners receive instruction that does not take account of their learning style" (p.108). In other terms, successful learning happens when there is a positive concurrence between students' learning styles and instructors' teaching styles. This is referred to as "the meshing hypothesis—the claim that presentation should

mesh with the learner's own proclivities" (Pashler et al., 2008, p.108). Conversely, a mismatch between a teacher's teaching style and a student's learning style may result in less effective learning as well as a low level of interest in the subject matter (Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015). Many studies where undertaken to confirm the meshing hypothesis such as a study by Al Khasawnah (2010) that was carried out in an EAP context. The results of the study showed that most of the writing weaknesses that Arab speaking learners experienced in learning to write in English were caused by the teaching method and the learning environment. Another study was undertaken by Naimie, Siraj, Piaw, Shagholi, and Ahmed Abuzaid (2010) on the influence of matching or mismatching learning and teaching styles on the achievement of learners. The findings Naimie et al.'s study showed that learners' achievement level was positively impacted by the compatibility of students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles.

In addition to the previous aspects, cultural factors are also reported to create challenges for Arab speaking learners. Learning a language not only entails learning its structure but also its culture. Hamzaoui Elachahchi (2015) stresses that "every language is rooted in the culture of its speaking community which makes learning a foreign language especially challenging if the culture of the native language and the target language are too distant" (p.129). Many studies in the Arab world focused on the cross-cultural differences between Arabic and English. Before going into further details, defining the term 'culture' is necessary. Barakat (as cited in Ahmad Shukri, 2014) described culture as (a) the entire or total way of life of people, including a shared social heritage, visions, of social reality, value orientations, beliefs, customs, norms, traditions, skills, and the like (b) artistic achievements; and (c) knowledge or thought and the sciences". Culture of the foreign language has become a salient aspect

in foreign language learning since, with globalization, English has become the dominant language in many sectors, particularly in education. Therefore, foreign language competency not only entails developing good linguistic skills but developing cultural and social understanding of the foreign language as well (Hamzaoui Elachachi, 2015). Ahmad Shukri (2014) reported two studies by Khuwaileh (1995) and Hussein and Mohammed (2012) on the impact of the L1 on the FL. These researchers found out that Arab speaking learners tend to translate their ideas from the L1 into the FL when composing, and this, in most cases, led to poor written productions. As explained by Hamzaoui Elachachi (2015), since writing is highly influenced by the culture of its speech community, variations in writing conventions exist in other speech communities. Therefore, cultural characteristics of the L1 may interfere in when Arab speaking learners write in the FL as those will apply L1 writing conventions that may be alien to FL writing, which in many instances causes difficulties in conveying ideas meaningfully and appropriately by generating "a tension between the apparent relationship of ideas to topic and the possibly inappropriate realisation of focus through intersentential syntax" (Kaplan as cited in Hamzaoui Elachachi, 2015, p.130). In addition to what was said, lack of knowledge about the cultural features of the FL negatively impact the perception of the English speaking countries about Arab speaking learners, for as asserted by Ahmed Shukri (2014), westerners view the Arab EFL students as "knowledge tellers who report information" rather than "knowledge transformers, who report information rather than knowledge transformers, who synthesize information into personal and critically meaningful concepts" (p.191). Another perception issued by Doushaq (as cited in Ahmed Shukri, 2014, p.191) about Arab EFL learners is that their difficulties in

coping with the writing process may come from the fact that FL writing requires these students “to think”, a perception that holds a negative connotation.

2.2. Limitations of the Traditional Teaching of Composition

In a general view, traditional teaching, often referred to as *teacher-centred transmission model or teacher-centred teaching (Johnson, 2016), is a an instructional model that is often contrasted to learner-centred teaching, and which relies* on a didactical model that combines “presentation of content by a teacher / trainer, interaction between teacher and students and among students, and follow up of content presentation and exercises (homework), to be done individually or in groups /pairs” (Trapp, 2006, p.28). A typical traditional language classroom involves an instructor teaching students who are supposed to ask questions based on the teacher’s presented content. The delivered content is meant for a group of learners rather than to individuals, and so, this strategy impedes the understanding and development of the individual student since the delivered content is designed for a group of students (Joseph, 2012). In other terms, this description of traditional teaching falls within the "one size fits all" teaching approach that assumes all students learn in the same ways (Mead, n.d.). Because of its pedagogical policy, traditional teaching has been criticized for several reasons. The major criticism concerns its teacher-centered feature. In traditional teaching, the instructor is primarily seen as a controller of the learning environment as well as an “information-giver”. Instructors in traditional teaching assign students a large amount of homework since the major portion of classroom time is devoted for content delivery and explanation. Consequently, with a large number of students in a classroom, assignments done outside the classroom are often either not properly evaluated or not considered at all, and so they have no positive impact on the students’ development (Mahini, Forushan & Haghani, 2012).

As it was earlier explained, because of its “one size fits all” approach, traditional learning does not pay attention to “individual's needs, talents, interests and differences” (Mahini et al. 2012, p.1615). Traditional teaching is often criticized for producing students that are “passive, dependent and less self-initiated to learn” (Geta & Olango, 2016, p.50). In a more strict view, traditional teaching is also seen to produce “irresponsible people” (Mahini et al., 2012), probably meaning here students who heavily rely on their instructor instead of being more self-regulated. In the context of writing, traditional teaching has many limitations. Traditional teaching fails to address learner differences. Rybushkina and Krasnova (2015) argued that the traditional learning environment regroups learners with different abilities, learning styles, and needs. This heterogeneity creates challenges to the teacher, and often, “rigid learning outcomes and strictly defined content of courses forces instructors to focus only on students of appropriate language levels, which further worsens the situation in the group” (Rybushkina & Krasnova, 2015, p.6888). This is applicable for writing instruction particularly in an EFL context. Speaking of learning outcomes, the traditional teaching of EFL writing is seen to lead to poor outcomes mainly due to absence of certain features in the instructional model such as appropriate and effective motivational strategies to help the learners cope with the challenges of certain topics used for writing practice (Liu, 2013). In addition to the previous reasons, traditional teaching of writing (and of the FL in general) fails to ensure “coordination between social & individual needs and what learners are taught; it cannot even prepare them for life in development society” (Mahini, et al., 2012, p.1615).

On the whole, traditional teaching of writing does not offer the teachers the appropriate conditions to develop the writing skills of EFL learners, particularly at university. Even with the adoption of an eclectic approach to teach writing that

combines, product, process and genre principles, there is still something missing in the overall equation. In her article, Strauss (2016) reported the experience of an American educator and said that: "[Lily Howard Scott] believes that the most meaningful learning occurs when teachers design or adapt curricula to meet the needs, strengths, and interests of their students. The current trend of standardized learning, she said, harms students and teachers alike" (para.2). Lily Howard Scott further described her frustration and disapproval of the "one size fits all" approach calling it a "disaster" making the learners lose the chance to access "tailored instruction" based on their social, emotional and academic needs as well as making the teachers miss the opportunity to express their talents (Strauss, 2016).

2.3. Composition in the Digital Age

It was explained in Chapter One that modern educational technology has significantly impacted the educational sector particularly ELT, and that within the current transformational process, writing has also been affected by ICTs, by new concepts such as "the digital natives", and with the emergence of technology-enhanced methods or approaches such as blended learning.

2.3.1. Information and Communication Technologies and Composition

The rapid development of the sector of information and communication technologies has revolutionized many fields, particularly education. Technology use has tremendously gown these last twenty years, and has come to be applied in different ways such as multimedia learning, online learning, web-based learning, ICT, computer-mediated communication (CMC), and technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) in the field of education particularly for language learning and teaching (Hiradhar, 2013). Concerning English language teaching, Chappelle (2003)

stressed that technology is changing this field, and suggests that English language teachers are the ones who should have legitimacy to address and develop the required language abilities of their students by considering innovative methods. With regard to the impact of technology on education, Akhtar and Asghar (2015) argued that "the approach and methodology in teaching have changed rapidly. It has become easier for the teachers to prepare their lectures using different tools of ICT and enabling the learning more effective for the students" (p.5). Akhtar and Asghar also highlighted the fact that, in English language teaching, information and communication technologies are more and more assuming an important role in the EFL classroom.

With regard to the teaching of writing, Hiradhar (2013) cited two authors who stressed the impact of ICTs on the learning and teaching of writing. Warschauer (as cited in Hiradhar, 2013) noted the significant effects of ICTs on written communication, and that these technologies are becoming a central means for writing. In reference to computers, Pennington (as cited in Hiradhar, 2013) viewed this technology as "a partner in creation and recreation of knowledge", and pointed out to the need to search for appropriate ways of to implicate technology in traditional teaching, since technology has profoundly affected writing. In the same vein, Phinney (as cited in Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006, p.260) acknowledged the essential role of technology in composition, and explained that "As part of the changing culture of composition instruction, there is a new emphasis on de-centering authority, coupled with a recognition of the importance of collaborative learning, and a realization of the need for new models of writing and rhetoric". Based on this paradigm, Hegelheimer and Fisher (2006) argued that "The availability of advanced technology coupled with recent research dealing with learner texts allows for the creation of systems specifically designed to address learner needs … An ideal platform for implementing

these recommendations into functional systems is the World Wide Web (WWW)" (p.258). Hegelheimer and Fisher suggested that, for instance, technology can be used as a consciousness-raising tool of certain difficult grammar items by creating "an innovative online grammar resource".

Technology falls within two type when used for instructional purposes, according to Maddux (as cited in Hegelheimer & Fisher, 2006): Type I and Type II. Type I is utilized to "make it quicker, easier, or more convenient to teach in traditional ways" (p.260); technologies of Type II offer more possibilities "to teach in new and better ways that are not otherwise available" (p.260). Some of the technology tools used to enhance writing instruction are CALL applications such as word processing that is used for collaborative writing, self-assessment, and peer assessment (Ghahari & Ameri-Golestan, 2014). With the development of web 2.0, more possibilities are available for language teachers, particularly in writing. Wilder and Mangillo (2007) suggested online technologies (or web 2.0 tools as they are often referred to) to efficiently develop the learners' writing skills. Instances of these technologies are online writing labs and online courses. Wilder and Mangillo (2007) explained that these online technologies facilitate some stages of the writing process such as revision and provide the learners opportunities to share their writing online which enables them to get feedback for a better comprehension of writing. Online technologies also enable the learners to have a good learning experience by accessing authentic and stimulating motivation. Grosseck (2009) established a list of potential web 2.0 tools amongst which photo/slides sharing that enable to "share, comment, and add notes to photos or images to be used in the classroom" or to "inspire writing and creativity" (p.479). Other web 2.0 technologies include wikis, blogs, and forums that are widely used writing instruction. Many studies were undertaken to tap into the pedagogical

potential of these tools to enhance students' writing. For instance, Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) used a method that combined a forum, a blog, and a wiki in an EFL context. These three online writing tools had a positive impact on the learners' language learning progress leading for better learning outcomes. Other web 2.0 tools that can be used to enhance writing instruction are e-mail, learning management systems, and instant messaging.

2.3.2. Rethinking Writing Pedagogy for Digital Natives

The traditional teaching of writing has been criticized for its "one size fits all" approach that fails to take into account the students' individual needs, language abilities, learning styles, and to use the right strategies to motivate and guide the students towards achieving a successful learning process. Moreover, what is being learned in the traditional teaching of writing often does not prepare the students to cope with professional requirements. The teachers are not here to be blamed since applying the right methodology to develop the writing skills of university students is more of a herculean task. Even experienced teachers are constantly challenged with the rapid changes in education that often leave them helpless concerning the best way to instruct their students. Geta and Olango (2016) stressed that the modern development of information and communication technologies have given birth to novel approaches for language teaching that surpass the traditional teaching in many aspects.

In addition to that, since the twenty-first century learners are evolving in an era where the world has become a global village and were powerful societies are the information or knowledge societies (Tumwebaze, 2010), these learners have the right to access instruction that goes in line with the rapid change of societies of this digital world, and which integrates cutting-edge technologies to ensure successful learning.

Tertiary education is liable for producing effective graduates who will be integrated in the professional framework, and therefore, **"**the challenge in higher education is to develop learning opportunities that leverage students' strengths in order to address rigorous academic content, while at the same time to address students' information literacy needs so that they become more successful 21st-century learners" (Fogleman, Niedbala, & Bedell, 2013, p.72). As more attention is directed towards learner-centered pedagogy, another consideration has emerged and which concerns the true nature of the twenty-first century learners. Tapscott (as cited in Lenoue & Stamme, 2011, p.216) described the learners who were born and have grown up with Internet as the "net generation"; he argues that they are "forcing a change in the model of pedagogy, from a teacher-focused approach based on instruction to a student-focused model based on collaboration". LeNoue and Stammen (2011) added that today's learners "want to participate in the learning process; they look for greater autonomy, connectivity and socioexperiential learning, have a need to control their environments, and are used to instant connectivity and easy access to the staggering amount of content and knowledge available at their fingertips" (p.216). In the same framework, one important claim posited by Prensky (2001) is that the twenty-first century learners, the digital natives, not only exhibit a strong inclination towards web technologies but also show dissimilarity with the digital immigrants (those who were born before the 1980's) at the neurological level explaining that digital natives, because of functional evolution of their brains, tend to process information differently than digital immigrants. Fogleman et al. (2013) added that "The way they have grown up has predisposed the millennials to unique behaviors as learners. They have a trial-and-error approach to learning, prefer to learn by doing, and for them doing is more important than knowing" (p.73). Fogleman et al. also

suggested that digital natives are prone to learning that involves “inductive discovery, making observations, formulating hypotheses, and figuring out the rules” and to teaching that favors “customization”, no memorization, peer learning, interactivity, student engagement, and topics or information that relatable to students’ needs and expectations.

To cater for the requirements of learner-centeredness in the digital age while respecting the conservative views about traditional teaching which, one must have to admit, has educated productive members of the society, it would be judicious to take advantage of possibilities that information and communication technologies as well as mobile technologies offer ELT, and which allows the combination of face-to-face teaching and virtual learning environments in a unique occasion to satisfy both the digital natives and their teachers. This involves applying strategies and techniques “that are up to date and geared toward [the students’] learning styles. A typical classroom is comprised of students who are on several different learning levels and it can be challenging to teach them because they are not all on the same page and do not do well working in small groups and struggle to work independently” (Camalahan & Ruley, 2014, p.2). What it is really about here is innovation, the creation of “new possibilities through combining different knowledge set”, (Subramaniam, 2013, p.2226) in order to “create something new which deviates from long established traditional practices, imparting learning at different levels” (p.2224).

A final word is that rethinking writing pedagogy for twenty-first century learners, particularly in an EFL setting, does of course depend on many actors on the academic stage; yet, since the primary concern of education is to equip the learners with the appropriate skills and abilities to face the requirements of this fast developing

world, the primacy of making decisions about how to best teach our students should rest with the ones who are in the frontline-the teachers.

2.3.3. Blended Learning as a New Orientation in Learning/Teaching Composition

With consideration to the limitations of traditional teaching of writing, the possibilities that information and communication technologies offer, and the nature of the twenty-first century learners, a paradigm shift in writing pedagogy has to be considered. This is about pedagogy 2.0. which is achieved through blended learning.

Blended leaning is an instructional model that combines teaching methods "such as use of digital resources (or e-learning) alongside traditional teaching" (Facharzt, Abos, Algaidi, Heissam, & Zolaly, 2013, p.13). Blended learning "allows adaptive, collaborative learning and transforms the role of the teacher from a disseminator of knowledge to a facilitator. Therefore, a combination of traditional and on-line learning in particular or e-learning in general creates a more integrated approach for both instructors and learners" (Facharzt et al., 2013, p.13). The bimodal nature of blended learning creates "a situation where face-to-face oral communication and the online written communication are optimally integrated so that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose" (Kistow, 2011, p.117).

These last few years, blended learning has gained much popularity in academia, and its practices "are becoming the basis for much of today's academic teaching, research, collaborative writing, course design and professional learning". Blended learning is primarily a new orientation in tertiary education which major aims are to enhance the quality of teaching and to enable the students to easily access to a

diversified content (Sen, 2011). Blended learning is implemented for various reasons that depend on the context and the goals of faculty members as Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) explained. They also highlighted the fact that variation in the purposes for which blended learning is applied is proof about the adaptive potential of this approach to various contexts, learners, and content. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003, p.231) recognized six goals for the purpose of designing blended courses. These are 1) pedagogical richness, that is enhancing the students' learning by changing the way class time is used , 2) access to knowledge by "[increasing] a teacher's pedagogical options—all for the purpose of helping students master the content more effectively", 3) social interaction (both face-to-face and online, 4) personal agency, that is learners' control over their own learning, 5) cost effectiveness, and 6) ease of revision in the sense that in most cases, blended courses are developed by teachers, and this implies that "the online resources for the course are relatively simple, easy to change, and do not require sophisticated programming, graphic arts, or video and audio production skills". Therefore, this enables the course developers to operate changes before starting their lectures, which results in more flexibility of instruction.

With a focus on the writing skill, Keshta and Harb (2013) reported several studies that proved the effectiveness of blended learning on students' writing, and mentioned the following major findings: expanding and improving students' learning experiences, immediate feedback for students, face-to-face interaction with the teacher during learning, and the flexibility of handling different content subjects according to the available circumstances. In his study, Liu (2013) concluded that "poor writers not only felt more successful with bimodal presentation, but were more successful in terms of comprehending content in this environment" (p.303). Challob et al. (2016) argued on the basis of their study that a blended writing course that combines online

and onsite activities offer the learners “flexible learning opportunities that suit their different learning styles, and learning habits” (p.238). Blended writing courses account for “the students’ pace and consequently provided students with self-paced learning”, opportunities for students “to discuss many aspects of the writing task in advance online and thus they could dedicate the class time for practicing writing only” (p.238). In other terms, developing EFL learners’ writing skills through blended learning offers “flexibility, personalization, and interactivity derived from an online component and direct observation, immediate feedback and spontaneity inherent from conventional teaching” (Challob et al. 2016, p.238).

The frustration that EFL learners and teachers often feel because of the challenges of writing that stem from “a lack of language skills, culture-specific behaviors, and difficulty in interpreting hedged and indirect language” (Liu, 2013, p.301), it is necessary to design an instructional model that combines two modes of delivery, face-to-face and online, because of the advantages mentioned earlier. The sole reliance on the traditional teaching of writing may result in low proficient EFL writers whose academic survival is at stake. In implementing a blended writing course, factors such as “instructional objectives, the characteristics of students, the condition of online resources and the experience of trainers [are] critical in creating balance between the face-to-face and online approaches” (Kistow, 2011, p.118).

Conclusion

EFL writing at university is one of the critical skills that students have to develop, for it ensures their academic and professional success. In traditional writing, students mostly write in the classroom with the teacher and perhaps their peers as the unique audience. Therefore, this does not realistically address certain skills that are vital for real purposes. The failure of traditional writing courses, now that we are

evolving in a digital world, is caused by practices that do not recognize the new nature of the students we are currently teaching; they are surrounded by technology in each aspect of their lives except, perhaps, in an educational setting on formal basis. Added to that, what makes traditional writing courses insufficient to effectively develop EFL students' writing skills is that, with the challenges that writing brings to the EFL classroom, gigantic task awaits the teachers, who in most cases, have to rely on their expertise for the luckiest ones or to go through a trial and error approach but which might be costly for the learners' development. Therefore, bearing in mind that learners in the twenty-first century might learn differently from the way their teachers used to, and taking into account the success of other teachers' experiences with blended learning, examining other options for developing the writing skills of EFL university students is a question of practicality and pragmatism. Adopting blended learning in the context of EFL writing cannot take place effortlessly; rather, it requires a change in students', teachers', and academic officials' attitudes as well as a realistic assessment of the academic institutions' resources. More importantly, adopting blended learning for EFL writing courses may be risky, not only in terms of the potential failure of this approach but also in terms of a conflict that could be generated by the conservative vision of certain faculty members and academic officials. Nevertheless, our students are worth the risk as our duty as teachers is to provide our students with the best instruction regardless of which method(s) we have to use, and to prepare them to become effective members of society.

Chapter Three: Blended Learning in an English as a Second/Foreign Language Context

Introduction

Applying computer technology to language learning and teaching has been done for several decades under the name of Computer Assisted Language Learning. The rapid development of information and communication technologies and the proliferation of digital media have significantly affected language learning particularly in an English as a Foreign Language context. Consequently, English language teaching pedagogy has evolved, and now, new possibilities are offered to the educators to expand the range of the twenty-first century skills that today's learners need. Attaining this goal requires searching for the most effective and appropriate method that involves technology in its foundations. As we are evolving in a digital era, the most relevant pedagogy to the current context is blended learning.

3.1. Definition and Scope of Blended Learning

Nowadays, more and more universities, colleges, and schools all over the globe are working on providing their students with the best conditions to succeed in their academic life and to guarantee their future working career by looking for alternative teaching methods. To this end/to achieve that, those educational institutions are investing more efforts in financing and developing new ways of teaching, and currently, blended learning is a concept that has come to be widely known in the field of education and is receiving a considerable interest at various levels.

The term "blended" comes from the verb "to blend" which, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, means "to combine or associate so that the separate constituents or the line of demarcation cannot be distinguished", "to combine into an integrated whole", and "to produce a harmonious effect". Therefore, the word

"blended" means "combined or mixed together so that the constituent parts are indistinguishable". On that basis, a very broad definition of blended learning could be "mixed learning" or "combined learning"; however, defining blended learning in such simplistic ways is not appropriate as blended learning is not like filling in a blender with various elements to be mixed into a given nutriment.

Less simplistic definitions of blended learning involve more than a one-dimensional vision of what this concept represents. In its broadest yet less simple meaning, blended learning is defined by several authors in reference to its different components which led some researchers to take the definition of blended learning to a more explicit level and provided definitions that introduced concepts that have come to give a more comprehensive view of what blended learning represents. This is the case of Graham, Allen and Ure (as cited in Kistow, 2011, p.117), Kupetz and Ziegenmeyer (as cited in Liu, 2013) and Graham (2006) who highlighted other dimensions when defining blended learning; they deduced specific concepts that are related to its various definitions and which are: "combination of online and face-to-face instruction", "combination of instructional modalities", and "combination of instructional methods". Accordingly, the coming definitions will be presented on the basis of the distinction provided by the authors abovementioned.

Blended learning can be seen as a combination of two types of instruction. Accordingly, Heesen (as cited in De Gregorio-Godeo, 2006) and Thorne (2003) defined blended learning as the combination of e-learning or online learning with traditional, also called face-to-face, instruction. For Hameed, Badii, and Cullen (2008, p. 5), blended learning is an innovative method which is based on the notion of combining "classroom based tuition … with private study using interactive

multimedia resources." Garrison and Vaughan (2008, p.7) represented blended learning as "the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences."

Blended learning can also be described in terms of modes of delivery or instructional modalities. On this basis, Singh and Reed (2001, p.1-2) defined it as "a learning program where more than one delivery mode is being used with the objective of optimizing the learning outcome and cost of program delivery. However, it is not the mixing and matching of different learning delivery modes by itself that is of significance, but the focus on the learning and business outcome." Singh (2003) saw blended learning as "[the combination of] multiple delivery media that are designed to complement each other and promote learning and application-learned behavior" (p.52). Modes of delivery are specified by Valiathan (2002) and Singh (2003) as "face-to-face classrooms; live e-learning, and self-paced learning", whereas Reid-Young (n.d.) identified them as "classroom sessions to mentoring arrangements or the support of a subject matter expert in the same office or area."

On another level, blended learning can represent a combination of instructional methods. For instance, Trapp (2006, p.28) defined it as "the combination of multiple approaches to pedagogy or teaching, e .g. self-paced, collaborative, tutor-supported learning or traditional classroom teaching. Blended learning often refers specifically to the provision or use of resources which combine e-learning with other educational resources." For Facharzt, Abos, Algaidi, Heissam, and Zolaly (2013) blended learning involves types of learning which associate various didactical methods, for instance elearning (or the "use of digital resources") along with traditional instruction. Therefore, blended learning "allows adaptive, collaborative learning and transforms the role of the teacher from a disseminator of knowledge to a facilitator" (Facharzt et al., 2013, p.13). As a result, this blend of traditional and electronic learning "creates a

more integrated approach for both instructors and learners (Facharzt et al., 2013, p.13). As blended learning has come to be viewed in various ways, so has its coinage that evolved into various labels. Franks (as cited in Alajab and Hussain, 2015) and Trapp (2006) explain that blended learning is sometimes referred to as "hybrid learning", "mixed learning", "multi-method-learning", or “integrated learning”, the latter regrouping the first three labels and which denotes “the integration (the "blending") of e-learning tools and techniques with traditional methods” (Trapp, 2006, p.26) Other scholars, like Wang and Gearhart (as cited in Geta & Olango, 2016, p.50), tagged blended learning as blended e-learning that means “information and communications technology enhanced learning by delivering learning contents and activities via internet, intranet/extranet, audio/video, that is, via an environment consisting of hardware, software and personnel”.

Considering what was mentioned so far, confusion about what blended learning represents can be rather confusing. To this end, researchers like Smith and Kurthen (2007, p.457) developed a percentage-based taxonomy of the different labels of blended learning to highlight the slight differences that exist between them. The researchers distinguished four categories: “web-enhanced”, “blended”, “hybrid learning” and “fully online”. **Web enhanced** includes a minimum amount of web-based components namely the syllabus and course announcements that are part of face-to-face classroom sessions. **Blended** involves the teacher in supplementing face-to-face instruction with important online learning activities in addition to an online syllabus and some online documents. Smith and Kurthen (2007, p.460) illustrated this as follows:

> a blended course might have online quizzes or have a few online discussions, which account for a certain limited percentage of the course grade. But an

important point is that these online activities do not replace any of the regular FTF class meetings and account for only a limited percentage of course activities – less than 45%.

Hybrid occurs "if the online activities replace 45% to 80% of FTF class meetings" and **fully online** involves instruction that utilizes 80% or more of e-learning. For a better comprehension, this taxonomy is summarized by Smith and Kurthen (2007 as cited in Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013, p.12) in the table below:

Term	Definition
Web-enhance	Subjects that make use of a minimal amount of online materials, such as posting a syllabus and course announcements.
Blended	Subjects that utilize some significant online activities in otherwise face-to-face learning, but less than 45 per cent.
Hybrid	Subjects in which online activities replace 45–80 per cent of face-to-face class meetings.
Fully online	Subjects in which 80 percent or more of learning materials are conducted online.

Table 3.1. Blended Learning related Taxonomy of Terms (Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013, p.12)

Blended learning, therefore, is more than just the use of technology to enhance face-to-face learning/teaching. It not only "combines the advantages of face-to-face and e-learning to satisfy individual differences" (Bersin & Associate as cited in Keshta & Harb, 2013, p.208), but also aims at "finding better ways of supporting students in achieving the learning objectives and providing them with the best possible learning and teaching experiences, as well as supporting teachers in their role (including the management and administration of courses)" (Keshta & Harb 2013, p.208). Keshta and Harb (2013, p.211) added that blended learning can resolve many problems when applied in an optimum way. On this basis, blended learning should be thought about "in terms of course design, material development and presentation,

assignment submission and grading, student involvement, teacher reflection, and student evaluation" (Liu 2013, p.301).

Throughout this section, many definitions were presented, and each one of them presented blended learning from a particular perspective. Singh and Reed (2001, p.2), suggested a more "polished" definition of blended learning that reflects all what has been explained so far and which can be used as a working definition: "Blended learning focuses on optimizing achievement of learning objectives by applying the "right" learning technologies to match the "right" personal learning style to transfer the "right" skills to the "right" person at the "right" time." For the purpose of this study, the following definition based on Grgurović's (as cited in Liu 2013, p.303) and Liu's definition in the context of her study can be used: Blended learning is the sum of "face-to-face teaching and learning supplemented by an online CALL component" and "delivered through an online classroom platform developed and maintained by the University."

3.2. Historical Development of Blended Learning

Blended learning as a teaching approach is a novelty in education, particularly in ELT. Throughout the literature, it appears that studies on blended learning exponentially developed since the beginning of the 2010's. However, contrary to some popular beliefs, the concept of blended learning appeared around the 2000's, but its roots can be traced back one century and a half ago with an evolution of its meaning in tandem with the development of technology. Pappas (2015) established a timeline that perhaps can shed light on the origins of blended learning. The timeline started with the 1840's suggesting that the notion of 'blending' can be dated back to the launching of the first distance education course by Sir Isaac Pitman in 1840 who taught shorthand, "a system of fast writing that uses lines and simple signs to

represent words and phrases" (Cambridge Dictionary)**.** Pitman's method consisted of sending shorthand texts to his students by mailed postcards, and the students had to send back their assignments to be assessed (Pappas, 2015). However, it is in 1858 that the first distance learning degrees were offered by the University of London. About a century later, mainframe computer-based training started in the 1960's and 1970's, and thousands of employees were trained and accessed information through systems such as PLATO **that was developed by the University of Illinois. In the 1970's and 1980's,** TV-based technology was used in the corporate field to train staff members without the obligatory physical presence of an instructor. This method "made the training experience more interactive and engaging. Learners were able to communicate with their peers, watch the instructor on TV, and even address any questions or concerns sending them by mail" (Pappas, 2015). In the 198'0s and 1990's, CD-ROMs and LMSs started to be used in schools and corporations, and this caused an evolution in blended training. CD-ROMs enabled the storage of large amount of data and displayed sound and video features while LMSs started to be used in e-Learning to help "track learner progress and improve online training courses" (Pappas, 2015). Nevertheless, talking of blended learning as a concept should be considered starting from 1998 that marked the beginning of the first generation of web-based instruction (Pappas, 2015).

Another view on the origin of the concept of blended learning emanates from Sharpe, Benfield, Roberts, and Francis (2006) who suggested that, based on their observations, the term "blended learning" has been around for more than fifteen years but with a constant evolution of its meaning. Sharpe et al. (2006) reported that, in the late 1980's, collaboration between the Workers Education Association (WEA) at Ruskin College and the Open University issued a project about a "blended learning

programme for adults, without qualifications, returning to education". Reflections on how courses had to be developed in that project utilized the phrase "blended learning" to refer to "a mix of distance and face-to-face learning" (Sharpe et al., 2006, p.19). In the 1990's, "the corporate training world spoke of blended learning as enhancements to the typical corporate training intervention: the short course" (Sharpe et al., 2006, p.19), and soon blended courses were implemented in the workplace. Since then, interest in blended learning has quickly grown; Alajab and Hussain (2015) credited the online learning department of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT, 2005) for identifying five reasons for the rapid interest of blended learning these last years: the increase of learner-centered models of instruction, the ongoing debate about the supremacy of classroom or distance education, the growing number of universities that used courseware management systems (CMS), the students' familiarization with online communication, and the need for more flexibility in work schedules and means to save time.

In the field of education, blended learning attracted the attention of ELT researchers since the late 1990's (Mingyong, 2015). However, Trapp (2006) argued that "blended learning is not really a new concept. Teachers have always been using 'combined resources'. Basically, blended learning is just a combination of teaching or facilitation methods, learning styles, resource formats, a range of technologies and a range of expertise" (p.28). Even if blended learning originated in the business world (Sharma and Barrett as cited in Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013), blended learning started to be used in the field of ELT probably when the book "Blended Learning" by Sharma and Barrett was released in 2007. Educators and researchers found that blended learning improved learning, helped in "information dissemination, creation of

learners' communities and networking, and [supporting] learners in choosing the ideal content" **(**Facharzt, Abos, Algaidi, Heissam, & Zolaly, 2013, p.13).

The concepts, strategies, and principles of blended learning have always been there, but modern technology gave new possibilities to apply it, and at the same time, led to different ways to interpret it.

3.3. Characteristics of Blended Learning

Blended learning is described as "a teaching approach that incorporates technologies with regular face-to-face teaching depending on the module requirements and the needs of the learners" (Ng, 2010, p.307). Blended learning merges two types of environments; it "offers the convenience of the online environments without losing face-to-face meetings" (p.307); face-to-face (or F2F) refers here to "traditional environment where the instruction is conducted face- to-face between teachers and students in a contact teaching situation" (Qiang, 2016, p.15). Therefore, blended learning includes various theoretical as well as pedagogical principles.

3.3.1. Foundations of Blended Learning

Blended learning is an instructional model which is based on three main learning theories as well as didactical principles that encompass the classroom, the learner, the instructor, and technology.

3.3.1.1. Theoretical Principles

Blended learning as an approach has a solid theoretical framework that is based on three learning theories or models: **Cognitive Learning theory**, Constructivist Learning theory, and Socially Situated Learning theory (Hadjerrouit, 2008; Aleksić & Ivanović, 2013).

- **The Cognitive Learning Theory**

In the 1960's, psychology witnessed a theoretical shift from behaviourism, and this led to a reconsideration of learning, thinking, language, and reasoning (Mayes & Freitas, 2004). This in turn "provided a basis for analyzing concepts and procedures of subject matter curricula in terms of information structures, and gave rise to new approaches to pedagogy" (Mayes & Freitas, 2004, p.8). Cognitive research includes sub-areas such as schema theory, information processing theories of problem solving and reasoning, levels of processing in memory, general competencies for thinking, mental models, and metacognitive processes that are regarded as significant in describing a cognitive model for learning (Mayes & Freitas, 2004). The cognitive theory sees "knowledge acquisition as proceeding from a declarative form to a procedural, compiled form" (Mayes & Freitas, 2004, p.8). Accordingly, learning becomes "the active construction of ideas and growing skills by exploring and experimenting, so according to the feedback they perform adequate adaptation" (Aleksić & Ivanović, 2013, p.96). In this respect, enhancement of the learners' achievement would lead to the automaticity of the basic skills in order for "the cognitive attention [to be] directed towards the strategic levels of information processing" (Aleksić & Ivanović, 2013, p.96). Therefore, according to the cognitive view, learners are viewed as knowledge interpreters rather than "passive recipients of knowledge". In this scheme, learning is seen as a "mental activity, such as analytical reasoning and critical thinking" (Hadjerrouit, 2008, p.186). This, in turn, implies that instruction that follows a cognitive approach emphasizes the learner's comprehension of notions and their association, which if appropriately understood through 'defragmenting' information and logically reconstructing it, will result in successful learning (Hadjerrouit, 2008).

- **The Constructivist Learning Theory**

Constructivism describes knowledge as "a constructed entity made by each and every learner through a learning process. Constructivism frames learning less as the product of passive transmission than a process of active construction whereby the learners construct their own knowledge based upon prior knowledge and experience" (Hadjerrouit, 2008, p.186). In the same vein, Aleksić and Ivanović (2013) explained that constructivism is an "Associative model [in which] people learn by linking, initially through basic stimulus-response conditioning, and later through the capacity to integrate the concepts into thought or through linking the steps during the activities in order to create composite skill" (p.96). Constructivism, then, involves learners into problem-solving, exploration, and discovery as essential components for better learning that in turn will enable them to apply their skills in real-life situations (Hadjerrouit, 2008). In a more concrete context, Gagne (as cited in Aleksić & Ivanović, 2013) elaborated "a system of instructional tasks of discrimination sequences, classification and responses" (p.96). This system allows individualized instruction where every learner "actively solves a problem and immediately receives feedback (basis of the development of programmed learning). Instruction sequence allows students to study in small and logically arranged steps" (Aleksić & Ivanović, 2013, p.96).

- **The Socially Situated Learning theory**

In the socially situated learning theory, learning is viewed as a process that occurs within a social context where the learner "will always be subjected to influences from the social and cultural setting in which the learning occurs" and where "knowledge is seen as situated in the practices of communities [which makes] the outcomes of learning [involved in] the abilities of individuals to participate in those

practices successfully" (Mayes & Freitas, 2004, p.9). Learning then not only "occurs as learners exercise, test, and improve their knowledge through discussion, dialogue, collaboration, information sharing, and interaction with others" but also through "the guidance given by more capable others, [allowing] the learner to engage in levels of activity that could not be managed alone" (Hadjerrouit, 2008, p.186).

Situated learning has two aspects or two "flavors" as Barab and Duffy (as cited in Mayes & Freitas, 2004) called them. These are "socio-psychological" and "joint practice". The socio-psychological view emphasises "the importance of context-dependent learning in informal settings" and "the relationship between the nature of the learning task in educational or training environments, and its characteristics when situated in real use" (Mayes & Freitas, 2004, p.9). The second view, "joint practice", focuses on "the individual's relationship with a group of people rather than the relationship of an activity itself to the wider practice, even though it is the practice itself that identifies the community" (Mayes & Freitas, 2004, p.9). Therefore, as explained by Aleksić and Ivanović (2013), "Situated model considers learning through the joint participation of people in practical activities, progress through observation, reflection and mentoring. Student learning outcomes are subject to influences from the social and cultural environment".

3.3.1.2 Didactical Principles

- **Integration of two modes of delivery**

One of the fundamental principle of blended learning is that "a situation where face-to-face oral communication and the online written communication are optimally integrated so that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p.7). In other terms, blended learning integrates e-learning and typical face-to-

face learning at different levels (DeGregorio-Godeo, 2006). This mixed delivery approach, for instance, can take the form of students taking online quizzes on request of the teachers so that they could evaluate and comprehend the learners' knowledge of certain subjects in order to improve their reflective capacities. This mixed learning can also take the form of lecturing students face-to-face on important concepts and organizing online discussions involving the students to reflect on what was tackled in class (Ng, 2010).

Blending two modalities (face-to-face and online) offers various program combinations: "online and offline learning environments, collaborative and individual learning environments, structure and non-structured learning environments, pedagogical approaches ('e.g. constructivism, behaviourism, cognitivism') to produce an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology" (Ceylan & Kesici, 2017, p.310).

- **Redefining the Students' and Teachers' Roles**

The combination of the cognitive learning theory, the constructivist learning theory, and the social situated learning theory redefined the role of the students in blended learning. The learners, then, play a more active role and are given the possibility to control their learning in terms of "*how* to learn content, *where* to learn it, *which path to take* to learn it, and *how quickly* to move through it—even though the content that must be learned is the same for all students" (Hammond, 2015). Here we are talking of *learner autonomy* or *self-reliance*, "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec as cited in Banditvilai, 2016, p.221). This is the main goal of blended learning; as students change "from passive recipient to active pursuer of knowledge" (Hammond, 2015), they are expected to "[seek] information and knowledge on their own, [determine] how to reach the desired learning outcomes

themselves and not only [rely] on teachers to supply them with information" (Geta & Olango, 2016, p.53). Blended learning, then, puts more responsibility on the learners than conventional instruction as learner autonomy is fostered through knowledge construction and "self-directed learning" (Liu, 2013).

Other concepts such as self-regulation and self-efficacy are part of the principles of blended learning, and which are specifically related to autonomous learning. Self-regulation is referred to as "the degree individuals are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process" (Cubukcu, 2009, p.54). Self-regulated learners are described as "self starters", "confident, strategic and resourceful", "self-reactive to task performance outcomes" (Cubukcu, 2009, p.54). Learners who are not self-regulators are reported to be "more impulsive, have lower academic goals, are less accurate in assessing their abilities, are more self critical and less efficacious about their performance and tend to give up easily than achievers" in addition to being "more anxious, [having] a lower self esteem, … a higher need for approval, and are more easily influenced by extrinsic factors" (Cubukcu, 2009, p.54). Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is defined by Schunk (as cited in Cubukcu, 2009, p.56) as "personal beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform skills", and it causes the application of self- regulation; the relationship between the two concepts is described by Motlagh, Amrai, Yazdani, Abderahim, and Souri (2011) as "individual's beliefs on application of the self- regulation processes such as the goal setting, self monitoring, strategy use, self- evaluation and self-reaction" (p.766). Figure 3.1. best illustrates the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation:

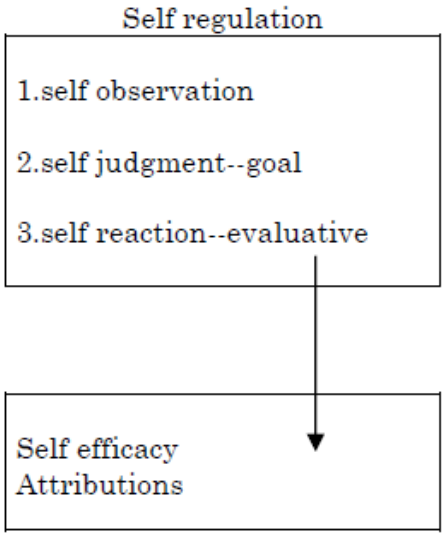


Figure 3.1. Relationship between Self-efficacy and Self-regulation

(Cubukcu, 2009, p.56)

Coming back to learner autonomy, it has a chain-like relationship with self-regulation and self-efficacy; for autonomous learning to take place, it requires self-regulation skills that in turn need self-efficacy abilities. In other terms, autonomous learning requires "self-management competencies and proactive, self-knowledge and self-control of the learning process" (Goulão & Menedez, 2015, p.1901).

The theoretical foundation of blended learning transfers responsibility from the teacher to the learner. In traditional teaching, the teacher assumes the role of knowledge provider and is rather seen as a controller or "authority" in the classroom, standing in the front of a classroom and "serving" information in a same manner to all the students **(**Hammond, 2015). Even those teachers who attempted to use some strategies to engage the students more in the learning process and personalize their teaching, the result was that the teacher still assumed the role of controller. In a blended pedagogy, however, the teacher becomes a facilitator, and a guide for her/his students (Geta & Olango, 2016). Many researchers agree on the facilitator role as the

major role of the teacher in blended learning, but the fact is that the teacher is seen to assume many other roles that appear to converge towards the facilitative task of the instructor. Hammond (2015), for instance, suggested three roles for the teacher: *coach, mentor, and data master*. As a coach, the teacher is involved in closer observation of his students, moving among the learners, focusing on the individuals rather than the whole group by identifying their specific problems and providing appropriate feedback on the spot, and all this can be achieved thanks to the transfer of some of the content online that provides the teachers more freedom to focus on the learners. Being a mentor involves personalized instruction or "differentiated instruction". Blended learning is seen to increase teacher-student interaction which allows the instructor to focus on each student, giving support for struggling students and challenging those who have no major issues with grasping the content. Mentoring students increases students' self-confidence as well as their relationship with the instructor. A teacher has also to be a data master in the sense that, since the learners will use computers for learning, the teacher can gather data on the students' performance to detect potential problems with computer use, content delivery, and coordination between classroom work and online work. In addition to the roles proposed by Hammond (2015), Bhagi (2016) suggested the following roles for teachers in a blended environment: *classroom planners,* i.e. "long-term planning of curriculum and instructional strategies done in advance", ***risk loving,*** **i.e., taking the risk "**to experiment with different instructional techniques, content strategies, as well as assessment formats to suit a diverse variety of learners for same set of learning outcomes", and ***content experts*****, i.e., "[mastering]** the art of content creation as well as content utilization".

- **Role of Technology**

In addition to redefining learner and teacher roles, technology also is given a specific role in blended pedagogy as Information and communication technologies were investigated to have a positive impact on learner autonomy (Motteram as cited in DeGregorio-Godeo, 2006). The major innovation of blended learning is the integration of CALL with face-to-face traditional teaching making technology a central part of this instructional model to "[provide] sufficient resources to ensure successful establishment of the learning environment" (Geta & Olango, 2016, p.53). Yet, as Sharma (2007) posited, technology is a complement and is not intended to replace the efforts of the teacher whose role is "to perform the needs analysis, write the syllabus and teach the course". Sharma (2007) suggested examples of "how to put blended learning in action" showing how technology is included in the process. For instance, he described a situation where during a face-to-face session (in the classroom), the instructor engages the learners in a collaborative task involving a wiki to create a text. Then the students compose and revise the text distantly, and the instructor reads the text (which is a collaborative product) before the coming classroom session takes place. The time of the face-to-face session is used by the teacher to provide feedback to the learners. Another example that Sharma (2007, para.9) provided involves "a small group of freelance teachers [who] download Moodle software, and club together to pay for hosting fees. They are now able to support their next course using the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) to communicate with their students between lessons".

3.3.2. Models in Blended Learning

Implementing blending learning can occur at various levels as Bonk and Graham (as cited in Alajab & Hussain, 2015) explained. Blending may occur at the activity level, course level, program level, and institutional level. El-Fiky (as cited in Keshta & Harb, 2013) organized blended learning based on its nature, quality and the degree of the blend, and provided four categories: component level, integrated level, collaborative level, expansive level. Other researchers described blended learning in terms of models such as Staker and Horn (2012) who refined existing descriptions of blended models and provided their own taxonomy of models that has come to be considered as a reference in the literature.

Staker and Horn (2012) developed four major blended learning models in the context of K-12, but several researchers extended their implementation to the tertiary level. Staker and Horn's taxonomy includes the following models: *rotation, flex, self-blend* and *enriched-virtual* (Figure 3.2.)

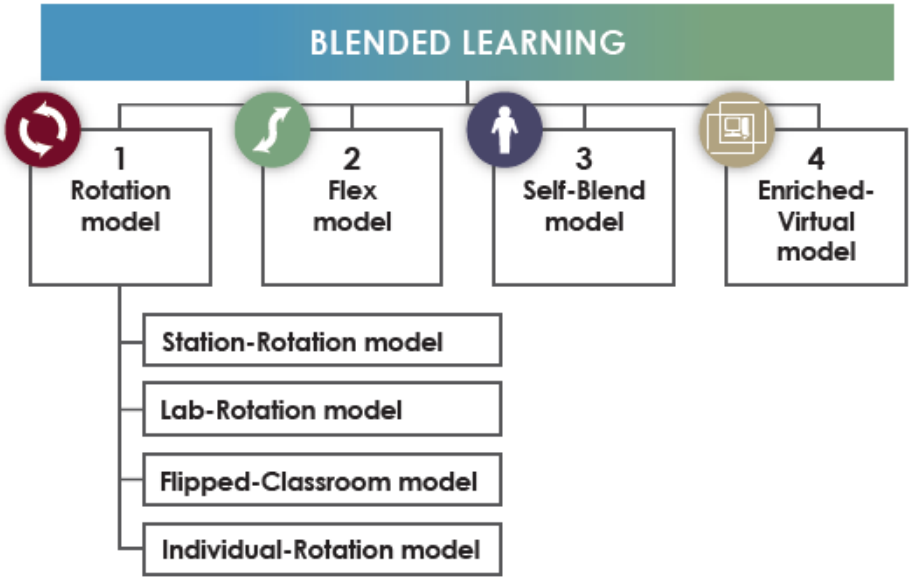


Figure 3.2. Taxonomy of Blended Learning Models (Staker & Horn, 2012, p.2)

Staker and Horn (2012, p.8-15) defined and described each model and sub-models as follows:

1. Rotation Model: this model involves the learners to "rotate *on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion* between learning modalities", that is face-to-face or online, within a given course. In this model, the students will work in activities such as small-group or full-class instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments. The rotation model includes four sub-models: *station rotation, lab rotation, flipped classroom, and individual rotation.*

- **Station Rotation:** in this model, the students rotate within a course between a classroom or classrooms ("stations") for one or more sessions. This rotation has to involve at least one station that takes place online. In the station rotation model, students are involved in activities such as small-group or full-class instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments. This model can be applied for an entire class rotating between the stations or for small groups (divided from a class), or "one-by-one rotations". In this model, the students have to rotate through all the stations.
- **Lab Rotation:** this model implicates students rotating between learning modalities (face-to-face or online) "among locations on the brick-and-mortar campus". One of the locations has to be a lab so the students will learn online. In this model, learning is individualized.
- **Flipped Classroom:** this model consists in students rotating between face-to-face sessions under the teacher's supervision in a normal class in a brick-and-mortar location (on campus) and online delivery of content and instruction of the same course off campus, often at home. Students study the content delivered online as "homework" and classroom time is devoted to apply the

learned content through various activities individually or collaboratively. This blended learning model provides the students with control over time, place, path, and pace of content learning. The flipped classroom model will be discussed in details in section 3.3.3.

- **Individual Rotation:** this model is just like the station rotation, but involves an "*individually customized, fixed schedule* among learning modalities" (face-to-face or online). The teachers arrange individual student schedules, and one of the stations has to be at least online.

2. Flex Model: the flex model uses online delivery of content and instruction as the "backbone" of the course and takes place in a brick-and-mortar location. Teacher's intervention is used as "support" for online instruction, and takes place offline. Teacher's support is then "customized" to offer flexibility in learning through small-group instruction, group projects, and individual tutoring where support can be increased or minimized depending on the students and the context.

3. Self-Blend Model (also called A la Carte Model): this model involves the students opting for one or more online courses to complement the face-to-face classes, and the online instruction is taken in charge by an online teacher or tutor. Instruction takes place either onsite or offsite.

4. Enriched-Virtual Model: here the students are not required to attend classroom sessions on daily basis but meet their teacher on scheduled sessions. The rest of their time consists in taking the rest of the course online out of campus, and this does not concern one course but all the rest of courses.

3.3.3. The Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom, as it was previously introduced, is one of the different models of blended learning, and it has become popular these last years particularly in ELT. Since the flipped classroom model was used in the practical part of this study, it will be thoroughly described in this section.

3.3.3.1. Definition of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom has gained much interest these last years thanks to the efforts of researchers in different disciplines whose aim was to come with a refined model of this blended learning model and to reinforce the growing body of literature about it. Accordingly, various definitions of the flipped classroom have come to exist, and these variations, according to the founders of the flipped classroom, Jon Bergmann and Aaron Sams, are due to the fact that the concept of the flipped classroom is context-bound (Bergmann & Sams, 2014), which, in the end, makes giving a precise definition to the flipped classroom an arduous task. Bergmann and Sams (2014) further highlighted that common features exist within the numerous definitions that are proposed to describe the flipped classroom, and that these involve "direct instruction (lecture) [which] is delivered at home via videos that teachers either create or curate, and that which has traditionally been done as homework is done in class" (Bergmann & Sams, 2014, p.24). In this section, some definitions were compiled from various researchers.

To begin with, a simple definition is provided by Strayer (2012), who viewed that the flipped or "inverted" classroom is "a specific type of blended learning design that uses technology to move lectures outside the classroom and uses learning activities to move practice with concepts inside the classroom." (p.171) Bergmann,

Overmyer & Wilie (2013) suggested that, in a more traditional fashion, the flipped classroom is "where videos take the place of direct instruction" which in turn "allows students to get individual time in class to work with their teacher on key learning activities" (para. 1).

With more precision, Bergmann and Sams (2012, p.15) in their conceptualization of the flipped classroom emphasized that in the flipped pedagogy, "the time is completely restructured", meaning here that a small portion of classroom time is devoted for students' questions on the watched videos outside the classroom (about 15 minutes) for clarification purposes, and that the rest of it (75 minutes) is devoted to "more extensive hands-on activities and/or directed problem-solving time" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p.15). They also pointed out that, in comparison to the flipped classroom, in traditional teaching generally only 20 to 35 minutes of classroom time is devoted to practice.

From another perspective, Harris, Harris, Reed, and Zelihic (2016, p.325) viewed the flipped classroom as a learning environment which offers the learners an array of tools to learn key notions as homework to prepare for class work. This enables the instructors to efficiently utilize classroom time for "hands-on activities or other means of encouraging students to practice, apply and demonstrate mastery of the content learned from the pre-class requirements" (p.325). Harris et al. (2016) additionally described the flipped classroom as a collaborative environment where learners and teachers jointly work towards ensuring good comprehension of the course content by focusing on clarifying key notions and students' weaknesses, thus both playing "an active role in the overall learning process" (p.325).

Some researchers such as Formica, Easley, and Spraker (2010), Tucker (2012), Kim, Kim, Khera, and Getman (2014), and Kurtz (2014) envisioned the flipped

classroom as a pedagogical approach, and which "provides students with access to online video lectures prior to in-class sessions so that students are prepared to participate in more interactive and higher-order activities such as problem solving, discussions, and debates" (Kim et al., 2014, p.38); this procedure in turn increases the quality of face to face instruction (Formica et al., 2010).

Other researchers consider the flipped classroom as a teaching method. For instance, Bishop and Verleger (2013) defined the flipped classroom as "a new pedagogical method, which employs asynchronous video lectures and practice problems as homework, and active, group-based problem solving activities in the classroom" (para. 1). November and Mull (2012) considered the flipped classroom as a method that involves the students into preparation that consists, for example, into watching videos, listening to podcasts or reading some articles followed by posting questions about the material being prepared online (November and Mull suggested social media like Facebook); then, the teacher sorts out the students' questions and uses them to develop classroom material. Classroom time is devoted to discussion and problem-solving tasks that ensure student engagement. Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, and Arfstrom (2013), in providing a definition about the flipped classroom, emphasized that it is a method where "teachers shift direct learning out of the large group learning space and move it into the individual learning space, with the help of one of several technologies" (p.4).

The flipped classroom has also been differently coined in the literature, and terms such as "inverted classroom" (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000), "just-in-time teaching" (Novak, 2011), "inverted learning" (Barker, Quennerstedt & Annerstedt, 2013), and "the reverse classroom" (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015) are interchangeably used. For the purpose of this research, the term "flipped classroom" was opted for, and

a combined definition is suggested as follows: The flipped classroom is a "personalised education where students take responsibility of their own learning" (Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015, p.143). It is "the reverse of traditional classroom" (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015, p.15) in the sense that "theoretical material is studied by students individually by means of watching video lectures recorded by the teacher or downloaded from the Internet websites while classroom activities are devoted to fulfilling practical tasks and discussing the major issues with the teacher" (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015, p.206).

3.3.3.2. History of the Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom is not a recent concept as one might think but rather an ideology that can be traced back to several centuries ago, probably with the invention of the printing press in the thirteenth century (Bishop & Verleger, 2013); it was then known under the coinage of "inverted classroom" (Ahmed, 2016). With the apprearance of the World Wide Web (WWW) at the begginning of the 1990's and later with the creationt of YouTube in February 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim (Fitzpatrick, 2010), new perspectives about the inverted classroom appeared. The first attempt at the inverted classroom was initiated by Lage et al. (2000) in a case of teaching introductory economics at Miami University. For Lage et al., the rationale behind the inverted classroom was that traditional teaching failed to accommodate the various learning styles of students, and that a mismatch between teachers' teaching styles and students' learning styles was the major reason of students' lack of interest in the subject matter. Hence, Lage et al. (2000) developed a method that "can appeal to *all* types of learners" (p.32), but it did not gain much popularity.

