

Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
Mentouri University, Constantine  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Languages

***The Students' Attitudes to Teachers'  
Feedback in Writing  
A Case Study of Second Year Students,  
University of Constantine***

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirement  
of the Magister degree in Linguistic Sciences and English  
Language Teaching.

By:

Miss SELMEN Salima

Supervised by:

Prof. ABDERRAHIM Farida

Board of Examiners:

Chairman: Dr MOUMENE Ahmed

Supervisor: Prof. ABDERRAHIM Farida

Member: Dr KESKES Said

Member: Dr DERRADJI Salah

MC University of Constantine

MC University of Constantine

MC University of Setif

MC University of Béjaïa

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## ***DEDICATION***

*To my mother and father for their patience and sacrifice*

*To my sisters and brother for their love and support*

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## **ABSTRACT**

New developments in educational psychology emphasize the central importance of the learners and their attitudes to learning. The learners' attitudes involve their beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations which may generate like or dislike and subsequently prompt them to adopt particular learning behaviours. It is argued that the learners' attitudes have an important influence on their motivation to learn, and therefore, on the effectiveness of their learning.

Due to the value of learners' attitudes in language learning, the present research is based on the hypothesis that Algerian students have a negative attitude towards teacher feedback on form in their writing. It aims, then, to identify the attitudes of second year students at the University of Constantine towards the teachers' feedback on their written production. These attitudes are expressed in terms of their reactions to teachers' error feedback, their preferences of the type of feedback they would like their teachers to provide them, and of the preferable ways of how their teachers should correct errors.

For this purpose, two basic research instruments were used. First, the questionnaires were handed in to students to investigate their attitudes with regard teachers' responding behaviour to their drafts. Second, the students' writing were analysed in order to provide data about how teachers respond to students' writings, and which aspect of writing they yield much importance to in their assessment. The results of the investigation have shown that the students hold favourable attitudes towards teachers' feedback.

The identification of students' attitudes can help to gain insight on the language learning process and suggest a teacher-learner collaboration approach to feedback. It helps to suggest some valuable guidelines and alternative feedback techniques for teachers to follow when responding to students' writing.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ESL/ EFL	English as Second Language or Foreign Language
L1	First Language
SL	Second Language
TL	Target Language
TLU	Target Language Use
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
IL	Interlanguage
UG	Universal Grammar
N	Number of Students
WE	Written Expression
H	High Importance
L	Low Importance
M	Medium Importance
NO	No Importance
%	Percentage

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## 1. Statement of the Problem

Error treatment is one of the key second / foreign language writing issues. In the process of correcting the students' written output, teachers have to decide about the aspect which needs more stress — form or content. This corresponds to two main trends underlying the issue of how to provide an effective evaluation of the learners' written production.

Researches on the evaluation system of the students' written production found that teachers are generally preoccupied with error correction, relying on the assumption that writing is primarily a means of consolidating and practising what has been learned. In this sense, failing to correct all errors, not only could mean a loss of credibility, but also could fossilize the erroneous structures which become difficult to eradicate at a later date. However, many research studies found that even detailed correction of form (grammar) is not really worth the teachers' time and effort; they stressed the purpose of writing to improve fluency in writing.

Researches in first and second / foreign language acquisition in the effect of form-based correction on learners' motivation found that learners dislike getting their written work back colored by red ink. They also argue that the learners will have no motivation to develop their skills in the areas of content and organization in their writings as the essay task is reduced to a means of achieving linguistic accuracy. In addition to that, recent thinking in the field of education recognizes the learners' role in the learning process. Due attention is given not only to the cognitive aspect of learning, but also to the affective aspect of learning wherein learners' preferences are taken into consideration in the decision-making process.

## 2. Aim of the Study

The present study aims to identify the attitudes of second year students of English with regard to the teachers' evaluation system of their written production (essays). This is based on the idea that when the learners are actively involved as decision-makers in the learning process, they show motivation to write. It is also based on the idea that teachers should take into account the learners' attitudes in order to develop an appropriate evaluation strategy to their students' written production.

## 3. Hypothesis

In promoting to assess students' attitudes towards the teacher's feedback in writing, we hypothesize that Algerian students have a negative attitude towards the form-based feedback provided by their teacher in writing.

## 4. Definition of 'Attitude'

'Attitude' has been defined as a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior (Backer, 1992). From an operational point of view, Child (1973: 253) defines it as a term 'generally reserved for an opinion which represents a person's overall inclination towards an object, idea or institution'. In practical terms, then, an 'attitude' is a construct derived from subjects' answers to a number of questions about an object.

As a concept, 'attitude' is subject to all the normal worries of the validity of the instrument used and of the honesty of the subjects' answers to the questions. Backer (ibid.) points out that 'attitude' do have its difficulties. First of all, the 'attitude' cannot be directly observed, but must be inferred from behavior which may not always be consistent or may be consciously or unconsciously designed to conceal 'attitude'. Secondly, the results can also be

affected by the researcher's pre-conceptions, the respondents' perceptions of the researcher and the purpose of the research, and the whole context in which the attitude test occurs. Another difficulty is that of 'the reactivity effect', when the measure causes a change in the subjects, 'subjects actually form or solidify attitudes that they did not have before filling out the questionnaire...the questionnaire becomes the catalyst for the very attitudes that are being studied'(Brown, 1988:35). Nevertheless, the questionnaire remains the most commonly used means to define the attitudes of learners and teachers.

## 5. Means of Research

The data are collected through an analysis of second year students' questionnaire and their essays. The questionnaire is given to the students to identify their attitudes towards the teacher's evaluation of their written production: form-based or content-based evaluation. The analysis of their essays aims to identify what aspect of writing the teachers emphasize when evaluating their students' essays.

## 6. Structure of the Study

Our study consists of five chapters. The first three chapters constitute the review of literature, while the last two chapters include the empirical part of the study.

Chapter One provides an overview of the teaching of writing through defining writing, and the development of the writing skill, and through reporting the current approaches that characterize the teaching of writing.

Chapter Two gives an in-depth discussion of the basic considerations in assessing language, and the general principles for evaluating test usefulness.

Chapter Three is of a great value to our study, as it provides a better understanding of the concept of feedback on students' written production, and the students' responses and attitudes to it.

Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis of data collection by means of a questionnaire addressed to students as well as an analysis of teachers' corrections of the students' essays.

Chapter Five gives guidelines and suggestions about how to respond to students' writings and how to design tasks for writing assessment in order to provide an effective and appropriate feedback to students' writings.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Teaching the Writing Skill

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## Introduction

The development in language teaching has contributed to an evolution of numerous approaches to teaching writing. The latter, similarly, have shared the changing role and status of writing within English language syllabuses and the English as second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) settings. It is beyond the scope of this work to explore all the issues related to ESL/EFL writing. However, this chapter attempts to discuss the basic principles underlying the teaching of writing. It starts with defining the writing system, comparing it with speaking, and distinguishing between to write in First (L1) and Second language (SL). Then, it discusses writing as a skill *per se* and in relation to other skills and the different stages learners have to go through to develop the writing skill, and examines the current approaches characterizing the teaching writing, including some possible writing activities.

### 1.1 The Writing Skill

In this section, we attempt to define the writing ability through two main distinctions. First, the distinction between speaking and writing which is useful to identify the textual qualities and factors governing writing. Second, the reference to L1 and SL writing which helps to stress the point that the writing needof SL learners are quite varied in terms of cognitive and communicative functions.

#### 1.1.1 The Writing System

For thousands of years, people had been talking before writing was invented. The writing system was developed in the Middle East around 3000 B.C., by the Sumerians and soon spread out to constitute an indispensable component of human society. As civilization becomes more complex and greater quantities of information have to be stored and transmitted, the written word becomes more and more indispensable than it already is.

Writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of an idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects. Nancy Arapoff (1967: 233) describes writing as ‘much more than an orthographic symbolization of speech. It is, most importantly, a purposeful selection and organization of experience’. According to her, “experience” includes all thoughts, facts, opinions, or ideas, whether acquired first hand through direct perceptions and/or actions or second hand through reading and hearsay.

The relationship between writing and the productive skills, particularly the speaking skill, has been subject to considerable discussion.

The relationship between writing and speaking is important for language testing, among other reasons, because of the question to what extent writing can be seen as a special case of L2 language use and to what extent writing represents a distinctly different ability from speaking drawing on the many of the same linguistic resources but also relying on distinctly different mental processes.

(Weigle, 2002:15)

Traditionally, most linguists hold the position that the sole reason for the existence of the written form is to present the language in its oral form. Written language has existence, but is simply a shadow cast by speech. ‘Writing is essentially a means of representing speech in another medium’ (Lyons, 1968: 38). If Lyons and others are right in thinking that writing is speech written down, both spoken and written forms of communication should then have essentially the same characteristics. Yet, it is instantly obvious that each has specific features distinguishing it from each other. A more recent position, thus, has emerged to stress the fact that:



Neither oral nor written language is inherently superior to the other, but oral and written texts vary across a number of dimensions including( but not limited to) textual features, socio cultural norms and patterns of use, and the cognitive processes involved in text production and comprehension.

(Weigle, 2002:15)

The following table 1.1 provides a summary of the differences between speaking and writing.

Features	Speech	Writing
Physical features	<p>-Speech is spoken sounds passing through the air.</p> <p>-Producing a spoken sentence means coordinating complex movements of the muscles of the mouth and lungs.</p> <p>-Understanding a spoken sentence starts by hearing sound waves with the air.</p>	<p>-Writing is visible signs on a flat surface.</p> <p>-Producing a written sentence means coordinating complex movements of the hand and fingers using a pen and keyboard.</p> <p>-Understanding a written sentence by seeing visual shapes with the eyes.</p>
Linguistic features	<p>-In speech, we are not much concerned with the precision in the expression. We can make a statement, repeat it, expand it, and refine it according to the reactions and interjections of our listeners,</p> <p>-Speech has a higher tolerance for repetition of a phrase or sentence than writing.</p>	<p>-Written statements should be constructed more carefully, concisely and coherently.</p> <p>-Repetition leads to redundancy.</p>
Cognitive features	<p>-Speech develops naturally and early in our L1.</p> <p>-Acquisition of speech is an ego-building activity</p>	<p>-Competence in writing develops much more slowly in L1. Writing is usually learned through formal instruction rather than through natural acquisition processes.</p> <p>-For many learners, learning to write is ego-destructive. In learning to write in L2, they often experience enormous frustrations</p>

<p>Psycho-logical features</p>	<p>-It is the first manifestation of language as well as the most frequently occurring medium. It is a social act. It elicits some form of interaction between individuals. Speech has a situational context.</p> <p>-Speech is linear. It cannot be retracted, but it can be amended.</p>	<p>-Largely a solitary act since communication is formed in isolation. Writing lacks a situational context and therefore requires a sustained act of imagination.</p> <p>-Writing is convergent. Writers assume the roles as readers. They presume that readers will share with them the same perceptions, views and expectations.</p>
<p>Socio-cultural features</p>	<p>-Speech may sometimes be in regional or other limited-context dialects.</p> <p>-In some languages, Chinese for example, the various spoken dialects may even be mutually incomprehensible.</p>	<p>-Writing normally uses a general acceptable standard variety of the language.</p> <p>-Written language is universally understood...</p>

**Table 1.1 Differences between Speech and Writing**

There are several cases where speech exhibits characteristics of writing (sermons, lectures, for example) and other many cases where writing resembles speech (for example, e-mail communication, informal notes, or screenplays). Speaking and writing, therefore, should be considered not as two separate skills, but rather two distinct modes that differ from each other in terms of textual features, and in terms of the factors that govern the uses of each modality. Yet, a combination of the two forms one's ability to use language.

In the context of the classroom, writing in a foreign language (FL) is perceived by learners to be their greatest difficulty. Differences in language structures, manner of expressing thoughts, writing styles and cultural factors affect the writing of SL/ FL learners (Benson and Heidish, 1995). In Silva's (1992) study, ESL/EFL learners were all aware of differences between writing L1 and in English; they had problems to cope with these differences, and to develop the level of English writing skill that is expected from them.

The best way to consider the complexities in the SL is to contrast it with L1 writing. L1 writing, in most cases, only happens as part of formal education. It involves learning a specialized version of a language already known to students, since it is built upon linguistic resources that students already possess (Weigle, 2002). This ability grows effectively as students' progress through compulsory education on higher education.

A great deal of emphasis, particularly at university level, is placed on originality of thought, the development of ideas and soundness of our writer's logic, while secondary importance is given to conventions of language (voice, tone, style, accuracy, mechanics).

(Weigle, *ibid*: 5)

Weigle (*op.cit.*) points out that the variety of backgrounds, experiences, needs; purposes for writing are much greater for SL learners than L1 learners. SL writing is determined by different factors, among which learner age, level of education in L1, learner's real-world needs for writing outside the classroom, and level of acquisition of the SL.

Although SL writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in many ways from L1 writing (Silva, 1993), L1 theories have had a significant influence on SL writing instruction and the development of a theory of SL writing.

### 1.1.2 Components of the Writing Skill:

To be able to write L1, learners have to master the different elements constituting the writing skill in which only some are strictly linguistic. Harris (1969) recognizes five general elements:

- Content, which involves the ideas expressed;
- Form, which refers to the organization of the content;
- Grammar, which refers to the use of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns;
- Style, which displays the use of structures and lexical items to give a particular tone to writing;
- and- Mechanics, which consists of the use of the graphic conventions of language.

Bell and Burnaby (1984; cited in Nunan, 1989: 36) explains that:

Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level, these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

The writing skill is complex and difficult to teach requiring a mastery of all these abilities, some of which are never fully achieved by many learners, even in their native language.

Furthermore, there is great evidence that learning how to express oneself in written English requires essentially a full practice in relation to other skills: listening, reading, and speaking altogether.

Only by hearing and reading a great deal of the language as it is spoken and written by native speakers can the foreigner acquire that feeling for the appropriate use of language forms and combinations which is basic to expressive writing.

(Rivers, 1968:244)

This implies that the best way to have learners learn to write is by practice in the whole competency involved to develop the writing skill. One needs, then, a continual integrative exercise of the four basic skills.

## 1.2 Approaches to Teaching Writing

A number of approaches have emerged to develop practice in writing skills. Applying one approach or another depends on what we want our learners to do: Whether we want them to focus more on the product of writing than its process, whether we want to encourage creative writing, either individually or cooperatively, and to whether we want them to use the computer as a useful writing tool.

### 1.2.1 The Product Approach

The Product Approach focuses on the production of well-produced composition. "...a product oriented approach, as the title indicates focuses on the end result of the learning process, what is that the learner is expected to be

able to do as a fluent and component user of the language” (Nunan, 1991: 86). The emphasis is to lead learners achieve pre-determined objectives; as White (1988: 5) puts it “... learners’ needs are carefully specified and the work of the materials designers and the teacher is to provide the means of enabling these needs to be realized”.

The most common activity required is copying and imitation, carrying out sentence expansions from cue words and developing sentences and paragraphs from models of various sorts. Learners study a model and attempt various types of exercises aimed towards relevant features of text: punctuation, spelling, vocabulary and rhetoric conventions. These exercises require the learners to check comprehension by completing sets and adding logical connectors following which, in a final exercise, learners produce parallel texts. In their grading, the teachers focus on the product, its clarity, originality and correctness.

Flowers and Hays (1977) analyzed thoroughly the Product Approach and noticed its three main aspects:

- learners are exposed to the formal descriptive categories of rhetoric (modes of arguments, definition, cause and effect, etc; modes of discourse, description, persuasion, etc);

- learners are offered good examples (usually professional ones) and bad examples (usually their own);

- learners are encouraged to absorb the features of socially approved style with emphasis on grammar and usage leaving the process of writing up to inspiration.

Such a means-to-an-end assumption has come to be questioned. Escholz (1980) and Walson (1982) claim it is too remote from learners’ own writing problems since learners are just duplicating someone else’s writing. Furthermore, Escholz (ibid.) points out that the product approach encourages

learners to use the same plan in a multitude of settings, applying the same form, regardless of content, thereby, inhibiting writers rather than empowering them or liberating them.

### 1.2.2 The Process Approach

The Process Writing represents a shift in emphasis in teaching writing from the final product itself to the different stages the writer goes through in order to create this product. According to Zamel (1982:196-9) “ writing involves much more than studying a particular grammar, analyzing and imitating rhetorical models, or outlining what it is one plans to say”. Writing, then, is an exploratory collaborative approach during which the finished product emerges after a series of drafts rather than a linear route to a pre-determined product.

The chief concern is to discover what writers do when they write. A number of researches have emerged. Probably, the most exhaustive is White and Arndt’s (1991), including six steps: generating ideas, focusing on, structuring, drafting, evaluating and reviewing. These stages generally involve different forms of brainstorming, selection and ordering ideas, planning, drafting, redrafting and revising. Instruction should aim to make students aware of the cognitive strategies involved in composing.

Common practice in the process approach includes free writing, writing extended narratives through cyclical process, and publishing student writing. Peyton and Station (1993) explains that in dialogue journals, learners are required to write about thoughts entries sharing experiences, ideas, and reactions as well as modeling correct usage. The development and pedagogical application of these cognitive models, though meant a decreasing concern with error in ESL/EFL, contribute to help students at different stages of the writing act. In the Process Approach, teachers can detect the source of



difficulty learners encounter at a particular phase and learners are made aware of the interaction that exists between them and the reader, which is important in conveying ideas clearly.

In the nineties, we witnessed a wide variety of writing research applying and criticizing both the product and process traditions such as Silva; 1990, Leki; 1995. These research studies and research projects have investigated central issues of form, the writer, the content, and the reader.

The Process Approach	The Product Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-emphasis on learning process.</li> <li>-focus on student experience.</li> <li>-regard for form and structure.</li> <li>-priority on student interactions</li> <li>-concern for immediate tasks, activities, brainstorming, genre analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-emphasis on finished products.</li> <li>-focus on objective outcomes.</li> <li>-regard for global meaning.</li> <li>-priority on formal course design.</li> <li>-concern for long-term objectives.</li> <li>-classroom writing, error analysis and stylistic focus are features of a product writing approach.</li> </ul>

**Table 1.2 Major Dichotomies in Writing Approaches**

(Adapted from Newfields, 1999)

### 1.2.3 The Genre Approach

The Genre Approach to teaching writing attempts to get learners aware of the different elements of writing: the topic, conventions, style of the genre and the context in which their writing will be read and by whom. The approach proposes deconstructing dominant genres, analyzing them from a linguistic point of view, reproducing them from an analysis of their structural and linguistic features, and generating their own texts that conform to the conventions of each genre.

‘In a genre approach to writing learners study texts in the genre they are going to be writing before they embark on their own writing’ (Harmer, 2001: 258 ). Learners might be given the task to write business letters of various kinds, or provided with a typical model of such letters before they start composing their own. Similarly, if the task is to write newspapers articles, the real examples are studied to find out how they are structured and which language can be used. The learners might then use this information to produce their own parallel texts.

Writing, then, is perceived as a form of production rather than as a creative act. In the first stage, learners might be asked to imitate to enforce adherence to strict genre rules. Later, at an advanced stage, they might be free to decide what to do with data they have collected.

### 1.2.4 The Creative Writing Approach

Creative writing allows learners to write starting from their own experience. Engaging in assignments such as writing poetry, stories and plays provide a strong motivation to learners. It is a journey of self-discovery, and self-discovery promotes learning. (Gaffield-Vile, 1998: 31). In addition to the teacher’ feedback, the whole class can also be a good practice. We can also include class magazines, or set up, if possible, websites for classes on the

internet. The purpose is to give a chance to learners to display their current abilities in making them use language in ways that suit their own needs.

The use of the computer contributes to develop writing the various reasons for using the computers have been identified by Harmer (op.cit: 261) as follows:

- ◆ A word-processing package removes the problem of poor handwriting that some suffer from.
- ◆ A word-processing package allows the competent users to edit their material at great speed and with great facility.
- ◆ Spell checkers can ease the task of achieving correct spelling.
- ◆ If students are working in groups, a computer screen can sometimes be more visible to the whole group than a piece of paper might be.
- ◆ A computer screen frequently allows students to see their writing more objectively. It also has the advantage of greatly inhering the participation of individuals when they are working in pairs or groups.

E-mail writing is another important use of the computer. The communication via E-mail is very immediate and a motivating activity for learners. It represents a genre of its own where linguistic accuracy is not so formally important. But despite this, it can still encourage students to 'sit back' and consider the results of their effort before clicking on the 'send icon'.

It is worthwhile to note that writing imaginatively may be frustrating and de-motivating for some students. This is why it is preferable to set up creative writing gradually, starting with phrases and sentences before expecting whole compositions.

### 1.3.5 The Cooperative Approach

A great benefit can be gained from writing as a cooperative activity. Students may find themselves producing a piece of writing which they might not have come up with on their own. Individual students may also find themselves saying and writing about topics they might not have come up with on their own, and the group's research is broader than an individual's.

A major advantage of this approach is to allow the teachers to give a more detailed and constructive feedback to group writing since they are dealing with a small number of groups rather than many individual students (Boughey, 1997). This kind of writing involves not only writing, but research, discussion and peer evaluation.

## 1.3 Teaching Writing

From the early 1980's, the focus of foreign language instruction has moved away from the mastery of discrete language skills such as grammar and vocabulary to the development of communicative proficiency; the ability to communicate about real world topics with native speakers of the target language (TL). This change, in fact, has developed in tandem with changes in how students FL skills are stressed.

### 1.3.1 The Role of Writing Skill in SLA/FLA Classroom

Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings. It can be challenging, whether the language in question is the native language or not. Gradually, it starts to be regarded as a major skill and an essential component in teaching curricula, typically for the following reasons:

- ◆ **Variety:** writing is one way of providing variety in the classroom procedures; it also makes possible individualized work in language classes.
- ◆ **Reinforcement:** this is arguably the most common reason why we teach writing. Writing is seen as a means of consolidating what has been learned, i.e., practising writing. The idea is that writing reinforces grammar and provides evidence of the learners' achievements.
- ◆ **Examination:** writing is viewed as a forum for more accurate use of the language and as a means of assessing knowledge of the language. Writing is a very convenient and often accurate mode of assessment. Most exams require students to answer in writing. Some require essay-type answer. Writing is certainly easier to assess objectively than students' speaking.
- ◆ **Reference:** writing is seen as a reference point and makes available a source for later reference.
- ◆ **Students' needs:** many of the students we teach have specific needs when it comes to writing. These needs are usually tied to specific text types such as academic essays, business letters, or reports.

In the context of ESL/EFL, learners are expected to learn:

- to use the graphic system of the FL according to the conventions of language, mainly spelling, punctuation, and capitalization;
- to use these conventions correctly;
- to control the structure of language to convey one's intended meaning comprehensively;
- to organize the written work according to the rhetorical conventions of the language, for instance unity and coherence;
- to select from among possible combinations of words and phrases those which will convey meaning in the most appropriate register.

