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**Students' Perceptions and Emotional Responses towards Teachers'  
Feedback on EFL Writing**

**A Case of Third Year LMD Students of English**

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**Language sciences and Didactics of Language**

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*Boudra Asma's Dedication*

*To my loving mother and father, my entire love, whose love, care, and encouragement make me able to do this humble work*

*To my sweet sisters 'Hayet' and 'Fulla' for their great help and support*

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*To my lovely sister 'Sara' and her future husband 'Walid'*

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*To my dear friends 'Souhila', 'khadija', 'Manel', 'Amel' and 'Asma'*

*To all who are dear to me*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Teacher's feedback plays without doubt a vital role in enhancing students' writing accuracy and fluency. This dissertation, a total of three chapters, attempts to investigate students' perceptions and emotional responses to their teacher's feedback on their writing. It aims at exploring students' perceptions and preferences of feedback methods and types that teachers should consider when correcting their students' writings. In this study, it is hypothesised that students' have negative views and emotional responses toward their teachers' feedback. Our investigation is based on a questionnaire, which is administrated to a research sample of students, and an interview that is designed for teachers of writing. The results obtained reveal that students do have positive attitudes towards their teachers' feedback. Students differ in their preferences of one type of feedback over the other, but they avow the importance of feedback in enhancing their writing level. They even vindicate their eagerness to receive more feedback on their writings.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**CAH:** Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

**EA:** Error Analysis

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Writing plays no doubt a crucial role in the field of language teaching and learning. It is a vital skill and students are often evaluated by their control of it. Unfortunately, most of students find writing the most difficult skill. Also, teachers of writing often complain about their students' level of achievement in this skill.

It is generally accepted that teacher's feedback has a crucial role in enhancing students' writing skill. Butler and Nisan (1986, p.210), for instance, contend that one element of mastery "is the search for information about one's competence and success in a task... such information seems vital to a sense of mastery and self-determination because without it one cannot assess one's mastery in a given task." Many studies have been carried out to examine teachers' attitudes towards feedback and the different strategies they use to enhance students' writing (Lee, 2008; Ferris, 2011). However, few research works have been conducted to examine how students perceive, respond, and use feedback. Students' views and attitudes are often put under erasure.

Recent approaches to language teaching and learning have stressed the importance of involving students in deciding about their leaning. Dissimilar to the early theories of instruction, which downplayed learners' views, recent research in EFL have started to approach language learning and understand it from inside the learner, giving cardinal importance to such affective variables like attitudes, motivation, emotional responses, ...etc. There are even researchers who consider these affective variables more significant than the cognitive ones. Seki (2004, p.42) assumes that "affective variables have an influence over cognitive variables. It could even be said that they are in a way the basic variables influencing how well students learn a foreign language." Studies on feedback have started to focus on students' attitudes towards this pivotal aspect of writing. One of the earliest studies



conducted by Brown and Marks (1994) evinced that teachers' method of providing feedback is one of the factors that lead to students' negative attitudes towards the writing skill. Thus, students' views and opinions of feedback on writing must be considered by the teachers when delivering their feedback.

This study attempts to examine students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teacher's feedback in order to know why some students might not make use of teacher's feedback and how their teacher can address their errors without misleading them. In fact, many writing teachers invest a huge amount of time correcting their students' writings. However, they feel discouraged when they find that their feedback fails to achieve their intentions. Therefore, it is important for teachers to explore their students' opinions of their feedback in order to know how they can effectively respond to their errors without having any misconceptions or misunderstandings.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Many researchers emphasized the critical role that teacher's feedback plays in enhancing students' writing. They further focused on the strategies writing teachers need to use when providing feedback. In fact, students tend to ignore and overlook teacher's feedback on their writing. Despite the fact that teachers invest much time and effort correcting and giving comments on their learners' written work, most of students concentrate just on the mark, and they do not even have a look at their instructor's comments. They think of them more as a criticism than as suggestion or evaluation. Indeed, students sometimes fail at understanding their teacher's feedback; as a result, they treat it most of the time with indifference. Students usually expect some positive comments that tell them that there is something worth considering in their writings. However, when they get back their written texts full of corrections, they easily get demotivated and disappointed. They tend to think that

their teacher intends to spotlight only their errors to underestimate their writing abilities. Thus, overtime, when their teacher keeps providing his feedback the same way, they treat it with indifference. Hence, their writing level does not improve. Teachers need to pay considerable attention to their students' emotional responses to their feedback. Without understanding students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their instructor's written feedback, and their preferences of feedback types, we cannot talk in any way about enhancing students' achievement in writing.

## **2. Aims of the Study**

The present study aims at uncovering students' perceptions and attitudes towards feedback on their writing. It tries to find the appropriate ways that may contribute in raising students' awareness of the importance of feedback in improving their writing skills. In addition to that, this study also aims at examining the type of feedback that students think is more effective in enhancing their level of achievement in writing. This research also attempts to offer some implications and inspiring guidelines for teachers to make use of when providing feedback on their students' writing.

## **3. Significance of the Study**

In fact, several motives prompted this research work. In fact, there is a general dissatisfaction expressed by many writing teachers about the performance of their students, and learners enrolled at Mila and Jijel universities are cases in point. Second, this study is important insofar as writing failure is more likely to result in educational failure. Third, since feedback is a very important aspect of teaching writing, it is important for teachers to know how their students perceive and react to their feedback because marginalising students, who are supposed to be partners in the teaching-learning process, is likely to result in academic failure.

This research work evinces the role of written feedback in enhancing students' level of writing. It is based on the premise that writing teachers should take into account their students' perceptions and opinions of their feedback when treating their students' writings. This study aspires to provide some insightful guidelines for teachers to consider while providing feedback to EFL students' writings.

#### **4. Research Questions**

This study addresses the following questions:

- 1) What are the students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teachers' feedback on their writings?
- 2) What are best methods of providing feedback that students prefer?
- 3) How can teachers help students perceive their feedback positively?

#### **5. Hypotheses**

In pursuit of the aims of our study, and in order to answer the aforementioned questions, we hypothesize that:

1. Students hold negative perceptions and emotions towards their teacher's written feedback.
2. Teachers do not take into account their students' views and preferences in providing feedback.
3. Teachers and students have different perceptions of how feedback should be provided.

#### **6. Tools of Research**

In order to test the validity of our hypotheses and to reach the research aims, two research instruments are used. A questionnaire is provided for third year students of English at Mila University Centre and Jijel University. An interview is designed for teachers of

written expression. These two means of research are chosen for gathering the needed data for this study.

## **7. Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is composed of three chapters. The first and the second chapters constitute the theoretical part and the last one constitutes the practical part of our work. The first chapter, which is entitled “Teaching the Writing Skill”, provides an overview of the writing skill, approaches to teaching writing, and some affective variables related to writing. It also discusses the most common writing problems students challenge and suggests some solutions for them.

The second chapter is entitled “Students’ Perceptions of Teacher’s Feedback on their Writing”. It discusses the nature of feedback, types of feedback, in addition to early and current perspectives on error correction. It also highlights students’ perceptions and opinions of feedback on their writing. It ends with suggesting some guidelines for providing feedback.

The last chapter is devoted to the presentation and the analysis of students’ questionnaire and teachers’ interview in order to test the validity of our hypotheses. Then, at the end, we suggested some pedagogical implications teachers need to follow for effective feedback.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **TEACHING THE WRITING SKILL**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Basically, writing plays a cardinal role in second and foreign language proficiency, but still remains a challenging task. For this reason, a plethora of approaches have been introduced as an attempt to improve writing achievement. They typically differ in the means they implement in teaching writing, but they still share the same aim in terms of helping the learners to be communicatively competent. Teaching writing, thus, assumes an outstanding position in language learning and teaching. This chapter attempts to discuss at length the writing skill. It tackles some key issues and variables related to writing. It begins with an overview of the writing skill, approaches to teaching it with a focus on the writing process. Then, it sheds light on some affective variables of great importance in relation to writing like motivation, self-efficacy, and writing apprehension. This chapter ends up with discussing some writing problems and introducing some solutions for those problems.

#### **1. The Writing Skill**

In recent approaches to language teaching and learning, the writing skill is given a considerable attention because it plays a critical role in achieving proficiency in the language, and it is considered the most difficult skill to master for both native and non native speakers. Kern (2000; as cited in Usó-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006, p. 394) defined writing as “an individual, creative process and a socially constrained normative process”. In other words, writing is regarded as a complex phenomenon that demands higher individual cognitive processes and a considerable awareness of the sociocultural factors for successful writing. In order to explain the idea that writing is a complex and a demanding task, a reference must be

made to an aspect of cognitive psychology called ‘human information processing’ (Flynn & Stainthorp, 2006, p. 54). Actually, writing is one example of the human information processing because it requires higher mental activities and the activation of different processes to construct a written work. ‘Formulation’, ‘execution’, and ‘monitoring’ are three basic cognitive processes that act in the ‘working memory’ which is, in turn, a system that makes use of knowledge and experiences stored in the long term memory for creating a good piece of writing (Flynn & Stainthorp, 2006, p. 57). To begin with, the formulation system consists of planning the ideas and translating them into sentences. In the execution system, the ideas must be executed in a written language; whereas in the monitoring system, the written language is produced and read, and thus edited. Actually, these processes are not all the time in a linear order. It highly depends on the writer per se. If he is a skilled one, he is may be writing an idea and preparing for the next one at the same time.

Actually, the writing skill demands higher cognitive abilities. It is “the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to the reader” (Nunan, 2003; as cited in Afrin, 2016, p. 105). In this sense, writing helps students to free their minds from thoughts and put them into words so that to share them with others. So, writing makes thought visible in the sense that it is a process of decoding signs in the mind into words which, in turn, reflect the person’s thought. Usually, the student finds himself looking for ideas, word choice, adequate vocabulary, correct grammar, and an appropriate organisation for those ideas to produce a written text. This is a strong evidence that writing is not simply having a pen and paper and getting into writing; it is more than this. It requires cognitive processes that must be activated to construct a well formed text.

In fact, writing is compulsory to be taught in all academic levels due to its difficulty to acquire. Since students’ communicative competence is immeasurable, this competence can be

reflected in their performance i.e. in their writing. Students' writing is a mirror of their competence or their language leaning proficiency. Good writing, thus, is a proof that the student has accomplished a satisfactory level in the learning process. Unfortunately, many students show weakness in doing writing tasks. In here, the teacher has a central role to play in the writing process development. He is normally asked to perform the following roles. First, he should demonstrate the language features for the students; second, he must help them generate ideas and to be more enthusiastic for performing the writing task; moreover, he has to support them to overcome difficulties, and finally, the teacher should respond and evaluate their writing performance (Harmer, 2004, p. 41).

## **2. Characteristics of Good Writing**

Being a skillful writer means to master almost all the aspects of good writing. In other words, to have a well written piece of language, the student has to grasp the features that typify good texts. Any text should be free of form and content problems because without accurate grammar and organized ideas, no language could be served. Moreover, good English writing cannot be considered as such unless the aspects of coherence, cohesion, unity and accuracy are captured in the text.

### **2. 1. Coherence**

Coherence in a piece of writing can be achieved when its sentences are ordered according to a principle (Boardman & Frydenberg, 2008, p. 18). This principle is often identified by the type of the text. For instance, in writing a historical text, the events should be narrated in a chronological order. However, when writing an expository text, the sentences should be organized in a logical order. While writing a descriptive text, sentences should follow a spatial ordering. In this sense, the writer has to organize his supporting ideas and sentences in a way that facilitates the reader's understanding. That is, if the writer intends to

explain a given phenomenon, then he has to facilitate his explanation in order for the reader not to be lost or confused when the writer is ‘jumping’ from one idea to another with no respect to any ordering type.

## **2. 2. Cohesion**

A coherent text cannot be a good one if it lacks cohesion. The latter refers to the connection of the supporting sentences to each other to create a smooth moving of thought. In other words, the sentences should be related to each other through the use of cohesive devices. These cohesive devices refer to the “linguistic techniques at our disposal to make sure that our prose ‘sticks together’” (Harmer, 2004, p. 22). These cohesive devices could be connectors (coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions), personal pronouns, definite articles, and demonstratives.

## **2. 3. Unity**

A text is unified when its supporting sentences are related to its topic sentence. That is, all the included sentences in the text should maintain the main idea. Indeed, a text is said to be unified when it is coherent and cohesive. Losing unity in the text makes it senseless; thus, the reader’s understanding will not be gained. That is, the reader cannot identify the main frame of the written work since no typical idea is illustrated.

## **2. 4. Accuracy**

In fact, writing inaccuracy is one of the main aspects of writing that teachers usually do not tolerate. This is mainly because it often creates negative attitudes towards the student’s writing. Inaccuracy is diagnosed when the text contains errors related to form. They can be grammatical, lexical, and morphological errors that would interfere sometimes even with the comprehensibility of the text. Actually, good writing must be accurate.



### **3. Approaches to Teaching Writing**

The difficulty and the complexity of the writing task have led to the emergence of many researches and investigations. These researches aim at finding the best way to teach writing and to make an effective approach that teachers have to follow in order to make students' engagement in writing more successful. However, there is no absolute truth that a given approach is more effective than the other. The shift to learner centeredness has made a great change in scholars' perceptions and views in the sense that different theories have come to emerge in order to meet students' different learning styles and individual differences.

A writing approach represents a set of assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the writing skill, the strategies learners use to formulate an appropriate written work, and the techniques the teacher must implement to teach and foster students to write. Even though writing approaches differ in the means they apply in teaching writing, they all aim at helping students to be skilful writers.

#### **3. 1. The Product Approach**

This traditional approach is behaviouristic in nature in the sense that it perceives writing as “a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences into the prescribed pattern” (Wen, 2013, p. 428). This approach views writing as a final product that must contain linguistic patterns of previously learned features. The main assumption of this approach is that students are presented with ‘modals of good writing’ and asked to imitate these examples (Coffin et al., 2003, p. 9). In fact, students are assigned to study and examine a modal text provided by the teacher and to sort out its main linguistic features to be imitated and by the end to form habits based on the studied text. For instance, from a literary text, students will learn a range of lexis, grammatical patterns, and the different techniques used for attracting readers' attention such as the use of beautiful expressions, metaphor, idioms, similes, and proverbs.

Then, after getting familiar with the different features of a given written discourse, sufficient practice and good instruction should be emphasised. This is typically done through teacher's guidance. Finally, the student reaches the productive stage where he organizes his thoughts and ideas and puts what have been previously taught and practised in a well constructed and formed written text. In other words, teaching writing from the view of this approach is a four stages process; familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing (Hyland, 2003, pp. 3-4). According to the product approach, "accuracy and clear exposition are considered the main criteria of good writing, while the actual communicative content, the *meaning*, is left to be dealt with later" (Hyland, 2003, p. 4). That is, this approach is form-based. It gives much prominence to accuracy; whereas ideas and organisation will be considered later when grammatical accuracy is secured.

### **3. 2. The Process Approach**

This approach does not deal with writing as a final product but as a process (Bayat, 2014, p. 1133). It sheds light on how the writer writes rather on what he writes. Usually, the writing process depends on:

- Who you are writing to or for (reader)
- Why you are writing (purpose)
- What you are writing about ( content)
- Where you are, how much time you have, how you feel (situation) (Brown & Hood, 1989, p. 6).

In other words, knowing the audience influences the level of language formality (formal or informal). The purpose of writing impacts the type of the text (argumentative, descriptive, expository....etc). The content helps for better sequencing of the ideas and arguments. And the context of writing affects the writing process as a whole.

The process approach provides students with the following extended opportunities for writing:

Writing for real audiences; engaging in cycles of planning, translating, and reviewing; personal responsibility and ownership of writing projects; high levels of student interactions, creation of a supportive writing environment; self-reflection and evaluation; and personalized individual assistance and instruction as needed. (Graham, 2010, p. 130)

Based on this assumption, students often get the chance to perceive the reader's reaction to their writing since interaction and discussion are highly emphasised, and thus, they edit what seems inappropriate in their writing. At the same time, they can be evaluators of their peers' writings so that they try to provide assistance and guidance whenever needed. Students in this approach are asked to be more responsible for their own learning. Moreover, The process approach considers writing as a cognitive process that "in its broad sense—as distinct from simply putting words on paper—has three steps: thinking about it, doing it, and doing it again (and again and again as often as time will allow and patience will endure)" (Kane, 1988, p. 17). Writing requires higher mental abilities and consists of different steps which all aim at creating a well formed written draft by the end. "The first step, 'thinking,' involves choosing a subject, exploring ways of developing it, and devising strategies of organization and style. The second step, 'doing,' is usually called 'drafting'; and the third, 'doing again,' is 'revising'" (Kane, 1988, p. 17). Writing, thus, consists of planning, drafting, revising and editing stages that are clarified as follows:

### **3. 2. 1. Planning**

Writing is like taking a trip. Planning and preparation will usually result in a smoother voyage and give the writer confidence and energy to complete the trip. The writer is usually asked to transcribe whatsoever in his mind into words, sentences, and even drawings that reflect his thoughts. What matters in here is that the writer must “keep going; to pause is to risk getting stuck, like a car in snow” (Kane, 1988, p. 25).

Generally, good writing requires a tangible planning that a writer prepares before he writes in terms of ideas, notes or key words. For some students few words could be enough; for others detailed notes would serve their planning; but there are others who do not need to write their ideas down; their planning is in their heads (Harmer, 2004, p. 4). Generally, students differ in their planning of ideas. They may rely on words, charts, outlines and so on. Galko (2001, pp. 19-20) noted that there are several strategies for writers to express their ideas in the planning stage, namely: brainstorming, free writing, asking questions, mapping, journaling, listing, visualising, and using charts.

1. Brainstorming: the flow of idea is not judged or controlled
2. Free writing: transcribing the thoughts as they are
3. Asking questions: raising some questions concerning the topic
4. Mapping: making a visual representation of ideas (outlining)
5. Journaling: writing ideas in journal
6. Listing: listing the ideas about the given topic
7. Visualising: giving opportunity for imagination to take place
8. Using charts: formulating the ideas in the form of charts (pp. 19-20).

### **3. 2. 2. Drafting**

After preparation and planning, drafting is the coming step which is the real starting point of writing. It is to jot down the words and let the ideas get down without being worried about accuracy, coherence or cohesion. It is to keep the flow of writing go easily regardless of grammatical, spelling, or even punctuation aspects of language. It is not the best time to care about spelling, grammar, wording or punctuation, what really matters in this stage is to get words onto the paper (Brown & Hood, 1989, p. 14). In other words, the student writes whatsoever pops into his mind and he should not be anxious about making mistakes either small or big mistakes because, if so, the student will write nothing. Hence, the aim of this stage is to transcribe the writer's ideas onto the paper.

Drafts are not final pieces of writing, and they will not be evaluated or graded (Berne, 2009, p. 52). Since grades are not provided for drafts, students must not worry about accuracy or correctness. The aim of drafting is to focus on the main ideas that will be discussed later. In fact, "drafting isn't always clear, and it doesn't need to be" (Berne, 2009, p. 53). That is, the initial text or the rough draft is considered as part of the writing process which does not need any correctness or appropriateness. Drafting is a very helpful stage to get good results. And it can be taken "as a rule, the more you draft, the better the result" (Kane, 1988, p. 34). The number of drafts depends on the type of the text, the available time, and even on the students' knowledge and familiarity with the topic itself (Galko, 2001, p. 50). That is, writing an essay is not like writing a story. Indeed, writing on an interesting topic for the student is not the same when writing about something the student does not appreciate. Also, doing a writing exam is not the same as making an assignment at home in two weeks or more.

### **3. 2. 3. Revising and Editing**

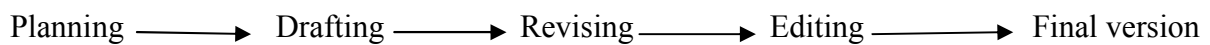
The student writer in this step imagines himself as if he is the reader. He will check whether the content and the purpose are clear and suitable for the reader in a specific situation

(Brown & Hood, 1989, p. 20). After revising his work, the student then uses the monitor to edit the form of language that seems inaccurate or inappropriate. He may omit, add, and replace what seems out of place in the written work. According to Brown and Hood (1989, p. 20) “Revising might take place while you are drafting or after you have finished a draft (your first, second or twentieth draft !)”.