Most of the authors in the literature about the inverted classroom credit Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams for being the "founding fathers" of the flipped classroom, a project that was initiated in 2007 (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Bergmann and Sams, at that time, were two chemistry teachers at Woodland Park High School in Colorado. Being teachers in a rural school, they noticed that many students missed their classes for a variety of reasons, and that made it difficult to those students to catch up with the rest of the students, which in turn made it difficult for the two high school teachers to repeat the lessons for the absent students. One day, Sams came across an article in a technology magazine presenting software to "record a PowerPoint slide show, including voice and any annotations, and then convert the recording into a video file that could be easily distributed online" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p.3). With the possibility of posting online videos onYouTube, Bergmann and Sams glimpsed a means to help the students who missed their classes. They started recording chemistry lessons and posted them online, which greatly helped the absent students to catch up. Other students who attended the lectures heard about the videos recorded by Bergmann and Sams, and soon, they started to watch them for reinforcement of key concepts. Rapidly, Bergmann and Sams' videos started to gain popularity among teachers and students all over the world (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Then, Sams noticed that the most critical time when the learners actually needed the physical presence of their teacher was when they had difficulties doing tasks that required the teacher to individually help them not to provide them with the lesson content. Based on these observations, the two teachers thought of prerecording all their lectures to be viewed by their students as "homework" and using class time to focus on clarifying the concepts that the learners did not undrstand (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). These observations led to the birth of the flipped classroom, and starting

from that time, more and more teachers in K-12 all over the world began to flip their classrooms, and later flipped learning extended to universities (Tucker, 2012).

Chilingaryan and Zvereva (2017) explained that Bergmann and Sams' flipped classroom entails "personalized instruction" and that it "allows the student to become one of the protagonists of the process. And the consequence of this transformation will be the strengthening of the student involvement in the learning process and increasing of the extent of its responsibility for the successful implementation of this process" (p.1501-1502).

3.3.3.3. Principles of the Flipped Classroom

Since it first appeared in 2007, the flipped classroom has evolved and is still evolving, which suggests that its principles have evolved too. Broadly speaking, flipped learning involves watching recorded lectures as homework then practical application of lectures' content in the classroom in the form of assignments, tests, and so on. However, flipped learning is more than that, and is based on certain principles.

As it was previously mentioned, the flipped classroom is first based on interactivity through video use, which represents a shift from "the lecture model to an instructional design involving interactive pedagogy and technology" (Danker, 2015, p.173). Reversing the learning process, that is devoting out-of-class time to study lecture content as "homework", and in-class time to do tasks, take tests, complete assignments, and so on, allows more teacher-student and student-student interaction (Pink, 2010), reinforcement of lecture content (Bergmann & Sams, 2014), and the transformation of the classroom into a workshop "to work through problems, advanced concepts, and engage in collaborative learning (Danker, 2015, p.173).

Flipped instruction also represents a shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction, making active learning one of its important principles. In clarifying the concept of active learning, Bonwell and Eison (1991) explained that "strategies promoting active learning be defined as instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing" (p.iii). Soliman (2016) observed that traditional teaching, by emphasizing explicit presentation of lecture content in the classroom and making the students complete assignments as homework, failed to consider low-proficiency students' difficulties to cope with this teaching mode. The flipped classroom, then, could be a solution to help these students study the material at their pace before coming to the classroom and actively participate in face-to-face sessions. In addition to active learning, flipped instruction also caters for the needs of students with various learning styles, an aspect that traditional instruction cannot ensure **(**Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015**)**.

Another principle of the flipped classroom is scaffolding. The term scaffolding was first introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) in teaching/learning as a "metaphor" to describe the process that "consists essentially of the adult "controlling" those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence" (p.90). Wood et al.'s work was based on Vygotsky's (1978) concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which refers to "distance between the child's actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance and in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In a nutshell, scaffolding is "assistance offered by a teacher or more competent peer to support learning" (Ragupathi, 2014, p.1).

Ragupathi explained that, in Vygostsky's constructivism, supplying suitable assistance while the learner is in the zone of proximal development during a given task provides the learner with sufficient impetus to complete the task in question. Ragupathi (2014) further explained that when scaffolding

> the teacher helps student master a task or concept that the student is initially unable to grasp independently. The teacher then offers assistance with only those skills that are beyond student's capability. Once the student masters the task with the benefit of scaffolding, the scaffolding can then be removed and the student will then be able to complete the task again on his own. (p.1-2)

Since Wood et al.'s definition, the concept of scaffolding has been examined in various contexts, amongst which technology-based learning environments (McLoughlin, 1999; Lim, Campbell & Smala, 2011). It has been suggested that information and communication technologies offer possibilities for effective scaffolding (Rasku-Puttonen, Eteläpelto, Häkkinen, & Arvaja, 2002; Puntambekar & Hübscher, 2005). For instance, Ragupathi (2014) suggeted that technologies such as online quizzes and online tutorials are effective in scaffolding students' learning. In relation to writing, Eady and Lockyer (2013) affirmed that "scaffolding takes place through models and how-to videos online to guide students through the writing process" (p.13). They suggested some technology tools that can assist scaffolding such as "concept-mapping tools" for planning and Microsoft Word for editing and receiving feedback from the instructor and the peers when sharing their writing on wikis or blogs. Wass and Golding (2014) proposed heuristics as a type of scaffolding that involves for instance the use of "Venn diagrams … to help [the students] to compare and contrast" (p.676). This scaffold can intervene in face-to-face interaction, and combined with online scaffolding, this offers the instructor the possibility "to

provide students with meta-cognitive support and ensure exactness of student learning so that the students can become self-regulated and independent" (Saunders, 2014, p.23).

Flipped instruction also represents a reconceptualisation of learners' and teachers' roles in the instructional process. In their study on the effectiveness of the flipped classroom, Evseeva and Solozhenko (2015) aptly described the changing roles of both the teachers and the learners in this pedagogy. In the flipped classroom, the students "have opportunities to control their own learning" (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015, p.207). This implies that the students can adjust the learning process to their personal pace thanks to the possibility of accessing lecture content in a virtual environment, do tasks and study the content anytime and anywhere at their convenience in the limitations of the imparted time, receive support from the instructor and the peers through synchronous and asynchronous tools such as chat programs and forums (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015). In addition to that, through flipped instruction, the students are supposed to work collaboratively, assessing and helping their peers. Lastly, the flipped classroom ideology with its emphasis on active learning "increases students' responsibility for their own learning. They become more self-directed and motivated than in a traditional classroom environment. Students have to learn to manage their time working with the electronic course, developing self-study and autonomous learning skills" (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015, p.207).

On the other hand, in the flipped classroom, the teacher becomes a facilitator "shifting from delivering ready-made knowledge to students to facilitating their learning" (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015, p.207). The teacher, then, acts towards guiding and helping the students to become autonomous and to develop good time-management skills for effective learning (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015). Moreover,

being a facilitator, according to Evseeva and Solozhenko, involves the teacher into "creating a friendly online environment" for peer interaction, and so the teacher has to assume the role of moderator "to monitor online discussions". Other teacher's roles include being a motivator and feedback provider. In a nutshell, flipped pedagogy emphasizes "cooperation between the trainers and trainees", by transferring the control over the learning process from the teacher to the learners (Chilingaryan & Zvereva, 2017), and at the same time, keeping "the helm" in the teacher's hands to "address common goals such as ensuring students prepare for learning, submit assignments in a timely fashion, and participate in ongoing engagement with both content and class" (Harris et al., 2016, p.326)

The flipped classroom greatly depends on the utilization of appropriate technology and computing skills. As it was formerly mentioned in this section, flipped instruction relies on recorded videos of teachers' lectures which the students have to watch at home or elsewhere before coming to the classroom. On a general basis, most researchers recommend that teachers record their own videos, which implies possessing or acquiring some basic computer skills, but this task does not require that teachers become "professional video producers" (Ahmed, 2016; Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016). Yet, teachers can also utilize videos proposed by some web sites notably Khan Academy, YouTube or Ted.

Finally, what has to be remembered about the flipped classroom is "what it is not". Bergmann, Overmyer, and Wilie (2013) explained that the flipped classroom is not synonymous of online videos. It rather prioritises face-to-face interaction; hence, video use can never replace the teacher. Moreover, the flipped classroom is not an online course, and therefore, the learners are not expected to spend much of their time

in a virtual environment. Additionally, the flipped classroom is not an unstructured learning environment.

3.3.3.4. Guidelines for Implementation

Many studies were conducted on the flipped classroom, and many guidelines can be inferred on how to implement flipped learning. Most of the guidelines that can be found in the literature on implementing flipped instruction involve the followings:

- **Conditions about video use:** two major conditions were recommended concerning video use for flipped learning: conciseness and relevance. Providing short videos for the students to watch is recommended by Danker (2015) since, in a study undertaken by Zappe, Leicht, Messner, Litzinger, Lee (2009), success of the flipped classroom was partly due to the use of videos that did not last more than twenty minutes. In addition to that, videos to be used as tutorials or for explications have to be about what students have to learn (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015).
- **Taking advantage of certain technologies:** In a study conducted by Evseeva and Solozhenko (2015) on the flipped classroom to teach an English language course to second year students of the Institute of Power Engineering at Tomsk Polytechnic University, the online delivery mode took place on Moodle, a learning management system. Evseeva and Solozhenko (2015) recommended using Moodle for the delivery of online content as it offers both the learners and the instructor many advantages amongst which “a variety of tools for studying and communication”, “flexibility of use”, “technical support”, and “low cost”.
- **Complementarity of delivery modes:** Zappe et al. (2009), Bergamann and Sams (2014), Halili and Zainuddin (2015) stressed that the students need to have time to review lecture content before applying it actively in the classroom, and classroom

time has to be devoted to completing tasks and assignments, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and consolidation of lecture content delivered online.

- **Role of the instructor:** Danker (2015) and Halili and Zainuddin (2015) insisted on the role of the instructor in flipped pedagogy. The teacher has to act as a facilitator both inside and outside the classroom and should act in a way that would increase interaction with the students particularly in the classroom to help the students achieve their learning goals.
- **Organizing students' learning according to Bloom's taxonomy:** Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive objectives is often referred to in education and is considered the corner stone of successful instruction. When flipping, as See and Conry (2014) recommended, effective organization of students' learning has to be based on Bloom's taxonomy, and flipped instruction "focuses on moving content that fits in the lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (understanding and remembering) outside class, reserving in-class time for the higher order levels (creating, evaluating, analyzing, and applying)" (See & Conry, 2014, p.586).

On the whole, successful implementation of flipped instruction requires careful planning and responsibility which will, in the end, ensure a better learning experience for the students (Danker, 2015; Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015).

3.3.3.5. Advantages of the Flipped Classroom

Research has shown that the flipped classroom has numerous benefits on the learners, the instructor, the learning process, and the learning environment.

First, the flipped classroom enhances the students' and teachers' contact (Danker, 2015; Chilingaryan & Zvereva, 2017). By combining two modes of delivery (face-to-face and online), more time is available in the classroom where the teacher

can have sufficient occasions to focus on the learners to help them correct their mistakes and solve their problems. In addition to that, by shifting the role of the teacher from “sage on the stage” to “guide on the side” (King, 1993), the flipped classroom increases student interaction as well as engagement, thus putting more responsibility on the students (Danker, 2015). This responsibility is generated by the fact that, in flipped instruction, face-to-face time “instead of a one-way propagation of information, …would become a much deeper interaction" (Leckhart & Cheshire, 2012, para.9).

Second, by adopting a flipped model for language teaching, the instructors would offer their students a better learning experience. First, what learners learn makes sense as they create something of their own and can be applied beyond the classroom boundaries, for instance in everyday life (Danker, 2015). Moreover, the flipped classroom favors personalized learning. Danker (2015, p.174) explained that “students can pause, re-wind and rewatch the online videos at their own pace”. In other terms, “learners have control over the media with the ability to review parts that are misunderstood, which need further reinforcement, and/or those parts that are of particular interest” (Danker, 2015, p.174). Another benefit is that the students are engaged in deep learning through the flipped classroom where they have the possibility to be more engaged into active learning tasks such as problem-solving, inquiry, critical thinking and collaborative or peer activities (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Soliman (2016) argued that critical thinking, discussion, problem-solving, communication and feedback are twenty-first century skills that are vital not only in an academic setting but also in a professional one. Soliman (2016) also argued that these activities can enable the learners “to use their higher-order thinking skills that were mentioned in Bloom’s Taxonomy (1984) which include analysis, synthesis,

evaluation and creation" (p.125). The final but not the least aspect of a good learning experience is differentiated learning. Through the flipped classroom, learner differences are taken into account; these concern language competence, learning style, language learning pace, and other variables (Soliman, 2016).

The flipped classroom also has advantages for the teacher. The first benefit is reflected in a more efficient use of classroom time. Even with a limited number of face-to-face hours, flipping the classroom enables the instructor to 'get rid' of the theoretical material online so that the students get more time to watch/read it, grasp it, and ask questions. Chilingaryan & Zvereva (2017) for example suggested that, for a better teaching of writing, all the theoretical concepts have to be dealt with outside class so that the students can have more time to practice this skill in the classroom and where the students become more active. In this sense, low proficiency students will save time by asking questions that target a specific problem while the other students will not be slowed down by the less-able students. Another advantage is that, when transferring the theoretical part of a course online, for example on a learning management system, the teacher is able to "monitor the students' progress" and to identify areas of difficulty or "knowledge gaps" that need clarification or consolidation (Soliman, 2016). Additionally, the flipped classroom method raises the instructor awareness of her/his teaching strategies and helps to improve her/his teaching experience and overall practices (Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015).

Studies on the flipped classroom revealed that this method increases learners' motivation and interest, encourages self-efficacy and self-regulation, and decreases language anxiety particularly in EFL (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015; Chilingaryan & Zvereva, 2017). The flipped classroom was also investigated to develop the students'

speaking skills thanks to “the on-line and in-class discussions and forums that the students participate in” (Evseeva and Solozhenko, 2015; Soliman, 2016).

In addition to the advantages abovementioned, the flipped classroom enables the learners to access the course content 24/7 and to learn it at their own pace anywhere and this is particularly beneficial for shy students (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Harris et al., 2016). To make this possible, a supplementary benefit is the possibility for continual archiving of the material, which is practical for times of revision before tests or examinations (Chilingaryan & Zvereva, 2017).

The last and perhaps the most important advantage of the flipped classroom is that the flipped classroom is the best model for large classes, particularly to teach writing. Teaching writing to large classes is one of the problematic issues for instructors. Horning (2007) reported that researcher Trish Roberts-Miller from the University of Texas affirmed that effective instruction of writing cannot take place with a large number of students. Horning (2007) also asserted that if teachers have to engage their students into “doing and getting feedback, these activities can only be accomplished in small classes where students actually *do* a lot of writing” (p.14). She also reported that two national organizations (in the United Sates), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), a professional organization pertaining to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Association of Departments of English (ADE), a project of the Modern Language Association which is “the flagship organization for teachers of English and foreign languages”, recommended that for teaching writing, classes should not exceed twenty individuals per group of students. The reason is that, according to Light (as cited in Horning, 2007), small classes significantly impact the learners’ motivation and engagement which in turn lead to significant improvement of their writing skills.

Light also suggested that the amount of writing in a course and students' level of engagement are strongly related. Astin (as cited in Horning, 2007) stated that small classes are characterized by the number of writing courses students take, the large amount of feedback they receive from the instructor, the amount of written assignments they produce, and the utilization of word processors. These features greatly impact the students' engagement in the writing course, and therefore, lead to students' satisfaction. Teachers who have to handle large classes face major challenges in teaching writing, and often, they cannot go against the administration who tend to increase the number of students in classes, often, for practical matters. The flipped classroom can solve the problem of large classes by enabling the teacher to provide individualized instruction for the learners that focuses on their needs and problems (Kachka as cited in Danker, 2015). This can be achieved through one-on-one tutoring online as well as "small group discussions, peer-learning and inquiry-learning" onsite (Danker, 2015).

3.3.3.6. Limitations of the Flipped Classroom

Though the flipped classroom has a large potential for language learning, it has many disadvantages. First of all, adopting the flipped classroom model requires from the teacher to spend more time and more effort in designing the course and preparing course materials, which is even more challenging for instructors who use the flipped classroom for the first time (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015; Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016). One of the hardest parts of the process is the preparation of good quality videos that require the appropriate computer skills and the best equipment to achieve that. Even if the teachers rely on videos made by fellow teachers, they might spend much time to look for the best videos for their students in addition to the tasks they have to undertake in the classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). From a general perspective,

the flipped classroom requires careful preparation which can be time consuming. Danker (2015) explained that **"**out-of-class and in-class elements must be carefully integrated for students to understand the model and be motivated to prepare for the class" (p.175). Danker added that adopting the flipped classroom not only means additional work but also developing new skills for the instructor. Another problem with flipped instruction may stem from the students' attitudes. Change of pedagogy may be welcomed by the teachers but not by the learners (Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016), and even if the students may show positive attitudes, they may not be ready to change from traditional teaching to the flipped classroom (Halili & Zainuddin, 2015). Added to that, to make things work in the flipped classroom is not only the responsibility of the instructor but also of the learners. A flipped course cannot work if the students come to the classroom without preparation (Danker, 2015, Halili & Zainuddin, 2015; Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016). In other terms, the learners do not do online tasks that are necessary for classroom activities such as watching videos, doing a quiz, completing an assignment and so on, and this results in disturbing the organization of class work as the students do not have the necessary knowledge to participate in face-to-face activities, and even if the teacher can remedy this problem, it will generate more work and more effort from the instructor (Kachka as cited in Danker, 2015). Finally, the flipping a course might not work if the students do not have the necessary software and hardware and a reliable access to Internet (Danker, 2015; Ozdamli & Asiksoy, 2016).

3.3.3.7. Some Studies on the Flipped Classroom

Several research studies were undertaken to examine the effectiveness of flipped classroom method, and the outcomes were conclusive. Huang (as cited in Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015) found out that the flipped classroom has positive

effects on English language learners' academic performance, learning attitudes and participation levels. Ahmed (2016) mentioned other studies such as Webb, Doman, and Pusey (2014) who found out that flipping an EFL class promotes creativity and opportunities for higher order learning in the classroom, and Mireille (2014) whose study showed the positive attitudes of ESL learners towards flipping a writing course.

With regard to writing, the flipped classroom proved to have positive impacts particularly on EFL students' writing skills. In his study on the effects of flipping classroom on writing in EFL, Ahmed (2016) came out with interesting results. He concluded that the flipped classroom can overcome most of the writing problems of EFL learners by creating a learning environment which promotes student engagement, communication, decision-making opportunities, and independent learning. In the flipped classroom, the students have access to differentiated instruction, thus avoiding the "one size fit all" approach of traditional teaching. With two modes of content delivery, the students are able to "digest" the notions of paragraph and essay writing before attending face-to-face classroom and to complete assignments and various tasks under the guidance of the teacher in the classroom. Ahmed (2016) argued that it is the teachers' duty to find the best methods to develop their students' writing skills and language skills in general so they can become more effective and independent learners. With the available technology and appropriate implementation of this method, the teachers can really help their students experience a learning of better quality.

Finally, to exploit the positive potential of the flipped classroom, Evseeva and Solozhenko (2015) suggested that, for a successful flipped course, the technology should be "thoroughly integrated and planned", students language proficiency should be seriously taken into account as not all the students have the same level in English,

and students' participation has to be encouraged in online discussions, forums and chats in order to develop their speaking skills.

3.4. Evaluation of Blended Learning

Blended learning is an approach that was reported by many researchers to be very effective as it has several advantages, but it was also investigated to have some limitations.

3.4.1. Advantages of Blended Learning

Many studies reported the advantages of blended learning particularly in ELT. These concern the learning outcomes, affective variables, student-student and student-teacher relationship, flexibility, and practicality (some other benefits were already discussed in the flipped classroom section).

***Blended leaning makes learning more productive and produces better learning outcomes than traditional teaching*.** The fusion of face-to-face and online instruction results in more productive learning. This is embodied in "better teaching tools, more time, and informative data …[which] allows individual instruction in a regular classroom setting" (Camahalan & Ruley, 2014, p.2-3). The end result, then, is stronger learning outcomes compared to traditional teaching. Camahalan and Ruley (2014) reported a study by Shanley on student retention in blended learning. They explained that it is imperative for the learners to get a chance to learn with media technology before being introduced to important content in face-to-face interaction, and does not mean considering technology as an 'add-on' but rather incorporating it in the learning process and making it become part of the students' learning routine.

Blended learning reduces learning anxiety, particularly in FLL, and increases motivation. Learning a second/foreign language is influenced by two important

affective variables, anxiety and motivation (Liu & Huang, 2010). In general, anxiety refers to "a feeling of uneasy suspense" (Rachman as cited in Liu & Huang, 2010). However, in language learning, it has come to imply more than that. Horowitz, Horowitz, and Cope (1986) were the first to thoroughly research foreign language anxiety and defined it as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.128), and identified three elements compose it: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Liu and Huang (2010) explained that foreign language anxiety is regarded to be "responsible for students' negative emotional reactions to language learning since they had to deal with a totally foreign language and culture" (p.1). Wiltse (2001) suggested that a reasonable amount of anxiety can be favorable to learning as it augments motivation, increases attentiveness and concentration which lead to better language performance. Conversely, a higher level of anxiety has a negative impact on learner performance (Wiltse, 2001; Liu & Huang, 2010). Motivation, as a second affective variable, is also significant in foreign language learning and is highly affected by anxiety and self-efficacy. In other terms, these three components are mutually influential and deeply affect language learning outcomes (Liu, 2010). Because of its bimodal nature, blended learning has a positive impact on both foreign language anxiety and motivation. For example, Liu (2013) applied blended learning for an academic English writing (AEW) course in a Chinese university, and found out that bimodal presentation of content significantly reduced students' anxiety particularly due to the online course platform. She explained that, on the platform, both the instructor and the learners are able to exchange messages and to download and/or upload materials at their convenience. In addition to that, online learning makes the learners to feel more relaxed and less

apprehensive particularly for asking questions and engaging in discussions with their peers and their instructor. Online learning also allows exchange of immediate feedback which helps for timely adaptation of learning and teaching.

Blended learning has also the benefit of increasing student-student and teacher-student interactions thanks to the reduction of communication anxiety, increase of motivation that in turn encourages student autonomy (Liu, 2013). Blended learning is an approach that is compatible with certain emotional variables such as shyness. Geta and Olango (2016) argued that blended learning is very effective in motivating shy students as they are encouraged to participate and interact particularly in a virtual learning environment in synchronous and asynchronous activities such forums and chat where they can express themselves freely without the fear of being criticized. On the whole, "asynchronous text-based communication has some advantages over face-to-face instruction, such as providing time to reflect on what has been said and to craft thoughtful responses" (Borup, Graham, & Velasquez, 2011, p.41).

More importantly, blended learning offers flexibility and practicality. McCampbell (as cited in Kistow, 2011) highlighted the flexibility of blended learning through "integrating online applications into an existing course programme for the first time" and it the preservation of face-to-face interaction. A course can be transferred online but keeping part of it for the classroom since the aim of blended learning is to free classroom time for purposeful practice and interaction with the peers and the instructor; the online environment allows the students to explore course content, ask questions through forums and emails, for instance, to exploit selected web links to access more information on a given subject. Thus, learning will be improved by providing the learners with opportunities to keep in touch with the tutor as well as the peers and to create a sort of online community, and teaching will remain flexible

as the instructor will have the possibility of "editing and adapting the online course material to the needs of the students and course intended learning outcomes (Adas & Bakir, 2013, p.256). Blended learning is also practical for students who have work and family responsibilities (Ginns & Ellis, 2006) as well as for "reducing travel time and having great potential in the area of executive training" (Bonk & Graham as cited in Kistow, 2011, p.118) thus making learning cost-effective for both the learners and the institutions (Adas & Bakir, 2013). On the whole, the advantages of blended learning are sumarised by Thorne (2003, p.132) as follows:

- learning can be more targeted, focused, delivered bite-size, just-in-time;
- learners can interact with the tutor;
- learners can interact with their peers;
- learning materials are readily accessible;
- a variety of techniques can be utilized by maximizing different technologies;
- it can build on other off-the-job provision.

3.4.2. Disadvantages of Blended Learning

Blended learning has become a popular approach these last years, through research, it has proved to be very effective for second/foreign language instruction. Yet, blended learning holds some limitations as any other approach. In the literature little information is provided on the limitations of blended learning. Anderson, Bullen, Alltree and Thornton (2008) recognized the skeptical attitudes of faculty members as being one the limitations of blended learning. They explained that faculty staff may be "fearful of losing face and getting it wrong in front of students and peers if they used unfamiliar learning technologies" (p.38-39). Adas and Bakir (2013, p.256) for instance suggested "computer and internet accessibility, limited knowledge in the use of technology, and lack of computer labs on university campus" as other

disadvantages of blended learning. Riley (2013) and Zappia (n.d.) both agreed that the limitations of blended learning are reflected in the three agents that make it up: the learner, the instructor, and technology. For the learner, the disadvantages of blended learning concern social issues such as lack of social interaction on-campus and a feeling of isolation, and problems of time, organization, and reliable computer or Internet access, three major requirements of online courses. For the teacher, designing a blended course may be problematic. Riley (2013) argued that "Blended learning is not simply pre-recording lectures and power points and putting them online for students to access. Teachers need consider what is the best method to teach the concept and then use this information to design the course." Managing a blended course can also be strenuous requiring more efforts than in the traditional classroom. For technology, problems may occur when teachers fail to effectively integrate it in the overall course, and this joins the problem of course design. However, the best description of the limitations of blended learning was perhaps made by Scott Winstead in his article "6 Disadvantages of Blended Learning You Have to Cope With". Winstead (n.d.) first identified the limitation of "the technology challenge" that he divided in two parts. The first one concerns the material and human resources of the institution in terms of "building the essential infrastructure within an educational institution or particular class", "required IT workforce" and budget to invest in software and hardware that often tend to be costly. The second part in the 'technology challenge' concerns the willingness of "all stakeholders of the learning process" to cope with the requirements of blended learning, that is "solid tech support and trainers", "a blended learning community", and organization. Winstead added that the 'old school' mentality may represent a major obstacle to the implementation of blended learning pedagogy. The second limitation of blended learning according to

Winstead (n.d.) is “pace of advancement”. Here he referred to a problem of synchronization that can occur with the blended course. Winstead suggested that, for instance, the use of videos as part of the learning process may not be the same for the learners: some would decide not to respect the schedule, and watch all the videos altogether while some other learners would prefer to “make the interactive class part of their daily/weekly routine”. These two students’ attitudes would make the synchronization of online and offline work very discouraging for the teacher. Another limitation presented by Winstead was already mentioned by Riley (2013) and Zappia (n.d.) and which concerns heavy workload for the teacher. What Winstead (n.d.) added to what was previously mentioned about this is that blended learning represents a paradigm shift for the teacher who, at the early stages of blending, may find serious difficulties particularly in selecting the right syllabus and “the right ratio between face-to-face and online learning”. Cognitive load, still according to Winstead (n.d.), is another limitation that may stem from teachers who are new to blended learning. This concerns teachers “overdelivering content and educational activities” for the students, a strategy that may do more harm than good. The last limitation described by Winstead (n.d.) is plagiarism and credibility. He explained that, as the students get used to Internet and online interaction for learning, they might be tempted to “cheat” when doing tasks online. Instead of figuring out answers by themselves, they might ask other people online or ask their peers. The second problem is the credibility of certain online resources. Winstead (n.d.) recommended that teachers have “to make learners aware of the perils of unverified online resources, such as bias, distortion and misrepresentation of facts”.

3.5. Blended Learning in Higher Education

Blended learning has become a much popular approach that has become widely applied in English Language Teaching. Many studies were undertaken in on various subjects ranging from the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing, to other aspects of the language such as vocabulary and grammar, and variables affecting language learning such as foreign language anxiety, motivation, learning styles and many more. Solid evidence is provided on the effectiveness of blended learning on foreign language learning, particularly in the case of writing. This section will outline evidence from ELT cases that provide the rationale for adopting blended learning for learning/teaching writing, some guidelines for implementation as well as caveats.

3.5.1. Some Examples from English Language Teaching

An ever growing number of studies are reported in the field of ELT holding much promise on the effectiveness of this novel approach. Liu (2013) explained that empirical studies on blended learning in ELT are classified under two headings: comparison and non-comparison studies. According to Liu (2013), comparison studies "examine the effectiveness of blended learning by comparing blended instruction (face-to-face together with CALL instruction) with traditional instruction (face-to-face without CALL instruction)" (p.302) whereas non-comparison studies "investigate blended learning program design and implementation, and attitudes towards blended learning held by teachers and students" (p.302). Liu added that in all the studies CALL instruction either takes place in computer lab or at students' homes through CALL programs, learning management systems (LMS), and the web, occasionally in combination with computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools. Many studies of

the effectiveness of blended learning in language learning in an EFL context were undertaken but only few examples will be reported in this section.

With focus on listening, Abdullah (2015) conducted a study which aimed at improving the listening skills of EFL students through a blended learning strategy. The study involved 26 post-graduate students enrolled in TEFL Diploma at Graduate Studies in Education, Cairo University. The study lasted one semester that involved the participants and the researcher to meet during nine face-to-face sessions with a duration of two hours per session. The online instruction consisted in e-listening units including a retrospective questionnaire. The blended learning strategy that Abdullah used involved five stages: explicit explanation, modeling, guided practice, self-paced practice and reflection. The results of the study indicated that blended learning was effective in developing the participants' listening skill after the treatment phase. It also indicated an enhancement of listening sub-skills: *identifying the main idea of a spoken text, extracting specific details, drawing inferences, recognizing lexical chunks and phrases, drawing conclusions, and recognizing organizational pattern of a spoken text.*

Another study conducted by AbuRezk (2015) investigated the impact of blended learning on the speaking skills of EFL college students. Thirty-five 3rd level English Major female students were enrolled in a speaking class at College of Education-Majmaah University (Saudi Arabia) and were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The study involved the use of *Jusur LMS*. The participants were required to learn eight units of *Interactions 2* listening and speaking course for three hours per week: one hour was devoted to online work and two hours to face-to-face instruction. The experiment lasted 12 weeks and was concluded by a posttest to determine the effects of the online speaking course via *Jusur LMS*. The results showed

that there was a statistically significant difference between the results of the two groups at the posttest. The effectiveness of the blended strategy used in this study was due to the presence of features that were habitually absent in traditional classrooms. One of the main features is interaction that increased students' engagement, attentiveness, curiosity and readiness to learn. Interaction occurred at three levels: *student-to-student, student-to-instructor, and student-to-content/materials.*

In the area of the reading skill, Behjat, Yamini and Bagheri (2012) undertook a comparative study to discover which of the conventional or blended learning environments has a better impact on the reading comprehension of EFL learners. To this aim, 107 sophomore (13 males and 94 females) Iranian students majoring in English at Abadeh Islamic Azad University and Zand Institute of Higher Education in Shiraz were enrolled. The participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group, and as an initial step, their English reading comprehension was assessed with the First Version of Oxford Quick Placement Test (2004), and results of the pretest showed no difference in the level of reading comprehension for both groups. The treatment phase consisted in instructing the two groups for eight weeks with two hours per week. Instruction for both groups consisted in reading lessons in the traditional classroom combined with out-of-class activities. The difference is that the control group students were given printed reading comprehension texts to study to be complemented with a summary of the read texts, whereas the experimental-group students were assigned Web-based activities on the teacher's blogs. The students were required to go to the blog after finishing their classes and do their homework online by posting their assignments on the blog. At the end of the treatment phase, both the control and experimental group undertook a posttest using the Oxford Quick Placement Test (version Two). The results of the test indicated that the experimental

group achieved better scores than the control group. The researchers concluded that blended learning is has a positive impact on EFL Iranian students.

Concerning vocabulary, Djiwandono (2013) conducted a small-scale study on the effectiveness of blended learning on EFL learners' mastery of vocabulary. Djiwandono involved an intact class of twenty-one EFL students in the study that was designed on a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental model. The experimental group was administered a pretest consisting of Nation and Laufer's (1990) 5000-word level test, the middle-semester scores, and the two final tests. The instructional phase, which lasted 16 weeks (a semester), consisted in vocabulary lessons with 100 minutes for a lesson per week. The online part of the instruction consisted in reading authentic texts and using "a vocabulary profiler" (a website) that classified the words encountered in the texts into several categories of vocabulary. The next step consisted in selecting the words that did not belong to the specified categories and providing a glossary for those words, then post the text from which the words were profiled and the glossary on a blog designed by the instructor. With time, the blog contained several texts and a rich glossary, and was used for instruction in the form of readings as a means to notice the new words and their meaning. This strategy allowed the exchange among the learners leading to the creation of "a virtual learning exchange in the cyberspace". The face-to-face part of this blended course consisted in a classroom session devoted to check and consolidate the students' understanding of the new words using questions/answers and to allow more student and teacher interaction to solve problems that could not be dealt with online. At the end of the treatment phase, the participants were administered a posttest consisting of two tests: the first test aimed at measuring the students' mastery of the 5000-word level test and the second test intended to measure the students' mastery of new vocabulary from the blog. The

results indicated that there was a major gain in students' vocabulary due to the application of blended learning.

3.5.2. Blended Learning and the Teaching of Composition

Blended learning as an approach has recently received special attention in the context of teaching writing. Several studies have indicated that this approach is effective in developing the writing skill of ELT students particularly in an EFL context. Justifications, guidelines for implementation and caveats of blended learning will be discussed in this setion.

3.5.2.1. Rationale for Blended Learning in English as a Foreign Language Writing

Nowadays, the main goal of higher education is to train the students to become active members of a society which is rapidly evolving in this digital age. To achieve this goal, university students need to acquire the necessary competencies for both their academic, social, and professional survival. This cannot happen unless higher education pedagogy shifts from traditional teaching to a constructivist view of learning where it is perceived as "an active and communal process whereby students build knowledge and construct meaning through interaction with others" (Albhnsawy & Aliweh, 2016, p.131). With the rapid growth of ICTs and Internet, new learning technologies are now available that make it possible "to move lectures which traditionally take place inside the classroom to outside the classroom and learning activities which occur outside the classroom to inside the classroom with the guidance of the instructor" (Uzunboylu & Karagozlu, 2015, p.143). Accordingly, concerning EFL writing, it becomes crucial for instructors "to employ effective methods of teaching that enhance students' ability to communicate ideas and feelings via writing" (Keshta & Harb, 2013, p.208). The reason is that the traditional teaching of writing

has several limitations that were shown through research. For examples, Liu (2013) reported studies by Coryell and Chlup (2007) and Colakoglu and Akdemir (2010) on the fact that FL traditional face-to-face instruction produces poor instructional outcomes. This is due to the instructional design that fails to include appropriate motivational strategies when introducing challenging topics in the classroom. Other limitations were discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2, and some of which involve a standardization of learning by applying the "one size fits all" approach to writing which does not take into consideration variations in learners in terms of individual needs, language abilities, and learning styles. Additionally, traditional teaching might not adequately prepare the learners for the professional life.

Through the literature, blended learning proved its effectiveness on several occasions particularly in an EFL context. In the field of writing, blended learning offers several advantages. For instance, Challob, Abu Bakar, and Latif (2016) found out that a blended pedagogy offers collaborative work and more communication opportunities, more opportunities to continuously practice writing in the classroom thus offering a better learning experience, more gain of linguistic and writing knowledge, increase of the students' writing pace, more creativity in writing and psychological relaxation.

Many studies investigated the impact of blended learning on the writing skill from various perspectives. For instance, Liu (2013) conducted a study in AWE course, and described and evaluated the course in terms of design, material development and presentation, assignment submission and grading, student involvement, teacher reflection, and student evaluation. The results indicated that the participants were very much satisfied with the blended course since it contributed to increase student-student and student-teacher interactions, reduce communication anxiety, motivate the students

to become (more) independent and autonomous, and to enhance their academic English writing ability. This satisfaction was due to for instance the use of an online platform that facilitated communication and provided access to numerous links and online tools (such as online dictionaries) as well as access to a large amount of information. The online platform also allowed the submission and grading of students' assignments. The instructor was able to correct and give feedback on students' writing thanks to the electronic form of the assignments. Therefore, the students were able to notice their mistakes as well as the changes and suggestions provided by their instructor. The students were also able to generate several drafts of the same writing assignment and this helped them compare the version to see the evolution of their writing. Another study were undertaken by Adas and Bakir (2013) that sought to show the impact of new educational policies (such as blended learning) on the writing skills of EFL students and the limitations of the traditional approach of teaching writing that was qualified as "outdated" by the authors. The study combined traditional face-to-face teaching with an online course on Moodle. The results of the experiment showed that blended learning is an effective approach to develop the students' writing in terms of content, coherence, grammatical structure and mechanics. In another study, Challob et al. (2016) investigated the the effects of collaborative blended learning writing environment on students' writing apprehension and writing performance of EFL learners in a Malaysian context. The results indicated that the learners positively perceived the collaborative blended learning writing environment they had evolved in. They realized the benefits of the collaborative blended learning activities in reducing their writing anxiety and improving their writing performance in terms of micro and macro aspects of writing. The learners also found that online discussions and the use of a blog greatly helped them with the writing tasks.

3.5.2.2. Guidelines for Implementation

By adopting blended learning to teach writing, the teachers are offered new possibilities and more opportunities to use their expertise, to apply their vision of how writing is best taught, and to cater for the needs of their students and their individual differences. However, to adopt a blended learning approach to language learning, instructors as well as the academic officials have to consider several variables or a 'framework'. Many blended learning frameworks were developed, but the best one appears to be *Khan's Octagonal Framework* (Figure 3.3).

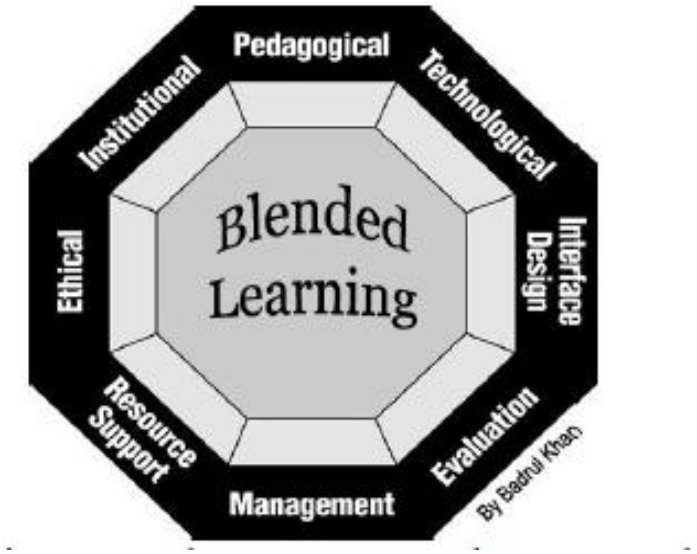


Figure 3.3. Khan's Octagonal Framework (Azizan, 2010, p.462)

Khan's Octagonal Framework has eight aspects as shown in the figure above: institutional, pedagogical, technological, interface design, evaluation, management, resource support, and ethical. This framework gives the 'big picture' about blended pedagogy. Azizan (2010, p.463) explained that each aspect of the framework "represents a category of issues that need to be addressed. These issues help organize

thinking, and ensure that the resulting learning program creates a meaningful learning experience", and these issues can be explained as follows:

- *Institutional*: "issues concerning organizational, administrative, academic affairs, and student services.
- *Pedagogical*: issues of "the combination of content that has to be delivered (content analysis), the learners' needs (audience analysis), and learning objectives (goal analysis)" and issues of "the design and strategy aspect of e-learning".
- *Technological*: concerns with "the need for the most suitable learning management system (LMS) that would manage multiple delivery types and a learning content management system (LCMS) that catalogs the actual content (online content modules) for the learning program". Other issues concern the "technical requirements" which encompass aspects such as "the server that supports the learning program, access to the server, bandwidth and accessibility, security, and other hardware, software, and infrastructure issues".
- *Interface Design*: this concerns "the user interface of each element in the blended learning program."
- *Evaluation*: this addresses "the usability of a blended learning program. The program should have the capability to evaluate how effective a learning program has been as well as evaluating the performance of each learner."
- *Management*: this has to do with "the management of a blended learning program, such as infrastructure and logistics to manage multiple delivery types."
- *Resource Support*: this concerns "making different types of resources (offline and online) available for learners as well as organizing them."

- *Ethical*: this is related to the "ethical issues that need to be addressed when developing a blended learning program such as equal opportunity, cultural, diversity, and nationality."

In a more restricted view, Neumeier (2005, p.166-175) proposed six key criteria for designing blended learning environments for language learning and teaching. These are: *mode, model of integration, distribution of learning content and objectives, language teaching methods, involvement of learning subjects (students, teachers and computers),* and *location.*

1. Mode

Mode refers to the way instruction will be delivered and is divided into three aspects:

- ***Focus on* mode**: it concerns selecting the lead mode (face-to-face or online) which is crucial to make everything clear about the course design. This is done by assessing the learning aims, the learning subjects (students and teachers) and the available infrastructural resources.
- ***Distribution of modes*:** this is related to the percentage of the learning process that takes place in each mode (face-to-face or CALL).
- ***Choice of modes*:** this concerns decisions on the components of face-to-face and CALL modes to integrate in the course design, in other terms "online or offline self-access learning, synchronous and asynchronous communication, whiteboards", and so on.

2. Model of integration

This refers to the way the modes of delivery will be integrated. This parameter is divided into two aspects:

- ***Sequencing of modes*:** This concerns the way the modes of delivery and their sub-modes will be sequenced, for example using an alternate sequence of face-to-face phases with one online sub-mode like chat or e-mail.
- ***Level of integration:*** This aspect is related to whether some components in the course are obligatory or optional. For instance, in certain situations, face-to-face phases are obligatory, but some online activities such as synchronous interaction (chat) are optional.

3. Distribution of learning content and objectives

This can be done in two ways: parallel or isolated. For example, if the blended course involves developing the learners' speaking skills, this means that learning and teaching of speaking will take place in both modes (face-to-face and online) in parallel. For instance, a new topic will be introduced online then practiced in a role-play in a face-to-face session.

4. Language teaching methods

In CALL mode, there are not many options of teaching methods as these are determined by the computer programme used. This is related to the face-to-face mode. However, in the face-to-face mode, more options of teaching methods are available depending on the teacher's beliefs, vision of learning, and experience. Teachers can for example choose one method (Task Based Learning, for instance) or a combination of several methods, in other terms, eclecticism.

5. Involvement of learning subjects (students, teachers and computers)

This parameter involves the followings:

- ***Interactional patterns:*** This has to do with the ways the three learning subjects are going to interact. For example, in face-to-face mode, interaction can take place through individual work, pair work and group work. The same can take place in CALL mode where the computer will take part in the interactional process (p.173-174).
- ***Variety of teacher and learner roles:*** In a bimodal instruction, teacher's and student's roles can vary according to context and purpose. A teacher can be a resource, an aid, a partner, or a facilitator; a student can "act as recipients, as partners in an activity or as peer teachers and experts in a certain domain of the learning process and content" (Neumeier 2005, p.174).
- ***Level of learner autonomy:*** In blended learning, learner autonomy is an important issue. Students are encouraged to take initiatives and to become independent; however, in certain situations, they have to "hand over responsibility".

6. *Location*

Location refers to the place where learning will take place. This can be for example in a classroom, at home, outdoors, in a language lab, or at a bus top. In addition to that mobile technologies can expand the range of learning locations.

To design a blended writing course, De Gregorio-Godeo (2006, p.126) suggested the following guidelines:

- identifying learning needs
- selecting appropriate materials, in particular online resources
- choosing working procedures and techniques
- organising personal work in terms of timetable, length and duration of sessions;
- encouraging self-assessment

3.5.2.4. Caveats of Blended Learning

Blended learning has a promising potential that can significantly and positively impact the teaching of writing. Yet, applying this new pedagogy can be taxing. The following proposed challenges do not specifically concern the teaching of writing but any area of ELT:

- Anderson, Bullen, Alltree and Thornton (2008, p.39) suggested that "student registration and administrative processes" can be a daunting task.
- Alhawiti (as cited in Al Zumor, Al Refaai, Bader Eddin & Al-Rahman, 2013, p.102) observed that "poor technical expertise and infrastructure are the major barriers that prevent faculty members from adopting online education".

Based on their study on blended learning in the context of EFL writing, Keshta and Harb (2013, p.213) named the following challenges:

1. Ensuring participants' ability to use technology successfully.
2. Overcoming the idea that blended is not as effective as traditional teaching.
3. Managing and monitoring participant progress.
4. Matching the best delivery medium to the performance objective.
5. Keeping online offerings interactive rather than just "talking at" participants.
6. Frustration, confusion, anger, anxiety and similar emotional states that may result from interaction can negatively influence productivity, learning, social relationships and overall well-being.

Conclusion

Theories about learning in the twenty-first century have evolved and have changed the way language learning has to take place. It is believed that, because of the

fusion of information and communication technologies and education, and because today's students, the "digital natives", are seen to learn differently from their teachers, a pedagogy that is comprehensive, flexible, and learner-centered should be developed and adopted to encourage our students to become more active, self-reliant, and motivated to achieve academic success.

Blended learning, by its bimodal nature, offers the instructors invaluable opportunities to exercise their expertise and creativity to realize the full potential of their students. Nonetheless, no perfection exists in this world, and blended learning is no exception. Adopting a blended approach to language learning is an appealing but risky enterprise if careful analysis of the existing learning situation, planning of the whole scheme, and appropriate design of a blended course are not achieved. The foremost caution about applying blended learning for in ELT is first to ask the stakeholders of the learning process, that is the students. Today's learners have something to say concerning the way they learn and how they wanted to take place. Their attitudes, views and wishes if taken into account can provide teachers, course designers, and faculty members valuable information on how to apply blended learning. Not taking into account the learners' opinions might make the teachers run the risk to lose the trust of their students.

Chapter Four: The Students' Perceptions and Attitudes about the Learning of Composition and the Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Developing Composition Skills in Higher Education

Introduction

Teaching writing is an intricate task as it requires informed choices and selection of effective strategies by the instructor. Yet, lapses can happen along the way due to either an incorrect assessment of the students' capacities and needs or a lack of discernment of what the learners are expected to accomplish at the end of a learning cycle. For that purpose, and in order to anticipate and/or limit those lapses, resorting to a questionnaire addressed to the learners could provide the instructor with valuable information that could help diagnose shortcomings in the way the learners are being instructed in order to find solutions to existing flaws as the instructor has only one perspective of the process that the learners' view can complement in order to have a complete picture of the whole process. The current study requires the use of a questionnaire, a qualitative research tool that yields answers to questions central to this study.

4.1. Population and the Sample

The following study targeted EFL second year students at the Department of Letters and English, at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine. To gather information about the students' perceptions and attitudes about the learning of composition and the role of Internet and mobile technologies in higher education, one fifth of the total population, which represents 373 students, was chosen. The sample of the students selected for this study is 75; they were randomly chosen amongst various groups.

The aim behind choosing Second Year students was determined by certain parameters. First, learning to write essays is vital for students in the sense that, in the second year of their majoring, the students are trained throughout the academic year to

write essays, a skill that is critical to the Third Year and the Master level. In their first year, the students are introduced to paragraph writing and some key concepts like unity, coherence, parallelism, wordiness, and sentence fragments; then in the second year, and based on the assumption that most students acquired those basic skills in their first year, the curriculum involves understanding and developing other composition skills that necessitate those basic skills acquired in the first year. The second parameter is that second year students have enough maturity and experience to give their opinions and perceptions about certain issues like the instructor's teaching method, types of tasks undertaken in the classroom, learning problems, and learning preferences.

4.2. The Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire

The present questionnaire (Appendix I) aims at knowing the students' attitudes and perceptions about the learning of writing, information and communication technologies, and the potential role of the latter in enhancing the students' composition skills. The justification behind resorting to this questionnaire is that many issues concerning the learning of writing and what takes place in the classroom have to be addressed.

The questionnaire was handed in to several groups of Second Year students at the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 the same day in the morning. The questionnaires were filled in by the students under their teachers' supervision and in the presence of the researcher. No feedback of any sort was provided to the respondents, and the all of the questionnaires were collected the same day.

4.2.1. Description of the Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of 33 questions that were organized into five sections each focusing on a particular issue. The first section, named "Learning Writing", is made up of 11 questions. The questions tackles certain matters like students' aims and expectations about learning to write at university (Q1-Q3), students' perceptions of writing in general and of the process of writing in particular (Q4-Q8), teacher's feedback (Q9 and Q10), and teaching materials used in the classroom (Q11). The second section, labeled "Learning Preferences, Learning Styles, and Motivation", is concerned with certain aspects that are important in the learning process but which may not be given enough consideration in the writing classroom. Six questions (Q12-Q17) are selected to check the abovementioned aspects. Section Three, "Use of Technology in Learning Writing", as its label indicates, focuses on an issue that has never been taken into account, or at least, was not given enough attention at the Department of Letters and English. The aim of Section Three is to check the place of Internet and mobile technologies in the development of students' writing skills, and the way they perceive the use or non use of ICT by their teachers in teaching them to write. To that end, seven questions (Q18-Q24) are designed. It has to be noted that the term "technology" was used instead of "ICT" or "Internet and mobile technologies" in order for students to relate to a more general concept. The fourth section is devoted to "Blended Learning", and it includes eight questions. From Q25 to Q29, the aim is to identify issues that may occur beyond the classroom, in other terms, problems that the students may face once they have left the classroom and when the "face-to-face" contact with their teachers of writing is over. Q30 to Q32 are about students' opinions concerning blended learning. The last section, "Further

Suggestions", includes one question, which provides the respondents with a space for further comments or suggestions.

All the multiple response questions of this questionnaire are analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Spss) to determine the frequency of responses. The other questions are all analysed with Microsoft Excel 2007.

4.2.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results of the Students' Questionnaire

Section One: Learning Writing

Q1. At the university, you are learning to write: (you can tick more than one answer)

a. to become skilled at academic writing

b. to produce different types of texts (expository, cause and effect, and so on) and text genres (summaries, reports, research proposals, and so on)

c. to express yourself better through writing

d. because it is obligatory

e. because it helps you improve the grades of other modules

f. because it is critical to succeed

g. Other: Please, specify: ……

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. to become skilled at academic writing	55	32.20	73.33
b. to produce different types of texts (expository, cause and effect, and so on) and text genres (summaries, reports, research proposals, and so on)	23	13.50	30.67
c. to express yourself better through writing	49	28.70	65.33
d. because it is obligatory	11	06.40	14.67
e. because it helps you improve the grades of other modules	23	13.50	30.67
f. because it is critical to succeed	10	05.80	13.33
g. Other	0	0	0
Total	**171**	**100**	**228**

Table 4.1. Frequencies of Learning Aims

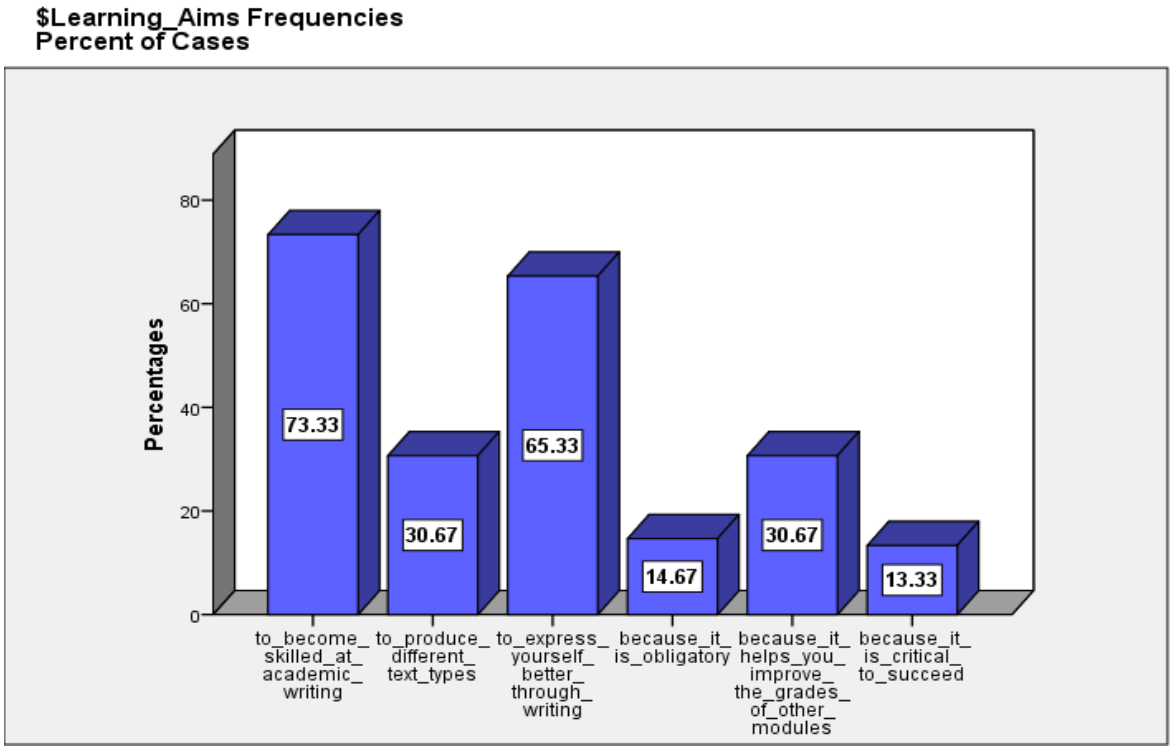


Figure 4.1. Frequencies of Learning Aims

Q1 tackles a central issue in language learning which is students' learning aims. The question provided the respondents with several options. The suggested aims are the most probable aims that students can be concerned with. A last option "other" was included in case the students had other aims. The results that were obtained were summarized in Table 4.1. According to the results, "to become skilled at academic writing" and "to express yourself better through writing" are the aims that received the highest proportions (73.33% and 65.33% respectively) since they were selected several times which explains the percentages of cases.

Q2. Has your teacher explained to you what writing skills and sub-skills you are supposed to have developed by the end of the academic year?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	67	89.33
No	08	10.67
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.2. Students' Understanding of Course Objectives

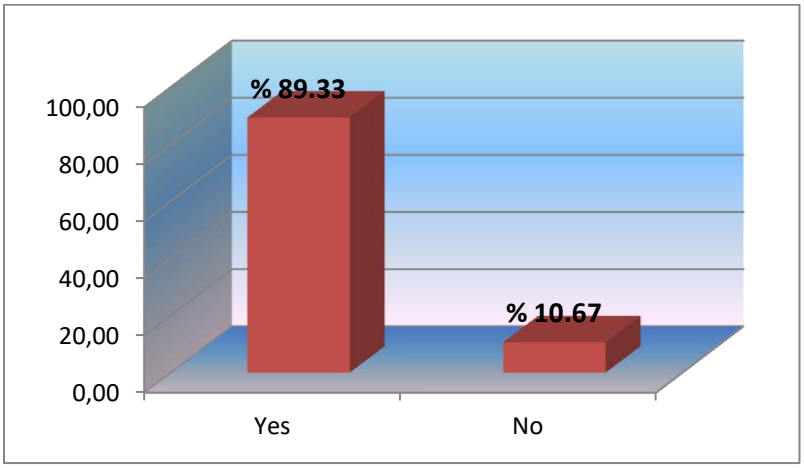


Figure 4.2. Students' Understanding of Course Objectives

The aim of Q2 is to check whether, at the beginning of the academic year, the teachers of writing explained to their students the course objectives that they were supposed to attain at the end of instruction. Normally, this question should have been asked to the teachers, but it was quite interesting to know whether students paid attention to what their teachers said at the beginning of the academic year. It happens

that when students meet their teachers for the first time, they do not give much importance to what the teachers say about the course objectives and the syllabus, and often, the students complain about not understanding the purpose of learning certain aspects of the subject being taught. The results obtained for Q2 show that 89.33% of the respondents testify that their teachers of writing made it clear to them about what composition skills they were expected to have developed by the end of the academic year. Only 10.67% of the respondents negatively responded to Q2, and most probably those students were either absent or did not pay attention to their teachers' explanations.