For these purposes, the ability to write effectively is becoming increasingly important in the personal and professional lives, and instruction in writing is thus assuming an increasing role in both SL/FL language educations. Its multifarious pedagogical purposes range from reinforcement, training and imitation (generally in the early stages of instruction) to communication, fluency and learning (at intermediate and more advanced levels) (Raimes, 1983, 1987).

Through writing, we reinforce what has been presented in another mode, for instance, the reinforcement of grammatical structures through drills. This kind of writing encourages learners' interest on accuracy. Similarly, writing for training consists in presenting learners with linguistic patterns and rhetorical forms and giving them practice in using and manipulating—particularly through the use of transformations — the pattern that might be new to them. In this case, learners work on units of discourse longer than the sentence, within parameters strictly prescribed by the teacher or the textbook. In this way, writing provides the opportunity to explore the number of syntactic options available and relates them to meaning and register, but ignores the whole process of writing. Through writing for the purpose of imitation, learners are presented with a model of content or form as a stimulus for writing. The purpose relying on models of rhetoric and syntax is to familiarize learners with rhetorical forms specific to the target language (TL). Therefore, learners assume that their work conforms to the model and not to their ideas.

A more recent interest, writing for communication, focuses on the writer's purposes and the audience. Eventhough teachers postulate new audiences, the audience is most often fictitious. The teacher will read the final product and comment on it probably by correcting linguistic errors. Writing for fluency focuses on ideas and less on grammar and spelling. Learners are free to generate their content. They are urged to concentrate on ideas and not

to be concerned about accuracy; when they are satisfied enough with their content, they proceed to editing. On the contrary, writing for learning is rather comprehensive and cumulative. It cumulates all the previous principles and combines the three points of the communication triangle –writer, reader, and the text – and becomes interactive and communicative. This approach includes writing and interacting with peers, studying of rhetorical structures and editing of the written text while teachers act as coaches.

### 1.3.2. How to Develop the Writing Skill

To be able to write in the L2, learners have to follow a systematic training which represents five stages of development of the writing skill: copying, reproduction, recombination, guided writing, and composition.

Copying is a prerequisite step to start with for learning a language. Rivers and Temperley (1978) point out that learning a new script for a new language must be recognized as a special task where early formation of efficient motor habits is desirable and monitored practice is warranted. This stage allows learners to learn the conventions of the code, familiarizing them with the new script to be able to reorganize and copy down accurately and comprehensibly words and phrases they wish to remember. The copying activity should be based on the already known material either oral or read by the teacher. Items copied are generally examples of grammatical rules and items of vocabulary. In this way, learners can associate the sounds they read or speak with their corresponding symbols. Thereby, they imprint the graphic outlines more firmly in their minds.

After the writing habits have been firmly established, learners will start the reproduction stage where they reproduce what they have learned without referring back to the original. Dictation exercises are employed to check on difficulties learners have. At a further stage, learners will be asked to recall all what has been learned to answer questions or describe pictures. The purpose

is to discover whether the abilities to memorize, understand, and distinguish-aurally and write actually- are acquired.

The recombination stage is the stage where the learners are asked to reproduce the learned work with minor adaptations. Rivers (1968: 249) emphasizes that “at no point, however, will a student be required to make a recombination which involves a structural change and new vocabulary at the same time”. Learners are asked to use unsupervised recombinations only after a sufficient practice of learned work is properly done to ensure correctness. At this level, writing practice may take the form of practice structure drills of various kinds; substitution, transformations, and expansion. Such drills do not only allow students to produce accurate and correct sentences, but also consolidate what has been learned. As a step further students may be asked to make recombination, probably, in the form of variations of memorized dialogues, around a subject presented in a picture or a series of pictures, given that they have been already presented to the learners.

During the Guided writing stage, learners are given a model and some directions in rewriting the model. Some freedom is given to them to select, according to their level, the lexical and structural patterns required for the writing exercises. Learners may begin with exercises of completion, substitution, and expansion. At advanced courses, Rivers (ibid: 251) suggests that learners may summarize, or rewrite “with a variation in person, tense, or number”.

The composition stage is highly dependent on a careful and systematic training of learners through the different preceding stages. Heaton (1975: 127) describes this activity as:

A task which involves the students in manipulating words in grammatically correct sentence and in linking those sentences to a piece of continuous writing which successfully communicate the writer’s thoughts and ideas on a certain topic.

(Heaton: ibid.)



This phase, therefore, displays clearly the learners' knowledge of the linguistic aspect of language, and the ability to construct a piece of writing based on a deliberate choice of lexical and structural items.

This progression is either meant to work on different aspects of writing, in distinct exercises or to combine them in one complete, well written text. Whatever the writing task used is, it should reflect the ultimate goal of enabling students to write whole texts which form connected, contextualized and appropriate pieces of communication (Edge, 1988). Successful, writing, then, depends on more than producing clear and correct sentences; it concerns writing whole pieces of communication.

## Conclusion

Teaching writing is gaining a paramount importance in language instruction. It has probably been more subject to pendulum swing than any of the other language skills.

Teaching writing as a system of communication has taken hold in both SL and FL settings. Traditionally, writing was viewed primarily as a tool for the practice and reinforcement of grammatical and lexical patterns, a fairly one dimensional activity, in which accuracy was important. But, in recent years, writing has started to be conceptualized as a social, cultural, and cognitive phenomenon. Writing, then, is considered as a worthwhile enterprise in itself.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Testing Writing

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## Introduction

In any educational field, instruction and assessment are closely related. Those interested in the field often follow new standards of teaching to bring about changes in teaching objectives and approaches at the different instructional levels. As these objectives and approaches change, updated assessment practices are needed to reflect these changes.

In this chapter, the focus is first on issues related to the assessment of language in general: the current assessment practice in EFL classrooms giving an overall view of the different approaches characterizing language testing; second on the different types of tests to assess writing: the various methods for marking essay writing as being actually a major measurement of the writing skill, and finally on test characteristics.

### 2.1 Approaches to Language Testing

There is a significant change in emphasis which has marked language testing over the last decade. Accordingly, language tests have developed based on the current assumptions underlying language teaching. We can in fact recognize three approaches to language test design: the Discrete-point Approach, The Integrative Approach and the Communicative Approach.

#### 2.1.1 The Discrete-Point Approach

The Discrete-point Approach to language teaching tests the elements of language separately, with little or no attention to the way those elements interact in a longer context of communication.

This approach has long been a subject of heavy criticism. Weir (1990:2) suggests that such an approach is able to yield data which are easily quantifiable and to allow a wide coverage of items, but the problem lies in the

proficiency being quantified in this way. Both the Discrete- point Approach and the various formats employed in it suffer from the defects of the construct they seek to measure. In the absence of the crucial properties of language due to the breakdown of its elements, Oller (1979, cited in Weir, 1990: 2) says:

The fact is that in any system where the parts interact to produce properties and qualities that do not exist in the part separately...organizational constraints themselves became crucial properties of the system which simply cannot be found in the parts separately.

He argues that testing a candidate's linguistic competence as a sole component of a test is not sufficient, though, necessary. Much interest, then, should be given to the development and measurement of learners' ability.

In this respect, Morrow (1979, cited in Weir, *ibid*:3) states clearly: 'Knowledge of the elements of a language in fact counts for nothing unless the user is able to combine them in new and appropriate ways to meet the linguistic demands of the situation in which he wishes to use'.

### 2.1.2 The Integrative Approach

As a response to the deficiencies identified in the previous approach, the interest swings in favor of integrative tests which could measure the ability to integrate disparate language skills in ways which more closely approximates the actual process of language use. The Integrative Approach is based on the belief that language should come to be seen as less of well defined taxonomic structure and more of a dynamic, creative, functional system; and that learners' competence covers, not only knowledge of rules for forming grammatical sentences, but also rules for using these sentences

appropriately with different contexts. Oller (*op.cit*: 3) maintained that integrative tests, namely cloze and dictation, are not only practical and economical, but also indicators of aptitude and potential for communication, even if they do not test communication itself. He assumed that these integrative tests aim at general language proficiency.

Serious questions, however, have been raised as to the results and the formats of integrative tests. Although such tests measure different skills, as Oller (*op.cit.*) points out, which are highly correlated among individuals, this does not mean that there will be no individuals whose performances in various skills differ considerably. Correlated data, thus, do not provide evidence about standards. Despite the fact that global tests might integrate disparate language skills in ways which more closely approximate actual language use, they are nevertheless indirect. They pay insufficient importance to the productive and receptive processes of discourse arising out of the actual use of language in a social context. Morrow (*op.cit*:5) claims that neither cloze nor dictation allows test takers to produce spontaneous language and to operate in authentic settings. They tell nothing directly about learners's performance ability. These usage based tasks result in learners being taught specifically to handle indirect tasks. Kelly (1978) highlights further the point that some tests takers manage to succeed in the indirect talk a creation kind of training thus invalid the test. He notes that:

Analysis of student's responses to an indirect test will not provide any relevant information as the reasons for the student s difficulties in the authentic task, of which one assumes. The indirect test is valid and reliable measure. By their very nature, indirect tests can provide evidence for level of achievement, but cannot diagnose specific areas of difficulty in relation to the authentic task.

(Kelly, 1978, cited in Weir, 1990:5)

### 2.1.3 The Communicative Approach

The deficiencies of both the discrete-point approaches and the integrative approaches bring out an interest to investigate a more satisfactory approach: the Communicative Approach.

The shift towards communicative language testing in 1970's and 1980's has brought changes in the theory of practice of testing. The salient features of the communicative approach are a concern for function as well as structure, use and usage, purposive and realistic tasks, and sensitivity to context. Morrow (1979), Canale and Swain (1980) (both cited in Weir, 1990: 9) emphasize the very fact that communicative language testing is mainly concerned with what the learners know about the form of the language, how they use it appropriately in contexts of use; and that it deals with the extent to which the learners are actually able to demonstrate the knowledge in a meaningful communicative situation.

To design a communicative language test, we should first identify those skills and performance conditions that are the most important components of language use in particular contexts. Those features are incorporated in a test task which reflects the learners' ability to function in similar real life circumstances. Carroll (1989 cited in Weir, *ibid*) argues that the prime need of most learners is not a theoretical or analytical knowledge of TL, but an ability to understand and be understood in that language within the context and constraints of a particular TL using circumstance.

Another aspect to be taken into account, whenever designing a communicative language test, is to ensure that the tests are as representative as possible of real life tasks and language. This implies that these tests should accord with performance conditions of real life situations. Weir (*ibid*: 9) succinctly points out:

The performance tasks candidates are faced with in communicative tests should be presentative of the type of task they might encounter in their own real-life situation and should correspond to normal language use where an integration of communicative skills is required with little time to reflect on, or monitor language input and output.

(Weir, *op.cit.*)

Furthermore, communicative language tests involve realistic discourse processing. The more authentic the tasks, the more effective language perception, processing and acquisition are likely to be.

It is worth noting, however, that the tendency to develop tests within the communicative perspectives poses serious issues for language test designers, researchers and administrators: validity, (encompassing content construct, face, washback, and criterion-related questions) and the various aspects of test reliability (See.2.3.3)

## 2.2 Methods of Testing the Writing Skill

Techniques used to assess the writing skill vary according to whether they deal with separate components of language or with the integrated process of writing. In both cases, 'we set up a stimulus to obtain a controlled response containing the problems we wish to test' (Lado, 1961: 250).

### 2.2.1 The Indirect and the Direct Testing Method

**The Indirect testing method** consists in testing the discrete elements of language, mainly grammar, vocabulary and mechanics separately by the use of objective tests. The purpose of testing grammar is to measure the learners' ability to either organize or produce correct grammar and usage. Probably, the most common ways of testing grammatical knowledge is:

- the multiple choice items wherein test takers are asked to provide the right answers among many options,

- completion items wherein test takers are used to fill in blanks in sentences,
- transformation items wherein test takers are given a sentence and the first few words of another sentence to change the original one without altering the meaning.

Vocabulary knowledge is very important to develop the writing ability; this is why, it is useful to test learners's knowledge of how to surmise the meaning of unknown words from the context. We may use several tests of multiple choice items, definition, matching items, completion items, guessing meaning from the context. We agree on the very fact that mechanics tests, spelling, and punctuation tests, are necessary tests to measure learners' ability to write correctly and comprehensively in English. Spelling tests, mainly dictation which is regarded as an essential method of testing spelling, may also be used such as multiple choice items, and completion items where test takers are required to select the word which is incorrectly spelt. Punctuation tests consist of providing test takers with unpunctuated sentence(s) wherein the task is to punctuate it, and to use capital letters where appropriate. The indirect test items are often quick to design, easy to score, and produce greater scorer results. Their validity remains, however, questioned. There is no guarantee that a good achievement in one of these tests predicts a good achievement in an actual composition.

**The Direct Testing Method** is a more integrated method where learners' ability to produce a connected piece of writing is the chief skill being tested. Brumfit (1984, cited in Edge, 1989: 25) points out:

Students need opportunities to engage in writing as a holistic process of composition. This means that they need practice in writing whole piece of communication, not just controlled exercises in sentence structure, grammar, or bits and pieces of paragraph development. These activities have their place as students need to be accurate in their writing, but they are not sufficient in themselves.

(Brumfit, *op.cit.*)



He emphasizes the need for learners to practise communicative tasks to develop the writing skill. At the same time, he points out that the highly controlled exercises allow writing to be “solely as a semi-conscious operation with no construction of meaning...only of form” (Brumfit, *ibid*: 50). The Direct Method involves the use of various types of extended tasks that require a more subjective assessment. The most frequent used tests range from controlled to free writing tests. The former expect the learners to produce a sample of connected writing, relying on prior input which acts as stimuli which can be written, spoken or non verbal; for example a graph, a plan, or a drawing which the learners are asked to interpret in written form. Free writing, on the other hand, provides the test takers with opportunities to display their ability to organize language naturally, using their own words to communicate their ideas. The advantages claimed for this method lie in the realistic nature of the learners’ responses and the broader sampling of the problem which learners may have. Scoring objectively and providing adequate samples remain the major problem test designers encounter in setting integrated tests. The former issue is dealt with in-depth in the following section as it is related to the field of direct testing writing.

### 2.2.2 Analytic and Holistic Scoring

Scoring a composition requires primarily a precise basis. Test designers should decide in advance whether they will be allocated a credit to each of the various writing elements such as, content, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics or to the performance as a whole. The actual ratings of compositions may, therefore, follow either the analytic methods or the holistic ones.

“**Analytical marking** refers to the method whereby each separate criterion in the mark scheme is awarded a separate mark and the final mark is a composite of these individual estimates” (Weir, 1990: 63). The analytic method depends on a marking scheme which has been drawn carefully by tester(s). It consists in giving a specified number of points to each of the aspects of a composition, and the total of the aspect ratings will constitute the composition score. Depending on the purpose of the assessment, scripts might be rated on such features as content, organization, cohesion, register, vocabulary, grammar or mechanics. The relevant importance of these different aspects is shown in the importance testers attach to various components. This method not only produces more reliable scores but also allows scorers to consider aspects of learners’ written performance which might be ignored. Thus, the analytic method performs a certain diagnostic role in delineating learners’ strengths and weaknesses in writing SL compositions.

**The Holistic method** (also called the impression method) “entails one or more markers awarding a single mark (multiple marking) based on the total impression of the composition as a whole” (Heaton, 1975: 135). Each composition is allotted a general, overall score based on the performance of the whole class. According to Francis (1977, cited in Weir, *ibid.*), the holistic method consists of reading a sample of scripts, perhaps 10-25 per cent in order to set up a standard according to which each script will be graded. It is worth noting, however, that the major proof of the deficiency of the holistic method is the fact that it is subjected to influence of the testers because it is based on fallible judgment affected by factors such as fatigue, carelessness, and prejudice. Arguably, Francis (1977, *op.cit.*: 64) sustained that the piece of writing can be influenced by the prejudices and biases of the markers which may play a greater part in determining the mark than in the analytical scheme.

Although some researches have given evidence that the holistic method yields more reliable results when two or more markers are involved, the analytic system is more useful and more suited to the usual classroom situation. Hughes (1989: 97) in what follows suggests that choosing one scoring system or another depends, in fact, on the testing purpose and testing circumstances:

The choice between holistic and analytic scoring depends in part on the purpose of testing. If diagnostic information is required, then analytic scoring is essential. The choice also depends on the circumstances of scoring. If it is being carried out by a small, well-knit group at a single site, then holistic scoring, which is likely to be more economical in time, may be the most appropriate. But if scoring is being conducted by heterogeneous, possibly less appropriate well trained group, or in a number of different places...analytic scoring is probably called for.

## 2.3 Test Characteristics

Testing writing, for our particular interest is as difficult as teaching, for one major issue: the objectivity of tests. If we decide to test writing in a way that can be graded objectively, we have to do so in a way that does not necessarily reflect how learners write in real world contexts. If, on the other hand, we test writing in a way that would reflect how learners use writing in the target environment, it is necessary to develop a scale that allows the writers' work to be graded as objectively as possible.

### 2.3.1 Aims of Testing

It has long been argued that tests may be constructed primarily as devices to reinforce learning, or as a means of assessing the students' performance in language. In the first case, the test is geared to teaching and in the second case, teaching is geared to testing.

Davies (1977: 42) discusses four basic purposes of writing tests:

**Research:** Tests are seen as tools of research in education. Testing is indeed necessary to test hypotheses of learning or theories of language, methods of teaching or teaching materials;

**Progress:** Concern is to compare learners not only with another bit with an already determined standard. The idea is that we would want to know how our learners are getting on, and to have some idea of whether what has been taught has been learned.

**Guide to curriculum:** The aim is seen in terms of what wash-back effect tests have on teaching. The implications of test results and their meaning are employed as a critique of the syllabus and the teaching process as a whole.

**Representing terminal behavior:** Tests sample the situation, the items and the features which the learner should have grasped.

### 2.3.2 Categories of Tests

The four main reasons for testing writing give rise to four main categories of tests: proficiency, diagnostic, achievement, and aptitude tests.

**Proficiency tests** have no control over previous learning. They establish a common standard on the basis of typical syllabuses. They give a general picture of a learner knowledge and ability. They evaluate the present level of learners' proficiency and predict future attainments. They are frequently designed to allow test takers to be allocated to academic program excerpted from certain coursework, or to be selected for particular job, or to obtain some kind of certificate.

**Diagnostic tests** are used to measure the strengths and weaknesses of individual students. They are primarily used by teachers to expose learners' difficulties during a course and then prepare remedial works to meet their learners' needs.

**Achievement tests** are designed to measure the learners' language and skill progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following. They aim to test the degree to which learners have met specific instructional goals. In other words, test takers are only provided with test items that are familiar to them. They are typically used at the end of a period of learning, not only to reinforce the learning that has taken place, but also to help to decide on future programs where learners' unexpected failure occurs.

**Aptitude tests** are concerned with inherent aptitudes for language learning. Similar to proficiency tests, they tend to predict future language success, but they have no content to draw on.

It is worth noting that these four types of test use have been discriminated in two ways: in their connection with a known syllabus, and in relation to timescale. Though they differ in their initial function, they are not exclusive since the same test may be used for more than one purpose.

### 2.3.3 Test Usefulness

In designing a test, much consideration should be yielded to the use for which it is intended that is referred to by Bachman and Palmer (1996, cited in Weigle, 2002) as 'test usefulness'. They defined it in terms of six qualities: reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality.

Two aspects are taken into account to measure the reliability of a test. The first one concerns the consistency of scoring among different markers or within one marker on several occasions, what is commonly referred to as mark/re-mark reliability to distinguish it from test/re-test reliability. The other reflects the consistency of the scores, if the test is readministered to the same candidates after a short intervening of time. Reliability of tests in writing can be affected by several factors. Some are related to the writing task itself ( for example, the topic, the expected discourse, the mode of response, the number of discrete writing samples a candidate is asked to provide ), and others are

related to the scoring process (for example, the background and experience of the rating scale, and the training given to the raters) ( Weigle, *ibid*: 49)

Construct validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is intended to measure. It is “the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations that we make on the basis of test scores” (Bachman and al, 1996:21). It is important then to understand as precisely as possible what ability the test is attempting to measure, and to what extent the test is actually measuring that ability and not some other ability. In order to determine the construct validity of a test, Chappelle (1998, cited in, Weigle, *ibid*: 50) discusses it in terms of five features:

**-Content analysis:** It consists principally in judging to what extent the selection of the test tasks is adequate and representative of the larger universe of tasks of which the test is assumed to be a sample. Instructors, for example, may be asked to judge the extent to which a writing test contains a representative sample of the course.

**-Experimental item investigation:** This involves the identification of the factors that affect item difficulty and discrimination (Carroll, 1989). These factors are related to the test takers (i.e. their responses to the prompts), prompts, and the scoring procedures. For example, if the task is written in such a way that requires background knowledge that only some test takers possess, construct validity of the test will be diminished.

**-Empirical task analysis:** It allows gathering information about the strategies that the test takers use to fulfill a given test task, such as the use of think-aloud protocols to investigate the writing process. Subsequently, “these strategies are compared to the strategies that would be predicted based on theoretical definition of the construct” (Weigle, *op.cit*: 50-1).

**-Investigating relationship between test scores and other measures:** This is achieved by calculating correlations between the test of interest and another measure of performance, usually referred to as criterion-related validity evidence.

**-Experimental evidence of construct validity:** This aspect of validity can be collected by generating testing hypotheses about the relationship between the characteristics of the test taker and the testing situation, on the one hand, and the test performance, on the other hand. For example, if the test is intended to measure learners' achievement in writing following instruction, experimental evidence of construct validity could be gained from comparing test scores before and after instruction. Higher test scores after instruction provide an empirical evidence of construct validity.

It is worth noting that construct validity of a test is determined by the content and the purpose to which it is intended to measure. Additionally, Weigle (2002: 53) stresses three principles underlying the construct validity of a test as follows:

- The task must elicit the type of writing that we want to test;
- the scoring criteria must take into account those components of writing that are included in the definition of the construct;
- and -the readers must actually adhere to those criteria when scoring writing samples.

Bachman et al (1996: 51) define the authenticity of a test as 'the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language use (TLU) task.' In the context of a writing assessment, the authentic writing task must be representative of the type of writing that test takers will need in the world beyond the testing context. For example, in testing English for general purposes for EFL learners, we need writing tests that simulate the type of writing that these learners might be expected to accomplish, such as a written response to a job advertisement.