### 3. 2. 4. The Final Version

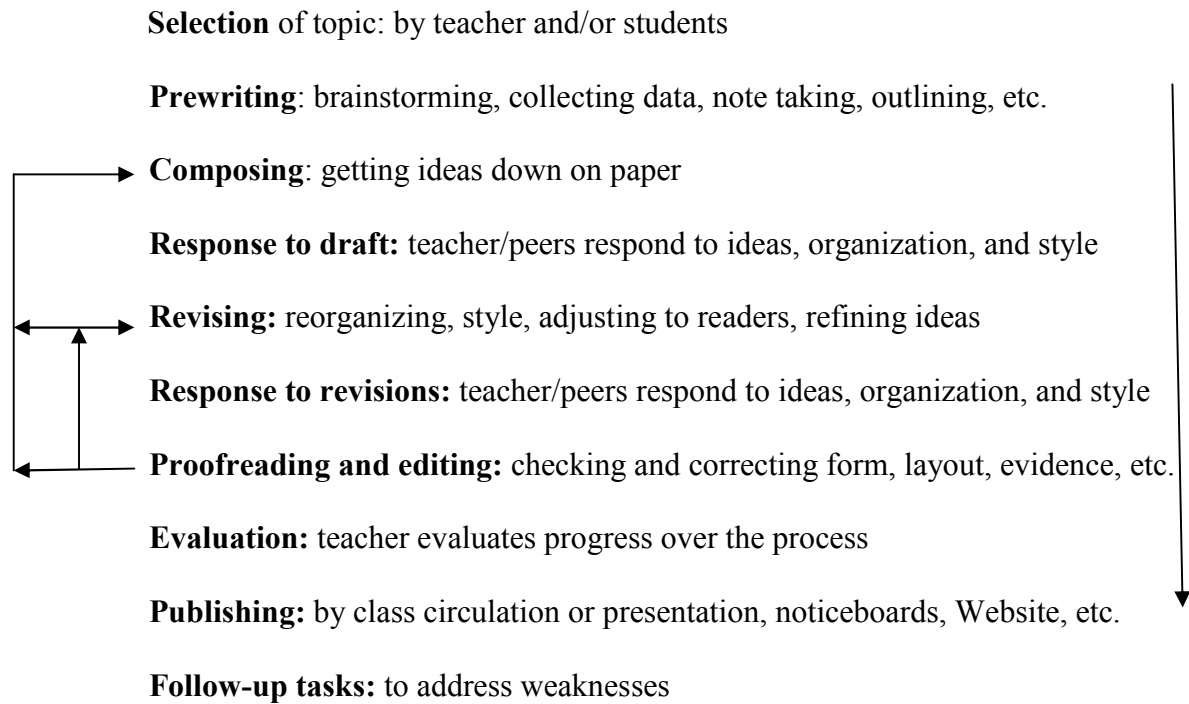
The student produces many drafts in which he writes, revises, and edits his drafts. Then, he reaches the final stage where he gets to produce the final product that he believes to be clear, correct, and ready to be submitted to the intended reader.

From the aforementioned classification of stages, we may think of writing as following this linear order:



**Figure 1:** The linear ordering of the writing process.

Harmer (2004, p. 5) maintained that the writing process is not linear, instead it is recursive; simply because the writer plans, drafts, edits, and he often re-plans, re-drafts, and re-edits. Hyland (2003, p. 11) supported the view that the writing process is interactive and recursive in the sense that the writer may jump backward or forward to any of those activities. To make his viewpoint clear, he suggested a process model for writing instruction:



**Figure 2:** A Process Model of Writing Instruction (Hyland, 2003, p. 11).

In addition to what has been mentioned previously about the process approach, the latter emphasises the significant role of interaction and collaborative writing. In this approach, the student has the opportunity to perform different roles. He may read an essay written by his classmate (writer), and then, he revises and proofreads it (reader and reviewer). Thus, he can be both a writer and a reviewer.

### 3.3. The Genre Approach

The emergence of this approach dates back to the 1980s when it came to emphasise the role of culture and the social context of the writing task. The genre approach is “based on the view that language is processed and understood in the form of texts” (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 13). The student transcribes his thoughts into writing which, in turn, will be processed and analysed to get the intended meaning the student wants to communicate. Hence, writing is considered as a socio-cultural phenomenon and a direct means for communication. In order to understand the principal aim of this approach, a clear explanation

for the term 'genre' must be introduced. Genre simply refers to the communicative purpose behind any writing, narrating, convincing, or even applying for something. Usó-Juan, Martinez, and Palmer-Silveira (2006, p. 388) stated that genres "are not patterns of words but rather socially accepted ways of using the language for communicative purposes". That is, the genre approach perceives writing as a tool for communicative purposes. In this approach, there must be a reason behind any writing. Thus, the purpose of writing, the context where writing occurs, and the conventions of the speech community are of higher prominence for the writer in the genre approach (Gao, 2007, para. 9). In this case, genre knowledge is mandated. Actually, in the genre approach, more attention is paid to "the language and discourse features of particular texts and the context in which the text is used" (Gao, 2007, para. 9). The basic belief in this approach is "that we don't just *write*, we write *something* to achieve some *purpose*: it is a way of getting something done" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18). For instance, the writer writes to tell a story, to express his feelings, or to argue about something.

#### **4. Proficient vs. less Proficient Writers**

Generally speaking, writers are said to be of two kinds: proficient and less proficient writers. Basically, proficient writers are much more aware of all the issues in the writing process such as: generating ideas, planning, drafting, and revising their writing (Westwood, 2008, p. 58). Good writers usually have the adequate vocabulary, knowledge of the structural features, and good strategies for clearly expressing their ideas so that to reach their audience's expectations and needs. By contrast, weak writers face difficulties in managing the writing task due to their lack of knowledge and their inability to implement those strategies. Over time, they develop negative attitudes towards writing, and thus they avoid the writing task whenever possible (Westwood, 2008, p. 59). Usually, lack of motivation and fear of writing accompany most unskilful students so that they try to avoid those feelings through avoiding the writing task.



Another distinction is that skilled student writers spend considerable time thinking about the readers and the effect of their writing on them; contrariwise, unskilled student writers focus on the topic per se and bear less concern about the readers (Barkaoui, 2007a, p. 84). Good student writers often know that their main aim is to make the reader understand, interpret, and enjoy what he is reading. Indeed, they know that the reader is somebody other than themselves. Thus, they spend time revising and editing their writing in order to produce a more acceptable written work from the part of the reader. By contrast, unskilled writers tend to write as if they are writing for themselves. They do not bother themselves to be clear and understood by the reader. They think that everybody thinks the same way as they do. For them, it is the reader's responsibility to interpret what the writer intends to communicate. In here, it is very crucial for the writer to consider the notion of audience. Indeed, due to their negative perceptions of their writing abilities, weak writers tend to be less motivated and more anxious about writing, and most of the time, they prefer passivity over challenging their potentials.

Hidi and Boscolo (2007, p. 3) claimed that "an expert writer is able to recognize and overcome difficulties when writing ... whereas a novice writer tends to be aware of his or her weaknesses only through a teacher's feedback on his or her written production". Competent students, due to their knowledge, can write a coherent and a grammatically correct text. If they commit errors, they can edit and correct what is wrong. However, incompetent students tend to notice their errors only through their teacher's feedback. And most of the time, they fail to do self editing or correction. This is a very important issue to be considered by the teacher when teaching writing. Less proficient students do not notice their errors because of their weaknesses in many areas in writing (grammar, vocabulary, ideas, spelling...etc). The teacher's role in here is to restore students' lost motivation and self-confidence in writing through providing a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere that encourages them to take

risks and frees them from fear to write. The focal point in teaching writing is to make students understand that errors are part of the learning process, and these errors reflect their endeavour and challenge to master the language. On the whole, “for an expert writer a difficulty is basically perceived as a problem to be solved, whereas a novice student sees a problem as an obstacle which makes a writing task ‘dangerous’ and unattractive” (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007, p. 3). Actually, good student writers are highly motivated and they have a more positive view about writing since they do not come across obstacles in writing (due to practice), and they commonly receive positive feedback which raises their self-esteem and even inspires them to be better. On the contrary, weak writers easily give up when they face any difficulty due mainly to their lack of motivation or their underestimation of their abilities. So, “weaker writers will still need a very large amount of support and guidance from their teachers to reach the stage where they can recognise their own progress” (Westwood, 2008, p. 59). In other words, mere encouragement from the part of the teacher would help the student to feel more relaxed, less afraid, and gain confidence to write better.

## **5. Affective Variables in EFL Writing**

“Writing is a hard work” is the most common saying among EFL students. This is clearly declared because writing is a contextualised process that needs much more concern about the reader, the context, the genre of writing, the structure, the lexis and so on. In the recent writing teaching applications, a considerable attention has been given to the factors governing and surrounding the writing process especially the writer. Issues like students’ motivation, self-efficacy, and writing apprehension have been widely studied and investigated due to their relation to the students’ affective side that Krashen’s (1982) affective filter hypothesis stresses its importance in language acquisition.

## **5. 1. Motivation and Writing**

Over the past decades, “teachers have been more concerned with how to improve children’s ability to write than with how to increase their interest in writing” (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007, p. 5). Recently, many studies provide evidence that motivation plays a crucial role in writing enhancement. And therefore, they justified students’ weaknesses in writing with their low motivation. Almost all language teachers have started to recognise the fact that many students lack motivation to write. This lack of motivation mostly results from the difficulty of the writing process. Motivation is considered as a crucial impetus for activating and sustaining the writing skill. And without motivation even people with high abilities cannot get access to their goals. A study conducted by Yuan-bing (2011) for investigating the relationship between motivation and writing performance found that motivation strongly affects students’ achievement in writing. The more students are motivated the better results they get. That is, motivation is the energetic source of success.

In order to understand students’ motivation and its relation to writing, a reference must be made to three main areas, namely: motives, the writer’s perception of his ability to write, and the writer’s academic level (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007, p. 2). To begin with, the first area deals with ‘motives’. They can be defined as students’ goals, needs, and interests which are the impetus behind the writing task .i.e. a writer, regardless of being a student or an expert writer, should have an intention behind writing any piece of language. This means that behind any writing process, there must be a purpose for doing it. The second area is the student’s perception of his writing ability in relation to the difficulty of the task and the context of writing. In other words, writers have different views of their self-efficacy and self-perception of their competences. Hence, fear of being criticised by the audience, being a teacher or anyone else, may intervene in the writing task. Thus, having positive or negative self-perception has a cardinal impact on students’ motivation to write. Finally, the last area is the

academic level of the writer which also has a big influence on students' motivation. In other words, when dealing with a demanding task, a novice and a professional writer may behave differently and use different strategies to do the task. That is, their self regulation is not the same, i.e. they have different ways of generating, planning, drafting and constructing their piece of writing.

In order for the students to overcome their lack of motivation to write, the following strategies could serve this aim:

1) The students must have an imagined audience that raises their motivation to write. In other words, when the student imagines that a reader will read his work, he will be better engaged in the writing task. Indeed, he will try to be interesting, clear, understood, and avoid ambiguity as much as possible.

2) According to Barkaoui (2007b, p. 42), "Teachers should identify and discuss learners' writing experiences, beliefs, needs, and goals with the aim of rectifying misconceptions (e.g., that writing is a gift) and enhancing positive attitudes towards writing". That is to say, teachers must discuss at length their students' perceptions and opinions of the writing task so that they know at first whether they like writing or not and if they face any difficulties in writing. If the students hold negative attitudes towards writing, it will be the teacher's job to redirect their views to be more positive. Indeed, trying to make the input fit into the students' needs and interests will make them more engaged, and even eager to be in the writing task.

3) Teachers must create a comfortable, relaxed and attractive environment for lowering students' anxiety and gaining much interest and attention. The more relaxed the students are, the lower their anxiety is, and the higher their engagement and participation would be.

4) Students need to have good writing experiences and models. In this sense, when learners do interesting activities they can gain experience from their writings, and later they would

perceive themselves as good writers. Indeed, reading for good writers will influence the way students write in a more positive way. And it would be more beneficial if they take them as models to be imitated.

5) Teachers should vary and give meaningful activities to enhance students' motivation .i.e. the teacher must be aware of his students' interests and individual differences and provide them with varied and updated content and topics.

## **5. 2. Writing and Self Efficacy**

Due to the higher emphasis on students' psychology and emotional state in recent teaching approaches, the notion of self-efficacy has got a great attention. Basically, self-efficacy refers to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated level of performance" (Bandura, 1994, p. 1). That is to say, self efficacy demonstrates peoples' perceptions and views of their own abilities when dealing with a certain task. Indeed, self efficacy can refer as well to "'efficacy', 'self confidence', 'self perception of ability', 'perceived competence', 'confidence' and 'a subjective measure of proficiency'"(Ruegg, 2014, p. 2). Researchers have recently recognised that students' beliefs about their abilities have a critical role in their motivation. Usually, self-efficacious students are claimed to possess higher motivation and to spend much more effort in their learning; contrariwise, less-efficacious students tend to give up easily when facing difficulties (Ruegg, 2014, p. 1). In this sense, self-efficacious students feel more motivated and consider the writing difficulties as challenging ones, thus, they must be solved and not avoided. Generally, the higher self-confident the students are, the more motivated they will be. Hence, with effort and practice, they will achieve a high level of performance in writing. A study was conducted by Hidi, Ainley, Berndorff, and Del Favero (2007) as an endeavour to find out the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their interest to write on their writing performance. The

results revealed that students' self-efficacy and their motivation to write have a direct bearing on their writing performance. So, good writing is achieved when students have confidence in their writing abilities, and they are interested in the writing task.

### **5.3. Writing Apprehension**

More recently, there has been a growing interest in the issue of writing apprehension that students experience when they intend to write. Writing apprehension refers to the fear of writing. "It is generally understood to mean negative, anxious feelings (about oneself as a writer, one's writing situation, or one's writing task) that disrupt some part of the writing process" (Bobanović, 2016, p. 7). In other words, it is the state or the situation that holds feelings of stress and anxiety a student may undergo when doing a writing task. This fear of writing is caused by many factors, naming: low self confidence, the pressure of time, the audience, the writer addresses (himself, his peers, or his teacher), and the situational context. To be more specific, these anxious and uncomfortable emotions come to exist in relation to the context in which the writer is asked to write. For instance, the student may feel at ease when he writes a personal journal, but anxious when he tries to write an email to his teacher. That is to say, people's anxiety is situational. Indeed, writing apprehension is also related to the purpose behind students' writing. It could be pleasurable, creative and exciting if they write in their free time, but it could be unattractive, frustrating, and avoidable when they write in an exam situation.

In fact, many students experience the intense fear of writing due to their lack of vocabulary, shortage of ideas, or incompetency in grammar; as a result, they try to avoid the task of writing as long as possible. So, the over emphasis on grammar makes the students usually focus more on the way they shall say it rather than what they are trying to say, and

this would raise their fear of writing inaccurately. Therefore, they will perceive writing as a tedious task.

A study had been accomplished by Bobanović (2016) as an attempt to figure out the reasons behind students' writing anxiety. The study hypothesised that students' gender and academic level have an impact on writing apprehension. The findings showed that students' gender plays no role in writing apprehension in contrast to their academic level which influences writing anxiety. For instance, first year students of English do not share the same feelings of fear with post graduate students because the latter become more aware of the writing process, stages and strategies of good writing, and they even become more experienced. In this way, writing anxiety is believed "to impede students in their academic work" (Kurt & Atay, 2007, p. 13). Because fear of writing will result in negative attitudes and feelings of distress whenever students do a writing activity, their academic level will logically decrease. In this case, students must get accustomed to the language as long as they can because if they do so, they gain more experience, and they become less anxious to write.

## **6. Collaborative Writing**

Basically, collaborative writing or writing in groups is believed to have a remarkable role in lowering students' fear and anxiety to write. Collaborative writing is the environment where "learners were randomly assigned into groups and were encouraged to collaborate with their peers instead of writing independently" (Tai, Lin & Yang, p. 290). A study has been conducted by McAlister (2005) to figure out the effect of collaborative learning on students' achievement. In this study, it was proved that in doing a cooperative task, children and adults perform well especially when they have similar roles. The focal tenet of collaboration is that it is a social work where students can interact with each other, share knowledge, negotiate meaning, assist each other, and even give and receive feedback when needed. Indeed, they

may use their peers as a source of information and revision. Indeed, collaborative writing increases almost all aspects of communication.

Interestingly, when students get in touch with their peers, they gain more self-confidence and become more motivated to write. In other words, collaborative writing leads to better motivation which, in turn, results in higher performance. However, collaborative writing might be a daunting task for many students; especially when there is a disparity between students' knowledge and their learning styles. For instance, students may have different interpretations for a given assignment. They may also want to express an idea in a particular way that seems unpersuasive for the other partner. Indeed, when a group consists of students with different levels, we may come across the problem of dominant and passive students. Usually, students who have an advanced level tend to dominate the discussion while those with a poor level prefer to be passive. But this does not denote that writing collaboratively is not useful or reliable for enhancing students' writing skill. It still "can enhance learning through joint scaffolding and discussion" (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012, p. 365).

A study had been conducted by Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) as an attempt to figure out what role collaboration has in writing enhancement. The results have shown that collaboration does not improve only students' writing skill, but it also affects their attitudes toward writing per se. Another study, that has been conducted by Khatib and Meihami (2015), has shown that collaborative writing does not enhance only grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics; but, also, content and organization. More precisely, collaborative writing promotes active learning through engaging students in the writing process in the sense that they feel more responsible and self controlled rather than being passive recipients. It also reduces their stress and anxiety of writing and promotes mutual help.



## **7. Writing Problems**

In fact, writing is considered the most difficult and challenging task to master. Indeed, “developing clear and accurate expression through writing presents major problems for most students with learning difficulties” (Westwood, 2008, p. 56). These problems take place mainly because writing is a complex process and a thinking tool that mandates higher cognitive abilities. Students have to generate ideas for their writing, transcribe and organise those ideas into sentences and paragraphs, and then revise those paragraphs and edit them when necessary. Students used to claim that incorrect grammar and inadequate vocabulary are the major reasons which make writing difficult for them. However, it is not all the time a matter of grammar and vocabulary. Students may have good grammar and rich vocabulary but how to combine them all together and to construct a well organised text is the problematic issue. Indeed, the main reason behind students’ reluctance to write is that they rarely write even in their native language (Harmer, 2004, p. 61). In here, the teacher must work regularly on building his students’ writing habit by inviting them to write either by suggesting interesting topics, varying the activities, or even collaborative writing.

A study has been done by Afrin (2016) to investigate the most common problems with students’ writing and the reasons underlying those problems. The study suggested a list of errors that students can make at and beyond the sentence level, namely: spelling mistakes, misuse of tenses, subject-verb agreement, punctuation and fragments, prepositions, number (plural and singular), pronoun agreement (e.g. she like), misuse of words, misuse of articles, capitalization, in addition to organizational problems, coherence and cohesion. The findings showed that spelling mistakes, misuse of tenses, subject-verb agreement, and punctuation mistakes were heavily committed. In addition, the results revealed that students face serious problems with generating ideas, expressing them clearly. They also have problems of cohesion and coherence, plagiarism and repetition. Indeed, this study evinces that lack of

practice, grammatical weakness, lack of motivation, insufficient vocabulary, and heavy reliance on memorization are the main reasons behind students' writing problems. In fact, many teachers still rely on the traditional method of memorisation, and this creates a serious impediment for students to write.

In addition to the aforementioned learners' problems in writing, instructional problems are also of higher importance to be considered. Gao (2007, para. 3-7) has identified five major problems with teaching and assessing writing, namely: emphasis on linguistic accuracy, overlooking the development of writing ability, overemphasis on the product, lack of input of genre knowledge, and lack of variety of assessment. Broadly speaking, they are all about one basic problem which is the focus on form and the final product in teaching or assessing the writing skill.

### **7. 1. Some Solutions for Writing Problems**

- 1) As the saying goes, perfection results from practice. Much practice leads to more development. The more students practise writing, the better they get accustomed to the different linguistic features, and the easier they overcome difficulties. In this sense, making the subject clear, providing suggestions, and asking students to write about topics that are interesting for them inside or outside the classroom could facilitate the writing task and motivate them to write.
- 2) Students need to spend considerable time thinking and planning for what to write and how to clearly express their ideas. In fact, good writing takes time. This is obviously because writing is a demanding task that requires cognitive processes like attention, monitoring, decoding, retrieval and so on. The student must plan before he directly writes on paper using the varied planning strategies like mapping, brainstorming, and outlining that are of great importance for the student

to be more organised in his writing and why not to be a proficient writer in the future. In other words, planning helps students to organize their ideas before copying them down.

- 3) Revision is believed to be the key step for overcoming writing problems. In fact, good writers are often aware of the importance of revision in enhancing their writing ability. Through revision students get the opportunity to read their writings carefully and to modify what seems inappropriate.
- 4) Students have to learn about how to correctly spell words. In fact, any good writing should be free of spelling mistakes. As saddler (2006; as cited in Westwood, 2008, p. 62) put it “learning to spell in a language like English is not an easy task”. Overcoming the spelling problem helps students to focus more on the context and how to integrate their knowledge in better ways rather on how to produce the correct spelling for a given word.
- 5) In addition, reading is considered the most effective strategy for overcoming students’ writing problems.