Q3. Does what you have expected to learn/develop as writing skills during this academic year correspond to what you are currently learning in the Written Expression classroom?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	66	88
No	09	12
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.3. Correspondence of the Students' Learning Expectations and Course Objectives

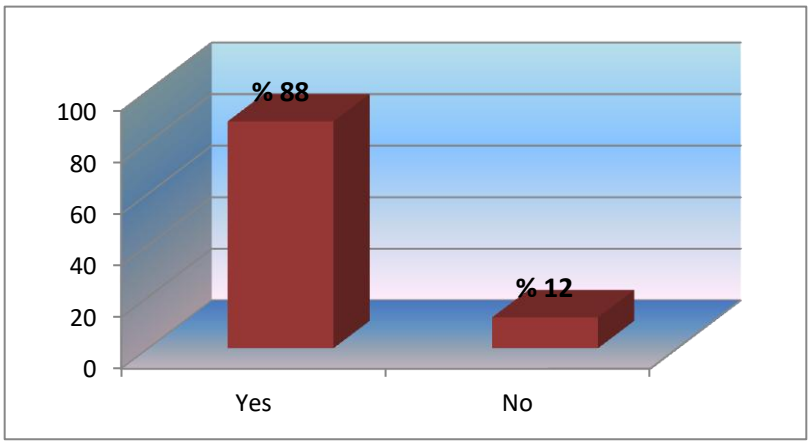


Figure 4.3. Correspondence of the Students' Learning Expectations and Course Objectives

In this question, the purpose was to check if there was a match between the students' learning expectations and course objectives. Table 4.3. shows that there is indeed a large correspondence between the students' learning expectations and the course objectives set by their teachers with a rate of 88%.

Q4. Which of the following aspects do you consider the most problematic in learning to write? (you can tick more than one answer)

a. Finding the appropriate ideas

b. Organization of ideas

c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed

d. Choosing the appropriate mode of essay development

e. Parts of the essay (thesis, topic sentences, and so on)

f. Vocabulary choice

g. Grammar

h. Mechanics (punctuation, spelling, paragraphing)

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. Finding the appropriate ideas	38	19.20	50.67
b. Organization of ideas	26	13.10	34.67
c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed	22	11.10	29.33
d. Choosing the appropriate mode of essay development	22	11.10	29.33
e. Parts of the essay (thesis, topic sentences, and so on)	24	12.10	32
f. Vocabulary choice	29	14.60	38.67
g. Grammar	15	07.60	20
h. Mechanics (punctuation, spelling, paragraphing)	22	11.10	29.33
Total	**198**	**100**	**264**

Table 4.4. Problematic Aspects in Learning to Write

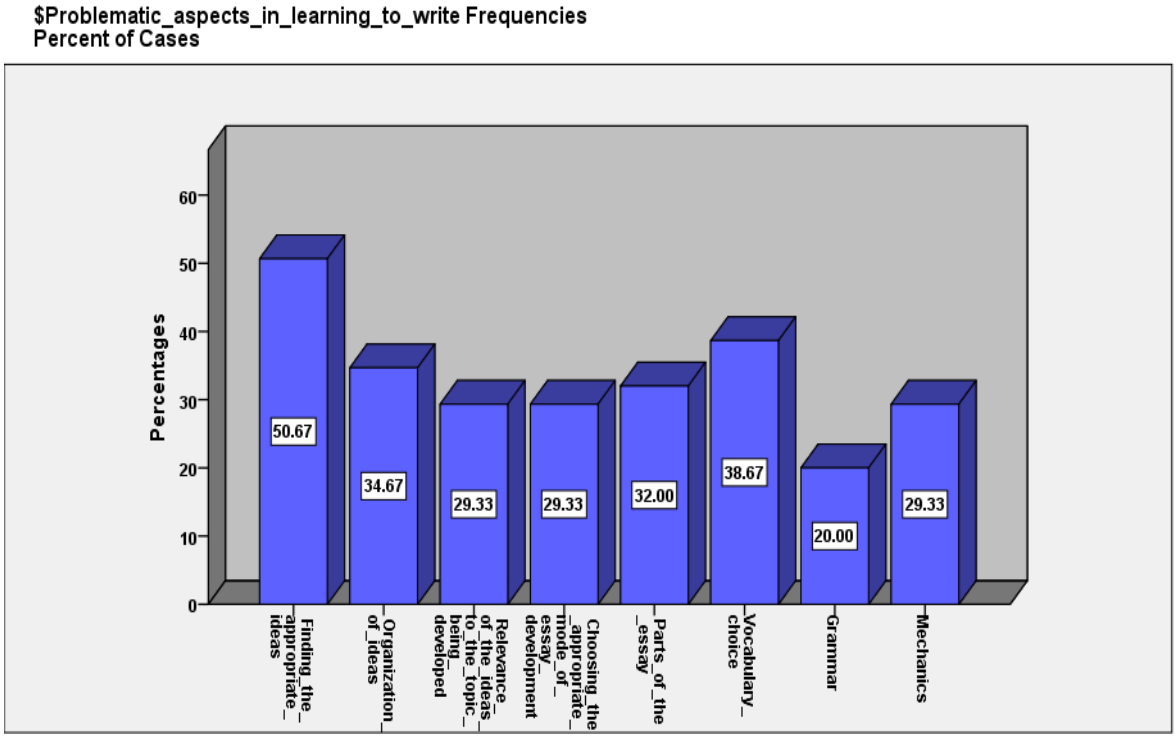


Figure 4.4. Problematic Aspects in Learning to Write

Q4 focuses on the aspects linked to essay writing. In this question, the students were asked to select the aspect that they find most problematic in learning to write. Eight items were suggested each representing one element of a standard essay. The first item "finding the appropriate ideas" is linked to the planning stage of the process of writing, and it is generally the hardest part that students have to go through before starting to draft their essays as they have to thoroughly think about the subject using, most of the time, their background knowledge. The second item "organization of ideas" refers to coherence; the third item "relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed" has to do with unity. It has to be mentioned that though item 1 and item 3 seem to be alike, they each refer to a particular aspect of essay writing. "Choosing the appropriate mode of essay development" is the fourth item and it is linked to coherence. The reason why no item named "coherence" was used instead is that coherence is achieved through four ways: repeating key nouns that act as reminders

for the reader about the topic being discussed or for avoiding confusion, using pronouns to avoid unnecessary repetition, using transition words and phrases (also called linking words) to the ideas discussed in the essay to each other depending on the logical relationship that the writer wants to express be it addition, opposition, result, consequence, conclusion, and so on; and arranging the ideas into some kind of logical order often referred to 'type of development' that ranges from chronological, exemplification, cause and effect, and so on. Accordingly, it was more logical to ask the students about the abovementioned elements of coherence separately for a better understanding of the most problematic aspects to the learners. Item five "parts of the essay" deals with the major "blocks" of the essay namely the introductory paragraph and the concluding paragraph which are often called "special paragraphs", which are paragraphs that do not apply to some rules that the developmental paragraphs apply to, and the developmental paragraphs. The last three items, that is "vocabulary choice", "grammar" and "mechanics" are related to the way the ideas are shaped or structured. As Q4 is a multiple response question, frequency analysis of the responses was used, and the results were summarized in Table 4.4. By observing the results, the aspect that received the highest percentage is "finding the appropriate ideas" with a proportion of 50,67%. "Vocabulary choice", with a proportion of 38,67%, and "organization of ideas" with a proportion of 34,67% are also considered as problematic.

Q5. Which of the following stages of the writing process is the hardest for you? (You can tick more than one answer)

a. Planning or Prewriting (gathering ideas, writing an outline, and so on)

b. Drafting (linking ideas to make up paragraphs, using cohesive devices, and so on)

c. Revising (checking for unity, coherence, examples/arguments, and so on)

d. Editing (checking errors in mechanics, grammar, and so on)

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. Planning or Prewriting (gathering ideas, writing an outline, and so on)	49	46.70	65.33
b. Drafting (linking ideas to make up paragraphs, using cohesive devices, and so on)	18	17.10	24
c. Revising (checking for unity, coherence, examples/arguments, and so on)	19	18.10	25.33
d. Editing (checking errors in mechanics, grammar, and so on)	19	18.10	25.33
Total	**105**	**100**	**140**

Table 4.5. Most Difficult Stages of the Writing Process

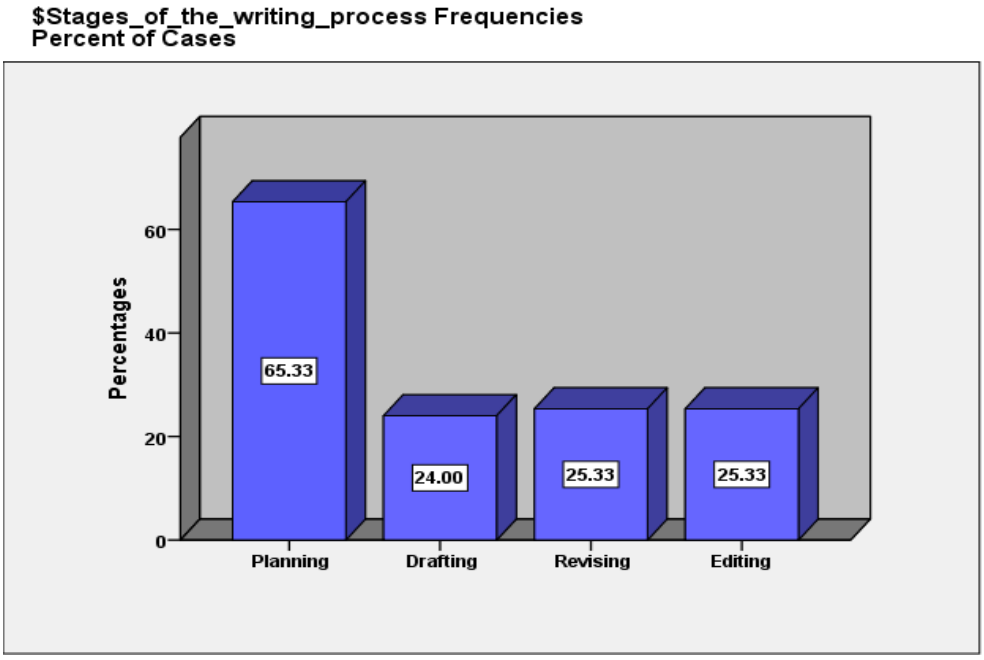


Figure 4.5. Most Difficult Stages of the Writing Process

Q5 focuses on an essential issue about essay writing and which is the process of writing. More and more teachers currently follow the process-oriented approach in teaching writing to their students at the Department of Letters and English Language as that approach proved to be effective under certain circumstances. Since their first year, the students are introduced to the stages of the writing process; however, the extent of the students' command of the different stages of the process remains questionable. According to Table 4.5., 65.33% of the respondents designated 'planning' as the hardest stage of the process of writing compared to drafting, revising and editing.

Q6. How often do you practise writing (writing outlines and drafts, revising and editing drafts) in the classroom?

a. Always

b. Often

c. Sometimes

d. Rarely

e. Never

Scale	N	%
a. Always	18	24
b. Often	28	37
c. Sometimes	26	35
d. Rarely	03	04
e. Never	00	00
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.6. Frequency of the Writing Tasks in the Classroom

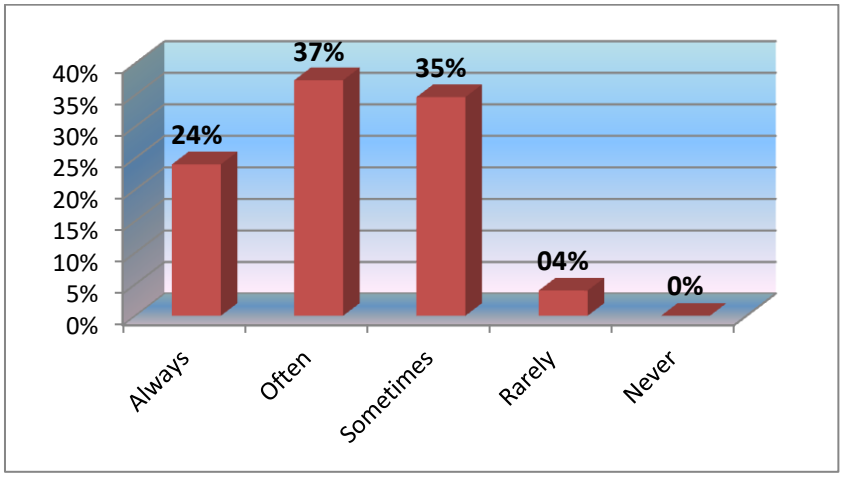


Figure 4.6. Frequency of the Writing Tasks in the Classroom

Q6 focuses on the frequency of practicing writing in the classroom. A five item Likert scale was used for this purpose. As it is indicated in Table 5.6., 37% of the students stated that they often practise writing in the classroom, 35% of the participants mentioned that they sometimes practice writing in the classroom whereas 24% said they always practice writing in the classroom.

Q7. Does your teacher engage you fully in the process of writing?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	69	92
No	06	08
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.7. Students' Practice of the Writing Process

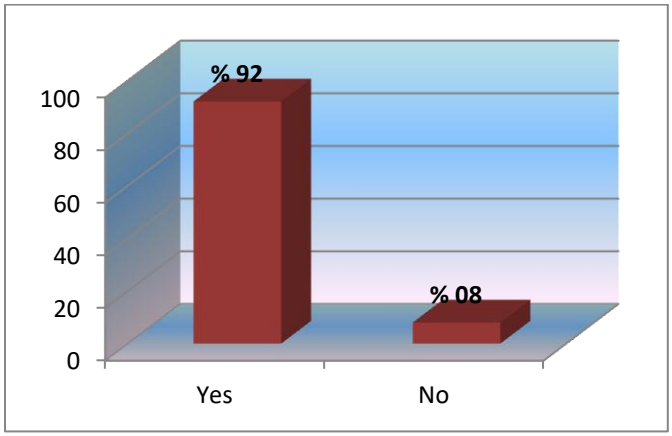


Figure 4.7. Students' Practice of the Writing Process

Table 4.7. displays the results obtained for Q7 about the process of writing. 92% of the students positively answered that their teachers fully engage them in the process of writing; the results are encouraging in the sense that the teachers have adopted the process-oriented approach to teaching writing and seem to encourage their students to go through all the phases of the process in order to make them become effective writers.

Q8. Which stage(s) of the writing process does your teacher emphasize mostly when engaging you in writing tasks?

a. Planning

b. Drafting

c. Revising

d. Editing

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. Planning	43	41.70	57.33
b. Drafting	32	31.10	42.67
c. Revising	17	16.50	22.67
d. Editing	11	10.70	14.67
Total	**103**	**100**	**137.34**

Table 4.8. Most Emphasized Stage(s) of the Writing Process during the Writing Tasks

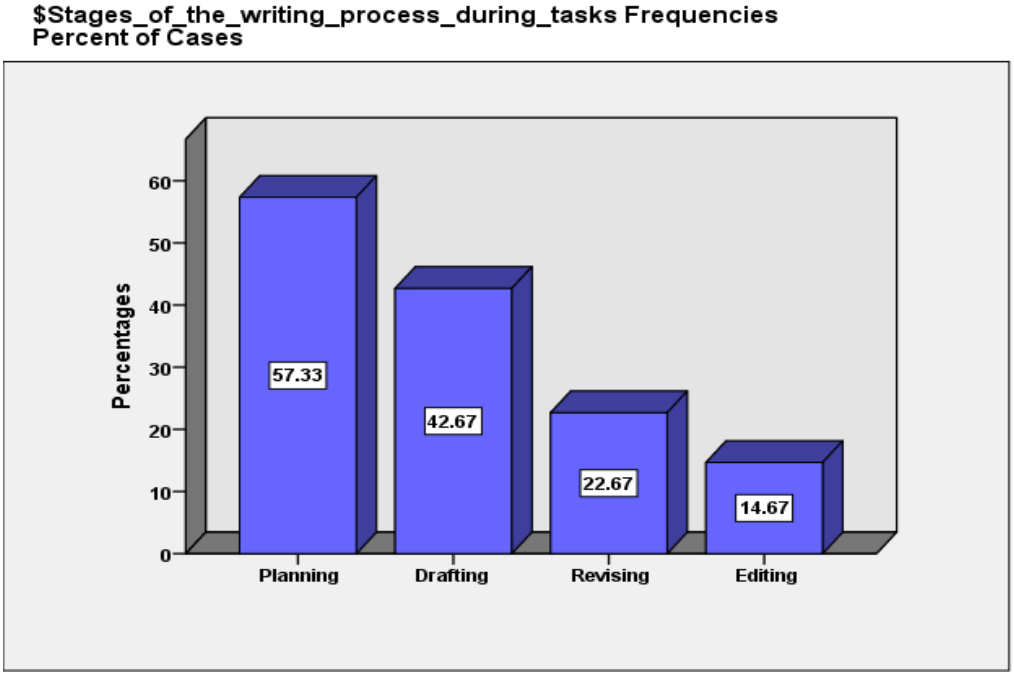


Figure 4.8. Most Emphasized Stage(s) of the Writing Process during the Writing Tasks

In Q7, the students were asked whether their teachers fully engage them in the process of writing. In Q8 they were required to specify which stage(s) of the writing process their teachers focus mostly on. The process of writing includes the stages mentioned above in addition to publishing which was not included with the options as generally students are not required to go through this stage. According to Table 4.8., the most emphasized stages of the writing process are planning with a proportion of 57.33% and drafting with a proportion of 42.67%.

Q9. How often does your teacher give feedback on your written productions?

a. Always

b. Often

c. Sometimes

d. Rarely

e. Never

Scale	N	%
a. Always	25	33
b. Often	22	29
c. Sometimes	24	32
d. Rarely	03	04
e. Never	01	01
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.9. Frequency of the Teacher's Feedback on the Students' Written Productions

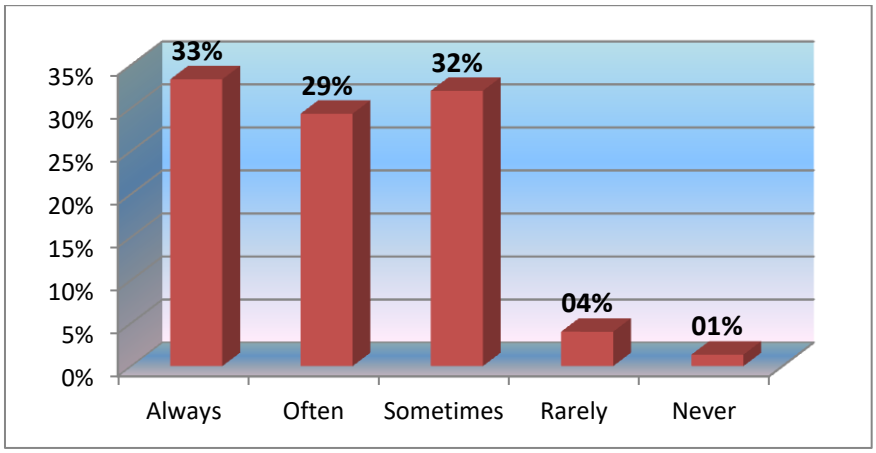


Figure 4.9. Frequency of the Teacher's Feedback on the Students' Written Productions

Another important issue to ask the students about is teachers' feedback. Frequency of feedback is important in the sense that the more feedback the students receive on their written productions the better it is. It has to be mentioned that no

specification was provided on whether feedback occurred inside or outside the classroom or at which stage of the writing process feedback is provided; the aim was kept general. According to 33% of the participants, the WE teachers always provide their students with feedback, 32% of the students mentioned that their teachers sometimes do it while 29% stated that their instructors often give them feedback.

10. On what aspect(s) does your teacher focus mostly when correcting your written productions? (You can tick more than one answer)

a. Organization of ideas

b. Mode of development

c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed

d. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, type of introduction, transition signals, and so on)

e. Grammar

f. Word choice

g. Mechanics

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. Organization of ideas	39	18.20	52
b. Mode of development	13	06.10	17.33
c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed	33	15.40	44
d. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, type of introduction, transition signals, and so on)	60	28	80
e. Grammar	21	09.80	28
f. Word choice	24	11.20	32
g. Mechanics	24	11.20	32
Total	**214**	**100**	**285.33**

Table 4.10. Frequencies of the Aspects Most Focused on during Correction

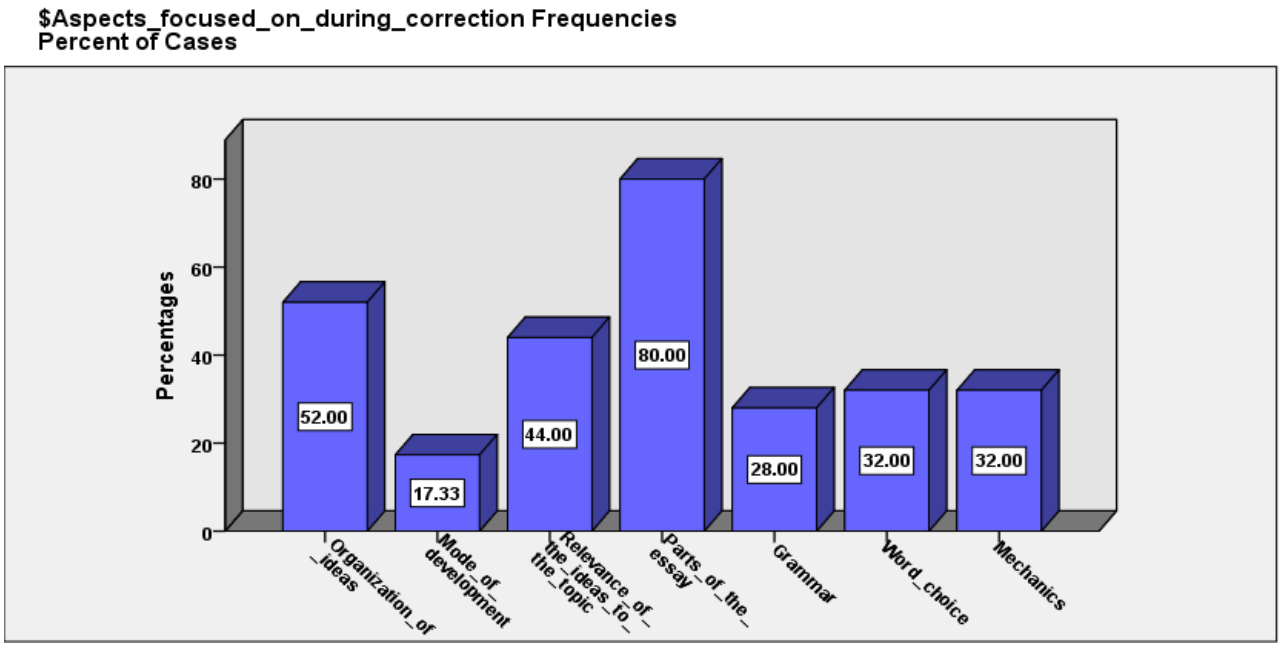


Figure 4.10. Frequencies of the Aspects Most Focused on during Correction

Q10 focuses on teacher's feedback on the elements related to essay writing. For this question, the same items mentioned in Q4 were suggested. The results displayed in Table 4.10. show that, with a proportion of 80%, "parts of the essay" is the aspect that the WE teachers focus mostly on when providing students with feedback. As it was explained on page 172, "parts of the essay" consist of the introductory paragraph, the developmental paragraphs, and the concluding paragraph. In a top three of the aspects teachers mostly focus on when giving feedback, "organization of ideas" comes in the second position with a proportion of 50%, and "relevance of the ideas to the topic" in the third position with a proportion of 44%.

Q11. What kind of teaching materials (*the* ***resources*** *a* ***teacher*** *uses to deliver instruction)* ***does your teacher of Written Expression use in the classroom? (You can tick more than one answer)***

a. Printed handouts

b. Textbooks/Printed Texts

c. Videos

d. Audio

e. PowerPoint presentations

f. Other: Please, specify: ……

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. Printed handouts	68	69.40	90.70
b. Textbooks/Printed Texts	30	30.60	40
c. Videos	0	0	0
d. Audio	0	0	0
e. PowerPoint presentations	0	0	0
f. Other	0	0	0
Total	**98**	**100**	**130.70**

Table 4.11. Kinds of Teaching Materials

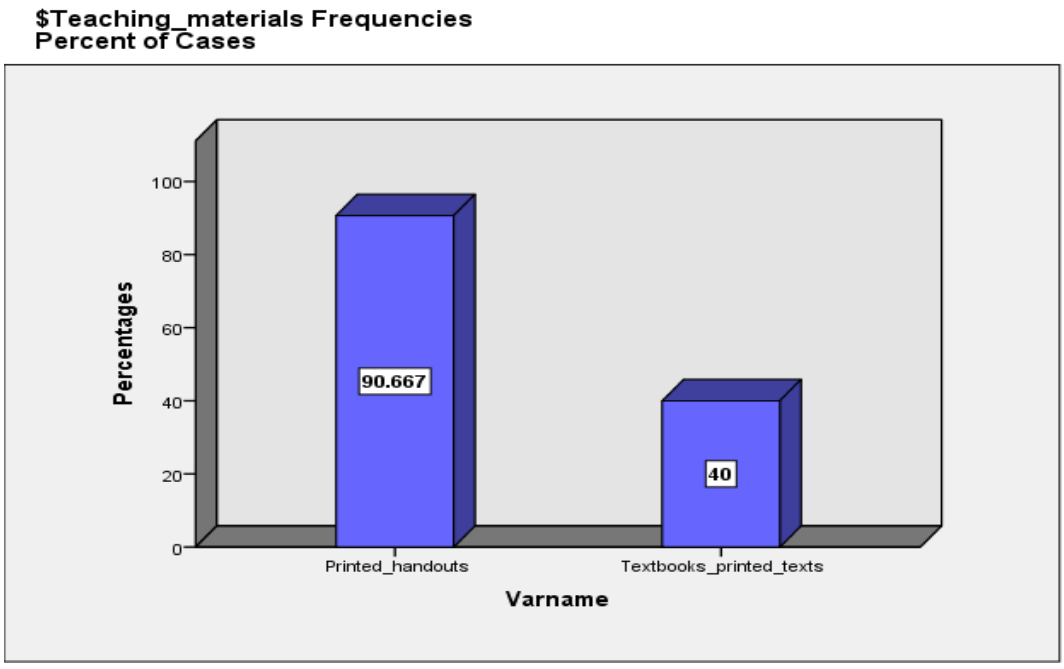


Figure 4.11. Frequencies of Teaching Materials

Note: *In the Spss version used for this study, the options which score 0% are not displayed in the histograms.*

Q11 was asked with the intention to check if there was variety in the materials used by the teachers of WE in the classroom. It has to be mentioned that diversity of teaching materials creates interest in the learners, and that it greatly contributes to boost their motivation in learning to write. Q11 includes five items that represent the most probable types of materials teachers could use in the WE classroom. A sixth item "other" was added in case other types of teaching materials did not occur to the researcher. Concerning item 4 "audio", it might seem unusual as a teaching material for a WE course; however, the choice was based on the researcher's personal experience of the researcher. When introducing the exemplification essay in a session, the students were given a sample text about popular music styles, and the text used reggae, punk and rap as examples. Names of bands were cited in the text to illustrate each music style, but the majority of the bands were unknown to the students as some date back to the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. Before engaging the students into reading comprehension, the researcher made the students listen to audio extracts of different songs belonging to each band mentioned in the sample exemplification text. Based on that experience, the option "audio" was included in Q11 in case other WE teachers used this type of materials in their sessions. The results obtained for Q11 show that the most used materials by the WE teachers are "printed handouts" with a proportion of 90.67% and "textbooks/printed texts" with a proportion of 40%.

Section Two: Learning Preferences, Learning Styles and Motivation

Q12. In learning to write, you prefer: (tick only the options you feel concerned with)

a. working individually in the classroom.

b. working in a group or a pair in the classroom.

c. understanding new concepts about writing through practice.

d. learning new concepts at your own pace before coming to the classroom.

e. doing writing tasks under the teacher's supervision rather than writing at home.

f. spending more time on writing in addition to the 04 hours/week devoted the Written Expression class to develop your writing skills.

Options	Responses		% of Cases
	N	%	
a. working individually in the classroom.	36	27.30	48
b. working in a group or a pair in the classroom.	28	21.20	37.33
c. understanding new concepts about writing through practice.	18	13.60	24
d. learning new concepts at your own pace before coming to the classroom.	10	07.60	13.33
e. doing writing tasks under the teacher's supervision rather than writing at home.	20	15.20	26.67
f. spending more time on writing in addition to the 04 hours/week devoted the WE class to develop your writing skills.	20	15.20	26.67
Total	**132**	**100**	**176**

Table 4.12. Frequencies of the Students' Learning Preferences

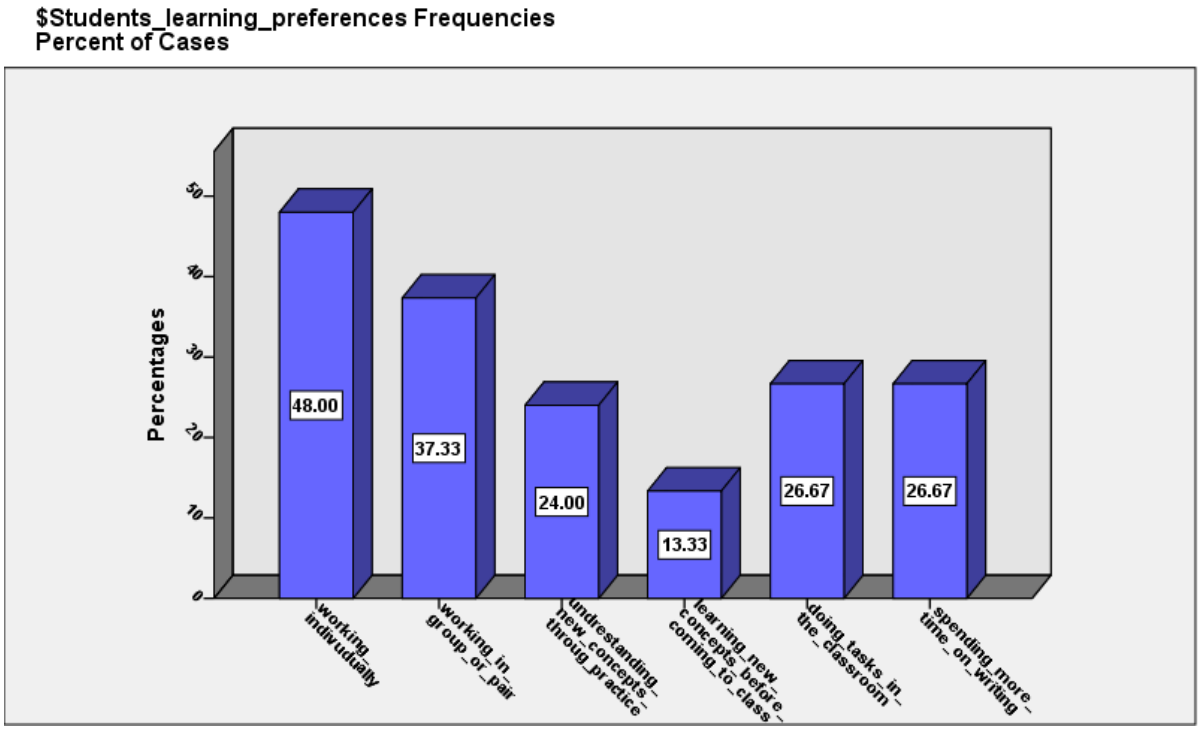


Figure 4.12. Frequencies of the Students' Learning Preferences

Q12 deals with the students' learning preferences in terms of individual vs. collaborative work, inductive learning, and other aspects that can be attributed to blended learning. The reason behind asking this question is that the students' learning preferences can influence the way they learn as well as their motivation to learn. The results obtained for Q12 show that with a frequency of 48% the learners prefer to write individually whereas at a rate of 37.33% the respondents prefer collaborative work. With a proportion of 26.67% the students rather prefer doing writing tasks under the teacher's supervision rather than writing at home as well as spending more time on writing in addition to the 04 hours/week devoted the WE class to develop their writing skills. 24% are more inclined towards understanding new concepts about writing through practice. With only 13.33% the students have a preference for learning new concepts at their own pace before coming to the classroom.

Q13. Do you like the topics suggested by your teacher?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	55	73.33
No	20	26.67
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.13. Students' Satisfaction with the Teachers' Suggested Topics

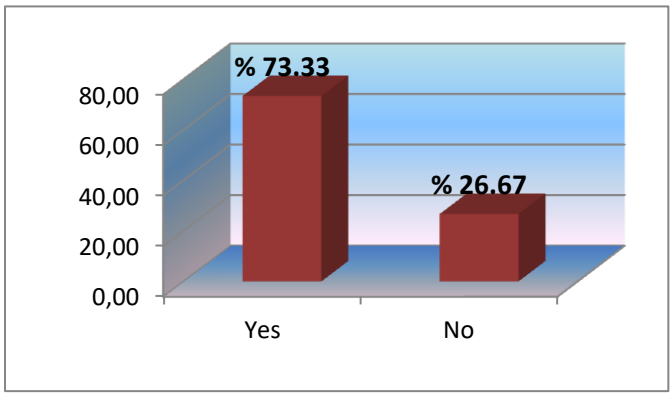


Figure 4.13. Students' Satisfaction with the Teachers' Suggested Topics

Learning to write involves a lot of practice that always focuses on topics chosen for the circumstance. Most of the time, the students write about topics suggested by the teacher who does so in order to give the students equal chances. However, it happens that the students would like to write about self-chosen topics. Q13 was asked to know whether the students like or dislike the topics suggested by their teachers, and according to Table 4.13., 73.33% of the students like the topics suggested by their teachers. This is encouraging as it has to be noted that the topics

that are used for practice can affect students' interest and motivation. When the students like the topics, even if the latter are a bit difficult, the students are likely to show a willingness to invest efforts and time to write about those topics and even to do extra reading for a better understanding of the topics, which in the long run could be beneficial as the students would develop their self-efficacy, that is the belief in their capacities to attain a goal.

Q14. If "No", please, explain why.

In Q13, the students were asked whether they liked the topics suggested by their WE teachers for writing tasks. Those who answered "no" were required to provide justifications for their choice. 20 students declared that they were dissatisfied with the topics suggested by their teachers, and all of them justified their answers. The total number of the responses is 23 because several open-ended questions included answers that combined responses which were treated separately; therefore, the total number of the responses does not automatically match the number of the respondents. The answers were categorized and analyzed using descriptive statistics as summarized in Table 4.14.and Figure 4.14.:

Themes	N	%
boring	08	43.48
lack of background info	08	34.78
imposed topics	03	13.04
other	02	08.70
Total	**23**	**100**

Table 4.14. Frequency of Categories

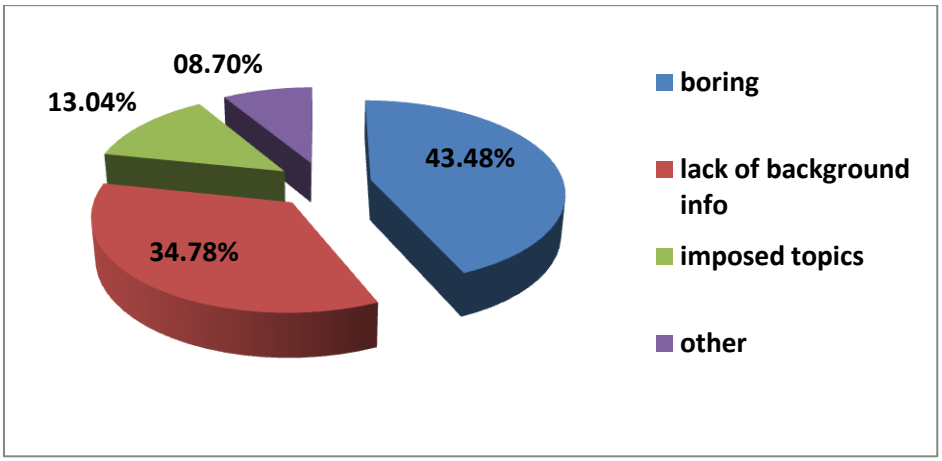


Figure 4.14. Reasons behind the Students' Dissatisfaction of the Teachers' Suggested Topics

The students mostly justified their dissatisfaction with the topics suggested by their WE teachers by the fact that the topics are "boring" with a proportion of 43.48% whereas other students explained their dislike of the topics by their lack of background information about the suggested topics with a rate of 34.78%. Other students, with a proportion of 13.04% stated that they disliked the topics suggested by their teachers because they were imposed on them. Other respondents mentioned that the topics provided by their teachers were redundant (08.7%). The rest of the participants mentioned other reasons that were categorized in "other" with a proportion of 08.7% and which include the followings:

-"He/she always picks topics that only the minority enjoys writing about"

- "It does not relate to reality, neither our fields of interest."

Q15. You easily learn from:

a. Things you see in the form of images, videos, charts, graphic organizers and so on.

b. Things you hear like lectures, discussions, and so on.

c. Things you read and write like taking notes during class or when reading a book, making lists, reading teachers' handouts, and so on.

d. Things you can feel, hold, or grasp like concrete simulations and experiences, videos and movies of *"real"* things, and so on.

Options	**Responses**		**% of Cases**
	N	**%**	
a. things you see in the form of images, videos, charts, graphic organizers and so on.	36	31	48
b. things you hear like lectures, discussions, and so on.	24	20.70	32
c. things you read and write like taking notes during class or when reading a book, making lists, reading teachers' handouts, and so on .	38	32.80	50.67
d. things you can feel, hold , or grasp like concrete simulations and experiences, videos and movies of *"real"* things, and so on.	18	15.50	24
Total	**116**	**100**	**154.7**

Table 4.15. Frequencies of the Students' Learning Styles

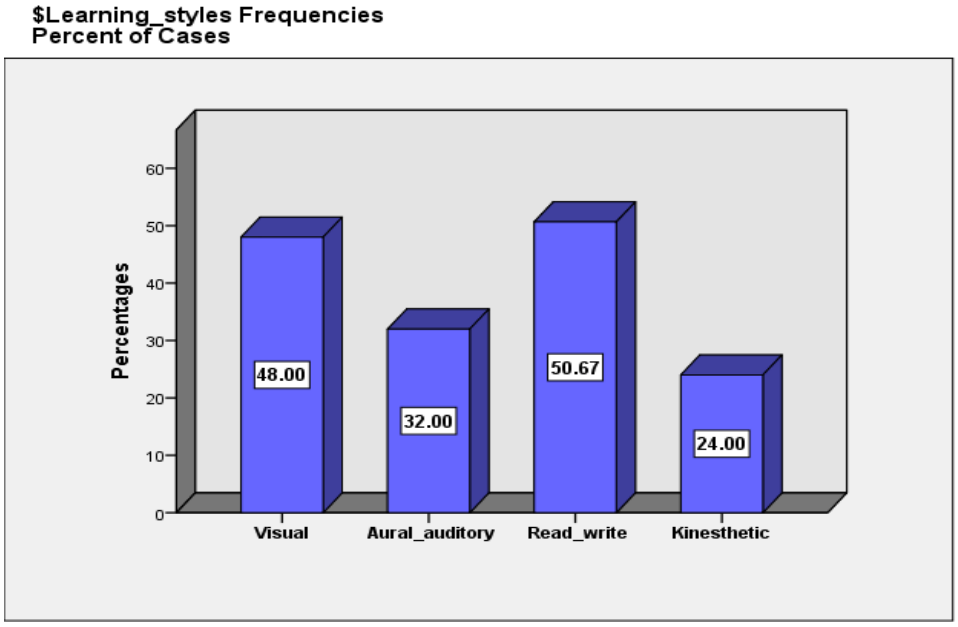


Figure 4.15. Frequencies of the Students' Learning Styles

Q15 focuses on learning styles. The aim behind that question was not to determine the most dominant learning style among the students but rather to show that they adopt different ways in learning the FL. The design of Q15 was based on Fleming's VARK model of learning styles (Fleming & Baume, 2006) that includes four types: visual (V), aural/auditory (A), read/write (R) and kinesthetic (K). For this question, the mention "you can tick more than one answer" was not included in order to see how the respondents would deal with a question about learning styles. It has to be mentioned that a student can have more than one learning style, and for this question, several students ticked more than one option; certain students even provided percentages next to each option to give an indication about their dominant learning style. According to Table 4.15., at a rate of 50.67%, some of the respondents learn better through reading and writing while other students tend to be more visual (48%). Other students are more auditory (32%) and the rest tend to be more kinesthetic (24%).

Q16. During the sessions of the Written Expression module, you feel: (tick only the options you feel concerned with)

a. engaged (curious, interested, and so on)

b. bored

c. motivated

d. Other: Please, specify: ……

Options	**Responses**		**% of Cases**
	N	**%**	
a. engaged (curious, interested, and so on)	36	40.90	48
b. bored	19	21.60	25.33
c. motivated	24	27.30	32
d. Other	08	09.10	10.73
No answer	01	01.10	01.33
Total	**88**	**100**	**117.39**

Table 4.16. Students' State of Mind in the Written Expression Classroom

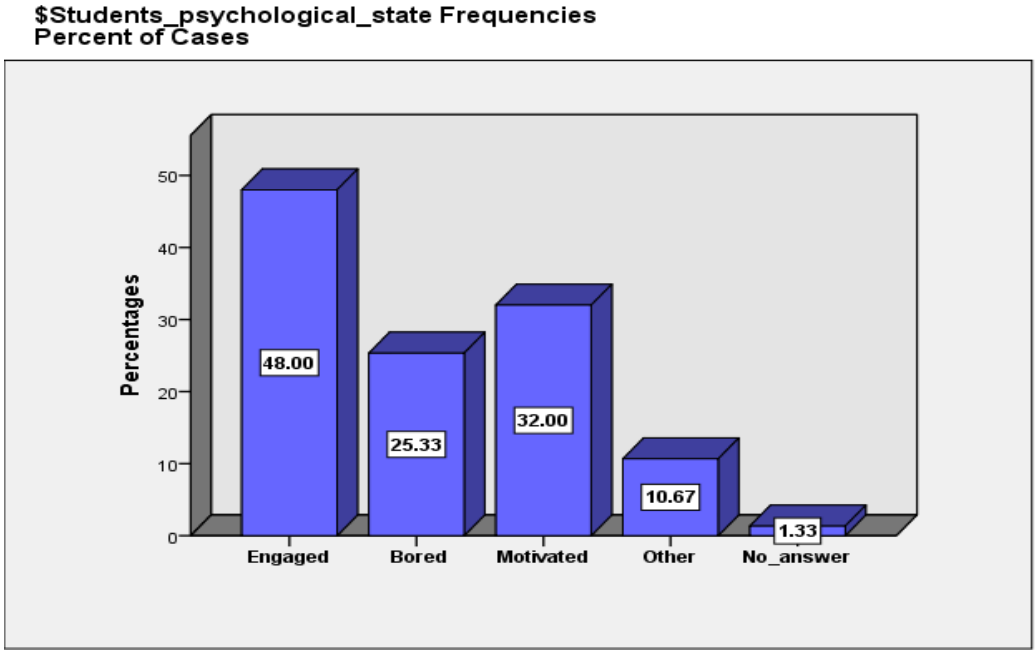


Figure 4.16. Students' State of Mind in the Written Expression Classroom

Q16 emphasizes the emotional aspect of the learning process. The question includes some options amongst which the learners' engagement that refers to "the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught" (The Glossary of Education, 2014). Another option "other" was included for other possibilities. The results obtained for Q16 show that 'feeling engaged' (48%) and 'feeling motivated' (32%) are the most prevailing emotional states amongst students. The students who chose "other" mentioned the followings:

-"Relaxed" (03 respondents)

-"Depending on the topics presented in class and on the teacher" (02 respondents)

-"Stressed, not motivated" (03 respondents)

Q17. Your teacher of Written Expression encourages you to:

a. investigate a given topic through reading suggested/self-chosen materials.

b. write outside the classroom.

c. overcome problems you encounter during the process of writing.

d. become autonomous in dealing with certain aspects like grammar and mechanics.

e. None of the above

Options	**Responses**		**% of Cases**
	N	**%**	
a. investigate a given topic through reading suggested/self-chosen materials.	20	21.70	26.67
b. write outside the classroom.	36	39.10	48
c. overcome problems you encounter during the process of writing.	26	28.30	34.67
d. become autonomous in dealing with certain aspects like grammar and mechanics.	06	06.50	08
e. None of the above	04	04.30	05.33
Total	**92**	**100**	**122.67**

Table 4.17. Teachers' Strategies in Encouraging their Students

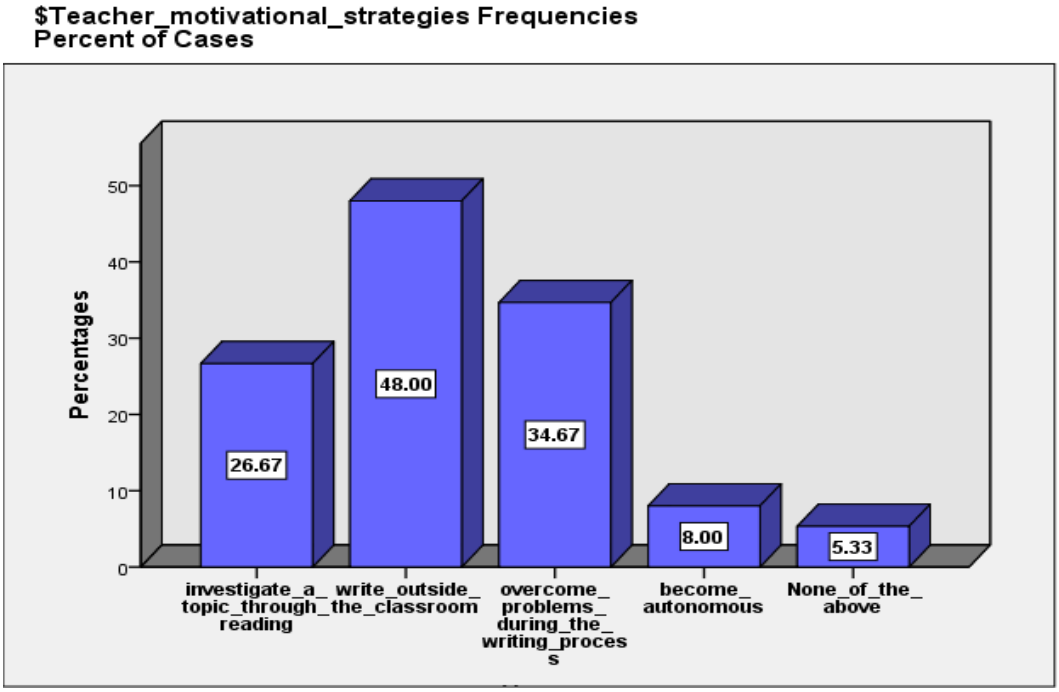


Figure 4.17. Teachers' Strategies in Encouraging their Students

For this question, the emphasis was put on the role of the WE teacher as a motivator in the classroom. Any teacher knows that motivation is a key factor in learning as an increase in motivation favors learning whereas lack of motivation leads to the opposite effect. For Q17, four ways through which the WE teacher would probably motivate the learners were suggested. Of course, the list is not exhaustive as many motivational strategies can be employed in the WE classroom. The first item "to investigate a given topic through reading suggested/self-chosen materials" implies extensive reading, that is to read outside the classroom, whereas the second item "to write outside the classroom" has to do with extensive writing. Item three "to overcome problems you encounter during the process of writing" deals with student' self-efficacy which is a very important aspect in learning. The fourth item "to become autonomous in dealing with certain aspects like grammar and mechanics", as it is indicated, focuses on students' autonomy in dealing with grammatical aspects. From Table 4.17., we can notice that the WE teachers mostly encourage their students to

write extensively (48%) and to overcome problems they encounter during the process of writing (34.67%).

Section Three: Use of Technology in Learning Writing

Q18. How often do you use the Internet and mobile technologies for learning purposes in the context of developing your writing skills?

a. Always

b. Often

c. Sometimes

d. Rarely

e. Never

Scale	N	%
a. Always	19	25
b. Often	19	25
c. Sometimes	21	28
d. Rarely	11	15
e. Never	05	07
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.18. Frequency of the Students' Use of the Internet and Mobile Technologies in Learning to Write

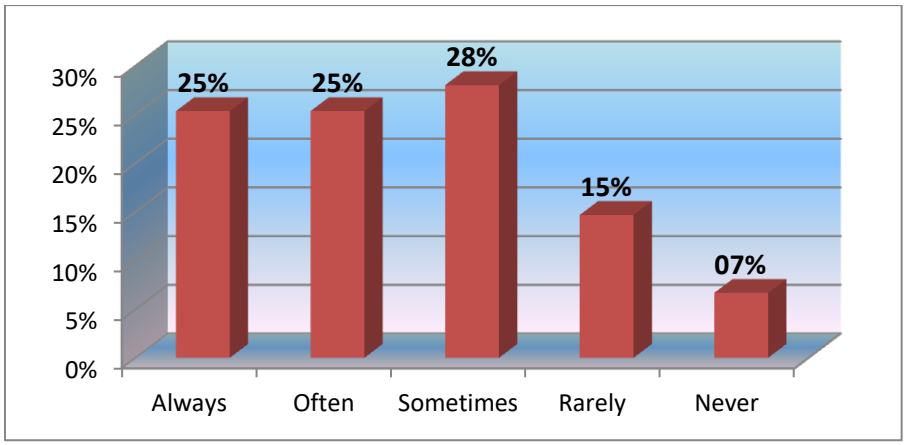


Figure 4.18. Frequency of the Students' Use of the Internet and Mobile Technologies in Learning to Write

It is quite known that the students of the twenty-first century utilize the Internet and mobile technologies on a daily basis for various purposes. It was quite natural to ask them a question that involves the use of those tools for learning to write. The question was formulated using a Likert scale, and the obtained results show that 28% of the learners **sometimes** use the Internet and mobile technologies to learn to write while 25% of them **always** use the Internet and mobile technologies to develop their writing skills; equally at a rate of 25% other students **often** use these tools.

Q19. Does your teacher allow you to use the Internet and mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, and laptops) inside the classroom?

Yes

No

Options	N	N
Yes	45	60
No	30	40
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.19. Students' Use of the Internet and Mobile Devices inside the Classroom

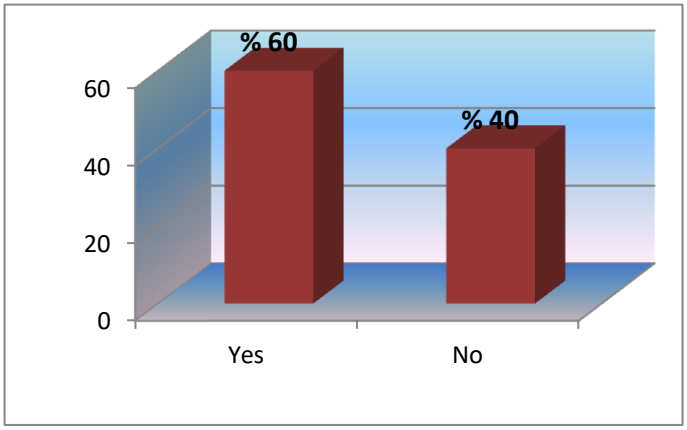


Figure 4.19. Students' Use of the Internet and Mobile Devices inside the Classroom

This question was asked to the students instead on purpose. It is agreed that the twenty-first century learners use Internet and mobile technologies in their daily life. It was quite logical to ask them whether their teachers allow them to use any of the abovementioned tools inside the classroom for learning purposes. According to Table 4.19., 60% of the respondents are allowed by their teachers to use Internet and mobile devices inside the WE classroom.

Q20. If "Yes", please, explain in what way and for what purpose(s)?

In Q19, the participants were asked whether they were allowed by their teachers to use the Internet and mobile technologies in the WE classroom. In Q20, the 45 students who answered "yes" were asked to explain in the way(s) and the context(s) in which they used the Internet and mobile technologies in the WE classroom. The total number of the obtained answers is 50, and the responses were tabulated as follows:

Themes	N	%
dictionary applications on smartphones	36	72
word processing software	01	02
Internet on smartphones for information	09	18
to facilitate learning	02	04
to use references from ebooks or websites	02	04
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 4.20. Ways and Purposes of Using the Internet and Mobile Devices inside the Classroom

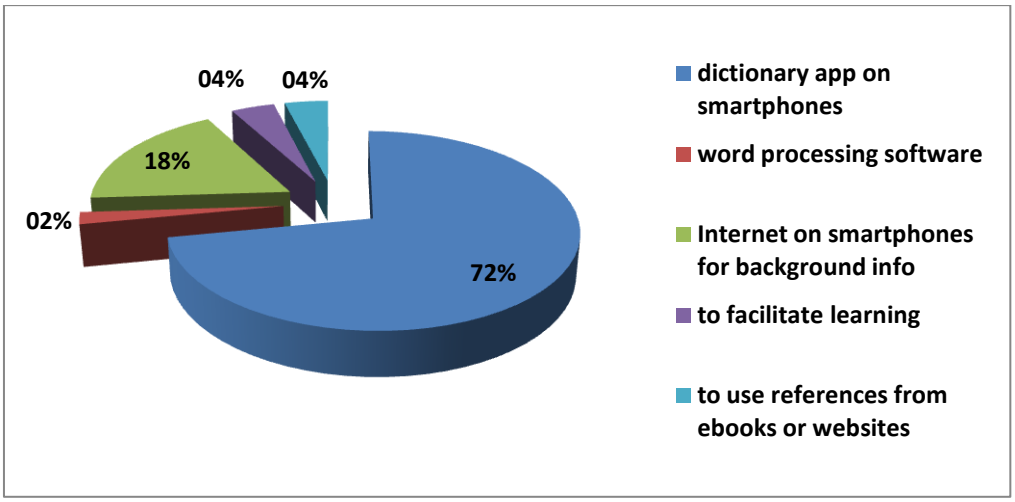


Figure 4.20. Ways and Purposes of Using the Internet and Mobile Devices inside the Classroom

According to Table 4.20., the students are mostly allowed to use their smartphones on which dictionary applications are installed. The purpose is either to check the meaning of words or to check their spelling. Other purposes include the use of Internet on the students' smartphones to check information about a given topic. The students specified that they sometimes have doubt about information they want to include in their essays, and that thanks to Internet, they can check the validity of the information. They also mentioned that, when the topic that is suggested by their teachers is difficult or unfamiliar to them, they use Internet to look for information to be used in their essays highlighting that it is under the supervision of the teacher. The respondents mentioned that they are also allowed to use Internet and mobile technologies to facilitate learning specifying that "it is easier than using books and dictionaries". Other students said that they use Internet and mobile technologies to use references such as ebooks and websites mentioning that, for that purpose, they use either their smartphones or their laptops. One student stated that she/he uses word

processing software either on her/his tablet or laptop to type her/his drafts so she/he can easily keep track of what she/he writes in the classroom.