The primary purpose of language testing is to make inferences about language ability. Weigle (*op.cit.*) defines language ability in terms of interactions between language knowledge( for example, knowledge of the linguistic code), strategic competence, i.e., strategies for effectively managing cognitive and linguistic resources to complete a task, topical knowledge, and affective schemata, or how test takers respond emotionally to the tasks. A highly interactive writing task would involve the engagement of all these characteristics to give an idea of not only how much test takers know about the language, but also about how well they can use the language.

The “Impact” which is another important characteristic of test usefulness which needs much consideration refers to the effect that tests have on test takers, teachers, and on larger systems, from a particular educational system to the society at large. Increased attention has been recently given to the impact of testing tests on curricula and instruction frequently referred to as “washback”.Weigle (*op.cit.*) emphasizes the fact that the relationship between a test and subsequent changes in instructional practices is not straightforward. A beneficial washback depends on factors such as the importance of the test, the status of the language being tested. Additionally, changes in teachers’ practices may be influenced by other factors, including their personal beliefs, institutional requirements, prevailing social, political, and economic issues, as well as students’ expectations and the availability of appropriate instructional materials.

“A test may be a highly reliable and valid instrument but still beyond our means and facilities” (Harris, 1969:2). The above criteria are of little or no use if the test proves not to be practical. A test is only practical if the resources available for the test tasks meet or exceed the resources required to develop and / or administer the test. These resources are described in terms of human resources, material resources and time for designing tasks, administering tests, scoring and score reporting.



## Conclusion

The effectiveness of language tests, direct or indirect, depends on whether they are related to a set of teaching objectives, reliable in the evidence it provides and applicable to testing a particular situation. In particular, writing tests should reflect the uses that learners make of writing outside of the classroom and should include a variety of tasks to give learners opportunity to display their writing ability. Marking of a writing test, additionally, should be as objective as possible, which requires a marking scheme with clear descriptors.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Responding to Students' Writing

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## Introduction

Feedback to learners' written work is an essential aspect of any English language writing course. Its major goal is to make the students develop skills that help them improve their writing proficiency to the point where they are cognizant of what is expected of them as writers and are able to produce it with minimal errors and maximum clarity. The role of feedback is one that has been the focus of much research areas of inquiry, including the treatment of errors, in form and content, students' responses and attitudes to subsequent use of written feedback.

The inevitability of learners' errors raises a major concern to ES/EFL teachers: What kind of feedback should a teacher give? How? How often? Does it help students? Due to the importance and practicality of the topic, a considerable number of research studies and projects have been dealt with. This chapter will present a review of teachers' feedback on learners' written works which provide the background to our study.

### 3.1 Definition of Error

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature, a wide range of vocabulary is used to refer to the deviation from the language norm -the error.

Brown (1994: 205) offers a major distinction between 'mistake' and 'error'. He defines a mistake as being "a performance that is either a random guess or a slip, in that, it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly". Errors, on the other hand, are problems that a native speaker would not have. An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker reflecting the interlanguage (IL) (the language used by a student in the process of learning a SL. The interim grammar constructed by learners on their way to the target language) competence of the learner (Brown, *ibid.*).

Another interesting distinction between ‘errors’, ‘lapses’ and ‘mistakes’ is that of Corder(1973). According to him, ‘errors’ are not amenable to self-correction, but lapses are recognized as being those slips of the tongue, or pen, false starts, and confusion of structure or syntactic blends. Such lapses are generally referred to as ‘performance errors’ since they are not failings in competence (Allwright & Bailey, 1991:88). The last category is the mistake Corder calls the ‘inappropriate utterance’ in which there is a failure to match the language to the situation.

Edge (1989) also provides a useful clarification between ‘error’ and ‘slip’. He retains the term ‘error’ to refer to those items learners cannot self-correct, and the term ‘slip’ for those items learners can self-correct, offering the term ‘attempt’ for deviations in areas of language which have not yet been taught.

These distinctions are extremely valuable for the teacher in determining when and how to treat a deviation, although it is really problematic to identify the category of a deviation. Only the most thorough analysis based on detailed knowledge of the situation and the learner will allow us to distinguish one type of failing from another with any certainty (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982:139). Given this difficulty, and given that distinction is not important for the purpose of this study, we shall define error as being ‘any deviation from a selected norm of language performance, no matter what the characteristics of causes of deviation maybe’ (Dulay et al.:139).

## 3.2 Error Treatment

### 3.2.1 Definition of Error Treatment

The term error treatment also requires clarification. According to Chaudron (1988: 150), the term tends to be used to refer to ‘any teacher behavior following an error that minimally attempts to inform the learner of the fact of error’. But, the treatment may not be evident to the student in terms of the response it elicits; it may take a significant effort to elicit a revised

student response. Moreover, the term 'correction' implies a cure of error, since it modifies the learner's IL rule and so eliminates the error from further production.

Long (1996) suggests that the learners can be provided with two categories of feedback about the TL: 'Positive evidence' and 'negative evidence'. The former is defined as providing the learners with models of what is grammatical and acceptable in the TL, and the latter as providing the learners with direct and indirect information about what is unacceptable.

Schachter (1991) draws attention to the use of three main terms: 'corrective feedback', 'negative evidence' and 'negative feedback' in the fields of language teaching, language acquisition and cognitive psychology respectively; where they are very often used interchangeably. In addition to that, he argues that feedback can occur into two forms: 'explicit correction' (including, for example, grammatical explanation, overt error correction), and 'implicit correction' (including, but not limited to, confirmation checks, clarification requests, and so on).

In Lightbown & Spada's view (1999), corrective feedback is any indication to the learners that their use of TL is incorrect. It includes various responses which may be explicit or implicit. When a language learner says, 'He go to school everyday' for example, 'the explicit corrective feedback' can be, 'No, you should say goes, not go', whereas 'implicit feedback' may or may not include metalinguistic information, for example, 'Do not forget to make the verb agree with the subject' (Lightbown and Spada, *ibid*: 171-72).

In order to avoid any kind of confusion, we will use the terms discussed so far interchangeably to refer to teacher's reaction/response and to learners' errors in general.

### 3.2.2 Approaches to Error Treatment

The various underlying language learning assumptions have completely changed the attitudes regarding feedback practices in classrooms.

Audiolingualism, influenced by behavioural psychology, favored meticulous and detailed correction. It is based on the view that language learning was largely a matter of habit formation and that good habits are formed by giving correct responses, rather than by making mistakes (Richards & Rogers, 1986: 51). Negative evidence is to be avoided as far as possible since it functions as a punishment and may inhibit or discourage learning, while positive assessment is to be encouraged, since it provides reinforcement of correct responses and promotes learning. More recently, development in SLA. research and certain changes in priorities encouraged by communicative and humanistic approaches to language teaching have prompted teachers to interfere less.

Krashen's Monitor Theory (1985) brought influential ideas which have challenged the whole purpose of classroom instruction and error treatment. Krashen (*ibid.*) emphasizes unconscious acquisition over conscious learning. Correction does not contribute to real acquisition of the language, but only to the learner's conscious monitoring of speech and writing. Hence, the main activity of the teacher should be to provide comprehensive input from which the learner can acquire language, not to correct (*ibid.*). In addition to that, the conceptions of IL ( Selinker, 1972, 1992) and Richards' Error Analysis (1974) provide a great understanding of the various causes of error and tend to encourage a more tolerant and sensitive reaction to error. They have also come to stress the idea that errors are inevitable and a necessary part of language learning, correcting them is a way of bringing the learner's IL closer to the TL.

Through the emergence of the communicative methodologies to language teaching, emphasis tends to be on 'fluency' and the learner's ability to get a message across, placing relatively less priority on absolute 'accuracy'. This seems to be in tune with the belief that native speakers' are more interested in what SL speakers say than in how they say it (Ludwig, 1982:279). Ludwig reports high levels of native speakers' tolerance of errors, and finds that the large majority of errors under consideration have little effect on comprehensibility and certainly far less than teachers tend to imagine. Ludwig also argues that teachers tend to give more attention to those errors which most affect communication and intelligibility. These are not easy to identify, though the distinction between global errors (which affect overall sentence organisation and significantly hindering communication), and local errors (which affect simple elements in a sentence and affect communication) seems useful in this respect. Not all mistakes need to be corrected. Correction should be focused on mistakes that interfere with the main aim of language learning which is to receive and convey meaningful messages, not on inaccuracies (Mc Donough & Shaw, 1999).

The humanistic influence has particularly meant that the danger of discouraging learners through insensitive correction tends to be emphasized more, recognizing the key role that affective factors can play in language learning. The crucial function of feedback is to preserve and promote a positive self-image of the learner as a person and language learner. Assessment, therefore, should be positive or non-judgmental (Mc Donough *et al.*, *ibid.*).

### 3.3 Teachers' Feedback

Mc Donough *et al.* (*ibid.*) identify two main components of feedback: assessment and correction. Assessment consists in giving information on how well a learner has performed, while correction consists in giving information

on what is right or wrong on the different aspects of learner's performance. In the context of teaching in general, feedback refers to the information that is given to the learners about their performance. It is the input from a reader to the writer with the effects of providing information to the writer for revision (Keh, 1990: 294), or in clearer words, any procedure used to inform a learner where an instructional response is right or wrong.

### 3.3.1 The Role of Feedback in Language Learning

In this section, we will review the different assumptions underlying the main SLA views regarding feedback: the Nativist Model, The Input Hypothesis Model: The Noticing Hypothesis, The Hypothesis Testing Model, The Cognitive Skill Model, and The Interactionist Hypothesis Model.

The nativist view of language learning, advocated by Chomsky (1975:29), suggests that what makes the acquisition of language is Universal Grammar (UG), “the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements of properties of all human languages”. He argues that instruction, followed by negative evidence has little impact on forms with UG, since it will temporarily change only language behavior and not IL, and yet any change in IL grammar is the result of ‘positive evidence’ grammars (Carroll, 1996; Cook, 1991; Schwartz, 1983).

Krashen (1982, 1985) believes that SLA is the result of implicit processes operating together with reception of comprehensible input. Conscious learning can only act as a monitor that edits the output, after it has been initiated by the acquired system. It follows, then, that explicit input, whether in the form of negative evidence or in the form of explicit instruction, can only affect the learning rather than the acquisition of the TL. In short, according to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis and the nativists, negative evidence has little effect on SLA. Krashen's views have been challenged on the grounds



that comprehension is essential for language, that acquisition does not entail unconscious processes, and that noticing is indispensable for the acquisition process (Ellis, 1991, Gass, 1988, 1990, 1991; Gass and Varonis, 1994, Schmidt, 1990, 1994; Schmidt & Frota, 1986).

The Noticing Hypothesis holds that some degree of noticing must occur in order for input to become intake for SL learning, and it is corrective feedback that triggers learners' noticing of gaps between the target norms and their IL which leads to subsequent grammatical restructuring. This requirement of noticing is meant to apply equally to all aspects of language (Krashen: 1982:149). Language learners, however, are limited in what they are able to notice. The main determining factor is that of attention that controls access to conscious experience, thus, allowing the acquisition of new items to take place (Schmidt, 1994: 176). Gass (1988, 1990, and 1991) stands against the view that learners with their presentation of comprehensible input would convert it to intake and subsequently to corrective feedback in SLA output. She argues that noticing in the TL is available for intake into a language learner's existing system, unless it is consciously noticed (Gass, *ibid*: 136). Learners must notice the mismatch between the input and their own IL system, and corrective feedback, thus, functions as 'an attention getting advice'.

There is a further evidence of the role of corrective feedback in the Hypothesis Testing Model of acquisition wherein the learner is assumed to formulate a hypothesis about the I.L. and to test this hypothesis according to the target norm. This model yields crucial role to corrective feedback (Bley-Vroman, 1986: 89). Ohta (2001) considers the role of correction feedback further by emphasizing the point that if the correct form is provided, learners may have the chance to compare their own production with that of another.

Corrective feedback, on the other hand, that does not provide the correct form may force the learners to utilize their own resources in constructing a reformulation. Chaudron ( 1988 ) stresses the role of information available in feedback that allows the learners to confirm, disconfirm, and possibly modify the hypothetical transitional rules of their developing grammars, provided that learners are ready for and attentive to the information given in the feedback. Learners must make a comparison between their internal representation of a rule and the information about the rule in the input they encounter. The corrective feedback the learners receive allows them to abandon their wrong hypothesis, immediately formulating new ones (Schachter, 1991).

According to White (1988), positive evidence alone is insufficient for SL acquisition progress. She argues that there are situations which entail negative evidence. This leads to what is known as the Cognitive Skill Model that stresses the interaction between input, the cognitive system, and the learner's perceptual motor system. This model views the feedback value in its properties of informing, regulating, strengthening, sustaining, and error eliminating.

There is a growing belief that interaction between innate and environmental factors is necessary for language acquisition. This leads to Long's updated version of Interactionist Hypothesis (1996, 1998). Long (1996) proposes that environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated selective attention and the learner's developing SL processing capacity. These resources are brought most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation for learning. Negative feedback obtained during negotiation work or elsewhere may facilitate SL development, at least for vocabulary, morphology and language specific syntax and is essential for learning certain specifiable L1-SL contrasts (Long, *ibid*: 414). According to this model of acquisition, interaction that includes implicit corrective feedback facilitates SL development.

### 3.3.2 Teachers' Feedback to Learners' Errors in Writing

Responding to students' writing is probably the most challenging part of teaching writing in L1 setting. Writing teachers invest much time and energy examining students' writings. The way they respond, in fact, reveal the assumptions teachers hold about writing.

The attitude that teachers have towards writing strongly influence their own teaching practices, particularly their evaluation of student writing. Their beliefs...serve as filters that train their attention to qualities (or lack therefore) in student writing.

(Beach & Bridwell, 1984:31, cited in Zamel, 1985: 80)

In investigating teachers' comments on students' writings, Sommers (1982: 149) showed how teachers' comments indicate that they take students' attention away from their responses in writing a particular text and focus that attention on teachers' purpose in commenting. Researches have found that teachers view students' texts as final products to be judged and evaluated. They have been found to apply uniform, inflexible standards to their students' texts and to respond to accuracy to the extent to which these texts conform to or deviate from these standards (Moran, 1981, cited in Zamel, *ibid*: 81). Responding in this way gives the impression that teachers take into account the writer's intention and attend only to surface level features as mechanics, usage and style and reinforcing a limited notion of composing. Sommers (*op.cit.*) found that most of teachers' comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged from a text to another because, very often, they are vague, prescriptive responses that might not help students reshape their texts. He reports that teachers' comments address the text as a finished product to be edited, and marginal comments view text as still developing and evolving (Sommers, *op.cit.*). Mechanical errors might be pinpointed at the same time that students are being asked to elaborate upon an idea or make it more interesting. Such kind of mixed messages learners receive may be

confusing, for they have no way of knowing whether to focus on meaning-level changes suggested or the local problems pinpointed (Zamel, *op.cit.*). Teachers apply very different and even conflicting standards, based on different experiences, orientations, expectations, preconceptions, and biases. Freeman (1984: 82) found that teachers' expectations and assumptions about students' writing determine their responses to student writing.

It is worth noting that until 1980s, SL writing teachers relied heavily on L1 research to inform their classroom practices. Since it has become apparent that SL writing classrooms are categorically different from L1 classrooms, and that SL writing teachers need to focus on different factors, and address different considerations than their counterparts (Hyland, 1998), a large body of research has emerged. Zamel (*op.cit.*) notes that some studies such as Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Fathman & Walley, 1990; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986 have investigated the efficiency of certain correction strategies, while some others ( like Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992; Kepner, 1991 ) have explored the effects of certain feedback treatment. Nevertheless, they do not increase our understanding of what teachers actually do in response to their students' written texts.

Candelle et al. (1981) studied the effect of written feedback in SLA. They found that by making errors salient and responding to them in a positive way, learners benefited by being able to acquire the TL more quickly. Although the study argues that there is a correlation between the identification of students' errors and language acquisition, it gives no answer concerning the exact form that teacher's responses should take. Moreover, no distinction has been made between 'accuracy' and 'fluency', 'form' and 'content'.

The most widely employed procedure for responding to ES/EFL writing is error identification-the practice of searching for, and calling attention to error-Cumming (1983: 6) explains the fact as:

Error identification appears to be ingrained in the habitual practices of second language teachers who perhaps by reason of perceiving their role solely as instructor of the formal aspects of language restrict their activities to operation exclusively within the domain of formal training rather than of cognitive development.

(Cumming, *op.cit.*)

Additionally, through a think-aloud protocols' analysis of three teachers, Cumming (*ibid.*) finds that teachers differ markedly in their responses to learners' written texts, and their application of error identification techniques varies considerably. More interesting findings are reached by Zamel's study (*op.cit.*) that investigated fifteen ESL teachers' responses to students' writing. She found that ESL composition teachers make similar types of comments or even more concerned with language specific errors and very often these comments are confusing, arbitrary and inaccessible.

Fathman et al. (1990) compared the effectiveness of form-based feedback, and content-based feedback through a survey of SL learners. Their sample was drawn up from ESL college composition classes. They found that both grammar and content feedback, whether given separately or together, resulted in improved writing on revisions. They found that identifying the location of errors was an effective means of helping students to correct errors in form.

The preoccupation with language accuracy continues to persist as a major trait of ESL/EFL teachers despite the recent influence of process-oriented research. Robb et al. (1986) refer to Applebee (1981) who found that 80% of FL teachers ranked mechanical errors as the most important criterion for responding to students' writing. Lau (1990) reports similar results: most ESL teachers responding to written work of high school students focused on form and paid little attention to content.

Several studies have found that students who received content-based feedback improved in various aspects of writing, particularly fluency (Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992; Kepner, 1991). Semke (ibid.) investigated four groups of students which received different types of feedback respectively: content-based, form-based feedback, both form and content-based feedback and feedback which pointed out errors but not corrected them. No significant difference was found in accuracy; however, group one –which received only content-feedback– did significantly better on fluency. Similar results were reported by Sheppard (1992) whose study consisted of the two groups, one receiving both written and oral grammatical correction, the other receiving content-based feedback. Sheppard found no significant difference between two groups in accuracy. Again, Kepner (ibid.) found no significant difference in the accurate use of structures between groups receiving feedback on grammar and content. In fact, many earlier researchers like, Searle and Dillon, 1980; Lamberg, 1980; Robb et al., 1986 had reached similar results that feedback on form is not really worth the teachers' time and effort.

Some researchers go further in their condemnation of corrective feedback. Truscott (1996) not only does argue against the efficacy of grammatical feedback, but he also argues that correction of form has a negative effect on students' perceptions of writing and that it leads them to simplify their writing to avoid being corrected, thereby reducing their opportunities to practise writing and to experiment with new forms. Edge (1989: 16) puts it clearly,

If the teacher wants correction above all things and never mind what ideas the students express, then that teacher will get attempts at accuracy: no mistakes and no learning steps. Teachers would eventually have learners who develop a version of English which is correct but meagre, not sufficiently robust to stand up to the demand places on it outside the classroom.

Harmer (2001) has identified three devices used to handle students' written work helping them improve their writing: responding, coding, and focusing. Responding or giving feedback on learner's written work is to show how successful it is or how it could be improved. The comments, written very often in the margin of the written work, help learners be aware of their progress in writing. A more constructive way of responding to students' writing consists in giving alternative ways of writing through reformulation, keeping the learner's intention but avoiding any of language constructive problems the learner made. The coding technique consists in using a number of different codes (either in the body of writing or in a corresponding margin) to refer to the different aspects of language, such as word order, spelling and verb tense. Each mistake is marked by a code to show what the problem is as in the following examples:

- S (Incorrect Spelling), for example, I recieved your letter.
- T (Wrong Tense), for example, If I will come, it will be too late.
- [ ]( Something is not necessary), for example., It was too [much] difficult.

This type of responses, Harmer (*op.cit.*) ads, makes correction neater, less threatening, and considerably more helpful than random marks and comments. Coding the responses, however, leads to the issue of overt correction. The latter, though helps to draw students' attention to their different language problems, are very often fatiguing for teachers and annoying for learners. Instead, focusing help learners concentrate on one particular feature of language, once on spelling, for instance, once on coherence giving priority to the features of language appropriate to their level.

### 3.3.3 Learners' Attitudes to Teacher Feedback

For the effectiveness of learning and teaching, recent development in language teaching has put a great emphasis on learners' needs. As Savignon (1997: 230) asserts,

If all the variables in L2 acquisition could be identified and the many intricate patterns of interaction between learner and learning context described, ultimate success in learning to use a second language most likely would be seen to depend on the attitude of the learner.

Most studies look at learners' attitudes and beliefs about language learning in general; few focus on learners' attitudes about instructional practices. Yet, as Horwitz (1988) suggests, classroom practices that contradict learners' expectations about learning may disappoint them and thus affect their desired leaning attainment. This mismatch in expectations between learners and teachers might decrease students' motivation to learn a language. Both teachers' and learners' awareness of each other' needs and resourses has to be raised, and compromises have to be reached between what learners expect and what teachers feel they can and ought to provide (Brindly, 1989).

Perhaps the most important issue to consider when examining the teachers' feedback to their students' writings is how the students perceive it in terms of its value and the kind of feedback they would like to get. Survey reports in SL have indicated that students both attend to and appreciate their teachers' pointing out of grammar problems (Leki, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Carthcart, Judy & Olsen, 1976). Leki' s research (1991.) on SL students' preferences regarding feedback showed that having error free work was a major concern for ESL students at the university who wished to have their errors corrected by their teachers. An interview conducted with ESL students by Hedgcock et al. (1994.) revealed that they did value form-



focused feedback and expected to improve their writing more than when their teachers highlighted their grammatical errors. Similar results have been reached by Carthcart et al. (1976.) via a questionnaire given to adult learners. Chaudron (1988) notes that though the effect of pointing errors seems extremely difficult to view, most students expect and want their teachers to help them to correct their own errors so that recurrence is reduced.

Other research studies revealed different results. Findly, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1996) found that students favored some kind of feedback pertaining to the content of their writings, while Ferris (1995) found that students were interested in receiving comments on both grammar and content. Hedgock et al. (ibid) found that at college level, ESL students were generally more interested in feedback related to content, while L1 students paid more attention to form. Another important finding is that students in process-oriented classroom have different preferences to students in product-oriented classroom. They found that students in multiple draft-classroom paid closer attention to teacher feedback than those in one-draft classroom. Ferris' explanation is that students in the multiple-draft classroom must rethink and revise what has been previously written; they are more likely to pay close attention to the teachers' comments on how to do so than in a one-draft classroom wherein they are merely receiving a graded paper with comments and corrections in order to apply to a completely new assignment.

Important findings have been revealed from Findly, Cohen & Cavalcanti study (1990) when examining the reactions of three EFL university students: a lower performer, an intermediate and higher performer to their teacher feedback. The study found that the lower performer not only showed a great difficulty in understanding how to handle the feedback she received on an assignment, but also felt that a greater emphasis on content, especially in areas of creativity, would be helpful when receiving teacher feedback.

