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Factors of EFL Poor Writing Productions.

Case study: Fourth year pupils at "Ait Ammara Hossin" middle school of Timerzrit of Bejaia.

A dissertation submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics and ELT at the University of Bejaia

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to

My lovely parents, who never stopped believing in me, to whom I wish a longer life.

My brothers and sisters and their families, especially my dear brother Fatah Benali and my lovely sisters Tiziry and Sihem.

My dearest husband, for his understanding during this year and his family, especially his parents.

My beautiful nieces Assia and Lydia, and my nephews Amine and Merouane.

My friends Fouzia Benabdelmalek and Naima who have provided me with support and understanding.

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Abstract

The present study explores the factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production at "Ait Ammara Hossin" middle school of Timezret. The objective is to identify those factors, analyze them, and finally provide some solutions to help pupils improve their writing skill. This makes our research exploratory. Questionnaire is the tool we have opted for data collection, and it is administered to both teachers of English and Fourth year pupils at this school. The results revealed that teachers faced some difficulties when teaching this skill because of various reasons such as pupils' demotivation, lack of teachers' special training for developing this skill, and insufficient time allocated for writing skill. Concerning pupils, they considered writing as the most difficult skill since they encounter several obstacles when writing small pieces of paragraph. This is due to their lack of vocabulary and difficulties with grammar rules. Finally, this study provided some pedagogical implications for both teachers and pupils.

Key words: middle school, affecting factors, writing skill, foreign language, difficulties.

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Résumé

List of Abbreviations:

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

L1: The First Language.

L2: The Second Language

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Glossary of Terms

- **Writing:** “is an activity that can usefully be prepared for by work in the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading. This preparation can make possible of words that have been used receptively to come into productive skill use”. (Nation 2009/113).
- **Foreign Language:** “a language that is not a native language of target numbers of people in a particular country or region” (Richard and Schmidt 2002:206).
- **English as Foreign Language (EFL):** English as foreign language (EFL) refers to a situation in which English is taught to persons leaving in countries where English is not a medium of instruction in the schools. In addition, it is taught as a subject, and where exposure to English is typically limited to the classroom setting.
- **Strategies:** “procedures used in learning, thinking, which serve as a way of reaching a goal” (Richard and Schmidt 2002:515).
- **Target Language:**” a language into which language is to be translated/compared or a language other than one’s native language that is being taught” (An Encyclopedia Company).

General Introduction

Introduction:

Foreign language skills are classified into two main categories: the productive skills (speaking and writing) and the receptive skills (reading and listening). Listening and speaking are naturally acquired; whereas, reading and writing must be learned at school. Each one of these skills is pivotal for effective mastery of a given language; however, writing has a special importance since nowadays everything is based on paper like sending messages, writing a job application, a scientific research and many other crucial elements. Hence, because of our interest in this skill, we have based our research on exploring some factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production, at "Ait Amara Hossin" middle school of Timezrit.

I. Statement of the Problem

Because writing needs careful planning of ideas and the use of appropriate language, this however, makes it challenging for fourth year pupils at "Ait Ammara Hossin" middle school. This problem has been observed by their teachers who admitted that their pupils' face difficulties in the writing production. In doing so, we have therefore stated the problem of this present study.

II. Research Questions:

The research questions that guide this study are as follow:

- Why do our pupils produce poor writing production?
- What are the major factors that prevent fourth year pupils from producing a correct piece of writing?
- What should be done to improve the situation?

III. Hypothesis:

We hypothesize that there are some factors which hamper fourth year pupils at middle school to produce a good piece of writing.

IV. Aims of the study:

The aims of this study are:

- Identifying some factors which hamper the pupils' ability to write correctly when they reach fourth year.
- Providing some solutions to the problem.

V. Method and Procedure:

This present study is based on an exploratory research and data have been collected through two questionnaires. The first is designed for teachers who had been teaching for a considerable periode. This guarantees that the responses they provide us with, were due to their long time of observation of the pupils' ability to write. The second is designed to pupils of fourth year. We have asked them a set of questions(close and open ended questions) in which we have found out some factors behind fourth year pupils' poor written production. We have chosen fourth year because we think that they have experiences through writing small pieces of paragraph. The procedure for analyzing and interpreting data is relied on frequencies, percentage, and descriptive statistics.