Q21. If "No", please, explain why.

30 students answered in Q19 that they were not allowed to use Internet and mobile technologies in the WE classroom. 24 students justified their answers, and 24 responses were obtained and were organized in Table 5.21.:

Themes	N	%
teachers' fear of plagiarism	04	16.67
using those devices for recreative purposes	08	33.33
making the students rely on their own ideas and language	05	20.83
prohibition of mobile devices inside the class	02	08.33
preference of traditional tools like printed dictionaries	02	08.33
other	03	12.50
Total	**24**	**100**

Table 4.21. Reasons behind the Teachers' Refusal to Allow the Students to use Technology in the Written Expression Classroom

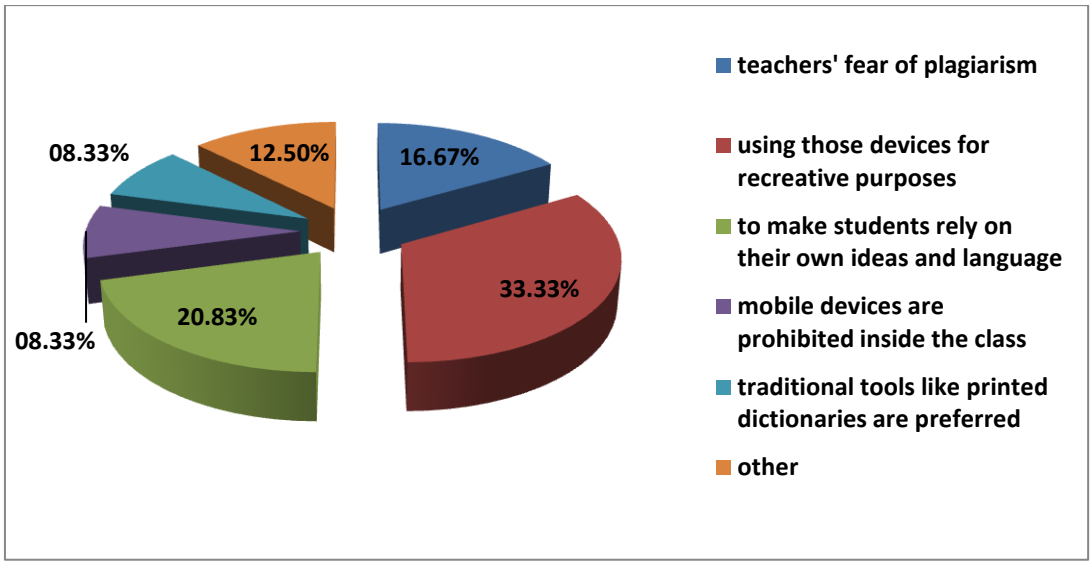


Figure 4.21. Reasons behind the Teachers' Refusal of Allowing the Students to use Technology in the Written Expression Classroom

According to Table 4.21., the major reason behind the teachers' refusal of letting their students to use Internet and mobile technologies in the WE classroom is their fear that the students would use those tools for recreational purposes like chatting and posting comments on social media like Facebook and Twitter. Other students stated that the WE teachers are against using Internet and mobile technologies inside the classroom because they want their students to rely on their own ideas and words. Some students explained that their teachers want them to rely on themselves to learn from their mistakes; that "the purpose of writing is to express [their] thoughts, show [their] style and develop [their] ideas in an interesting way and that can only be done when depending only on [themselves] while writing." Another portion of the students referred to the teachers' fear of plagiarism when explaining the reason why they were not allowed to use Internet and mobile technologies in the WE classroom. The students explained that their teachers are always afraid their students are going to steal others' ideas. Some other students mentioned that Internet and mobiles devices are "prohibited" in the classroom (08.33%) without explaining this claim while others

stated that their teachers rather prefer more “conventional” tools like printed dictionaries (08.33%). In the category “other”, the students provided the following justifications:

-“She/he thinks if she/he opens the door of using Internet in the classroom that makes us less interested with what we have in class.”

-“Actually she doesn't forbid us too but she never asks us to bring and use mobile devices.”

-“She/he always warns us about the excessive use of technology and its disadvantages.”

It has to be mentioned that many students particularly emphasized that “it is not respectful to use Internet and mobile technologies in the presence of the teachers” without giving further details about that.

Q22. Does your teacher of Written Expression use any technological means (PowerPoint presentations, videos, and so on) in the classroom?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	05	06.67
No	70	93.33
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.22. Teachers' Use of Technological Means in the Written Expression Classroom

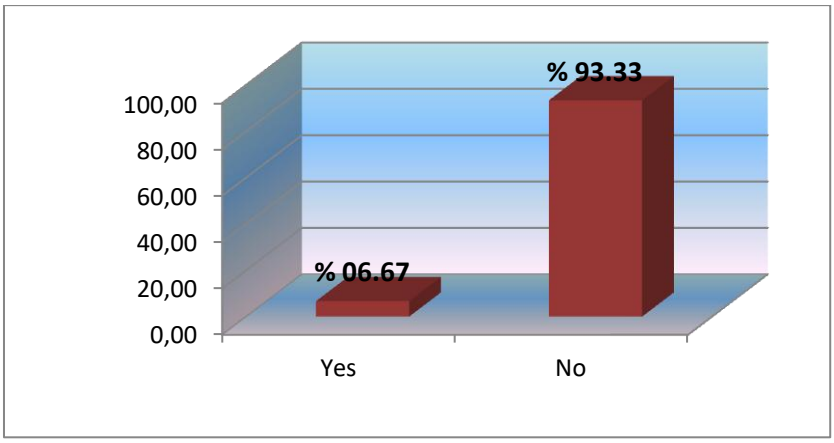


Figure 4.22. Teachers' Use of Technological Means in the Written Expression Classroom

In Q19, the students were asked whether their teachers allow them to use Internet and mobile devices inside the classroom. Q22 was asked in order to mirror the students' answers to Q11 (about the teaching materials) and to Q19. According to the majority of the participants, the WE teachers do not use any technological media in their sessions.

23. Do you think that an effective teacher of Written Expression is the one who uses Internet and mobile technologies?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	33	44
No	42	56
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.23. Link between the Teachers' Effectiveness in Teaching Writing and Internet and Mobiles Technologies

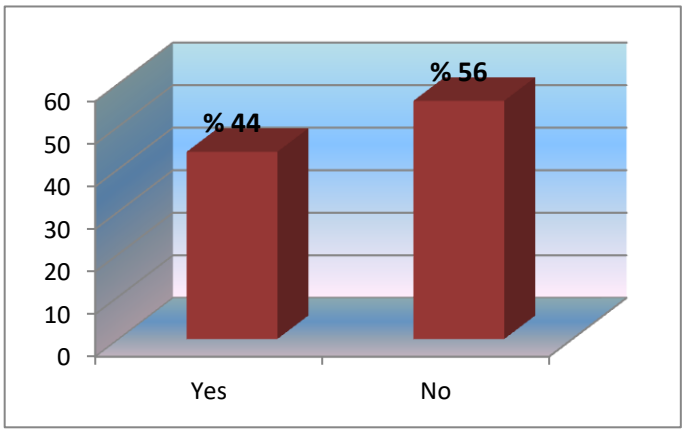


Figure 4.23. Link between the Teachers' Effectiveness in Teaching Writing and Internet and Mobiles Technologies

Q23 was a tricky question to ask to the students as it implies judging their teachers' effectiveness. It was asserted to the respondents that the questionnaires were anonymous and that their opinions could provide the current study with valuable data. Even if the students are generally thought not to be in a position to assess their teachers as they have only one perspective of the learning/teaching process as students, they still may notice aspects about their teachers of which their teachers themselves may not be aware. In Table 4.23., 56% of the participants consider that the effectiveness of their teachers does not lie in the use of Internet and mobiles technologies. In contrast, 44% of the students think that an effective teacher is the one who utilizes Internet and mobile devices in his teaching method.

24. Please, explain why.

Q23 focuses on the relationship between the teacher's effectiveness in teaching writing and the use of Internet and mobile technologies. 33 students answered "yes" and 30 provided justifications for their answers. The total number of responses is 39, and they were classified into themes as shown below:

Themes	N	%
21st Century learners learn with technology	05	12.82
technology facilitates the learning/teaching process	19	48.72
technology can improve students' writing skills	02	05.13
more resources	05	12.82
motivation	05	12.82
increase of learning opportunities	03	07.69
Total	**39**	**100**

Table 4.24. Justifications of the link between the Teacher's Effectiveness and the Use of Internet and Mobile Technologies

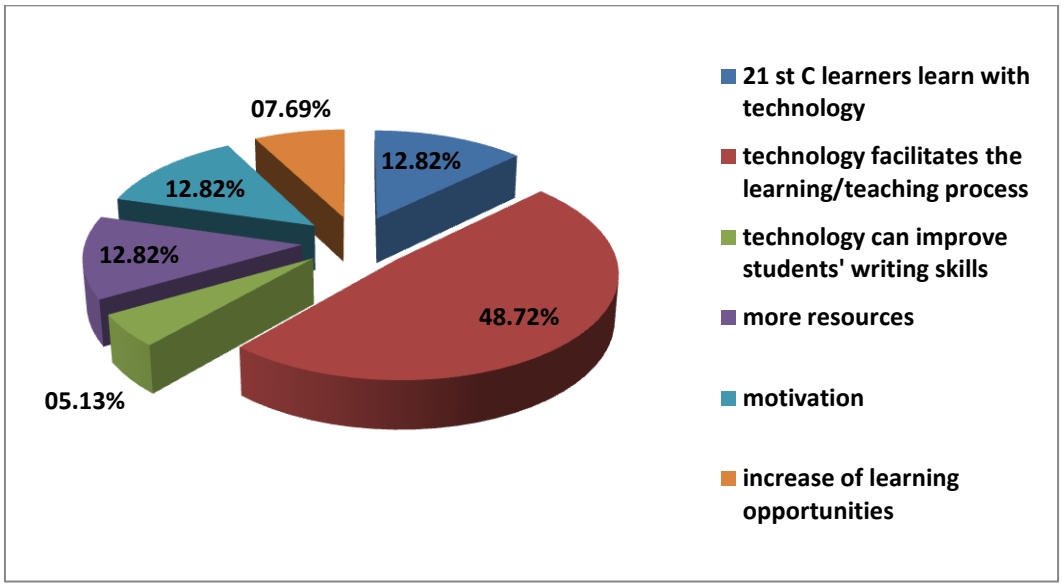


Figure 4.24. Justifications of the link between the Teacher's Effectiveness and the Use of Internet and Mobile Technologies

According to the students, the major reason that makes a teacher who uses Internet and mobile technologies effective is that technology facilitates the learning/teaching process (48.72%). The students explained that those tools "save time", "facilitate the understanding of the lessons", and "it is easier to explain something relying on multiple resources and the technology can provide that." Another reason that was provided by the respondents is that the 21st century learners learn with technology (12.82%). They specified that they "like to study in the technological mood", that "technology is very important since [they] live in the 21st C. [Teachers] can't keep comparing [their students'] generation with the previous ones, [they] need to move on", and that "it is a fast developing world with many development, [teachers] need to stay up-to-date". Other students mentioned "more resources" (12.82%) and "motivation" (12.82%) emphasizing that "using Internet and mobile devices is a kind of motivation and inspiration so that [they] will never get bored during the classes" and that those tools are "more interesting than the traditional ones." In addition to the previous reasons, "increase of learning opportunities" (07.69%) and "technology can improve students' writing skills" (05.13%) were mentioned.

42 students answered "no" for Q23, and 37 justified their answers. A total of 41 responses were obtained and were categorized in Table 4.25..:

Themes	N	%
the teacher makes the difference	23	58.54
traditional teaching makes the teacher effective	04	09.76
technology is not a factor to determine teacher's effectiveness	03	07.32
technology is incompatible with WE	09	21.95
other	02	02.44
Total	**41**	**100**

Table 4.25. Justifications against the Link between Teacher's Effectiveness and the Use of Internet and Mobile Technologies

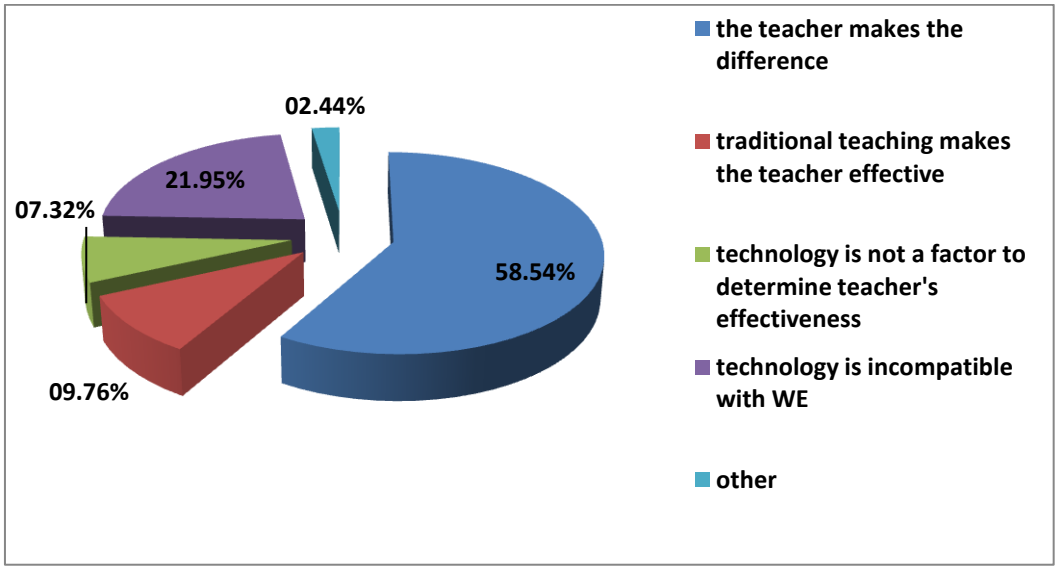


Figure 4.25. Justifications against the Link between Teacher's Effectiveness and the Use of Internet and Mobile Technologies

Most of the justifications about the fact that an effective teacher of writing is not the one who uses Internet and mobile technologies in her/his teaching method centered around the claim that the teacher "makes the difference" (58.54%), which the students explained by the teacher's ability "to transmit the information with simple ways", the atmosphere she/he creates in the classroom, her/his experience, her/his background knowledge, and her/his ability to sustain motivation in the students. One student made a good remark and wrote: "it is not about technology itself, but its use." Some other students justified their viewpoint claiming that technology is incompatible with Written Expression (21.95%) as learning to write needs practice as well as reading and that there is no way in which Internet and mobile technologies could be used in the context of writing. Other justifications provided by the learners involve the followings: traditional teaching makes the teacher effective (09.76%) and technology is not a factor to determine teacher's effectiveness (07.32%). Some responses were categorized as "other" (02.44%) and include the following statement:

-"our university is so deprived from those tools, and still we have good teachers."

Section Four: Blended Learning

Q25. Are you satisfied with the current method used by your teacher to teach writing?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	61	81.33
No	14	18.67
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.26. Students' Satisfaction with their Teachers' Method of Teaching Writing

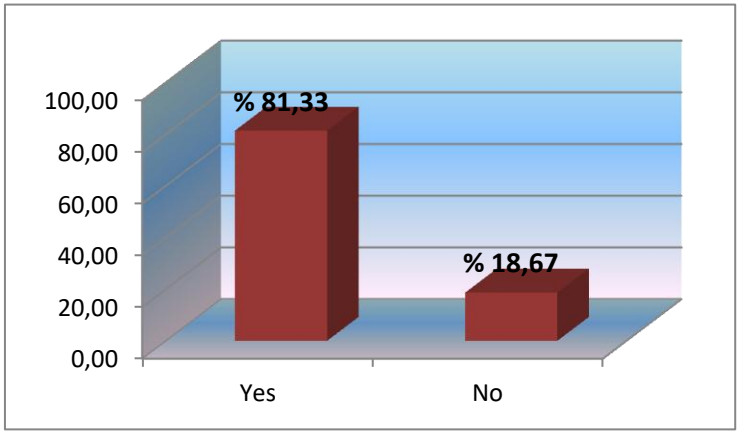


Figure 4.26. Students' Satisfaction with their Teachers' Method of Teaching Writing

In Q25, the participants were asked to state whether they were satisfied with their instructors' teaching method, and 81.33% answered that the current teaching method is satisfactory.

Q26. If "No", please, explain why.

In Q25, the students were asked whether they were satisfied with the method used by their teachers of Written Expression. 14 students answered "no", and 11 provided justifications. 13 responses were obtained and classified in Table 4.27.:

Themes	N	%
obsolete	04	30,77
demotivating	06	46.15
time constraints	02	15.38
other	01	07.69
Total	**13**	**100**

Table 4.27. Reasons behind the Students' Dissatisfaction with their Teachers' Method

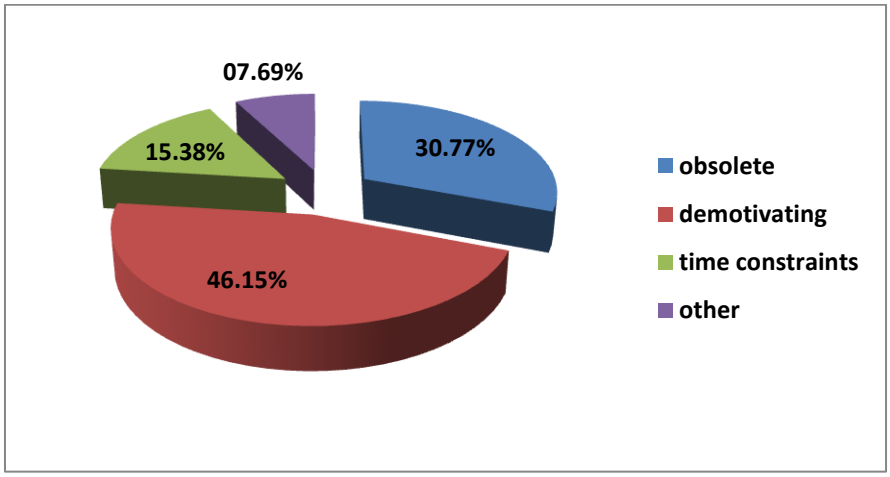


Figure 4.27. Reasons behind the Students' Dissatisfaction with their Teachers' Method

The main reason why the students were dissatisfied with their teachers' method is that it is demotivating (46.15%) in the sense that the students feel bored in the classroom, and this is because of the topics the teachers suggest in the classroom, the sole use of printed materials, and the teachers' explanations that were described as "redundant". At a rate of 30.77%, some students explained that their teachers' method

is “obsolete” probably meaning “old-fashioned” and that it is more teacher-centered as some teachers do not accept “the diversity of ideas of the students. [They] correct pieces of writing based on their preferences in terms of choice of words, and used information.” With a proportion of 15,38%, some respondents highlighted the time factor explaining that they have so many things to learn that four hours and a half per week to learn writing are not enough, and that when it comes to practice, it takes too long to complete a simple task. Other justifications were categorized as “other” and involve the following:

- “I would love studying with other tools except rather than printed materials.”

Q27. When doing homework, does it occur to you to need the help of your teacher to clarify concepts you have not understood in the classroom or to guide you through a task?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	57	76
No	17	22.67
No answer	01	01.33
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.28. Students’ Need for Teachers’ Help during Homework

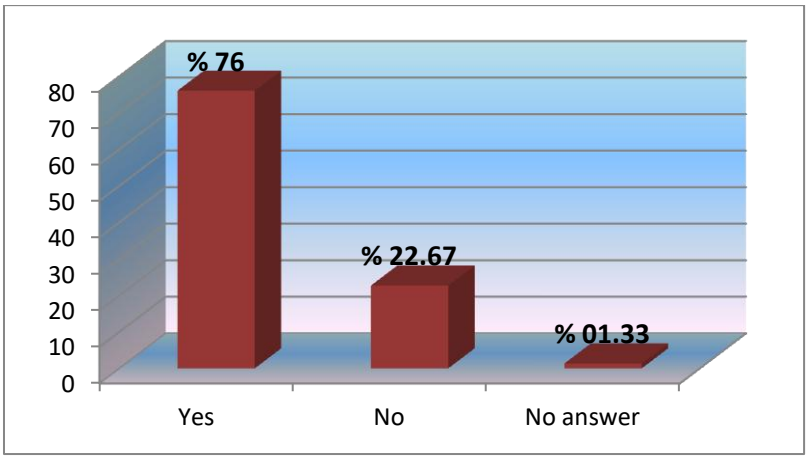


Figure 4.28. Students' Need for Teachers' Help during Homework

Q28 was issued after several informal discussions about writing in an EFL context that the researcher had with the students of English some years ago. Discussions revolved around several questions that the students considered as "vital" for them if they were to develop their writing skills. One of those questions was their inability to contact their teachers once they are doing homework. A large number of students said that they wished to be able to have their teachers' feedback and advice when completing tasks at home because it often happens to the learners to realize that their understanding of the concepts and notions dealt with in the classroom is not as clear as they think, and that delayed feedback would not be as effective as immediate feedback. It was necessary to ask Q27 to the students of the academic year 2016-2017 to check whether the previous claim still had validity, and from the results shown in Table 4.28, 76% of the respondents confirmed that it occurs to them to need the help of their teachers to clarify concepts they have not understood in the classroom or to guide them through a task when doing homework. The obtained proportion of the answers widely justifies asking Q27.

Q28. Do you think it would be helpful to keep in touch with your teacher of Written Expression through online discussions and/or via e-mail particularly when needing feedback?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	57	76
No	17	22.67
No answer	01	01.33
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.29. Students' Attitudes about Keeping in Touch with their Teachers for Feedback

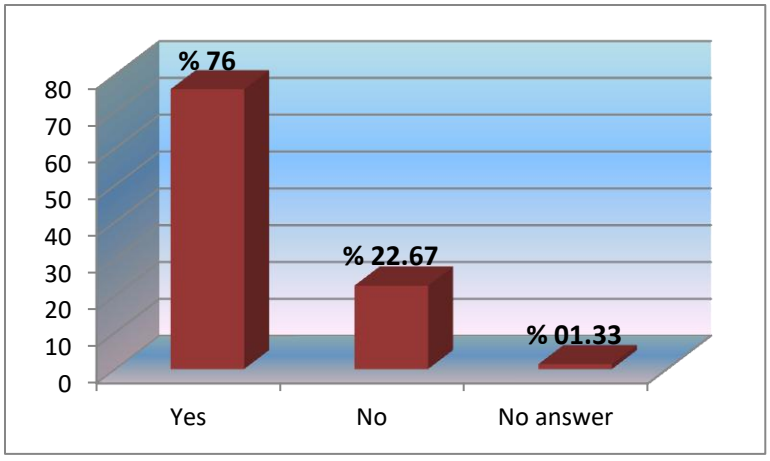


Figure 4.29. Students' Attitudes about Keeping in Touch with their Teachers for Feedback

Q28 was included to check the validity of the answers provided for Q27 as the students may just have randomly ticked the question's options. Q28 was formulated in a way to know, from one part, the students' attitudes towards an aspect of blended learning, which is the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools, and from another part to check the validity of the students' answers to Q27. In Table 4.29., 76% of the students think it would be helpful to use synchronous and /or asynchronous tools to remedy the issue of immediate feedback. As one can notice from Table 4.29, the same proportions obtained for Q27 were obtained for Q28 which means that there is a high probability that the students' answers to Q27 were not random.

Q29. Please, explain why.

In Q28, the participants were asked to give their opinion about keeping in touch with their teacher of Written Expression through online discussions and/or via e-mail particularly when needing feedback. 57 students showed a positive attitude towards that proposition, and all of them justified their answers. The responses were categorized as follows:

Themes	N	%
guidance and advice	21	36.84
reinforcement	13	22.81
helping with the stages of the writing process	07	12.28
specialist and critique	09	15.79
for a better communication	02	03.51
other	05	08.77
Total	**57**	**100**

Table 4.30. Reasons behind the Students' Need to keep in Touch with their Teachers outside the Classroom

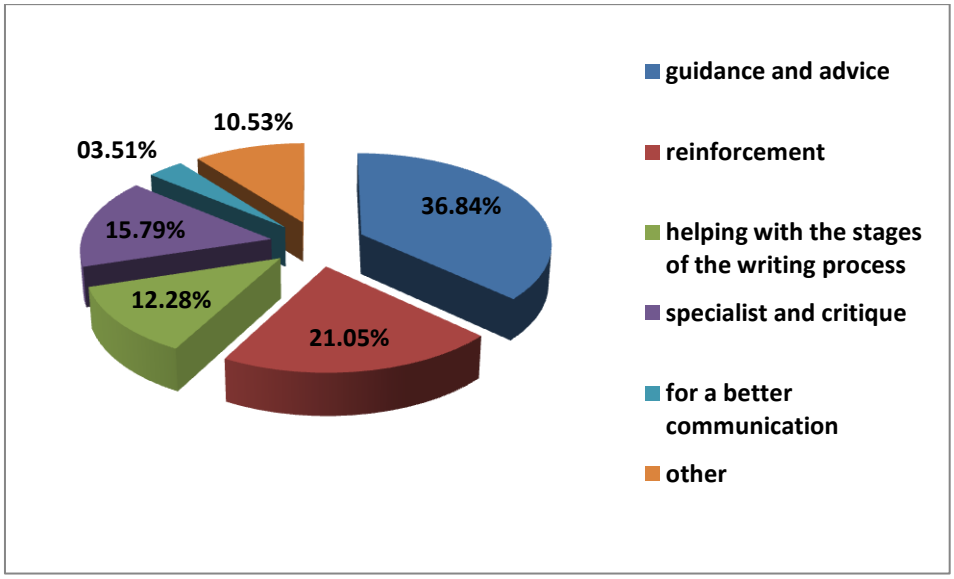


Figure 4.30. Reasons behind the Students' Need to keep in Touch with their Teachers outside the Classroom

Several students explained that keeping in touch with their WE teachers outside the classroom was a good suggestion because that would offer them more guidance and advice (36.84%). The students mentioned that it often occurs to them to need the teachers' recommendations more when they are at home as "Internet and books cannot offer perspectives as the teacher does" and that "e-mail for example is easy to use so why not ask the teacher about something why it is still fresh to remember." Another reason is that keeping in touch with the teacher would act as reinforcement (22.81%) of the concepts studied in the classroom, and that could take place in the form of additional writing tasks, more explanations and more examples. Additionally, keeping in touch with the teacher would be a beneficial endeavor since the students consider their instructors as specialists and critiques (15.79%) because, as one student pointed out, "even if you have Internet and a wide range of books, the teacher remains the best resource ever." Other students stated that keeping in touch with their teachers outside the classroom would help them to better practise the stages of the writing process (12.28%) in the sense that they would be able to save time when getting an instant answer to their query therefore doing the biggest part of the work before coming to the classroom. Additional explanations provided by the students were categorized as "other" (08.77%), and they involve the followings:

-"it would encourage me to work better."

-"I would like to send pieces of writing that are not related to classes to get feedback from the professor."

-"I think that this way, teachers can make a bond with their students who need attention and more care."

-"It's an easier way of studying and I heard it functions incredibly well in Europe."

-“Feedback is vital for the students inside and outside the classroom.”

17 students negatively responded to Q28, and 14 students provided justifications that were classified in Table 4.31.:

Themes	N	%
classroom feedback is enough	05	35.71
students have to be autonomous	06	42.86
other	03	21.43
Total	**14**	**100**

Table 4.31. Reasons behind the Students not needing to keep in Touch with their Teachers outside the Classroom

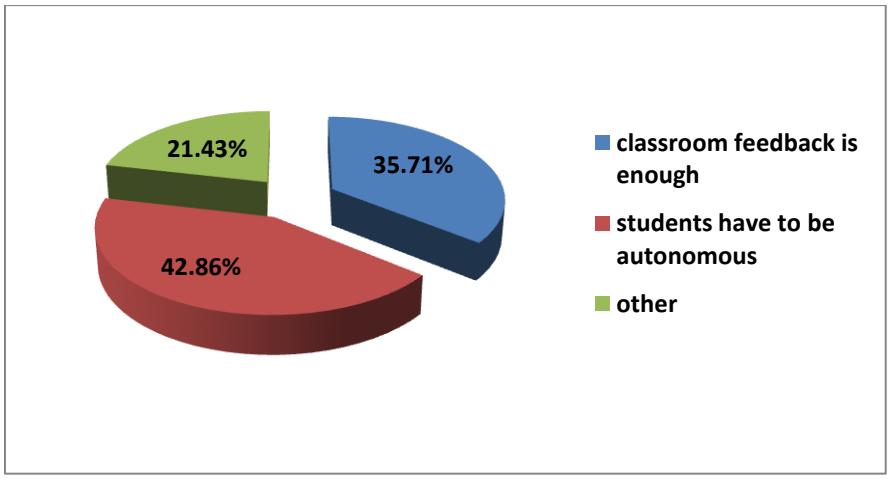


Figure 4.31: Reasons behind the Students not needing to keep in Touch with their Teachers outside the Classroom

In the view that keeping in touch with the teacher outside the classroom would not be a good idea, the participants stressed that the students have to be autonomous (42.86%) in the sense that the teacher acts as a guide and does enough work in the classroom; the students “need to make some efforts when [they] don't understand something and to do research on their own.” Another reason is that the feedback provided by the teacher in the classroom is enough (35.71%) since the teachers of writing are doing a good work. In the category “other” (21.43%), the respondents mentioned the followings:

-It cannot work with all teachers.

-“teachers are really busy; they can't be free for our daily questions.”

Q30. If given the opportunity, would you like to enroll in an online course of writing to learn concepts about essay writing at your own pace, then come to the classroom to practice all the stages of the writing process with your teacher?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	60	80
No	14	18.67
No answer	01	01.33
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.32. Students' Willingness to Enroll in a Blended Learning Course

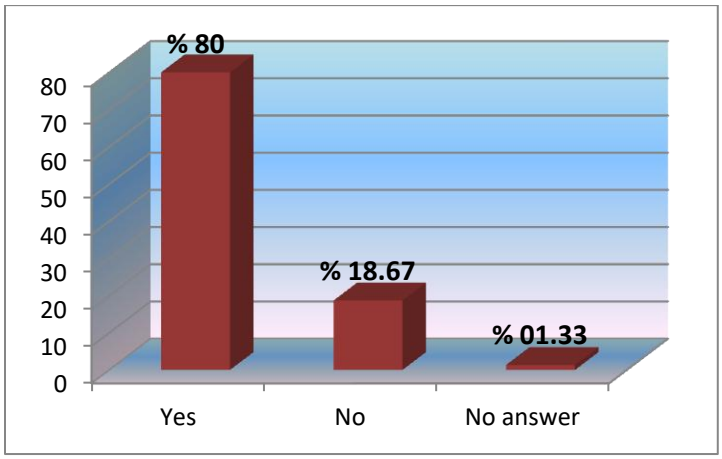


Figure 4.32. Students' Willingness to Enroll in a Blended Learning Course

Q30 concerns the students' opinions about enrolling in a blended learning course of writing. The question was designed in a way that would allow the students to have a glimpse of what blended learning is about. Of course, the wording of the question does not directly refer to blended learning but rather to one of its models which is the flipped classroom. As displayed in Table 4.32., 80% of the respondents show a willingness to participate in a blended learning.

Q31. If your teacher of Written Expression combined the traditional way of teaching writing with technology-based instruction, do you think it would be more effective to help you develop your writing skills?

Yes

No

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	64	85.34
No	10	13.33
No answer	01	01.33
Total	**75**	**100**

Table 4.33. Students' Attitudes towards Blended Learning

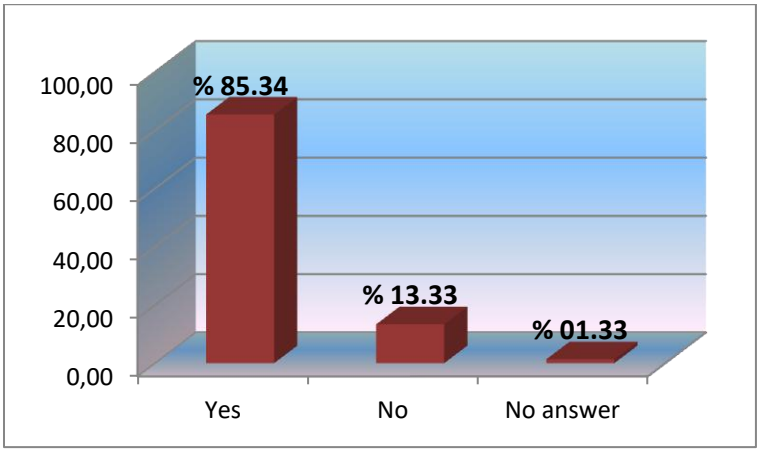


Figure 4.33. Students' Attitudes towards Blended Learning

Q31 is at the core of the current study as most of the previous questions paved the path to that question. For Q31, giving an approximate definition of what blended learning is was necessary as students are most probably not acquainted with this method. In Table 4.33., it can be noticed that 85.34% of the participants consider that blended learning would be efficient to develop their writing skills.

32. Please, explain why.

In Q31, the students were asked whether using blended learning would be effective to develop their writing skills. 64 students positively answered to Q31 and 47 justified their answers. 55 responses in total were obtained and were grouped into themes as shown in Table 4.34.:

Themes	N	%
both methods are complementary	14	25.45
the best method for a technology generation	28	50.91
it helps practise the stages of the writing process	07	12.73
it alleviates teacher's work	04	07.27
other	02	03.64
Total	**55**	**100**

Table 4.34. Students' Justifications of the Effectiveness of Blended Learning

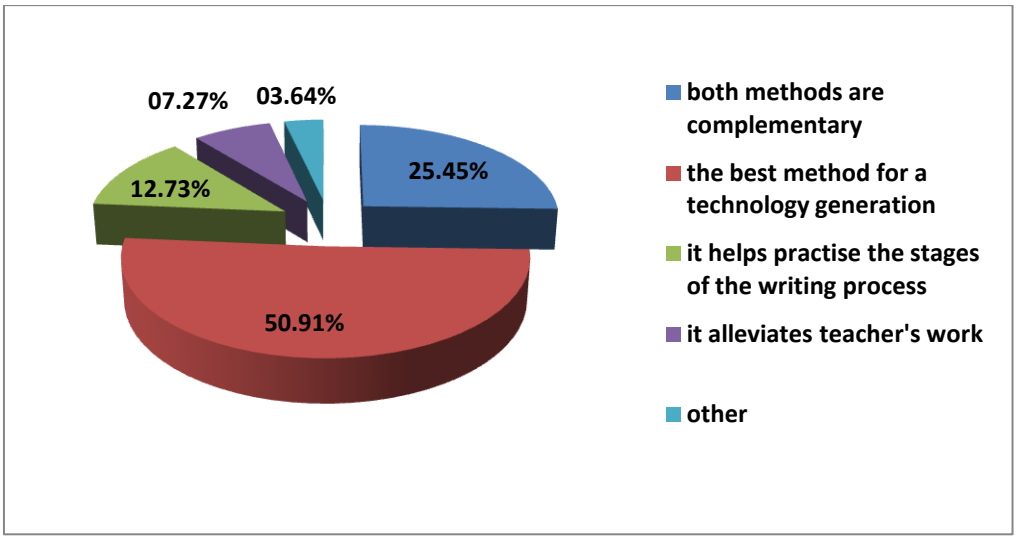


Figure 4.34. Students' Justifications of the Effectiveness of Blended Learning

The major reason that made the students consider blended learning as an effective method to develop their writing skills is that it is the most suitable method for a technology generation (50.91%). Many students emphasized that, because they use Internet and mobile technologies in their daily lives, and that they are quite familiar with them, there is no reason why those tools should not become an inherent part of the learning process. The notions of "interest" and "motivation" recurred in the students' responses. They also mentioned that blended learning would likely save time and make information more accessible, which in turn would help the students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere. With a rate of 25.45%, the respondents explained that both traditional teaching and technology-based instruction are complementary in the sense that "technology helps a lot to clarify several concepts and the traditional method teaches [the students] to work and rely on [themselves]." Blended learning can also help the learners in better practicing the stages of the writing process (12.73%) because if, for example, the theoretical part is "taken care of before coming to the classroom, more time will be given to practice". One student wrote: "it would be easier to draft and edit our essays using the computer plus we can easily send the

final work with no trouble." Another reason why blended learning would be effective to develop the students' writing skills is that it would considerably save time as it is easier to write essays on with word processing software like Microsoft Word, and that the students would be able to save their work so they can review their work at their convenience. Some students also mentioned that blended learning would alleviate the teacher's work who would be able to focus more on the process of writing if her/his students deal with the theory before coming to the classroom. In addition to that, "advanced materials would help the teacher innovate in presenting the information." In the category "other" (03.64%), one student wrote that blended learning would increase feedback knowing that "feedback polishes writing"; another students said that "[blended learning] would fuse potential with technology" probably meaning here that, thanks to that method, the students would be able to show or exploit their capabilities to the fullest.

Only 10 students answered "no" to Q31, and 07 of them justified their answers. All of the respondents said that face-to-face sessions are sufficient to develop their writing skills without giving further explanations.

Section Five: Further Suggestions

33. Please, add any further comment or suggestion.

In this section, 30 students provided answers but the number of the provided answers is 31 as one student provided a combined response. The responses were categorized as comments and suggestions and were organized in two separate tables as shown below:

COMMENTS		
Category	**Comment**	**Number of Responses**
Research	Put into practice the current research as it may mark a turning point in learning English as a foreign language.	01
Technology	Technology has a big potential to be exploited.	05
The Writing Skill	writing is critical to learn a FL, which requires the use of an effective method like Blended Learning	03
Adapting	-do not just stick to the same teaching method if other effective methods exist like Blended Learning. -Traditional teaching should not be discarded in favor of Internet and mobile technologies which are tools.	01 01
The Teacher	The teacher is the one who makes the difference in developing the students' writing skills.	02

Table 4.35. Students' Further Comments

In Table 4.35., the students provided several interesting comments. The major idea being presented is that technology has a big potential that can be exploited for learning the FL particularly the writing skill which is, in the view of the learners, a vital skill. Therefore, blended learning might be the most suitable method to develop their writing skills but under some restrictions, the first one being not to discard traditional teaching in favor of technology, and the second one being that the teacher

plays a key role in the learning process because blended learning "is not about technology itself but about its use."

SUGGESTIONS		
Category	**Suggestion**	**Number of Responses**
Practice of Writing	-more practice of writing	02
	-more practice of writing combined with regular reading and/or reading tasks	03
	-more hours of practice under teacher supervision	01
	-varied writing tasks	01
Recycling	a summer recycling for students would be beneficial so they won't forget what they studied during the academic year.	02
Topics for Writing	-more interesting topics about real life and society	02
	-more freedom for students in choosing their own topics would be beneficial	02
Focus on the Student	-more focus on the individual student than on the group	01
	-some students feel neglected by their teachers because they take more time to learn and to do their tasks in the classroom	01
	-use a teaching method in accordance to students' needs	01
	-teachers should work on motivation	01

Table 4.36. Students' Further Suggestions

The respondents also made suggestions that were classified into categories (Table 4.36.). The first category comes under the headline of “practice of writing”. The students proposed that more hours should be devoted to practicing various writing tasks under the teacher’s supervision, in addition to reading tasks for reinforcement. The “topics for practice” should be more appealing and more related to society and real life to create interest and therefore to motivate the learners. “Focusing on the students” as individuals was also suggested. Learning to write is not a group task but rather a more individualistic enterprise because not all the students learn at the same pace, have the same capabilities, and show intrinsic motivation. Another suggestion was provided concerning “recycling” the students during summer vacation. The students stated that an online course could help the students rehearse what they studied during the academic year in the form of assignments, and therefore, it would greatly help the learners to refine their writing skills.

4.2.3 Overall Analysis of the Students’ Questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire was designed in order to yield information on how Second Year students envisage the learning of composition at university. The first element that the students were asked about was their learning expectations. It is well known that, before starting an academic year, university students have some expectations about the syllabus they will be introduced to as well as some major aims they would like to attain at the end of their curriculum. This is more accentuated in the twenty-first century learners who seem to be more aware of their needs and about what they are supposed to develop as skills. In the case of the current study, the students of Second Year expect to become skilled at academic writing (that is to master the principles of academic writing and to meet its requirements) which in turn would enable them to effectively express themselves in

various circumstances. Learners' expectations are very important as they can be indicators about students' needs. Reinforcing the students' confidence about starting a new program is first accomplished by explaining to them the course objectives which is generally undertaken by the teachers at the beginning of the academic year. The participants of this study confirmed through their answers that their teachers of Written Expression stated and explained to them the objectives of the WE course and that those objectives matched their learning expectations. The second element related to learning to write are the difficulties the students encounter with aspects of academic writing. In Q4, the three aspects that are problematic to Second Year students are "finding the appropriate ideas" (50.66%), "vocabulary choice" (38.66%), and "organization of ideas" (34.66%). "Finding the appropriate ideas" as it was explained in the analysis of Q4 is mainly linked to the planning stage of the process of writing. Planning, also called pre-writing, is often the most difficult step the students have to go through because they have to manage several key elements such as purpose, audience, definition of the scope of the topic to be developed, a thesis that will act as the 'backbone' of the essay, and a clear outline that plays the role of 'road map' for the student writer. Vocabulary choice is also problematic as it is most probably the result of lack of reading, the translation from the L1 to the FL (what Adas and Bakir, 2013 coined as "Arabish"), or both of them. The third problematic aspect "organization of ideas", as it was formerly explained, is related to coherence. The students were taught in their first year that putting one's ideas in a logical way is achieved through repeating key nouns, using pronouns, using transition words and phrases, and selecting the appropriate type of development (which is generally specified by the teacher in assignments). Achieving coherence in an essay is a complex task as the learners have to take into account, at least, three constituents of

coherence adding to that the difficulties caused by the other essay parts. It is quite understandable that the students are more concerned with finding the appropriate ideas and correctly wording them than with coherence, particularly repetition of key nouns and of pronouns which are often overlooked. As a third element of the questionnaire's first section, focusing on the issue of the process of writing was essential in this questionnaire since most of the Written Expression teachers have, for some years now, opted for the process-oriented approach (but in combination with the product-oriented approach and some features of the genre approach, a claim based on a consensus among the team of the WE teachers at the Department of Letters and English), and that it has come to be quite an effective method to teach writing. The first question that the participants were asked was indicating the hardest stage of the process of writing which came out to be the planning stage (65.33%). This result is in accordance with what the participants responded in Q4 about "finding the appropriate ideas" as being the most problematic aspect in learning to write. The students were also asked to indicate the frequency of composition practice that habitually involves the practice of the stages of the writing process through various tasks. The frequencies that were opted for varied in rate (Q6), and this variation may be due to the students' number per group, the teachers' strategies in teaching Written Expression, or both of them. What can be retained from the results is that the Written Expression teachers ensure a minimum of practice in the classroom, and part of that involves engaging the students in the process of writing that was confirmed by the majority of the students. Nevertheless, not all the stages are given equal emphasis as indicated in Q8 where planning (57.33%) and drafting (42.66%) received the highest proportions. That is rather logical since Second Year students have to practise the different parts of the essay, which involve for instance the development of a thesis and topic sentences,

different types of introductions, the structure of a given type of development, and so on, and that is initially and mainly achieved in the planning and drafting phases of the writing process. Another element that had to be verified was teachers' feedback on the students' written productions. Feedback is an essential part of learning the FL in general and is more critical to learning to write. In teaching composition, feedback can occur at different levels and in various forms (oral or written; immediate or delayed) depending on the writing tasks that are assigned to the learners. The results of Q9 indicate that the Written Expression teachers provide their students with feedback at different frequencies, and the rates are almost similar to the ones obtained in Q6 about the stages of the writing process. Added to that, parts of the essay (that is the thesis, topic sentences, types of introduction, and so on) are the most emphasized aspect of essay writing as the results of Q10 indicate. Again, these results are in concordance with the results of Q8 and Q9 since the most emphasized stages of writing are planning and drafting where the students have to put into practice the different principles of writing the special paragraphs (the introduction and the conclusion), the thesis, and the topic sentences. The last element of the questionnaire's first section was about the instructional materials the Written Expression teachers use to teach their students composition that came out to be 'printed handouts'. Printed handouts are widely used by the WE teacher team, and the results of Q11 are not surprising.

Concerning the students' learning preferences and learning styles, it appears from Q12 that the latter greatly vary and that it is quite logical since no group of learners can be homogeneous to the extreme. The aim then is not to show which learning preference or learning style mostly prevails but rather to highlight that the traditional method of teaching writing may not address this variety. Concurrently, this is quite useful as it provides valuable indications on the possible application of

blended learning in the context of teaching composition. One of the positive aspects of blended learning is that it can satisfy different learning preferences and suits various learning styles through the use of various tools like wikis, synchronous and asynchronous tools, or the use of some blended learning models like the flipped classroom. In addition to learning preferences and learning styles, motivation was also considered in this questionnaire as it provided some valuable information about the students. The first question on motivation that the students were asked about is their attitudes towards the topics suggested by their teachers in the Written Expression classroom. On the whole the students seem to like the topics their Written Expression teachers propose for practice, yet, the students who did not share this opinion provided some justifications like “boring”, “redundant”, and “lack of background information” that triggered some questioning: do the students like the topics suggested by the teachers because they are familiar to them or is it is because they are not challenging? The second question on motivation concerned the psychological state of the students in the WE classroom. The results were satisfactory since most students reported to be ‘engaged’ and ‘motivated’. No justification was required from the learners as the aim of this questionnaire was to assess the learning situation in the Written Expression classroom from a general perspective. The last question on motivation was on the Written Expression teachers’ strategies in encouraging their students through the learning process. As it was mentioned in the analysis of Q17, the suggested items are common strategies used by the Written Expression teachers in the classroom. The most common ones are extensive writing (48%) and overcoming problems encountered during the process of writing (34.66%). Teachers’ encouragements are a means to instill a feeling of concern in the students that, in combination to the right

motivational strategies, can increase students' motivation that in turn can help them develop their self-efficacy.

The issue of the students' use of technology in the context of writing was highlighted in this questionnaire. The respondents declared that they utilize Internet and mobile technologies in learning to write but at different frequencies. What is interesting in the results is that the students do use technology as a means to foster their composition skills, and that is an aspect the Written Expression teachers can exploit since the current generation of university students seems quite familiar and comfortable with Internet and mobile technologies. According to the results of Q19, Q20, and Q21, some teachers have already introduced technology in their classrooms but its use is restricted to the use of dictionary applications installed in the students' smartphones. Yet, this initiative may not 'enthusiasm' other teachers of Written Expression who seem to have a negative attitude towards the use of Internet and mobile technologies in their classrooms, an attitude justified by the teachers' fear of plagiarism, of students' use of Internet and mobile technologies for recreational purposes, and the encouragement of students' dependence on technology. These concerns are quite understandable since a misuse of technology can hinder the development of the students' composition skills and in the long run it affects the students' self-efficacy. However, further investigation among the teachers of writing would have provided more explanation about this negative attitude towards Internet and mobile technologies. The students' were also asked if their teachers used Internet and mobile technologies in their classrooms (Q22). As it was mentioned earlier, this question was asked to mirror the students' answers to Q11 (about the teaching materials) and to Q19 (about teachers authorizing the students to use Internet and mobile technologies in the Written Expression classroom) as the students could just

have randomly ticked the answers. Though some teachers are quite tolerant with the use of technology in their sessions, the instructors do not use any technological means in their classrooms. The respondents were not asked to justify their answers as it is an issue that only the teachers could have explained; however, the most logical explanation would be that, because the Written Expression teachers mostly use printed handouts and/or textbooks/printed texts, there is no legitimacy to use any technological medium inside the Written Expression classroom. Other reasons could be time constraints and availability of the appropriate means. The last question on technology concerned the link between the teacher's effectiveness and the use of technology in his/her teaching method. The students were asked whether they consider an effective teacher of writing as the one who uses Internet and mobile technologies in her/his teaching method. 56% of the respondents consider that teacher's effectiveness has nothing to do with technology use for two major reasons. The first reason concerns the teacher. Even if they are digital natives, the students are quite aware of the important role the teachers plays in teaching writing emphasizing that an effective teacher stands out by her/his ability to transmit knowledge using simple means, to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, to use her/his experience and background knowledge for the benefit of the learners, and to sustain motivation in the students. The second reason is that there is no possible way in using Internet and mobile technologies to teach writing as the latter is more about practice than theory. In contrast, 44% of the respondents do consider the effectiveness of the teacher as undoubtedly related to technology use. The students supported their claim with three major arguments: (1) technology optimizes the learning/teaching process since it offers a wide range of tools that save time and stimulate students' understanding, (2) living in the twenty-first century implies the inclusion of technology in the academic

life since the world is developing fast and staying up-to-date particularly in education has become a question of “academic survival”, and (3) technology can represent an important “booster” of motivation as Internet and mobiles technologies, if used properly, can instill self-confidence and inspiration in the learners.

Concerning the way Written Expression is being taught at the Department of Letters and English Language, the majority of the participants declared that they were satisfied with the current method of teaching writing even if certain elements from the students’ answers to the previous questions might have indicated a certain amount of dissatisfaction with what takes place in the Written Expression classroom. However, since the students have no other reference to establish a comparison with another teaching method, they could have just provided a positive answer based on the only point of reference they know which is the traditional method of teaching writing.

Though the students claimed their satisfaction with traditional teaching, the majority confirmed that it occurs to them to need the help of their teachers once they are doing homework, and that using synchronous and asynchronous tools would likely benefit them particularly in getting feedback. For the latter, the students explained that keeping in touch with the teacher via synchronous and/or asynchronous tools offers them the guidance and advice of their teachers whom they consider as specialists, and the ability to reinforce their understanding of the content presented in the classroom. Again, although the majority of the students are satisfied with the traditional teaching of Written Expression, they showed a positive attitude towards trying blended learning as new method to teach writing if they were given the opportunity. They also believe that if their teachers adopted blended learning to teach Written Expression, this method would effectively help them develop their composition skills for the following reasons: (1) blended learning is the most appropriate method for digital natives, (2)

traditional teaching and technology-based instruction are not incompatible but rather complementary, (3) blended learning helps to better the practice of the stages of the writing process, and (4) blended learning is a method that would benefit the teacher by mainly reducing her/his workload.

Finally, the students commented on several issues particularly on technology, the writing skill and the teacher. Technology has a potential that can foster the students' self-efficacy as well as address their various needs in learning to write. A remodeling of the way the students are learning to write through traditional teaching can either compensate for issues of learning styles, motivation, and learning preferences or boost the teachers' strategies in developing their students' composition skills. Since the writing skill is known to be the most difficult skill to learn in an EFL context, looking for alternatives that would provide both the learners and the instructors with tools to reduce the workload and increase learning opportunities should be taken into account. Yet, one major condition remains the teacher who, in the view of the learners, plays the most important part if a redesign of the Written Expression course is to be considered. Eventually, if that took place, the respondents suggested that practice of writing should be enhanced by increasing the amount of tasks and combining them with regular intensive and/or extensive reading. Additionally, the topics suggested for practice should relate more to real life so that the learners could relate to those topics as they seem to have a lot to say. Finally, focusing more on the learner as an individual was highlighted since some factors like students' needs, motivation, and students' learning aptitudes could affect the development of their composition skills.

Based on what was mentioned in the discussion of the results, many points have to be highlighted. The students are quite aware of what they are supposed to

learn and to be able to accomplish by the end of instruction and that corresponds to what they expected before taking the course. To achieve their aims, overcoming problems finding the appropriate ideas, vocabulary choice, and organization of ideas have to be taken care of particularly at the planning stage, the hardest phase of the writing process according to the students. Practice is ensured in the classroom at a certain rate and seems to mostly take place during the planning and drafting stages; however, it can be considered as weak point of the traditional teaching of Written Expression. Another weakness is the sole use of printed materials that, in a certain way, deprives the students from some advantages that Internet and mobile technologies can offer. Added to that, the current method may not suit all the students because of their learning preferences and learning styles which blended learning will better address. A further limitation in the current way of teaching Written Expression is that the teachers do not seem to be ready to introduce the use of Internet and mobile technologies in their classes since fear of plagiarism and use of those tools for recreational purposes appear to justify their stand. Further investigation about teachers' attitudes about Internet and mobile technologies would probably provide more answers to this issue. Concerning the students, they consider that teacher's effectiveness has no link with technology use, but at the same time they consider it as "a plus" that can benefit both the teachers and the students. On the whole, the students seem to be quite fine with the current teaching method of Written Expression as the teachers seem to do a good job with the students, yet the majority of the participants in this study wish to learn writing through blended learning, a wish based on the claim that the inclusion of technology in the Written Expression course would greatly benefit them as well as the teachers. Still, the students are aware that the teacher has an important role in the process, and that discarding the traditional method that proved

to be effective to a certain point should not be discarded but rather complemented or strengthened with technology.

Conclusion

Most of the respondents showed a positive attitude towards the current method used to teach writing; yet, through their answers in the last section of the questionnaire (Q33), they showed more enthusiasm concerning the existence of another teaching method based on technology. The fact that the majority of the respondents insisted on certain key elements related to the teaching of writing like motivation and students' needs implies their concern about learning to write at university which in the first place they regard as an important medium that would greatly ensure their success in the academic life.

The suggestions that the learners provided in the questionnaire hold valuable indications on how we, teachers, could help our learners become effective writers through a genuine combination of traditional teaching and technology-based instruction that will preserve the position/status of the teacher as the cornerstone of students' needs, expectations, and motivation and at the same time satisfies the students' desire to experience technology use in learning to write.