In tune with these findings, Radecki & Swales' (1988) results support the claim that more lower level students prefer a greater emphasis on content rather than higher level students. The preference of lower level student for feedback focusing on content may be the result of the amount of effort they must experiment on writing English grammatically. Perhaps, they are so focused on getting the form correct that their ability to write creatively and organize their work suffers and therefore they rely on their teachers for assistance in these areas.

The researches presented so far conclude that students do value the feedback they receive from their teachers, but they hold various attitudes towards the kind of feedback they would like to get. Variance in individual attitudes is influenced by the milieu (ESL/EFL) and the theory of instruction (one-draft/ process), as well as the students' acquisition level and ability to assimilate the corrective feedback.

## Conclusion

The importance of feedback on learners' writings is due to the changing attitudes towards errors and feedback from the behaviorist theory where learners' errors are to be pounced on before they became nasty habits to a more tolerant reaction to errors within the framework of communicative teaching.

Teachers and researchers are aware of the challenges and complexities involved in providing feedback on students' errors in writing. Yet, the main point is that for a large number of them, the immediate concern in the classroom is not so much to correct or not to correct, but rather what and how to correct. Researchers have condemned form-based feedback as being inconsistent, unhelpful and as overgeneralizing the negative aspect. Likewise, many faults have been attributed to content-based feedback, in the form of comments, which are very often vague, unsystematic and inconsistent.

It is argued that teachers must avoid the adoption of a dogmatic approach that does not allow flexibility in accordance with changing students' needs. One way of doing so is to determine students' attitudes or preferences to ensure that any feedback provided is comprehensible and useful, an ultimate aim this research seeks.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Students' Attitudes to Teacher's Responses to their Writing

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## Introduction

The aim of this research study is to assess the students' attitudes towards teachers' responses to their written production. For this purpose, a learner's questionnaire is administered in addition to an analysis of the teachers' corrections on the students' written work.

We have opted for a questionnaire as acknowledged the most important source of information for research in order to obtain a quantitative and qualitative data. There are many advantages to using questionnaires: (a) you can collect a large amount of data in a fairly short time ( Brown, 1988:3), (b) they are easier and less expensive than other forms of data collection (Selinger & A. shohamy, 1989: 172), (c) questionnaires can be used to research almost any aspect of teaching and learning( Nunan, 1989:62), and (d) they can be easily used in field settings such as classrooms (Nunan, 1992:142).

The results of the questionnaire and the students' written work are compared to see whether there is a match between what students prefer and what teachers do when correcting students' writings.

### 4.1 The Sample

The simple random sampling was followed to select the sample to conduct the research. Through this technique, 'each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected. The method involves selecting at random from a list of a population the required number of subjects for the sample' (Cohen & Manion, 1980: 101). The larger the population is the more reliable the results would be.

The total population of the study consists of 505 students (87 males and 418 females) enrolled as second year students of English and assigned to a total of 11 groups. The size of the sample used was of a total of 160 students.

It constitutes more than the fifth of the population which is largely representative of the whole population.

## 4.2 The Learners' Questionnaire

### 4.2.1 Description of Learners' Questionnaire

The designing of the questionnaire was guided by the principle of combining theoretical input suggested in the literature. A thirty-one item questionnaire was developed to explore the different aspects the research intended to investigate. The questionnaire includes closed questions and open-ended questions. Through the closed questions the respondents had to tick one or more options. The open-ended questions aimed to identify students' reasons for preferring an option rather than the others. It is worth noting that some questions required the students to complete them by using numbers from 1 to 5 following a scale of decreasing order of priority or difficulty. The thirty-one items are categorized into four interrelated sections.

#### **Section One: Learners' Background in Writing** (From Q1 to Q7)

This section allows us to get general information about the informants' background in writing. Their interest in the writing skill and other skills (Q1); their level in writing(Q2); how much they practice writing outside university and if yes, what type of writing ( Q3& Q4); whether they like writing individually, in pairs, in small groups or in large groups (Q5); and their weaknesses in writing (Q6 &Q7).

## **Section Two: Teacher's Feedback to Errors in Writing** (From to Q8 to Q18)

This section is aimed to examine whether the teachers of Written Expression (WE) responds to their students' written production in terms of the type of feedback and the importance s/he gives to different aspects of writing (Q8, Q9 & Q10); and then, whether the teachers of other modules correct the students' errors in writing, what type of feedback they provide and, to which component of writing they yield much importance (Q11, Q12 & Q13). Finally, the responding behaviors of the teacher of WE and the teachers of other modules are compared in terms of the type of the pen used, the techniques followed and the type of correction allocated by the teachers in assessing their students' writings (From Q14 to Q18).

## **Section Three: Learners' Attitudes to Teacher Feedback** (From Q19 to Q30)

This section is intended to assess learners' attitudes to teacher's responding behavior to their papers. These attitudes include:

- their reactions to teachers' corrections: whether they read them, and if yes, what kind of corrections they focus on ( Q19 & Q20);
  - their preferences for the type of errors they would like their teachers to correct ( Q21& Q22); whether they want their teachers to correct their written production and if yes to what extent( Q23 & Q24 );
  - their preferences for the color of the pen used, and the ways their teachers indicate their errors (Q 25 & Q26);
  - their preferences for the way they think would help them to understand what they did wrong (Q27 & Q28);
- and – whether they would like to answer such a questionnaire before they start the WE course, and why ( Q29 & Q 30).

#### **Section Four: Further Suggestions**

In this section, a space is allocated for any comment the students would like to add (Q 31).

Prior to completing the questionnaires, to prompt the students to give frank answers, they were explained that there were no right or wrong answers, and that their responses would not affect their assessment in writing classes.

#### 4.2.2 Results of the Questionnaire

##### **Section One: Learners' Background in Writing:**

##### **Question 01**

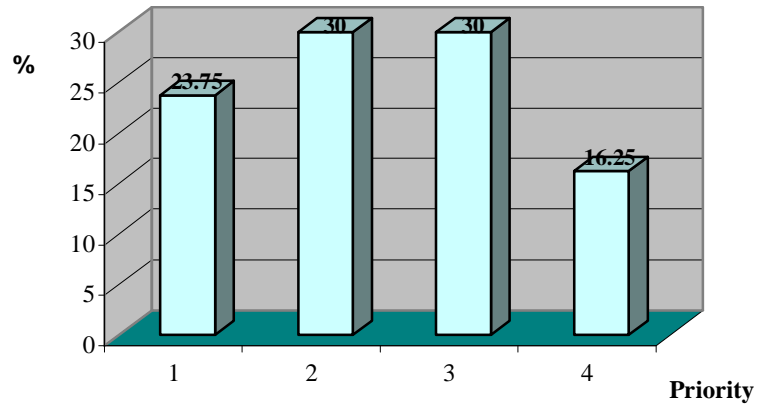
Which skill would you like to master most? (Put 1,2,3,4 next to each one).

- a. Listening.
- b. Speaking.
- c. Reading.
- d. Writing.

Priority	N(Number)	%(Percentage)
1	38	23.75
2	48	30
3	48	30
4	26	16.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.1a: Priority Given to Listening**

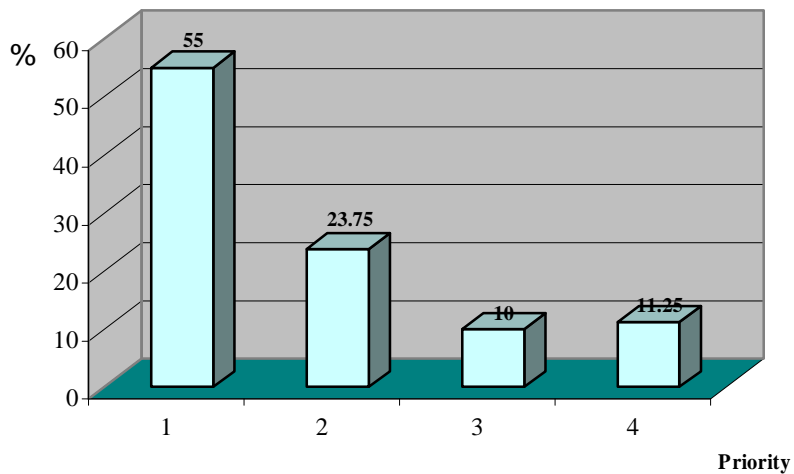




**Graph 4.1a: Priority Given to Listening**

Priority	N	%
1	88	55
2	38	23.75
3	16	10
4	18	11.25
Total	160	100

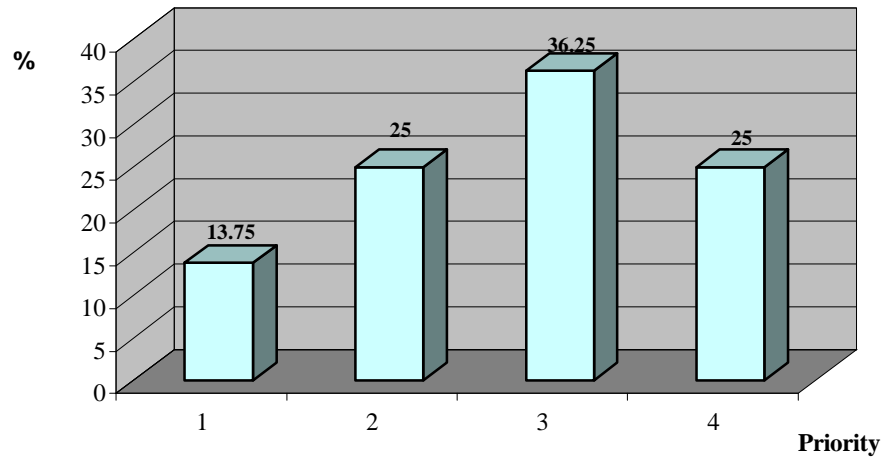
**Table 4.1b: Priority Given to Speaking**



**Graph 4.1b: Priority Given to Speaking**

Priority	N	%
1	22	13.75
2	40	25
3	58	36.25
4	40	25
Total	160	100

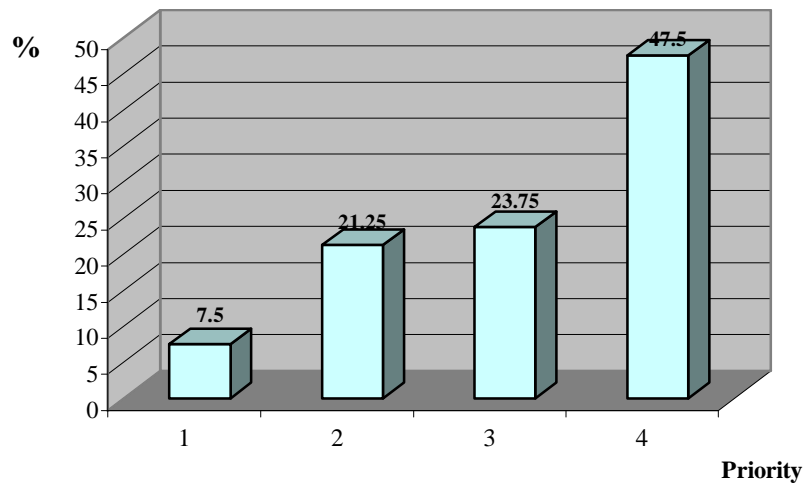
**Table 4.1c: Priority Given to Reading**



**Graph 4.1c: Priority Given to Reading**

Priority	N	%
1	12	07.50
2	34	21.25
3	38	23.75
4	76	47.50
Total	160	100

**Table 4.1d: Priority Given to Writing**



**Graph 4.1d: Priority Given to Writing**

Table 4.1a and Table 4.1b indicate that the students assigned priority to the auditory-oral skills as being their ultimate aim in learning English (Listening 23.75%, speaking 55%). Concerning the writing skill, only 12 students classified it as first priority (Table 4.1d), holding, then, the last position in the students' classification of the skills they would like most to master. This maybe justified by the negative attitudes the students hold towards writing due to their bad experience in writing, or their belief that mastering a language is to speak it and understand it when spoken. We also have to note that the students' answers were —apparently— not influenced by the aim of this study.

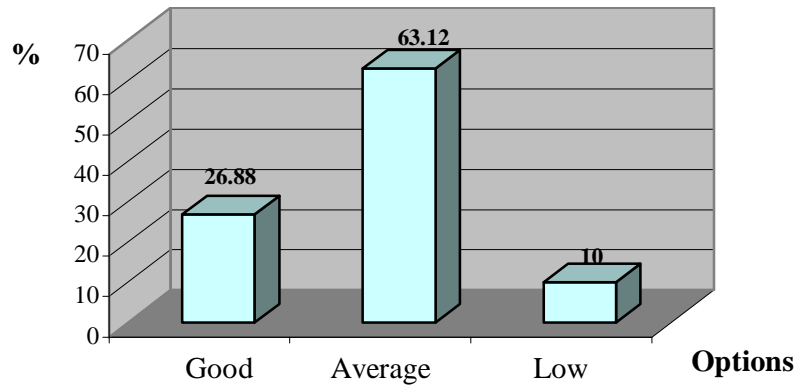
## Question 02

Your ability to write is:

- a. Good.
- b. Average.
- c. low.

Options	N	%
Good	43	26.88
Average	101	63.12
Low	16	10
Total	160	100

**Table 4.2: Ability in Writing**



**Graph 4.2: Ability in Writing**

As shown in Table 4.2, 63.12% of the students evaluated their level in writing as being 'Average'. This could imply that they are not satisfied with their performance level in writing.

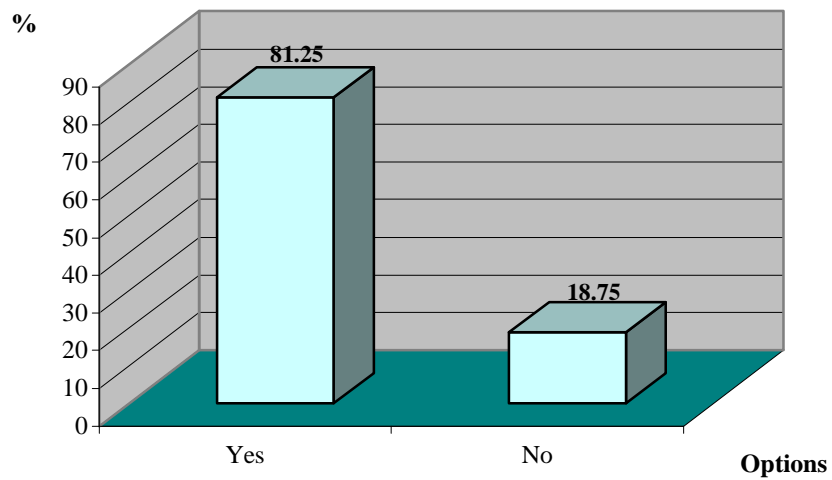
### Question 03

Do you write in English outside university?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
Yes	130	81.25
No	30	18.75
Total	160	100

**Table 4.3: Writing Practice outside University**



**Graph 4.3: Writing Practice outside University**

The majority of the students (81.25%) said that they write English outside university. This is really encouraging to know that a considerable number of students are interested in performing a writing task.

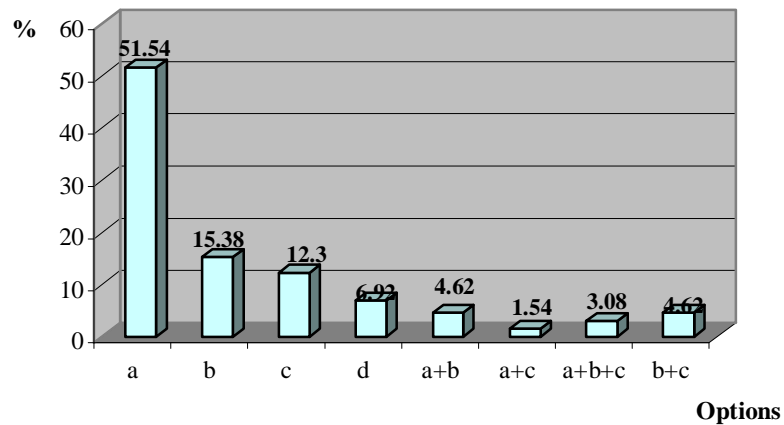
**Question 04**

If 'Yes' what type of writing:

- a. Homework.
- b. Letter.
- c. E-mail.
- d. Other: Please, specify.....

Options	N	%
a	67	51.54
b	20	15.38
c	16	12.30
d	09	06.92
a+b	06	04.62
a+c	02	01.54
a+b+c	04	03.08
b+c	06	04.62
Total	130	100

**Table 4.4: Type of Writing Performed outside University**



**Graph 4.4: Type of Writing Performed outside University**

As can be noticed in the Table 4.4, the homework is the most performed task (79 times = 67(a) +06(a+b) +02(a+c) +04(a+b+c)). Writing letters occurs 36 times (20 (b) +06(a+b) +04(a+b+c) +06(b+c)), while the E-mail writing occurs 28 times (16(c) +02(a+c) +04(a+b+c) +06(b+c)).

The 09 students who opted for (d) said that they engage in activities including writing short stories, diaries and poems.

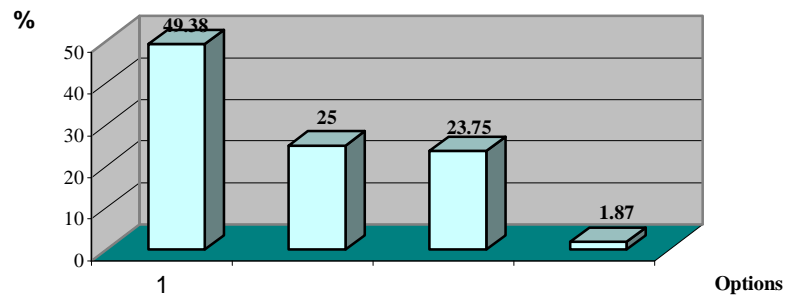
### Question 05

In class, do you like writing?

- a. Individually.
- b. In pairs.
- c. In small groups.
- d. In large groups.

Options	N	%
a	79	49.38
b	40	25
c	38	23.75
d	03	01.87
Total	160	100

**Table 4.5: Writing Techniques**



**Graph 4.5: Writing Techniques**

The results for Question 5 suggest that students generally prefer to work either individually (49.38%), or in pairs (25%). This is a clear message to the teachers that students do feel more comfortable, productive and relaxed by working individually or in pairs, where their voice would be heard, and views listened to and valued.

### **Question 06**

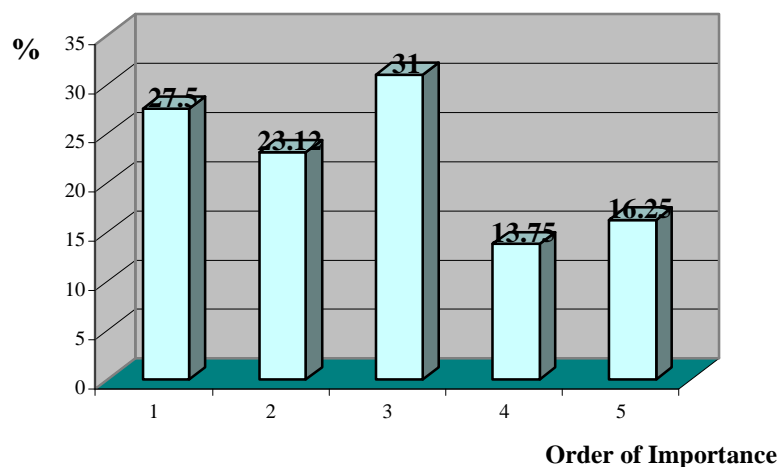
Which aspect constitutes most a problem for you in writing? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 next to each one)?

- a. Grammar.
- b. Vocabulary.
- c. Content/ideas.
- d. Organization of ideas.
- e. Mechanics.