### **7. 1. 1. The Role of Reading in Writing Enhancement**

Generally speaking, teachers usually explain their students’ weaknesses in writing with their famous comment “because they do not read”. “A writer’s brain is like a magician’s hat. If you’re going to get anything out of it, you have to put something in first” (L’Amour, 1990; as cited in Graham, 2010, p. 125). It is well common that expert writers are by nature ‘addicted’ readers. Basically, good writers do huge reading activities, i.e. the more reading activities are done, the higher writing proficiency will be gained. When the student receives sufficient amount of knowledge, he, then, can sort out his collection of information to get a good writing recipe. Krashen (2004, p. 37) stated that “reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced

grammatical competence, and the only way we become good spellers”. So, reading is an elegant way that any student should pass through to reach proficiency in writing. Indeed, reading is a suitable input for the writing skill acquisition because through this skill, the student can improve his linguistic knowledge. That is, reading a piece of language means knowing about the language features, and thus, learning the writing conventions. For example, reading different genres helps the student to have a global view about different writings. They will learn new concepts and terms that could be used in different contexts. Also, reading enhances students’ awareness of their audience’s expectations. The student who makes lots of readings always gives thoughtful attention to his reader, and he is heedful of what should suit his reader’s needs. That is to say, the writer ought to have an audience in his mind even if this audience is himself. Nelson (2007, p. 28) stated that “Writers produce their texts to move audiences in some way, and, without audience, there would be no reason to write”. Hence, a successful student is the one who, by his writing, achieves the intended effects on his intended audience. Graham, Gillespie, and McKeown (2012, p. 3) claimed that “writing provides a powerful tool for influencing others”.

Moreover, reading helps to improve students’ writing style in the sense that they will learn new lexicon and new expressions and terms that would be very useful to develop their writing style. In addition, an active reader, over time, will develop a higher level of critical thinking. That is, the student will be able to make the right decisions about words choice, ideas organisation, and the audience interests.

To sum up, having a problem in reading or doing insufficient readings will directly affect the ongoing improvement of the writing task. Krashen (2004, p. 150) confirmed that “well-read people write well because...we rarely find well-read people who have serious problems with grammar, spelling, and so on”. So, to be a good writer, the student has to be free of reading problems.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, teaching writing is a very important issue that is still thoroughly discussed and studied in academia worldwide. As this chapter has shown, writing in English is of a complex, sophisticated, and multi-faceted nature which requires learners to develop a series of abilities. A plethora of approaches have been introduced, and they all endeavour to provide directions and guidance for teaching writing. These approaches differ in their views of writing; however, they all attempt to help learners to be communicatively competent in their writings. Due to students' individual differences, there is no method that can be described as the best one for teaching writing. It is the teacher's role to decide upon the suitable approach that can be applied in his class. Of utmost importance, the teacher should be aware of his students' psychological side and needs while teaching writing because aspects like motivation, self- efficacy, and writing apprehension have a great influence on students' level of achievement. Significantly, this chapter has also shown the importance of collaborative writing and the role of reading in enhancing students' level of achievement in the writing skill. As the chapter demonstrates, successful writing does not only require cognitive and intellectual abilities. Affective variables are also decisive of one's level of achievement in the writing skill.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER'S FEEDBACK ON THEIR WRITING

#### INTRODUCTION

Providing feedback has become a very important issue in the field of second and foreign language writing, especially in the last decades, in which a plethora of studies have proved its critical role in enhancing students' writing skill. Thus, researchers and scholars have become more interested in making teachers aware of the usefulness of feedback and how to make it more effective. Recently, writing teachers, since students' psychology is highly stressed, are asked to pay considerable attention to their students' perceptions, views, and feelings when providing feedback. This chapter aims at providing a clear view about feedback and students' perceptions and feelings towards it. It touches upon the early and recent views of error correction, the different types of feedback, some arguments for providing feedback, and a range of approaches that teachers might follow in their provision of feedback. In particular, this chapter describes the various perceptions and opinions students hold about their teacher's feedback. Then, it ends with suggesting some guidelines writing teachers need to be aware of when treating their students' errors.

#### 1. Feedback

##### 1. 1. Definition of Feedback

Feedback is considered as “a vital part of the teacher's role, and something that the teacher is uniquely able to provide, but precisely because it involves pointing out people's mistakes” (Harmer, 1998, p.62). Teachers usually feel that feedback is a critical part of their job because it is the only way to highlight and to point out their students' errors. So, error correction or feedback is any information provided for evaluating and reflecting upon the level of satisfaction with the student behaviour. Brookhart (2008, p. 2) stated that “good

feedback gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next”. This means that feedback provides specific descriptions and suggestions for a given student work which helps the student to know his current level and decide upon the future objectives. More precisely, feedback is a “reciprocal arrangement in which tutors’ written comments signal information to students about how well they are on course to their target, and students, in turn, use the comments to redirect their learning” (Burke & Pieterick, 2010, p. 4). Hence, feedback is more than assessing and marking. Its aim is to inform the students about their level of competency in the target language. In fact, one might say that without feedback, students’ level of achievement may be hampered and their interest may decline. Feedback is of utmost importance in the writing process because without sufficient feedback, improvement will not take place.

Indeed, feedback can either take a positive direction in terms of supporting, encouraging, and showing satisfaction with the student’s written work ( positive feedback), or a corrective one in which feedback is meant to signify dissatisfaction with the student’s work by indicating that the student has made an error in his writing ( corrective feedback). Egan (2002; as cited in Kurtöglu-Hooton, 2016) distinguished between the two types of feedback by referring to the positive feedback as confirmatory feedback. However, his definitions of feedback are not specific to the educational context. He claimed that “through confirmatory feedback, significant others such as helpers, relatives, friends, and colleagues let clients know that they are on course—that is moving successfully through the steps of their action programs toward their goals” (2002; as cited in Kurtöglu-Hooton, 2016, p. 2). So, this feedback i.e. positive feedback confirms that the student’s behaviour or performance is adequate, and, thus, he is seeking the right way to successfully achieve proficiency in his learning. However, it is “through corrective feedback [that] significant others let clients know that they have wandered off course and what they need to do to get back on” (Egan, 2002; as

cited in Kurtöglu-Hooton, 2016, p.2). In this respect, positive feedback encourages the learner to carry on because his performance went well; contrariwise, corrective feedback informs the learner that he deviates from the desired level of performance that he is expected to achieve. Basically, corrective feedback represents a kind of correction while confirmatory feedback denotes “a pat on the back” (Kurtöglu-Hooton, 2016, p. 3). In this sense, Brookhart (2008, p. 57) claimed that “feedback is not feedback unless it can truly feed something”. In other words, feedback cannot be considered as such unless it serves students’ needs in terms of enhancing their writing skill. By and large, responding to students’ errors is affected by the teachers’ assumptions and views on the notion of error.

### **1. 1. 1. Definition of Error**

Usually, errors in speech can be ignored for the purpose of fluent interaction, whereas errors in writing seem to be more permanent and when they often appear in essays, e-mails, and reports, they build negative attitudes on the part of the reader (Sampson, 2012, p. 494). In speaking, the interlocutors are involved simultaneously, and they can use body language and some sort of communication strategies when the message is not successfully conveyed; however, in writing the writer and his audience are far from each other. So, the reader is affected only by what is written in front of him because he cannot expect what the writer intended to say as a true message. In fact, this affects the smooth reading of the written work that may hurt the reader’s ear and gives him bad impression about the written product and even about the writer’s abilities.

Ferris (2011, p. 3) defined the notion of error as “morphological, syntactic, and lexical forms that deviate from rules of the target language, violating the expectations of literate adult native speakers”. So, any deviation from the rules of the target language is considered as an error. In fact, defining the concept of error can be a little bit problematic due to the different views and perceptions that teachers and scholars hold regarding this issue. On the



one hand, making errors could be seen as a natural stage of development, and students cannot truly develop their knowledge unless they exhibit errors in their outputs. That is, making errors is quite normal in the learning process and through time, students will reach the stage when they get rid of them forever. More importantly, errors are not obstacles in the learning path, they are part of the learning process since they reflect students' endeavour to learn and to master the language. On the other hand, errors could be viewed as problems that should be avoided and they must not appear in the student's output. If not so, they will interrupt the learning process and will result in fossilization.

Earlier studies tried to explain the phenomenon of errors in relation to the student's mother tongue. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) was strongly a supporting assumption to this idea (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p. 4). It has been assumed that learners' errors are derived from the negative transfer. Researchers picked up the similarities and differences between learners' L1 and L2, and, then, hypothesised that by recognising the differences, it would be easy to predict areas of difficulty. In this sense, similarities do not cause problems. Thus, this transfer is seen as positive. However, differences lead to difficulty, and thus, errors. In this case, this transfer is negative. Later on, this assumption has fallen out of favour due to the emergence of Error Analysis (EA) that heavily criticised the CAH's lack of empirical investigation, and proved that L1 is not the only source of errors (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p. 5) since there are many errors made by learners that cannot be explained in relation to their mother tongue but in relation to the target language itself like overgeneralization.

### **1. 1. 2. Types of Errors:**

Ferris (2011) discussed four types of errors which are global errors, local errors, treatable errors, and untreatable errors. Global errors are those errors that affect the understanding of a given language structure like the sentence, whereas local errors do not

break the flow of communication, but they can be easily noticed at the level of the sentence. For instance, the sentence “she stooded by her mirror” contains a local error. This is because the meaning of the whole sentence is not distorted. It is the past form of the verb which is wrong. It should be stood not ‘stooded’. A possible example of global errors could be “the dog was parking all the night”. Here, the wrong use of the verb affects the whole meaning of the sentence which does not allow the reader to get the real meaning. Normally, it is “the dog was barking all the night”.

The other dichotomy of errors introduced by Ferris (2011) is that of treatable and untreatable errors. Ferris (2011) claimed that “a treatable error is related to a linguistic structure that occurs in a rule-governed way. It is treatable because the student writer can be pointed to a grammar book or a set of rules to resolve the problems” (p. 36). In other words, treatable errors are those errors that the learner can effortlessly correct by checking the rules in a grammar book, for instance. Untreatable errors, by contrast, require the students to use their acquired knowledge to solve them. A possible instance of treatable errors is “‘verb tense’, ‘subject-verb agreement’, ‘article usage’, and ‘spelling errors’; while untreatable errors include ‘word choice’ and ‘word order’” (Ferris, 2011, p.36). In other words, untreatable errors may break the flow of communication which does not allow the message to be successfully conveyed; however, treatable errors are not considered as really problematic ones.

Touchie (1986, p. 76) has made a further distinction between errors which is performance and competence errors that share the same principles with the previous dichotomies. That is, performance errors refer to grammatical, syntactic and structural errors, whereas competence errors refer to the ones committed at the meaning level of the sentence. In this connection, it is worth noting that researchers have introduced many dichotomies and distinctions between types of errors. These distinctions differ in the name, but they have the

same meaning. As it is noticed, all the aforementioned dichotomies focus on two main things. One type of errors is related to form, grammar and structure of the language, whereas the other type consists of errors related to communication, meaning, comprehension and understanding of the text.

## **2. Early and Recent perspectives of Feedback**

During the 1960s, an error was considered as a sinful act that must be prevented from occurrence. It was viewed more negatively because it hinders the learning process. Brooks (1960; as cited in Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p. 4) pointed out that “error, like sin, is to be avoided”. That is, errors are forbidden to be committed, and they must not be tolerated because, over time, learners will form bad habits which lead to fossilisation. Basically, the focus of these traditional approaches is “more on error prevention than error treatment” (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p. 4). In other words, the main focus of these approaches is to prevent the occurrence of errors through memorization of rules and structures so that students build habits and, thus, learn. In addition, teachers tend to correct all the errors to prevent bad formed habits, thus error correction and grammar instruction were highly stressed in teaching writing (Ferris, 2011, p. 8).

Later on, an emphasis has been put on the writer himself, the writing process, the strategies used, and the steps he goes through to form a well constructed written text. More precisely, errors are no more viewed as a sinful act but rather as part of the learning process. Instead of focusing on the correct forms of the written texts, teachers and students are expected to concentrate more on ideas, drafting, revising, and editing collaboratively their written work (Ferris, 2011, p. 8). In this sense, teachers are supposed to respond mostly to meaning and ideas the students want to communicate rather than to the accuracy of language. However, accuracy of form is not tolerated all the time; it gains teachers’ attention usually in the final product when providing grades.

Some scholars pointed out the drawbacks of the process approach and its principles that are related to error feedback. They claimed that the process approach is much more concerned with and applicable in L1 writing where students can improve and get rid of their errors with time (Ferris, 2011, p. 8). That is, the principles of the process approach are concerned with native users of the language who are more aware of grammar, vocabulary use and the appropriate expressions that can serve their needs. However, in foreign language writing, without correction, there will be no magical avoidance of errors. Since learning a foreign language takes time, one cannot expect students' performance to be free of errors; therefore, feedback is indispensable in such a case.

More recently, an adapted perspective in the learning process is the vygotskyan socio-cultural theory. This theory holds the assumption that learning occurs as a result of social interaction. In other words, the student can develop his learning abilities through positive scaffolding i.e. through the assistance of others (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p.18). In particular, in the classroom, the teacher is considered as the more knowledgeable one, and, thus, his guidance and feedback are really crucial in enhancing the students' current level.

### **3. Types of Feedback**

Actually, written comments (written feedback), conferencing (verbal feedback) and peer feedback are three major types of feedback that have been widely investigated due to their noticeable effects on students' writing achievement.

#### **3. 1. Written Comments**

Written comments are the most useful type of feedback that teachers opt for when responding to students' writing. Harmer (2004) pointed out that written feedback is "to write down what we [teachers] think is good in the students' work" (p. 113). In other words,

written feedback is meant to spotlight what is good in the students' writing. Thus, teacher's encouragement is highly emphasised. Also, written comments can take the form of constructive criticism that helps students to discover their writing problems and work on fixing them. Sommers (1982) claimed that "commenting on student writing is the most widely used method for responding to students' writing" (p.148). That is, providing written comments on student' writing is the most frequently used method for evaluation since students can directly notice their errors and understand their pitfalls. Moreover, students cannot diagnose their weaknesses and know their strengths unless the teacher points them out. Also, written feedback helps students to revise their works because, without it, students will assume that there is nothing wrong with their writings, and thus, no improvement will be achieved. Of utmost importance, written feedback is very helpful for visual students, i.e. students who learn better when they see the language written down. They can refer to the teacher's comments whenever they want. They can revise their writings, read their teacher's comments and figure out their problems. And thus, as it is stated before, their revision ability will develop which, in turn, leads to improving their writing.

### **3. 2. Conferencing**

Usually, readers do not get the opportunity to enter in a dialogue and negotiate meaning with the writer. Thus, they make herculean efforts to interpret what the writer means in his statements. However, in this type of feedback, writing conferences, the reader is able to open a face to face dialogue with the writer and to discuss and speak out what turning around his mind. Writing conferences are verbal comments given to the student during the writing process in order to negotiate a given point. Carroll and Wilson (1993) stated that "writing conferences are woven throughout the writing process, provide a time for teacher and student to discuss a piece of writing" (p.172). In writing conferences, the teacher corrects the student's work orally. He faces the student's piece of writing, reads it aloud, and each

time he comes across an error, he indicates it. Students, in turn, edit and modify what is wrong in the margin of their papers and discuss it with the teacher. This type of feedback could be helpful for both teachers and students and specifically students because it enables them to exchange their understanding of the difficulties they face in writing.

One reason why oral feedback is favoured over written one is that the former is instant while the latter lacks this sense of immediacy. Written feedback often comes days or weeks later when the written test may no longer be important for the student. This shortcoming may be overcome by using conferencing. Despite its advantages, oral feedback does not always work with all students because of their individual differences. Many students feel intimidated to have an informal discussion with their teacher; hence, they usually prefer passivity rather than challenging their fear or introversion.

### **3. 3. Peer Feedback**

More recently, with the adaptation of the socio-cultural theory and the process approach to teaching writing, great attention has been paid to the issue of peer feedback. Peer feedback is a kind of assessment made by classmates to provide information and opinion about the student's output (Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Orghena, & Smeets, 2010, p. 144). In this type of feedback, students' relationship changes from that being classmates to that of being assessors in the sense that they respond to each other's work and they give comments on it. Harmer (2004) pointed out that "peer review is a valuable element in the writing process" (p.115). It occurs at any place of the writing process where students can check each other's work. This makes it easier for them to revise their works. Peer response plays a vital role in enhancing the writing skill, mainly, because it "operates in a more informal level" (Rollinson, 2005, p. 25). That is, being familiar with each other allows students to interact freely and

negotiate their strengths and weaknesses deeply in a smooth way which leads to better performance.

Also, Harmer (2004) stated that peer response is “less authoritarian than teacher review, and helps students to view both colleagues and teachers as collaborators rather than evaluators” (p. 115). In other words, giving the chance for students to assess each others’ works makes them more comfortable, and they feel that responding to their peers’ drafts is a part of the writing process. Moreover, they will see their teachers as guides and not leaders. This, in fact, plays a crucial role in reducing students’ writing anxiety and apprehension because dealing with equals builds more self-confidence than interacting with adults who are more knowledgeable and experienced. Regarding this view, a study has been carried out by Kurt and Atay (2007) revealed that the group provided with peer feedback experienced significantly less anxiety than the group provided by teacher feedback. Other studies conducted by Chun-xian (2007) and Wakabayachi (2008) proved that peer feedback is very beneficial for facilitating the learning process and have positive effects in developing students writing. In fact, success of peer feedback depends on the proof reader per se, i.e. the peer’s knowledge and his way of responding to the work. If the peer is a good student in terms of knowledge, it will be helpful for students to notice and edit their errors. But when poor students do the correction, it will be quite problematic.

#### **4. The Case for Teacher’s Corrective Feedback**

It has been argued that teachers’ feedback is useless, ineffective, and harmful for students’ writing (Truscott, 1999). Actually, Truscott (1999) denied the effectiveness of feedback on students’ writing improvement. He argued that grammar correction is a part of language learning not because students value and want to see feedback on their writing (the argument that Ferris heavily relied on), but because teachers have been widely providing this

message for their students as far as they remember. Yet, there is a growing amount of research that proves the opposite. It has been found that teacher's feedback does not only encourage and motivate students to write, but it also enhances their writing accuracy and competency as such (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ferris, 2007, 2011; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016).

It has been proved, through many empirical studies, that teachers' feedback has a critical role in enhancing students' writing level. Learners cannot have great control over their writing accuracy only when their teacher provides them with constructed feedback. Teacher' feedback plays important role in raising students' self-regulation which enables them to be more independent and responsible for their own learning (Sampson, 2012, p. 495). Indeed, teachers' feedback, especially when it is provided in a good way, has a strong impact on students' attitudes and motivation. Many students want to know and to have an idea about how others, especially their teachers, perceive their writing. It is something innate in humans to be eager to know how others think of them.

Ferris (2011, p.36) advocated the following basic arguments for the importance of error correction. First, error correction is helpful for students' revision and edition of their texts. Second, error correction is beneficial for improving students' writing accuracy over time. Third, students and teachers often value the importance of feedback. And fourth, writing accuracy plays a crucial role in the real world.

First of all, error correction is helpful for students' revision and edition of their texts. When students' errors are pointed out by the teacher's feedback, students directly get the chance to revise their writing in order to find out their errors and correct them. In here, error correction is a way to highlight students' errors and to make them aware of their writing problems. Thus, they will avoid errors as much as possible. In fact, teacher's feedback is very



important because not all students can notice their errors without their teacher's help, especially novice writers who need their teacher's guidance to overcome their obstacles.

Indeed, error correction is beneficial for students' writing accuracy over time. Many studies (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Ferris, 2007; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) have revealed that feedback has a positive effect on students' writing, and especially when it is provided at the first stages of writing before the last draft.

Moreover, students and teachers do value the importance of error feedback. When being corrected, students gain the impression that their written work is worth considering, and that somebody cares enough to correct it. Many studies tried to discover students' views of their teacher's feedback. Most of them evinced that students value and want their teacher's feedback when it affects their writing ability positively. Though they may differ in their options of feedback; students still consider its significant role in enhancing their writing (Alqurashi, 2015; Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Lee, 2008; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Zhan, 2016). Likewise, teachers feel that feedback is a critical part of their job (Ferris, 1995).

In fact, writing accuracy has a crucial role even outside the classroom because grammatical, morphological, and lexical accuracy might affect the comprehensibility of the text. Indeed, good writing must be accurate, if not, how to consider students' writing as being good while it is full of broken grammar.