Chapter Five: An Online Course of Writing for English as a Foreign Language Algerian Second Year University Students

Introduction

Since 2012, the University “Frères Mentouri”, Constantine (formerly Mentouri University) has implemented an e-learning project hosted by the platform “TELUM” (Télé Université Mentouri) in the context of initiating university teachers to ICTs for education. This platform includes several online courses developed by university teachers from various disciplines who undertook a training in e-learning since then; more recently, TELUM has become the hosting platform for training newly recruited university teachers all over the Algerian territory.

5.1. Description of the Online Course

The current research work entitled “Developing the Composition Skills of English as a Foreign Language University Students through Blended Learning” required the utilization of an online course. This course was designed by a teacher of Written Expression during the academic year 2013-2014 in the context of a training in e-learning for newly recruited teachers at the University “Frères Mentouri”, Constantine. The course is available on the platform TELUM (Télé Université Mentouri) hosted by the University “Frères Mentouri”, Constantine (Figure 5.1.). All the figures in this chapter are screenshots taken from the same source: https://telum.umc.edu.dz/

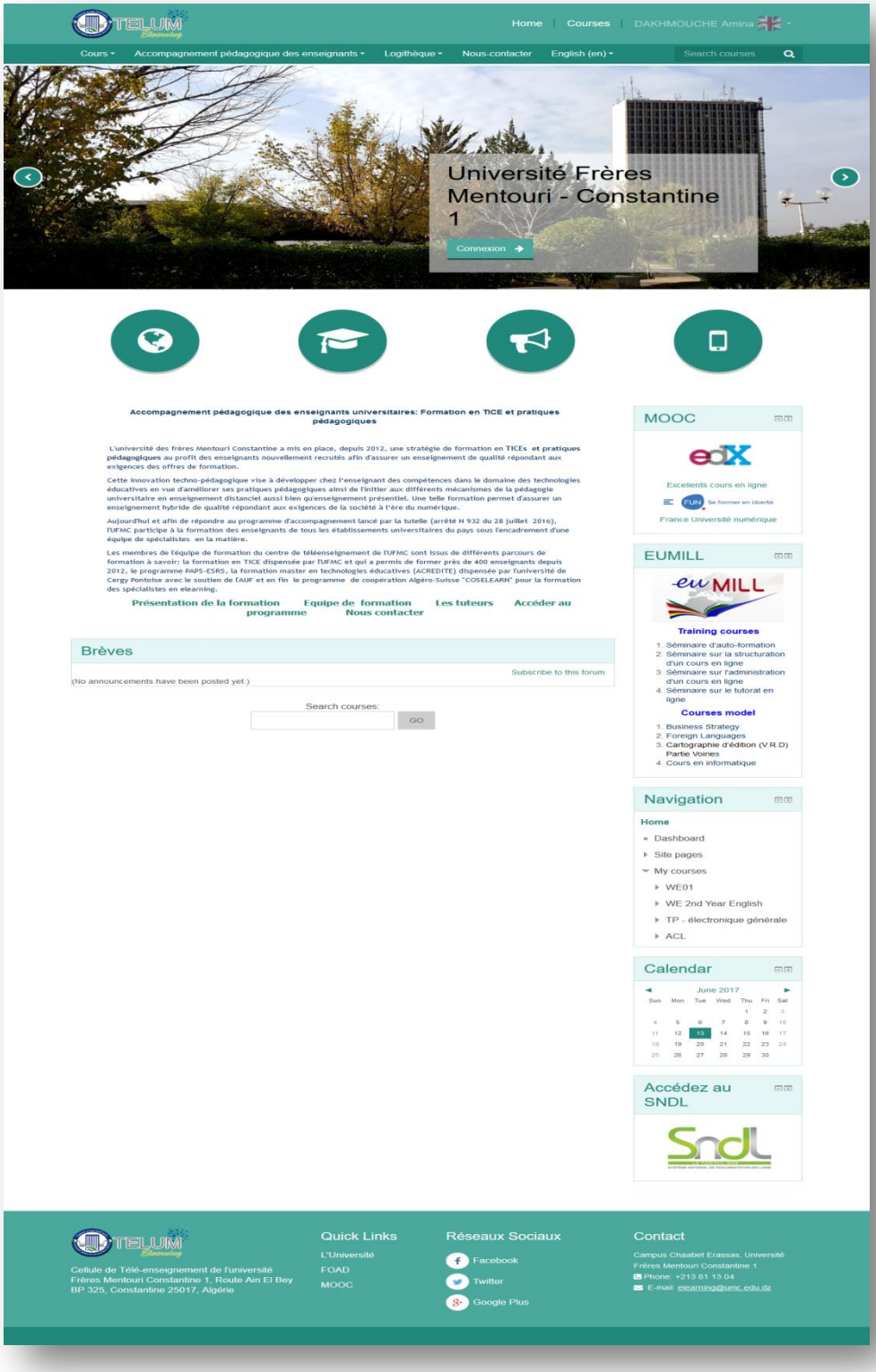


Figure 5.1. Télé Université Mentouri Welcome Page

This course, after being designed, was submitted for evaluation to three university teachers. It has to be mentioned that the three assessors are all teachers of

writing with a long teaching experience. The teacher who designed this course of writing for second year students accepted to give the researcher full access to the online course as well as the right to operate any necessary modifications with the approval of the head of the e-learning cell of the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine1.

The online course, called "Written Expression for Second Year Students of English", consists of four chapters. Chapter One, Chapter Two and Chapter Three are an introduction to essay writing, and each chapter deals with different parts of the essay; Chapter Four, which in turn is divided into three parts, introduces the students to three modes of development: exemplification, compare/contrast, and cause/effect (Figure 5.2.).

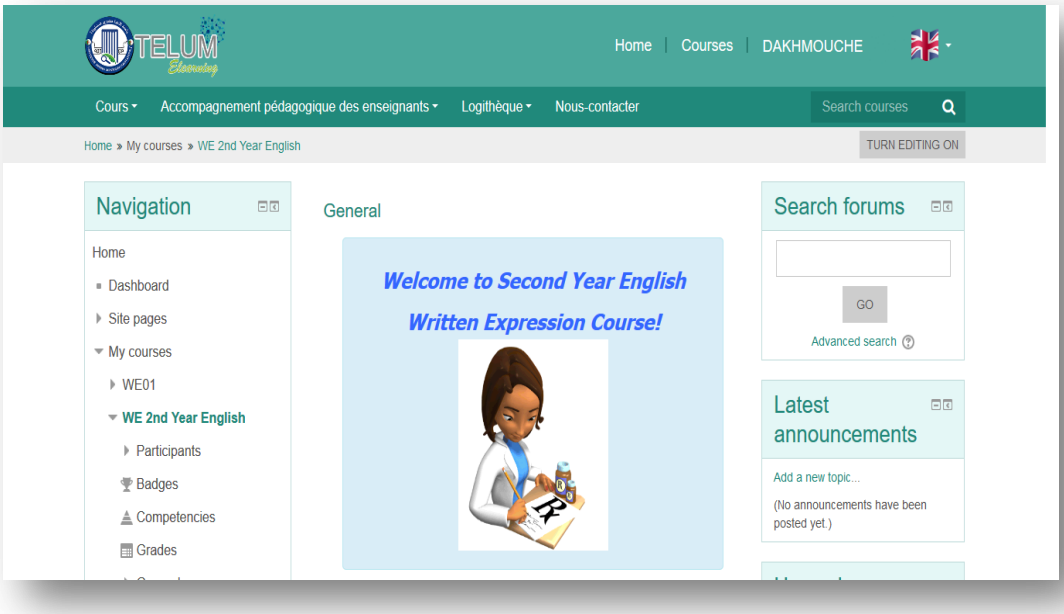


Figure 5.2. The "Written Expression for Second Year Students of English" Online Course Welcome Page

The first three chapters of the course include a theoretical part that provides students with the principles that govern the production of a standard essay **(Figure 5.3., Figure 5.4., and Figure 5.5.)**.

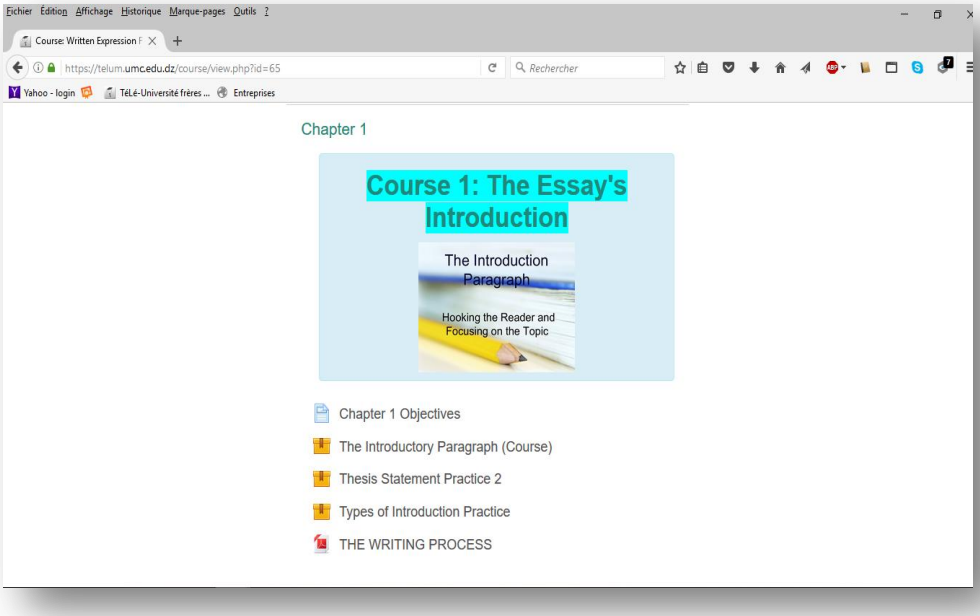


Figure 5.3. Chapter 1 of the Online Written Expression Course

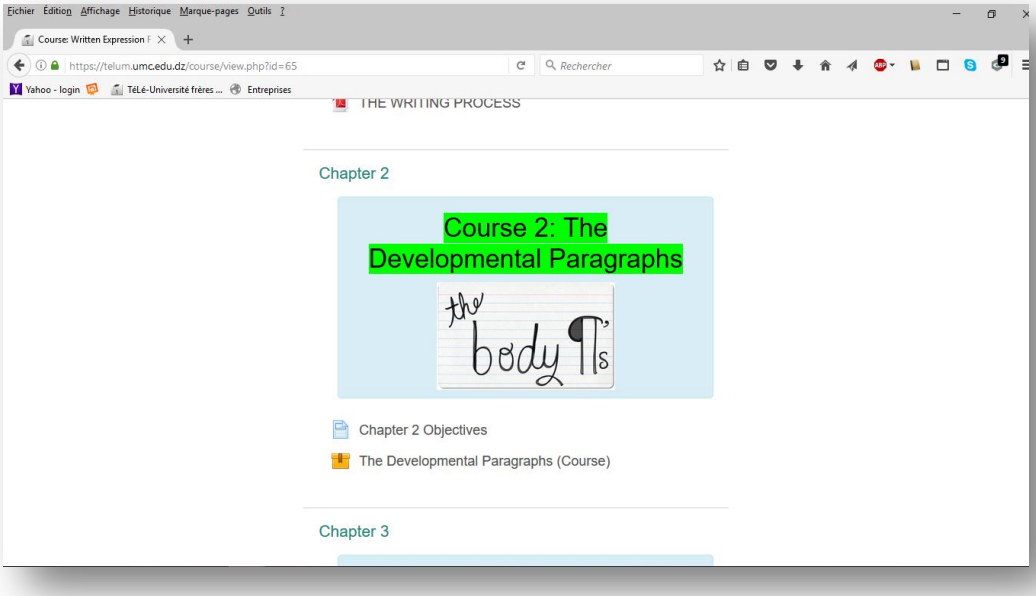


Figure 5.4. Chapter 2 of the Online Written Expression Course

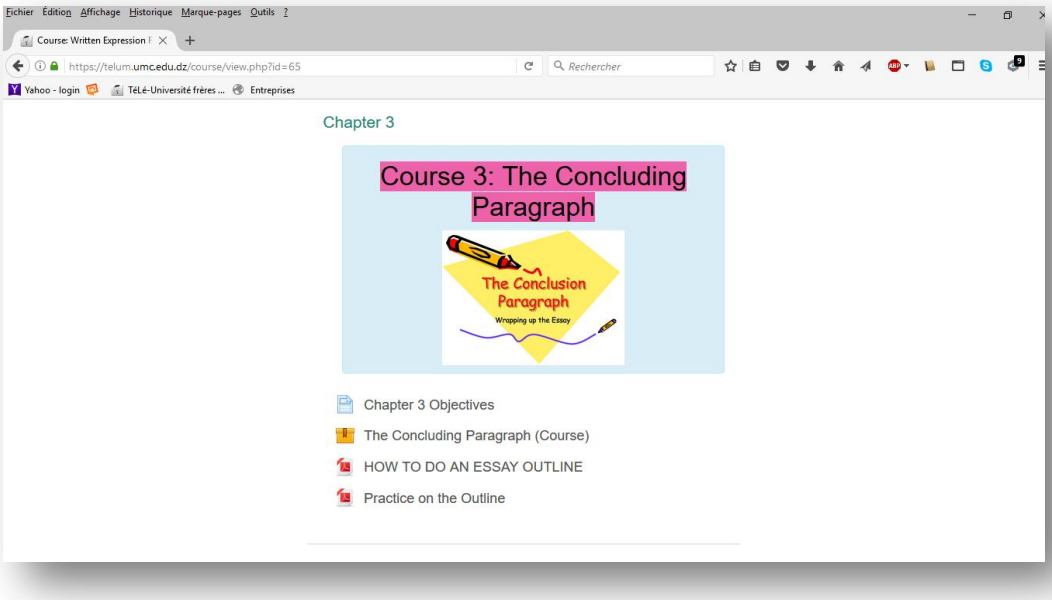


Figure 5.5. Chapter 3 of the Online Written Expression Course

The last chapter of the online course explains the aspects and the structure of each mode of development mentioned earlier **(Figure 5.6., Figure 5.7., and Figure 5.8.).**

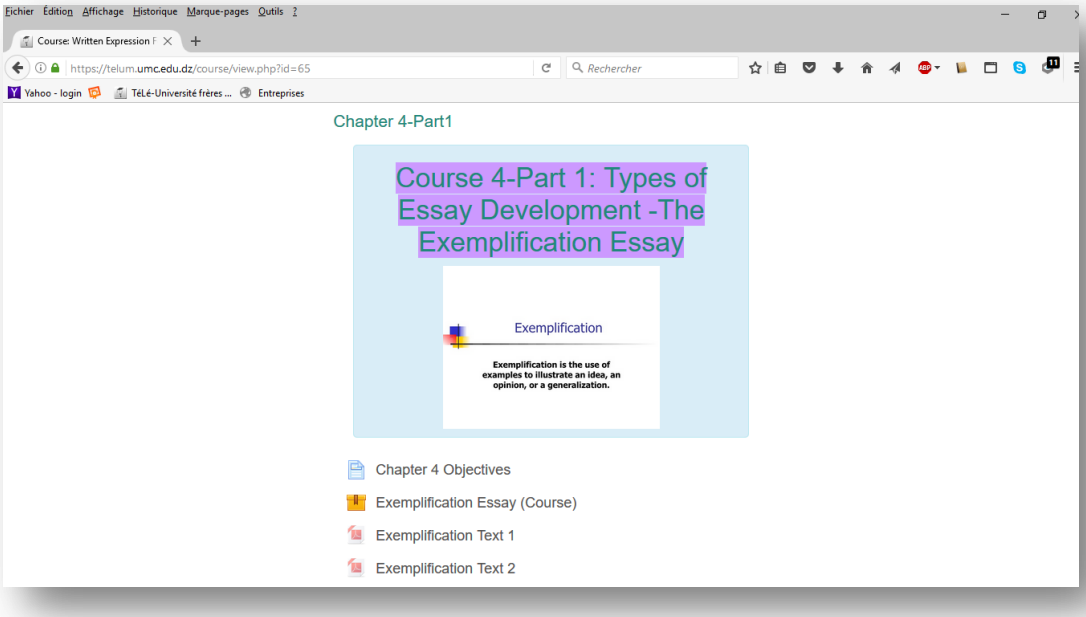


Figure 5.6. Chapter 4 (part 1) of the Online Written Expression Course

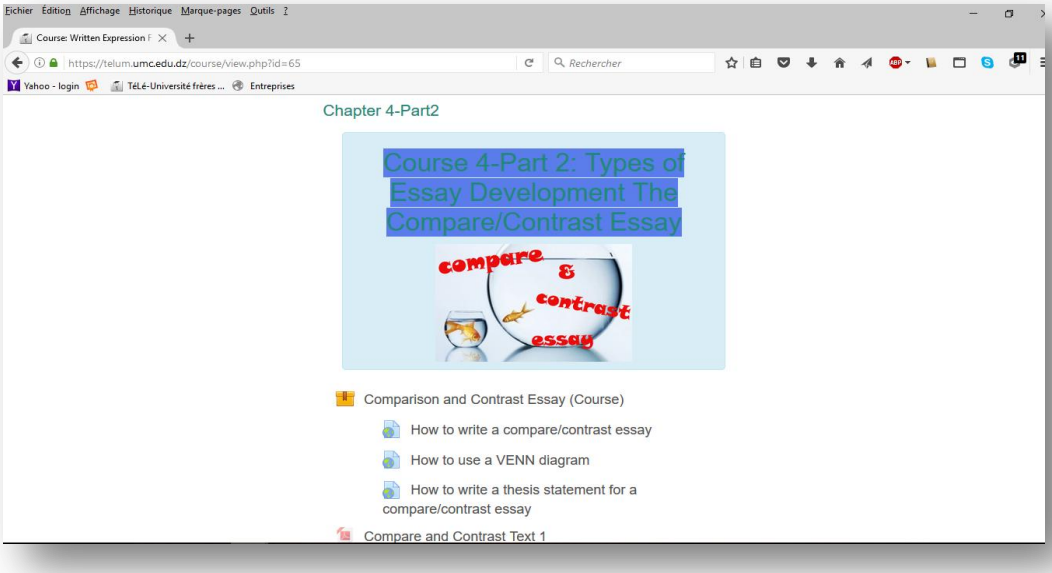


Figure 5.7. Chapter 4 (part 2) of the Online Written Expression Course

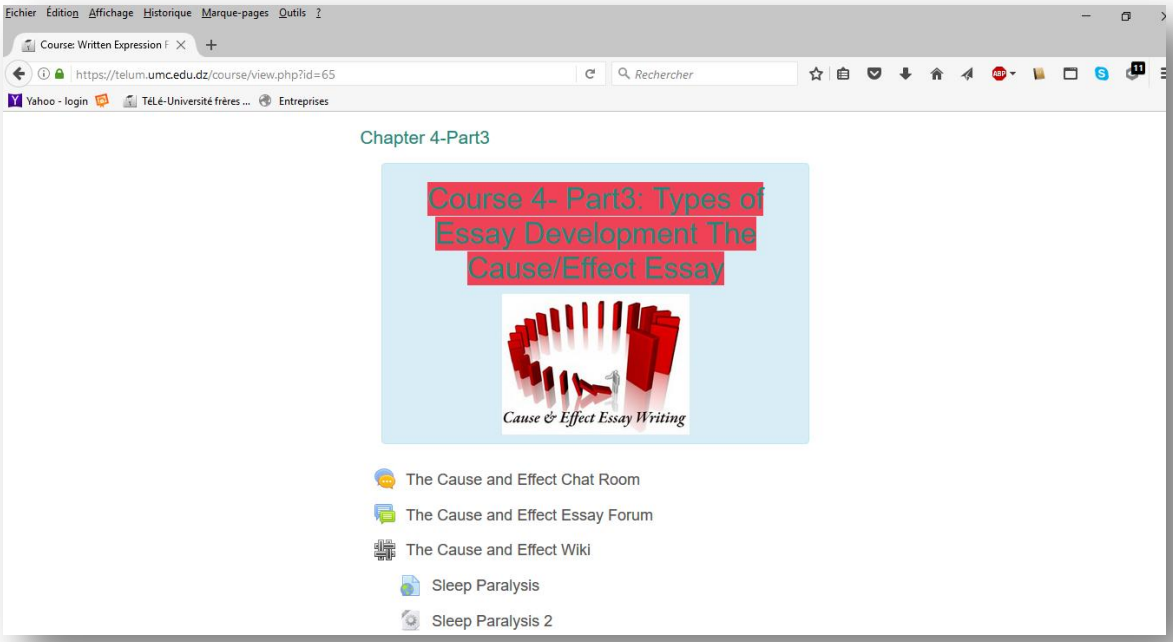


Figure 5.8. Chapter 4 (part 3) of the Online Written Expression Course

The course organization on the university platform is structured in a way that facilitates the navigation for the students who have access to the online course, and it is ordered as follows:

1. General (presentation of the online course) with a course charter and course objectives that are downloadable in PDF and ".docx" formats respectively **(Figure 5.9.)**

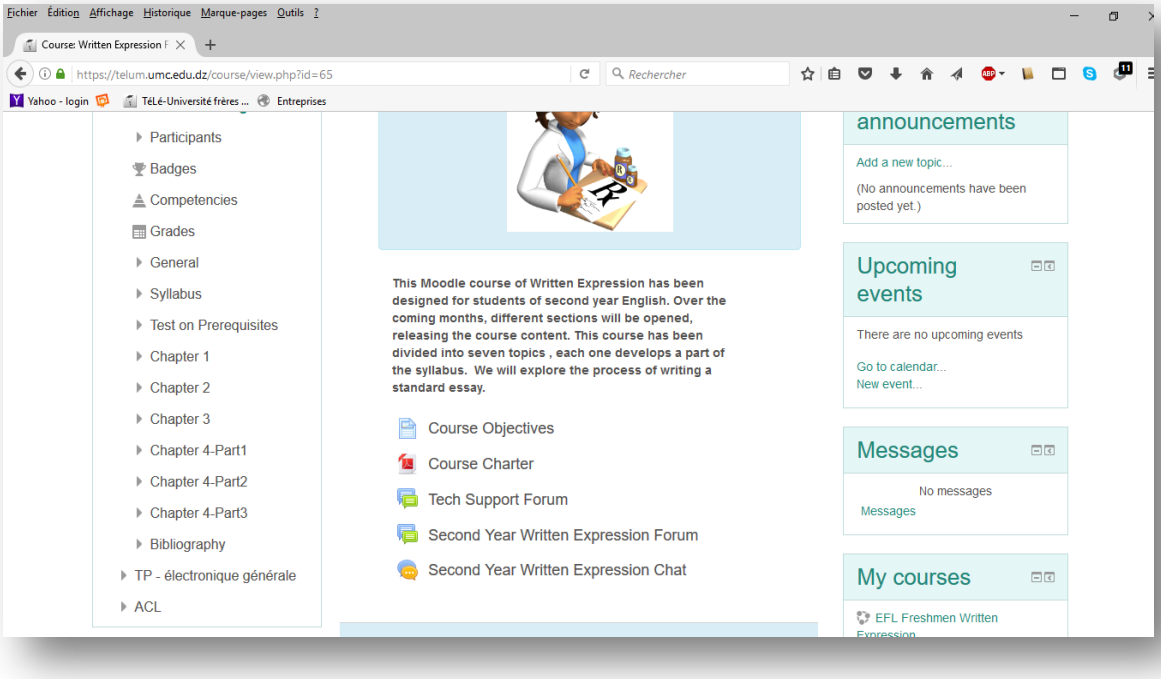


Figure 5.9. Presentation of the Online Written Expression Course

2. The syllabus and a mind map that are downloadable in PDF formats **(Figure 5.10.)**

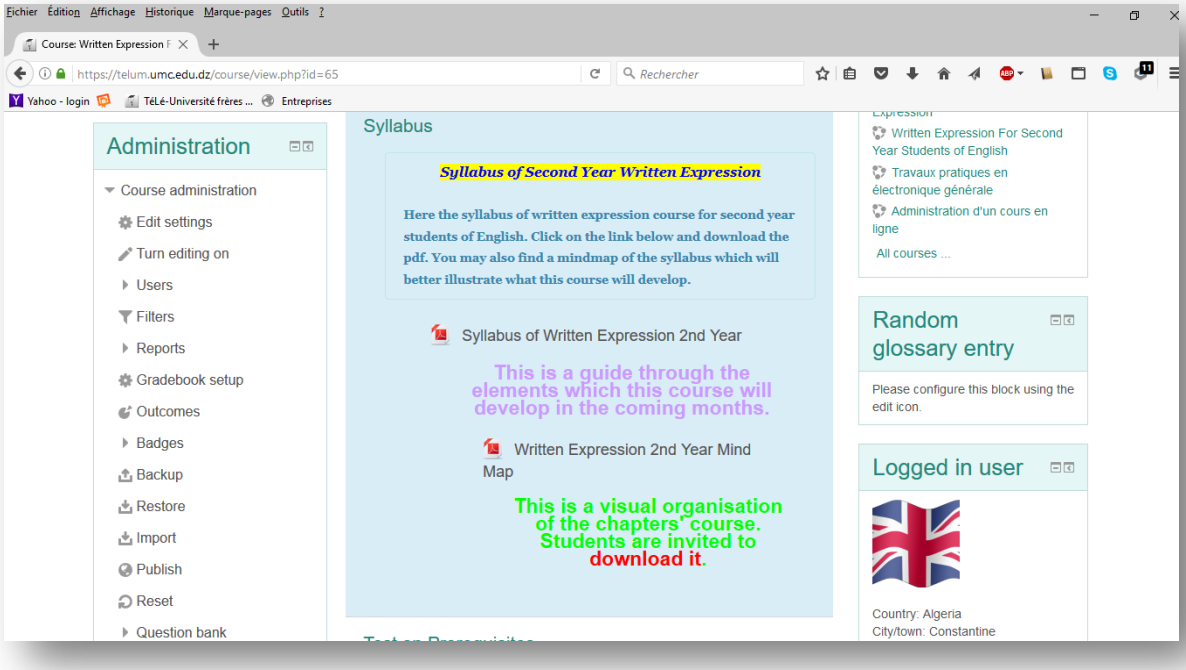


Figure 5.10. The Written Expression Course Syllabus and the Mind Map

3. A pre-test (or test on prerequisites) **(Figure 5.11.)**

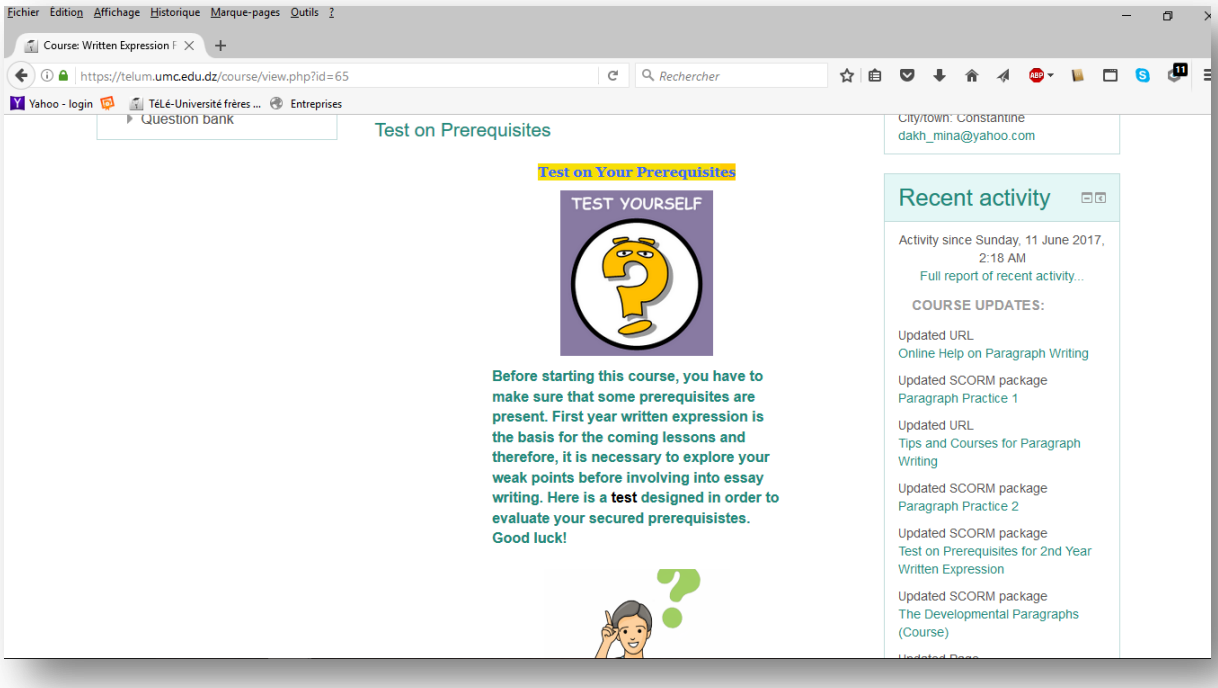


Figure 5.11. The Test on Prerequisites

4. Chapter One “The Essay Introduction”

5. Chapter Two “The Developmental Paragraphs”

6. Chapter Three “The Essay Conclusion”

7. Chapter Four-Part 1: Types of Essay development – The Exemplification Essay

8. Chapter Four-Part 2: Types of Essay development – The Compare and Contrast Essay

9. Chapter Four- Part 3: Types of Essay development – The Cause and Effect Essay

10. Bibliography which includes a list of references that were used to design the online lessons and activities. References include book titles, eBooks, and web pages that students would eventually like to check for further reading **(Figure 5.12.).**

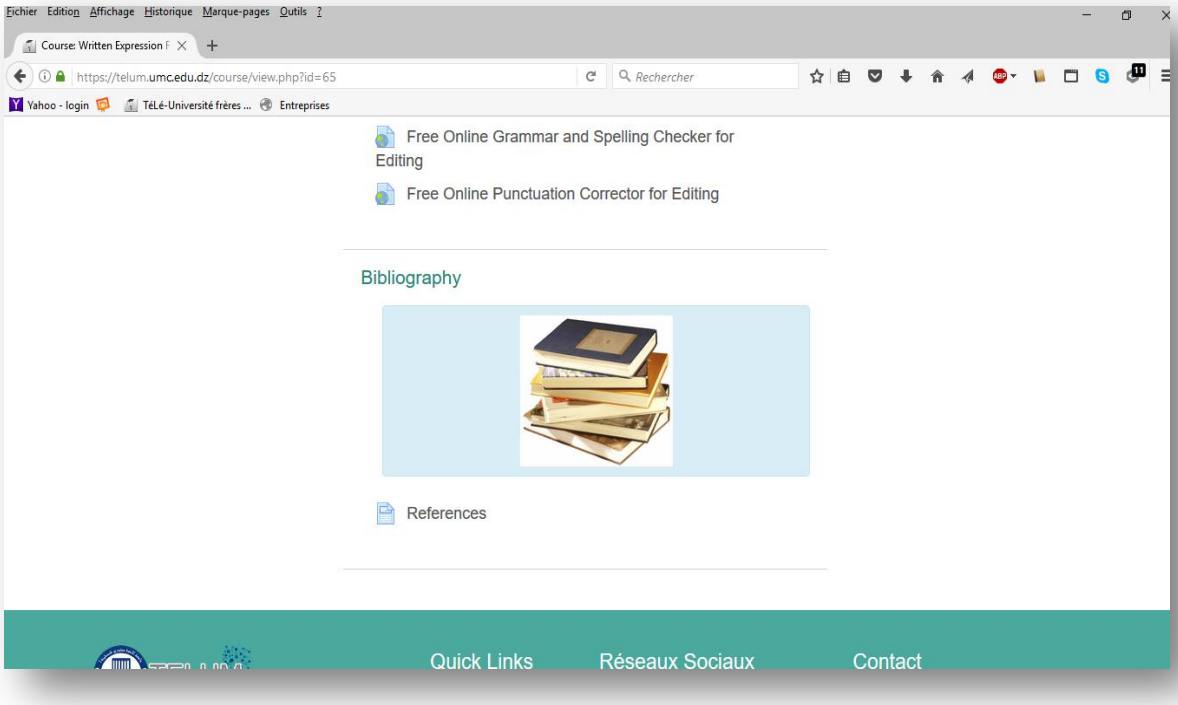


Figure 5.12. The Online Written Expression Course Bibliography

In the online course, every chapter is structured as follows:

- Objectives of the chapter
- Theoretical concepts in SCORM format
- Sample texts for reading comprehension in PDF format (downloadable)
- Online assignments
- Online activities (depending on the chapter) in the form of exercises or quiz
- Resources (web links, videos, and materials for extensive reading)
- A forum (that is devoted to the specific content of the chapter)
- Chat (for students who want to exchange ideas, ask questions, and so on)
- Other resources for extra practice (particularly for students who have problems with certain aspects of writing like grammar and mechanics) in the form of online quizzes and tests.
- Web links and mini-lessons about the grammatical features particular to each type of development.

5.2. Major Elements of the Online Course

In the previous section, the online course was presented in terms of its different sections and chapters. In this section, the online course will be presented in relation to key elements that involve course objectives, prerequisites, the pre-test, the syllabus, online activities, and resources.

5.2.1. Course Objectives

Designing an online course is subject to the same principles followed for designing a “classical” or traditional course although the first one takes place in a

virtual environment, whereas the second one takes place in a “brick-and-mortar” classroom. The first and most critical step of the course design is defining objectives.

Objectives are very important to the good conduct of the learning/teaching process as they are very useful to both the students and the teachers in order to know what to expect from the course. Objectives may be broadly defined as statements that specify what students are supposed to have learned by the end of instruction. However, caution should be observed as, nowadays, objectives that are often referred to as course objectives are frequently confused with learning outcomes, and making the distinction between the two is necessary. Course objectives are defined as “what a faculty member will cover in a course. They are generally less broad than goals and broader than student learning outcomes” **(**DePaul University, 2017**)**. Learning outcomes, on the other hand, are “a detailed description of what a student must be able to do at the conclusion of a course. When writing outcomes, it is helpful to use verbs that are measurable or that describe an observable action. … The best outcomes will include a description of the conditions … and the acceptable performance level” **(**DePaul University, 2017**)**. Therefore, whether course objectives and/or learning outcomes, the instructors or the course designers must be clear about the knowledge, skills and behaviors that they want their students to acquire or develop. One way to ensure that course objectives and/or learning outcomes are clear and well defined is to refer to Bloom’s Taxonomy (Figure 5.13.), and which is defined as “a classification system used to define and distinguish different levels of human cognition—i.e., thinking, learning, and understanding” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

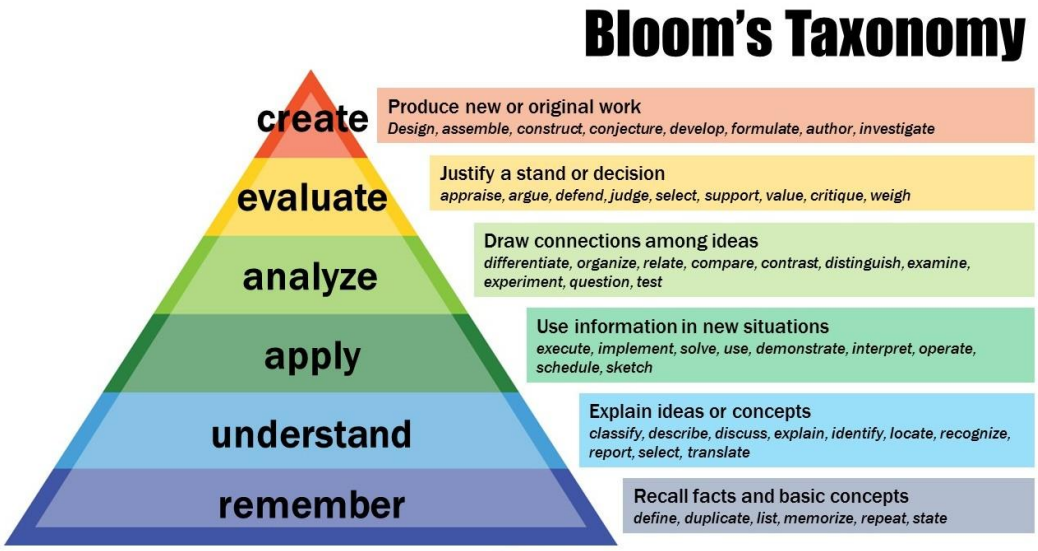


Figure 5.13. Bloom's Taxonomy (Abu Ziden, n.d.)

5.2.2. Prerequisites

From a general perspective, the students who enroll in the "Written Expression for Second Year Students of English" online course need to possess some basic skills in writing supposedly acquired in their first year and which involve the ability:

-to produce different types of sentences (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex),

-to write topic sentences for paragraphs,

-to know the concepts of unity and coherence,

-to know the concepts of parallelism, wordiness and sentence fragments,

-and to correctly use certain punctuation marks like the comma and the semi-colon which are critical in producing different types of sentences.

Those prerequisites serve as the basis for the new notions and skills that students are supposed to have acquired and developed at the end of the Second Year course.

5.2.3. The Online Pre-test

The "Written Expression for Second Year Students of English" online course requires from the learners who study online to take a pre-test (Figure 5.14) to evaluate the prerequisites mentioned in the previous section. The pre-test is meant to measure the degree to which the students have acquired the basic notions of writing in their first year, and this in turn helps to identify the students' strengths and weaknesses thus identifying any gaps that may have been left from previous instruction.

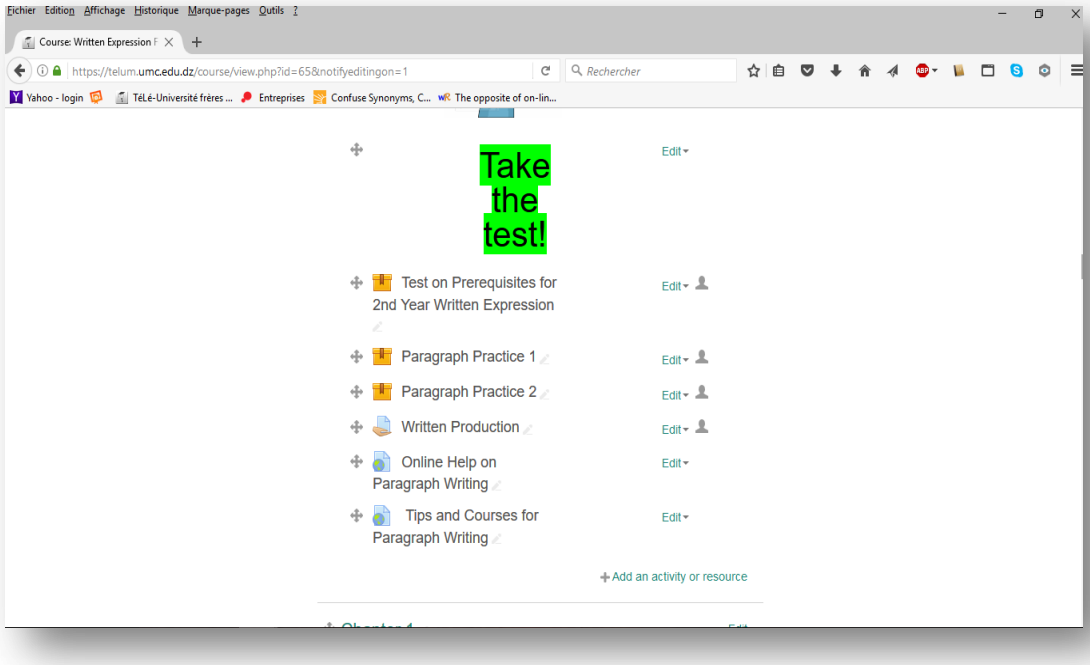


Figure 5.14. The Written Expression Online Pretest

In order to achieve that, several activities were designed to test the students' various writing sub-skills which, as Palmer (as cited in in Keshta and Harb, 2013) defined them, include grammatical skills that are related to concepts like the sentence, the clause and the phrase; rhetorical skills that partly relate to coherence and cohesion, and organizational skills that involve organizing ideas into paragraphs and notions like unity. The pre-test, as it can be noticed in Figure 4.14., is composed of four tasks, each

focusing on a particular aspect. The first task, “Test on Prerequisites for 2nd Year Written Expression”, seeks to assess the students’ knowledge of the basic concepts (like the clause, sentence, and punctuation) they studied in their first year. The second task, “Paragraph Practice 1”, is about unity and coherence; and the third task, “Paragraph Practice 2”, is a reading activity followed by comprehension questions on the constituents of the paragraph. The last task, “Written Production”, as its name indicates, is a free writing activity where students are required to write a 15-20 lines paragraph on a topic of their choice. This task tests all the writing skills the students developed in their first year and provides the instructor with more indications about the students’ weaknesses and areas that need particular focus.

4.2.4. The Syllabus

The online course, called “Written Expression for Second Year Students of English”, was designed on the basis of the current curriculum of the module “Written Expression” that is being taught at the Department of Letters and English, University “Frères Mentouri”, Constantine 1, and which is organized as follows:

Second Year Syllabus of Written Expression

Objectives:

- Students will be able to recognize the different parts of the essay.
- Students will practise writing different essay parts.
- Students will be able to write academic essays using different patterns of development.

Contents

5.2.5. The Activities

The online course includes several activities that vary in type and purpose depending on the writing aspect the students are introduced to. Moodle offers an array of activity modules that enable the learners to access the interactive dimension that online learning offers, such as multiplying attempts of answers (depending on the parameters of the activity) and getting immediate feedback via synchronous and asynchronous tools. Some activities like writing assignments provide the students with the opportunity to submit their written productions online and to get back the evaluated files with comments and suggestions that enable the students to identify their weaknesses and receive appropriate feedback.

In this online course, the activities that were used had different aims each focusing on testing particular writing skills. Some aimed to check the students' understanding of newly presented concepts from a purely theoretical perspective, and others were meant to check the students' ability to use those concepts into their writing through practice.

5.2.6. The Resources

Moodle includes several kinds of resources that offer the learners the possibility to access information from different channels and in various forms. The kind of resources found on Moodle are books, files, folders, IMS content packages, labels, pages, and URL (*Uniform or Universal Resource Locator*). In the current online course, the resources that were used are the file, label, page, and URL modules. The file module allows the instructor to provide a file as a course resource, either to be presented in the course itself (online) or to be downloaded by the learners. It can be either a pdf document, a video file or a picture. Labels are elements that are inserted

into the course interface between sections or activities. They are generally used with long sections so to make the navigation and identification of course elements easier. Labels can take the form of a short description of a chapter or section of the course, and can include images, sounds or videos that can be directly inserted in the course page. Pages are resources that can include texts, images, sounds or videos and which are created using a text editor. For instance, a page can present course objectives or the course syllabus. The URL is a resource that allows the students to access a web link, generally freely available on the web. The URL helps the students to save time by just clicking on the link for research or further reading.

5.3. Requirements to Follow an Online Course

Designing an online course requires several skills; some of those skills can be self-developed through daily practice, and others require a specific training. The abilities that an instructor needs for the development of an online course can be divided into two categories: pedagogical and technical. Pedagogical skills involve knowledge about concepts like course objectives, assessment and its various forms, lesson design, and teaching resources. Technical skills involve the ability to use hardware and software, Internet and Web tools, and so on. In general, most teachers nowadays are widely acquainted with technology, and using various hardware and software like word processing has become widespread. However, designing an online course to be deposited on a platform is not easy and requires a specific training in ICTs for education with specialists in the field. The major skills that the teachers need to develop are generating a course using software like Opal and VUE (Visual Understanding Environment) managing a course on Moodle, and utilizing the different functions of Moodle to provide the learners with the best online learning

experience. The students who want to enroll in an online course need, in general, to possess certain skills. Those skills involve the followings: owning a computer (either desk computer or laptop) with a reliable Internet connection; different software installed on the computer, which are generally word processing software like Microsoft Word or any other variant, zip/unzip software to compress/extract files like "7-zip", "File Extractor", or "Winrar", freeware software like Adobe Flash Player to view multimedia, and a web browser like Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge; and having an e-mail address. The students are not expected to be computing specialists; yet, they are required to have some basic computer skills like downloading/uploading, copying/pasting, saving files, creating folders, installing/uninstalling software, using a web browser, and e-mail. In addition to the requirements abovementioned, other requirements need to be respected by the students and which involve, for example, respecting deadlines, respecting schedules, not disclaiming email addresses of peers and the teacher, respecting the peers and the teacher even through chat. Those requirements are presented and explained in the online course charter that students can download for a better understanding of how a virtual classroom works.

The present online course is used as part of this study on developing EFL students' composition skills through blended learning. The course chapters that are used are Chapter 4-Part2 and Chapter 4-Part 3, which respectively correspond to the compare/contrast and cause/effect essay developments. Many parts of the chapters' content were modified for the sake of the current study. The structure of the chapters has already been explained in section 5.1. This online course is essential to the study since, in the view of the present context, the blended learning approach used is defined in terms of the combination of traditional learning, which is face-to-face sessions that

take place in a “brick-and-mortar” environment, and online sessions that take place in a VLE or LMS, like Moodle. The online course content was embedded in the original syllabus of the second semester of the module of Second Year Written Expression, and represented 40% of the overall content that the students had to learn.

Conclusion

The online course represents an important part in the current study as it offers the students of Second Year the opportunity to evolve with the content of the Written Expression course, that is presented in the classroom, in an interactive way that not only helps save valuable time, but also provides the learners with more opportunities to explore the content of the course at their convenience and in a more efficient way.

Chapter Six: The Blended Written Expression Course

Introduction

Testing the effectiveness of a new teaching method is an intricate task as it necessitates the specification of the necessary parameters to achieve that. This entails the specification of the research hypotheses, the research variables, and selection of the appropriate research design and statistical analysis tools.

The students who participated in the current study are Second Year university students at the Department of Letters and English Language at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1. The overall population of Second Year in the academic year 2016-2017 included 373 students. For practical matters, 32 students from the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 were selected to participate in this study; all the participants were from the same location (Constantine) and their age ranged between 19-24 years old (information about location and age were obtained from the "online readiness questionnaire" as explained in section 6.4.)

6.1. The Research Design

The present study required the adoption of a quasi-experimental design to test the research hypotheses, and which is regarded to be the most appropriate design in educational research since "*random assignment* … is often impossible … at the classroom level because [researchers] seldom control the assignment of students to classes and usually work with *intact classes*. Intact classes are classes assigned by administrative procedures or classes selected by students" (Griffee, 2012, p.72). The study involved two groups of Second Year students that were assigned to the researcher at the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017 to cover her weekly

teaching hours. That was practical as those groups were going to be taught by the researcher herself.

Since the study involved testing a new teaching method, the most appropriate research design to be used was the nonequivalent (or nonrandomized) control group pretest-posttest design where "participants are not assigned to either the experimental or the control group in a random manner" (Jackson, 2009, p.323). Opting for this design instead of the one-group pretest-posttest design was based on the fact that the one-group pretest-posttest design, where a single group of participants is measured "before the manipulation (a pre-test) and again afterward (a post-test)" (Cozby, 2009, p.209), presented threats to the internal validity, which is defined by Sani and Todman (2006, p.20) as "the capability of an experiment to show the effects that the [independent variable], and only the [independent variable], exerts on the [dependent variable]." Griffee (2012, p.75) explained that "a threat, sometimes called an *alternative hypothesis*, is any possible explanation or reason for the results achieved other than or in addition to the one of interest." Campbell and Stanley (1963), Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), Cozby (2009) and Griffee (2012) mentioned several threats (also referred to as *rival hypotheses*) related to the one-group pretest-posttest design some of which are *history*, *maturation* and *testing*, and which appear to be the most important. *History* is regarded as a sum of events that occur between the pre-test and the post-test that might either produce the observed outcome or avert its occurrence, or affect the dependent variable rather than the independent variable, therefore creating rival hypotheses (Abdi, Edelman, Valentin, & Dowling, 2009; Griffee, 2012). *Maturation* is related to the time factor and involves changes that may occur in the subjects of the study over the research duration, and which may affect the results of that study. Changes can be physical like age and fatigue and psychological like

interest or absence of interest (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Griffee, 2012). *Testing*, also called "the test effect", "the practice effect" or "sensitization by the test" refers to the effects of the pre-test on the scores of the post-test. The fact of taking the pre-test will "alert" or "sensitize" the subjects about their aptitudes and/or weaknesses or the researcher's expectations, and therefore, they tend to have better scores in the posttest. Therefore, any improvement or change in the dependent variable may be caused by a rival or alternate hypothesis, that is initial testing, rather than the independent variable (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

After selecting the design type to be used to test the research hypotheses, choosing which of the two selected groups was going to be the experimental group and the control group was undertaken randomly using a lottery system, and the group that came out to become the experimental group consisted of 32 students. However, a problem of practical nature related to the online course arose. The researcher participated for the first time as an online tutor in a training for newly recruited university teachers of all the Algerian universities for the academic year 2016-2017, and she realized that the role of a tutor is demanding since she was going to ensure in the online course various functions amongst which "E-learning designer", "technology specialist", "content coach", "social director", and "managing correspondent" (Taylor-Massey, 2015). Therefore, managing 32 students online was going to be difficult, and for practical matters, reducing the sample size to half, that is 16 students (which is, according to most researchers, quite acceptable depending on certain conditions), was more appropriate. Therefore, 16 students from the control group that consisted of 27 students were also randomly chosen.

To summarize what has been explained so far, the selected research design for this study was the nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest; the total number of the participants (32) was equally divided into an experimental group and a control group to be instructed by the researcher herself.

Through the quasi-experimental study, the following hypotheses were meant to be tested:

1. If English as a Foreign Language second year students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, were trained to write through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve.

2. Blended learning improves students' writing skills at the sentence level.

3. Blended learning improves students' writing skills at the paragraph level.

4. Blended learning improves students' writing skills at the discourse level

Hypothesis 1 was stated in general terms, and it involves two variables: composition skills as the dependent variable, and blended learning being the independent variable. Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4 are related to the different levels of essay writing.

6.2. The Preparatory Phase of the Quasi-Experiment

The current study revolves around the main hypothesis that if EFL second year university students were instructed through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve. To test this hypothesis, as it was mentioned earlier, a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test involving two groups, an experimental group and a control group, was chosen as a quantitative research tool. Before starting the experimental part of the current study, some steps were followed;

these include enrolling the participants of the experimental group in the online course and designing a schedule for the experimental phase.

6.2.1. The Online Course

Before implementing the experimental phase, it was necessary to design an online course about writing for EFL Algerian second year students. As it was explained in Chapter 4, the researcher was authorized to have full access to an online course of writing for second year students by its designer and the head of the e-learning cell of the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1. The online course is available on the platform maintained by the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 at https://telum.umc.edu.dz/

Though the online course was fully described in Chapter 4, it has to be mentioned that the course was updated by the researcher, and only part of it was used for the current study as the experiment took place during the second term of the academic year 2016-2017. In addition to that, the syllabus of the second term involved the teaching of "types of essay development". The types of development that were focused on are the compare/contrast and cause/effect types.

6.2.2. Enrollment of the Participants in the Online Course

Before enrolling the students in the experiment, they were informed of the study and its purpose to respect ethical considerations, and all of them volunteered to participate in the study.

Before enrolling the students of the experimental group in the online course, a questionnaire called "Online Readiness Questionnaire" (Appendix I) was designed by the researcher, and was given to the experimental group to check if the students fulfilled the requirements of the study. Requirements mainly involve having access to

Internet connection via ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) or 3G/4G technology, owning a desk computer or a laptop, possessing basic computing skills such as downloading/uploading, compressing/uncompressing files, using a web browser, and being ready to participate in discussions and doing tasks online. After collecting the data from the online readiness questionnaire, some of the information of the "General Information" part (full name, address, and e-mail) provided by the students are not displayed in this work; only the age of the participants is provided and it ranges between 19-24 years old. For the second part named "Questions to apply for an Online Course", the results of each section are tabulated as follows:

1. Tools

	Item1		**Item2**		**Item3**		**Item4**		**Item5**		**Item6**		**Item7**		**Item8**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	32	100	32	100	28	87.50	23	71.88	18	56.25	14	43.75	07	21.88	14	43.75
No	00	00	00	100	04	12.50	09	28.12	14	43.75	18	56.25	25	78.12	18	56.25
Total	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**

Table 6.1. Technology Tools

According to Table 6.1., all the students have internet at home and are connected via a reliable connection (ADSL or cable modem). The majority have other means (3G or 4G) to connect to Internet, and most of the students have their own computer either a laptop (56.25%) or a desk computer (43.75%). However, only few participants have a printer. Item 5 (My computer is a laptop) is included in this section to see whether all the participants have laptops in the expectation of using the latter in the classroom. Item 7 (I have a printer) is mentioned since the participants will be asked to print homework or documents downloaded from Moodle. For Item 8 (I do not share my computer with other persons), the aim is to evaluate the availability of

the students' computers particularly for chat sessions. On the whole, the results of section one are satisfactory since most of the necessary tools (Internet and computer) are present.

2. Prerequisites

	Item1		**Item2**		**Item3**		**Item4**		**Item5**		**Item6**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	22	68.75	30	93.75	13	40.63	23	71.88	32	100	21	65.62
No	10	31.25	02	06.25	19	59.37	09	28.12	0	0	11	34.38
Total	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**

Table 6.2. Prerequisites

The aim of section two, "Prerequisites", is to gauge the students' familiarity with computer jargon even if one assumes that today's students are technology-savvy. The other reason is that, since the students are meant to be emailed by the researcher who will use particular computer jargon, knowing basic terminology such as "browser", "surfing", "file extension", "forum" and "wiki" is necessary. From Table 6.2., it appears that some terms such as "browser" are unfamiliar to the students. This entails that the researcher has to make sure to explain any computer terminology when emailing the students or chatting with them as well as using simple language when making tutorials.

3. Skills

	Item1		Item2		Item3		Item4		Item5		Item6		Item7	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Yes	28	87.50	29	90.62	25	78.12	25	78.12	19	59.38	30	93.75	26	81.25
No	04	12.5	03	09.38	07	21.88	07	21.88	13	40.62	02	06.25	06	18.75
Total	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**	**32**	**100**

Table 6.3. Skills

Section three focuses on some basic computing skills that are necessary for the students to enroll in the online course. These skills involve knowing how to use forums and chats (Item1), how to download (Item2) and upload (Item3) documents, videos and podcasts from the Internet, how to save files on a computer's hard drive (Item4), and how to install/uninstall software on a computer (Item5). Other skills involve the ability to do tasks without the help of another person (Item6) as well as to follow a tutorial in the form of a video or written instructions (Item7). It can be noticed from Table 6.3. that the majority of the students possess most of the basic skills stated in the online questionnaire.