Order of Importance	N	%
1	44	27.50
2	37	23.12
3	31	31
4	22	13.75
5	26	16.25
Total	160	100

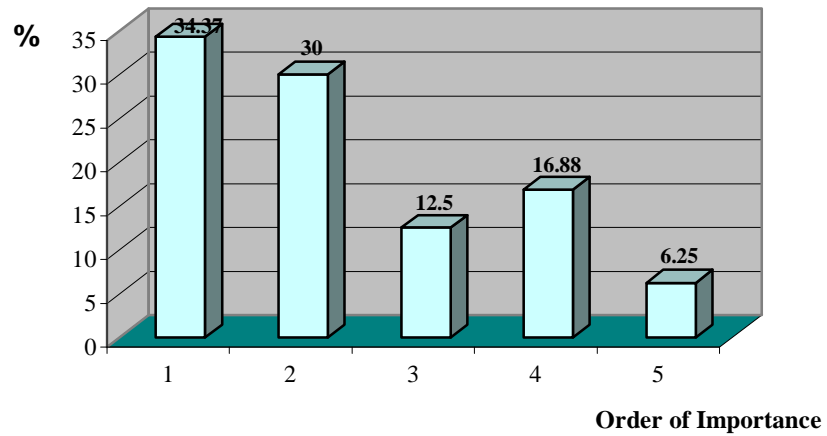
**Table 4.6a: Grammar: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**



**Graph 4.6a: Grammar: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	55	34.37
2	48	30
3	20	12.50
4	27	16.88
5	10	06.25
Total	160	100

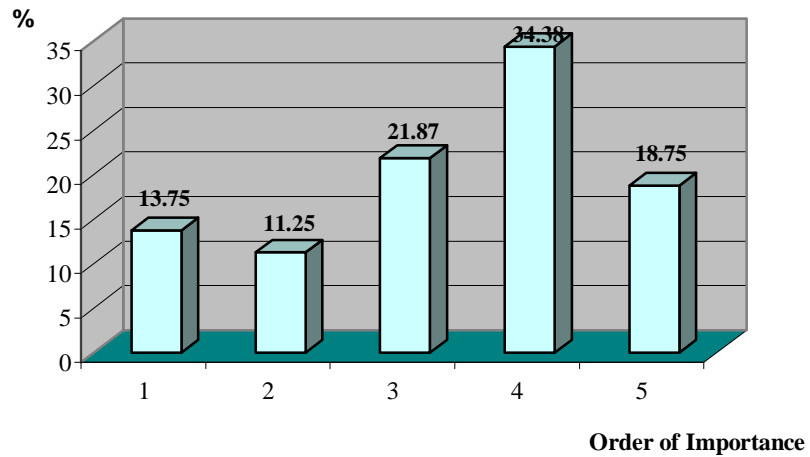
**Table 4.6b: Vocabulary: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**



**Graph 4.6b: Vocabulary: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	22	13.75
2	18	11.25
3	35	21.87
4	55	34.38
5	30	18.75
Total	160	100

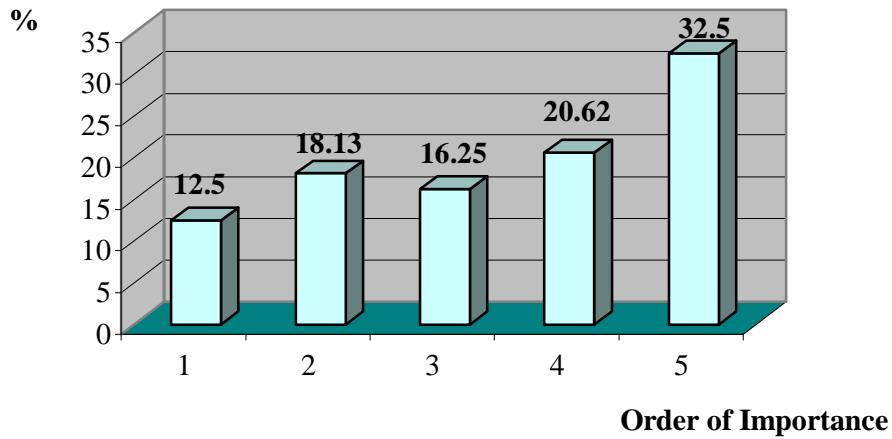
**Table 4.6c: Content/Ideas: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**



**Graph 4.6c: Content/Ideas: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	20	12.50
2	29	18.13
3	26	16.25
4	33	20.62
5	52	32.50
Total	160	100

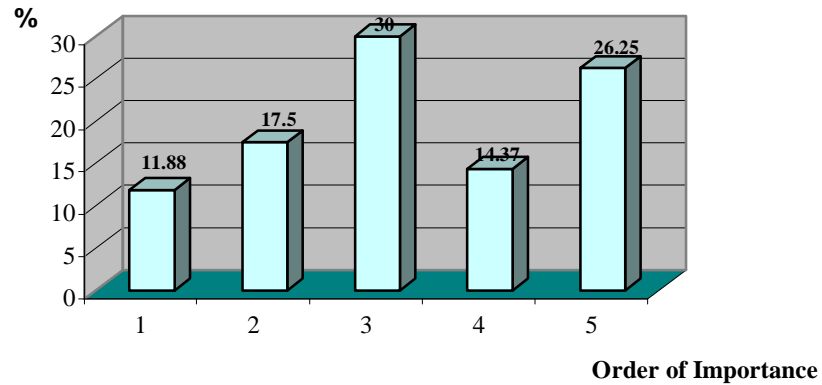
**Table 4.6d: Organization of Ideas: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**



**Graph 4.6d: Organization of Ideas: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	19	11.88
2	28	17.50
3	48	30
4	23	14.37
5	42	26.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.6e: Mechanics: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**



**Graph 4.6e: Mechanics: the most Problematic Aspect of Writing**

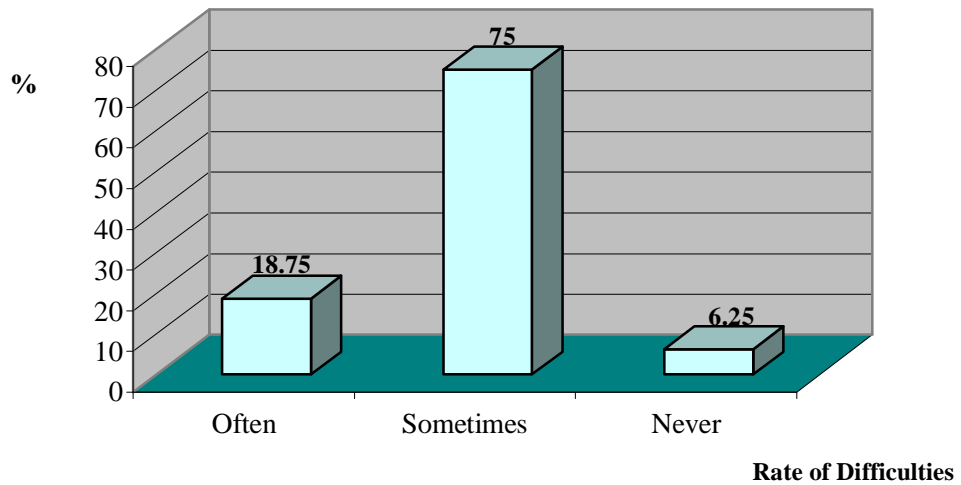
If we classify the findings in terms of priorities 1 and 2, the students classified their difficulties in writing as follows: vocabulary (103 times), then, Grammar (81 times), then the Organization of Ideas (49 times), mechanics (47 times), and finally, content/Ideas (40 times). This shows that the students experience more problems with the formal characteristics of language.

**Question 07**

When you write, do you have difficulty in:	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>Grammar</i>			
<i>Vocabulary</i>			
<i>Content/ ideas</i>			
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>			
<i>Mechanics</i>			

Rate of Difficulties	N	%
Often	30	18.75
Sometimes	120	75
Never	10	06.25
Total	160	100

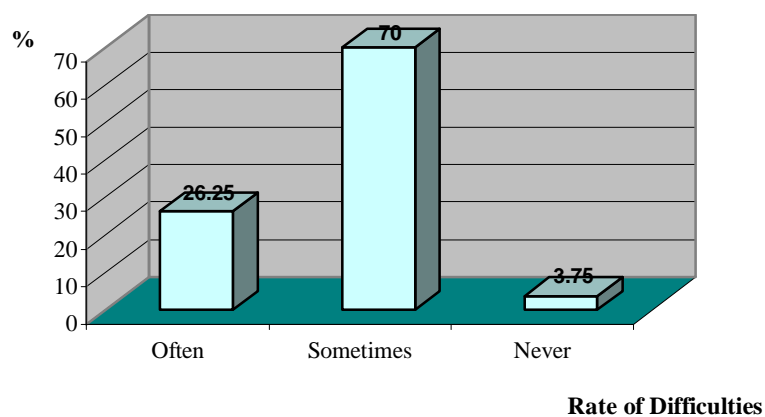
**Table 4.7a: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Grammar**



**Graph 4.7a: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Grammar**

Rate of Difficulties	N	%
Often	42	26.25
Sometimes	112	70
Never	06	03.75
Total	160	100

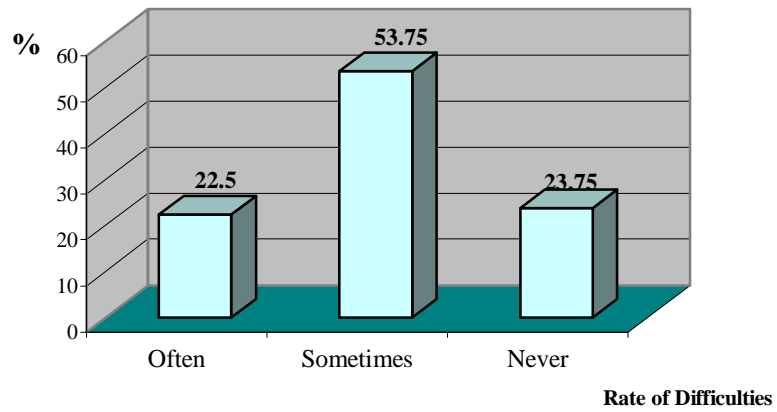
**Table 4.7b: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Vocabulary**



**Graph 4.7b: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Vocabulary**

Rate of Difficulties	N	%
Often	36	22.50
Sometimes	86	53.75
Never	38	23.75
Total	160	100

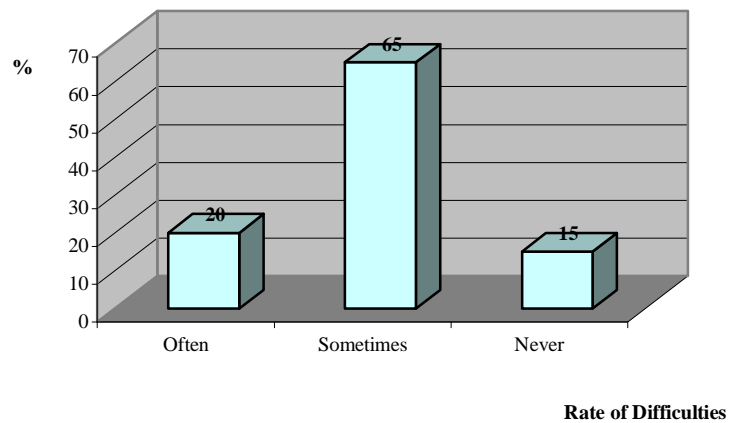
**Table 4.7c: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Content/Ideas**



**Graph 4.7c: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Content/Ideas**

Rate of Difficulties	N	%
Often	32	20
Sometimes	104	65
Never	24	15
Total	160	100

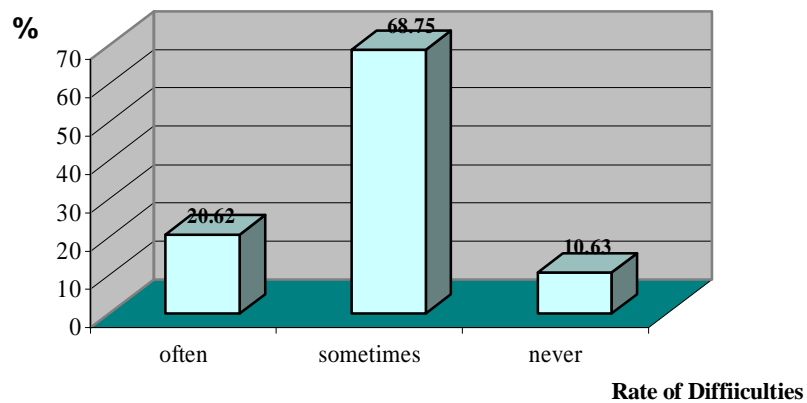
**Table 4.7d: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Organization of Ideas**



**Graph 4.7d: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Organization of Ideas**

Rate of Difficulties	N	%
Often	33	20.62
Sometimes	110	68.75
Never	17	10.63
Total	160	100

**Table 4.7e: The Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Mechanics**



**Graph 4.7e: Rate of the Students' Difficulties in Mechanics**

If we combine the results of 'Often' and 'Sometimes', we see that the students classified their difficulties in writing as follows:

- vocabulary with 154 times (96.25%);
- grammar with 150 times (93.75%);
- mechanics with 143 times (89.37%);
- organization of ideas has occurred 136 times (85%).
- and -content/ideas has occurred 122 times (76.25%).

This implies that the formal features of language constitute a serious problem the students encounter when performing a writing assignment.



**Section Two: Teachers' Feedback to Errors in Writing:**

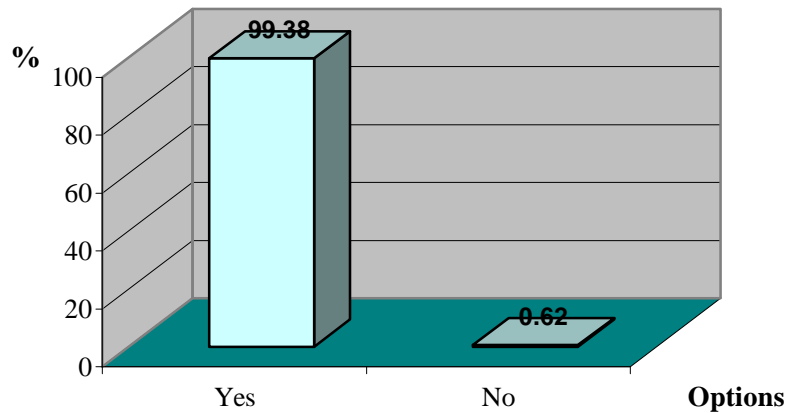
**Question 8**

Does your teacher of Written Expression (W E) correct your errors?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
Yes	159	99.38
No	01	0.62
Total	160	100

**Table 4.8: Rate of the Students' Perception of Whether the Teacher of W E Correct their Errors**



**Graph 4.8: Rate of the Students' Perception of Whether the Teacher of W E Correct their Errors**

Almost all the students stated that their teacher of WE correct their errors in writing.

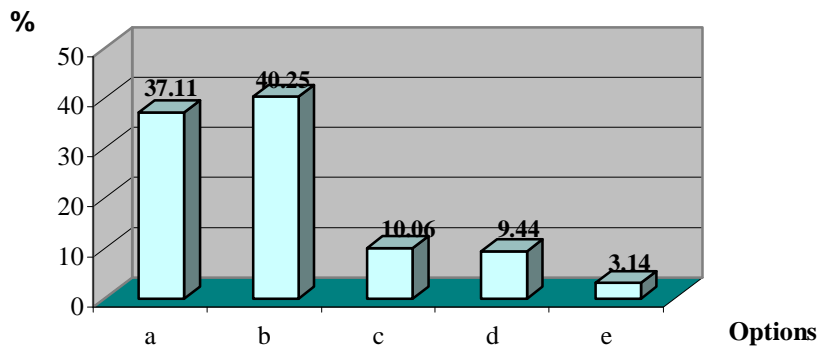
### Question 9

If 'Yes', does s/he correct:

- a. All errors.
- b. Most errors.
- c. Some errors.
- d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas.
- e. No errors and comment only on ideas you express.

Options	N	%
a	59	37.11
b	64	40.25
c	16	10.06
d	15	09.44
e	05	03.14
Total	159	100

**Table 4.9: Extent of the Errors the Teacher of WE Corrects**



**Graph 4.9: Extent of the Errors the Teacher of WE Corrects**

40.25% of the students stated that their teacher of WE treated most of their errors in their written production. 03.14% of the students said that their teachers paid attention only to their ideas.

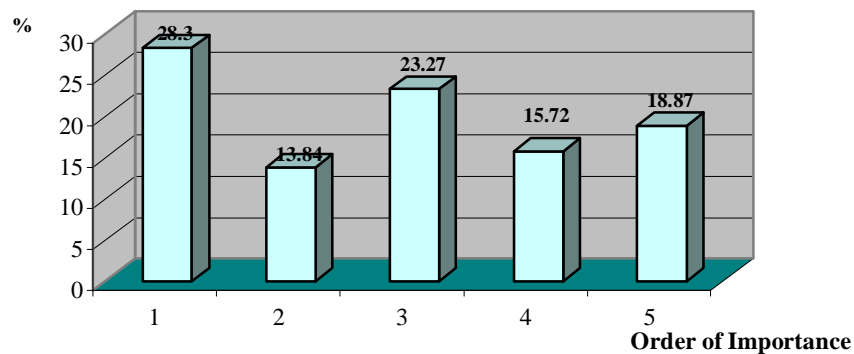
### Question 10

Which aspect does s/he give more importance to? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to each one).

- a. Grammar.
- b. Vocabulary.
- c. Content/ideas.
- d. Organization of ideas.
- e. Mechanics.

Order of Importance	N	%
1	45	28.30
2	22	13.84
3	37	23.27
4	25	15.72
5	30	18.87
Total	159	100

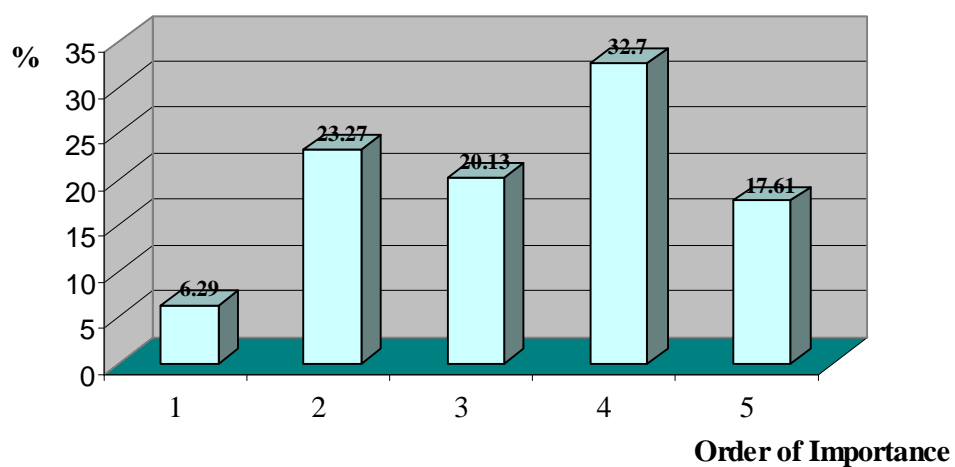
**Table 4.10a: Grammar Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.10a: Grammar Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	10	06.29
2	37	23.27
3	32	20.13
4	52	32.70
5	28	17.61
Total	159	100

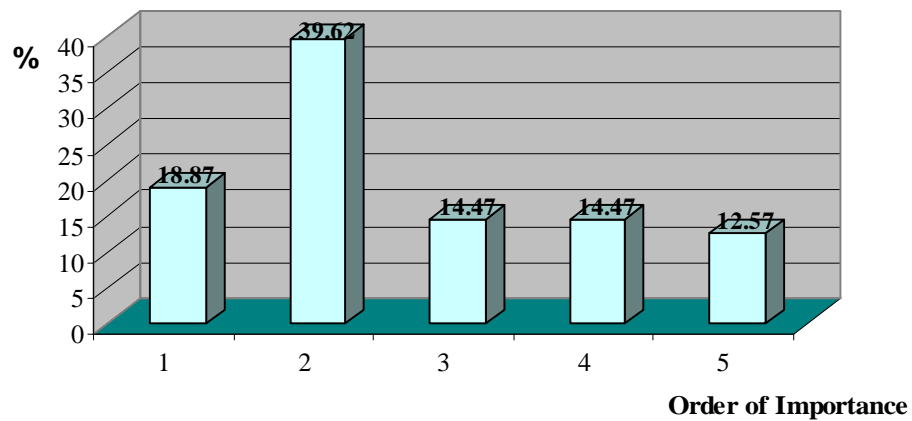
**Table 4.10b: Vocabulary Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.10b: Vocabulary Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	30	18.87
2	63	39.62
3	23	14.47
4	23	14.47
5	20	12.57
Total	159	100

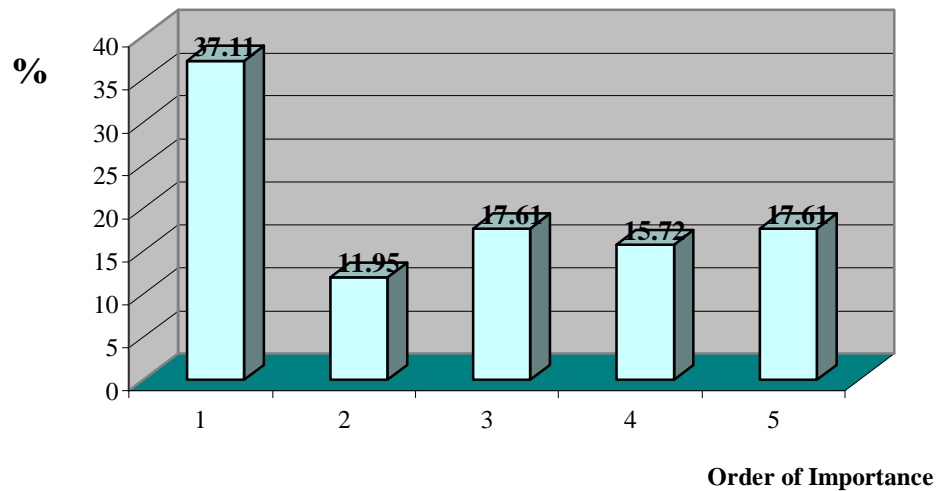
**Table 4.10c: Content/Ideas Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.10c: Content/Ideas Emphasized by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	59	37.11
2	19	11.95
3	28	17.61
4	25	15.72
5	28	17.61
Total	159	100

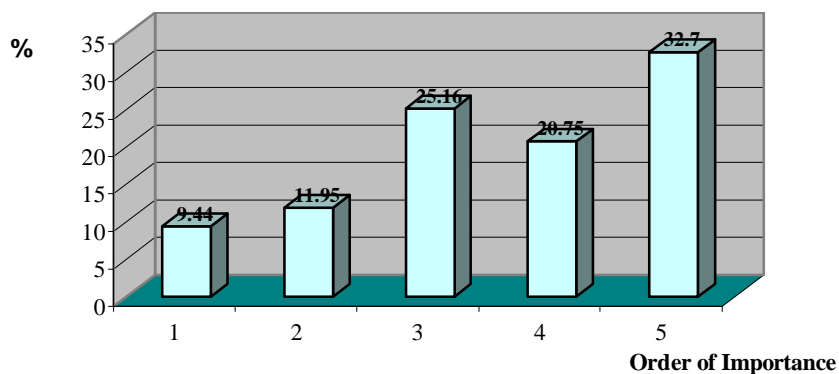
**Table 4.10d: Organization of Ideas Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.10d: Organization of Ideas Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	15	09.44
2	19	11.95
3	40	25.16
4	33	20.75
5	52	32.70
Total	159	100

**Table 4.10e: Mechanics Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.10e: Mechanics Emphasised by the Teacher of WE in the Assessment of Writing**

Both Content/Ideas and Organization of Ideas reached the highest scores in priority 1 and 2 (93 times and 78 times respectively) in comparison with other components of writing: Grammar(67 times); Vocabulary (47 times); and, Mechanics (34 times). These findings go along with modern teacher concern with content rather than form, use rather than usage.

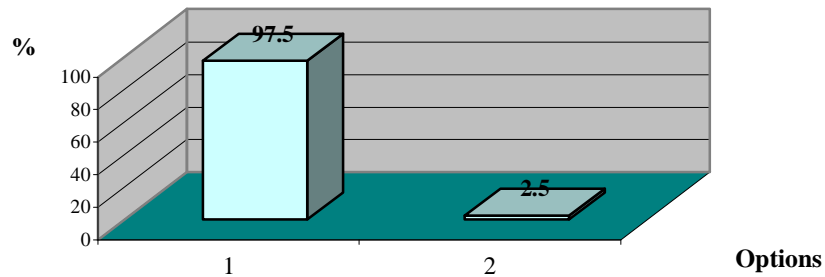
### Question 11

Do the teachers of other modules correct your errors?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
Yes	156	97.5
No	04	02.5
Total	160	100

**Table 4.11: Rate of the Students' Perception of Whether the Teachers of other Modules Correct their Errors**



**Graph 4.11: Rate of the Students' Perception of Whether the Teachers of other Modules Correct their Errors**

The results reported in the Table 4.11 reveal that the teachers of other modules correct their students' errors (97.5% of the respondents said 'Yes').