VI. Population and Sample of the Study:

VI.1. Population:

The population of the present study is limited to 200 fourth year pupils at" Ait Amara Hossin" middle school of Timezrit, in addition to all teachers of English at that school.

VI.2.Sample:

The sample includes 70 fourth year pupils of mixed age and gender. This sample is randomly selected, and the five teachers of English at "Ait Aamara Hossin" middle school of Timezrit.

VII. Significance of the Study:

Much research has been conducted on the topic; however, studying different factors behind learners' poor performance in writing skill needs further investigations with different objectives, populations, and conditions. So, the present study may help teachers to become more aware of their pupils' needs for writing a short and correct piece of writing. Moreover, it attempts to help pupils know some factors behind their poor level in writing skill.

VIII. Description of the Thesis:

The present study is divided into two main parts. The first part introduces the theoretical background of our work. It includes chapter one which is composed of three sections. Section one, discusses the various definitions of writing, its importance, its elements, aspects, and characteristics. Section two deals with approaches and strategies to teach writing. Finally, section three is devoted to the relation between writing, speaking and reading. The second part represents the practical side of this research. It is divided into two sections, section one deals with the methodological design and section two deals with the interpretations of the findings. This chapter ends with some suggestions and general conclusion.

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Introduction

The process of learning English is slow and it could be interpreted as a series of challenges to face. This process consists of the development of certain skills. Writing is one of the most important skills in English as a foreign language.

Writing allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and makes them visible and concrete, it encourages thinking and learning. Therefore, this skill needs to be developed and learnt properly, because knowing how to learn and write correctly are among the important objectives for both teachers and learners. Pupils' poor writing performance have become a core problem which needs an urgent remedy.

This chapter presents a theoretical background on the writing skill and its importance in a foreign language classroom. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three main sections; the first one introduces the writing skill which explores the elements of writing, its aspects, and characteristics. The second one, attempts to demonstrate the approaches and strategies to teach writing. The third and the final one is about writing and its connection with other skills which are reading and speaking.

Section One: Introducing the Writing Skill

I.1. Definition of Writing Skill

Writing is a skill, and like other skills, it has to be learned and acquired because it helps us to express ideas, give instructions, share and preserve knowledge. In addition, writing is not just about using correct spelling, organizing words and ideas as well as following grammatical rules; but, it is a skill which has been given different definitions and understanding. According to Heaton (1989, cited in Saraitum 2010: 30), “writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements”. This means that the matter is not with providing pupils with knowledge of writing; but, how to think critically which is something abstract and not concrete. This can explain the reason behind pupils’ difficulties in expressing themselves appropriately when writing in English since they need to have background knowledge of how to write and how to personalize things using their understanding and interpretations.

For Coulmas (2003: 1), writing has got different important definitions. To start with, it is considered as a mechanism of language recordings through the use of visible or tactile marks. In other words, this means that writing is a way of storing ideas and messages using different codes. In addition, it means the process of putting such system into use which means to apply the knowledge that pupils have learned about writing into action. Furthermore, it is the result of an activity and the particular form of such result, a script styles such as block letter. Moreover, it is seen as an artistic composition, a professional occupation. More importantly, Coulmas (1999: 560) also gives another definition to writing in which he describes it as a unit of language which has got a purpose of storing messages, and in which any person who knows the language can retrieve it.

In turn, Trimmer (1995, cited in Sariatum 2010:15) states that “writing allows you to express something about yourself, to explore and explain ideas, and to assess the claim of other people. By formulating, organizing, and finding the right words to present them, you gain power”. In other words, writing is a crucial skill which permits people to express ideas freely without necessarily knowing the person who wrote it. Such elements cannot be done orally since many factors might hamper the person to do it.

All in all, from these definitions, we can notice that writing is a skill which needs to be mastered, and this can be through helping pupils know how to write, and how to be creative in their writing. In addition, they need to teach them different styles of writing and help them choose the most suitable for them. To do so, teachers should motivate their pupils to write and create this joy and love of writing in them. This is why a careful design and constant practice of this skill is of great importance.