## **5. Approaches to Teacher's Corrective Feedback**

While correcting any student's written work, the teacher must decide upon the strategy he is going to follow during his assessment. In other words, he must seriously think

of whether to correct all his students' errors or not, to identify their errors directly or indirectly, to provide his feedback within or after they finish their writing, to focus on form or meaning and so on. Because of the individual differences, it is not an easy task to decide upon a certain feedback form for all students. What suits a learner may not necessarily suit the other. Therefore, the teacher must be aware of his students' preferences and learning styles to avoid unexpected feelings towards his feedback. It is well known that students feel their teacher's care and interest, and they easily build unpleasant feelings towards their teacher's feedback when it underestimates their abilities or when it is negatively provided. So, it is better for both students and teachers to agree upon the type of feedback that will be provided (Aridah, 2003, p. 112). The most important dichotomies in feedback that have been widely discussed are: direct vs. indirect feedback, coded vs. uncoded feedback, focused vs. unfocused feedback, form vs. content based feedback, and formative vs. summative feedback.

### **5. 1. Direct vs. Indirect Feedback**

In direct feedback, the teacher points out that an error is made by the student. He indicates the place of the error and provides direct correction (Bitchener et al., 2005, p. 193). This type of feedback could be more helpful especially for beginners or those who are not able to do self-correction. In other words, it could be beneficial for students with low level of proficiency. However, direct (explicit) feedback does not often contribute to the students' long-term improvement, but it can be useful for short-term or immediate revision of their texts. Concerning the indirect (implicit) feedback, it is when the teacher indicates the student's error, but he lets the student to discover the error and correct it by himself (Ferris, 2011, p. 32). This could be done through underlying or circling the error. This strategy encourages students to reflect upon their errors and correct them. Thus, it will contribute to long term development since they rely on their knowledge to solve the problem. Hence, it enhances students' autonomy and problem solving ability. This is, mainly, because learners

learn better when they are involved in the learning task. Also, they feel more engaged and responsible. Moreover, they value their abilities, and thus, gain more confidence and develop higher self-efficacy which raises their motivation to succeed. Sheen and Ellis (2011) have made a clear, and a sharp distinction between direct and indirect feedback presented in the table below:

	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
Metalinguistic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of the correct form with brief grammatical explanation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of error code (e.g., symbols such as VT to signal a verb tense error or WO a word order error are inserted into the text).</li> <li>• Use of brief grammatical explanation (e.g., error types are numbered in the text and then a brief explanation of each type of error is provided at the end of the text).</li> </ul>
No metalinguistic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of the correct form only.</li> <li>• Reformation of the entire sentence or paragraph.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Errors are indicated but not located and the correct form is not supplied (e.g., a cross is placed in the margin next to the line where an error has occurred).</li> <li>• Errors are indicated and located but the correct form is not supplied (e.g., an error is underlined in the place in the text in which it occurs).</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Taxonomy of Written Corrective Feedback Strategies (Sheen & Ellis, 2011, p. 594)

As the table shows, in both types of feedback, metalinguistic explanation can be provided in which the teacher tries to be more explicit in order to allow his input to pass across. Different strategies have been suggested for provision of both implicit and explicit feedback. Starting with explicit (direct) feedback, the teacher either corrects the student's

error and provides some clarification or explanation (metalinguistic information), or only corrects the error. Moving to the implicit (indirect) feedback, the teacher, trying to be more implicit, indicates the students' error either by showing the location of the error or only by indicating that the student is getting wrong. Another strategy the teacher applies in indirect feedback, when he tries to be less implicit, is to provide codes or hints (this will be discussed at length later) or gives a brief explanation of the type of the error.

Several researches have been conducted to figure out the most effective type of feedback, direct or indirect, on students' writing accuracy. On the one hand, many of these studies have confirmed that implicit feedback is more effective for students' writing accuracy and performance (Ahmadi, Maftoon & Mehrdad, 2012; Hosseiny, 2014; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Sampson, 2012; Tootkaboni & Khatib, 2014). Students provided with indirect feedback, minimize the frequency of their errors over time. In fact, indirect feedback encourages autonomous learning and self-editing and correction. On the other hand, other studies have found that direct feedback is more effective than the indirect one (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Ferris & Robert, 2001). Actually, direct feedback is easier for students to deal with since it requires less efforts and knowledge. Contrariwise, indirect feedback requires knowledge and efforts to pick up and correct the errors marked by the teacher.

## **5. 2. Coded vs. Uncoded Indirect Feedback**

Indirect feedback is said to be of two major types: coded and uncoded. Coded feedback is when the teacher indicates that an error has been made by the student. The teacher provides a hint or, let us say, a code that helps the student to figure out the place and the type of the error (Ferris, 2011, p. 34). For example, when the student makes a spelling mistake, the teacher provides only the code 'SP' to inform the student about the type of

mistake, and lets him correct it by himself. However, uncoded feedback is when the teacher points out the place of the error by circling or underlying it so that to make the student know that there is an error, but he must look for its type and correct it (Bitchener et al., 2005, p. 193). That is, the teacher lets the student rely on himself to figure out the type of the error and to find its correction. As it is explained before, coded feedback relies on using symbols or codes to clarify the type of error. In fact, there is no set list for correction symbols or codes; different teachers and course books create their own codes for different concepts (Harmer, 2004, p. 111). That is, correction symbols are not universal or agreed upon by teachers and scholars. Each teacher has the right to create his own symbols to refer to a given type of error. The following table introduced by Harmer (2004) shows the most common symbols:

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example error</b>
<b>S</b>	A spelling error	<i>The <u>answer</u> is <u>obvius</u>.</i>
<b>WO</b>	A mistake in word order	<i>I <u>like very much</u> it.</i>
<b>G</b>	A grammar mistake	<i>I am going to buy some <u>furnitures</u>.</i>
<b>T</b>	Wrong verb tense	<i>I <u>have seen</u> him yesterday.</i>
<b>C</b>	Concord mistake (e.g. subject and verb agreement)	<i>People <u>is</u> angry.</i>
<b>A</b>	Something has been left out	<i>He told <math>\lambda</math> that he was sorry.</i>
<b>WW</b>	Wrong word	<i>I am interested <u>on</u> jazz music.</i>
<b>{ }</b>	Something is not necessary.	<i>He was not {too} strong enough.</i>
<b>?M</b>	The meaning is unclear.	<i>That is a <u>very excited</u> photograph.</i>
<b>P</b>	A punctuation mistake	<i>Do you like London.</i>
<b>F/I</b>	Too formal or informal	<i>Hi Mr Franklin, Thank you for your letter...</i>

**Table 2:** Indirect Feedback Codes (Harmer, 2004, p. 111)

Many studies have been carried out to find out the effectiveness of coded and uncoded feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016). Most studies have proved that implicit coded feedback is very beneficial for students' writing accuracy, and it helps them raising their awareness of the importance of teacher's feedback (Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Tootkaboni & Khatib, 2014). Indeed, the coded feedback is effective because it is less implicit, and it guides the learner towards the correction of the error, whereas uncoded feedback is more suitable for skilled writers since they have the ability to diagnose the type of the error and correct it.

### **5.3. Focused vs. Unfocused Feedback**

Research on error feedback has pointed out two major strategies teachers follow while correcting their students' papers: focused and unfocused error correction. Focused feedback is when the teacher intensively corrects the errors made by the student, whereas unfocused feedback is when he extensively corrects the errors (Ellis, 2007, p.102). In the focused feedback, the teacher selects a specific category of errors to be treated. That is why it is called selective correction. But in the unfocused feedback, the teacher marks all the errors the students make. It is often called comprehensive correction.

Usually, teachers opt for the selective approach in order not to exhaust themselves correcting every single error especially when there is an excessive amount of mistakes (Ferris, 2007, p.170). Indeed, correcting all students' errors may create bad impressions. It may negatively affect students' self-esteem and their self-confidence. In addition to that, it may not result in enhancing students' level in writing. By using selective marking, the teacher is looking for reaching a long term goal in terms of enhancing students' writing rather than the short term goal of overcoming a given error at hand (Ferris, 2007, p. 170). In this sense, focused feedback is a way for avoiding proliferation of the red color over the student's

written work (Harmer, 2004, p. 110). That is to say, the teacher will not correct all the errors at once. He may correct tenses this time, and only punctuation in another time. What is entirely important is that the student must be aware of the way the teacher will correct his errors so that he will concentrate more on the aspect that will be treated in his writing. In this way, the teacher must have a rubric or a grading criterion that guides his provision of feedback without forgetting that he must make the student aware of these standards so that he will focus more on them (Ferris, 2007, p. 170). Grading criteria are very crucial to consider since all teachers often have a specific marking scale on the margin (Harmer, 2004, p.110). They would be very helpful for students if they are weak in a specific area of language like grammar for instance. The teacher in this way will be fair with his students. Using marking scale helps students to know their strengths and weaknesses. Also, instead of losing their self-confidence due to over emphasis on one aspect of language, mostly grammar, they will feel more competent in the other aspects. Following this assumption, teachers may want to provide one mark out of twenty, for instance, for each aspect of language e.g. grammar, vocabulary, ideas, punctuation, coherence and cohesion.

A study conducted by Lee (2003) evinced some reasons behind opting for unfocused feedback. They are summarized as follows: First, teachers usually look for the overall output of their students. Second, students opt for the comprehensive over the selective marking. Third, teachers are often said to be lazy if they overlook some errors. And finally, students do not notice all their errors unless their teacher indicates them because they often rely on their teachers to know their errors.

Lee's study also explained the reasons behind favoring the selective marking. They are summarized in the following points: First, selective correction is more applicable when the composition is too long because it saves time. Second, students may easily get demotivated when they see their papers full in red ink. Third, selective correction directs

students' attention to specific areas of language to work seriously on them. In general, teachers feel that it is their responsibility to mark their students' errors. Basically, another study done by Robb, Ross and Shortreed (1986) revealed that teacher's feedback should not be highly detailed. Instead, it should be selective according to the objectives of the lesson or the frequency of the error.

#### **5. 4. Content vs. Form-Based Feedback**

The way teachers react to their students' writing is mainly related both to the kind of the task and the goal intended to be achieved (Harmer, 2004, p.108). That is, when reacting to students' errors, teachers consider the main objectives of the input and the purpose of the task. Generally, teachers, in their reaction to any written work, fall within one of the two following categories: responding or correcting (Harmer, 2004, p.108). Responding and correcting refer respectively to meaning-based feedback and form-based feedback.

In form-based feedback, the teacher is more concerned with the grammatical, lexical, and morphological errors. In other words, Accuracy is the main focus of this type of feedback. Usually, the teacher points out what is right and what is wrong in his students' writing by heavily focusing on form.

Due to the harsh criticism on grammar correction, content-based feedback comes to emergence. In a meaning-based feedback approach, the teacher gives much importance to the content and ideas the student endorses. In here, the tutor is much more concerned with the meaning intended to be conveyed rather than performance accuracy. Interaction and discussion take place at this level in which the tutor tries to help the students overcome their problems, mainly those related to the organisation and design of their writing. For instance, the teacher can comment on a problem of organising ideas using the following expression: 'It would be better if you start with the second idea'. What is really important in this strategy is



to know what the learner is trying to say to his readers. In fact, it is more about discussing the students' writing than judging it (Harmer, 2004, p. 108).

Actually, a number of studies have provided evidence that feedback on content results in better writing performance. A study was done by Kepner (1991; as cited in Aridah, 2003) revealed that students who received message-related comments (content feedback) outperformed those who received form-focused feedback. This is because feedback on content aims at improving students' fluency and spontaneity in the target language and this surely serves the communicative purposes. Indeed, providing meaning-based feedback can be very beneficial since it helps the learner to diagnose his gaps and get rid of them and this surely results in better achievement (Harmer, 2004, p. 109).

In fact, one cannot say that a student writer is competent, unless he is good at both conveying his ideas and expressing them in a well formed text that contains correct grammar and good organisation of ideas. In order to solve the problem of whether to use form-focused or meaning-focused feedback, researchers and teachers come up with a third category of feedback that combines both meaning and form known as integrated feedback (Park, 2006, p. 68). It is believed that feedback related to grammar is necessary in writing instruction for the purpose of improving students' writing accuracy (Ferris, 2011). And it is also assumed that giving feedback only on grammatical accuracy results in students' low motivation and self-confidence (Truscott, 1999). In here, meaning-based feedback is indispensable to raise students' self-esteem and redirect their thoughts not only to their weaknesses but their strengths as well. As a result, a combination of both forms of feedback could be an appropriate solution for improving students' accuracy and fluency.

## **5. 5. Formative vs. Summative Feedback**

Researchers have made a distinction between two kinds of feedback: formative and summative feedback. It is formative feedback if it is given in the process of writing or let us say in the early drafts; however, it is summative feedback when it is delayed until the final draft. While summative feedback focuses on writing as an ended product, formative feedback gives much prominence to the enhancement of the writing process (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 83).

Summative error correction is an assessment act used to judge students' performance through giving grades or marks; formative correction, by contrast, is to give feedback about students' learning development without the provision of grades (Irons, 2008, p.7). Actually, formative feedback aims at encouraging the development of students' writing, and it is regarded as crucial in improving and consolidating the learning process (Hyland, 2003, p. 177). Many researchers have recommended that it would be more beneficial if the teacher's feedback is provided at the intermediate rather than the final stage of writing in order for the student to have the chance to edit and correct his poor writing (Ferris, 2011).

## **6. Students' Perceptions and Emotional Responses to Teacher's Feedback**

In fact, a great deal of research had been carried out for investigating the effect of feedback on students' writing, but little attention had been paid to the notion of students' perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses. As it has been mentioned before, in the first chapter, the student's psychology is highly emphasised in recent language writing instruction. The more the student is self-motivated, self-efficacious, and less apprehensive, the better writing achievement he will reach. In fact, "without understanding how students feel about and respond to teacher feedback, teachers may run the risk of continually using strategies that are counter-productive" (Lee, 2008, p. 145). In other words, while giving feedback, the

teacher should be aware of his students' preferences, emotions, and feelings. For instance, over marking the student's written work may kill his motivation since he would think of it as a matter of weakness and, thus, he underestimates his abilities. Also, when students' responses are fed back to the teacher, they help him to decide upon the most suitable evaluation strategy for those students.

The teacher should bear in mind that his students are not writing machines that receive orders and directions then follow them. In fact, feedback is considered unhelpful when it is vague or insufficient for students (Rowe & Wood, 2008, p. 79). More experienced writing teachers know that responding to students' writings is the most frustrating, time and effort demanding part of their job (Ferris, 2007; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Because they know that feedback is not just pointing out students' errors and letting them notice their gaps, teachers must work seriously on how to evaluate the student's work and comment on it appropriately taking into consideration the student's affective side.

Many studies have revealed that the main reason behind providing correction is that students want and value their instructor's feedback on their writing (Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Zhan, 2016). Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) claimed that despite the fact that big changes have been made in the writing approaches, "one element has remained constant: both teachers and students feel that teacher feedback on student writing is a critical, nonnegotiable aspect of writing instruction" (p. 185). In fact, students might show pleasurable feelings towards their teacher's feedback when they see that feedback does not negatively affect their motivation to write. Zumbrunn, Marrs, and Mewborn (2015) have made a study through which they have demonstrated the reasons why students want their teacher's feedback. First, students perceive feedback as an important means for improving their writing. Second, students usually like to see what mistakes they make. Also, they want to see others' views of their writing. And finally, students enjoy receiving comments related to their writing.

In fact, not any feedback is helpful. Teachers usually think that providing an effective feedback guarantees students' writing improvement. However, the effectiveness of feedback is not related to feedback per se, but to the way teachers provide it. Teachers' intended meaning when giving feedback might be interpreted differently by their students. In fact, it sometimes depends on the teacher-student relationship and the students' individual differences. Some students might perceive their teacher's written feedback as being harsh and discouraging because it spotlights only their errors and shows them in one way or another their weaknesses that they want to hide. Others, who usually think that they write well, get disappointed when they see that their writing has not reached their expectations. Thus, they build negative attitudes towards their writing abilities and, hence, towards their teacher's feedback. These negative attitudes might appear from the problems they find in interpreting their teacher's feedback. Teachers must consider their students' emotional responses when providing feedback in order to avoid misconceptions later on.

A study conducted by Ken (2004), to figure out students' views of feedback, revealed that students do not pay considerable attention to their teacher's feedback as they claim. They do not read their compositions, provided with feedback, carefully, and they get frustrated each time they make the same errors. Also, this study demonstrated that one major reason why students do not benefit from feedback is that they face serious difficulties in understanding it. Hence, "the use of terminology also needs to be reconceptualised in case students have difficulty understanding it" (Ken, 2004, p. 107). In other words, the teacher must be aware of his words choice when delivering his feedback. Thus, a teacher-student conferencing might be the suitable solution which enables teachers to diagnose their students' responses to their feedback, and it makes it easier for students to comprehend their teacher's feedback and overcome their writing problems.

A number of studies have been conducted to find out and explore the issue of feedback and students' views of different types of feedback in order to make teachers aware of these attitudes when they respond to their students' writing.

Regarding positive and corrective feedback, a study conducted by Ferris (1995) proved that students' writings improved when they receive positive comments besides constructive criticism. However, they have shown no improvement while receiving only corrective feedback. Moreover, Ken's study (2004) showed that students, actually, feel discouraged and demotivated when they receive too much corrective or negative feedback. In fact, when students get their written works back, they expect some encouragement to work better next time. However, when corrective feedback is excessively received, they got the impression that their writing is full of errors. Hence, they might think that their teacher's major aim is to detect their errors. Thus, Teachers are asked to provide, in addition to corrective feedback, some positive comments to highlight the students' strengths as well.

Moving to another dichotomy, feedback, whether written or spoken, is actually effective if it is provided in a good way and contains helpful comments. A study conducted by Morra and Asis (2009) has shown that students show positive responses to their teacher's feedback, regardless of its mode, due to its effective role in reducing their errors occurrence. That is, students would like to receive feedback when they sense some improvement in their writings. If not, they will not bother themselves to even read it.

Marefat (2005) has carried out a study to investigate students' perceptions and views of oral feedback by making an experiment in which feedback is orally provided. This study revealed that most of the students enjoyed the experiment because involving students in talks makes them relaxed and lowers their anxiety which, in turn, leads to more positive attitudes towards writing. Students usually favour oral feedback for several reasons. First, they feel involved and engaged in learning. Second, most of students overlook their teachers' written

feedback. Third, discussing errors together creates a pleasant, friendly, and enjoyable atmosphere where they can develop their communicative skills and social interaction. Of utmost importance, teacher student conference is helpful for clarifying ambiguity. That is to say, written feedback is not always clear; it can be difficult to be interpreted especially by poor students. Therefore, a teacher student conferencing would be an appropriate solution for this problem. Feedback is said to be unhelpful when it is, mainly, too broad or it lacks details. In this case, it does not guide them clearly to the correction of their errors. Hence, it might lead them to build negative attitudes towards it and to treat it with indifference.

Moving from students' views of corrective and written feedback, another issue that has been widely noticed is that students usually do not appreciate receiving feedback if it is only provided on their final drafts. In fact, they care about their teacher's feedback when provided in the preliminary drafts (Ferris, 1995; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016) where little attention is paid to grammar. Generally, due to the teacher's emphasis on their errors and specifically grammatical ones, students want to diagnose their errors earlier in order to avoid getting low grades. So, feedback on earlier drafts might be helpful for students to change their negative attitudes towards it. Teachers give more attention to their ideas when responding to their first drafts so that students will revise their writings. This, in turn, results in better enhancement. However, other studies revealed that students exhibit negative to neutral attitudes towards meaning focused feedback (Saito, 1994; Zhan, 2016; Salteh & Sadeghi, 2015) because they typically want to write error-free texts rather than coherent ones. Indeed, they believe that feedback on grammar will directly indicate their superficial errors so that they can correct them easily. However, feedback on ideas is not specific enough to reach the same effects

According to the noticing hypothesis, "learning is enhanced when learners pay conscious attention to specific linguistic forms in the input to which they are exposed" (Sheen

& Ellis, 2011, p. 595). That is, teacher's feedback must gain students' attention so that they can benefit from it. A study that has been conducted by Mohammad and Rahman (2016) proved that students opt for the indirect feedback that contains codes in order to make corrections by themselves as long as they know the location and the type of the error. So, through using codes, students are likely to notice the location of their errors and types, and they will pay conscious attention to them and work attentively on correcting them. In this sense, students are likely to build positive attitudes towards feedback since it is not misleading, but rather guiding for self correction. In this case, they will be more autonomous, independent, and why not motivated.

Generally, students do not appreciate receiving feedback because they feel demotivated when they are shown all the errors they have made (Lin & Dass, 2014). The problem is not with the issue of unfocused correction per se, but it is mainly related to the way feedback is provided. One might think so because there are other students who still want their teacher to correct all their errors (Mobini & Khosravi, 2016; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016). This is, mainly, because when they see that their errors are pointed out, they will learn and remember them better than if their errors are not marked. Some students do not perceive their teacher's feedback as a criticism; on the contrary, they welcome and even want the comprehensive correction. As we have stated before, the teacher has a crucial role in the opinions students build towards his feedback.