### Question 12

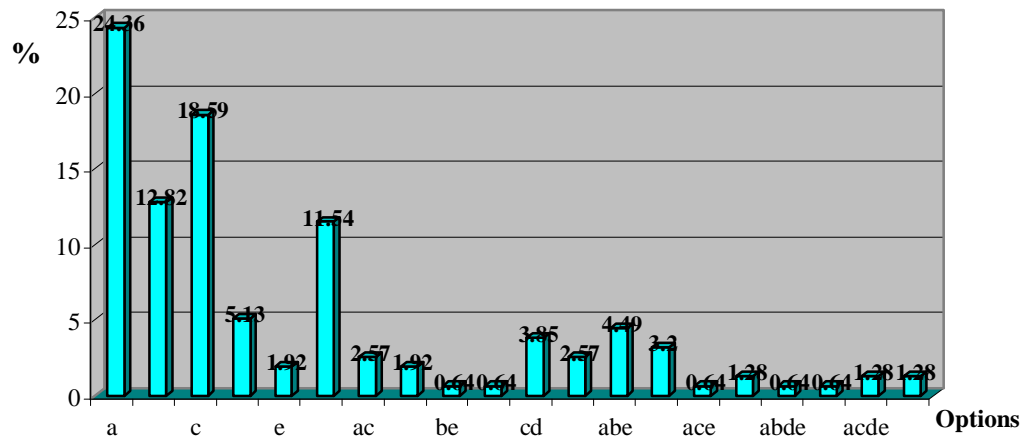
If 'Yes', do they correct:

- a. All errors.
- b. Most errors.
- c. Some errors.
- d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas.
- e. No errors and comment only on ideas you express.



Options	N	%
a	38	24.36
b	20	12.82
c	29	18.59
d	08	05.13
e	03	01.92
ab	18	11.54
ac	04	02.57
ad	03	01.92
be	01	0.64
bc	01	0.64
cd	06	03.85
abc	04	02.57
abe	07	04.49
acd	05	03.20
ace	01	0.64
abcd	02	01.28
abde	01	0.64
abce	01	0.64
acde	02	01.28
abcde	02	01.28
Total	156	100

**Table 4.12: Extent of the Errors the Teachers of other Modules Correct**



**Graph 4.12: Extent of the Errors the Teachers of other Modules Correct**

The analysis of the results reveal that the options ‘a’, ‘c’ and ‘b’ reached the highest scores (38 times, 29 times and 20 times respectively). This implies that the teachers of other modules do emphasize form in the correction of the students’ writings.

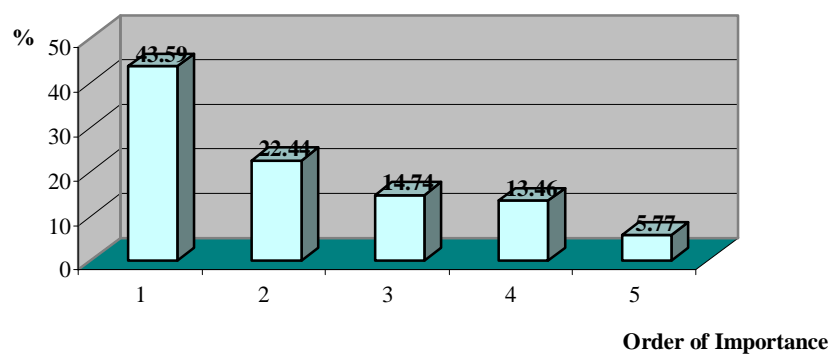
### Question 13

Which aspect do they give more importance to? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 next to each one).

- a. Grammar.
- b. Vocabulary.
- c. Content/ideas.
- d. Organization of ideas.
- e. Mechanics.

Order of Importance	N	%
1	68	43.59
2	35	22.44
3	23	14.74
4	21	13.46
5	09	05.77
Total	156	100

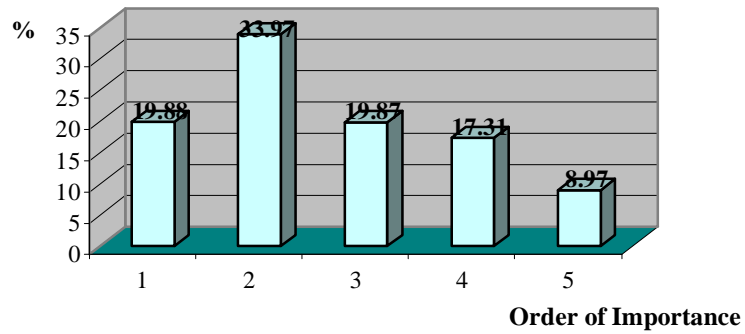
**Table 4.13a: Grammar Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment Writing**



**Graph 4.13a: Grammar Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	31	19.88
2	53	33.97
3	31	19.87
4	27	17.31
5	14	08.97
Total	156	100

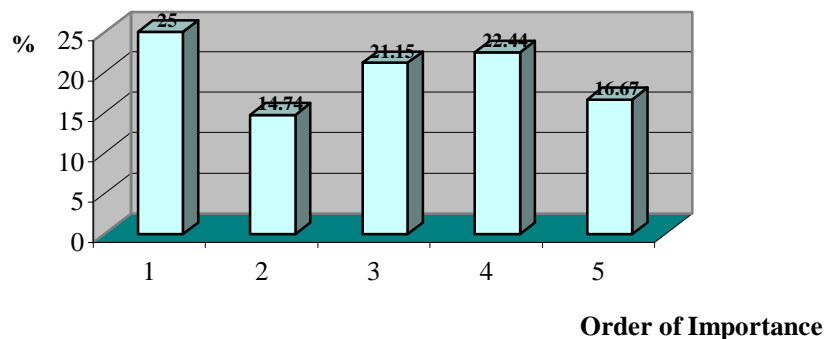
**Table 4.13b: Vocabulary Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.13b: Vocabulary Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	39	25
2	23	14.74
3	33	21.15
4	35	22.44
5	26	16.67
Total	156	100

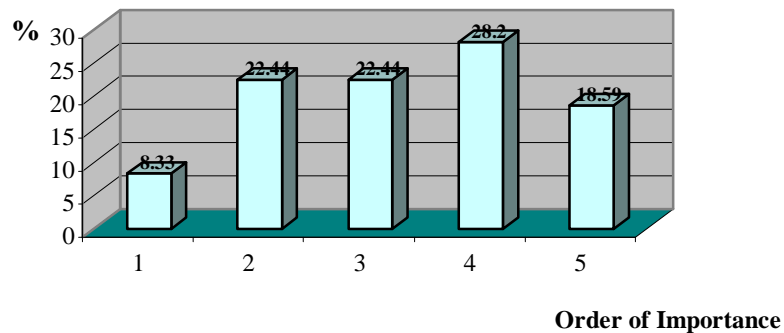
**Table 4.13c: Content/Ideas Emphasised the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.13c: Content/ Ideas Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	13	08.33
2	35	22.44
3	35	22.44
4	44	28.20
5	29	18.59
Total	156	100

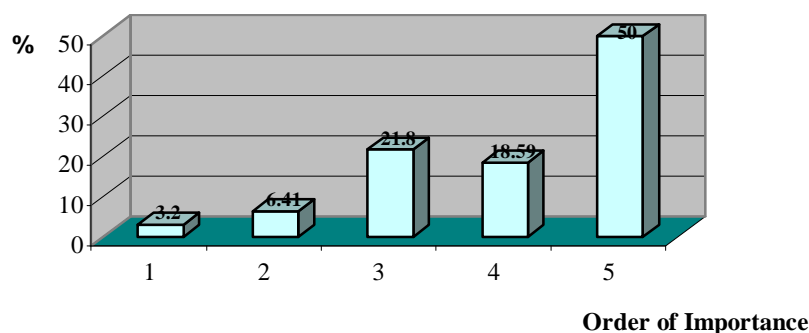
**Table 4.13d: Organization of Ideas Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.13d: Organization of Ideas Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**

Order of Importance	N	%
1	05	03.20
2	10	06.41
3	34	21.80
4	29	18.59
5	78	50
Total	156	100

**Table 4.13e: Mechanics Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**



**Graph 4.13e: Mechanics Emphasised by the Teachers of other Modules in the Assessment of Writing**

The analysis of the results in terms of priority 1 and 2 shows that Grammar reached the highest scores (103 times next vocabulary (84 times), followed by Content/Ideas (62 times), Organization of ideas (48 times), and at last Mechanics (15 times). This implies that the teachers of other modules give much importance to form.

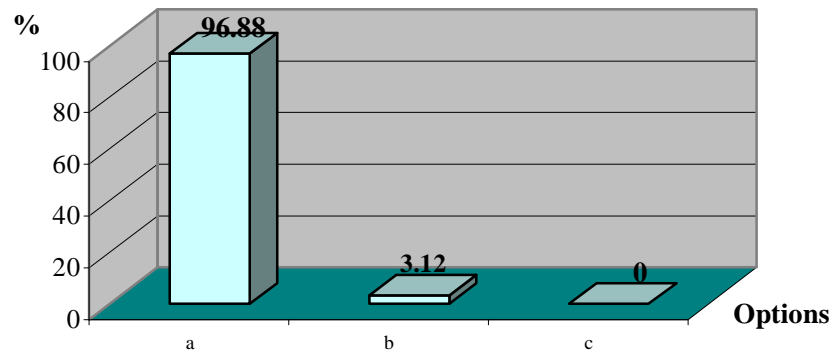
#### Question 14

When your teacher of W E corrects your writing, s/he uses:

- A red pen.
- A pencil.
- Other: Please, specify:.....

Options	N	%
a	155	96.88
b	05	03.12
c		
Total	160	100

**Table 4.14: Type of Pen Used for Correcting Errors in WE**



**Graph 4.14: Type of Pen Used for Correcting Errors in WE**

The results point out that the teacher of WE prefers to use a red pen to show the learners' weaknesses in writing. The red pen is the commonly used pen to correct errors in the students' written production.

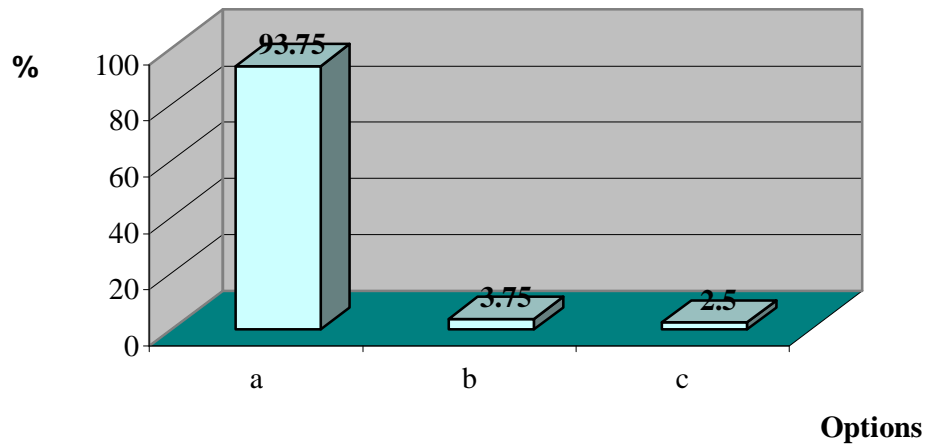
**Question 15**

When your teachers of other modules correct your writing, they use:

- a. A red pen.
- b. A pencil.
- c. Other: Please, specify:.....

Options	N	%
a	150	93.75
b	06	03.75
c	04	02.50
Total	160	100

**Table 4.15: Type of Pen Used for Correcting Errors in other Modules**



**Graph 4.15: Type of Pen Used for Correcting Errors in other Modules**

Similarly to Question 14, 93.75% of the respondents affirmed that their teachers used a red pen to correct their papers. Those who chose ‘c’ (02.5%) said that their teachers use a black pen.

**Question 16**

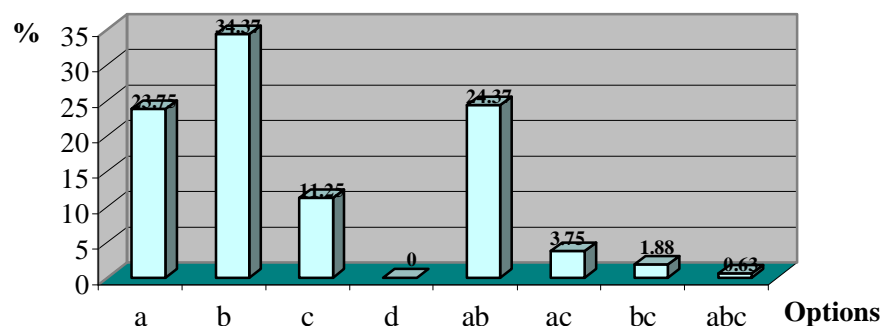
How does your teacher of WE correct your errors? (You may opt for more than one answer).

- a. Rewrites the sentence, the phrase or the word correctly.
- b. Shows where the error is and gives a hint about how to correct it.
- c. Only shows where the error is.
- d. Other: Please, specify:.....



Options	N	%
a	38	23.75
b	55	34.37
c	18	11.25
d		
ab	39	24.37
ac	06	03.75
bc	03	01.88
abc	01	0.63
Total	160	100

**Table 4.16: Techniques Used by the Teacher of WE to Correct the Students' Errors**



**Table 4.16: Techniques Used by the Teacher of WE to Correct the Students' Errors**

The results clearly show that the teachers of WE use different techniques to draw the learners' attention to their mistakes in writing. However, the most commonly used techniques are to indicate the location of error and give a hint about how to correct it (95 times= $b + ab + abc$ ), and to provide the correct version (84 times= $a + ab + ac + abc$ ). Showing only the errors on the students' writing is the least used technique (28 times= $c + ac + abc + bc$ ).

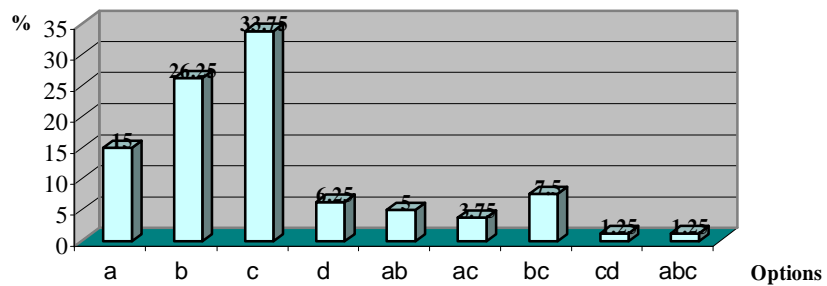
**Question 17**

How do the teachers of other modules correct your errors? (You may opt for more than one).

- a. Rewrite the sentence, the phrase or the word correctly.
- b. Show where the error is and give a hint about how to correct it.
- c. Only show where the error is.
- d. Other: Please, specify:.....

Options	N	%
a	24	15
b	42	26.25
c	54	33.75
d	10	06.25
ab	08	05
ac	06	03.75
bc	12	07.50
cd	02	01.25
abc	02	01.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.17: Techniques Used by the Teachers of Other Modules to Correct the Students' Errors**



**Graph 4.17: Techniques Used by the Teachers of Other Modules to Correct the Students' Errors**

The answers provided here indicate that the technique ‘c’ “only show where the error is” reached the highest scores (76 times= $c(54)+ bc(12)+ ac(06)+ cd(02)+ abc(02)$ ), while technique ‘b’ “show where the error is and give a hint about how to correct it” occurred 64 times ( $b(42)+ ab(08)+ bc(12)+ abc(02)$ ) and technique ‘a’ “rewrite the sentence, the phrase or the word correctly” 40 times ( $a(24)+ ab(08)+ ac(06)+ abc(02)$ ).

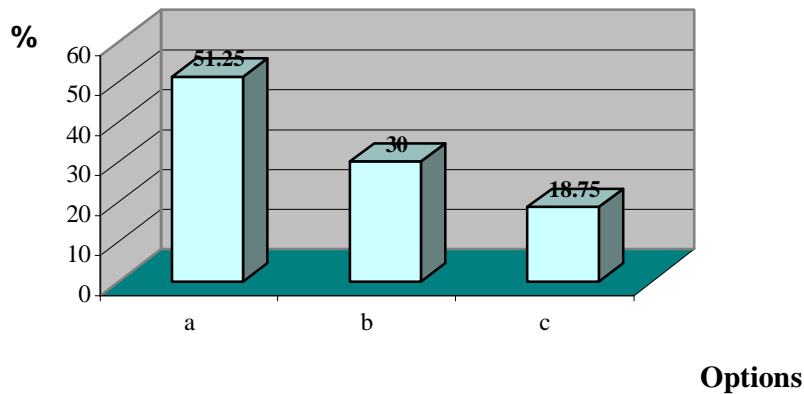
### Question 18

Does your teacher of W E allow you time to?

- a. Correct yourself.
- b. Your classmates to correct you.
- c. Use both ways.

Options	N	%
a	82	51.25
b	48	30
c	30	18.75
Total	160	100

**Table 4.18: Type of Correction Allocated by the Teacher of WE**



**Graph 4.18: Type of Correction Allocated by the Teacher of WE**

A little more than half of the respondents (51.25%) said that their teacher of WE gives them time to correct themselves. 30% of the students affirmed that their teacher allow peer-correction, while 18.75% said that both types were performed. This, in fact, reveals that teachers are aware of the importance of both self-correction and peer-correction.

**Section Three: Learners’ Attitudes to Teachers’ Feedback:**

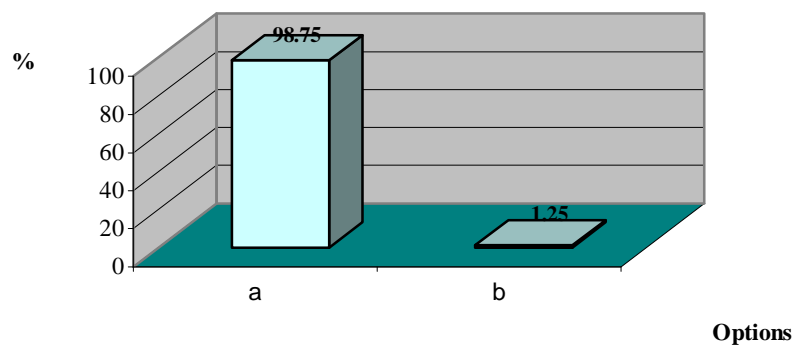
**Question 19**

Do you read your teacher’s corrections?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
a	158	98.75
b	02	01.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.19: Rate of the Learners Who Read their Teacher’s Corrections**



**Graph 4.19: Rate of the Learners Who Read their Teacher’s Corrections**

Nearly all the students read the corrections provided by their teachers. This implies that the students are interested in the teachers’ corrections.

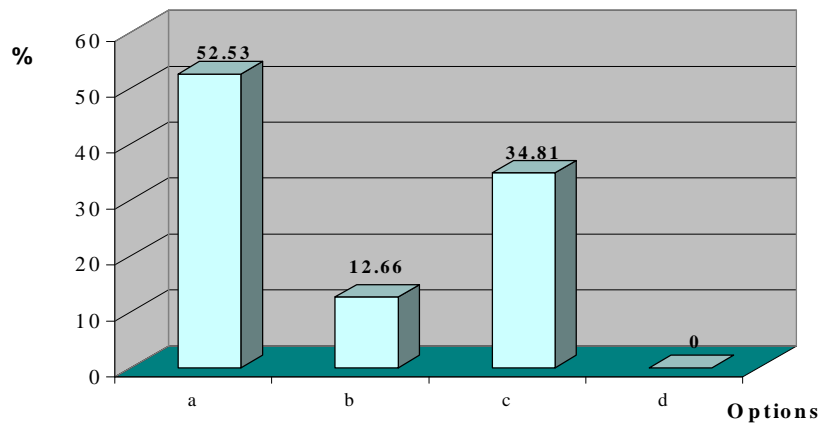
### Question 20

If 'Yes', do you:

- a. Read them carefully.
- b. Look at some of them.
- c. Pay attention to teachers' comments on the ideas expressed.
- d. Other: Please, specify:.....

Options	N	%
a	83	52.53
b	20	12.66
c	55	34.81
d		
Total	158	100

**Table 4.20: The Students' Reactions to Teachers' Feedback**



**Graph 4.20: The Students' Reactions to Teachers' Feedback**

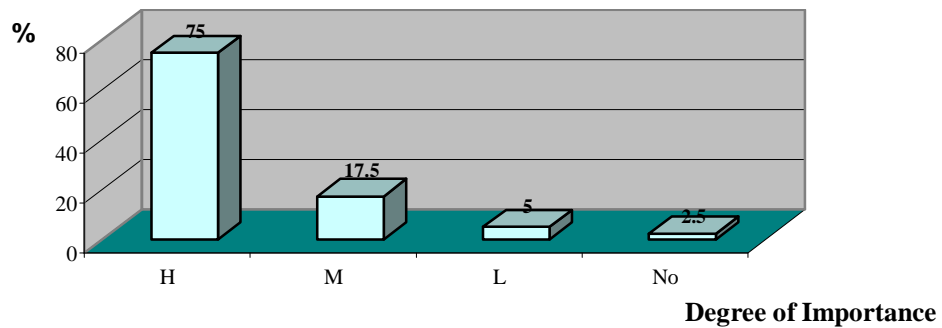
Slightly more than the half the respondents (52.53%) said that they read carefully the corrections provided by their teachers. 34.81% of the students stressed the fact that they are interested in the teacher's comments on their writing. This implies that the students are interested in all what their teachers provide as feedback.