I.2.The Importance of Writing Skill

Graham and Perin (2007: 9) argue that in the school setting, writing plays two distinct but complementary roles. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, like writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, it is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning a subject matter. They added an important and inspiring proverb which is that "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man". Thus, writing is a crucial medium and the benefits that it has are infinite.

In addition, writing performs many functions in a person's daily life and in various areas like academic official media, social, cultural and personal settings. Communication to a major extent is carried on through the medium of writing –personal correspondence, telegrams, circulars, reports, memos, minutes of meetings, instructions, email messages, assessment reports, project reports etc. Furthermore, Pack (2003: xvii) highlights the importance of writing in which he says that:

Learning to write well is learning to think, learning to become an educated person. Writing is essentially the vehicle by which our ideas and feelings are expressed and articulated in the first place. Writing at once defines and constitutes our identity.

To sum up, writing has got different roles to play in our daily life and looking at the advantages that it has make the person eager to write and boost his/her willingness to improve this skill in order to succeed in transmitting ideas and messages in a correct and meaningful way.

I.3. Elements of Writing

In order for writers to produce a good piece of writing, she/he needs to consider different components of writing skill and among them are the following:

- **Grammar.** It is defined by Ur (1988: 4) as the means by which language is operated through the combination of words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning by respecting the rules of language. Besides, it is expressed by Harmer (1999:1) as the study of language forms and the depiction of the way rules are governed to produce sentences or utterances. Similarly, Widdowson (1996:128) states that grammar is the combination of linguistic forms to produce a piece of text. Hence, for pupils to write accurately, they need to master the grammatical rules of the English language in order to make their writing more comprehensible and understood by others.
- **Mechanics.** According to Richard and Schmidt (2002:325) mechanics are:

Those aspects of writing such as spelling, use of apostrophes, hyphens, capitals, abbreviations and numbers, which are often dealt within the revision or editing stages of writing. These may be compared with more global or higher level dimensions of writing, such as organization, coherence, or rhetorical structure.

To comment, mechanics are considered important aspects when it comes to writing a piece of paragraph. Thus, teachers need to explain them to their pupils in order for them to be competent in writing.

- **Word choice.** It refers to the use of relevant words on the topic being discussed, including the use of idiomatic expressions, adverbs, idiom....etc.
- **Content.** It means the extent to which the writer is original and clear in his work; that is to say, to use personal ideas and words, avoid plagiarism, to be brief and concise, as well as avoid useless details.
- **Organization of ideas.** According to Bowen and Cali (2003:2) “organization is the progression, relatedness, and completeness of ideas”. This is of course one of the pivotal elements in writing. Peha (1995-2002:3) defines organization as the process of moving from one idea to another.
- **Purpose.** According to Torte and Heaton (n.d, n. p), “purpose is what you hope to achieve by doing something, that is to say; aim”. This means to have a better understanding of the aim of the topic.

All in all, these components have been shown to be essential in writing; however, there are other aspects and characteristics which should be taken into account since they give writing its sense and beauty.

I. 4. Aspects of Writing

The process of writing is dealt with some factors such as punctuation, spelling, structure, and vocabulary. They are summarized below:

- **Punctuation.** According to Richards and Schmidt (2002:434) “punctuation is the use of graphic marks such as commas (,), semicolons (;), dashes (-), and periods (.) to clarify meaning in written sentences or to present spoken sentences in writing”. Accordingly, the use of punctuation when writing makes the piece of text easier for people to read since it guides them to know when to stop and make pauses as well as help them to understand what is being written.
- **Vocabulary.** Hornby (2000:1506) defines vocabulary as the number of words a person knows. Without having a repertoire of vocabulary at one’s disposal, a person cannot express his intentions and ideas and will then struggle in his writing.
- **Structure.** According to Lado (1961 cited in Striatum 2010:19), “structure is the head of phrase in particular structure “. This means the form and the shape of the sentence.
- **Spelling.** Sárosdy and Bencze (2006:70), and Waters (2006:365) say that spelling is to know the correct form of a word. It is also defined by James (n. d: 2302) as the knowledge, and understanding of how the forms of words go in harmony with their spoken counterparts.

In a nutshell, the lack of knowledge of these aspects makes pupils struggle in their writing because they do not have the habit to use them. Hence, they need to be aware of their importance and get familiar with them through applying them in their everyday writing and not just at school.