4. Students' Engagement

For section four, all the students showed a positive attitude towards participating in the online course. In other terms, they all are willing to e-mail their teacher and classmates and to participate in online discussions, to keep record of their assignments and written productions, to watch videos as assignments, to take tests and/or quizzes online, to take into consideration their teacher's feedback and recommendations, and to do collaborative work online. From the results obtained in

section four and the previous sections, it can be concluded that all the students of the experimental group have all the requisites to enroll in the online course.

The second step in enrolling the participants in the online course involved a simple non-disclosure agreement that was designed by the researcher and which was given to the students to inform them about the study. The non-disclosure agreement was formulated as follows:

Non-disclosure Agreement

Presentation

The following is a document that will be used in the context of a PhD research work.

Terms

- This non-disclosure agreement will be used only in the context mentioned earlier.
- The researcher/online course designer commits to protect all personal information provided by the student for the sake of this study.
- The researcher has not forced any student to participate in this study.
- This agreement concerns only the parties mentioned hereinbefore.

I, Ms/Mrs/Mr ……, agree to:

- enroll in an online course in the context of an academic study.
- participate in a study for a PhD research work.
- keep confidential all information and sources used in the online course I will be enrolled in and not to communicate them to any student not belonging to my group or to any of my teachers.
- protect all information concerning the current study and not communicating them to any student or teacher of the department.

I confirm having read and understood the terms and obligations mentioned hereinabove.

Signature: **Date:**

…… ……

The role of the non-disclosure agreement was to ensure (for the sake of informational purposes) that the students were not "forced" to participate in the study, and to make them feel the importance of this research work hoping that no information concerning the study was going to be communicated to other students or teachers in order to avoid any bias. Both the questionnaire and the non-disclosure agreement were handed in to the students at the beginning of the second term in February. All the students of the experimental group were present to fill in the questionnaire and the non-disclosure agreement during a session of WE in the presence of the researcher, and both documents were handed in right afterwards.

It has to be mentioned that enrolling the students of the experimental group in the online course was difficult for various reasons. The initial plan was to conduct the experiment for a whole term, that is from February until mid May (12 weeks). At that period, a training for newly recruited teachers for the academic year 2016-2017 was taking place and involved hundreds of teachers from all the universities on the Algerian territory. The researcher contacted the head of the e-learning cell on mid January 2017 to register the students for the online course; the registration required the creation of user names and passwords for the students so they could access the course. Because of the huge load of work of managing hundreds of teachers online and ensuring coordination between the e-learning cell of the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 and the e-learning cells of the other universities, the researcher's students were not registered until the end of February. Once the researcher obtained the list of usernames and passwords for the students of the experimental group, these were sent via e-mail to the students so they could check if the usernames and the passwords were valid. It has to be noted that the online course was locked so that the students could not access its content before undertaking the pre-

test. The experiment could not take place until the beginning of April because, since the beginning of March 2017, the university platform was undertaking an update, and therefore accessing the university platform was not possible for the participants of the study until mid March. Accessing the platform was only meant to check the validity of the usernames and the passwords. No other information about the online course was available or accessible to the students.

6.3. The Pre-test

Before starting the instructional phase of the quasi-experiment, a pre-test was administered to both the experimental group and the control group. A detailed description of the pre-test as well as the analysis and interpretation of its results are provided.

6.3.1. Description of the Pre-test

The pre-test took place the first day of the first week of April 2017. Both the experimental group and the control group did the test the same day in the morning in the presence of the researcher. The test was designed on the same kind of test the students of second year are used to take for the WE second term examination and which consists of writing a five-paragraph essay on a suggested topic. The pre-test consisted of writing an exemplification essay on why computer skills are essential for university students. The participants were handed in printed sheets to write down their essays with enough space for five paragraphs on the following prompt:

Write a five-paragraph "exemplification" essay explaining why computer skills are essential for university students.

The choice of the topic was based on the assumption that, since the current study revolved around technology, it seemed quite natural that the pre-test (as well the posttest) involved computer skills. The pre-test took place during a WE session and lasted one hour and a half, the standard duration of a WE examination at the Department of Letters and English Language. In order to avoid any pressure, the students were told that the test was just a task part of continuous assessment.

6.3.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results of the Pre-test

The students' essays of both the pre-test and posttest were scored using a grading system that focused on the sentence level that regrouped grammar and mechanics (punctuation, spelling, and paragraphing); the paragraph level that included the topic sentence and support, unity, and coherence; and the discourse level that involved the type of introduction used and the thesis, the conclusion (restatement of the thesis, summary of the main points, and a final comment), overall unity and coherence, and style. This grading system was adapted from a tracking system used by Yang (as cited in Liu, 2013) in a study about scoring Chinese students' writing.

To analyze the scores obtained in both the pre-test and the posttest, a *t*-test was used since, according to Miller (1984, p.66), the *t*-test is "specially adapted for small samples (where one or both samples are smaller than thirty)." A *t*-test is a parametric test that is used "to discover whether there are statistically significant differences between the means of two groups" (Cohen & Manion, 2007, p.543). It is parametric in the sense that it is

> based on highly restrictive assumptions about the type of data which are obtained in the experiment: (1) it is assumed that each sample of scores has been drawn from a *normal* population; that is, if a very large number of

observations was obtained under each condition of the experiment, then the resulting distributions would follow a normal curve; (2) these populations are assumed to have the same variance; (3) the variable is assumed to have been measured on an *interval* scale. (Miller, 1984, p.49)

The aim of the pre-test was to establish the likeness of both the experimental group and the control group in terms of writing performance through the traditional method of teaching writing, in other words, to establish that the **"μs"** (the means) of the experimental group and the control group did not vary much before the treatment (blended learning). For this purpose, an independent samples *t*-test was used to compare the means of the two independent groups, that is the experimental group and the control group. It is important to mention that before undertaking any calculation, an additional parameter has to be specified concerning the *t*-test and which concerns whether to use a one-tailed or a two-tailed test. This has to do with the predictions the researcher makes on the onset of the experiment. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.504) explained that "in a one-tailed test one predicts, for example, that one group will score more highly than the other, whereas in a two-tailed test one makes no such prediction." In the case of the pre-test, the *t*-test is two-tailed since no prediction was made concerning the outcome.

Before running the *t*-test, it was necessary to specify the Null Hypothesis (H_0) and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_1), define a level of significance by specifying an alpha (**α)** level, the critical value that is used to accept or reject the null hypothesis (Sani and Todman 2006), calculate the degree of freedom (*df*), and calculate the critical value for the *t* distribution (*T)*.

First, to reject or accept the *Null* Hypothesis (H_0), the alpha level that was chosen is **α** = 0.05, which is the most used significance level in educational research.

α is the critical level for the *p*-value, the probability that the test results occurred or not by chance. Therefore, if $p > 0.05$, this means that there is no significant difference between the results obtained for both groups in the pre-test, and thus the *Null* Hypothesis (H_0) will be accepted. If $p \leq 0.05$, this means that there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups, and so the *Null* Hypothesis (H_0) will be rejected and the *Alternative* Hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted.

The *Null* and *Alternative* Hypothesis for the pre-test are defined below:

$H_{0:}\ \mu_1 = \mu_2$

$H_{1:}\ \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

To put it into words:

H_0: **There is statistically no significant difference between the mean of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test.**

H_1: **There is statistically significant difference between the mean of the experimental group and the control group in the pre-test.**

By considering N_1 = the number of participants in group 1 (the experimental group) and N_2 = the number of participants in group 2 (the control group), the degree of freedom[2] (*df*) is obtained as follows:

$(N_1 + N_2) - 2 = df$

Or

$(N_1 - 1) + (N_2 - 1) = df$

[2] The degree of freedom is automatically calculated in Spss; calculating it by hand was for the sake of finding the critical *t*-value (*T*) in the *t*-table.

The number of participants in both the experimental group and control group was 16; therefore, $N_1 = 16$ and $N_2 = 16$

So:

$(N_1 + N_2) - 2 = df$

$(16+16) - 2 = 30$

So, our *df* is 30. Now, the critical *t*-value must be specified. This can be either calculated with a mathematical formula or simply looked up in a *t*-table. In our case, a *t*-table was used to determine the critical *t*-value (*T*). With an $\boldsymbol{\alpha} = 0.05$ and a $df = 30$, the critical *t*-value is (*T*) = 2.042 (value obtained from the *t*-table in Hatch and Lazaraton, 1991, p.595).

After all the necessary parameters were specified, the independent-samples *t*-test was run in Spss using the raw data obtained from the pre-test as shown below:

Pretest Scores		*Posttest Scores*	
Experimental Group	**Control Group**	**Experimental Group**	**Control Group**
10,5	6	13	8
6	7	9	8
10	8	13	11
7	9	10,5	10
9	11	11,5	9
11	7	12	5
13	13	14	13
12	14	14,5	14
7	11	10	10
7,5	10	11,5	12
9	11	10,5	13
8	9	8,5	12
12,5	11	13	11
14	9	15	10
10	10	13,5	11
10,5	12	13,5	10

Table 6.4. Pre-test and Post-test Raw Data

The following tables were obtained after the calculations:

Group Statistics

	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	Experimental_Gr	16	9.8125	2.34432	0.58608
	Control_Gr	16	9.8750	2.21736	0.55434

Table 6.5. Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Pre-test

Table 6.5. provides descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups. From the table, it can be noticed that the mean score of the experimental group $\boldsymbol{\mu_1}$ = 9.81 whereas the mean score of the control group $\boldsymbol{\mu_2}$ = 9.87 with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.34 for the experimental group and 2.22 for the control group. From a first look, the means of both the experimental group and the control group do not greatly vary; however, only the *t*-value (also called the *t*-statistic) can precisely indicate whether there is or there is no statistically significant difference between the means of the experimental group and the control group. It is to be noted that a *t*-value is "the difference between the mean or average scores of two groups, while taking into account any variation in scores" (T-Value, n.d.).

Independent Samples Test

t-test for Equality of Means				
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
-0.077	30	0.939	-0.06250	0.80671

Table 6.6. The Independent Samples *t*-test in the Pre-test

Table 6.6. shows that the calculated *t*-value is 0.077[3], which is lower than the critical *t*-value $T = 2.042$, and the *p*-value calculated for the pre-test is $p = 0.93$, which means that $p > \alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, the *Null* Hypothesis (H_0) is accepted; in other terms, there is statistically no significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and the control group in the pretest in terms of writing performance.

6.4. Instruction

Instruction of the experimental group consisted of a combination of face-to-face classroom sessions (that according to the weekly schedule, involved three sessions of one hour and a half each) and online sessions. Both types of sessions were complementary; however, face-to-face sessions represented 60% of the learning process (in reference to the taxonomy suggested by Guba and Hinkelman, 2012, in Chapter Three of this work) as this blended learning course was based on the flipped classroom model where face-to-face sessions were used for reinforcement of the concepts students learned in the online course through practice of writing, discussions, and feedback at all the stages of the writing process.

Before coming to the classroom, the students of the experimental group were notified via e-mail about what the face-to-face sessions would be about. Depending on the context or the tasks that would take place in the classroom, the students had to explore the lessons of the online course on the university platform. For that purpose, the researcher created tutorials for the students that could be viewed in html format, and which were sent to the students via e-mail as compressed files using WinRar.

[1] When the calculated *t*-value is greater than the critical *t*-value (*T*), there is statistically a significant difference between the two groups.

The lessons were in SCORM **(Figure 6.1. and 6.2.)** format which is an interactive interface that helps the students explore the content of the lessons at their convenience. In other terms, the students can go back and forth through the content of the lessons, check examples, go back to definitions, check again explanations, and so on. They can even use resources like web links for a better understanding of certain aspects of the lessons that are included in the online course on the platform. The lessons in SCORM format include definitions, enough examples for clarification, explanations, charts, tables, and tips.

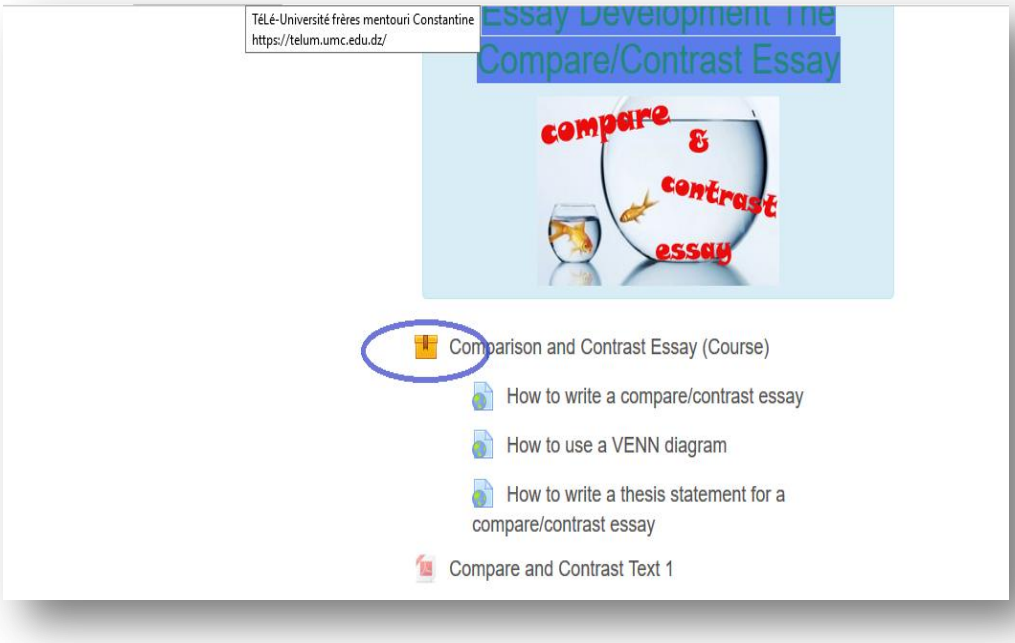


Figure 6.1. Online Lessons in SCORM Format

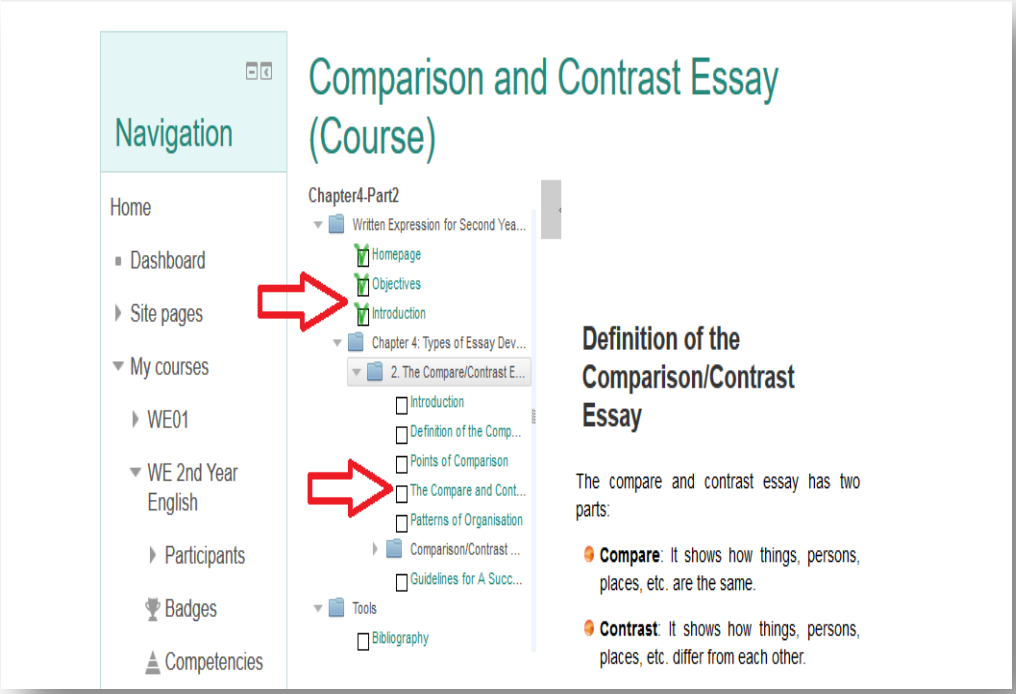


Figure 6.2. Interactive Content

After going through the content of the lessons, the students were required to do online activities which varied in type and purpose. Some activities were used as a preparation for other classroom tasks. For example, as an introduction to the compare/contrast essay development, the students were asked to watch a video on YouTube that compared two actors who portrayed the famous superhero "Superman" in two very well-known films "Superman" (with the American actor Christopher Reeve in 1978) and "Man of Steel" (with the British actor Henry Cavill in 2013). The reason behind choosing those two films is that, at the beginning of the academic year, the researcher undertook an informal interview with the students about the topics they would like to write about. Amongst the list that the researcher established, films was the category that tended to recur in students' responses, and it appeared that many students seemed to be fond of Marvel and DC films which are adapted from the famous American Marvel and DC comics. Therefore, introducing comparison and

contrast with something the students liked seemed to be a good idea. After watching the video, the students had to fill in a table prepared by the instructor and made accessible on the platform in a downloadable format as follows:

Semester 2 – Compare and Contrast Essay

Assignment1: Establishing points of comparison

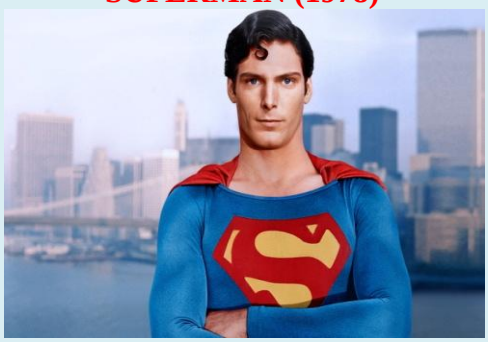
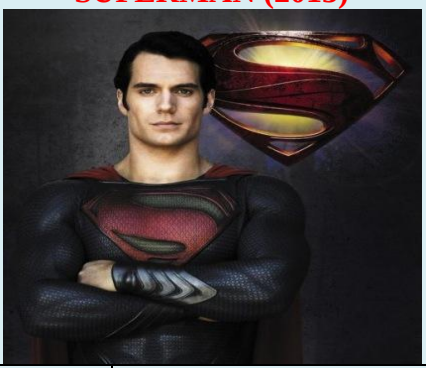
Directions:

After watching the video **"Superman 1978 vs. Superman 2013"***, make a list of the two superheroes' differences and similarities. Next, choose two (02) or three (03) of the most important aspects that make the two superheroes different/similar. To help yourself, fill in the diagram below with the appropriate information.

*** pictures were taken from :**

http://fundacionadecco.org/blog/blog/hoy-christopher-reeve-el-superman-que-transformo-sus-poderes-cumpliria-62-anos/

http://www.allposters.es/-sp/Henry-Cavill-Superman-Man-of-Steel-2014-Poster-Calendar-Posters_i9561709_.htm

SUPERMAN		
SUPERMAN (1978) 		SUPERMAN (2013) 
Differences	**Similarities**	**Differences**
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-

The document to be filled in was used as practice of the planning stage of the writing process. The practice consisted of learning how to use diagrams for establishing points of comparison for a compare/contrast essay, an important step that helps the students to limit the scope of their essay, to write a clear arguable thesis statement and a clear outline. Another type of diagrams that the students learned in this blended learning course is the Venn diagram **(Figure 6.3.)** that is also used to establish points of comparison for a compare/contrast essay.

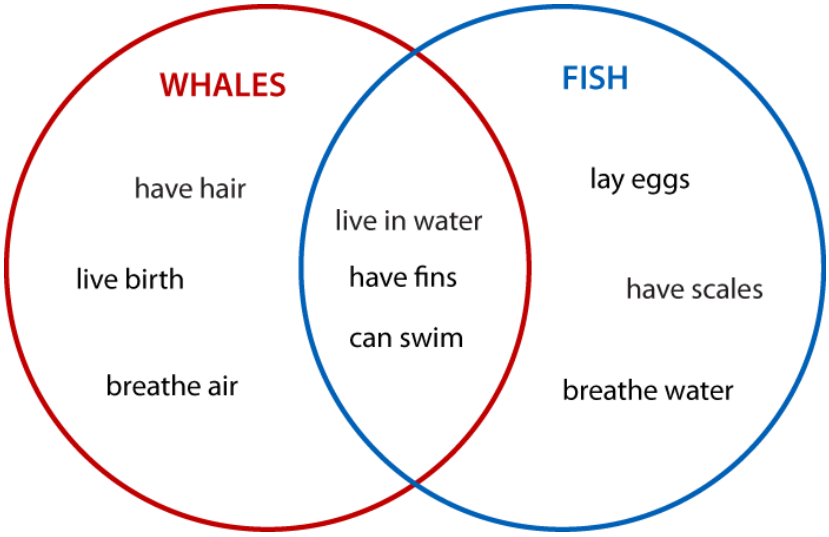


Figure 6.3. An Example of the VENN Diagram (taken from http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2646)

For the cause/effect essay, the students were introduced to "sleep paralysis", and several links to web pages and a YouTube video were made available for the students who were required to read about the subject and do a quiz on Moodle after the reading task.

Other activities were meant for immediate practice after having finished exploring the content of the lessons in SCORM format. These tasks were either fill in the gap exercises or multiple choice item exercises where students received immediate

feedback. In some cases, certain online tasks were done after the face-to-face classroom sessions took place. For example, in the classroom, students were required to write an essay outline about a given topic. After completing this task, students had a space on Moodle where they could submit their outlines (in PDF or .docx formats) and which were corrected by the teacher and sent back to the students so they could use the outlines for another classroom task.

Chat sessions were also part of the learning process **(Figure 6.4 .and Figure 6.5.)** as the students had the possibility to talk with their teacher and their classmates online. Chat sessions generally took place during the weekend either at the end of the afternoon or in the evening on students' request. The students were encouraged to organize chat sessions during the week, but they showed a preference for the weekend as they reported that they felt more relaxed at that time.

Figure 6.4. Chat Screenshot 1 (Afternoon Session)

Figure 6.5. Chat Screenshot 2 (Evening session)

The chat sessions lasted one to two hours and a half depending on the subject of the discussion and the needs of the students. During the online discussions, students were required to respect certain rules that were previously provided to them in the course charter. Certain rules included the use of academic English, respect of the teacher and the students, discussions about academic subjects, and avoidance of offensive language. During the chat sessions, the students explored the content of the lessons and simultaneously asked questions to the teacher and the classmates. Watching videos about a given topic that was going to be tackled in the classroom served as a basis for brainstorming, and the students were able to take notes that were going to be used for a writing task. The chat room was a space where the students got a lot of feedback from both their teacher and their classmates, and instead of delaying certain questions or issues for classroom sessions, those were solved on the spot through the collaboration of both the students and the teacher, or at times through the collaboration of the students only. It has to be noted that during the chat sessions, the teacher's roles varied. The teacher played the role of moderator when students were addressing each other, and the teacher had the right to intervene in case a student did not respect the chat rules (the course charter). At other times, the teacher played the role of collaborator, facilitator, and peer. In certain chat sessions, the teacher acted as a monitor giving students more opportunities to collaborate with each other, and often that proved to be very beneficial. The chat sessions were also used for discussions about what was tackled during the week or about what was going to be done in the coming sessions. The students were encouraged to talk about the problems they encountered during face-to-face sessions. This way, the researcher was able to assess the students' abilities and weaknesses, and to identify their problems so she could focus on finding solutions for the students to overcome them.

Forums were available on the platform, and each lesson had its own forum **(Figure 6.6.)** as well as its chat room. The students were also encouraged to use the forums to start discussions about a given point related to the lessons; however, the students tended to prefer the chat reporting that it was more practical and motivating.

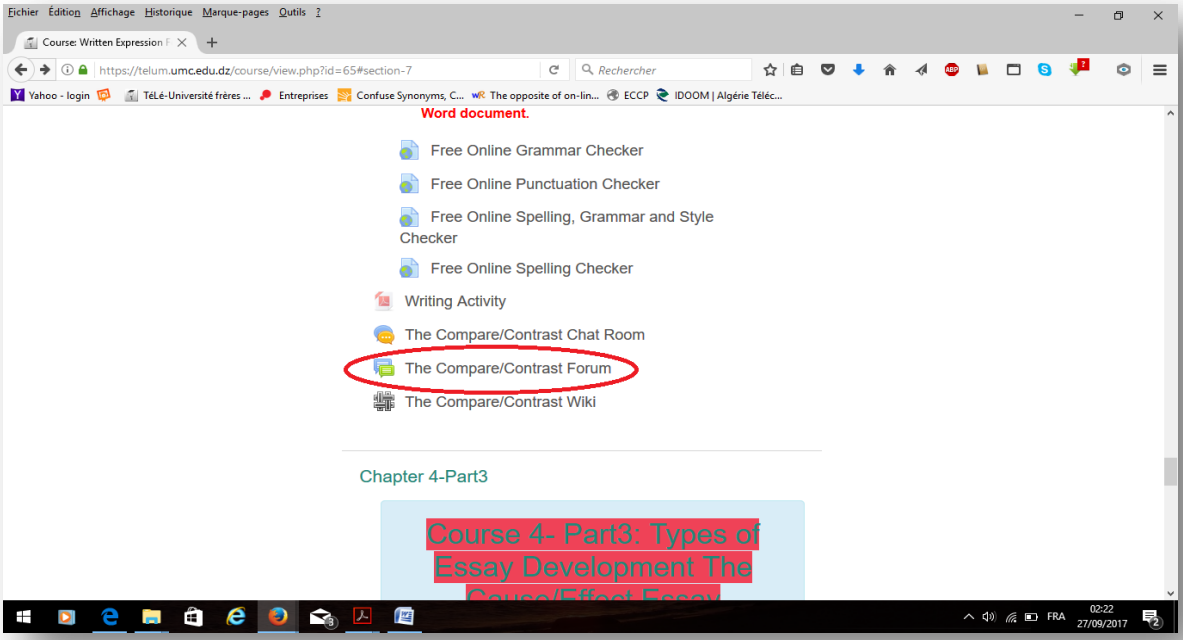


Figure 6.6.: Forum

Once the students explored the lessons, did the required tasks and prepared the required material for classroom practice, they came to the classroom to do writing tasks. The major principle of the flipped classroom model in blended leaning is that the traditional way of teaching is turned upside down in the sense that, instead of attending the presentation of the lesson by the teacher and listening to her/his explanations then do homework, students explore the theoretical part online and clarify concepts either through online tasks or through chat sessions, then students come to the classroom to do the "homework" under the guidance of the teacher. The blended learning classroom becomes a "workshop" and is more dynamic where

students work individually, in pairs or in small groups depending on the task and on their preferences.

During the face-to-face sessions, the students spent the classroom time doing various writing tasks. Before doing the tasks, the teacher reminded the students of certain key elements of the lesson, a kind of rehearsal. For example, for the task on the topic “Superman 1979” vs. “Superman 2013”, the students were reminded that two methods could be used to organize the essay, and that each had its particular features. After that, the teacher asked the students to use the material prepared online (outlines, notes, and so on) for a specified writing task. The classroom tasks varied, and generally were about the stages of the process of writing and were done individually. For example, the students were asked to write the first draft of their essay in the classroom using the outline they prepared previously in the classroom and improved online. During the drafting phase, the teacher moved from one student to another checking the different parts of the essay like the thesis statement, the topic sentences, the mode of essay organization and so on. The teacher had the possibility to focus on every student providing feedback when necessary, clarifying a point when needed or answering students’ questions. During feedback delivery, even the peers participated with the aim to help their classmates. Once the students finished writing their first draft in the classroom, they were required to submit it online in PDF or .docx formats. The aim here was that students could always have a copy of their essay in case they lost it or when they would have to submit it another time, which proved to be very practical.

The classroom sessions were devoted to practicing the writing process, particularly drafting and revising. At times, students planned for their essays in the classroom if the topic chosen did not require research; however, in certain cases, the

students needed to plan for their essays before coming to the classroom as they needed to deepen their understanding of a given topic (like “sleep paralysis”). For the editing stage where the students had to check for mechanics, grammar, word choice and so on, links for free online checkers of grammar, spelling and punctuation were provided on the platform. Again, a special space was provided for the submission of the students’ first draft, which were corrected by the teacher **(Figure 6.7. and Figure 6.8.)** and sent back to the students.

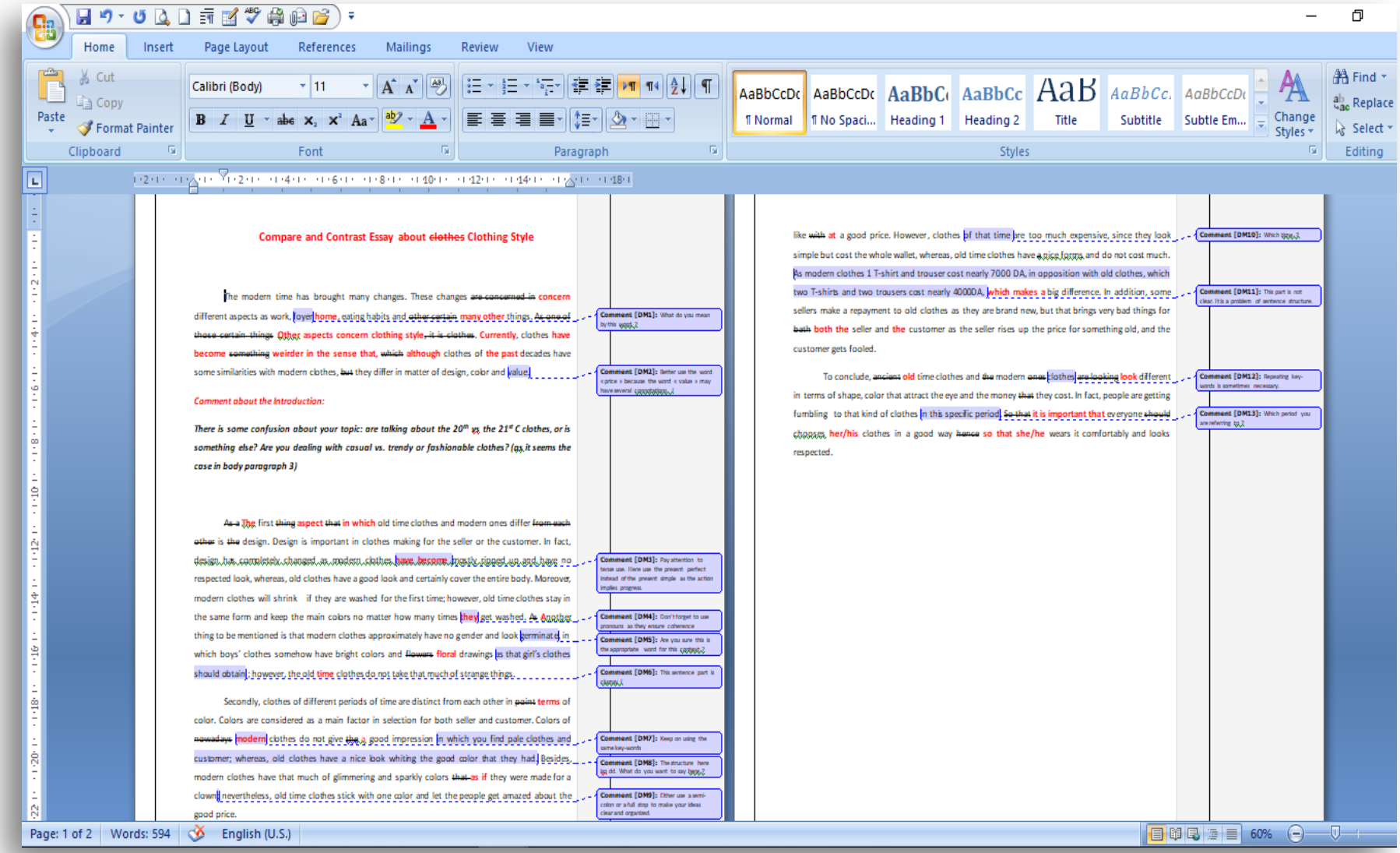


Figure 6.7. Student's Sample Draft 1

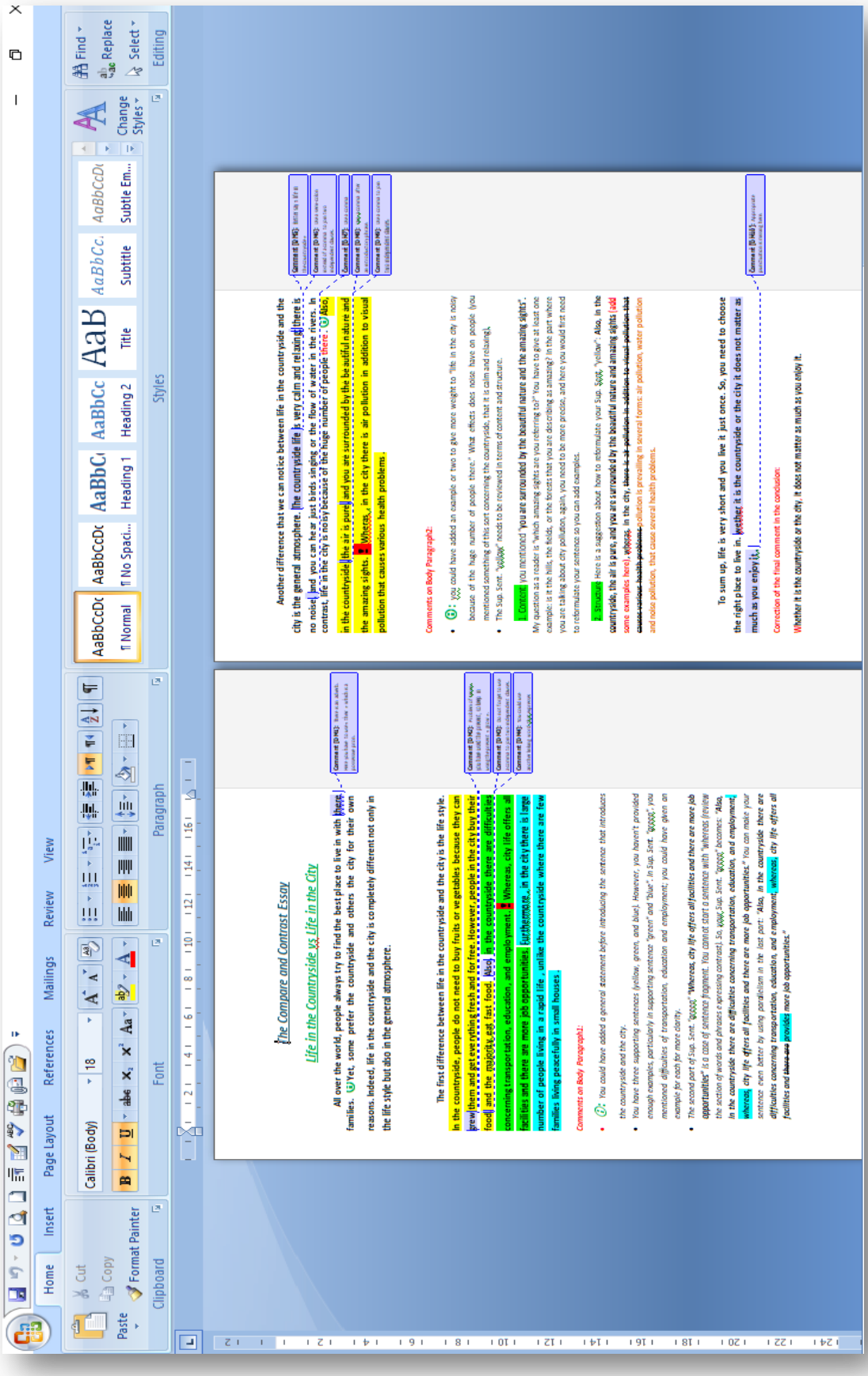


Figure 6.8. Student's Sample Draft 2

The same system used to score the students' essays in the pretest and the posttest was used in the blended learning course when correcting students' assignments. This helped the teacher identify and correct the students' mistakes, make suggestions, and include comments on the assignments. Having both the first essay draft and the second draft corrected by the teacher helped the students notice their mistakes so they could identify the weak points of their essays.

6.5. The Post-test

At the end of the instructional phase of the quasi-experiment, a post-test was administered to both the experimental group and the control group. Its description as well as the analysis and interpretation of its results are provided.

6.5.1. Description of the Post-test

The post-test took place the first day of the second week of May 2017 six weeks after the pretest. Just like the pretest, both the experimental group and the control group did the test the same day in the morning in the presence of the researcher. The posttest was designed the same way the pretest was designed, that is the same kind of test the students of second years are used to take for the WE second term examination and which consists of writing a five-paragraph essay about a suggested topic. The posttest consisted of writing a cause/effect essay about the effects of technology on the students' writing skills and was handed in to the participants in the form of printed sheets on the following prompt:

Write a five-paragraph "cause and effect" essay explaining the effects of technology on students' writing skills.

The posttest took place during a Written Expression session and lasted one hour and a half. Again, in order to avoid any pressure, the students were told that the test was another task that was part of continuous assessment.

It is known that the pretest and the posttest should be alike in form and content. Making the students write an exemplification essay in the pretest and cause/effect in the posttest was not problematic since types of development are part of coherence, and that writing both types is subject to the same principles that is they both need an introduction which includes the thesis, developmental paragraphs each having a topic sentence, support, unity and coherence, and a conclusion.

6.5.2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results of the Post-test

The aim of the post-test was to test the effectiveness or the inefficiency of blended learning in developing the composition skills of the experimental group participants. In other terms, looking for the *t*-value and the *p*-value will determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the μs (means) of the experimental group that underwent blended learning and the control group that was taught through the traditional method.

For the posttest, again, an independent-samples two-tailed *t*-test was used. The alpha level that was selected is $\boldsymbol{\alpha}$ = 0.05. With a *df* = 30, the critical *t*-value is *T*= 2.042. Both the *Null* and *Alternative* Hypothesis for the posttest are defined below:

$H_{0:}\ \mu_1 = \mu_2$

$H_{1:}\ \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

That is:

$H_{0:}$ **There is statistically no significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and the scores of the control group in the posttest.**

$H_{1:}$ **There is statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and the scores of the control group in the posttest.**

Running the independent-samples *t*-test in Spss was done on the basis of the obtained raw data from the posttest(see p.:

Then **Table 6.7.** and **Table 6.8.** were obtained:

Group Statistics

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
score	Exp_gr	16	12.0625	1.94829	0.48707
	Cntrl_gr	16	10.4375	2.25000	0.56250

Table 6.7. Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups in the Post-test

In Table 6.7, the experimental group (N_1 = 16) scored a mean of 12.06 with a SD= 1.94 whereas the control group (N_2 = 16) had a mean score of 10.43 with a SD = 2.25.

Independent Samples Test				
t-test for Equality of Means				
t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
2.184	30	0.037	1.62500	0.4407

Table 6.8. The Independent Samples *t*-test in the Post-test

The results displayed in Table 6.8 show that p = 0.037 and t = 2.184, and since $p(0.037) \leq 0.05$ and $t(2.184) > 2.042$, $H_{0:}\ \mu_1 = \mu_2$ is rejected and $H_{1:}\ \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ is accepted.

That is since *p* is lesser than the significance level **α = 0.05,** and that the *t*-statistic is greater than the critical *t*-value *T* = 2.042, the *Null* Hypothesis stipulating that "there is statistically no significant difference at between the scores of the experimental group and the scores of the control group in the posttest" is rejected and the *Alternative* Hypothesis stating that "there is statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and the scores of the control group in the posttest" is accepted. This means that the participants of the experimental group outperformed the participants of the control group in the posttest due to blended learning.

6.6. Analysis of the Results of the Pretest and the Posttest for the Experimental Group

After establishing that there was statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the posttest, comparison of the results obtained for the experimental group in both the pretest and the posttest was necessary. Since the scoring system used to grade the participants' essays in both the pretest and the posttest was a three-level system, therefore, a *t*-test was used to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pretest scores and the posttest scores at the sentence level, the paragraph level, and the discourse level.

To compare the results of the pretest and the posttest, a paired-samples two-tailed *t*-test was used as one group of participants, the experimental group, was going to be involved in this comparison. Since three levels of writing performance were specified, a paired-samples test was used for each level, and for the three tests, the same parameters were used. For this sake, an **α = 0.05** was opted for. The *df* for this paired *t*-test was calculated as follows: (N – 1) = *df,* since N=16, therefore, ***df* = 15.** With **α = 0.05** and ***df* = 15**, the critical *t*-value (*T*) = 2.131 (value obtained from Hatch

and Lazaraton, 1991, p.595). In addition to that, both the *Null* and *Alternative* Hypothesis were specified for each level of the scoring system.

- **At the Sentence Level**

H_0: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$

H_1: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

That is:

***H_0*: There is statistically no significant difference at between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the sentence level.**

***H_1*: There is statistically significant difference at between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the sentence level.**

Running the paired-samples *t*-test for the sentence level in Spss was done on the basis of the raw data obtained for both the pretest and posttest as follows:

	Sentence Level		*Paragraph Level*		*Discourse Level*	
	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**
Student 1	2,5	3	5	5	3	5
Student 2	1	2	2	3	3	4
Student 3	3	3	2	4	5	6
Student 4	2	3	2	3,5	3	4
Student 5	2	2,5	3	4	4	5
Student 6	3	3,5	3	4	4	4,5
Student 7	3	3	4	5	6	6
Student 8	3	4	4	5,5	5	5
Student 9	4	3	1	3	2	4
Student 10	3	3,5	2	4	2,5	4
Student 11	3	3	2	3	4	4,5
Student 12	3	2	2	2,5	3	4
Student 13	4,5	5	4	3	4	5
Student 14	4	5	5	4	5	6
Student 15	3	4	3	4	4	5,5
Student 16	3	4	3	5,5	4,5	4

Table 6.9. Pre-test and Post-test Three Levels Raw Data

Then, we obtained the following tables:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest_sent_level	2.9375	16	0.83417	0.20854
	Posttest_sent_level	3.3438	16	0.88917	0.22229

Table 6.10. Comparison of the Means of the Pretest and the Posttest at the Sentence Level

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	Pretest_sent_level - Posttest_sent_level	-0.40625	0.66380	0.16595	-2.448	15	0.027

Table 6.11. The Paired Samples Test for the Sentence Level

Table 6.10. shows that, at the sentence-level, the mean of the pretest $\boldsymbol{\mu_1}$ = 2.93 with a SD = 0.83 whereas the mean of the posttest $\boldsymbol{\mu_2}$ = 3.34 with a SD=0.88. Since the mean of the posttest is greater than the mean of the pretest, this implies that there is an improvement (or a gain) in the scores of the experimental group in the posttest.

The results obtained in Table 6.11. indicate that $t = -2.448$[4] and $p = 0.02$. As $p(0.027) \leq 0.05$ and $t(|-2.448|)$[5] $> T = 2.131$, $H_{0:}\ \mu_1 = \mu_2$ is rejected and $H_{1:}\ \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ is accepted, that is there is statistically a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the sentence level.

[4] A negative *t*-value has no particular consequence on the significance of the difference between the pretest and the posttest results since it is considered an absolute value.
[5] |–2.448| is the absolute value of the *t*-value.

- **At the Paragraph Level**

H_0: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$

H_1: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

That is:

$H_{0:}$ **There is statistically no significant difference at between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the paragraph level.**

H_1: **There is statistically significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the paragraph level.**

Again, after running the paired-samples *t*-test for the paragraph level in Spss on the basis of the raw data obtained for both the pretest and posttest, Table 6.12. and Table 6.13. were obtained:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest_parag_level	2.9375	16	1.18145	0.29536
	Posttest_parag_level	3.9375	16	0.92871	0.23218

Table 6.12. Comparison of the Means of the Pretest and the Posttest at the Paragraph Level

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair1	Pretest_parag_level - Posttest_parag_level	-1.00000	1.00000	0.25000	-4.000	15	0.001

Table 6.13. The Paired Samples Test for the Paragraph Level

As it can be noticed in Table 6.12, the mean of the pretest is 2.93 with a SD = 1.18 whereas the mean of the posttest is 3.93 with a SD = 0.92. We can state that because the mean of the posttest is greater than the mean of the pretest, this indicates an improvement of the scores of the experimental group in the posttest at the paragraph level. This is best explained by the results displayed in Table 6.13 where we observe that $t = -4.000$ and $p = 0.001$. Since $p(0.001) \leq 0.05$ and $t(|-4.000|) > T = 2.131$, $H_{0:}\ \mu_1 = \mu_2$ is rejected and $H_{1:}\ \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$ is accepted, that is there is statistically significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the paragraph level.

- **At the Discourse Level**

H_0: $\mu_1 = \mu_2$

H_1: $\mu_1 \neq \mu_2$

That is:

***$H_{0:}$* There is statistically no significant difference at between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the discourse level.**

***H_1:* There is statistically significant difference at between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the discourse level.**

The last comparison concerned the discourse level. The paired-samples *t*-test for the paragraph level was run in Spss (on the basis of the raw data obtained for both the pretest and posttest), and we obtained Table 6.14. and Table 6.15. as follows:

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest_disc_level	3.8750	16	1.07238	0.26810
	Posttest_disc_level	4.7813	16	0.77392	0.19348

Table 6.14. Comparison of the Means of the Pretest and the Posttest at the Discourse Level

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	Pretest_disc_level - Posttest_disc_level	-0.90625	0.68845	0.17211	-5.265	15	0.000

Table 6.15. The Paired Samples Test for the Discourse Level

As it can be noticed in Table 6.14, the mean of the pretest is 3.87 with a SD = 1.07 whereas the mean of the posttest is 4.78 with a SD = 0.77. Since the mean of the posttest is greater than the mean of the pretest, this is an indication of an enhancement of the scores of the experimental group in the posttest at the discourse level. This

enhancement is validated by the results shown in Table 6.15, and which involve $t = -5.265$ and $p = 0.000$. Therefore, because $p(0.000) \leq 0.05$ and $t(|-5.265|) > T = 2.131$, $H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ is rejected. Consequently, there is statistically significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores of the experimental group at the discourse level.

6.7. Discussion of the Results of the Quasi-experimental Study

The analysis of the post-test results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental group and the control group due to blended learning, and that was embodied in a high *t*-value compared to the critical *t*-value (*T*). In addition to that, the calculated mean for the experimental group ($\mu = 12.06$) considerably improved compared to the mean in the pretest ($\mu = 9.81$) and was better than the mean of the control group in the posttest ($\mu = 10.43$). This is a major finding with regard to the effectiveness of blended learning since the main hypothesis of this study, that is instructing the students to write through blended learning significantly improves their composition skills, was confirmed. The enhancement of the students' overall composition skills was due to several reasons.

First, the variety of resources that were available on Moodle mainly contributed in increasing the students' interest and motivation as the students were able to use these online resources "independently at their own pace to enhance their language proficiency as they access information in different forms which tailors to their different learning styles" (Soliman, 2014, p.755). Indeed, since the students have different learning styles, accessing genuine, visual, and interactive resources facilitated the students' understanding of certain key concepts and critical skills necessary for the development of their composition skills. These key concepts and

critical skills were introduced in the classroom and fostered trough practice; however, online sessions contributed in consolidating the students' comprehension of these elements by giving them more time to rehearse them and to use the resources that best fit their learning style. For instance, watching videos explaining some important concepts like the thesis statement, methods of essay organization, paragraph structure and some planning techniques such as clustering (see Figure 6.1.) contributed in reducing the students' difficulties in understanding those concepts, and since the online resources were appealing in terms of content and form, that led to an increase of interest and motivation.

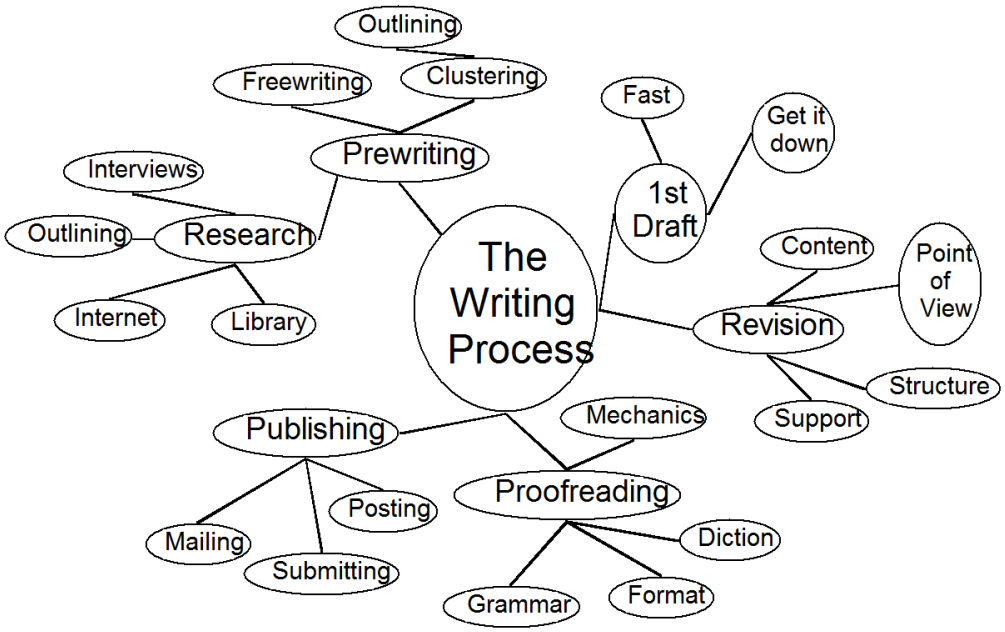


Figure 6.9. Clustering (Wasko, 2011)

The second reason that led to the improvement of the participants' composition skills was the increase of learning opportunities by optimizing classroom time and multiplying teacher-student and student-student interaction thanks to the use of the flipped classroom model for this blended learning writing course. The fact of reversing the traditional process of teaching writing by tackling the theoretical aspect of the writing course online combined with activities that served as a preparation for

classroom tasks and devoting the face-to-face sessions for writing practice helped the instructor to optimize the classroom time by investing it in exploring the stages of the writing process. Optimization involved an emphasis on critical writing stages like planning which is often the most difficult stage in composition according to the students' responses in the Perceptions and Attitudes questionnaire (see Chapter 5). From a general perspective and based on the researcher's personal experience, in learning/teaching writing, the planning stage is given much importance since it is considered the cornerstone of essay writing and is three-fold: (1) the students have to use some pre-writing techniques like brainstorming or clustering to gather the necessary information about a given topic, (2) then this will be used as raw material for the students to define a scope for their compositions by specifying a thesis that will work as the essay "compass" and which provides the student writers with the necessary information about what to include in the body of the essay, and finally (3) the students have to write an essay outline that will act as a "road map" for the entire essay where specifications about the type of introduction, the thesis (main idea), the topic sentences (secondary ideas), examples and arguments are made to facilitate the drafting of the essay. However, in the traditional method, the students often struggle with the planning stage, particularly when writing takes place in the classroom, since they often lack background knowledge about suggested topics, lack practice of pre-writing techniques and outline writing which result in frustration and waste of time. Blended learning can remedy these difficulties particularly by using the flipped classroom that helps the students in "gaining more opportunities to reflect and learn in their own pace" (Nouri, 2016, p.9), an aspect that the traditional teaching of writing does not offer. In addition to that, more interaction with the teacher and the peers contributed in providing the learners with more opportunities to learn. Thanks to

blended learning, the face-to-face sessions were turned into workshops where the students could practice writing in accordance with their learning preferences, that is individually, in pairs or in small groups, and where the teacher could act as a facilitator, monitor, and peer helping the students to negotiate meaning, to develop more perspectives on how to approach a topic, to explore techniques for the writing process, and to "demystify" the very act of writing.

Increase of feedback frequency also led to the improvement of the students' writing skills. Feedback, which is known to be vital in the learning process, is generally provided either in oral form or written form. In the context of writing, the teacher can use both forms depending on the occasion; however, the frequency at which feedback is being provided can vary according to some factors mainly the number of students per group, classroom time, and students' proficiency level. In this blended writing course, the students received more feedback compared to the traditional method thanks to chat sessions, e-mail exchanges, explicative resources (mainly the YouTube videos), and teacher-student interaction in the face-to-face sessions mainly during practice. The researcher was able to focus on every participant and to provide feedback particularly during the process of writing.

Another reason that led to the improvement of the learners' writing skills is a decrease in writing anxiety. Before starting this blended writing course, the majority of the students that were instructed by the researcher reported that one of the major difficulties they encountered during the process of writing was the fear of being unable to find the appropriate ideas about a given topic and to correctly write an essay with all its necessary requirements or to finish the writing task on due time. This fear often generated a high level of anxiety that was observed when the students were engaged into writing practice. This writing anxiety started to slowly decrease when

the participants got along this blended writing course, particularly due to the synchronous and asynchronous tools combined with the use of the appropriate online resources and optimization of classroom time for more practice and feedback. Some students mentioned that the possibility of keeping in touch with the instructor via synchronous and asynchronous tools and the ability to discuss certain matters with the teacher during face-to-face sessions alleviated that sensation of "helplessness" that they used to feel before participating in this blended writing course.

Concerning the achievement of the experimental group participants, a noticeable improvement was recorded at the sentence, paragraph and discourse levels. As it was formerly explained, from a general perspective, this improvement was due to the variety of online resources, increase of learning opportunities, increase of feedback frequency, and decrease in writing anxiety. However, other reasons related to each level have to be specified.

In the pre-test, at the sentence level, many problems were identified in the compositions of the experimental group students. These involve awkward sentence structures that most probably resulted from a translation from the L1 to the L2, many spelling mistakes, and misuse of prepositions and determiners, and punctuation. The improvement at the sentence level partly resulted from the use of the online grammar, spelling, and punctuation checkers for the editing phase of the writing process. The improvement was not directly linked to these online tools themselves but rather to an awareness-raising about language structures. The participants reported that online checkers helped them to notice their mistakes at the sentence level, and the very fact of noticing them made them realize that their writing might not be comprehensible to the teacher, their major reader. Therefore, they understood that paying attention to grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes was not trivial but rather a necessary task

if their writing was to become comprehensible so they could clearly convey their ideas to the reader. This helped them to move a little bit from a writer's perspective to a reader's perspective. Having to write e-mails and chat messages also contributed to a certain extent in improving the students' writing at the sentence level. Being warned against informal, ill-structured and "social media" language, the students invested efforts in using correct, formal and academic language to communicate both with the researcher and the classmates particularly during chat sessions. That is why a course charter was included in the online course and which acted as a safeguard during synchronous exchanges. It has to be mentioned that, even if the students' writing skills improved at the sentence level and a decrease in mistakes was recorded, the students still have many aspects to improve, and which are punctuation (the use of the comma and the semi-colon) and syntax (particularly subject-verb agreement, sentence fragments, and tense consistency).