From the aforementioned discussion, we can say that there is no evidence to date or absolute truth about the features of the teacher's feedback that must be implemented. "Teachers should carefully listen to their students' perceptions and preferences as they consider how to design their own feedback and error treatment strategies" (Ferris, 2011, p. 46). Students' choices and preferences are obviously dependent on their individual differences, and they are based on what can work better for their learning.

## **7. Students' Perceptions of Peer Feedback**

Indeed, students might hold negative attitudes towards their teacher written corrective feedback. A research work was done by Sultana (2009) in order to investigate the extent to which students might accept to be corrected by their peers. The study showed that students do not accept this idea because they believe that their friends do not know better than them and that they are also liable to make mistakes. Indeed, "some students might feel reluctant to correct their friends' errors because correcting friends' errors might harm their relationship" (Sultana, 2009, p. 12). In short, students do not trust their peer's knowledge. Indeed, peer correction, specifically when it is verbal, would result in discomfort and embarrassment situations. Besides, another study conducted by Lin and Dass (2014) revealed that students do not like their peer feedback because they think that their peers are unable to provide honest comments or grades.

However, students may prefer to be corrected by their peers, especially, when they see that their teacher's feedback is noxious and discouraging. A study conducted by Morra and Romano (2008) revealed that students can have positive attitudes towards their peer feedback only when they are provided with a suitable atmosphere full of trust and respect where their writing will not be perceived with indifference. Students are often in dire need to a more knowledgeable and experienced guide who is able to create a pleasant atmosphere and whose feedback is welcomed.

## **8. Guidelines for Providing Feedback:**

The teacher, while responding to his students' works, should put himself instead of the student who has spent huge time and effort preparing himself for a given test or composition. And, he is interested in getting a satisfied feedback that enhances his self-confidence, motivation and self-esteem. Thus, in order for the teacher, to give effective feedback some researchers have suggested some guidelines. Raims (1983, p. 142), for



instance, provided some steps that the teacher should follow while responding to his students' works. First, it is preferable for the teacher to read the student's whole product before starting to correct it. Second, the teacher should look for the student's strengths and spotlight them to be known by the student. Third, he should be aware of his feedback's clarity and legibility for not demotivating or misleading the student. In here, the teacher must minimize as much as he can the possibility that his students will not understand his feedback. This can be done by selecting the appropriate words and expressions to communicate his ideas. Fourth, the correction strategy should be known by students. That is, students should know what types of errors are going to be corrected i.e. whether they are grammatical or ideational. Finally, the teacher should know that his aim when responding to students' writing is to help them overcome their language problems. In other words, the teacher is not an examiner who judges his students' work, but a guide who directs them to improve their writing.

Indeed, the teacher's feedback must be descriptive not judgemental. For example, let us consider the following comments on the margin of the student's work: 'you are not clear in here' and 'I don't see what you mean here'. Both seek the same purpose in terms of informing the student that his idea is not clear. But, the first comment seems to be more judgemental, whereas the second one is descriptive. The teacher's feedback will be more effective if it takes the form of suggestion rather than criticism. Also, teacher's feedback must be specific and not too broad or vague. For instance, the teacher instead of writing 'that's good'; he writes 'this argument is really good'.

## **CONCLUSION**

It has been widely proved that teacher's feedback is absolutely effective since it plays an important role in enhancing students writing performance. However, feedback can be really effective only when it is well provided. That is, it must consider the receiver of this

feedback, in this case, the student. The teacher should be cognisant of his students' attitudes and emotions, and he needs to take them into consideration while responding to his students' writings. Students usually vary in their preferences and opinions of the good characteristics of feedback. They may prefer direct over the indirect feedback, grammar over meaning feedback, or written or verbal feedback. The teacher's role in here is to do his best to satisfy students' expectations. Through getting a little bit closer to his students, the teacher can know their preferences and views of his feedback. Thus, he will opt for the kind of feedback which they like most.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As it is mentioned before in the introductory chapter, the main aim of this study is to investigate and to explore students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teacher's feedback on their writing. This study holds the assumption that students have negative attitudes towards their teacher's feedback because they perceive it as a criticism rather than a constructive evaluation.

It is by means of a questionnaire and an interview that the hypothesis of the present study is tested. This chapter is devoted to the presentation and the analysis of the data collected through students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews for the purpose of diagnosing the students' attitudes towards their teacher's feedback. It starts with a clear description of both means of research. Then, a detailed analysis of the data obtained will be provided.

#### **1. The Students' Questionnaire**

##### **1. 1. Administration, Participants, and Description**

A total of 72 questionnaires were given to third year students of English at both Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center of Mila and Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel. 20 questionnaires were provided for students of English at Jijel University, and 52 questionnaires were given for students of English at the University Center of Mila. Our sample composed of 72 students of English from two different universities.

The students' questionnaire comprises both open ended and closed ended questions. In the closed ended questions, the students are required to select an option among many; whereas in the open ended questions, students are asked to justify their choices or their preferences of one option over the other. Indeed, the questionnaire consists of 30 questions which are, in turn, divided into three sections described as follows:

**Section One:** The Writing Skill (Q1-Q7).

This section seeks to gather information about students' background and opinions concerning studying English and writing in English. This section is meant to generate a global view about the students' level in writing, their problems, if any, and their level of motivation to write.

**Section Two:** Feedback on Writing (Q8-Q18).

This section aims at eliciting information about the features of teacher's feedback students usually receive on their writing. It is meant to point out whether teachers provide feedback or not, the form of feedback they provide and its focus. Also, it will investigate whether students benefit from feedback or not, how and when teachers often provide it.

**Section Three:** Students' Perceptions of Teacher's Feedback on their Writing (Q19-Q30).

The last section attempts to figure out the main aim of this study which is to explore and to diagnose students' views, attitudes, and preferences of feedback. It starts by gathering information about students' attitudes towards writing. Then, it tries to discover students' opinions and feelings towards their teacher's feedback including the method, the provider, and the time to do the correction.

## 1. 2. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

### Section One: The Writing Skill

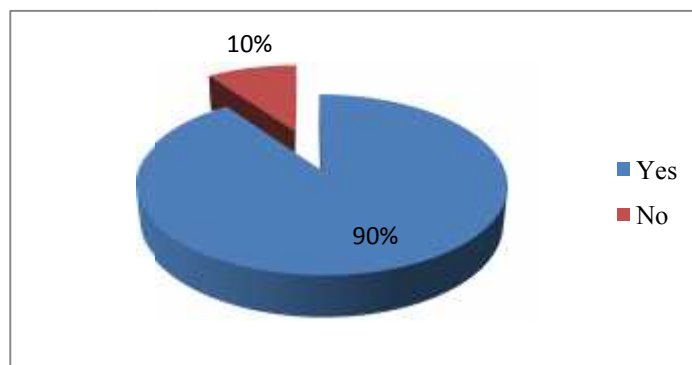
**Question 01:** Was it your choice to study English?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	90.28%
No	07	09.72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 03: Students' Choices for Studying English**



**Figure 03: Students' Choices for Studying English**

Most of students (90.28%) said that studying English was their choice and that they were not obliged to do so. It is reasonable to claim that these students have a considerable level of motivation to study English. The other students (09.72%) claimed that studying English was not their option. We assume that their baccalaureate average did not allow them to opt for their preferable option, so their motivation to study English might be low.

**Question 02:** How do you find studying English?

a. Interesting

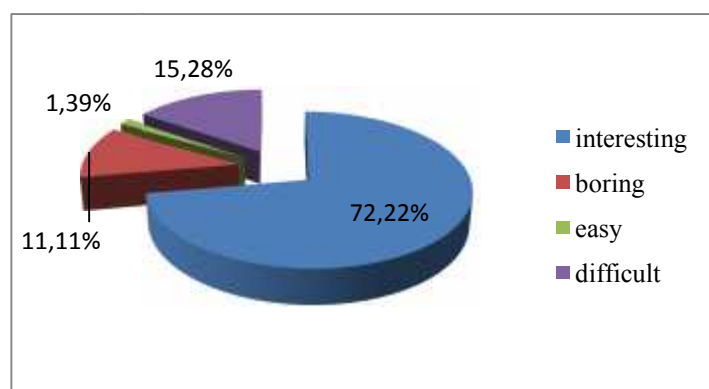
b. Boring

c. Easy

d. Difficult

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	52	72.22%
b.	08	11.11%
c.	01	01.39%
d.	11	15.28%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 04: Students' Attitudes towards Studying English**



**Figure 04: Students' Attitudes towards Studying English**

Table 4 shows that a great majority of students (72.22%) claimed that studying English is interesting. This indicates that students found the pleasurable atmosphere where they enjoy studying English and become more interested. 11.11% of students said that studying English is boring. This means that they lack motivation to study English either due to its difficulty or because it was not their preferable choice to study. Some of students (15.81%) were complaining about the difficulty they faced when studying the English language. However, just one student (01.39%) stated that studying English is extremely easy.

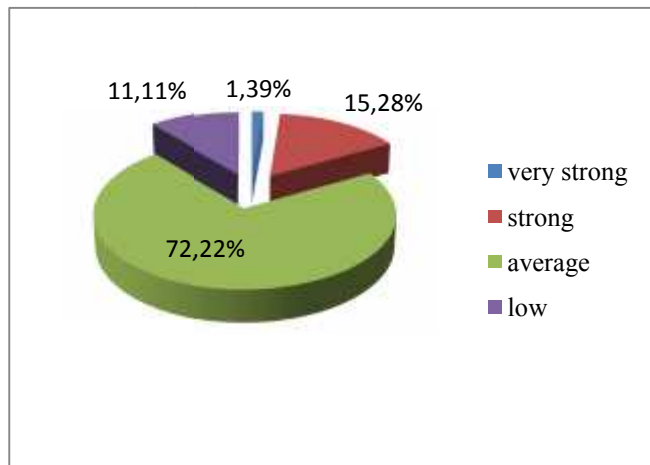
we assume that this student has a higher self efficacy so that s/he considers studying English easy.

**Question 03:** How would you rate your motivation to write in English?

- a. Very strong    b. Strong    c. Average    d. Low

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	01	01.39%
b.	11	15.28%
c.	52	72.22%
d.	08	11.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 05: Students' Level of Motivation to Write**



**Figure 05: Students' Level of Motivation to Write**

Table 05 shows that the majority of students (72.22%) rated their motivation to write as 'average'. This indicates their low of eagerness to write, and is likely to have negative effects on their level of achievement. Thus, it is the responsibility of the teacher to make students aware of the importance of writing for mastering the language because without

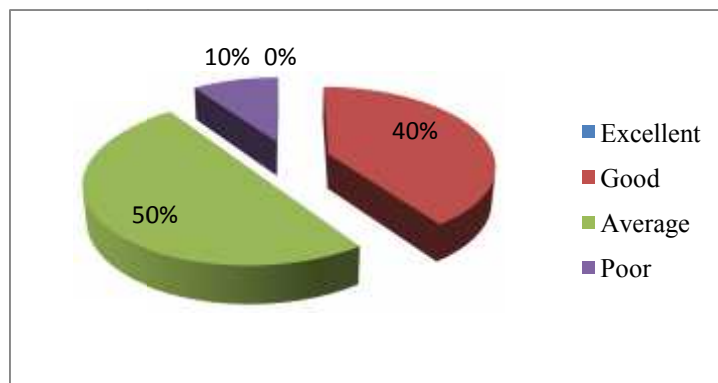
recognising the value of this skill, students cannot be motivated. Eight students (15.28%) claimed that they have strong motivation to write and only one (01.39%) expressed his/her very strong desire to write. Those students are mainly the ones who are intrinsically motivated and have great willingness to be good writers. Few of this population (11.11%) said that they have low motivation to write. It is possible to think that this is due to the absence of a suitable writing atmosphere and the lack of encouragement from the part of the teacher.

**Question 04:** Your level in writing in English is:

- a. Excellent      b. Good      c. Average      d. Poor

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	00	00%
b.	29	40.28%
c.	36	50%
d.	07	09.72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 06: Students' Level of Writing**



**Figure 06: Students' Level of Writing**



A quick glance at table 06 will reveal that none of the students stated that his level of writing is excellent, (50%) of students evaluated their level in writing as being average, (40.28%) believe that they have good writing level; whereas few of them consider themselves as poor writers. This could imply that students' level of writing is related to their motivation in the sense that highly motivated students are the more proficient ones. Also, these results are tied with students' self efficacy beliefs and they are really encouraging for teachers since the majority of them consider themselves as good to average writers.

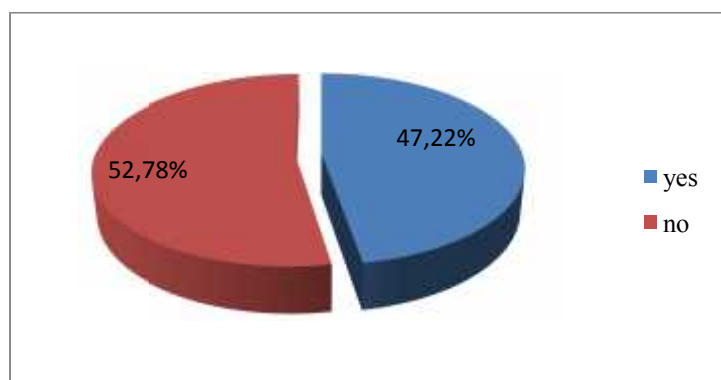
**Question 05:** Do you write outside the classroom?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	47.22%
No	38	52.78%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 07: Students' Writing Habit outside the Classroom**



**Figure 07: Students' Writing Habit outside the Classroom**

The results above show that most of students (52.78%) said that they do not write outside the classroom; however, many of them (47.22%) claimed that they do. This could

imply that more than half of the students are unaware of the importance of practising writing which leads to better improvement. Students' lack of practice might be due to their lack of motivation and awareness of the importance of practising writing in enhancing their writing performance.

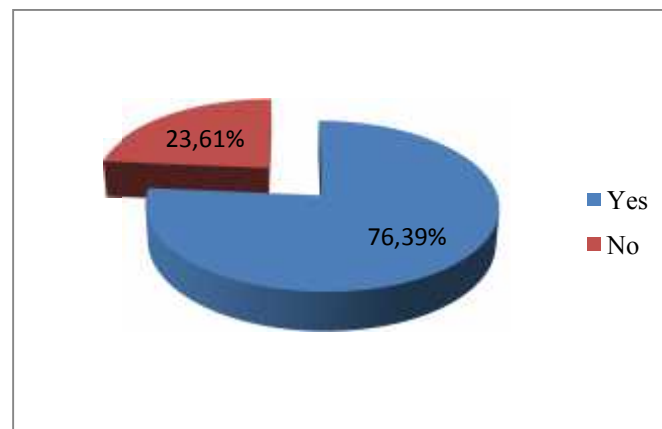
**Question 06:** Do you usually face difficulties when writing in English?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	76.39%
No	17	23.61%
Total	72	100%

**Table 08: Students' Opinions about Writing Difficulties**



**Figure 08: Students' Opinions about Writing Difficulties**

The majority of students (76.39%) said that they face difficulties while writing in English. This could be justified by the difficulty of the writing task itself as being demanding and challenging for students to deal with. However, few of them (23.61%) claimed that they do not have any problem with writing, because most of them have a good level of language

proficiency, and they don't consider difficulties as obstacles to be avoided, but rather as problems to be solved.

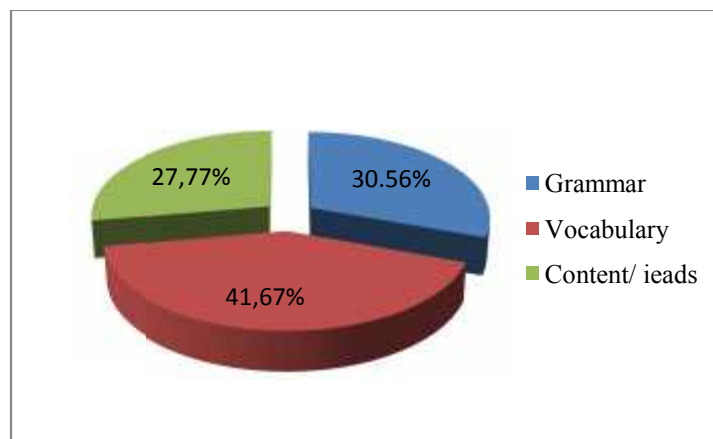
**If yes, which of the following aspects do you think hinders your mastery of writing?**

- a. Grammar                      b. Vocabulary                      c. Content/ ideas

Others (please specify).....

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Grammar	22	30.56%
Vocabulary	30	41.67%
Content/ ideas	20	27.77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 09: The Most Hindering Aspect in Mastering Writing**



**Figure 09: The Most Hindering Aspect in Mastering Writing**

The results indicate that the majority of students (41.67%) stated that their main difficulty is the lack of vocabulary. (27.77%) of students see that content and ideas are the most problematic issues of writing. The other students (30.56%) said that grammar is the

most challenging aspect of their writing. Most of the students also consider spelling mistakes as a major problem hindering their writing ability. Thus, mastering the writing skill demands the mastery of different aspects of language including: grammar, vocabulary, organization of ideas and mechanics. In fact, many students do not have the ability to express and organize their ideas in a coherent way because they do not think in English. They rather translate from their mother tongue into English, and thus they usually create nonsense sentences. This is obviously due to their lack of readings. Without reading, there will be no writing improvement. The more they read, the better language, ideas, grammar, and especially vocabulary, they acquire.

**Question 07:** Do you usually write:

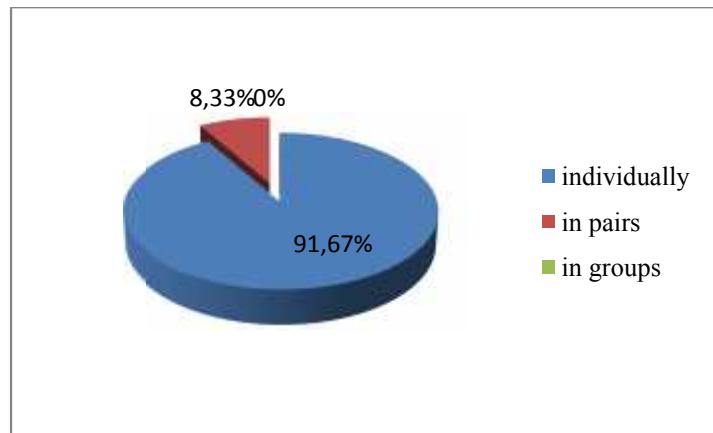
a. Individually

b. In pairs

c. In groups

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Individually	66	91.67 %
In pairs	06	08.33 %
In groups	00	00 %
<b>Total</b>	72	100 %

**Table 10 : The Students' Writing Method**



**Figure 10: The Students' Writing Method**

From the table 10, it is clear that almost all students (91.67%) opted for writing individually rather than writing in pairs or groups. This is probably because writing is a cognitive process that needs much concentration and thinking. Also, students often do not want their peers to see their ideas and even their errors. Only six students (08.33%) write in pairs. We assume that these students prefer to work in pairs because they believe that writing is a social constructed process in which students must interact and negotiate meaning so that they improve and learn. However, none of them opted for the last choice, i.e. writing in groups mainly because students usually face difficulties in dealing with writing tasks in groups due to their learning styles and individual differences. They often have different views which make them unable to agree on one thing.

## **Section Two: Feedback on Writing**

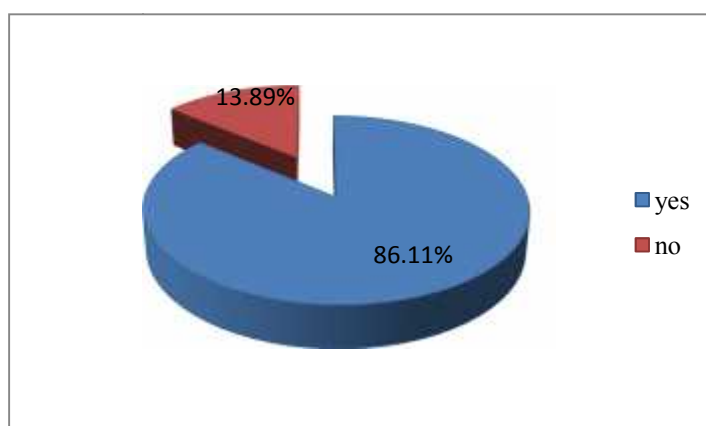
**Question 08:** Does your teacher of written expression give feedback on your writing?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	62	86.11 %
No	10	13.89 %
Total	72	100 %

**Table 11: Writing Teachers' Provision of Feedback**



**Figure11: Writing Teachers' Provision of Feedback**

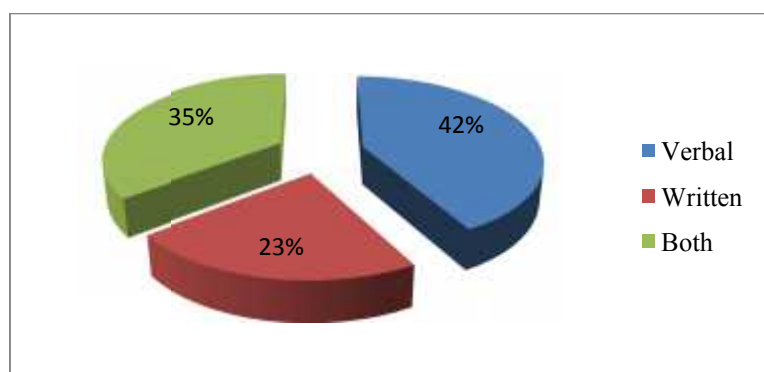
Most of the students (86.11%) said that their teachers of written expression give feedback on their writing. The others (13.89%) said that they do not receive any kind of feedback on their writings. In fact, mainly due to large classes, it becomes quite difficult for teachers to respond to all their students' papers. However, these results are strong evidence that most university teachers are aware of feedback as a critical part of teaching writing and a crucial aspect when responding to their students' works for the purpose of enhancing their writing performance. Thus, they spend their efforts and time trying to help students overcome their errors.