I. 5. The Characteristic of Writing

There are four characteristics of good piece of writing which are: unity, support, coherence and sentence skills. These are mentioned in the next page:

- **Unity.** Unity involves the relatedness of ideas to one another. The aim is to make the text more comprehensible for the readers.
- **Support.** According to Richard and Schmidt (2002: 350), “sentences in a paragraph which support, illustrate or explain the topic sentence”. This means that support provides the reader with extra information via using relative clauses, adjectives, and adverbs.
- **Coherence.** Harmer (2004: 24) states that “coherence is how phrases and sentences are related to each other”. In others words, for a paragraph to be coherent, it must satisfy two criteria: first, relevance which means every idea must be related to the topic. Second, effective order, i.e. ideas must be arranged in a way that clarifies their logic or their importance.
- **Sentence skills.** Langan (cited in Sariatun, 2010:32) asserts that “if you can find and explain briefly the twenty sentence-skills mistakes made in the first essay, use the space provided.” This means the ability to explain sentences.

In sum, we think that the knowledge of elements of writing, its aspects and characteristics are pivotal for writing a good piece of paragraph; however, knowing them is not sufficient, pupils have to put them into practice too so as it becomes automatic for them. This can be through encouraging them either through providing them with positive feedback or giving rewards as a way to make them enjoy the culture of writing and be enthusiastic and ambitious to become good writers and why not authors of short stories, books, journals.....in the future.

Section Two: Approaches and Strategies to Teach Writing

Introduction

Writing is the most complex and difficult skill because it requires a great deal of training. In addition, all learning problems, difficulties in producing a good piece of writing lie not only on generating ideas, but also on translating these ideas into readable text. Hence, in this section we will present the approaches to teach writing, and then, some pre-writing and writing strategies.

II.1. Approaches to Teach Writing

When constructing any piece of writing, the writer either focuses on the aim or on the process of the writing.

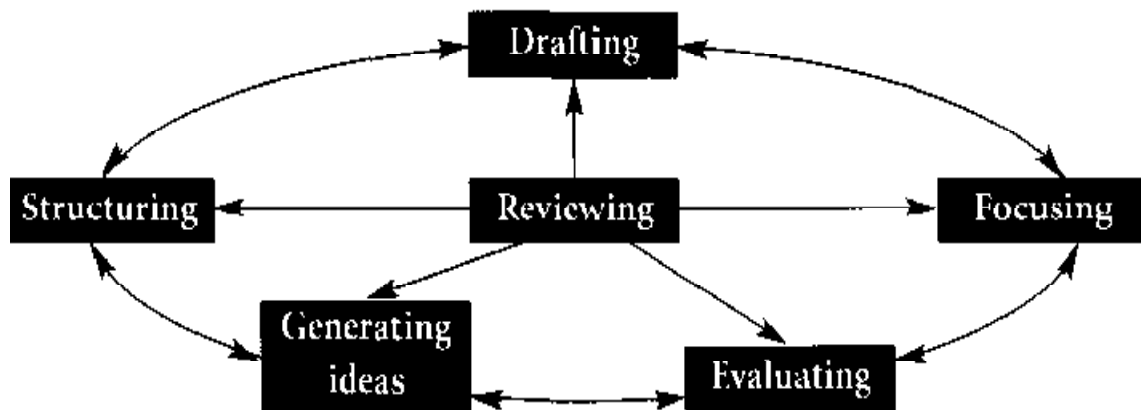
- **Writing as a product.** The product-oriented approach to the teaching of writing emphasizes on mechanical aspects of writing, such as focusing on grammatical and syntactical structure and imitating models. As Harmer (2001: 257) sustains: “the concentration on the product means that the concentration is on the aim of the task and in the end product”.

In this view, writing is related to what the writer needs to write. Hence, the amount of information is more important than the form of writing. Mc Donough and Shaw (1993 cited in Nacira 2010:45) argued that “it is a traditional way to teach writing whose focuses are on accuracy and consolidation of grammar. This means that meaning is not given its greatest importance in this case.

- **Writing as a process.** Process oriented approach is concerned with the process, i.e., how ideas are developed and formulated. According to Harmer (2007:326), “writing as a process refers to the different stages that learners follow when constructing any piece of writing and among them pre-writing phase, editing, redrafting, and finally producing a final draft”. This means the focus is on how to write and not on what to write. Hence, constructing well-formed sentences is the main focus of writing as a process.