At the paragraph level and discourse level, the improvement was partly due to a combination of reading sample essays and analysis/discussion of their structure during face-to-face sessions. Reading sample essays is not an inherent aspect of blended learning but rather exists in the traditional method of teaching writing. The difference is that, thanks to blended learning, classroom time is optimized so that more activities involving reading are introduced thus making the students interact more with essay structure. The improvement was also due to the use of charts/diagrams that helped the students organize and write essay outlines for a better perspective about what they were supposed to write about, the use of checklists, for the revision stage of the writing, and more importantly discussions with the teacher in both face-to-face and online sessions. Below is a checklist devised by the researcher:

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH	
Type of Introduction	□ Is the type of introduction I have chosen for the topic appropriate? □ Have I properly used quotations (if any) and cited their sources?
Hook	□ Is the hook (quote, anecdote, etc.) I have chosen interesting enough to grab my reader's attention?
Logical Development	□ Does the introduction follow a logical development?
Thesis Statement	□ Is my thesis broad enough to be discussed in a whole essay? □ Is my thesis arguable? □ Does my thesis state both the topic and the controlling idea?
DEVELOPMENTAL PARAGRAPHS	
Organisation	□ Have I stated a topic sentence for every developmental paragraph? □ Does each topic sentence mention the topic and the controlling idea? □ Are there enough supporting sentences? □ Are all the sentences in the paragraph logically organized? □ Have I used the appropriate transitions?
Support	□ Are there enough examples/arguments? □ Have I appropriately used statistics (if any) and cited their sources?
Unity	□ Is there any irrelevant sentence in the developmental paragraphs?
THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH	
	□ Does my conclusion restate the thesis statement? □ Does my conclusion summarise the main points discussed in the developmental paragraphs? □ Have I included final comment in my conclusion?
OVERALL ORGANISATION	
	□ Do the topic sentences of the developmental paragraphs explain the thesis? □ Have I used the appropriate transitions between each developmental paragraph? □ Are the developmental paragraphs logically organized? □ Have I used vague words in my essay? □ Is my word choice appropriate?

Table 6.16. Revision Checklist for a Standard Essay

The aspects that significantly improved are the thesis, the topic sentences, the appropriate use of the type of organization (for the case of the posttest the cause and effect organization), the use of more sophisticated linkers compared to the pretest compositions, and style. However, the students still need to pay more attention to the overuse of pronouns instead of repeating key-words when achieving coherence, and to

vary the type of support they include in their developmental paragraphs to support their topic sentences, which in turn explain or prove the thesis of the essay.

Conclusion

The results of the independent samples *t*-test showed that the students of the experimental group who were trained to write through blended learning made more progress than the students of the control group who were taught through the traditional method. This progress was noticeable at the sentence, paragraph and discourse levels thanks to the results of the paired samples *t*-test. It can be concluded that blended learning, particularly implemented through the flipped classroom model, is an effective method in developing EFL students' composition skills. Yet, some other concerns about the online course and some aspects of the blended writing course had to be taken into account. For this purpose, an evaluation questionnaire was devised as a complementary tool to identify the strengths and weaknesses of this blended writing course and will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven: The Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course "Writing for English as a Foreign Language Second Year University Students"

Introduction

In Chapter Six, the effectiveness of blended learning in developing EFL students' composition skills was established. Several explanations were provided for this effectiveness based on the researcher's experience with the blended writing course and with observations recorded throughout the duration of the experiment. However, it was necessary to investigate the opinions of the students (the experimental group) who participated in this study. The aim was to unravel several issues that mostly could be clarified by the students' answers to specific questions. For this purpose, an evaluation questionnaire was designed to assess both the online course and the blended learning course in relation to certain key factors.

The Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course "Writing for English as a Foreign Language Second Year University Students" Questionnaire was handed in to the 16 students of the experimental group. They filled in the questionnaire the same day they undertook the post-test. The students were given enough time to fill in the questionnaires under the researcher's supervision and received no help or any kind of feedback while filling in the questionnaire. All the questionnaires were returned the same day.

7.1. Description of the Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course Questionnaire

The present questionnaire aimed at gathering information about the students' evaluation of the online course they enrolled in for this study. The results of the questionnaire helped the researcher identify the strong and weak points of the online course on Moodle as well as the blended writing course.

The questionnaire involves 35 questions (some of which were adapted from http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/blusummative) that are divided into close-ended and

open-ended questions and are organized into two sections. The first section, “The Online Course”, includes 15 questions. From Q1 to Q6, the focus is on the students’ opinions about some general aspects of the online course like the easiness of using the online course and exploring the university platform, the design of the online course, and the usefulness of the online tasks and of the synchronous and asynchronous tools. Q7 and Q8 are more specific questions as they targeted the tools used in the online course in terms of their usefulness and easiness or difficulty of use by the learners. Q9 to Q15 seek to determine the students’ assessment of their interaction with their peers and with their teacher online either through online discussions or when undertaking online tasks. The second section, “Blended Learning”, consists of 20 questions (Q16-Q35) that are related to blended learning. Q16 highlights the degree of the work load in a blended learning course in comparison to the usual face-to-face classes. Q17 was meant to establish the connection between online work and classroom work from the students’ point of view. Q18 to Q20 are concerned with the interaction of the learners with their classmates and with their teacher in a blended environment, that is online and onsite. Q21 to Q23 were designed to identify the students’ evaluation of their composition skills after taking this blended learning course. Another aspect that was mentioned in this evaluation questionnaire is the development of new skills (apart from the composition skills that students were supposed to have developed at the end of this blended learning course). Q26 to 29 are about students’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction about the blended learning course they enrolled in. Q30 to Q35 are questions that are related to some questions of the Students’ Attitudinal Questionnaire, and they were included in the Students’ Evaluation Questionnaire for further comparison.

The multiple responses questions were analysed with Spss while the rest of the questions were analyzed with Microsoft Excel.

7.2 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results of the Evaluation Questionnaire

Section One: The Online Course

1. Was the online course easy to use?

Yes

No

The term "easy to use" refers here to the accessibility of the online course, the facility to access the content of the course, the clarity of the language used both for explanations and for directions, and the organization of the different sections of the course on Moodle. The term also refers to the students' comprehensibility of the digital jargon. For this question, all the respondents consider the online course as easy to use.

2.Were the online tasks/activities interesting?

Yes

No

In Q2, all the students consider that the online tasks and activities were interesting. As it was explained in Chapter 4, Moodle provides online course designers with a variety of online and offline tasks that create opportunities for the learners, in the present case, to practice writing in various manners and for various purposes. This way, the teacher can ensure that the students are likely to develop a wide range of sub-skills that will in turn contribute to enhance their writing skill.

3. Did the variety of online resources help you to learn better?

Yes

No

All the respondents agree that the variety of online resources helped them to improve their learning experience. The resources that were used in the online course included videos made by teachers of writing who are native speakers; this ensured that students were going to be exposed to native speakers and to teachers who are familiar with the subject-matter. The other online resources comprised online grammar, spelling and punctuation checkers, websites about the content being studied and online exercises.

4. Did you feel relaxed communicating through the chat and e-mail?

Yes

No

The aim of Q4 is to check whether the anxiety factor that is often present in the classroom particularly when it comes to student-teacher interaction is also present in a online environment. All the participants who enrolled in this online learning course felt relaxed when communicating with their teacher and peers via chat sessions and e-mails.

5. Did you feel motivated while exploring the online course on the university platform?

Yes

No

All the learners felt motivated while they were exploring the course on Moodle. That is quite understandable since those students reported during classroom and online discussions that they have never participated in a blended learning course of this type.

6. Was the design of the online course helpful in terms of:

a. Organisation of the chapters?

b. Use of graphics (pictures, charts, etc.)?

c. Other: Please, specify: …….?

Options	**Responses**		**% of Cases**
	N	**%**	
a. organisation of the chapters	13	72.20	81.25
b. use of graphics (pictures, charts, etc.).	5	27.80	31.25
c. Other	0	0	0
Total	**18**	**100**	**112.50**

Table 7.1. Students' Evaluation of the Design of the Online Course

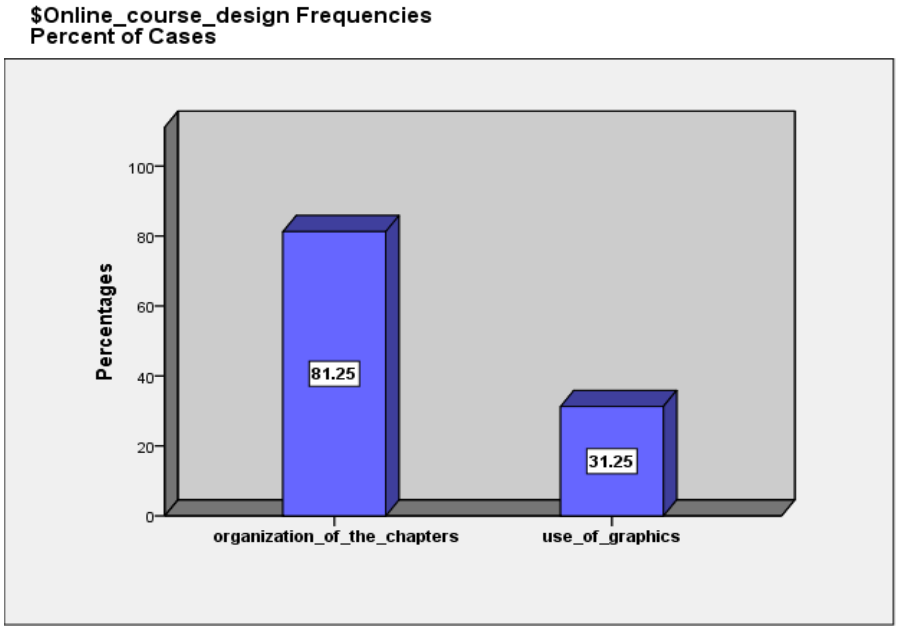


Figure 7.1. Students' Evaluation of the Design of the Online Course

Note: In the Spss version used for this study, the items scoring 0% are not displayed in the output.

It was quite important to ask this question as it has to do with the "aesthetic" aspect of the online course. From Table 7.1., we can see that "organization of the chapters" with a frequency of 81.25% is considered the most helpful aspect of the design of the online course.

7. Classify the following tools in the online course in terms of their usefulness to you (1 for the most useful; 7 for the least useful)

a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)

b. Online tasks and activities

c. Forum

d. Chat

e. Quiz

f. Wiki

g. Online grammar, spelling, and punctuation checkers

The aim of this question is to identify the most useful Moodle tool to the learners who participated in this blended learning course. To that end, classifying the question items from the most useful item to least useful one was the most suitable procedure to follow. The ranking results for each item were tabulated as follows:

Rank	N	%
1	10	62.50
2	05	31.25
3	0	0
4	01	06.25
5	0	0
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.2. Rank of Resources in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	03	18.75
2	03	18.75
3	07	43.75
4	02	12.50
5	01	06.25
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.3. Rank of the Online Tasks and Activities in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	09	56.25
7	07	43.75
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.4. Rank of Forum in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	03	18.75
2	03	18.75
3	05	31.25
4	04	25
5	01	06.25
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.5. Rank of Chat in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	01	06.25
4	04	25
5	11	68.75
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.6. Rank of Quiz in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	08	50
7	08	50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.7. Rank of Wiki in Terms of Usefulness

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	5	31.25
3	3	18.75
4	4	25
5	4	25
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.8. Rank of the Online Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation Checkers in Terms of Usefulness

To have a global view of the ranks of each item of Q7, the results were summarized in percentages in 7.9.:

Options	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7
a. Resources	62.50	31.25	0	06.25	0	0	0
b. Online Tasks and Activities	18.75	18.75	43.75	12.50	06.25	0	0
c. Forum	0	0	0	0	0	56.25	43.75
d. Chat	18.75	18.75	31.25	25	06.25	0	0
e. Quiz	0	0	06.25	25	68.75	0	0
f. Wiki	0	0	0	0	0	50	50
g. Online Checkers	0	31.25	18.75	25	25	0	0

Table 7.9. Summary of the Results in Percentages of the Usefulness of Moodle Tools

In order to know which item was the most useful to the learners that evolved in the online course, "sum of the ranks" was used. The sum of the ranks procedure entails that the item which receives the lowest score is the most important. Table 7.10. summarizes the scores obtained for each item:

Options	Sum of the Ranks
a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)	24
b. Online Tasks and Activities	43
c. Forum	103
d. Chat	45
e. Quiz	74
f. Wiki	104
g. Online Checkers	55

Table 7.10. Sum of the Ranks of Moodle Tools in Terms of Usefulness

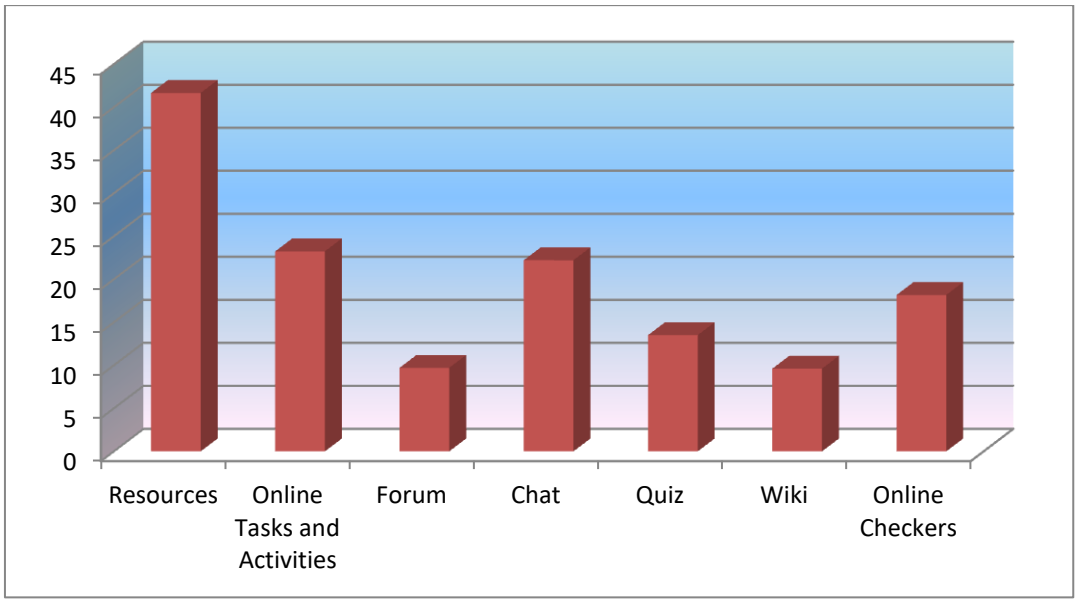


Figure 7.2. Usefulness of Moodle Tools

According to Figure 7.2., the item "Resources" is considered by the respondents as the most useful tool in the online course followed by "Online Tasks and Activities", and "Chat". The least useful tools are "Forum" and "Wiki".

8. Classify the following tools in the online course in terms of their difficulty of use (1 for the most difficult; 7 for the least difficult)

a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)

b. Online tasks and activities

c. Forum

d. Chat

e. Quiz

f. Wiki

g. Online grammar, spelling, and punctuation checkers

In Q7, the focus was on the usefulness of the listed tools used in the online course. Q8 focused on the difficulty of using the abovementioned items. Classification of the items from the most difficult to the least difficult was used for this question, and the obtained results for every item are shown in the tables below:

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	02	12.50
4	05	31.25
5	03	18.75
6	04	25
7	02	12.50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.11. Rank of Resources in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	01	06.25
3	06	37.50
4	06	37.50
5	01	06.25
6	02	12.50
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.12. Rank of the Online Tasks and Activities in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	06	37.50
2	07	43.75
3	01	06.25
4	01	06.25
5	01	06.25
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.13. Rank of Forum in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	04	25
6	06	37.50
7	06	37.50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.14. Rank of Chat in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	03	18.75
2	01	06.25
3	03	18.75
4	03	18.75
5	04	25
6	02	12.50
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.15. Rank of Quiz in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	07	43.75
2	07	43.75
3	02	12.50
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.16. Rank of Wiki in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	02	12.50
4	01	06.25
5	02	12.50
6	03	18.75
7	08	50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.17. Rank of the Online Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation Checkers in Terms of Difficulty of Use

Table 7.18. summarizes the results of each item from rank 1 to rank 7 in percentages:

Options	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Rank 7
a. Resources	0	0	12.50	31.25	18.75	25	12.50
b. Online Tasks and Activities	0	06.25	37.50	37.50	06.25	12.50	0
c. Forum	37.50	43.75	06.25	06.25	06.25	0	0
d. Chat	0	0	0	0	25	37.50	37.50
e. Quiz	18.75	06.25	18.75	18.75	25	12.50	0
f. Wiki	43.75	43.75	12.50	0	0	0	0
g. Online Checkers	0	0	12.50	06.25	12.50	18.75	50

Table 7.18. Summary of the Results in Percentages of the Difficulty of Using Moodle Tools

To know which tool was the most difficult to use by the students, the sum of the ranks procedure was again used. Table 7.19. displays the ranking of each tool as follows:

Options	Sum of the Ranks
a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)	79
b. Online Tasks and Activities	61
c. Forum	32
d. Chat	98
e. Quiz	58
f. Wiki	27
g. Online Checkers	94

Table 7.19. Sum of the Ranks of Moodle Tools in Terms of Difficulty

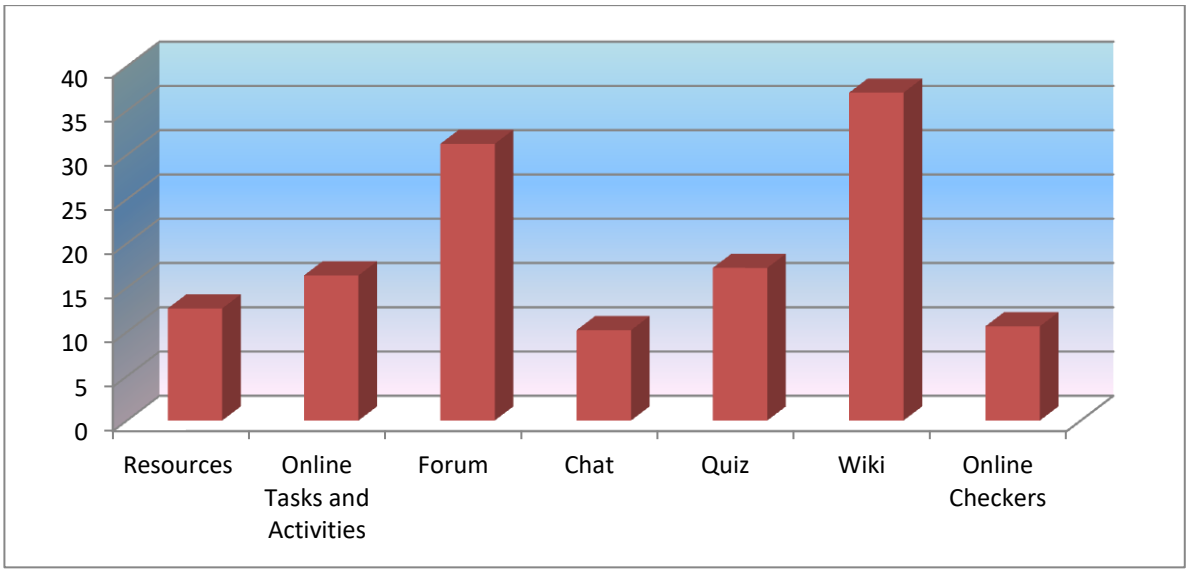


Figure 7.3. Difficulty of Use of Moodle Tools

As it was explained earlier, when doing a sum of the ranks for a standard classification, the item that gets the lowest score is the most important or gets the first rank. Table 7.19. shows that, according to the students, the most difficult Moodle tool to use is the wiki with a score of 27. We can see that the wiki obtained a low score (27) compared to the other tools followed by the forum (32) that comes in the second rank. Therefore, the wiki and the forum appear to be the most difficult Moodle tools that students had to use in the online course. Figure 7.3. illustrates the obtained results.

9. Did you feel confident interacting with your classmates online?

Yes

No

Q9 aims to check the level of anxiety students felt during the learning process particularly during teacher-student or student-student interaction. In a "brick-and-mortar" classroom, students often experience a high level of anxiety that in turn decreases their level of confidence when it comes to discussions or group tasks. It was

quite logical to wonder if it is the case in an online environment. For this question, all the respondents felt confident during online interaction with their peers.

10.Did online discussions help you to develop a sense of collaboration with your classmates?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	15	93.75
No	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.20. Online Discussions as an Aid to develop Peer Collaboration

Q10 is again about student-student interaction. The focus here is on the concept of collaboration. According to Table 7.20., 93.75% of the students consider that online discussions helped them to develop a sense of collaboration with their classmates.

11. Did online collaboration with your classmates improve your learning experience.

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	14	87.50
No	02	12.50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.21. Improving the Students' Learning Experience through Peer Collaboration

As it was mentioned earlier, collaboration is an important aspect in language learning as it has several benefits. Q11 emphasizes the impact of collaboration with peers on one's learning experience, and according to the results displayed in Table 7.21., 87.50% of the participants agree that collaborating with their classmates online improved their learning experience.

12.Was Online collaboration with your teacher beneficial?

Yes

No

The students' learning experience is also influenced by collaboration with the teacher; Q12 focuses on this aspect. For this question, all the respondents agree that collaborating with their teacher online was beneficial.

13. Did the teacher help you to keep engaged and participating in online discussion?

Yes

No

The students' engagement is a central issue nowadays, and it is often the key to success in various aspects. Q13 was included in the evaluation questionnaire for the sake of knowing whether, in an online environment, the teacher influences the students' engagement and participation during discussions. All the participants confirmed that their teacher helped them to keep engaged and participating in online discussions.

14. Did the teacher provide feedback (online) that helped you identify your strengths and weaknesses?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	15	93.75
No	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.22. Role of the Teacher's Feedback in Helping the Students to identify their Strengths and Weaknesses

Feedback, as it is well known, is very critical in the learning process as it not only helps students clarify erroneous understanding of newly learned concepts/notions but also to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Just like in the traditional classroom, feedback is also very important in an online setting. Feedback can be provided online at several levels: during online discussions, tasks, forums, and so on. Particular focus on identification of the learners' strengths and weaknesses was targeted in Q14, and the answers provided by the majority of the students (93.75%), as

shown in Table 7.22., attest that, during online exchanges, the teacher provided feedback that helped the learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

15. Did online communication help you better interact with your classmates and your teacher?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	15	93.75
No	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.23. Impact of Online Communication on the Students' Interaction with the Peers and the Teacher

Q15 aims at determining the impact of online communication on the students' interaction with their classmates and teacher. The majority answered that online communication helped them to better interact with both the peers and the instructor as shown in Table 7.23.

Section Two: Blended Learning

16. How was the workload in this blended learning course?

a. Too heavy

b. Heavy

c. Reasonable

d. Light

e. Too light

Scale	N	%
a. Too heavy	0	0
b. Heavy	01	06.25
c. Reasonable	13	81.25
d. Light	02	12.5
e. Too light	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.24. Students' Evaluation of the Work Load in the Blended Learning Course

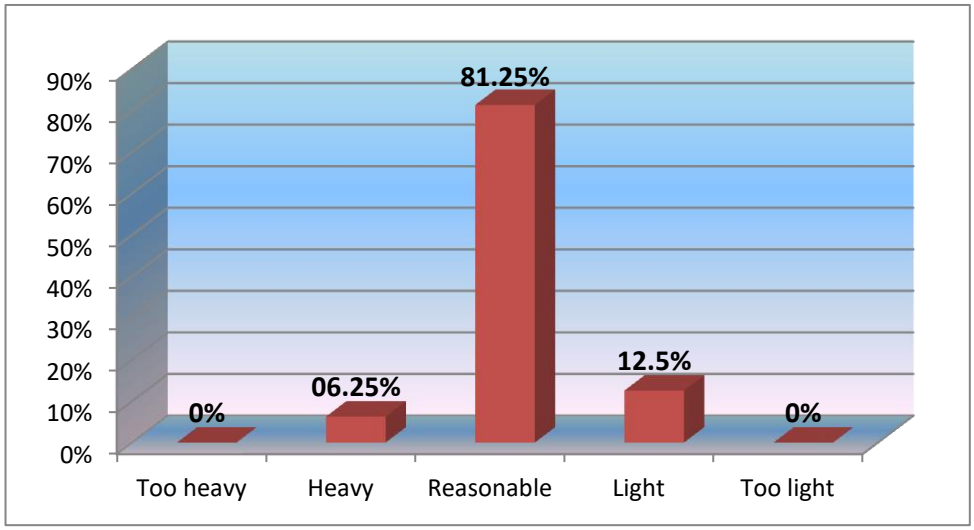


Figure 7.4. Students' Evaluation of the Work Load in the Blended Learning Course

Q16 aims at knowing the amount of the work load that the students experienced in blended learning for the development of their composition skills. The majority of the students (81.25%) stated that the work load was reasonable.

17. How would you describe the relationship between the online and face-to-face (inside the classroom) learning in this course?

a. Online and classroom work enhanced each other.

b. Online and classroom work were complementary.

c. The connection between online and classroom work was not always obvious.

d. There was little or no connection between online and classroom work.

Options	N	%
a. Online and classroom work enhanced each other.	05	31.25
b. Online and classroom work were complementary.	11	68.75
c. The connection between online and classroom work was not always obvious.	0	0
d. There was little or no connection between online and classroom work.	0	0
Total	16	100

Table 7.25. Students' Evaluation of the Relationship between Online and Classroom Work

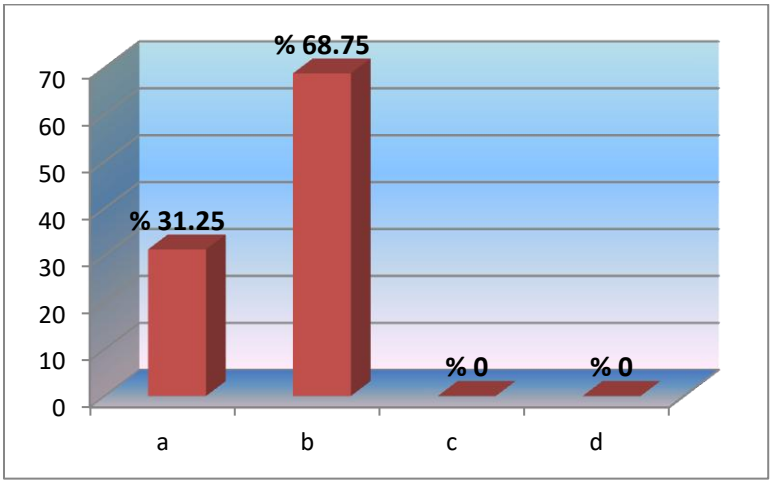


Figure 7.5. Students' Evaluation of the Relationship between Online and Classroom Work

Q17 is an important question as it is at the core of the current study. The term 'blended learning', in a very broad sense, not only entails the combination of traditional teaching with online teaching but also a certain balance and harmony in doing so. The results obtained for Q17 show that, according to 68.75% of the participants, the relationship between the online and face-to-face work in this blended learning course was complementary.

18. In this blended learning course, your interaction with your teacher increased:

a. A lot

b. Somewhat

c. No difference

d. A little

e. Not at all

Scale	N	%
a. A lot	10	62.50
b. Somewhat	05	31.25
c. No difference	0	0
d. A little	01	06.25
e. Not at all	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.26. Rate of the Students' Interaction with the Teacher through Blended Learning

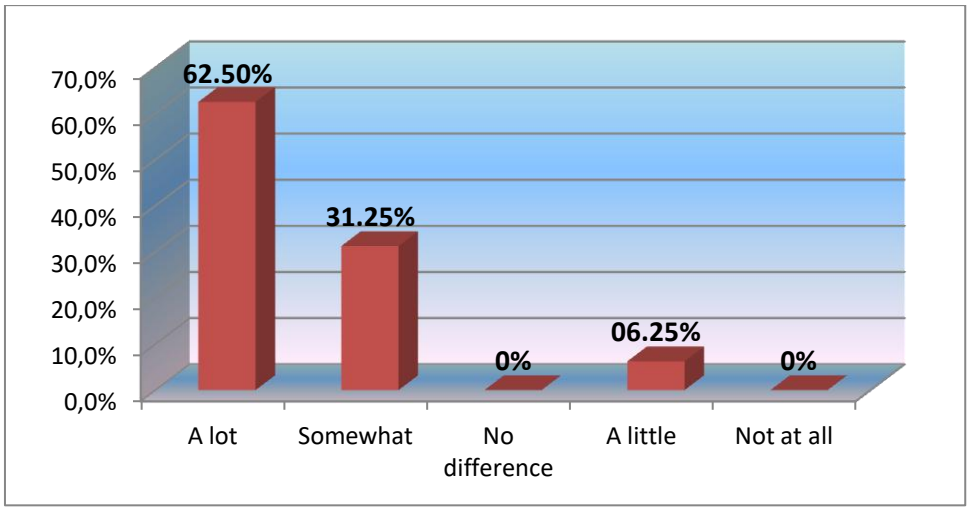


Figure 7.6. Rate of the Students' Interaction with the Teacher through Blended Learning

Blended learning is said to increase teacher-student interaction both face-to-face and online. As shown in Table 7.26., according to 62.50% of the students, their interaction with their teacher increased a lot throughout this blended learning course. 31.25% said their interaction somewhat increased. What can be noticed is that, regardless of the degree of interaction with the teacher, a change is noticed concerning this aspect.

19. Did you receive more feedback from your teacher?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	15	93.75
No	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.27. Amount of the Teacher's Feedback in Blended Learning

Q19 focused on teacher's feedback in a blended environment. As shown in Table 7.27., 93.75% of the participants declared that they received more feedback from their teacher through blended learning, and this is implicitly in comparison to the traditional classroom.

20. In this blended learning course, your interaction with your classmates increased:

a. A lot

b. Somewhat

c. No difference

d. A little

e. Not at all

Scale	N	%
a. A lot	04	25
b. Somewhat	09	56.25
c. No difference	02	12.50
d. A little	01	06.25
e. Not at all	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.28. Rate of Peer Interaction through Blended Learning

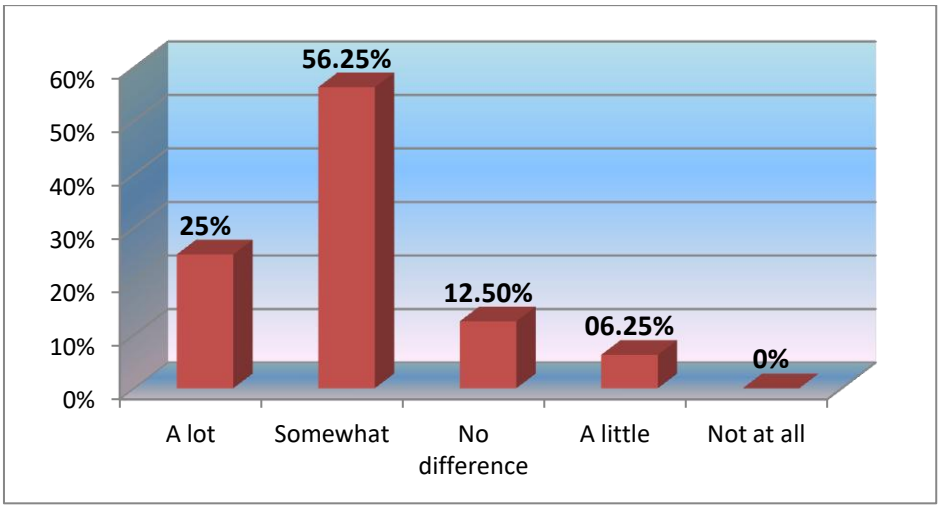


Figure 7.7. Rate of Peer Interaction through Blended Learning

Just like Q18, Q20 focuses on the students' evaluation of their interaction with their classmates through blended learning. According to Table 7.28., 56.25% of the students declared that their interaction with their classmates somewhat increased whereas 25% said that interaction increased a lot. Few students evaluated their interaction with their peers as not being significant.

21. Compared to the traditional method, do you feel your written production has increased through blended learning?

Yes

No

One of the advantages of blended learning is that it increases learning opportunities which in turn helps optimize the rate of practice. This is confirmed by the results of Q21 where all the respondents agreed that blended learning helped them increase their written productions.

22. Do you feel you have a better command of the different stages of the process of writing (planning, drafting, revising, and editing)?

Yes

No

Options	N	%
Yes	15	93.75
No	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.29. Students' Evaluation of their Command of the Stages of the Writing Process

Teaching the students to become skilled writers is best achieved through the exploration of the stages of the writing process. It is well known that a good piece of writing is the result of a thorough work that starts from the planning phase up to editing phase and/or the publishing phase, and all the stages equally have their share of difficulties. Through blended learning, the students who participated in this study were able to experience the stages of the writing process that is planning, drafting, revising, and editing, except publishing. In Table 7.29., the majority of the students declared that they have a better command of the different stages of the writing process thanks to blended learning.

23. Classify the following items in terms of their degree of improvement through this blended learning course (use 1 for the most improved item and 5 for the least improved one)

a. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, types of introduction, unity, and coherence)

b. Organisation of ideas

c. Grammar

d. Vocabulary use

e. Mechanics

Q23 aims at knowing which aspect of essay writing mostly improved through blended learning. The suggested items in the question are all the elements that are necessary for the production of a standard essay. The item about the process of writing was dealt with separately in Q22 as it represented an important part in the blended learning course. To analyze Q23, ranking the items from the most improved element to least improved one is used. The tables below display the scores of the ranks for each item.

Rank	N	%
1	09	56.25
2	03	18.75
3	0	0
4	03	18.75
5	01	06.25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.30. Rank of Parts of the Essay in Terms of Improvement

Rank	N	%
1	05	31.25
2	08	50
3	03	18 ;75
4	0	0
5	0	0
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.31. Rank of Organization of Ideas in Terms of Improvement

Rank	N	%
1	0	0
2	01	06.25
3	01	06.25
4	10	06.25
5	04	25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.32. Rank of Grammar in Terms of Improvement

Rank	N	%
1	01	06.25
2	02	12.50
3	08	50
4	01	06.25
5	04	25
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.33. Rank of Vocabulary Use in Terms of Improvement

Rank	N	%
1	01	06.25
2	01	06.25
3	05	31.25
4	03	18.75
5	06	37.50
Total	**16**	**100**

Table 7.34. Rank of Mechanics in Terms of Improvement

Option	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
a. Parts of the essay	56.25	18.75	0	18.75	06.25
b. Organisation of ideas	31.25	50	18.75	0	0
c. Grammar	0	06.25	06.25	62.50	25
d. Vocabulary use	06.25	12.50	50	06.25	25
e. Mechanics	06.25	06.25	31.25	18.75	37.50

Table 7.35. Summary of the Results in Percentages of the Improvement of the Aspects of Essay Writing

Table 7.35. summarizes the percentile scores for each rank of every item of Q23, and it can already be noticed that in rank 1, parts of the essay and organization of ideas have the highest percentile scores. For a better comparison, sum of the ranks was used, and Table 7.36. was obtained. The item that receives the lowest score is the item that mostly improved through blended learning as shown below:

Options	Sum of the Ranks
a. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, types of introduction, unity, and coherence)	**32**
b. Organisation of ideas	**30**
c. Grammar	**65**
d. Vocabulary use	**53**
e. Mechanics	**60**

Table 7.36. Sum of the Ranks about the Improvement of the Aspects of Essay Writing

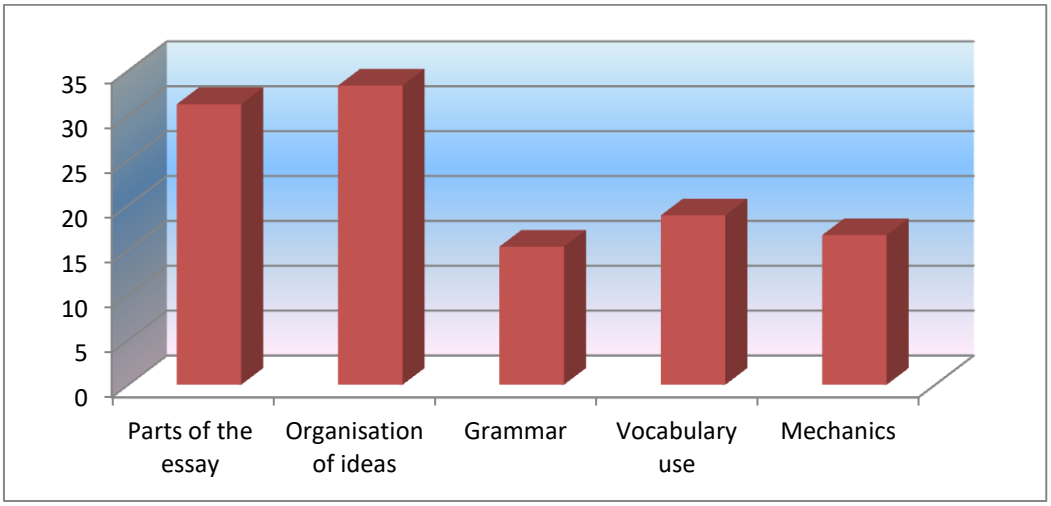


Figure 7.8. Degree of Improvement in the Writing Aspects

According to Figure 7.8., organization of ideas and parts of the essay are the aspects that mostly improved through blended learning.

24. Do you feel you have developed new skills after completing this blended learning course?

O Yes

O No

Q24 aims at determining if the students felt that, throughout their experience with blended learning, they developed new skills in addition to the ones they were supposed to have acquired at the end of instruction. All the respondents positively answered that they indeed developed new skills in this blended learning course.

25. If "Yes", could you please mention these skills?

In the previous question, all the students agreed that they have developed new skills after completing the blended learning course they participated in. The participants were asked to justify their answers, and 15 answers were obtained (some answers included combined responses that were treated separately, which explains the total 17 instead of 15). The answers were categorized and analyzed using descriptive statistics as summarized in Table 7.37. and Figure 7.9.:

Categories	N	%
computing skills	02	11.76
listening/speaking development	03	17.65
critical thinking	05	29.41
more developed writing skills	05	29.41
other	02	11.76
Total	**17**	**100**

Table 7.37. New Skills Developed through Blended Learning

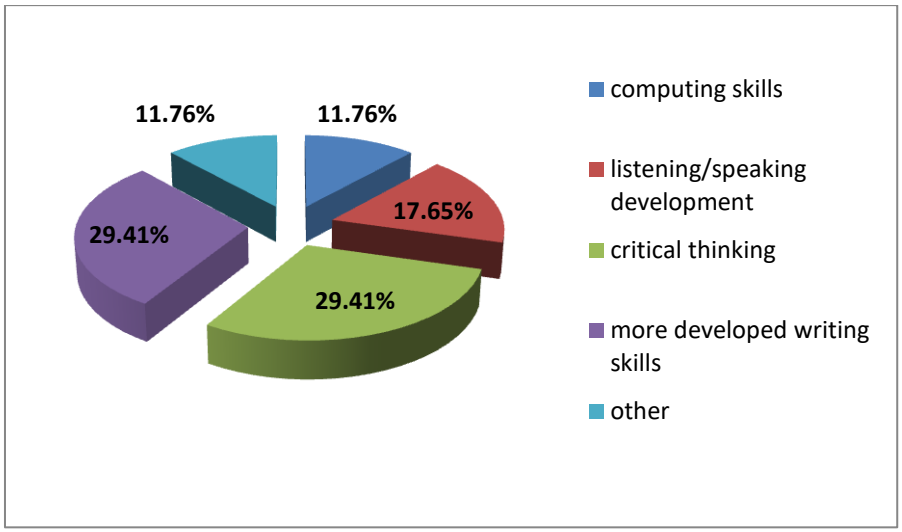


Figure 7.9. New Skills Developed through Blended Learning

The analysis of the responses obtained for Q25 varies in topics. Five categories were obtained, and each category involves a particular aspect. In the category "computing skills", the students mentioned that, after completing the blended learning course, they learned how to easily evolve in an online course. Another response referred to the ability "to use word processing software to write outlines and drafts". In the "listening/speaking development" category, the students noticed that their listening and speaking skills clearly improved, and improvement concerned the followings: use of more formal language, speaking without feeling intimidated and better listening abilities during classroom interaction. For the "critical thinking" topic, students mentioned that they had a better understanding of their writing abilities. They had a "more critical eye" on what they wrote, and in turn, this helped them to be "more logical in writing". Concerning the category of "more developed writing skills", the students stated that their overall writing abilities greatly improved in terms of the command of aspects like thesis statement, appropriate types of introduction, more concern for word choice and spelling, and better ideas. The students who provided the former answers might not have understood what was meant by "new

skills". They probably wanted to emphasize that they writing skills developed from a general perspective. The category "other" involves the following answers:

-"how to interact with teacher and classmates"

-"I learned some tricks that helped me in writing."

26. Are you satisfied with this blended learning course?

Yes

No

In the Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire, the students were asked whether they were satisfied with the traditional way of teaching writing. The same question was asked about blended learning, and all the participants are satisfied with the blended learning course they took part in.

27. Please, explain why.

In Q26, all the respondents answered that they were satisfied with the blended learning course, and all of them provided justifications in Q27 (Several open-ended questions included answers that combined two responses; as it was formerly explained, the total of the responses does not automatically match the number of the respondents). The answers were analyzed as displayed in Table 7.38. and Figure 7.10.:

Categories	N	%
an effective method to develop writing	07	33.33
better communication	05	23.81
Increase of learning opportunities	05	23.81
reduces anxiety	02	09.52
other	02	09.52
Total	**21**	**100**

Table 7.38. Reasons behind the Students' Satisfaction with the Blended Learning

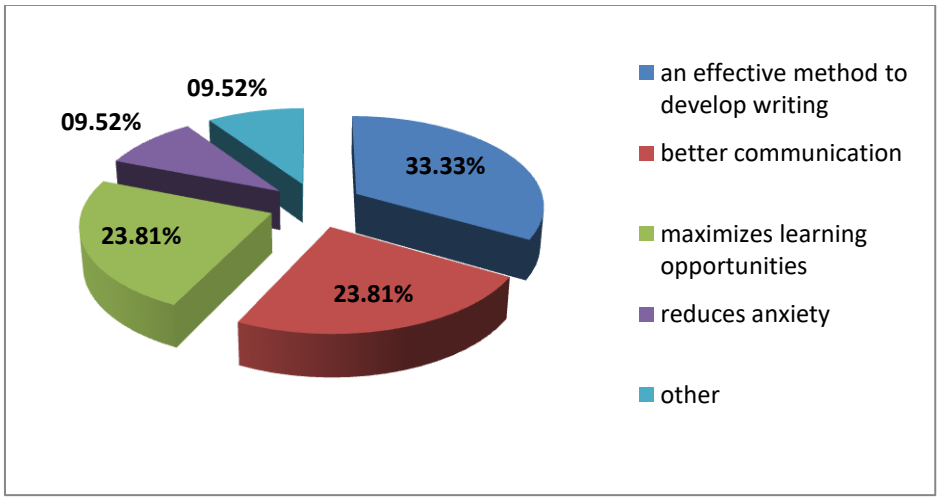


Figure 7.10. Reasons behind the Students' Satisfaction with the Blended Learning Course

The students provided several justifications for their satisfaction with the blended learning course. Several answers implied that blended learning is an effective method to develop writing in the sense that it is "an advantageous experience that helped [them] a lot to improve [their] writing skills"; it helped them to become better writers, partly thanks to the online resources that were very useful. It also "made a balance" probably meaning here that the work load in the classroom partly transferred online, and that learning at their own pace out of the classroom reduced stress and

increased motivation. Other students mentioned that they were satisfied with the blended learning course because it provided “better communication” with the teacher and the classmates, emphasizing that “[they] kept in touch with the teacher even when at home”, they were able “to communicate with [the teacher and the classmates] in a relaxed manner”, and “it helped [them] get closer to [their] classmates.” They highlighted that, on the whole, blended learning provided a “better student-teacher relationship”. A third category mentioned an “increase of learning opportunities”. The students stated that through blended learning, they learned better particularly at home. On the whole, “[blended learning] increases learning.” Other students focused on affective factors when justifying their satisfaction with the blended learning course. They mentioned that blended learning is a method that helped them reduce pressure and anxiety particularly when communicating/interacting with the classmates and the teacher. In the last category “other”, the learners stated that blended learning is satisfactory because “it is a new way to study” and that “it made [them] see studies differently”.

28. What was the most effective aspect of this blended learning course?

The aim of Q28 is to identify the most effective aspect of the blended learning course according to the participants. For this question, 23 answers were provided and were grouped into six categories. The results were tabulated as follows:

Categories	N	%
course resources	06	26.09
lessons format	03	13.04
chat sessions	08	34.78
online tasks/activities	02	08.70
feedback	02	08.70
other	02	08.70
Total	**23**	**100**

Table 7.39. Most Effective Aspect(s) of the Blended Learning Course

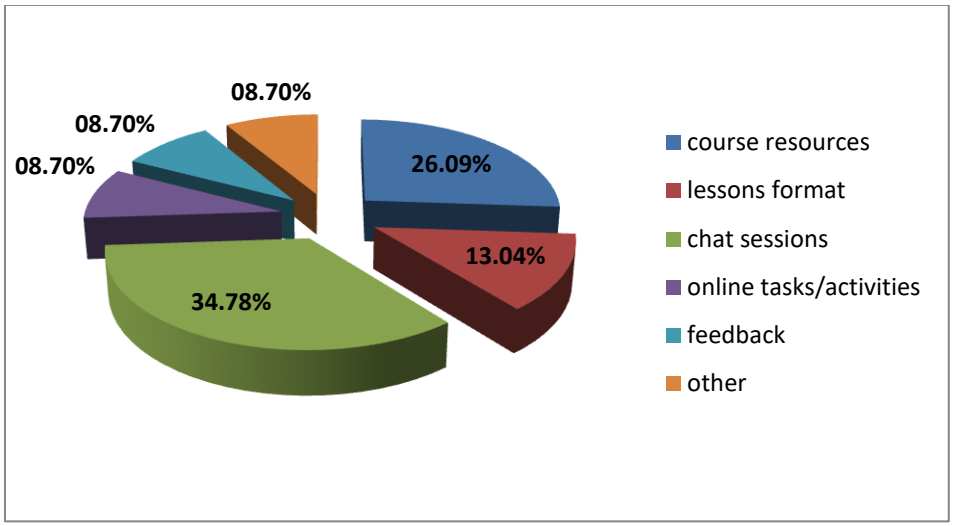


Figure 7.11. Most Effective Aspect(s) of the Blended Learning Course

According to the obtained proportions, chat sessions appear to be the most effective aspect of the blended learning course. Students mentioned that chat sessions were very useful because "[they had] direct communication with the teacher without pressure", "[chat sessions] created a virtual environment where the teacher explains, helps and discusses topics with students as if they are studying in the classroom", and they could discuss the problems they had about writing thanks to the synchronous tools. Course resources were also mentioned to be an effective aspect, though they are a component rather than an aspect of the online course. The students emphasized

resources like videos and online checkers to be highly useful for the development of their composition skills. Other aspects were mentioned like lessons format, referring here to the SCORM format that allows the learners to explore the course content in a more interactive way. Online activities/tasks and feedback were treated as separate categories. The variety of the tasks and the activities was probably beneficial as it allowed students to practice different sub-skills like writing outlines using suggested models in the form of worksheets, or using graphic organizers like Venn diagrams for the compare-contrast essay or the "fishbone" diagram for the cause and effect essay for the planning phase of their assignments. Concerning feedback, during the six weeks where students experienced blended learning, they received feedback both online and in the classroom at various levels ranging from concepts about the theoretical aspect of the two essay types they studied (compare/contrast and cause/effect) to the practical part where the participants were required to write essays on selected topics. When referring to feedback, the learners stated that keeping in touch with classmates and the teacher, either through chat sessions or via e-mail, was very helpful when they needed clarifications or help during writing tasks, and the ability to submit assignments on Moodle and getting them back with the teacher's comments and recommendations was very effective. For the category "other", the students mentioned that the effective aspect of this blended learning course is its novelty and the fact that it helped them understand better certain features of essay writing thanks to the use of visual aids like videos and graphic organizers. We can infer here that, for the last statement, the students referred to learning styles.

29. What was the least effective aspect of this blended learning course?

Just like Q28, Q29 was necessary to know which aspect of the blended learning course was the least effective. 15 students provided responses; however, four

responses were eliminated as they were positive statements as the students mentioned that there was no negative aspect about this blended learning course. The eliminated responses are the followings:

-“from my perspective all the activities were effective and positive for the students.”

-“I think it was good this BL course; it just helped us.”

-“I do not think there was an ineffective aspect in this BL course because each aspect aimed at something, so it was useful.”

-“nothing was ineffective. The online course helped me.”

Taking into account the combined responses, the total number of answers is 13.

Categories	N	%
Forum	06	46.15
Types of Activities	01	07.69
Course duration	01	07.69
Communication with peers	01	07.69
Online checkers	01	07.69
Wikis	01	07.69
Quiz	02	15.38
Total	**13**	**100**

Table 7.40. Least Effective Aspect(s) of the Blended Learning Course

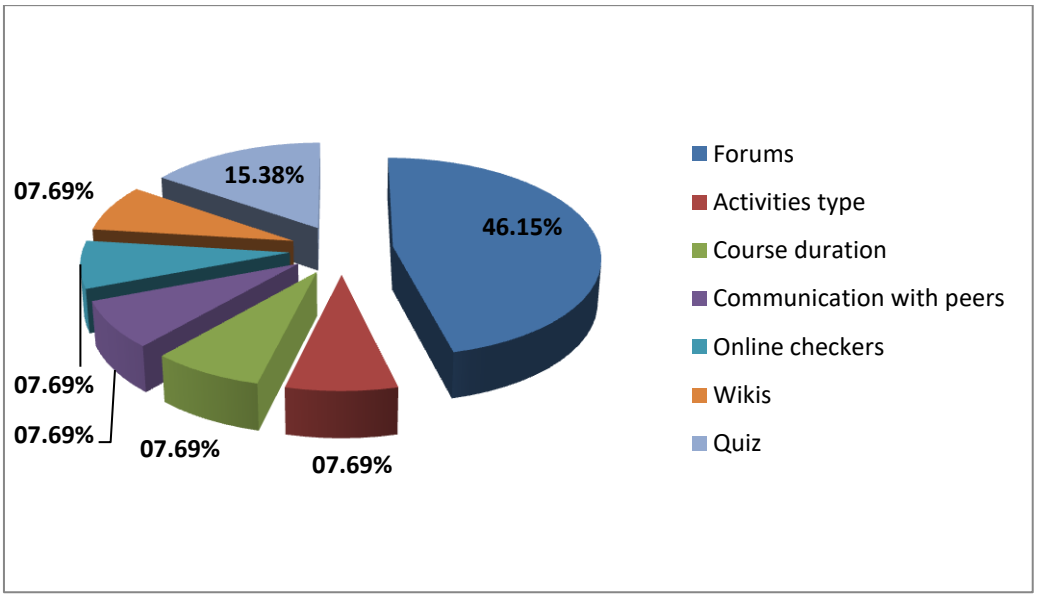


Figure 7.12. Least Effective Aspect(s) of the Blended Learning Course

From Table 7.40. and Figure 7.12., 'Forum' appears to be the least effective aspect of this blended learning course, and the explanation provided by the students who stated this response is that the forum seemed to be difficult to use.

30. After taking this blended learning course, do you think Internet and mobile technologies are effective in developing students' writing skills?

Yes

No

Q30 is related to three questions of the Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire: Q18 (the frequency of using Internet and mobile technologies in the context of developing the students' writing skills), Q23 and Q24 (the relationship between teacher's effectiveness and the use of Internet and mobile technologies for teaching). In Q30, all the participants agree that Internet and mobile technologies are effective in developing their writing skills.

31. Please, explain why.

In Q30, all the students agreed that Internet and mobile technologies are effective in developing their writing skills. It was quite logical to ask them to justify their answers in order to identify key elements for the present study. In Q31, 15 students justified their answers. Table 7.41. summarizes the obtained results that were grouped into themes:

Themes	**N**	**%**
course improvement	02	10
modernization of learning	10	60
development of writing skills	03	15
better communication	03	15
Total	**20**	**100**

Table 7.41. Justifications for the Effectiveness of Internet and Mobile Technologies in Developing the Students' Writing Skills

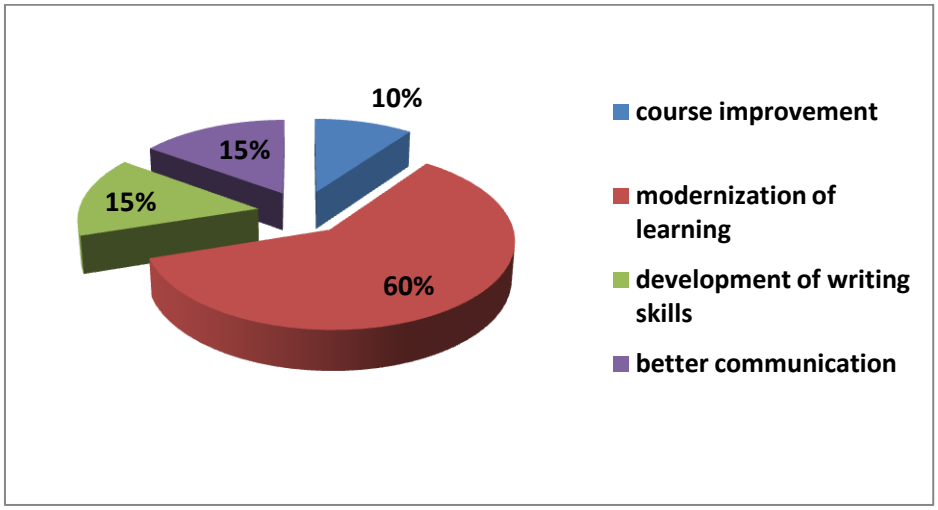


Figure 7.13. Justifications for the Effectiveness of Internet and Mobile Technologies in Developing the Students' Writing Skills

The category that tended to recur in students' justifications is "modernization of learning" with a proportion of 60%. For the students, Internet and mobile technologies are effective because they give a more 'modern dimension' to learning in the sense that "we live in a modern world where everything moves quickly and technology helps us keep up with the pace." Accordingly, students have access to unlimited information and a various range of tools like "online dictionaries and thesauri" that help them learn faster and better. They can study whenever and wherever they want, use word processing software to write their essays and save them so they "can take their writing wherever they go". The students also mentioned that, without Internet and mobile technologies, they would never have participated in an online course and would never have experienced blended learning. Concerning the "better access to information" category, the students emphasized that the various resources they had access to enabled them to learn in various ways and to consolidate what they have learnt in the classroom through 'cross-checking'. For the "better communication" category, the students emphasized that Internet and mobile technologies make it easy for them to keep in touch with both the teacher and the classmates once they have left the classroom, thus bringing the classroom into the virtual world in the first place and decreasing the feeling of isolation they might experience in the traditional teaching in the second place.