**Question 21**

It is important that your teacher of WE points out your errors in your writing in:	High Importance (H)	Medium Importance (M)	Low Importance (L)	No Importance (No)
<i>Grammar.</i>				
<i>Vocabulary.</i>				
<i>Content/ideas.</i>				
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>				
<i>Mechanics.</i>				

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	120	75
M	28	17.5
L	08	05
No	04	02.5
Total	160	100

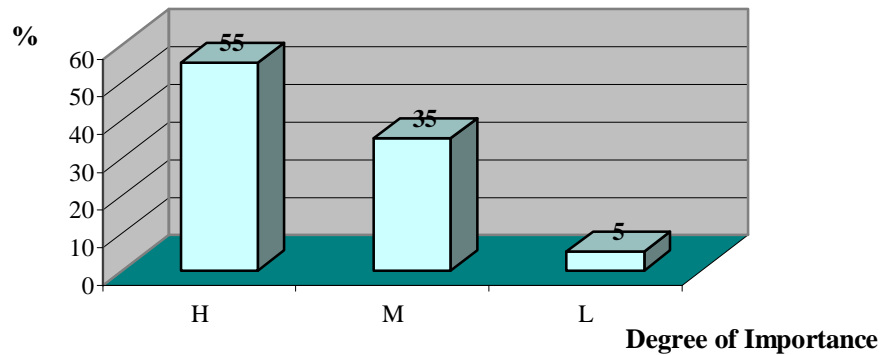
**Table 4.21a: Classification of the Students’ Preferences for Grammar in Teacher Feedback in WE**



**Graph 4.21a: Classification of the Students’ Preferences for Grammar in Teacher Feedback in WE**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	88	55
M	56	35
L	08	05
No	08	05
Total	160	100

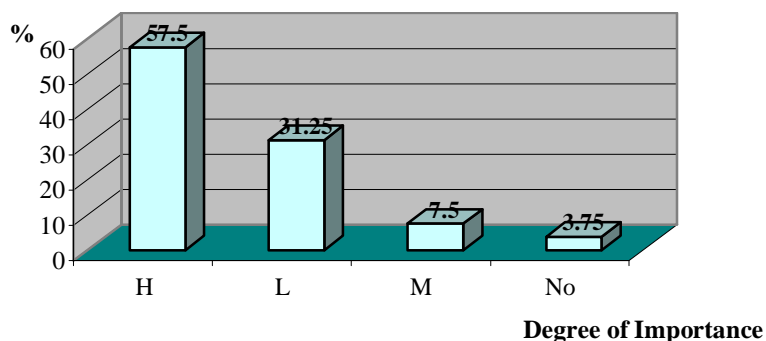
**Table 4.21b: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Vocabulary in Teacher Feedback in WE**



**Graph 4.21b: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Vocabulary in Teacher Feedback in WE**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	92	57.50
L	50	31.25
M	12	07.50
No	06	03.75
Total	160	100

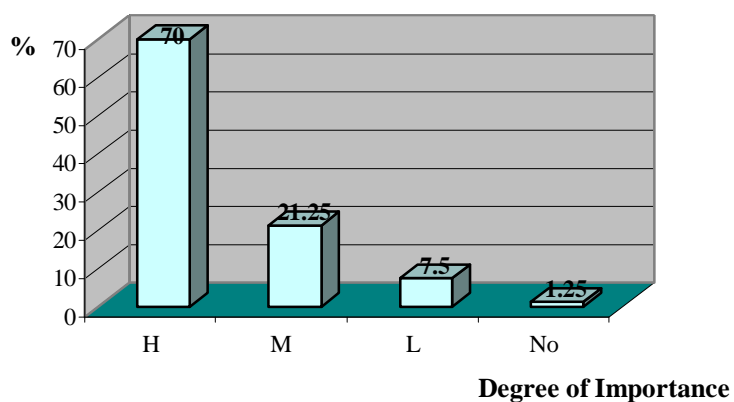
**Table 4.21c: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Content/Ideas in Teacher Feedback in WE**



**Graph 4.21c: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Content/Ideas in Teacher Feedback in WE**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	112	70
M	34	21.25
L	12	07.5
No	02	01.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.21d: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Organization of Ideas in Teacher Feedback in WE**

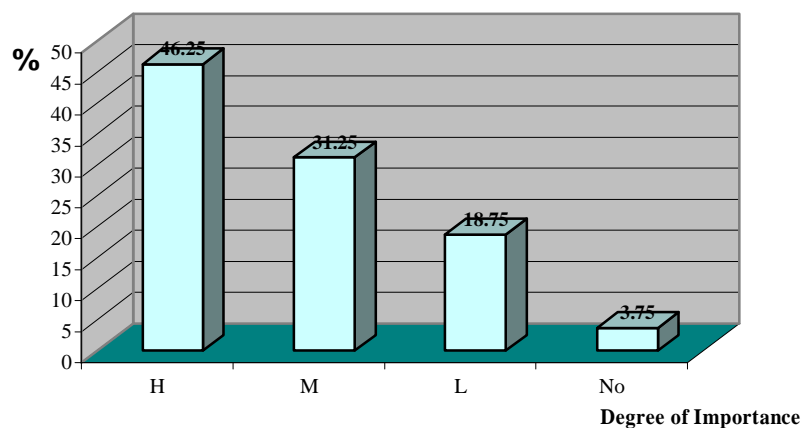


**Table 4.21d: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Organization of Ideas in Teacher Feedback in WE**



Degree of Importance	N	%
H	74	46.25
M	50	31.25
L	30	18.75
No	06	03.75
Total	160	100

**Table 4.21e: Classification of the Students' Preferences for Mechanics in Teacher Feedback in WE**



**Graph 4.21e: Classification of Students' Preferences for Mechanics in Teacher Feedback in WE**

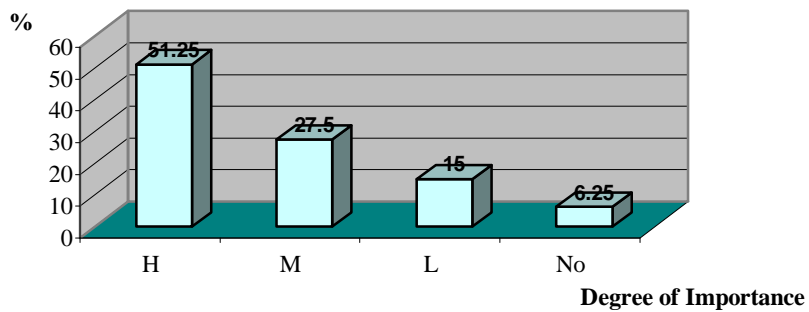
The analysis of the results of Question 21 in terms of High Importance and Medium Importance show that Grammar occurred 148 times, Organization of Ideas 146 times, Vocabulary 144 times, Content/Ideas 142 times, and Mechanics 124 times. As it is shown, there is a slight difference between the scores which maybe explained by the fact that the students wanted their teachers of WE to emphasize both form and content in the assessment of their writing.

**Question 22**

It is important that the teachers of other modules point out your errors in your writing in:	H	M	L	No
<i>Grammar.</i>				
<i>Vocabulary.</i>				
<i>Content/ideas.</i>				
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>				
<i>Mechanics.</i>				

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	82	51.25
M	44	27.50
L	24	15
No	10	06.25
Total	160	100

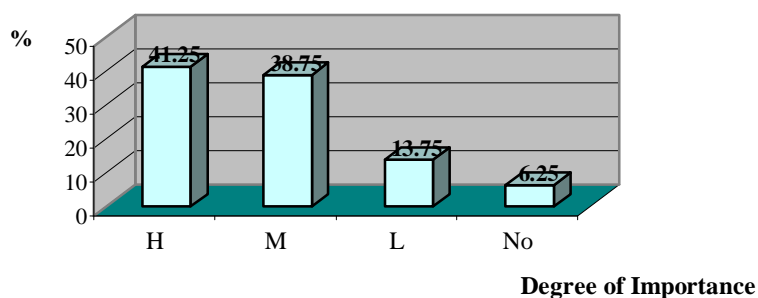
**Table 4.22a: The Students' Preferences for Grammar in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**



**Graph 4.22a: The Students' Preferences for Grammar in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	66	41.25
M	62	38.75
L	22	13.75
No	10	06.25
Total	160	100

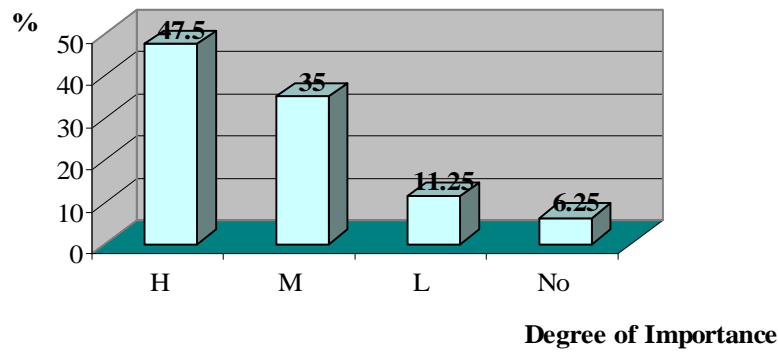
**Table 4.22b: The Students' Preferences for Vocabulary in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**



**Graph 4.22b: The Students' Preferences for Vocabulary in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	76	47.5
M	56	35
L	18	11.25
No	10	06.25
Total	160	100

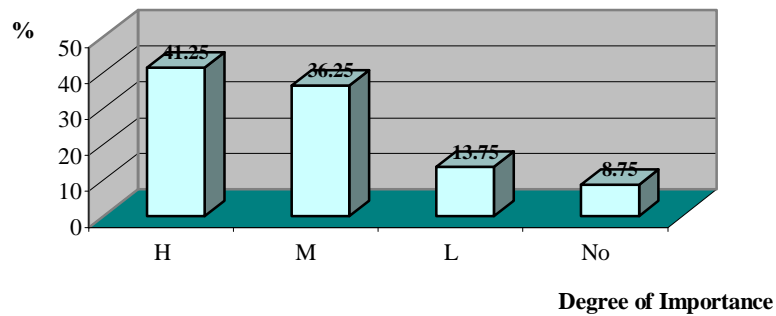
**Table 4.22c: The Students' Preferences for Content/ Ideas in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**



**Graph 4.22c: The Students' Preferences for Content/Ideas in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	66	41.25
M	58	36.25
L	22	13.75
No	14	08.75
Total	160	100

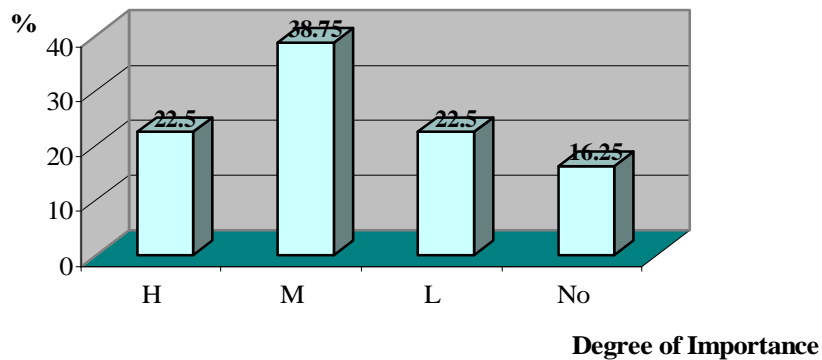
**Table 22d: Graph 4.22d: The Students' Preferences for Organization of Ideas in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**



**Graph 4.22d: The Students' Preferences for Organization of Ideas in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**

Degree of Importance	N	%
H	36	22.50
M	62	38.75
L	36	22.50
No	26	16.25
Total	160	100

**Table 4.22e: The Students' Preferences for Mechanics in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules**



**Graph 4.22e: The Students' Preferences for Mechanics in Teacher Feedback in Other Modules.**

Similar results were found concerning what the students want their teachers of other modules stress when correcting their texts. In terms of H and M, Content/Ideas occurred 132 times, Vocabulary 128 times, Grammar 126 times, Organization of Ideas 124 times and Mechanics 98 times. Thus, both form-based and content-based feedback are overwhelmingly wanted by the students.

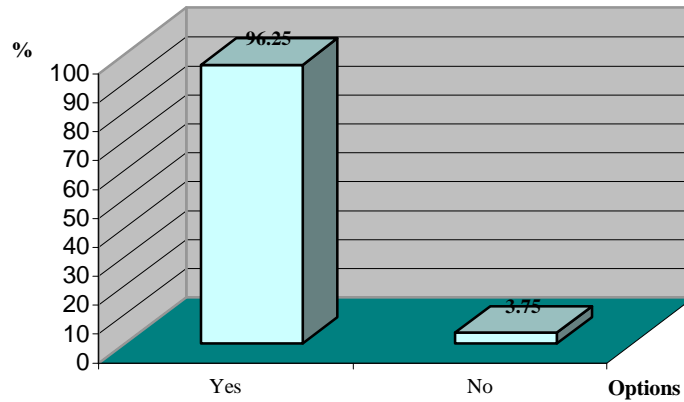
### Question 23

Do you want your teachers to correct your written production?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
Yes	154	96.25
No	06	03.75
Total	160	100

**Table 4.23: Students' Attitudes to Teachers' Correction of their Written Production**



**Graph 4.23: Students' Attitudes to Teachers' Correction of their Written Production**

The vast majority of the respondents expressed a favorable attitude towards teachers' corrections of their errors in writing. Only 03.75% said they did not want their teachers to correct their written work; this may imply that they disliked their teachers' feedback.

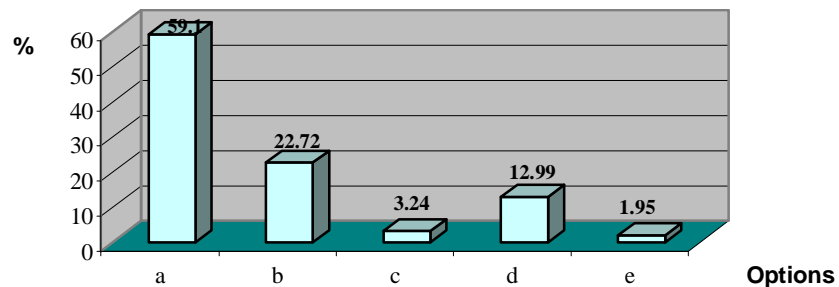
### Question 24

If 'Yes', do you want them to correct:

- a. All errors.
- b. Most errors.
- c. Some errors.
- d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating your ideas.
- e. No errors and comment only on the ideas you express.

Options	N	%
a	91	59.10
b	35	22.72
c	05	03.24
d	20	12.99
e	03	01.95
Total	154	100

**Table 4.24: Students' Preferences as to How they Want their Teachers' to Correct their Written Production**



**Graph 4.24: Students' Preferences as to How they Want their Teachers' to Correct their Written Production**

The results reveal strong favourable preferences for error correction. Only three students said they prefer their teacher not to correct the errors and only comment on the ideas expressed.

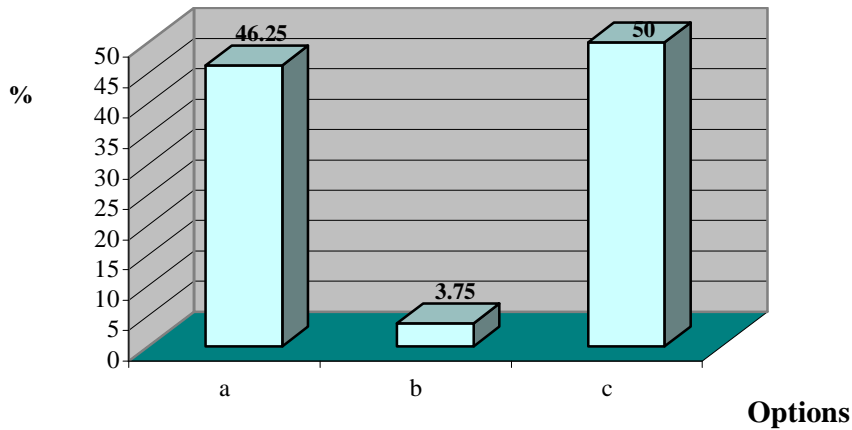
### Question 25

Do you want your teachers to correct your writing with:

- a. A red pen.
- b. A pencil.
- c. It doesn't matter.

Options	N	%
a	74	46.25
b	06	03.75
c	80	50
Total	160	100

**Table 4.25: Students' Opinion about the Type of Pen Used for Correction**



**Graph 4.25: Students' Opinion about the Pen Used for Correction**

Nearly half the students said they wanted their teachers to correct their writing with a red pen. 50% said that the type of pen used does not matter. It seems then that the use of a red pen does not have any negative effect on the students.



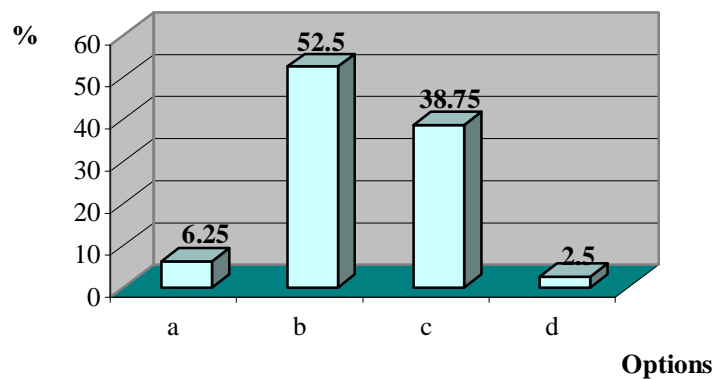
### Question 26

How do you want your teachers to indicate errors in your writing?

- a. Cross out what is incorrect.
- b. Cross out what is incorrect and write the correct form.
- c. Show the error and give a hint about how to correct it.
- d. Ignore errors and pay attention only to the ideas expressed.

Options	N	%
a	10	06.25
b	84	52.50
c	62	38.75
d	04	02.50
Total	160	100

**Table 4.26: Students' Preferences for the Techniques used by the Teachers to Indicate Errors**



**Graph 4.26: Students' Preferences for the Techniques Used by the Teachers to Indicate Errors**

52.50% of the students prefer that their teachers cross out what is incorrect and write down the correct form. Besides, a significant number of students (38.37%) expected their teachers to show their weaknesses in writing and provide a hint to improve them. Only 04 students said that they wanted their teachers to ignore their errors and pay attention only to the ideas expressed. These results contribute not only to stress the fact that the students preferred the ‘a’ and ‘b’ techniques of teacher’s feedback, but also they favored the form-based feedback provided by their teacher.

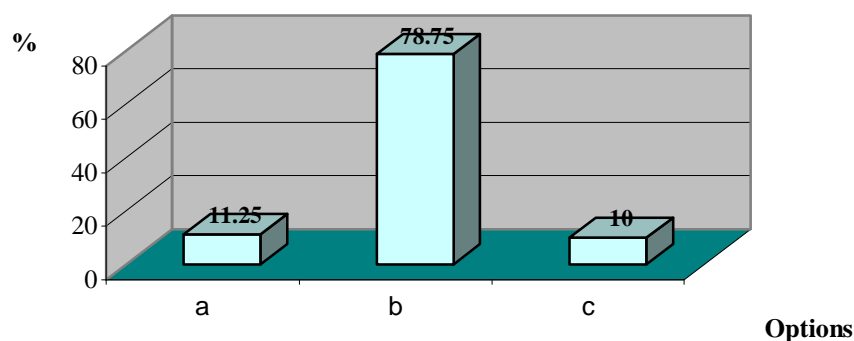
**Question 27**

If you made an error in your writing, what helps you to understand what you did wrong?

- a. Having another student explain the problem.
- b. Having your teacher explain the problem.
- c. Looking in a grammar handbook (or other book).

Options	N	%
a	18	11.25
b	126	78.75
c	16	10
Total	160	100

**Table 4.27: What Helps the Students Understand their Errors**



**Graph 4.27: What Helps the Students Understand their Errors**

Most students (78.75%) said that what help them understand what they did wrong is having their teacher explain the problem. Only 11.25% of the total number of the students preferred their classmates' help, while 10% of them chose to refer to a grammar handbook or other books to solve any problem they encounter in writing. The results, indeed, show that the students are highly dependent on their teachers to understand their errors.

### **Question 28**

Please justify your answer.

The 126 students who opted for the teachers to help them understand their problems in writing explained that their teachers know their students' weaknesses, how to correct them, and how to avoid them in the future. This indicates to what extent the students are confident and dependent on their teachers as a sole source of knowledge.

Those students (18) who preferred the classmates' assistance said they feel more comfortable with them. We assume it is because they have the same level and may use different means for explanation.

The 16 students who preferred looking in books to understand their errors gave no justification. Yet, this maybe explained by the fact that the teachers could not help all the students with all their errors.

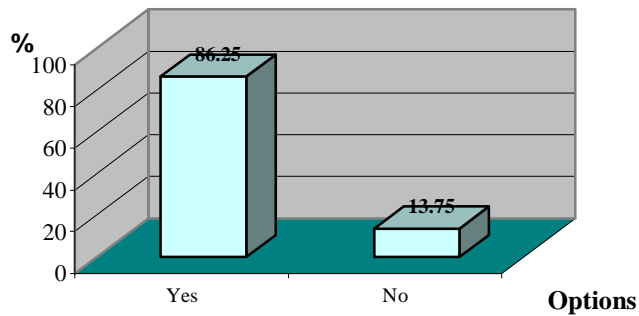
**Question 29**

Would you like to answer such a questionnaire before you start the WE course?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.

Options	N	%
Yes	138	86.25
No	22	13.75
Total	160	100

**Table 4.28: Rate of Students who would like to Have a Questionnaire before they Start the WE course**



**Graph 4.28: Rate of Students who would like to Have a Questionnaire before they Start the WE course**

Question 29 is intended to assess the extent to which students agree with assessing their attitudes towards their teacher’s feedback and what would be preferable as effective feedback in writing. The results found (86.25%) welcomed such a proposition.

### **Question 30**

Please, explain why?

Among the 138 students who answered 'Yes' to Question 30, 130 claimed that:

- A questionnaire is useful for teachers and learners as well;
- it is helpful because it provides the teachers with the required information about their students: their problems and how to deal with them;
- it helps the learners to express their ideas, their preferences and wants freely and thereby ease the interaction between teachers and students.

However, only one student out of 22 who said 'No' justified that s/he dislikes being questioned.

### **Section Four: Further Suggestions**

#### **Question 31**

Please, add any comment or suggestion on the way your errors are corrected by your teachers in writing:

Among 160 respondents, only 88 students gave some comments on the way their errors are corrected by the teachers in writing:

- 72 students emphasized the teacher's job to correct all their errors.
- 03 students said that their teachers should encourage self-correction.
- 13 students mentioned their dissatisfaction of the teacher's verbal ironical criticism such as "It is not English", and "you're a second year students, and you write such an essay!".

## 4.2 Teachers' Corrections

### 4.2.1 Description of the Teachers' Corrections

Having investigated attitudes, it was necessary to see how far they coincided with what teachers actually do. We set to investigate the actual teacher response to students' writing, the types of feedback the teachers provide when correcting their students' texts. We studied one hundred sixty corrected essays written by students who participated in the questionnaire. Since each teacher responded to different students, and therefore, to different papers written for the Second Examination in WE module, we assumed that the responses were, in fact, representative of the teacher's responding behavior.

First, we investigated the teachers' emphasis when correcting the students' written drafts. For this purpose, we subdivided the teachers's corrections into five categories: Grammar, Vocabulary, Content/Ideas, and Organization of ideas and Mechanics.