From the above definition, we can conclude that writing as a process requires much more time from the learners since they need to pass through different activities. Accordingly, we think that pupils who are not yet fully matured need to be introduced first to the product approach and then the process one or simply use them both in the classroom.

Figure 1: White and Ardt' s process writing model (adapted from Harmer 2001: 258)



The above figure shows clearly the stages that the writer follows when s/he tries to deliver her/his ideas. The first stage is “**drafting**”, in which the writer writes down the first ideas on paper. The second one is “**structuring**”; here the writer orders his/her information. The third one: “**reviewing**”, which refers to the changing of ideas in order to improve the style or achieve other purposes. The fourth one: “**focusing**”; the writer in this stage tries to make sure that s/he is getting the message across. The fifth and the last one: “**generating ideas and evaluation**”, which means assessing the draft.

II.2. Pre-writing Strategies

Pre-writing strategies are the ones which generate ideas for writing, motivate learners to write. It is considered as the most important part in the writing process. The followings are some of the pre-writing strategies:

- **Brainstorming.** According to Ameziane & Guendouzi (2012: 60), “it is a thinking technique which consists of writing down your ideas about a particular subject to generate more ideas, organization, and focus”. It comprises the following elements:
 - **Free-writing.** It means to write down your thoughts as they come to you. As it is mentioned in Virginia Department of Education (2008:06), “free-writing is considering the topic, and just writing continuously for 5-10 minutes about it, without worrying about spelling, punctuation, or any other convention”. In others words, the purpose of free-writing is just to help the writer express his/her ideas freely without being restricted to any rules of the English language.

- **Asking question.** According to Virginia Department of Education (2008:4), the writer should write a list of questions to answer about his/ her topic; then, answer each one of them deeply. This can guide him/her to understand the topic.

- **Mapping.** Galko (2001:24) states that “mapping (clustering or webbing) is when a writer maps his/her ideas and makes a visual diagram about the topic. Often the topic is circled in the centre of a page, and then the writer links the ideas together”. Thus, mapping helps the writer generate new ideas and relate them to one another.

- **Listing.** According to Santa Barbara City College (n. d), listing is to record all your thoughts in response to the assignment, and produce a great deal of ideas. In addition, the goal is to list all the information and ideas you have on the topic.

- **Visualizing.** It is described by Galko (2001:27) as imagining ourselves in another situation and describing the situation from our point of view. This will help us become creative in our writing.

- **Using chart.** Galko (2001: 27) defines it as a means of organizing ideas in a visual form. He mentioned different kinds of charts that the writers might find helpful to include:
 - **Pro and con chart.** In this step, the writer shows both sides of an issue or an action plan.
 - **Five senses chart.** Here, the writer breaks down an event or a situation into observation.
 - **Comparison and contrast chart.** The writer reports how things are alike and different.
 - **Time line.** The writer demonstrates the chronological relationship between events.
 - **Flow chart.** Here, the writer presents the steps in process.

II.3. Writing Strategies

II.3.1. Effective Teaching strategies for the Developing of Writing

Explicit strategies and instruction help learners to write a higher quality than implicit one. According to Graham and Perin (2007: 99,445-476), there are some writing instructions which are more effective than others. These are as follows:

- **Process writing approach.** This approach to teaching writing involves extended opportunities for writing, where learners take a personal responsibility in their writing projects, boost learners' interactions and creations of a supportive writing environment.

- **Explicit teaching of skills, process, or knowledge.** it includes four crucial elements which are stated below:
 - **Grammar.** This instruction requires explicit and systematic teaching of grammar; for example, the study of parts of speech and sentences.

 - **Sentence combining.** This instruction involves teaching learners to construct more complex sentences. It also entails explicitly teaching learners the strategies for planning, revising, and editing text.

 - **Summarization.** This instruction necessitates systematically teaching learners how to summarize texts. This can include instructional activities designed to improve students' text summarization skills.

 - **Text structure.** This instruction involves explicitly teaching learners about the structure of specific types of text.

- **Scaffolding learners' writing.** in order to help learners scaffold their writing, there are some techniques which are mentioned below:
 - **Pre-writing.** This entails engaging learners to generate or organize ideas for their composition.