**Question 09:** Your teacher's feedback is often:

- a. Verbal                      b. Written                      c. Both

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Verbal	26	41.94 %
Written	14	22.58 %
Both	22	35.48 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Table 12 : The Most Frequently Provided Mode of Feedback**



**Figure 12: The Most Frequently Provided Mode of Feedback**

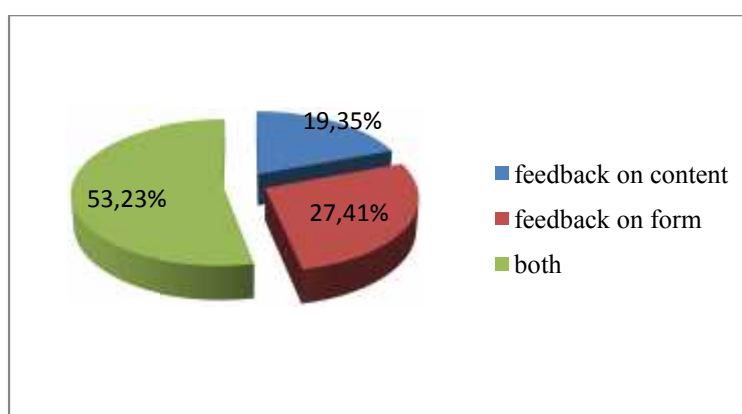
A glimpse at the table above shows that most of the Participants (41.94%) said that their teachers often give them verbal feedback. Whereas some of them (22.58%) claimed that they receive written feedback. The other students (35.48%) said that they are provided with both types of feedback, oral and written. Thus, we can note that teachers do not provide the same kind of feedback while correcting their students' written products; they vary according to their own perceptions about feedback.

**Question 10:** Which type of feedback do you mostly receive from your teacher of written expression?

- a. Feedback on content                      b. Feedback on form                      c. both

Options	Number of Students	Percentage %
a.	12	19.35 %
b.	17	27.41 %
c.	33	53.23 %
<b>Total</b>	62	100 %

**Table 13: The Type of Feedback Students Mostly Receive**



**Figure 13: The Type of Feedback Students Mostly Receive**

From the table 13, we can note that most of the students (53.23%) claimed that their teachers usually provide them with feedback on both content and form. Those teachers believe that good writing is a combination of both correct form, and good ideas. 17 students (27.41%) stated that they receive feedback on form and 12 students (19.35%) said that they receive feedback on content. Teachers who focus on content probably believe that writing is a means for communicating ideas and thoughts. So, what must be highly stressed is meaning and communication. In brief, most teachers aim at correcting all students' errors regardless of being grammatical or ideational. However, other teachers see that focusing on a specific kind of errors is better for developing students' writing skill since over correction may create negative attitudes on the part of the students.



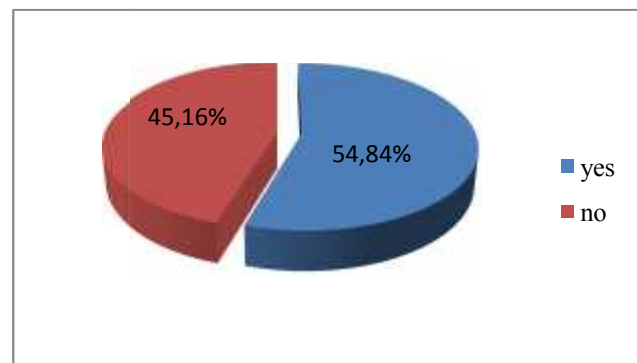
**Question 11:** Do you understand your teacher’s feedback?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	34	54.84 %
No	28	45.16 %
<b>Total</b>	62	100 %

**Table 14: Feedback Legibility**



**Figure 14: Feedback Legibility**

When students were asked if they understand their teacher’s feedback or not, they gave two different answers. More than half of our sample (54.84%) pointed out that they can understand the feedback of their teachers; however, many of them, (45.16%) stated that their teacher’s feedback is not legible.

If we get back to students’ background information about their writing skill, it is possible to say that the clarity of teachers’ feedback for their students depends on the latter’s level in the writing skill. In other words, students with low level of proficiency in writing cannot always understand their teacher’s feedback. So, teachers should be aware of the

wording of their feedback, i.e. they must provide feedback that suits all their students' levels and do not give ambiguous words that students cannot grasp.

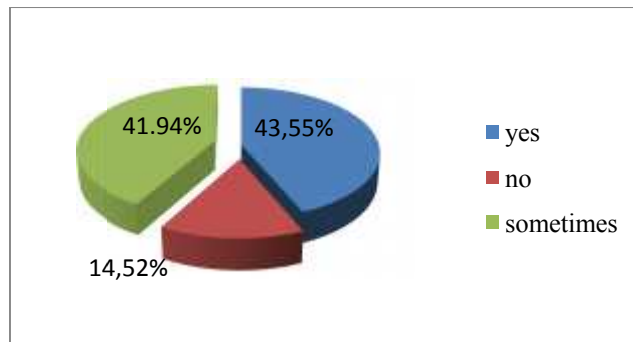
**Question 12:** Have you ever benefited from your teacher's feedback?

- a. Yes                      b. No                      c. Sometimes

Please justify.....

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	43.55%
No	09	14.52%
Sometimes	26	41.93%
<b>Total</b>	62	100%

**Table 15: The Usefulness of Teachers' Feedback**



**Figure 15: The Usefulness of Teachers' Feedback**

Many students (43.53%) said that their teacher's feedback is beneficial for them, while others (41.94%) stated that feedback is not all the time helpful. We can assume that these students find that feedback helps them in improving their writing accuracy and fluency overtime. Few of students (14.52%) assume that they do not benefit from it at all. From the

results of the previous question, one can presume they do not benefit from their teachers' feedback, because they fail to understand it. Though feedback is a crucial aspect in writing development, over correction and vague comment can make it less valuable.

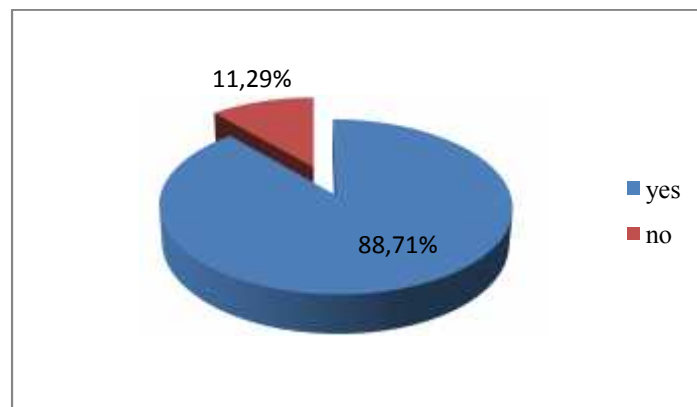
**Question 13:** Do you take your teachers previous feedback into consideration when you write again?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	88.71%
No	07	11.29%
<b>Total</b>	62	100%

**Table16: Students' Opinions of the Importance of Feedback**



**Figure16: Students' Opinions of the Importance of Feedback**

The majority of the students (88.71%) claimed that they pay considerable attention to the previous provided feedback. This implies that students are aware of the importance of their teachers' corrections, and they take them into account while writing again. This is really encouraging for teachers who underestimate the necessity of their corrections and think that

students overlook their feedback that they spend huge time and effort to provide it. Only seven students (11.29%) stated that they are not concerned with their teacher’s previous feedback. This leads us to think that, they are not motivated or interested in improving their writing skill.

**Question 14:** Your teacher’s feedback takes the form of:

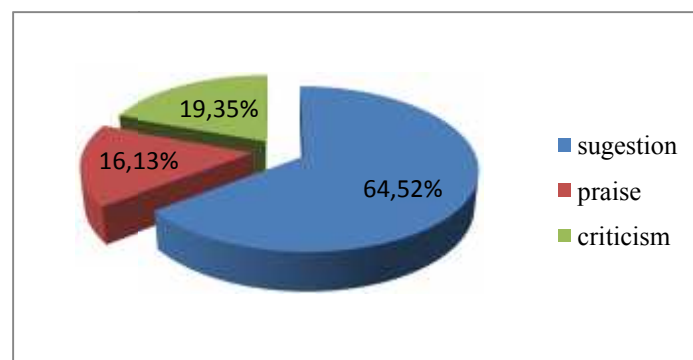
a. Suggestion

b. Praise

c. Criticism

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Suggestion	40	64.52%
Praise	10	16.13%
Criticism	12	19.35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table17: Students’ Perception of Teacher’s Feedback**



**Figure 17: Students’ Perception of Teacher’s Feedback**

Most of the students (64.52%) said that they perceive their teachers’ feedback as a matter of suggestion rather than praise or criticism. Teachers’ method of providing feedback correlates with Harmer’s (2004) view that feedback should not take the form of judgment or

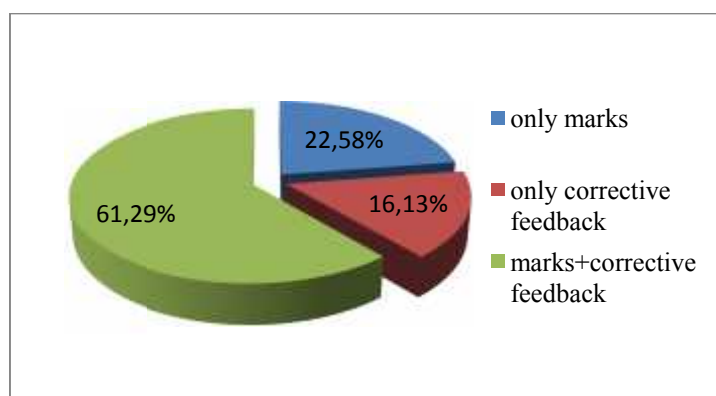
personal evaluation. It should be rather objective and given in the form of discussion. These results indicate that students generally have positive attitudes towards their teacher's feedback, and they do not see it as a form of criticism. Some students (16.13%) revealed that their teacher's feedback takes the form of praise. Their teacher provides positive comments for his students to raise their self esteem and motivate them to write better. For the other students, (19.35%), feedback is a criticism. Seemingly, these students see that their teacher is harsh and tough in his comments, and this is likely to have negative effects on their attitudes towards writing. Hence, the teacher should take into account the psychology of the learner when providing feedback.

**Question 15:** Which of the following do you mostly receive from your teacher of written expression?

- a. Only marks                      b. Only corrective feedback                      c. Marks + Corrective feedback.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
a.	14	22.58%
b.	10	16.13%
c.	38	61.29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 18: The Method of Evaluation Students Mostly Receive**



**Figure 18: The Method of Evaluation Students Mostly Receive**

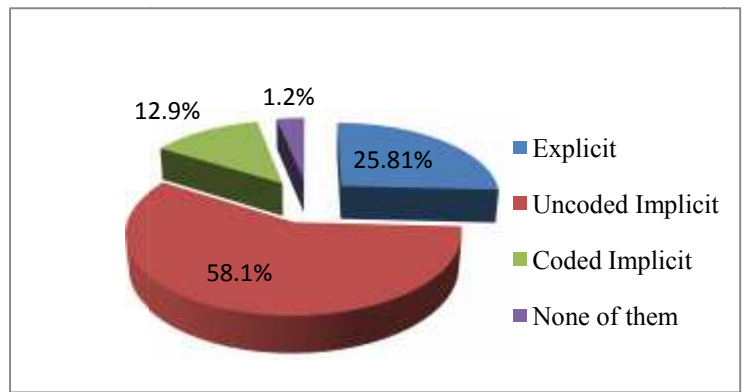
From the results reported in table 18, most of students (61.29%) avowed that teachers of written expression usually provide them with written comments in addition to marks on the same written product. However, 22.58% of students said that most of the time they receive only marks. One possible reason why teachers do not give feedback is the problem of large classes which makes the teacher invests much time and efforts in providing feedback. The others, 16.13%, claimed that written feedback is what they mostly receive. We can note here that most teachers are not concerned only with students' marks, but they also seek to develop their students' level of writing through giving them advice and comments to overcome their problems.

**Question 16:** Which of the following methods does your teacher mostly use while correcting your writing?

- a. Crossing out / underlining/ circling the error and giving correction. E.g. he ~~goes~~ went
- b. Underlining/ circling the error. E.g. he goed
- c. Underlining / circling the error and providing codes. E.g. he goed VT (VT= verb tense)
- d. None of these methods.

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
a.	16	25.81%
b.	36	58.07%
c.	08	12.90%
d.	02	03.22%
<b>Total</b>	62	100%

**Table 19: The Type of Feedback Provided**



**Figure 19: The Type of Feedback Provided**

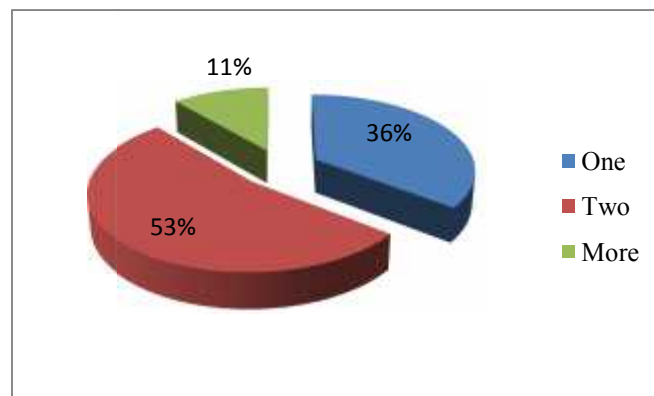
The majority of students (58.07%) opted for the answer (b) which refers to the implicit feedback. It is clear that most of writing teachers opt for the implicit method when responding to students' errors probably because it saves time and makes the students more autonomous in their learning. A portion of 25.81% revealed that they are provided with direct feedback. This supports the results of Ferris's study (2007) which showed that explicit feedback is more workable with students who have low level of proficiency. For the students who receive coded feedback, their teachers are trying to guide them toward the correction without providing it. These teachers are aware of the importance of making their students notice their gaps and search for the solution by themselves to make them more autonomous in their learning.

**Question 17:** How many drafts of the same essay do you usually write?

- a. One                                      b. Two                                      c. More

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
One	22	35.48%
Two	33	53.23%
More	07	11.29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 20: The Number of Drafts Students Usually Write**



**Figure 20: The Number of Drafts Students Usually Write**

According to the results of table 20, most of the students (53.23%) write more than one draft for the same essay. This proves that students always seek to perfection in their writing since they revise and then rewrite their draft. However, a considerable number of students (35.48%) said that they write only one draft of their essays. These students are not probably aware of the importance of revision in improving their writing and overcoming accuracy problems. It is also possible to think that they lack motivation to write. Thus, they write only one draft to satisfy the teacher. Few students (11.29%) claimed that they write



more than two drafts for the same written work. We assume that these students have higher writing abilities. They really know the value of a good written text. Thus, they revise their drafts and edit them to produce an essay of high caliber.

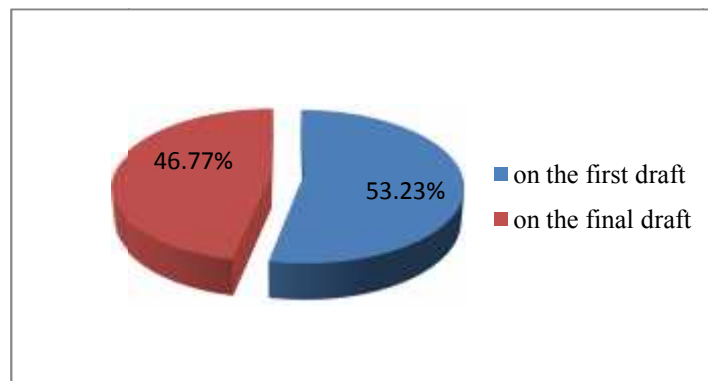
**Question 18:** On which draft do you usually receive your teacher’s feedback?

a. On the first drafts

b. On the final draft

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
a.	33	53.23%
b.	29	46.77%
<b>Total</b>	62	100%

**Table 21 : The Draft on Which Students Receive Feedback**



**Figure 21: The Draft on Which Students Receive Feedback**

From the table above, a percentage of (53.23%) of students stated that they mostly receive feedback on their first drafts while writing. Also, many students (46.77%) pointed out that they receive feedback only on their final drafts. This evinces that teachers of writing opt for both the process and the product approaches. However, the process approach becomes the dominant one especially in the last few years.

### Section Three: Students' Perceptions of Teacher's Feedback on their Writing

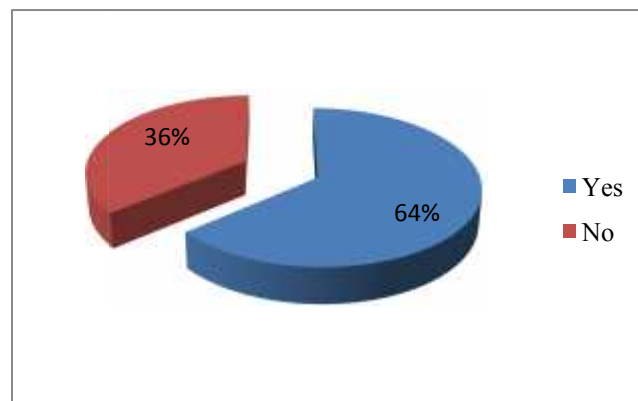
**Question 19:** Do you enjoy writing?

a. Yes

b. No

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	46	63.89%
No	26	36.11%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 22: Students' Opinions of Writing**



**Figure 22: Students' Opinions of Writing**

The majority of students (63.89%) revealed that they enjoy writing. This result is very encouraging because it shows that most students are motivated to write and they perceive writing as interesting and enjoyable. Seemingly, the writing atmosphere is inviting, i.e. the teacher's method of teaching writing is effectively applicable to create pleasing feelings on the part of students. However, 36, 11% of the students claimed that they do not enjoy the writing task. We assume that they are not motivated to write because the writing atmosphere is not helpful or they face serious difficulties in writing in English. So, with the passage of



difficulties in finding ideas and arranging them together in a coherent way”. 44.44% of students stated that they do not feel anxious at all when they write. We assume that these students do have a higher self efficacy, i.e. they value their writing abilities. Many students claimed that writing is an opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions and emotions, so there is no need for fear. Also, some revealed that they like writing and they are motivated to write. Few of the students said that the teacher is the source behind their confidence to write. This response confirms our previous assumption that the teacher provides a pleasant, relaxed, and comfortable writing atmosphere that lowers and decreases students’ anxiety.