32. Do you think that blended learning (combination of traditional face-to-face sessions in the classroom with online learning) is an effective method to develop the students' writing skills?

Yes

No

Q32 is related to Q31 and 32 of the Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire which was about the students' attitudes towards combining traditional

teaching and technology-based instruction to improve their composition skills. In Q32, all the respondents evaluated blended learning to be an effective method to develop their composition skills.

33. Please, explain why.

Previously in Q32, all the participants agreed that blended learning is an effective method to develop the students' composition skills. The respondents were asked to justify their answers in Q33, and 15 justifications were provided. 21 responses were obtained as shown in Table 7.42.:

Themes	**N**	**%**
Motivating	03	14.29
Increase of learning	06	28.57
Better learning conditions	07	33.33
Better communication	02	09.52
Compatibility with students' needs	01	04.76
Suitable for shy students	02	09.52
Total	**21**	**100**

Table 7.42. Reasons for the Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Developing the Students' Writing Skills

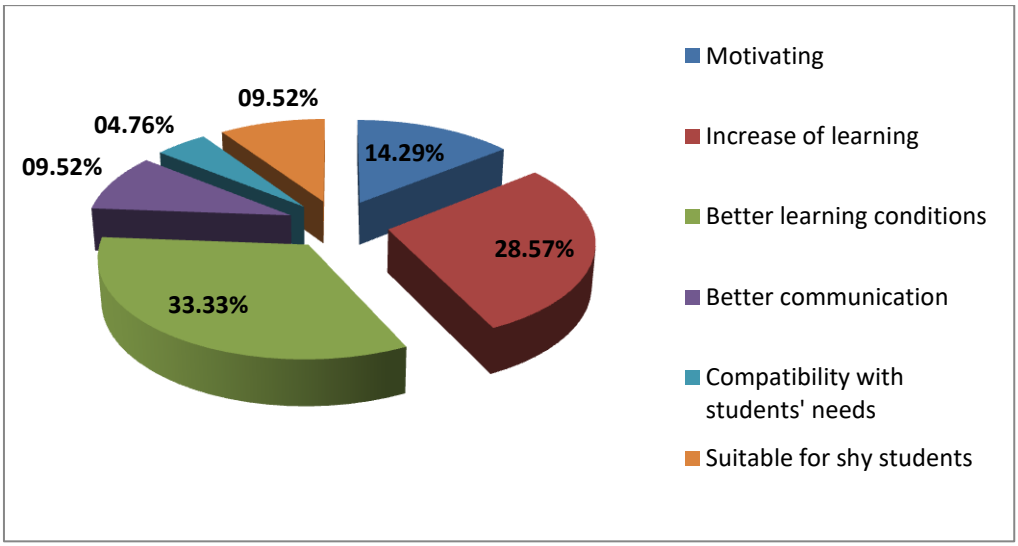


Figure 7.14. Reasons for the Effectiveness of Blended Learning in Developing the Students' Writing Skills

The participants mentioned several elements that were organized into categories. As it can be noticed from Figure 7.14., the categories that stand out are "better learning conditions" with a proportion of 33.33%, "increase of learning" with a proportion of 28.57%, and "motivating" with a proportion of 14.29%. Concerning the "better learning conditions" theme, the students mentioned that blended learning helps them to experience writing beyond the classroom walls with the guarantee to keep contact with the teacher and their classmates for feedback and to have the advantages of learning in a more relaxed atmosphere at their own pace anytime and anywhere as long as they have access to Internet and to mobile devices. When mentioning "increase of learning", the students referred to the fact that, based on the experience they had with blended learning, what they did online was "a continuation of the work done in the classroom" and vice versa. They also mentioned that they wrote more through blended learning making them share their ideas more, and at the same time, that made them learn more techniques and more "tricks", and learn more from their mistakes. For the "motivating" category, the learners said that blended learning is a

method that encourages learning in the sense that it makes them want to learn more and feel less bored compared to face-to-face learning alone.

34. Based on your personal experience, do you recommend this method for developing university students' writing skills?

Yes

No

The last question of this evaluation questionnaire focuses on the personal experience of the participants in this blended learning course. All of them recommended blended learning as a method for the development of EFL university students' composition skills and the reasons for this recommendation were mentioned in Q33.

35. Please, explain why.

All the participants recommended blended learning for developing university students' writing skills as it was stated in Q34. 16 justifications were provided in Q35, and 21 responses in all were obtained. The answers were tabulated as follows:

Themes	**N**	**%**
enhancement of teacher-student relationship	02	09.52
the most suitable method for university students	08	38.10
increase of learning	05	23.81
motivating	04	19.05
modernity	02	09.52
Total	**21**	**100**

Table 7.43. Reasons for Recommending Blended Learning

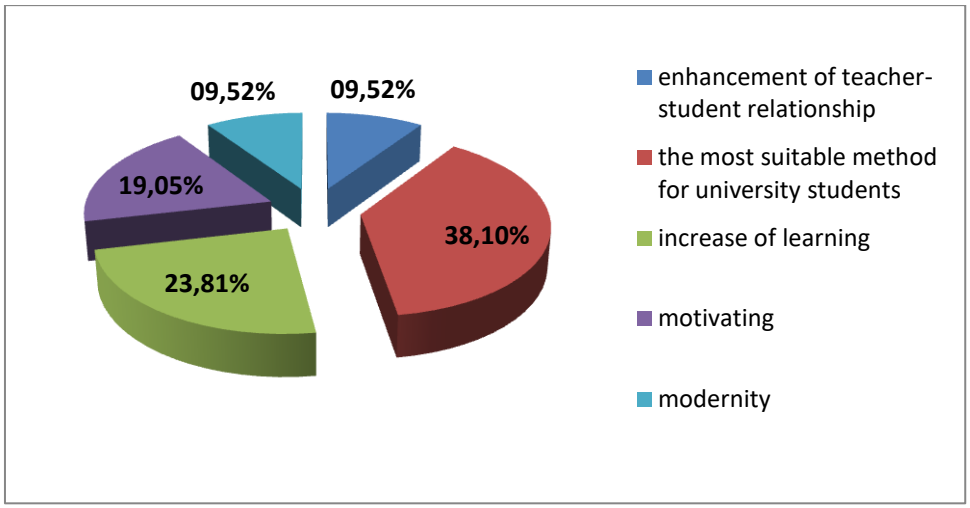


Figure 7.15. Reasons for Recommending Blended Learning

Based on what is displayed in Table 7.43., the major reasons that were provided by the learners are "the most suitable method for university students" with a proportion of 38.10%, "increase of learning" with 23.81%, and "motivating" with 19.05%. Blended learning is "the most suitable method for university students" because of many factors: teacher action is more noticeable, and the learners are more active; adequate feedback is provided by both the teacher and the peers when needed; contact with the teacher and the classmates is possible outside the classroom or the university; "it matches students' needs" and it is "a method that can work with almost all modules". One student stated that "[blended learning] is very effective for students' academic life." Blended learning also increases learning in the sense that "it gives the opportunity to try new things", "it helps a lot to acquire new skills", and it augments learning occasions. In addition to the previous reasons, blended learning is motivating. It makes the students like the module more and gives them the will to want to invest more efforts to improve their writing skills. Blended learning also "helps them to learn better how to write, what to write and why they are writing. So it gives a purpose." More importantly according to the students, blended learning reduces the pressure

they feel in the traditional classroom, and this in turn helps to increase their motivation. Concerning the "modernity" theme, the students provided the following statements when evaluating blended learning:

-"the world is developing; we cannot just stick to the classroom; we need other improved methods like this one."

-"it keeps students at the same level with the students of the developed countries."

7.3. The Blended Course Questionnaire Evaluation Results

This evaluation questionnaire was a complementary tool for the experimental part of the current study because it was important to know the students' comments and opinions about their experience with Moodle and with blended learning. Therefore, the questionnaire included a section about the online course and another one about the blended writing course.

The first section of the questionnaire involved several questions that focused on the participants' impressions about the design of the online course and their interaction with their peers and instructor online. All the participants agreed that the design of the course was friendly-user, helpful and motivating in relation to the course organization, the online tasks, the variety of online resources, and chat/e-mail. Some of the respondents' answers were not surprising considering the fact that nowadays, most of the students are quite familiar with Internet and Web 2.0 tools. One particular reference should be made concerning Q5. All the participants reported that they felt motivated while exploring Moodle, and since they earlier mentioned that blended learning was quite a novelty for them, that might explain this keen interest. Another reference should be made to Q6 which concerned the most helpful aspect in the course

design. Organisation of the course chapters was identified as very useful. It has to be noted that, when designing an online course, organization of the content is very critical. An online course can use attractive graphics, but if it is badly organized in the sense that it hasn't a logical progression, the learners would likely to find difficulties in identifying major sections from sub-sections, or to locate a particular assignment. The participants also identified the "online resources" as the most useful tool on Moodle followed by online tasks, and chat. However, the forum and wiki tools were indicated as the most difficult tools to use. In the online readiness questionnaire (Appendix I), the participants indicated that they were familiar with forums and wikis; therefore, during the training phase, they were provided with forum and wiki spaces for every chapter of the online course. Though the instructor explained to the participants what forums and wikis were for, it appears that they had more preference for the chat. Two explanations could be possible here. The first explanation is that the students preferred to use a tool (chat) they were familiar with, an assumption based on the fact that, nowadays, the majority of the students use social media that offer chat tools, and so they were not interested in using the asynchronous tool (forum) and the collaborative tool (wiki). The second explanation is that the students might have discovered that there was a difference between knowing about wiki and forum and actually being able to use them. The second part of the first section concerned the participants' interaction with their peers and instructor online. Regarding student-student interaction, the respondents stated that they were confident during online interaction with their peers. Somehow this is understandable thanks to the expansion of social media like Facebook that have gained much popularity particularly amongst the younger generation. The inclusion of a chat room in the online course was probably appealing since most of the participants mentioned in some chat sessions that

chatting was something they would never have imagined to use in an academic context, and that they highly liked it. The majority of the students also agreed that they developed a sense of collaboration through online discussions. In some chat sessions, the researcher observed that the students were attentive to the problems their peers had either concerning technical problems or comprehension difficulties. That was also beneficial for the instructor as it reduced some of the workload she had to undertake in online discussions. In the traditional classroom, collaboration can be fostered through pair and group tasks and discussions; yet, it is not always possible, first because of time management constraints, and second because of the number of students per class. Another reason could be the kind of relationships the students have with one another and which the teacher is not always aware of. In an online environment, collaboration can better work as certain constraints can be handled like time constraints and affective factors (for instance shyness). In the end, online collaboration with peers resulted in improving the participants' learning experience since they pointed out that they did not feel isolated and that they almost forgot they were evolving in a virtual environment. The learners positively evaluated their interaction with the instructor reporting it as highly beneficial through their responses to Q13. This was mainly due the teacher's actions online embodied in motivating the learners by keeping them engaged and participating in online discussions, providing feedback whenever it was necessary, responding to their questions both via synchronous and asynchronous tools, acting less as a controller and authority and more as a facilitator, peer, guide and motivator. Several participants acknowledged that they feel less anxious online and this thanks to the easiness of communicating with their instructor because they were able to relax and focus on the online work feeling no more the pressure they often felt in the face-to-face sessions. On the whole,

online communication contributed in enhancing the students' interaction with their classmates and their teacher.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on several issues concerning the blended writing course. First of all, the workload in this blended writing course was described by the majority of the participants as reasonable since online and classroom work were mostly complementary. Indeed, blending does not merely involve the learners to do tasks online or to access resources and then come to the classroom to practice writing. It is vital to ensure that both face-to-face and online work are related and that the learners feel a real connection between what takes place in the virtual environment and the 'physical' classroom. Second, the majority of the students also declared that the interaction with their teacher considerably increased, and in turn, it led to an increase of teacher feedback. This is due, on one hand, to the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools and online activities and on the other hand to the optimization of classroom time as it was explained in Chapter 6. However, the participants pointed out that the interaction with their peers somewhat increased. In the face-to-face sessions, the students had the freedom to undertake tasks according to their learning preferences, and since most of them previously mentioned that essay writing is an individual endeavour, working in groups was scarce. On Moodle, interaction was limited to chat sessions, and so the moderate degree of improvement felt by the students concerning the interaction with their classmates could be explained by the absence of collaborative work that could have been achieved through wikis and forums.

All the students who participated in this blended writing course felt an increase in their written productions compared to the traditional method (face-to-face only)

where all the learning usually takes place. In the case of the Department of Letters and English Language, the current time allocation for the module of writing is 04h30 per week, which appears quite enough to develop the skills that the students need to write academic essays. However, because the adoption of a process-oriented approach[6] to teach writing requires much more time and taking into account that it is an approach that is not suitable to all proficiency levels (Badger & White, 2000), it happens that the rate of the students' written productions may be insufficient. Thanks to the flipped classroom model that was adopted for this study, the instructor was able to make the students experience writing entire essays by going through the whole stages of the writing process where they used different planning techniques, like using diagrams, outlining, using revision and editing checklists thus making them reflect more on their own writing by taking it from the writers' perspective to the reader's perspective. Another benefit of using the flipped classroom for this study is that the majority of the respondents felt an enhancement in their command of the stages of the writing process as well as a noticeable improvement of the organisation of their ideas and the different parts of the essay. This may be particularly attributed to the enhancement of the participants' planning skills since planning was described the most problematic stage of the writing process in the students' attitudinal questionnaire (Q5). An emphasis on planning helped the participants to overcome their difficulties with writing the thesis and the outline which in turn helped them with the drafting and revision stages. In addition to that, the participants reported to the researcher that they had a better perspective of the process of writing which they came to view as recursive rather than linear.

[1]The process-oriented approach has become the prevailing approach of teaching writing at the Department of Letters and English though the product-oriented approach and the genre approach are used in combination.

Thanks to blended learning, all the participants also mentioned that they developed new skills that involved for instance the ability to be more critical about their writing, computer skills, and better abilities in interacting with the instructor in face-to-face sessions. Blended learning was investigated to have positive effects on students' critical thinking skills (Akyüz & Samsa, 2009) as it helps them to analyze, reflect on, and evaluate what they have learned and how they apply it. Blended learning can also develop and/or reinforce the students' existing computing skills. In addition to that, blended learning fosters the students' communicative skills.

A general satisfaction among the participants about the blended writing course was recorded, and several reasons were provided, the most important ones being it an effective method to develop writing, to enhance communication, and to increase learning opportunities. The results obtained from the quasi-experiment confirmed that indeed blended learning is an effective method for improving the students' writing skills at various levels thanks to the complementarity of the online work and the classroom work. Enhancing communication is also another benefit of blended learning. As it was explained earlier, the use of synchronous and asynchronous tools breaks the physical boundaries of the classroom taking it to a virtual environment, a world that our students who are the digital natives are more familiar with; hence, the 'connection' with the instructor and the peers is sustained but in a more relaxed and conducive atmosphere. Moreover, learning opportunities increase in a blended environment due to the combination of face-to-face and online learning in the sense that the students have increased chances of interacting with the instructor to get more feedback, experimenting learning through various means and adapting it to their learning styles, accessing a huge amount of open sources on the web, and saving time. Concerning the strong and weak points of this blended writing course, the majority of

the participants eventually identified the chat as the most effective aspect of the course. Indeed, the students were highly motivated when they started chat sessions and this in turn resulted in increased interest in online as well as classroom learning. However, they mentioned that the forum was the least effective aspect of the course, and that was probably due to their answers to Q8 where the wiki and the forum were classified as the most difficult tools used in the online course.

As it was already mentioned on p.328, Q30 (which was about the students' opinion about the effectiveness of Internet and mobile technologies in developing their writing skills) is related to Q18, Q23, and Q24 of the Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire. Q18 focused on the frequency of the students' use of Internet and mobile technologies to develop their writing skills which was recorded to be quite sporadic. Q23 and Q24 concerned the relationship between the teacher's effectiveness and the use of Internet and mobile technologies for teaching writing, and it was considered, with a rate of 56%, as unrelated since the teacher is regarded to play a critical role in the learning/teaching process and since technology is incompatible with the teaching of writing. After taking part in this blended writing course, the students positively evaluated it, and their answers to the questions of the present questionnaire yielded information that put into question the answers obtained to the abovementioned questions of the attitudinal questionnaire. Experimenting blended learning seems to have changed the learners' vision about many things concerning the development of their writing skills through the traditional method.

From Q32 to Q35, the students were asked to reflect on the effectiveness of blended learning and on its application for developing university students' writing skills. In Q32, all the participants agreed that blended learning is an effective method for developing the students' writing skills. The results of Q32 are quite logical if we

compare them to the results obtained for Q21 (increase of written production), Q22 (better command of the stages of the writing process), Q24 (development of new skills), Q26 and 27 (satisfaction with blended learning), and Q30 and 31 (effectiveness of Internet and mobile technologies in developing the students' writing skills). Q32 is also related to Q31 and Q32 of the attitudinal questionnaire and which were about the students' attitudes towards blended learning. In the attitudinal questionnaire, the majority of the respondents mentioned that blended learning would be effective in developing their writing skills mainly because it appears to be the most suitable method for a technology generation, and since Internet and mobile technologies play an important part in their daily lives, there is no reason for not officially integrating them in their academic life for it increases interest and motivation, saves time and gives access to more resources. The respondents also added that both traditional teaching and technology-based instruction are complementary, and this synergy would help them to better practice the stages of the writing process. In the evaluation questionnaire, the students provided comparable justifications for the effectiveness of blended learning. The participants identified better learning conditions, more learning opportunities, and motivation as the main reasons of the effectiveness of blended learning. Based on their experience, the students who participated in this study described blended learning as a method that helped them to experiment a new learning dimension where the physical classroom no more represented an obstacle to their learning styles, their learning preferences, and learning expectations. Being able to experience learning anytime anywhere freed the students from the constraints of the classroom providing them with more occasions to learn at their own pace and to adjust the learning process so they could share more ideas and explore the various resources provided by the web. This in turn increased their motivation and made them reflect on

their own capabilities for a long-term improvement. On the basis of these observations, all the participants recommended blended learning for developing the writing skills of university students for it makes the students more active and more receptive and meets most of their needs. It also helps the teacher efficiently take action within a context that offers more options and more freedom to address the various needs and learning styles of the students, which in turn yields palpable results reflected in the increase of students' motivation, engagement, and learning opportunities in the pursue of achieving the goal of becoming effective writers at the university.

The discussion of the results helped to identify some major aspects concerning this blended writing course. The first aspect concerns the online course. Good organization of the course chapters, variety of resources and online tasks, and the availability of the instructor through synchronous and asynchronous tools were reported by the participants to be the strongest points of the online course, whereas the wiki and the forum were considered as difficult tools and identified as the least effective aspect of the course. The second aspect is related to the students' and the teacher's online interaction. Online interaction was characterized by confidence, collaboration, and ease of communication with both the instructor and the peers; yet, student-teacher interaction was more significant than student-student interaction, the latter not resulting in much collaborative work. From the way the students described the teacher's action online, it appears that for them, the teacher played an important role and represented the 'touchstone' in the learning process. Another major aspect refers to the blended writing course which, on the whole, was evaluated as effective because of the reasonable workload, a noticeable increase of contact with the teacher in the classroom, an increase in feedback and in learning opportunities. Moreover, not

only the students felt an enhancement of their writing skills, but they also mentioned the development of other skills such as critical thinking. On the whole, despite some weaknesses, this blended writing course was satisfactory from the participants' point of view, and based on their personal experience, Internet and mobile technologies should be introduced in the teaching of writing and the best way to do so is through blended learning.

Conclusion

Throughout the analysis of this questionnaire, the students' evaluation of the blended writing course was rather positive despite some weaknesses. On the whole, the students reported an enhancement of their writing skills thanks to the combination of online and face-to-face sessions that enabled them to experiment learning in accordance with their learning styles, to get more teacher feedback, to access varied resources and to have more time to explore the process of writing. Thanks to blended learning, the learners also felt more motivated and less experienced writing anxiety. It can be concluded that the complementarity of the two modes of delivery (face-to-face and online) helped the students of the experimental group to have a better learning experience compared to the traditional method, and that blended learning appears to be the most suitable method to English as a Foreign Language second year students.

Chapter Eight: Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

Developing EFL learners' composition skills is an important task in higher education since it is regarded to be the most critical skill that ensures the students' academic survival. For several decades, starting from the 1960's until the present day, teaching composition has gone through numerous debates and controversies, and all of them brought more confusion than solutions for those who are mostly concerned with it – the learners and the instructors. With the rapid and spectacular development of information and communication technologies and web 2.0 in the last two decades, more questions arose concerning the teaching of composition, particularly in relation to the concept of digital natives and to the way they appear to learn in comparison to pre-web generations. Other questions, emanating from the limitations of web-based instruction that sought to take over traditional teaching by replacing face-to-face interaction with virtual learning environments, concern the legitimacy of information and communication technologies in education in general, and whether they actually have a positive impact on developing the learners' composition skills in particular. In response to these issues, blended learning has emerged to reconcile traditional teaching and web-based instruction by providing equilibrium between human intervention and technology inclusion. In this respect, some implications and some recommendations concerning the application of blended learning to develop EFL students' composition skills in higher education can be suggested.

8.1. Pedagogical Implications

The current study on the effectiveness of blended learning in improving EFL students' writing skills has yielded several implications concerning the students, the teachers, and ICTs.

8.1.1. The Students

Concerning the students, implementing a blended writing course requires that teachers take into account the learning styles of the learners and certain affective and psychological factors, provide more activities that encourage peer interaction, and understand the notion of "digital natives" in a more practical view.

- **Learning Styles and Preferences**

Since, nowadays, successful teaching is seen to be learner-centered, taking into consideration the students' learning styles and learning preferences is fundamental as they significantly impact the learners' proficiency level and motivation in learning to write. Many studies showed evidence that learners' learning styles positively or negatively affect their proficiency level as well as their motivation in learning the target language particularly the writing skill, and therefore, "teachers should add a learning-how-to-learn dimension to their teaching that encourages learners to develop an extensive and varied repertoire of techniques and approaches to their learning." (Wong & Nunan, 2011, p.153). Identifying the students' learning styles and learning preferences is a hard task, and trying to adapt the teaching of writing to all learning styles is incongruous. Yet, the question here is about creating a learning environment where the learners would be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in learning to write. To achieve that, instruction should be directed towards meeting the students' needs in terms of learning styles and learning preferences, and helping the learners use strategies that lead to better learning (Oxford, 1990). The current study partly showed that, in the context of the writing skill, blended learning can address various learning styles and learning preferences in the sense that it helps the students better cope with the learning process by adjusting learning to their learning styles through the

utilization of various resources as well as the flexibility that blended learning can offer them via the face-to-face and online modes of delivery to satisfy the students' learning preferences.

- **Affective /Psychological Factors**

Writing anxiety and motivation are psychological factors that have to be taken into account in order to foster the students' writing skills. This is undoubtedly putting much pressure onto the teachers who already have so much to achieve to make their learners become effective writers, but considering these factors as trivial might be a costly mistake. Writing anxiety "largely affects learners' writing performance in a negative way" (Blasco, 2016, p.11). It can affect the learners' perceptions about their own capacities and the way they undertake a task as well as develop in them a constant apprehension of teachers' evaluation of their writing skills. On the other hand, motivation, which is an important component of successful learning, also positively or negatively affects the students writing performances; for instance, students with a low level of motivation tend to poorly achieve in writing performances. Since both writing anxiety and motivation were investigated to be related to each other, and that they can affect each other (Alico, 2016), finding ways to alleviate writing anxiety by increasing and sustaining motivation should be taken into account, and that can be achieved through blended learning thanks, for example, to the variety of resources that are available online, the students' ability to adjust the learning environment to their learning styles, and the possibility to take advantages of the learning opportunities that blended learning increases due the combination of face-to-face and online modalities.

- **Peer Interaction**

Peer interaction is another aspect that can affect the students' writing skills in the sense that the teacher is not the only source of knowledge and feedback but also the peers. Peer interaction, which was less significant than teacher-student interaction in this study, is very important since it offers the students the possibility to interact with individuals who are evolving in the same sphere.

- **The Notion of "Digital Natives"**

In the literature review of the present work, Prensky's (2001) concept of digital natives (individuals who were born in an environment surrounded by digital technology and who are supposed to possess advanced computer literacy) was introduced. Since all the participants of the current study were born in the late 1990's (information obtained from the enrollment questionnaire), a period that was already characterized by a rapid growth of ICTs and web 2.0, one can assume that these students belong to the digital natives category. They were quite interested and exited at the expectation of experimenting technology in a way they would never have suspected. However, based on the researcher's experience with these so-called digital natives, it appeared that there was a serious discrepancy of computer skills among the participants of the quasi-experiment. Many students showed an inability to use certain web 2.0 tools without the help of the researcher, who had to provide tutorials, explications, and extra effort in helping these digital natives evolve in a virtual learning environment. Even the use of word processing was problematic to certain students, and this difference in computer skills proved that the digital immigrant, the researcher herself, was more effective than the so-called digital natives, the students.

Therefore, teachers should be cautious about this concept, and that "digital native" does not automatically imply "technology expert".

8.1.2. The Teacher's New Roles in Blended Learning

The main issue that emerged in this study and which is related to the instructor concerns the new roles that she/he has to assume. As it was explained in the previous chapters, blended learning is a learner-centered approach that focuses on the students' needs, individual differences, and which seeks to develop the learners' autonomy, motivation, and critical thinking from a general perspective. Therefore, adopting blended learning as an approach to teach writing implies that the teacher has to accept a change in her/his roles in instructing her/his students. In the quasi-experiment of this study, the researcher shifted her traditional roles mainly to facilitator, technology expert, coordinator, and collaborator. This experience was quite beneficial but which also had its share of complications notably the high demanding nature of blended learning in terms of computer literacy and managing skills.

8.1.3. Information and Communication Technologies, Web 2.0, and Composition

Part of this study tackled the impact of information and communication technologies and web 2.0 on the writing skills. The results of the quasi-experiment implicitly proved that ICTs and web 2.0 are tools that have a substantial impact on students' composition abilities as well as learning aptitudes. They also have a positive impact on the psychological/affective variable in the sense that they help reduce writing anxiety and increase motivation. Since this study used the LMS Moodle and various web 2.0 tools both synchronously and asynchronously, it appears that they are compatible with the context of writing.

8.1.3.1. Blended Learning as an Approach

Throughout the literature, a disagreement exists in whether to consider blended learning a method or an approach. At the conclusion of the present study, the researcher realized that blended learning is an approach rather than a method. The justification behind this is that it represents an intricate combination of theories and principles, and that it has come to give rise to various models, like the flipped classroom that was used in the quasi-experiment. Researching the subject matter was a complex task as it appears that the definition of the term "blended learning" is still evolving. In relation to composition, blended learning has several benefits in developing students' writing skills. It increases learning opportunities by optimizing face-to-face time and partly transferring the workload of the classroom online, and it helps the students adjust the blended environment to their learning abilities, learning styles and preferences. As an approach, blended learning appears to be the best approach for EFL writing, and to implement it, the flipped classroom model is the most appropriate method for teaching EFL writing to Arab speaking learners.

8.1.3.2. Writing-Reading Connection in a Blended Environment

A final implication concerning the results of this study is that, developing the students' writing skills can be connected in a way or another to other skills, particularly reading. The participants of this study were exposed to various reading materials both online and onsite such as reading e-mails, chat messages, directions provided for activities and tutorials, and sample essays. Many reported that the fact of investing some tasks on intensive and/or extensive reading greatly enhanced their command of certain writing skills such as writing the essay's thesis and topic sentences, using the appropriate transition markers to move from one idea to another,

using repetition of key-words to insure coherence, appropriately applying punctuation, particularly the comma and the semi-colon, and paragraphing. In addition to that, not only reading sample texts was beneficial, but also synchronous and asynchronous tools were helpful too as the learners had to read both the peers' and instructor's responses in chat sessions. The reason is that, since the use of academic English was one of the conditions stipulated in the online course charter, this obliged the students to make efforts to respect this rule, and as a result, reading academic English written by the peers and the teacher was beneficial. More importantly, when experiencing difficulties, the students had to read extra material from web pages, shared files and so on, which significantly impacted their writing.

8.2. Recommendations

Based on the pedagogical implications mentioned earlier, some guidelines recommendations are proposed for the teachers who would like to implement a blended writing course.

8.2.1. Informed Actions before Rethinking Pedagogy

Before thinking of implementing blended learning to teach writing, gauging the situation is necessary, and this involves surveying academic officials, teachers and students. Giving questionnaires to the students before starting instruction, as the one (the attitudinal questionnaire) used in this study, provide the instructor with valuable information about the learners and the learning situation. Designing a questionnaire for the teacher staff of writing and the faculty members will also offer additional information on how blended learning in the context of writing could be best implemented. This is an effective strategy "to test the waters" before undertaking any action. Another recommendation is that, for more assertion about the effectiveness of

blended learning in developing EFL learners' composition skills, a study on a large scale has to be undertaken, that is involving a larger sample of learners, and involving the teachers as well.

8.2.2. Guidelines in Implementing a Blended Writing Course for University Students

The following list of guidelines, though not exhaustive, could be very helpful in implementing a blended writing course at university:

−A pretest is recommended to measure the students' overall writing aptitudes, particularly to identify their weaknesses.

− Clearly defined learning objectives and/or learning outcomes is the key to successful instruction. For this purpose, a mind map can be a good tool since is provides the students with valuable information, for example, on the number of hours devoted for a given lesson and the type of assessment that will be used in the course.

− Choosing the right blending mode is crucial. In this study, the flipped classroom proved to be a suitable design for developing Algerian students' writing skills in a blended environment, and therefore, the researcher recommends this model. However, other models exist, and the teachers of writing have to adapt the selected model to their students' needs, computer skills, and learning capabilities.

− Emphasizing face-to-face sessions is vital as most of the important learning takes place there. Online sessions can never replace interaction with the teacher, an aspect that most students that participated in this study agree with.

− Varying the teaching materials and resources is one of the most important aspects in implementing a blended course, and this implies favouring quality over quantity. In

other terms, materials and resources should be carefully assessed before presenting them to the learners. They should be compatible with the students' level, cultural background, tastes (though the latter is not very critical), and should be motivating. One recommendation should be made about videos that could be used in the blended course, and which would be more interesting if they were made by the teachers of writing themselves so the students would feel more 'connected' with their instructors.

− A last guideline concerns the language lab which may solve certain inconveniences. The idea here is to devote one session of writing in the lab, for example, to show the where how to work in a virtual learning environment. In this study, if the researcher had access to a lab where she would have shown her students how to work with Moodle, many troubles would have been avoided and a lot of time could have been saved.

− Continuous assessment of the students is necessary even in a blended environment. Though it may represent more work for the instructor, keeping track of the students' progress along the course by creating e-portfolios for assessment could prove useful and time-effective.

8.2.3. The Instructor

Adopting a blended approach unquestionably requires knowledgeable teachers in ICTs and Web 2.0 applications as well as other computer skills. Therefore, organizing teacher training seminars in ICTs for education, for instance, how to design an online course on Moodle, would be a good initiative. At the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, each year, a training in ICTs is organised for newly recruited teachers. However, it would be beneficial if all the teachers, particularly those teaching writing, participated in that training. Having expert teachers in ICTs

not only would help them cope with the complexity of these tools but also will help them to be autonomous if technical problems occur. Another possibility is to create a cell or a team that will involve several teachers who, in the case of adopting a blended approach on large scale, will use the same online course, and so they will share the workload making their work manageable, and it will become even easier if a computing engineer is part of the team to handle the technical problems.

8.2.4. Cautions about Blended Learning

In the current study, blended learning proved to be an effective method to improve EFL students' composition skills. Despite its positive aspects that were discussed so far, blended learning should not be applied blindly. Therefore, cautions should be observed with regard to certain aspects. First, before envisaging the application of blended learning to teach writing, surveying students and teachers is advisable as not every student and every teacher may be ready to invest time and effort in a method that, one has to acknowledge, might create a certain 'upheaval' in the way writing is being learned and taught. This particularly concerns some students who still consider traditional teaching as the foremost way to learn what they are supposed to learn and who highly value the connection they have with their teachers in the classroom. Another caution that has to be observed is that, since blended learning is partly composed of technology-based instruction, an absence of appropriate and enough ICTs and web 2.0 technologies would greatly hinder its application. Therefore, insuring that these tools are available on a regular basis is paramount. Furthermore, testing blended learning on a long period of time in the context of writing should be undertaken to ascertain its effectiveness on the Algerian EFL students' composition skills. This requires the collaboration of the students, the teachers and the university officials. This way, combined efforts would likely to

provide a sharper perspective on how blended learning could be applied so that not only the learners but also the teachers would draw the maximum profit from what blended learning has to offer. Moreover, teachers have to teach their students the ethics of ICTs, and this mainly refers to plagiarism. At university, the students are supposed to become active members of the society, and learning to respect copyright and ownership of any material that exists on the web will even make them better learners and better writers. Finally, blended learning has gained over this decade a large popularity for its advantages in a world that is developing faster in terms of technology. It is a method that has proven its efficiency, and more and more universities and schools all over the world are drawn to the application of blended learning not only in writing but also in ELT in general. Yet, informed teachers should always bear in mind that effective learning/teaching is concerned with selecting what best fits their students which is a question of adapting not adopting.

Conclusion

Applying blended learning in higher education in the context of developing EFL learners' writing skills will significantly change the way these learners approach writing as well as their views about learning in general. Yet, the implementation of a blended writing course requires careful planning and solid foundations that require sound investigations.

The final word about blended learning is that though it is a recent approach one should not forget what traditional teaching has brought so far. Informed teachers have to take into account that what works for some does not necessarily work for others, and that adaptation is always the key to successful teaching. As teachers, we

have to remember the past and to take advantage of the present in order to build a better future for our students.

General Conclusion

Becoming a proficient and effective writer in higher education is a complex and tedious task for university learners particularly in an English as a Foreign Language context. Writing not only imposes cognitive constraints on the students but also linguistic, rhetorical, social and psychological. With the spread of information and communication technologies and the availability of web content, the twenty-first century students have access to a tremendous amount of information, and seem to be more attracted by the Internet and web 2.0 tools. Today's students are said to be technology savvy and more inclined to teaching methods that make them interact with technology. These students are called Digital Natives, Net Generation, or Millenials.

Many studies have shown the benefits of information and communication technologies in foreign language teaching, and many researchers are exhorting teachers to exploit their pedagogical potential for various contexts and purposes. With the inclusion of more and more information and communication technologies in the field of education, blended learning, the approach of combining face-to-face teaching and online instruction, has emerged. Blended learning was reported to positively impact English as a Foreign Language students' writing skills at the tertiary level, and that it appears to be the most suitable method for the Net Generation, individuals who were born and have grown up in an environment surrounded and saturated with technology.

The present study investigates the impact of blended learning on the composition skills of university students. For this study, 107 sophomore students from the Department of Letters and English, University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 are enrolled. The questionnaire and the quasi-experiment are used as means of

research. This study is based on two hypotheses: 1) English as a Foreign Language Second Year students are not satisfied with the traditional method of teaching writing at the Department of Letters and English Language at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1 because of their learning expectations, an incompatibility between their learning styles and the teaching method, and the absence of variety of teaching materials and writing tasks, 2) If English as a Foreign Language second year students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, were trained through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve. The last hypothesis involves three levels on which the effectiveness of blended learning was tested: the sentence level, the paragraph level, and the discourse level.

To test the first hypothesis, an attitudinal questionnaire is designed to determine the students' general satisfaction with the method used to teach writing at the department. The second hypothesis is tested through a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design that involved 32 students equally divided into an experimental group (N=16) and a control group (N=16). An evaluation questionnaire is administered to the experimental group as a complementary research instrument in order to gain more insights about the students' attitudes about blended learning based on their personal experience, and to identify the strong and weak points of the blended writing course. Based on the results of the attitudinal questionnaire, the first hypothesis which stipulates that English as a Foreign Language Second Year students are not satisfied with the traditional method of teaching writing at the Department of Letters and English Language at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine because of their learning expectations, an incompatibility between their learning styles and the teaching method, and the absence of variety of teaching materials and writing

tasks. Yet, the students express stated that they would like to learn to write in with a method that includes information and communication technologies since they are familiar with these tools and their potential.

The quasi-experiment confirmed the second hypothesis, that If English as a Foreign Language second year students at the Department of Letters and English at the University "Frères Mentouri", Constantine 1, were trained through blended learning, their composition skills would significantly improve. The results of the posttest showed that after the treatment, the experimental group who was instructed through blended learning outperformed the control group who was taught through the traditional face-to-face method. The results also showed that blended learning improved the writing skills of the experimental group at the sentence, paragraph, and discourse level.

The evaluation questionnaire indicated that the blended writing course was satisfactory in many aspects. The students reported content delivery, active learning, decrease of writing anxiety, and enhancement of student-teacher interaction to be the most important aspects that improved thanks to blended learning. The experimental group also recommended that blended learning has to become the new pedagogical policy of the department not only to teach writing but also other modules such as literature and linguistics.

Even though the present study provides positive results on the effectiveness of blended learning, it has two weaknesses: the small sample selected for the quasi-experiment which does not allow generalizations to the other English as a Foreign Language students and the absence of the written expression teachers' participation in this study who could have provided more useful insights on blended learning.

Therefore, more investigations should be carried out on a larger sample, and surveying teachers and academic officials would be beneficial.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Online Readiness Questionnaire

Appendix II: The Students' Attitudinal Questionnaire

Appendix III: The Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course Questionnaire

Appendix I

Online Readiness Questionnaire

Dear student,

The following is a questionnaire intended to gather information about requirements to enroll you in an online course which is part of a study about ICT in higher education. You will be asked to provide information that are vital to the effective conduct of this study. Please, fill in all the required fields, and make sure all information* are correct.

**** All the information that will be provided in this questionnaire will remain confidential. All personal information will not serve other purposes except for the one mentioned above.***

Questionnaire Designer:

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Please fill in the following table. All fields with an (*) are obligatory.

1. General Information	
***Family Name:**	
***First Name:**	
***Age:**	
***Address:**	
***E-mail:**	

Please fill in the following table. Tick (✓) the appropriate box, and make sure no box was left blank.

2. Questions to apply for an Online Course		
Tools	***Yes***	***No***
1. I have Internet at home.		
2. I am connected to the Internet with a reliable connection such as ADSL or cable modem.		
3. I have another means to connect to Internet (3G or 4G).		
4. I have my own computer.		
5. My computer is a laptop.		
6. My computer is a desk computer.		
7. I have a printer.		
8. I do not share my computer with other persons.		
Pre-requisites	***Yes***	***No***
1. I know what a browser is.		
2. I know how to surf on the Web.		
3. I know what a file extension is.		
4. I know what forums are and what they are for.		
5. I know what chat is and what it is for.		

6. I know what wikis are and what they are for.		
Skills	***Yes***	***No***
1. I know how to use forums and chats.		
2. I know how to download documents, videos, and podcasts from the Internet.		
3. I know how to upload documents, videos, audio files, and so on.		
4. I know how to save files on the hard drive of my computer.		
5. I know how to install/uninstall software on my computer.		
6. I can do tasks on my own without the help of a teacher or a classmate.		
7. I can follow a tutorial in the form of videos or instructions.		
Student's Engagement	***Yes***	***No***
1. I am willing to e-mail/have discussions with my classmates and with my teacher online.		
2. I am disposed to use e-mail, chat and forums to ask my classmates and my teacher questions.		
3. I am disposed to keep record of my assignments and written productions.		
4. I am disposed to watch videos for an assignment.		
5. I am willing to take a test/quiz online.		
6. I am disposed to take into account my teacher's feedback and recommendations.		
7. I am willing to do tasks with my classmates online.		

Appendix II

The Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire is intended to gather information about the students' perceptions and attitudes about the learning of writing, Internet and mobile technologies, and the potential role of the latter in enhancing the students' composition skills.

The information you will provide in this questionnaire is vital for the current study.

Please, tick ☑ the appropriate answer or provide explanations/comments whenever required.

We thank you in advance for your valuable answers and your precious collaboration.

Ms. DAKHMOUCHE Linda

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Section One: Learning Writing

1. At the university, you are learning to write: (you can tick more than one answer)

O a. to become skilled at academic writing

O b. to produce different types of texts (expository, cause and effect, and so on) and text genres (summaries, reports, research proposals, and so on)

O c. to express yourself better through writing

O d. because it is obligatory

O e. because it helps you improve the grades of other modules

O f. because it is critical to succeed

O h. Other: Please, specify:
……

2. Your teacher has explained to you what writing skills and sub-skills you are supposed to have developed by the end of the academic year.

O Yes

O No

3. What you have expected to learn/develop as writing skills during this academic year corresponds to what you are currently learning in the Written Expression classroom.

O Yes

O No

4. Which of the following aspects do you consider the most problematic in learning to write? (you can tick more than one answer)

O a. Finding the appropriate ideas

O b. Organization of ideas

O c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed

O d. Choosing the appropriate mode of essay development

O e. Parts of the essay (thesis, topic sentences, and so on)

O f. Vocabulary choice

O g. Grammar

O h. Mechanics (punctuation, spelling, paragraphing)

5. Which of the following stages of the writing process is the hardest for you? (you can tick more than one answer)

O a. Planning or Prewriting (gathering ideas, writing an outline, and so on)

O b. Drafting (linking ideas to make up paragraphs, using cohesive devices, and so on)

O c. Revising (checking for unity, coherence, examples/arguments, and so on)

O d. Editing (checking errors in mechanics, grammar, and so on)

6. How often do you practise writing (writing outlines and drafts, revising and editing drafts) in the classroom?

O a. Always

O b. Often

O c. Sometimes

O d. Rarely

O e. Never

7. Does your teacher engage you fully in the process of writing?

O Yes

O No

8. Which stage(s) of the writing process does your teacher emphasize mostly when engaging you in writing tasks?

O a. Planning

O b. Drafting

O c. Revising

O d. Editing

9. How often does your teacher give feedback on your written productions?

O a. Always

O b. Often

O c. Sometimes

O d. Rarely

O e. Never

10. What aspect(s) does your teacher focus mostly on when correcting your written productions? (you can tick more than one answer)

O a. Organization of ideas

O b. Mode of development

O c. Relevance of the ideas to the topic being developed

O d. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, type of introduction, transition signals, and so on)

O e. Grammar

O f. Word choice

O g. Mechanics

11. What kind of teaching materials (the *resources* a *teacher* uses to deliver instruction) **does your teacher of writing use in the classroom? (you can tick more than one answer)**

O a. Printed handouts

O b. Textbooks/Printed Texts

O c. Videos

O d. Audio

O e. PowerPoint presentations

O f. Other: Please, specify:

……..

Section Two: Learning Preferences, Learning Styles, and Motivation

12. In learning to write, you prefer: (tick only the options you feel concerned with)

O a. working individually in the classroom.

O b. working in a group or a pair in the classroom.

O c. understanding new concepts about writing through practice.

O d. learning new concepts at your own pace before coming to the classroom.

O e. doing writing tasks under the teacher's supervision rather than writing at home.

O f. spending more time on writing in addition to the 04 hours/week devoted the Written Expression class to develop your writing skills.

13. Do you like the topics suggested by your teacher?

O Yes

O No

14. If "No", please, explain why.

……
……

15. You easily learn from:

O a. things you see in the form of images, videos, charts, graphic organizers and so on.

O b. things you hear like lectures, discussions, and so on.

O c. things you read and write like taking notes during class or when reading a book, making lists, reading teachers' handouts, and so on .

O d. things you can feel, hold , or grasp like concrete simulations and experiences, videos and movies of *"real"* things, and so on.

16. During the sessions of the Written Expression module, you feel: (tick only the options you feel concerned with)

O a. engaged (curious, interested, and so on)

O b. bored

O c. motivated

O d. Other: Please, specify:
……

17. Your teacher of writing encourages you to:

O a. investigate a given topic through reading suggested/self-chosen materials.

O b. write outside the classroom.

O c. overcome problems you encounter during the process of writing .

O d. become autonomous in dealing with certain aspects like grammar and mechanics.

O e. None of these

Section Three: Use of Technology in Learning Writing

18. How often do you use Internet and mobile technologies for learning purposes in the context of developing your writing skills?

O a. Always

O b. Often

O c. Sometimes

O d. Rarely

O e. Never

19. Does your teacher allow you to use Internet and mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, and laptops) inside the classroom?

O Yes

O No

20. If "Yes", please, explain in what way and for what purpose(s)?

……
……

21. If "No", please, explain why.

……
……

22. Does your teacher of Written Expression use any technological means (powerpoint presentations, videos, and so on) in the classroom?

O Yes

O No

23. Do you think that an effective teacher of writing is the one who uses Internet and mobile technologies?

O Yes

O No

24. Please, explain why.

……
……

Section Four: Blended Learning

25. Are you satisfied with the current method used by your teacher to teach you writing?

O Yes

O No

26. If "No", please, explain why.

……
……

27. When doing homework, does it occur to you to need the help of your teacher to clarify concepts you have not understood in the classroom or to guide you through a task?

O Yes

O No

28. Do you think it would be helpful to keep in touch with your teacher of writing through online discussions and/or via e-mail particularly when needing feedback?

O Yes

O No

29. Please, explain why.

……

……

30. If given the opportunity, would you like to enroll in an online course of writing to learn concepts about essay writing at your own pace, then come to the classroom to practise all the stages of the writing process with your teacher?

O Yes

O No

31. If your teacher of writing combined the traditional way of teaching writing (presentation of theoretical concepts in the classroom and doing homework) with technology-based instruction (online lessons/activities, completing assignments and saving multiple drafts on the computer, online discussions, and so on), do you think it would be more effective to help you develop your writing skills?

O Yes

O No

32. Please, explain why.

……

……

Section Five: Further Suggestions

33. Please, add any further comment or suggestion.

……

……

Appendix III

The Students' Evaluation of the Blended Course Questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire is intended to evaluate the Blended Learning course you participated in. We would be grateful if you could provide us with your perceptions and opinions about your experience in this Blended Learning course.

Please tick ☑ the appropriate answer or provide explanations/comments whenever required.

We thank you in advance for your valuable answers and your precious collaboration.

Ms. DAKHMOUCHE Linda

Department of Letters and English

Faculty of Letters and Languages

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Section One: The Online Course

1. **The online course was easy to use.**

O Yes

ONo

2. **The online tasks/activities were interesting.**

O Yes

O No

3. The variety of online resources helped you to learn better.

O Yes

O No

4. You felt relaxed communicating through the chat and e-mail.

O Yes

O No

5. You felt motivated while exploring the online course on the university platform.

O Yes

O No

6. **The design of the online course was helpful in terms of:**

O a. Organisation of the chapters

O b. Use of graphics (pictures, charts, etc.).

O c. Other: Please, specify: ……..

7. Classify the following tools in the online course in terms of their usefulness to you (1 for the most useful; 7 for the least useful)

O a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)

O b. Online tasks and activities

O c. Forum

O d. Chat

O e. Quiz

O f. Wiki

O g. Online grammar, spelling, and punctuation checkers

8. Classify the following tools in the online course in terms of their difficulty of use (1 for the most difficult; 7 for the least difficult)

O a. Resources (websites, videos, and lesson files)

O b. Online tasks and activities

O c. Forums

O d. Chat

O e. Quiz

O f. Wikis

O g. Online grammar, spelling, and punctuation checkers

9. You felt confident interacting with your classmates online.

O Yes

O No

10. Online discussions helped you to develop a sense of collaboration with your classmates.

O Yes

O No

11. Online collaboration with your classmates improved your learning experience.

O Yes

O No

12. Online collaboration with your teacher was beneficial.

O Yes

O No

13. The teacher helped you to keep engaged and participating in online discussions.

O Yes

O No

14. The teacher provided feedback (online) that helped you identify your strengths and weaknesses.

O Yes

O No

15. Online communication helped you better interact with your classmates and your teacher.

O Yes

O No

Section Two: Blended Learning

16. How was the work load in this blended learning course?

O a. Too heavy

O b. Heavy

O c. Reasonable

O d. Light

O e. Too light

17. How would you describe the relationship between the online and face-to-face (inside the classroom) learning in this course?

O a. Online and classroom work enhanced each other.

O b. Online and classroom work were complementary.

O c. The connection between online and classroom work was not always obvious.

O d. There was little or no connection between online and classroom work.

18. In this blended learning course, your interaction with your teacher increased:

O a. A lot

O b. Somewhat

O c. No difference

O d. A little

O e. Not at all

19. Did you receive more feedback from your teacher?

O Yes

O No

20. In this blended learning course, your interaction with your classmates increased:

O a. A lot

O b. Somewhat

O c. No difference

O d. A little

O e. Not at all

21. Compared to the traditional method, do you feel your written production has increased through blended learning?

O Yes

O No

22. Do you feel you have a better command of the different stages of the process of writing (planning, drafting, revising, and editing)?

O Yes

O No

23. Classify the following items in terms of their degree of improvement through this blended learning course (use 1 for the most improved item and 6 for the least improved one)

O a. Parts of the essay (thesis statement, topic sentences, types of introduction, unity, coherence, and so on)

O b. Organisation of ideas

O c. Grammar

O d. Vocabulary use

O e. Mechanics

24. Do you feel you have developed new skills after completing this blended learning course?

O Yes

O No

25. If "Yes", could you please mention these skills?

……

……

26. Are you satisfied with this blended learning course?

O Yes

O No

27. Please, explain why.

……

……

28. What was the most effective aspect of this blended learning course?

……

……

29. What was the least effective aspect of this blended learning course?

……

……

30. After taking this blended learning course, do you think Internet and mobile technologies are effective tools in developing students' writing skills?

O Yes

O No

31. Please, explain why.

……

……

32. Do you think that blended learning (combination of traditional face-to-face sessions in the classroom with online learning) is an effective method to develop the students' writing skills?

O Yes

O No

33. Please, explain why.

……

……

34. Based on your personal experience, do you recommend this method for developing university students' writing skills?

O Yes

O No

35. Please, explain why.

……

……

Résumé

L’objectif de cette étude est d'examiner le degré de satisfaction des étudiants par rapport à la méthode actuelle d'enseignement de l’écrit dans un contexte algérien. Elle vise aussi à montrer l'efficacité de l'apprentissage mixte ou hybride dans le développement des compétences scripturales des étudiants en anglais comme langue étrangère. A cet effet, un échantillon d’étudiants de deuxième année licence dans le Département des Lettres et Langue Anglaise, Université des Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1, ont été sélectionnés pour cette étude. La collecte des données a été faite à travers deux questionnaires et une quasi-expérience. Le premier questionnaire a été conçu pour évaluer le degré de satisfaction globale des étudiants par rapport à la méthode actuelle d'enseignement. Nous avons opté pour une quasi-expérience impliquant une technique de pré-test et de post-test à laquelle 32 étudiants ont participé. Le deuxième questionnaire a été conçu comme un outil complémentaire à la quasi-expérience pour évaluer les attitudes des participants par rapport au cours hybride d'expression écrite. Les résultats du premier montrent que, dans l'ensemble, les étudiants sont satisfaits de la méthode utilisée par leurs enseignants. Néanmoins, les étudiants ont exprimé le désir d'expérimenter une méthode basée sur les technologies de l’information et de la communication comme, par exemple, l'apprentissage hybride. Les résultats de la quasi-expérience confirment l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'apprentissage mixte ou hybride est une approche efficace pour améliorer les compétences scripturales des étudiants universitaires. Les résultats du questionnaire d'évaluation, quant à eux, montrent que non seulement les étudiants sont satisfaits du cours hybride d'expression écrite, mais aussi qu’ils aimeraient que l'apprentissage hybride devienne la nouvelle approche de l'enseignement de l’expression écrite à l’université. La satisfaction des étudiants a été exprimée par

rapport aux points suivants : (1) le contenu du cours en ligne, (2) l'apprentissage actif, (3) la diminution de l'anxiété qui se manifeste pendant le processus de rédaction, et (4) l'amélioration des rapports étudiant-enseignant.

ملخص

يعد تطوير المهارات الإنشائية في سياق آكاديمي من أكبر التحديات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مناهجهم الدراسية. أدى تطور تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات إلى ظهور أساليب تعليمية مبتكرة مثل التعلم المدمج الذي يجمع بين التدريس المباشر والتدريس عبر الإنترنت. أثبتت العديد من الدراسات أن التعلم المدمج يمكن أن يعزز التعبير الكتابي ، ولكن ليس الكثير منه ينطوي على الجمع بين التدريس وجها لوجه مع دورة الكتابة التي تم تطويرها مع Moodle وهو نظام إدارة التعلم. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق من مدى رضا الطلاب عن الطريقة الحالية لتدريس التعبير الكتابي في سياق جزائري بالإضافة إلى التحقق من فعالية التعلم المدمج في تطوير المهارات الإنشائية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. لهذا الغرض ، شارك في هذه الدراسة 107 طالبا في السنة الثانية من قسم الآداب واللغة الانكليزية بجامعة الإخوة منتوري، قسنطينة 1. لجمع البيانات ،تم إستخدام إستبيانين و شبه تجربة. تم تصميم الاستبيان الأول لقياس مدى رضا الطلاب بشكل عام عن الطريقة الحالية لتدريس التعبير الكتابي في القسم. تم اختيار شبه تجربة تنطوي على تصميم ما بعد الاختبار التجريبي لمجموعة ما بعد الاختبار ، وشارك 32 طالبًا في التجربة شبه التجريبية. تم تصميم استبيان ثان كأداة تكميلية لشبه التجربة لتقييم مواقف المشاركين في حول التدريس المدمج للتعبير الكتابي. تظهر نتائج الاستبيان الأول أن الطلاب ، بشكل عام ، راضون عن الطريقة التي يستخدمها أساتذة مقياس التعبير الكتابي. ومع ذلك ، فقد أظهروا رغبتهم في تجربة أسلوب قائم على التكنولوجيا مثل التعلم المدمج. تؤكد نتائج شبه التجربة الفرضية التي تنص بأن التعلم المدمج هو نهج فعال لتعزيز المهارات الإنشائية للطلاب الجامعيين. تظهر نتائج استبيان التقييم أن الطلاب ليسوا فقط راضيين عن التعلم المدمج ، ولكنهم يريدون أيضًا أن يصبح التعلم المدمج أسلوبًا جديدًا للتدريس في الجامعة بصفة عامة.