- **Inquiry.** This involves engaging learners in activities that help them develop ideas and content for particular writing task; for example, comparing and contrasting cases or collecting and evaluate evidence.
 - **Procedural facilitation.** This demands providing external support; such as, prompts, guides, and hints, as well as designing writing processes like planning or revising.
 - **Peer assistance when writing.** This involves collaboration among learners like planning, drafting, and/or revising their compositions.
 - **Study of models.** This requires learners to examine examples of one or more specific types of text, and then, try to produce their own ones.
 - **Product goals.** This involves helping learners to identify their goals when writing.
 - **Feedback.** This involves learners receiving input from others about the adequacy of their written product.
- **Alternative mode of composing:**
 - **Alternative mode of composing.** Here learners use words processing computer programs to compose their composition.
 - **Other:**
 - **Extra writing.** This involves learners to spend extra hours writing or doing a particular kind of writing.

All in all, we have tried above to present the crucial aspects related to the teaching strategies of the writing skill, in which we think that, all of them play a specific role for the pupils and each one of them complements the other. From this basis, our view consists in giving each one of them time for practice so as there will be a kind of harmony in the lesson and pupils will get all the rudiments required for the mastery of this skill.

II.3.2. Effective Learning Strategies for the Developing of writing strategies

Writing is a lifelong skill that learners will use at school, work, and in their personal life. In order for learners to improve their writing production, make their writing composition easily and quickly understood, there are some strategies which show how to write a good piece of writing and how to become good writers.

▪ **Choosing your topic:**

Learners' writing topic may be chosen by the teacher; but, sometime they will have to come up with the topic by themselves. According to Stark (2003:19-20), there are some steps to follow when choosing topics:

- **List set of ideas.** Learners will write down all the ideas that come to their mind.
- **Narrowing down the topic using the 5W's.** According to the European Commission (n. d, p. 3), to narrow the topic, learners should ask themselves five basic questions which are stated below:
 - ✓ Who? Persons/things concerned.
 - ✓ What? The essential points of the writing production.
 - ✓ When/where? The learner should think about the place and the time of a given topic.
 - ✓ Why? Causes, results, comparison, contrast, and other objectives are other elements learners should think about when writing their topic.

In fact, choosing a topic is not easy especially for pupils who are not yet competent in the English language. Accordingly, teachers have to familiarize them with reading short stories or any small paragraphs in English just to gain vocabulary and learn to think in the target language and rely on themselves in choosing topics so as to encourage them to be autonomous. Even though it is quite early; but, we think that for pupils to be good writers, they have to learn to be self-reliant in order to keep this habit when they become mature.

▪ **Writing the drafting process:**

Drafting means writing a piece of paper where learners focus on the main ideas they want to get across in their writing composition. When drafting, learners may skip sections or make notes to themselves to come back and add more examples in certain spots or check their facts later. Learners do not need to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. They will have time to refine these mechanical parts of their piece writing at a later stage. According to Galko (2001:54-55) there are some techniques to get learners' drafting started:

- **Start where you feel inspired.** Learners do not have to start at the beginning; they can start in the middle or go on to a conclusion.
- **Try one of the pre-writing strategies.** Learners can use pre-writing strategies to develop their drafting.
- **Summarize the main point.** Learners should write what they want to say in a simple language as they can.
- **Talk it out.** Learners can explain to someone else what they want to say. Bouncing their ideas off can help learners clarify their thoughts. Besides, they may say things that will spur their writing.
- **Visualize your writing successfully.** Learners should visualize their writing through for example using semantic mapping.
- **Stop what you are doing.** Learners can go to another question or activity and come back to it when they feel ready to it.

As far as our research is concerned, pupils can follow the above stages first with their teacher, then collaboratively with their peers and finally repeat them alone to see whether they have improved their way of writing or not. This is the way we think writing in the classroom should be at this level.

▪ **Evaluating your writing :**

At this stage, learners should have a solid rough draft in front of them, and they should be ready to revise even if their rough draft seems to be too rough and not yet finished. According to Gallo (201:73-74), there are some strategies to evaluate the writing process which are:

- **Reviewing what you have written.** One way to review the writing production is to tackle the different levels of problems at different time. Here are three main levels to look at.
 - ✓ **Content.** What the writing composition says.
 - ✓ **Structure.** The form of the paragraph.
 - ✓ **Mechanics.** Spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage.