Categories of Teachers' Corrections	Types of Errors
Grammar Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Wrong use of affixes.</li> <li>-Wrong use of articles.</li> <li>- Wrong use of tense.</li> <li>-Wrong use of prepositions.</li> <li>-Wrong use of subject-verb agreement</li> <li>-Wrong use of word order.</li> <li>-Wrong use of sentence-structure.</li> </ul>
Vocabulary Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Wrong collocation.</li> <li>-Word innovation.</li> <li>-Wrong word selection.</li> </ul>
Content/Ideas Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Irrelevance of the ideas expressed.</li> <li>-Wordiness.</li> <li>-Style.</li> <li>-Register.</li> </ul>
Organization of ideas Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Weaknesses in linking sentences.</li> <li>- Illogical order of the ideas presented in different paragraphs</li> </ul>
Mechanics Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Indentation.</li> <li>-Punctuation.</li> <li>-Capitalization.</li> <li>-Abbreviations.</li> <li>-Spelling.</li> <li>-Handwriting.</li> </ul>

Second, we investigated the teachers' responding behavior in terms of form-based and content-based feedback. In analyzing the teachers' responses to form, we found out that the teachers simply underlined the mistake and sometimes underlined the mistake and gave the correct form as illustrated in the following student' s essay:

Furthermore, when we examined the different teachers' remarks on content, we discovered that the total remarks are questioning comments, i.e., comments that seek clarification from the students. In most cases, the teachers used symbols like the question mark (?) to ask a student to be clear in expressing an idea as exemplified in this student' s essay.



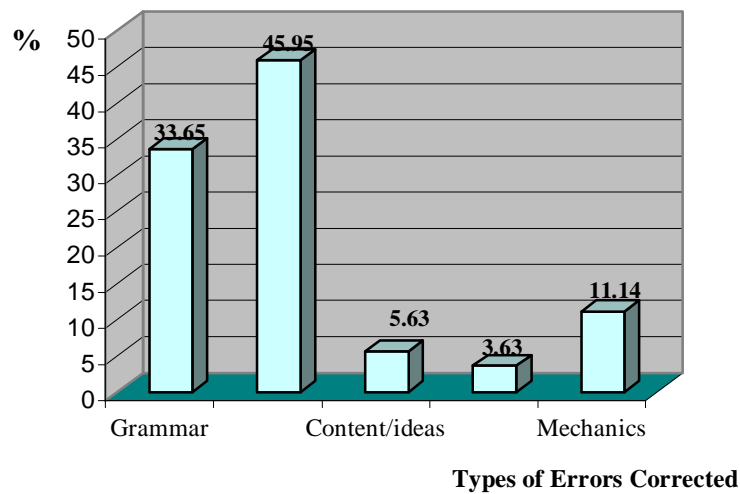
However, we should mention that what teachers correct does not correspond to all the mistakes the learners made: there were some uncorrected mistakes in form and content as can be clearly observed in this essay.

### 4.3.2 Analysis of the Teachers' Corrections

The analysis of the teachers' corrections on students' essays revealed the following results.

Types of Errors Corrected	N	%
Grammar	843	33.65
Vocabulary	1151	45.95
Content/ideas	141	05.63
Organization of ideas	91	03.63
Mechanics	279	11.14
Total	2505	100

**Table 4.29: Types of Errors Corrected on Students' Writings**



**Graph 4.29: Types of Errors Corrected on Students' Writings**

As it is clearly noticed, the majority of teachers' corrections were those of vocabulary (45.95%) then grammar (33.65%), then mechanics (11.14%). Content/Ideas and Organization of ideas constitute only 09.26% of the whole corrections. This is a clear indication of teachers' main concern with form at the expense of content (similar results were found in Sommers (1982), Hyland (1990), Kepner (1991), and Ferris (1995)). The teachers' tendency to correct errors may be explained by the fact that the teachers feel it their duty to correct their students' errors, or they fear that the erroneous structures would become fossilized in the students.

The analysis of the teachers' corrections indicates that ESL/EFL teachers are preoccupied with treating surface features deficiencies rather than the discourse ones. It shows a lack of comments that might help the students improve their weaknesses of language use. Knowing that not all students will come to discuss the teachers' comments with their teachers after the mark is given, it is more beneficial that teachers communicate with their students through their own papers and signal errors in content as well as form.

Although the corpus seems exhaustive, it is worth noting that in our study the students wrote about different topics and for examination purposes. This can constitute a limitation to the study. The study would have been more reliable if it were out of the constraints of the examination. Another possibility could be to ask a group of students to write an essay about a particular topic, then, ask their teacher to respond in three ways to the same essay: on form only, on content only and finally on both form and content. After that, we would examine the students' reactions to the three types of feedback.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the questionnaires provided a significant data about the students' writing background, their perceptions of teachers' responses, and their preferences concerning what and how to provide a feedback. Moreover, though the students classified the writing skill as being their last priority in learning English, this does not mean they denied its importance. More importantly, they expressed their favorable attitudes towards correcting all their errors in use and usage. Thus, the results disconfirmed the research hypothesis that Algerian students hold negative attitudes towards the form-based teacher feedback. The results have also reported the students' willingness of being involved in the assessment of their needs. This stresses the fact that students' input is of a paramount importance. Furthermore, the analysis of teachers' corrections on students' writings confirmed the general claim about EFL teachers' tendency towards emphasizing form in their assessment of writing.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Pedagogical Implications

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## Introduction

Responding to students' writing is probably the most challenging part of teaching writing. It does not only demand a tremendous amount of time and great deal of intellectual activity; it also affects to a large extent how students feel about their ability to write. Effective teachers, thus, take time to critically examine what they do and the effects of what they do on their students at the metacognitive level, identifying their needs and preferences, attitudes, and adopting a feedback strategy to meet them.

### 5.1 Effective Feedback on Students' Written Work

Many teachers are concerned about the degree they should focus on grammatical form, style, meaning, or other elements of writing. Few only seem to actually ask their students about what they ought to focus on. It is argued, then, that effective feedback depends on teachers' awareness of students' attitudes to and preferences of teachers' responding behaviour to their written production. Consequently, teachers need to determine properly attitudes and preferences, and subsequently adopt a feedback strategy to ensure that any feedback provided is comprehensible and useful.

Many common feedback practices were proved to be not working in developing and promoting students' writing skills. Neither purely form-based feedback nor purely content-based feedback is beneficial for students. Teachers, then, have to come up with an effective method that takes into account the shortcomings of the common methods of feedback, the positive aspects of them, and the desires of the students.

Feedback on form can be productive provided that teachers set a number of priorities and provide selective feedback. They have to decide about which errors to correct. Hendrickson (1980) proposes three types of errors: those that impair communication, those that have highly stigmatising effects on the reader, and those that occur frequently. Teachers can also diagnose some general problems and work on them in class. For example, they can develop supporting sentences from the students' own writing to deal with trouble spots in grammar and mechanics. In addition to that, feedback on form will be more effective if the teachers use consistently a standard set of symbols that the students are familiar with to indicate the location and the types of errors without correcting them. This will allow the students to proofread their own and other students' work.

However, since the students will be deleting, editing and re-writing a great deal of written work, especially at earlier stages of the writing process, marking all language errors would be a waste of time. Focusing on the content, on the other hand, allows time to the teachers to deal with the rhetorical structure which is an essential part of the composing process that is most of the time neglected by English teachers. To comment effectively on students' writings, therefore, teachers should avoid cryptic language, symbols; they should respond with questions as well as statements taking into account students' level, and what they originally intended to mean. They may use evaluative comments, instructional comments and positive comments. The evaluative comments are comments of a judgemental nature, describing the students' writing competence like: "Weak introduction", "topic sentence is too general". The instructional comments are those that serve to teach the students to make a change. Examples of these are "Be direct and clear", "link this point to the topic sentence". In addition to pointing out the students' weaknesses in writing, it is motivating to use positive comments to reinforce

their strengths and to attempt to produce something akin to the best of their potential.

## 5.2 Methods of Correction of Students' Written Work

Different methods can be developed in the writing class to correct the students' written production. It includes Minimal marking, Correction codes, Written Commentary, and Taped Commentary.

**Minimal marking** consists in marking in the margin every language error. The students not only have to find the problems, but work out what type of problems they are as well.

**Correction codes** seem to be the most frequently used way to deal with learners' written work. They involve placing symbols beside learners' mistakes to show what the problem to be corrected. Here are examples of codes which might be used.

â: Word missing.

C: concord/ subject and verb don not agree.

? M: meaning is not clear.

Sp: spelling.

P: punctuation.

T: tense.

WO: word order.

WF: wrong form.

WW: wrong word.

<>: join the ideas; you do not need a new sentence.

[]: something is not necessary.

//: new paragraph is needed.



Although this method can be very useful for surface errors, problems or deviations such as paraphrasing, style would be very difficult to categorize within a code.

**Written commentary** involves writing detailed comments on the problems that exist in the learners' work, then, guiding the learners so as they can try to self-correct. In case the learners find it difficult, teachers might give them the correct version or advise them to use dictionaries or grammar books. Teachers may read the piece of writing once or twice; thinking about what aspect of writing needs much focus form or content before reading their students' drafts. They may also use E-mail to provide feedback to students' writing whenever possible.

The idea of **taped commentary** is that teachers' comments are recorded in a tape rather than written on paper. When the teacher gives the student's draft and the tape back, the learners listen to the comments and think about the corrections afterwards. This method, though difficult to organize, is faster than written commentaries and has the advantage of helping students with their listening skills as well.

### 5.3 Techniques of Effective Feedback on Students' Written Work

As it is already evidenced by the research, written feedback is a complex and important issue. Yet, it is not always beneficial to students. The teachers must strive to ensure that feedback does not take place within a vacuum through a teacher-student consultation strategy. Basic techniques may be incorporated by the teacher in writing classes to develop the learners' writing skills and foster their learning. We would recommend the use of Conferencing, Peer-review and Self-monitored writing

**Conferencing** involves face to face conversations between the teacher and the students. The teacher gives the learners some questions to think about beforehand. The questions should concern different aspects of their writings and the problems learners want their teachers to look at. The learners, then, rewrite the work and hand in both versions. The teachers can also meet groups of students, often divided according to their writing weaknesses, or even use E-mail to communicate with them. This technique can be used at any stage in the writing process\_ planning, revising etc. It helps the students to focus on the process of writing, and prioritise what they need help or advice about. While time constraints make it unrealistic to expect all teachers to have sufficient time to meet privately with each student, there are alternatives.

One solution is the group oriented consultation such as writing shops. The students may read each other' s work as a group - they read each other' s draft and decide together on one or two questions about each piece of work which they will then put to the teacher as a group. The teachers, furthermore, may provide students with pre-conference sheets that allow them to prepare questions for teachers for example:

- What are the aspects of writing that I need to improve on? How?
- Are there any errors that are consistent?

Likewise, the teacher may also prepare a list of comments and questions before the conference for example:

- How do you expect your teacher to correct your written work? Do you want them to correct all the mistakes and problems?
- Were there any comments or markings that you did not understand?
- Was there anything about the assignments that you have questions about?

Through **peer reviews**, the students can hand their writings to their classmates in class to assess it and give comments on it. A useful idea is to give the group a sample of questionnaire to work through while they are correcting the written work. This can be done by giving the students guidelines or structured checklists that can be focused on a specific set of criteria such as paragraphing, cohesive devices, punctuation. For example, Now look at your partner's work, and while you read it, think about the following questions. Make some notes and when you have finished, give your partner some feedback.

- Is the piece well organized?
- Are the ideas well presented and coherent?
- Is there a wide enough range of syntax used?
- Comment on the accuracy of:

Lexis

Syntax

Spelling

Punctuation

Use of cohesive devices

The students can also use charts when evaluating the quality of other students' writing. The process of correcting other students not only helps the one being evaluated, but also the one doing the correction. Students may write comments to justify their corrections. Charts can be designed in various ways. What follows is an example of a chart.

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Poor	Comment
Interest of the content.				
Organization, development and coherence of ideas.				
Appropriacy of style and register of language used.				
Range and complexity of grammatical structures.				
Sentences and words varied				
Accuracy of vocabulary.				
Use of cohesive devices.				
Spelling.				
Punctuation.				
Recommended changes.				
Appropriate layout, general presentation and handwriting.				

Table 5.1: Writing Feedback Sheet

**Self-monitored writing** is another important writing activity which teachers can encourage. The learners mention those parts of their writings that they are unsure about, and at the bottom of the page, they explain what the problem they are having is. For instance:

- ‘I’m not sure whether I should say ‘to play aerobics or to do aerobics’.
- ‘Should I use the present perfect or the past simple’.
- ‘Is it a good idea to start a new paragraph here?’.
- Does my conclusion have enough effect or do I need to add something else in?

This allows the teachers to respond easily to the questions, comments and add any extra feedback. More importantly, it gives the teachers a good insight into their students’ intentions and problems. Additionally, if learners themselves indicate where they would like feedback, they will be very motivated. Furthermore, learners take more responsibility for their learning as well as looking critically and analytically at their work as if they were the readers.

Another means to have the students monitor their writing is to develop a portfolio. The writing portfolio is meant to be a compilation of all the students’ written production plus their own reflection and self-assessment for further reference and future work. The idea behind this meta-communicative task is to encourage the students to monitor their own progress. Towards the end of the course, the file will contain many different types of writing (descriptions, narrations and so on) and varied formats (for example a letter, a diary, reports) with comments. Going through their own material from time to time will allow the students to evaluate their learning process and eradicate errors.

## Conclusion

Teachers need to pay attention to their ways of marking the student's writing and their responding behaviour, taking into consideration three significant factors: first, the type of error: whether it has a major effect on communication or the one which the learner could self-repair; second, the type of activity: whether the focus of the activity is more on form or meaning; and the type of learner: whether the learner is discouraged or motivated by correction.

# CONCLUSION

It is an acknowledged fact that there is no consensus in the teaching English as a second or foreign language context about feedback. Many teachers and students still favour feedback on form in writing, despite its lack of efficacy and its punitive nature. Teachers, therefore, should examine their ways when responding to students' written production. Emphasis should be on acquiring communicative academic writing proficiency over correct surface errors. However, while accuracy always remains important for second language writing, teachers should recognize that focus on accuracy must be balanced with a focus on the ability to express one's communication in an effective manner. More importantly, they should be aware of the effect of their feedback practices on their students through observing their improvement in writing, and identifying their attitudes.

Through this work, we have investigated the students' attitudes to teachers' feedback in writing. The results show that the students are interested in avoiding errors in their writing, and therefore, want and expect their teachers to correct all errors in their written work. The study suggests that feedback cannot be rigidly based on any standardized practice derived from the opinions of linguists and teachers alone, but must be flexible enough to incorporate the attitudes and needs of the students. It also suggests that written feedback should be used in coordination with a form of teacher-students consultation about the kind of feedback which helps them to improve their writing. Such a teacher-student consultation helps the teachers to modify their students' attitudes to make them conform to those feedback practices that are of some benefit for them, and it encourages the students to take more responsibility for their learning, and thereby, result in better learning.

The many aspects surrounding the issue of feedback call for a continued systematic research to investigate whether different types of feedback are more effective than others, and to what extent this may be dependent on the instructional materials or the attitudes of individual learners to them. It is our hope that this work has contributed to give a glimpse of Algerian English language students' attitudes to teacher' s feedback, and can pave the way for those interested in studying the teachers' responding behaviour to the students' writing and its effect on learning.



# **APPENDIX**

## The Learners' Questionnaire

APPENDIX  
The Learners' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to assess your attitudes towards your teachers's feedback to your written production.

Please, tick the appropriate answer and justify it whenever it is possible.  
We extremely appreciate your collaboration.

Miss SELMEN Salima  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English  
University of Constantine

## Section One: Learners' Background in Writing:

1. Which skill would you like to master most? (Put 1,2,3,4 next to each one).

a. Listening.

b. Speaking.

c. Reading.

d. Writing.

2. Your ability to write is:

a. Good.

b. Average.

c. low.

3. Do you write in English outside university?

a. Yes.

b. No.

4. If 'Yes', what type of writing?

a. Homework.

b. Letter.

c. E-mail.

d. Other: Please specify.....

5. In class, do you like writing:

- a. Individually.
- b. In pairs.
- c. In small groups.
- d. In large groups.

6. Which aspect constitutes most a problem for you in writing? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 next to each one).

- a. Grammar.
- b. Vocabulary.
- c. Content/ideas.
- d. Organization of ideas.
- e. Mechanics.

7.

When you write, do you have difficulty in:	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>Grammar.</i>			
<i>Vocabulary.</i>			
<i>Content/ ideas.</i>			
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>			
<i>Mechanics.</i>			

## Section Two: Teachers' Feedback to Errors in Writing

8. Does your teacher of Written Expression (WE) correct your errors?

a. Yes.

b. No.

9. If 'Yes', does s/he correct:

a. All errors.

b. Most errors.

c. Some errors.

d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas.

e. No errors and comment only on ideas you express.

10. Which aspect does s/he give more importance to? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to each one).

a. Grammar.

b. Vocabulary.

c. Content/ideas.

d. Organization of ideas.

e. Mechanics.

11. Do the teachers of other modules correct your errors?

a. Yes.

b. No.

12. If 'Yes', do they correct:

- a. All errors.
- b. Most errors.
- c. Some errors.
- d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas.
- e. No errors and comment only on ideas you express.

13. Which aspect do they give more importance to? (Put 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 next to each one)

- a. Grammar.
- b. Vocabulary.
- c. Content/ideas.
- d. Organization of ideas.
- e. Mechanics.

14. When your teacher of W E corrects your writing, s/he uses:

- a. A red pen.
- b. A pencil.
- c. Other: Please, specify.....

15. When your teachers of other modules correct your writing, they use:

- a. A red pen.
- b. A pencil.
- c. Other: Please, specify.....

16. How does your teacher of WE correct your errors? (You may opt for more than one answer).

- a. Rewrites the sentence, the phrase or the word correctly.
- b. Shows where the error is and gives a hint about how to correct it.
- c. Only shows where the error is.
- d. Other: Please, specify.....

17. How do the teachers of other modules correct your errors? (You may opt for more than one).

- a. Rewrite the sentence, the phrase or the word correctly.
- b. Show where the error is and give a hint about how to correct it.
- c. Only show where the error is.
- e. Other: Please, specify.....

18. Does your teacher of W E allow time to:

- a. Correct yourself.
- b. Your classmates to correct you.
- c. Use both ways.

### Section Three: Learners' Attitudes to Teachers' Feedback

19. Do you read your teacher's corrections?

a. Yes.

b. No.

20. If 'Yes', do you:

a. Read them carefully.

b. Look at some of them.

c. Pay attention to teachers' comments on the ideas expressed.

d. Other: Please, specify.....

21.

It is important that your teacher of W E points out your errors in your writing in:	High importance	Medium importance	Low importance	No importance
<i>Grammar.</i>				
<i>Vocabulary.</i>				
<i>Content/ideas.</i>				
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>				
<i>Mechanics.</i>				



22.

It is important that the teachers of other modules point out your errors in your writing in:	High importance	Medium importance	Low importance	No importance
<i>Grammar.</i>				
<i>Vocabulary.</i>				
<i>Content/ideas.</i>				
<i>Organization of ideas.</i>				
<i>Mechanics.</i>				

23. Do you want your teachers to correct your written production?

a. Yes.

b. No.

24. If 'Yes', do you want them to correct:

a. All errors.

b. Most errors.

c. Some errors.

d. Only errors that might interfere with communicating your ideas.

e. No errors and comment only on the ideas you express.

25. Do you want your teachers to correct your writing with:

- a. A red pen.
- b. A pencil.
- c. It doesn't matter.

26. How do you want your teachers to indicate errors in your writing?

- a. Cross out what is incorrect.
- b. Cross out what is incorrect and write the correct form.
- c. Show the error and give a hint about how to correct it.
- d. Ignore errors and pay attention only to the ideas expressed.

27. If you made an error in your writing, what helps you to understand what you did wrong?

- a. Having another student explain the problem.
- b. Having your teacher explain the problem.
- c. Looking in a grammar handbook (or other book).

28. Please justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....

29. Would you like to answer such a questionnaire before you start the WE course?

a. Yes.

b. No.

30. Please, explain why?

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

**Section Four: Further Suggestions:**

31. Please, add any comment or suggestion on the way your errors are corrected by your teachers in writing.

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

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# Résumé

L'étude qui fait l'objet de ce présent mémoire vise à analyser les attitudes des étudiants de deuxième année Anglais à l'université de Constantine vis à vis les corrections fournies par leur enseignants en expression écrite.

Cette étude est basée sur l'hypothèse suivante : les étudiants Algériens ont une attitude négative envers le feedback visant la structure formelle de leur essais. Le but est donc de déterminer ces attitudes en terme de leur réactions vis à vis les corrections de leur enseignants et leur préférences concernant le type et les techniques de feedback qu'ils souhaitent avoir.

Pour vérifier cette hypothèse, deux instruments de recherche ont été utilisés. Premièrement, un questionnaire a été administré aux étudiants pour analyser leur attitude concernant le type de feedback fournie par les enseignants. Deuxièmement, leur essais ont été étudiés pour analyser la façon dont les enseignants corrigent les essais des étudiants et sur quel aspect ces corrections sont basées.

Les résultats obtenus ont montré que les étudiant ont une attitude plutôt favorable vis à vis le type de feedback basé sur l'aspect structurel du texte. Les résultats ont aussi démontré que la majorité des étudiants souhaitent que leur enseignant corrigent toutes leur fautes commises dans leur essais.

Grâce à ces conclusions, l'étude a suggéré que la correction d'un essai ne doit pas seulement se conformer à un standard particulier basé sur les opinions des linguistes et des enseignants, mais aussi elle doit incorporer les besoins et les préférences des étudiants. Ainsi, on a proposé quelques techniques de correction qui peuvent aider les étudiants pour se prendre en charge pour corriger leur erreurs de l'expression écrite et à changer leur attitude négative envers les techniques de correction utilisées.

## ملخص

يبحث موضوع هذه الدراسة في تحليل نظرة الطلبة اتجاه التأطير المرجعي المعتمد من طرف أساندهم عند تصحيح إنتاجهم الكتابية.

تعتمد هذه الدراسة على الفرضية التالية: للطلبة الجزائريون نظرة سلبية اتجاه تصحيح الأساتذة المرتكز على الخصائص البنيوية للنص. الهدف إذن هو تحديد هذه النظرة من خلال معرفة ردود أفعال طلبة السنة الثانية إنجليزية لجامعة قسنطينة اتجاه أسلوب أساندهم في التصحيح و طرق التصحيح المفضلة لديهم.

و من أجل التحقق من صحة هذه الفرضية، اعتمدنا على إستمارة معلومات قدمت للطلبة لمعرفة آرائهم حول طرق أساندهم في تقويم كتاباتهم وكذلك اعتمدنا على دراسة كتابات نفس الطلبة لمعرفة الأساليب المتبعة من طرف هؤلاء الأساتذة في التصحيح.

و قد أوضحت النتائج أن للطلبة نظرة إيجابية اتجاه التصحيح المركز على الخصائص البنيوية للنص و يحبذون أن تصح كل أخطائهم. و بناء على هذه النتائج تبين أن التأطير المرجعي لا يجب أن يعتمد فقط على مقياس معين مبني على آراء علماء اللغة و الأساتذة المختصين و لكن يجب أن يأخذ بعين الإعتبار إحتياجات و رغبات الطلبة المعنيين.