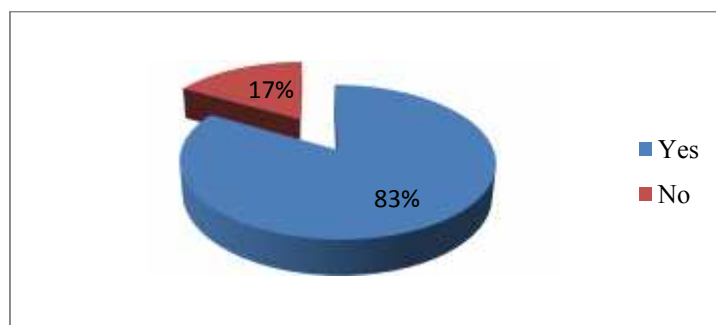
**Question 21:** Do you enjoy being evaluated?

a. Yes

b. No

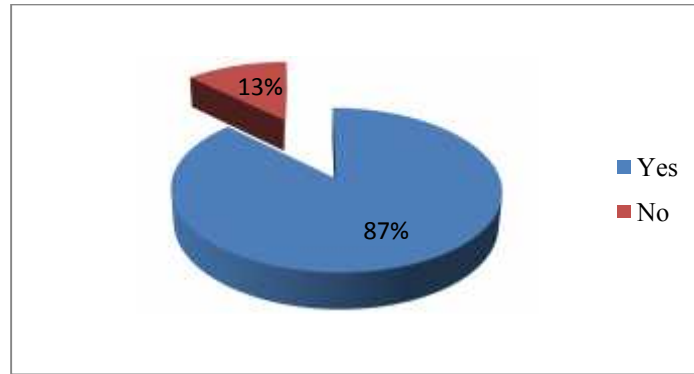
Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	83.33%
No	12	16.67%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 24: Students’ Feelings towards Evaluation**



**Figure 24: Students’ Feelings towards Evaluation**





**Figure 25: Students' Views of the Importance of Feedback**

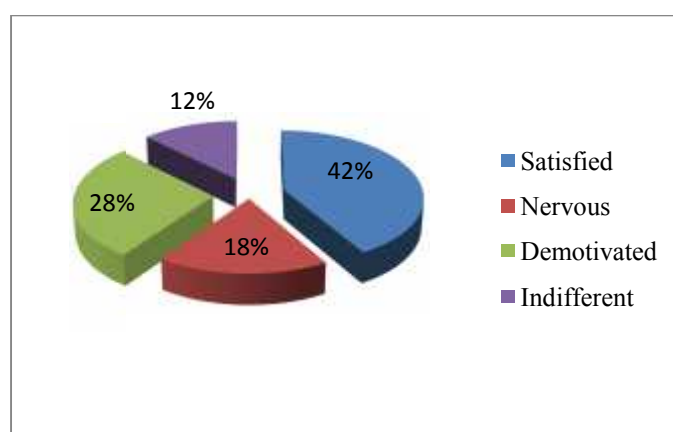
A total of (87.5%) of students stated that teacher's feedback is valuable and worth considering. The reason behind their valuing of their teacher's feedback is the fact that the teacher is the one who is more knowledgeable in the subject matter. Thus, through his feedback, they know their weaknesses in their writing, and they will work assiduously to avoid the errors they make before. Many students consider their teacher's feedback as a source of motivation and guidance to improve their writing. Other responses collude with the results of the study conducted by Mohammad and Rahman (2016) in which students revealed that through their teacher's feedback, they learn and remember better their errors so that they successfully avoid them in their coming writings. Only (12.5%) of students stated that they do not view their teachers' feedback as important. Since most of these students did not justify their choices, we assume that these students have negative attitudes towards their teacher's feedback because they make a lot of errors and their teacher's feedback will point them out.

**Question 23:** How do you feel if you get back your written product full in red?

- a. Satisfied and evaluated
- b. Nervous and angry
- c. Demotivated
- d. I don't care; I just care about the mark

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	30	41.67%
b.	13	18.05%
c.	20	27.78%
d.	09	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 26: Students' Feelings towards Written Feedback**



**Figure 26: Students' Feelings towards Written Feedback**

A considerable number of students (41.67%) feel satisfied and evaluated when their teacher corrects every single error in their writings. This result and the previous ones indicate that students value their teachers' feedback, and they are aware of their writing accuracy and fluency. A total of (27.78%) of students feel demotivated when they receive feedback on their writing. We assume that these students have higher expectations of their writing abilities. So, when they see that they have made errors, their motivation decreases. 18.05% of students experience feelings of anger and nervousness when their written works are full of correction. They probably think that their teacher's feedback is not fair since it sheds light only on their weaknesses and marks them out. Some of students, (12.5%), show indifference when they

receive feedback. This is possibly because their main focus is on the mark. These students are not motivated to learn and to improve their writing; they evaluate their abilities only through their marks.

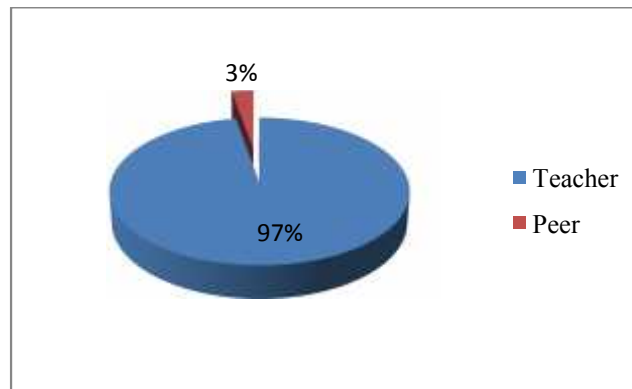
**Question 24:** You often prefer your mistakes to be corrected by:

- a. Your teacher
- b. Your peer

Please justify.....

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
The teacher	70	97.22%
The peer	02	02.78%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 27: Students’ Preferences of Feedback Provider**



**Figure 27: Students’ Preferences of Feedback Provider**

Regarding the question of whether students want their teacher or their peers to provide feedback on their writing, almost all students (97.22%) want their errors to be corrected by their teacher. In their justification of their choice, they asserted the fact that their teacher is more knowledgeable than their peers. They also revealed that they do not trust their peers’



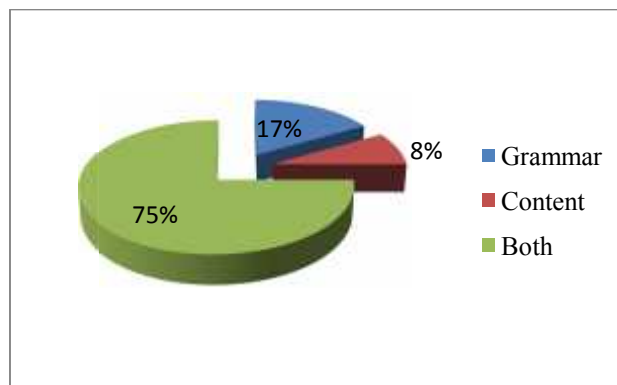
feedback because they also make errors. Instead, they trust the teacher and they believe that his feedback is more helpful for improving their writing. However, only two students (02.78%) prefer their peers to correct their errors. Unfortunately, there was no justification provided. We assume that these students feel less anxious and more comfortable when they are assessed by their classmates.

**Question 25:** Which of the following kinds of feedback is more useful for enhancing students' writing?

- a. Feedback on grammar                      b. Feedback on content                      c. Both

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Grammar feedback	12	16.67%
Content feedback	06	08.33%
Both	54	75%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 28: Students' Preferences of the Focus of Feedback**



**Figure 28: Students' Preferences of the Focus of Feedback**

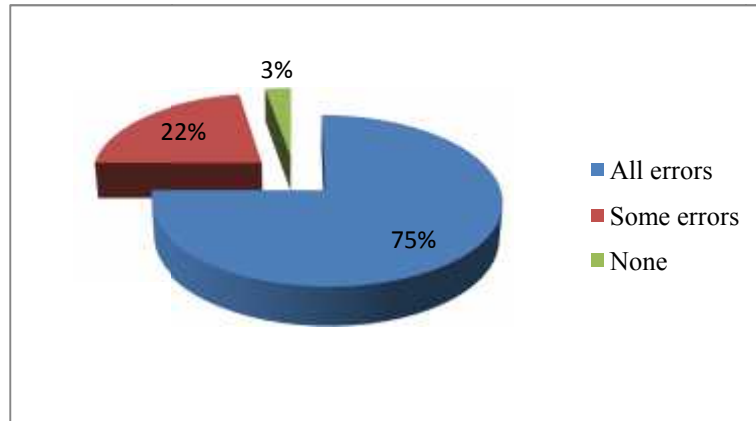
A total of 16.67% of students believe that feedback on grammar is the most useful one for enhancing their writing. These students generally believe that good writing means correct grammar. Since grammatical errors are frequently made by students, they want their teacher to mark them so that they avoid them and improve their writing accuracy. Only six students (08.33%) opted for feedback on content as the most effective type for enhancing their writing. We assume that these students want their teacher to pay more attention to their ideas. They dislike feedback on grammar because they probably make a lot of grammatical mistakes. A great majority of students (75%) wanted their teacher to correct both form and content. These students value both grammatical accuracy and they would like their teachers to read their thoughts and ideas. This result is very crucial to be regarded by the teacher while providing feedback.

**Question 26:** Which errors do you highly want your teacher to correct?

- a. All of them                      b. Some of them                      c. None of them

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
a.	54	75%
b.	16	22.22%
c.	02	02.78%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 29: Students' Preferences of Errors to Be Treated**



**Figure 29: Students' Preferences of Errors to Be Treated**

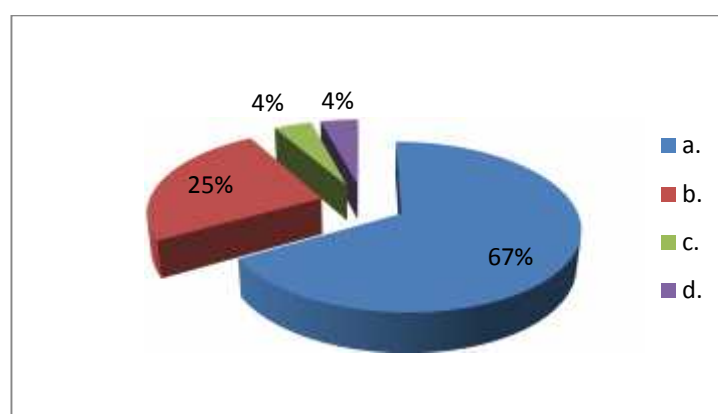
The majority of students (75%) want their teacher to correct all their errors. They want their errors to be marked by the teacher because they view their teacher's feedback as the best means for showing them their weaknesses. Indeed, many students do not notice their errors unless they are pointed out by the teacher. A total of 22.22% of students opted for selective marking as their best choice for correction. From the results of question 23, we can say that students want their teacher to correct only some of their errors because they get demotivated when s/he corrects all of them. However, only two students (02.78%) do not like their teacher's treatment of their errors. These students perceive their teacher's feedback as unnecessary and unimportant.

**Question 27:** What do you do if you don't understand your teacher's feedback?

- a. Ask the teacher to explain it
- b. Ask for a classmate help
- c. Check the internet or a book to fix the problem
- d. You just leave it as it is

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	48	66.67%
b.	18	25%
c.	03	04.16%
d.	03	04.16%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 30: Students' Reactions When Not Understanding Teacher's Feedback**



**Figure 30: Students' Reactions When Not Understanding Teacher's Feedback**

More than half of the students (66.67%) claimed that they ask for their teacher's help when they do not understand his feedback. This clearly indicates that students do care about their teacher's feedback, and they want to know their teacher's comments and responses to their writing. Some students (25%) stated that they ask for their peers' help in case they fail to understand their teacher's feedback. These students feel more comfortable when they look for their classmates help rather than the teacher. They probably hesitate to ask the teacher because of shyness or fear. Other students (04.16%) prefer to browse the internet or to check a book to correct their errors. These students are autonomous learners; they rely on themselves to solve their learning problems. Another (04.16%) of students claimed that they

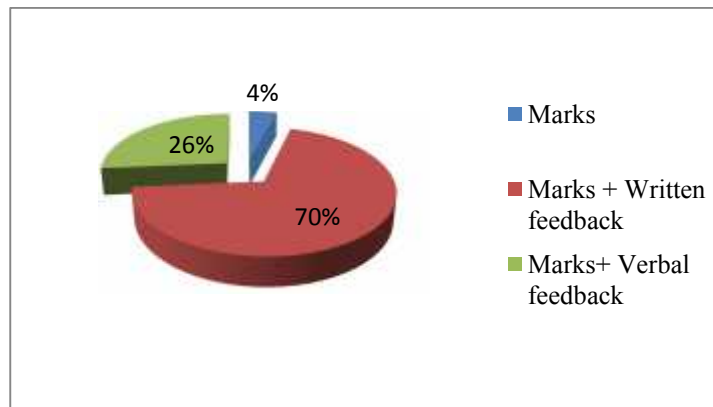
treat their teacher’s feedback with indifference. This result makes us think that they are not really interested in understanding their teacher’s feedback.

**Question 28:** What do want your teacher to provide when correcting your writing?

- a. Only marks                      b. Marks + written feedback                      c. Marks + verbal feedback

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Only marks	03	04.17%
Marks + written feedback	50	69.44%
Marks + verbal feedback	19	26.39%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 31: Students’ Preferences of the Form of Correction**



**Figure 31: Students’ Preferences of the Form of Correction**

We recorded three students (04.17%) who want to receive only marks on their writings. It is reasonable to think that they are not interested or aware of the importance of their teacher’s feedback. The majority of students (69.44%) would like their teacher to provide, in addition to marks, written feedback. We assume that these students do value their teacher’s feedback. They admitted earlier in question 22; they learn better and remember their

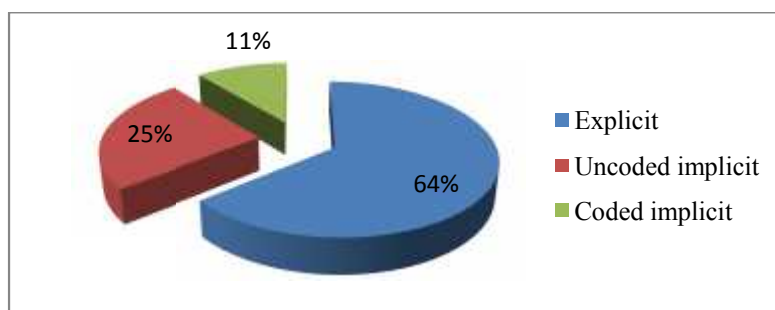
errors when they see them pointed out in their written works. Some students (26.39%) prefer their teacher to provide oral feedback in addition to the mark. This response indicates that those students can learn better if their teacher discusses their strengths and weaknesses orally, i.e. face to face. The students' choice of the mode of feedback is mainly related to their individual differences in general and their learning style in particular.

**Question 29:** Which of the following methods of feedback do you prefer?

- a. Crossing out /Underlining/ circling the error and correcting it. E.g. He ~~goed~~ went
- b. Underlining/ circling the error. E.g. He goed
- c. Underlining/ circling the error and giving codes. E.g. He goed VT (VT = verb tense)

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	53	73.61%
b.	05	06.94%
c.	14	19.44%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 32: Students' Preferences of the Type of Feedback**



**Figure 32: Students' Preferences of the Type of Feedback**

The majority of students (73.61%) opted for the explicit feedback as their preferable method of correcting their errors. Generally, students like the teacher to point out their errors and correct them so that they easily notice their writing problems and solve them. A total of (19.44%) of students chose the coded implicit feedback as the best way of treating their errors. Those students want to be more independent in their learning; however, they need the help of the teacher to guide them towards the correction. Only five students (06.94%) want their error correction to be very implicit. It is reasonable to assume that those students are more independent and autonomous in their learning. They probably learn better if they solve their writing problems by themselves.

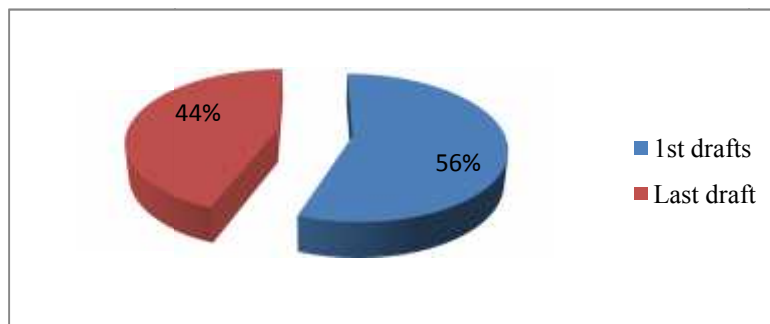
**Question 30:** When do you prefer to receive your teacher’s feedback?

- a. On the first drafts
- b. On the final draft

Please justify.....

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
a.	40	55.56%
b.	32	44.44%
<b>Total</b>	72	100%

**Table 33: Students’ Preferences of the Time of Correction**



**Figure 33: Students’ Preferences of the Time of Correction**

More than half of the students (55.56%) express their desire to receive feedback on their first drafts. It is possible to think that through this strategy they would get the opportunity to improve the quality of their piece of writing. However, a total of (44.44%) of students prefer that feedback on the final draft so that they can revise carefully their texts, correct their mistakes, and organise their ideas appropriately.

## **2. Teachers' Interview**

In order to figure out students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teachers' feedback on their writing at Mila and Jijel universities, we conducted a structured interview to investigate teachers' opinions about how students perceive their feedback and if they show any response towards it. Also, this interview aimed at exploring whether there is a correlation between teachers' perceptions of feedback and those of students. Moreover, several questions were put to ask about the strategies and methods of feedback teachers mostly follow.

### **2. 1. Design and Description of Teachers' Interview**

The teachers' interview consists of nine open ended questions to which three teachers of written expression respond. The interview revolves around their provision of feedback on their students' writings. The interview was given to three teachers of written expression at both Mila University Centre and Jijel University. At the beginning, the interviewees were asked whether they provide or not feedback on their students' writings, and how much importance they give it. Then, they were asked about the aspect of language they mostly focus on when correcting their students' papers: form or content. In addition, teachers were questioned about the method of feedback they follow while responding to students' written works, i.e. whether they use implicit or explicit feedback. Moreover, teachers were inquired about their opinions of the most interesting aspect of evaluation for students: marks,



feedback, or both. After that, we asked them if students show any reaction when they receive their feedback, and, if yes, how they react. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked if their feedback plays any role in improving the students' writing skill, and if no, what reasons could be behind that. Indeed, what might hinder the improvement of their students' writing, and how, then, they can help their students interpret their feedback positively.

## **2. 2. Analysis of Teacher's Interview**

### **Question 01: Do you provide feedback on your students' writing?**

**Teacher one:** Yes, correcting students' grammatical and structural mistakes in writing is the usual work of any written expression's tutor.

**Teacher two:** Yes, sure.

**Teacher three:** Yes.

All the teachers affirm that they provide feedback on their students' writing. One teacher claimed that correcting students' grammatical and structural errors is one of the main tasks of written expression tutor. That is, being a teacher of written expression requires providing students with feedback on their writings. This indicates teachers' awareness of the crucial role of feedback in enhancing their students' writing skill.

### **Question 02: Why do you think feedback is very important in teaching writing?**

**Teacher one:** The teacher's feedback plays a crucial role in checking the students' writing mistakes as it improves their writing skills, targets their writing needs, and gives them effective sample writing.

**Teacher two:** to make students aware of their mistakes.

**Teacher three:** to make students aware of their mistakes and encourage them to overcome their writing problems.

All of the interviewed teachers agree that feedback is a critical aspect in teaching writing. It helps making students aware of their mistakes and encourages them to get rid of those committed errors so that they improve their writings in the future. One tutor stated that through students' writings the teacher can know their weaknesses and help them to overcome these difficulties by providing feedback that tells them how good writing should be. This indicates that teachers rely very much on feedback to ameliorate their students' level of writing. They do this through identifying students' writing drawbacks and providing worthy advice for them in order to make things clearer. Also, it is crystal clear that correcting students' written products enables the teacher to know his students' proficiency level in writing.

**Question 03: When providing feedback, do you often focus on form, or on content?**

**Teacher one:** My usual focus is on form.

**Teacher two:** It depends on the students' level, but form is more emphasised.

**Teacher three:** Form in most of the time.

Teachers' responses indicate that the focus in providing feedback is on form. Teachers perceptions of how feedback is provided do not coincide with those of the students, because the latter stated that their teacher's feedback focuses on both form and content (see question 25).

**Question 04: Could you, please, describe your method of providing feedback?**

**Teacher one:** My method of feedback depends on the type of the error and the level of the student himself. But, mostly, my feedback takes the form of praise for right answers or

indicating the error by asking the student if he is sure about his response, and, thus, he will reflect upon his error and correct it.

**Teacher two:** I provide both implicit and the explicit feedback; however, through time I discovered that students may not pay attention to the implicit feedback. Thus, I mostly give direct correction to my students to save time and go directly to the point. Also, I believe that explicit feedback touches upon all the students' levels (poor and good ones).

**Teacher three:** I indicate the error through circling or underlining it, and I provide some suggestions when necessary. Also, I reflect upon the reason behind the answer if it is wrong.

From these answers we can note that teachers have different ways of responding to their students' writing. All of them pointed out that they do provide students with implicit feedback besides other types which highlights the crucial role of this kind of feedback on students' writing development. This type of feedback is often used by teachers to make their students more responsible and independent in their learning so that the teacher is only a guide and a facilitator. The first and the third teachers' responses correlates with students' responses to question 16 in which most of them stated that their teachers' method of providing feedback is the implicit one. The second teacher claimed that explicit feedback is more helpful for students because it directly addresses the error that the student has made. That is, through explicit correction, teachers can avoid ambiguity and vagueness that students might challenge. And this is what really students opted for when asked about their preferable kind of feedback. One teacher spotlighted the usefulness of praise in enhancing students' writing. He thinks that emphasising students' strengths is more helpful for them because it raises their self confidence and self efficacy which, in turn, helps them to be more motivated. This indicates that teachers are aware of the importance of students' psychology while correcting their written works. Also, teachers indicated the importance of revision which

pushes students to look for the right answer by themselves without getting hurt or negatively affected. This can be very beneficial to raise students' motivation and autonomy. So, we can deduce that teachers vary their ways of responding to students' errors according to their students' needs and preferences.

**Question 05: What do you think is more interesting for your students, marks or your feedback?**

**Teacher one:** Feedback is more interesting for students than marks.

**Teacher two:** I think that marks are more interesting for my students.

**Teacher three:** It depends on the student's awareness. Though there are students who care solely about the mark, there are others who care about both the mark and the remark.

When we asked teachers about what they think is more interesting for their students, they gave us different answers. One teacher thinks that marks are more interesting for his students. This leads us to think that students do not care about what teachers give as comments or advice. Indeed, it indicates their unawareness of the importance of what the teacher has written to help them improve their writing level. Another teacher sees that feedback is more interesting for students. That is, correcting the error is the main concern for those students mainly because they believe that success is not getting good marks but to master the writing skill is the real success. However, the last one said that his students are interested in both marks and his feedback and this is what the majority of students in the questionnaire opted for. So, we can notice that students are aware of the importance of feedback, and they are not just seeking for the grade. In other words, besides being ambitious to get good marks to succeed, students also want to overcome their writing problems and enhance their level in the writing skill.

**Question 06: Do your students show any reaction when you provide feedback on their writings? If yes, what is their reaction?**

**Teacher one:** when my students write well, I give them approval and good comments. So, they show satisfaction and happiness, but when I demand revision of their writing, some of them rewrite it again; while, others make it the same.

**Teacher two:** Yes, they do. My students show positive reactions because they aim at enhancing their writing level.

**Teacher three:** Yes, they do. If they do not understand, they ask for more clarification (you know, face-to-face explanation is clearer and more extended than writing it down). Sometimes, they get shocked when they discover their silly mistakes, but they overcome them and edit the revised version.

From the aforementioned answers, we can deduce that students usually show positive reactions to their teachers' feedback. All the teachers claimed that their students do appreciate their feedback. And feel satisfied when they get it twice since they often attempt to correct what has been pointed out as inappropriate or inaccurate. These teachers perhaps have a good relationship with their students since the latter view their teacher's feedback as a constructive criticism that endeavours to help them amend their writing. Teacher three shows a good example of this point. His students ask for clarification whenever they fail to interpret his feedback. These results are clear indications that students are more aware of the critical role that feedback plays in figuring out their language strengths and weaknesses.

**Question 07: Have you found that your feedback helps students improve their writings?**

**If no, what do you think is the reason?**

**Teacher one:** No, sometimes my feedback does not help students to enhance their level because of their lack of motivation and awareness of writing mistakes.

**Teacher two:** Yes, they do benefit from my feedback.

**Teacher three:** Yes, it helps a lot. The idea is that they do mistakes unknowingly; to the point that they sometimes believe they are writing the best paper ever. All they need is someone to show them where the mistake is, why it is so, and then how to improve themselves.

As it is shown in the teachers' answers, two teachers have found that feedback is helpful and beneficial for developing their students' writings. The third teacher's explanation is significant. It evinces that students' writing mistakes are mainly due to their ignorance. They often believe that they write pieces of high quality, they accuse the teacher to be unfair. But if the teacher clarifies things for them, they are likely to view his feedback positively, and thus, they will work hard to improve their level. Only one teacher asserted that his students do not benefit from his feedback and he attributed this to their lack of interest and awareness. In many cases, students' failure to benefit from the teacher's feedback might be related, as he stated, to their lack of motivation. As the saying goes, you can lead a horse to the river, but you cannot make it drink. However, it is possible to think that his method of providing feedback is the reason why students cannot make use of his feedback. Students, for instance, repudiate the implicit feedback because they cannot grasp it; hence, it is unlikely to help them improve their writing level. Since this teacher mostly relies on implicit feedback in his treatment of students' written works, and students have different levels and writing abilities, some of them might not be able even to grasp the type of the error, let alone correcting it.

**Question 08: Do you consider the fact that your students might receive your feedback negatively, and this is the reason why it failed to enhance their level in the writing skill?**

**Teacher one:** Yes, students may receive feedback negatively, but it is not the only reason behind students' failure to enhance their level in the writing skill. It could be their weak level and lack of motivation and interest.

**Teacher two:** It depends on the teacher-students kind of relationship. If students are aware that their teacher is correcting their mistakes to develop their levels, his feedback will not harm them any way.

**Teacher three:** No, if feedback is reasonable and clear, they won't get it wrong.

When teachers are inquired about the possibility that their feedback might be interpreted negatively, and thus hinders their students' writing enhancement, they responded differently. One teacher claimed that this assumption is possible. Students might perceive their teacher's feedback as a criticism of their writing abilities rather than an evaluation of their work. If so, this will obviously lower their motivation and thus decrease their level of achievement. However, this teacher denied that students' misinterpretation of feedback is the only reason behind their failure to improve. He believes that their failure is also due to their lack of motivation and low level. He might be right, but some students might misinterpret the real intention behind their teacher's feedback. As teacher two stated, it depends on the teacher-student relationship. If the teacher makes it clear that making errors is a part of the learning process, students will pay more attention and show more interest in their writing and their teacher's feedback. The teacher must show his students that his feedback is not meant to underestimate their abilities and that its real purpose is to upgrade their writing skills. In fact, a humanistic approach is very much needed in the writing class. If the teacher acts as an autonomous, students are likely to mistrust him. Therefore, they will receive his feedback

negatively, and this will impede their improvement. The last teacher denies the truthfulness of our assumption. This teacher even asserted that when feedback is clear and reasonable, there will be no misunderstanding of it. However, what seems clear for the teacher might not necessarily be clear for students. The teacher must pay too much attention to his feedback so that students will always get its intended meaning.

**Question 09: How can teachers of writing help their students perceive their feedback positively?**

**Teacher one:** When they correct papers they can put positive or negative remarks. That is, as they correct a written form of course they give a kind of feedback that encourages the learner to consider his mistakes positively and revise his writing.

**Teacher two:** Giving encouraging words and being natural when the error is already made for not hurting the psychology of the student.

**Teacher three:** First, it is better to start with frequent errors. Then, Make your feedback clear and reasonable in the sense that the teacher can convince the student of his point of view, especially that there are students who have problems in their writing, but they are convinced that there is nothing wrong with them.

In order to make students perceive their teacher's feedback positively, the majority of our interviewees agreed that in addition to corrective feedback, positive feedback must be present in the student's written work. In other words, the teacher should highlight the positive aspect in his students' writings rather than focusing solely on their weaknesses. In this way, feedback will seem fair for students since it does not spotlight only weaknesses but strengths as well. In fact, this suggestion does not only create positive attitudes, but it also motivates students and raises their self-confidence. Thus, they will have faith in their abilities and look



for the best. Moreover, the teacher must explain for his students that errors are not a reflection of their weaknesses, but instead, they reflect their endeavours to make change. In addition, teacher three opted for selective correction as one strategy to avoid negativity from the part of the learner. This teacher is probably right, because correcting all the errors at once might demotivate students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of students' questionnaire reveals that students do have positive attitudes towards their teacher's feedback on their writings. The students' answers, in section one, demonstrated that students are motivated and willing to study English and improve their writing abilities. In addition, lack of vocabulary and spelling mistakes were major difficulties that they often face in their writings. This is mainly due to their lack of readings. The analysis of the second section answers evinced that writing teachers are typically aware of the significance of feedback in enhancing their students' writings. Indeed, the teacher's feedback is deemed effective since almost all students benefit from it and they pay great attention to it when they write. From the analysis of the third section, it was crystal clear that students do not solely show positive responses to their teacher's feedback, but they wish that their teacher will offer more written feedback in the future. In addition, almost all students agree that they prefer their teacher's feedback to focus both on form and content. They favour explicit feedback because it guides them towards overcoming their writing problems immediately.

The analysis of teachers' interview, like the students' questionnaire, affirms that students show positive responses when they receive feedback. Teachers seem to be aware of the crucial role that feedback plays in improving their students' writing skills because they all agree that feedback helps students know their errors and weaknesses, and it enables them to improve their level of achievement in this skill.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Our research work has some limitations. For instance, the sample consists only of 72 students enrolled in Mila and Jijel Universities. This makes it quite impossible to generalize the results of the study. However, the choice of the small sample is due to the lack of time. The participants who confessed that their teachers of written expression provide them with feedback are 86.11% of the whole sample though they belong to the same groups. Since they admit that they do not receive any feedback, students did not answer the remaining questions, and this made it impossible for us to know whether they share the same perceptions and attitudes as those who said that they are provided with feedback. The reason why teachers give feedback to some students and ignore others from the same group is really a meaty question.

The fact that the study was conducted by means of a questionnaire might not give truthful results, because the participants do not always give objective answers. Students, in our study, gave us contradictory answers for some questions which have almost the same objective. Thus, it leads to confusions in analyzing the data collected. Also, the lack of face to face interaction made it difficult to understand what the students meant exactly which might lead us to misinterpretation.

Moreover, some students did not give complete justifications about their perceptions and attitudes, and this hinders the analysis of their responses.

Time was a big challenge while making this research since we could not apply different methods of examining students' perceptions. It would have been more interesting if we had conducted a longitudinal and quantitative study to investigate the effect of students' perceptions on improving their writing.

## **Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations**

The results that were obtained from the analysis of the students' questionnaire and teachers' interview revealed that students hold positive attitudes towards their teacher's feedback. On the basis of the results of this study, we try to suggest some pedagogical implications that writing teachers might follow to enhance their students' writing. These implications discuss the way teachers need to provide feedback in order to be more effective and the preferable characteristics of feedback that students want to receive for making them more engaged and, thus, they learn. This is what Krashen (2011) emphasised as a condition for acquisition to take place in which he said "language acquisition occurs most efficiently when we are so involved in the message that we 'forget' it is in another language" (p. 82). Basing on our study, teachers need to consider the following suggestions when teaching writing:

First of all, teachers need to provide feedback on their students' writings in order to make them aware of their errors and, thus, to enhance their writing. The teacher should make his students feel that his feedback is meant to guide and help them improve their level in the writing skill.

Second, teacher's feedback should focus on both grammar and content. Students want to receive feedback on both the form of their language and the ideas they advocate. This enables them to generate a global and a truthful view of their writing ability and recognise their weaknesses. Hence, they will fill in their gaps as much as possible.

Third, teachers need to consider and to tackle all their students' errors whether global or local. In our study, the great majority of students opted for an unfocused feedback that describes and marks all their errors. This kind of feedback gives students the opportunity to

notice all their writing problems since not all students can diagnose their errors and mistakes without their teacher's help.

In addition, teachers need to give much importance to written feedback. Students learn better when they see their errors pointed out in their papers because they can easily remember them and, thus, avoid them whenever possible.

Moreover, teachers should provide direct feedback in order for the students to understand its meaning immediately and easily. Explicit feedback guides students towards the correction of their errors. Students are sometimes lost when they are provided with implicit feedback.

Indeed, it is preferable for the teacher to rely on the process approach to teaching writing. However, correction must be always provided by the teacher since all students prefer to be corrected by their teachers rather than by their peers. Generally, the process approach helps students to get feedback on their earlier drafts in order to get the chance for revising their papers before submitting them. To be more specific, formative feedback allows students to improve their revision since it is considered a key aspect of any good writing.

Teachers should not neglect the students' affective side. They have to work on lowering their students' anxiety and fear of writing through different ways. Teachers can use different strategies for encouraging their students to write and read outside the classroom, and this will help a lot in enhancing their level in writing. Also, teachers must raise their students' awareness of the fact that errors are indications of their cognitive development. Hence, teachers should treat students' errors positively. In this way, they will not get negative attitudes towards feedback and the writing task as a whole.

Finally, teachers need to make their students aware of the importance of reading in enhancing their writing and overcoming their writing difficulties. It is well known that reading is the best way for students to be good writers and good thinkers as well.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The complexity of the writing skill makes it a tedious activity for both teachers and students. In fact, feedback is very important in facilitating and developing students' level in the writing skill. This study has been carried out to investigate students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teacher's feedback on EFL writing. Three questions were posed. The first one is about students' perceptions towards teachers' feedback. The second one is about students' preferable method of providing feedback. The third question is on how can teachers help their students perceive their feedback positively. Four hypotheses were set. First, students hold negative perceptions and emotions towards their teacher's written feedback. Second, teachers do not take into account their students' views and preferences in providing feedback. Third, Teachers and students have different perceptions of how feedback should be provided. Fourth, teachers do not care how their students respond and react to their feedback.

To test our research hypotheses and to answer the research questions, we have used a questionnaire for students of Mila and Jijel Universities. An interview was also designed for three teachers from the same universities.

The first chapter of our dissertation gives a considerable account to the nature of the writing skill, characteristics of good writing, approaches to teaching writing, and the affective variables in EFL writing. The chapter also discusses the most common writing problems and the solutions that might help students overcome these writing problems. The second chapter focuses on feedback. It deals with its types and the different approaches teachers use to provide it. The chapter also tackles the key issue in our research work which is students' perceptions and emotional responses towards teachers' feedback. The third chapter constitutes our field work.

Our main research hypothesis that posits that students have negative attitudes towards their teachers' feedback has not been confirmed. Students in Mila and Jijel universities have showed positive attitudes towards their teacher's feedback. In fact, they have showed their desire to receive written feedback from their teachers. This is very encouraging for teachers who believe that students overlook their feedback and do not care about it.

For making feedback more effective, teachers need to use the methods that suit their students' preferences and needs. In our study, students prefer to get written corrective feedback that motivates and does not hurt their feelings. Clear feedback, also, is highly emphasized by the students since they can understand it easily. Hence, students, including the poor ones, will benefit from it as much as possible, and they will not ignore it.

Raising students' awareness of the importance of feedback plays crucial role in making it more effective. Thus, teachers can provide positive feedback besides corrective feedback in order to make students feel more confident since they got some encouragement. This strategy is a very good way to make feedback a valuable issue for students. In other words, it can positively affect students' attitudes and beliefs, especially when they sense some improvement in their writing.

Moreover, teachers can apply different methods for providing feedback because one type cannot fit all the students' preferences. In this study, students prefer their teacher's correction to peer feedback. They also favor explicit feedback, and they want their teacher to focus on both form and content.

Teachers of written expression should make feedback an integral part of their teaching. Also, teachers have to encourage their students to write multiple drafts for the same assignment because it leads to better writing development. When it is provided at intermediate stages of the writing process, feedback can enhance students' awareness of their

writing problems and overcome them through attentive revision and edition. However, not all the methods of providing feedback may suit the students' preferences and learning styles. This may lead to negative reactions on the part of the student who may misunderstand it and cannot benefit from it. Moreover, teachers need to be aware of the psychological side of the student while responding to any draft since it has a direct effect on their writing development. In other words, when feedback is provided in a good way, it will positively affect the student's writing skill and vice versa.



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## Appendix A: The Students' Questionnaire

### Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to answer this questionnaire that aims at investigating your attitudes towards your teachers' feedback on your writing. Please tick (✓) the appropriate answer, and justify whenever needed. There are no wrong or right answers. What you believe in is all what we need. We extremely value and appreciate your cooperation.

#### Section One: The Writing Skill

1) Was it your choice to study English?      Yes       No

2) How do you find studying English?

Interesting       Boring       Easy       Difficult

3) How would you rate your motivation to write in English?

Very strong       Strong       Average       Low

4) Your level in writing in English is:

Excellent       Good       Average       Poor

5) Do you write outside the classroom?      Yes       No

6) Do you usually face difficulties when writing in English?

Yes       No

If yes, which of the following aspects do you think hinders your mastery of writing?

Grammar       Vocabulary       Content / ideas

Others (please specify).....

7) You usually write:

Individually

In pairs

In groups

**Section Two: Feedback on Writing**

8) Does your teacher of written expression give feedback on your writing?

Yes

No

9) Your teacher's feedback is often:

Verbal (oral)

written

both

10) Which type of feedback do you mostly receive from your written expression teacher?

Feedback on content

feedback on form

both

11) Do you understand your teacher's feedback? Yes  No

12) Have you ever benefited from your teacher's feedback?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Please justify.....

.....

13) Do you take your teacher's previous feedback into consideration when you write again?

Yes

No

14) Your teacher's feedback takes the form of:

Suggestion

praise

Criticism

15) Which one of the following do you mostly receive from your teacher of written expression?

Only marks       Only corrective feedback       Marks + corrective feedback

16) Which of the following methods does your teacher mostly use while correcting your writing?

-Crossing out/ Underlining /circling the error and giving correction. E.g. he ~~goed~~ went

-Underlining /circling the error. E.g. he goed

-Underlining /circling the error and providing code. E.g. He goed VT (VT = verb tense)

-None of these methods.

17) How many drafts of the same essay do you usually write?

One       two       more

18) On which draft do you usually receive your teachers' feedback?

On the first drafts       On the final draft

**Section Three: Students' Perceptions of Teacher's Feedback on their Writing**

19) Do you enjoy writing?      Yes       No

20) Do you feel anxious when you write?      Yes       No

Please justify .....

.....

21) Do you enjoy being evaluated?      Yes       No

22) Do you think that your teacher's feedback is important and worth considering?

Yes

No

Please justify.....

.....

23) How do you feel if you get back your written product full in red?

Satisfied and evaluated

Nervous and angry

Demotivated

I don't care; I just care about the mark

24) You often prefer your mistakes to be corrected by:

Your teacher

Your peer

Please justify.....

.....

25) Which of the following kinds of feedback do you believe is more useful for enhancing students' writing?

Feedback on grammar

feedback on content

both

26) Which errors do you highly want your teacher to correct?

All of them

some of them

None of them

27) What do you do when you don't understand your teacher's feedback?

- Ask the teacher to explain it

- Ask for a classmate help

- Check the internet or a book to fix the problem

-You just leave it as it

28) What do you want your teacher to provide when correcting your writing?

Only marks       Marks + written feedback       Marks + verbal feedback

29) Which of the following methods of feedback do you prefer?

-Crossing out/ Underlining/ circling the error and correcting it. E.g. he ~~goed~~ went

- Underlining/ circling the error. E.g. he goed

- Underlining/ circling the error and giving codes. E.g. He goed VT (VT = verb tense)

30) When do you prefer to receive your teacher's feedback?

On the first drafts       on the final draft

Please justify.....

.....

Thank you for your cooperation



## Appendix B: Teachers' Interview

### Teachers' Interview

Dear teacher,

You are kindly invited to answer the following questions for a study conducted to figure out students' perceptions and emotional responses towards their teachers' feedback on their writing. We highly respect your opinions, appreciate and value your cooperation.

1) Do you provide feedback on your students' writing?

.....

2) Why do you think feedback is very important in teaching writing?

.....

.....

3) When providing feedback, do you often focus on form, or on content?

.....

.....

4) Could you, please, describe your method of providing feedback?

.....

.....

.....

5) What do you think is more interesting for your students, marks or your feedback?

.....

6) Do your students show any reaction when you provide feedback on their writings? If yes, what is their reaction?

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

7) Have you found that your feedback helps students improve their writings? If no, what do you think is the reason?

.....  
.....

8) Do you consider the fact that your students might receive your feedback negatively, and this is the reason why it failed to enhance their level in the writing skill?

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

9) How can teachers of writing help their students perceive their feedback positively?

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

Thank you for your cooperation and for the time devoted to answer this interview

## ملخص

مما لا شك فيه أن تصحيح الأستاذ له دور هام في تحسين مستوى الطلبة في كتاباتهم، إلا أن نظرة الطالب لهذا التقييم لها أثر كبير على مدى فعاليته. تتمحور هذه الأطروحة المتكونة من ثلاثة فصول حول دراسة وجهات نظر طلبة اللغة الانجليزية اتجاه تصحيح الأستاذ لكتاباتهم. إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو اكتشاف نظرة طلبة اللغة الانجليزية و تفضيلهم لأساليب و طرق التصحيح التي ينبغي أن يأخذها الأستاذ بعين الاعتبار عند تصحيح كتابات طلبته. لقد افترضنا في هذه الدراسة أن لطلبة نظرة سلبية اتجاه تصحيح الأستاذ لكتاباتهم. و من أجل التحقق من صحة هذه الفرضية اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على استبيان لعينة من طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بالإضافة إلى مقابلة صممت لمدرسي التعبير الكتابي في الجامعة. و قد أوضحت النتائج أن للطلبة نظرة إيجابية إزاء تصحيح الأساتذة لكتاباتهم إلا أنهم يختلفون من حيث تفضيلهم لأسلوب تصحيح عن الآخر و مع ذلك يبدون اهتماما كبيرا و رغبة في تلقي المزيد من التصحيح لكتاباتهم.