▪ **The revising process:**

Everyone has his or her own method for revising their writing. Here are the basic steps involved in revising the content of the piece of writing:

- ✓ Read your writing very carefully.
- ✓ Decide what is needed to be done: you may decide to write an entirely new draft, or you may decide that the draft you have can be easily fixed with some minor revision.
- ✓ Make the needed change.
- ✓ You may need to replace parts that are not clear.
- ✓ You may need to improve sentences.

▪ **Writing the final version:**

When the writer has totally finished the revising process, he/she writes the final version of the paragraph.

In sum, this section has clarified the most important approaches and strategies to the teaching of writing in which we think that they will be beneficial for both teachers and pupils. Hence, for pupils to improve their writing skill, they need to follow all the strategies we have mentioned and make constant efforts at school and home too. In addition, they need to collaborate with their peers through exchanging ideas and correcting each others' writing.

Section Three: Writing and Other Skills

Introduction

Writing, reading, and speaking are all interrelated skills in English language learning environment. Writing and speaking are different in both origin and practice; but, they are two modes of communication and both are concerned with conveying information. However, writing and reading are reciprocal, in other word, writers can learn much by reading, and readers can learn much about reading by writing.

III.1. Writing and Reading

A relationship between reading and writing has long been acknowledged by authorities in both fields. Graham and Herbet (2010: 9) state that “writing is often recommended as a tool for improving reading”.

The relationship between writing and reading is a very strong one and people who are generally good at one will usually be good at the other. Both disciplines are vital to learning a new language. Tierney and Pearson (1983 cited in Tsai 2006: 5) believed that in order to understand the reading and writing connection, one must view reading and writing as constituting one meaning construction. In the same view, Ptrosky (1982 cited in Tsai 2006:8) noted that “reading, responding, and composing are aspects of understanding, and theories that attempt to account for them outside of their interactions with each other run the serious risk of building reductive module of human understanding”. This means that separating reading from writing will create a misunderstanding in the philosophy of humans’ learning since both of these skills are interrelated.

In second language literacy context, Krashen (1984 cited in Hirvela 2004 :20) argues that reading which is based on written texts, helps second language learners to acquire necessary language constructs such as grammatical structure and discourse rules for writing, and facilitate the process of language acquisition. According to Joanne Walker (2012), there is a reason that children learn to read before they write and it is not necessary which one is the easiest. It is because reading teaches the language learners so many aspects that will then become useful in writing. Without reading, a writer would not know how and where to use words and sentences together. Konig (2009:19) shared the same point view and argued that “writing is to create by motor activities a shadow existence; reading is to raise this shadow into life, image, so we can understand it”.

A similar point comes from Graham and Hebert (2010:3) who stated that writing has a potential role in enhancing reading in three ways. First is related with the functional activities that can be combined to accomplish specific goals such as learning new ideas. Second, reading and writing are connected, as they draw upon common knowledge and cognitive processes. Third reading and writing are both communication activities, and writers should gain insight about reading by creating their own text, leading to better comprehension of texts produced by others. They have also mentioned an important point which is that writing and reading are complementary skills.

Considering both reading and writing as processes in which pupils interact with texts meaningfully, researchers suggested that ESL/EFL teachers need to utilize strategic methods to integrate the concept into teaching. Reading to write and writing to read are two facilitative strategies for instruction in second or foreign language literacy. First, reading to write is based

on the notion that reading supports second/foreign language learners' writing, through acquisition of language input when learners are performing reading tasks. On the other hand, writing to read serves as a technique which changes the goals of teachers' instruction from helping learners to answer comprehension checks correctly to encourage their meaningful interaction with written texts.

Tsai (2006) noted that the concept of reading and writing connection can be manifested in many instructional activities: These are as follows:

- **Writing to Read**

- **Writing before you read.** writing Activities before reading are suggested to be implemented in the initial stage of reading, in the attempt to solicit learners' experience of reading different types of texts, their attitudes toward certain topics or issues and the writing difficulties they experienced.
- **Keeping a reading journal.** Learners can keep a dialectical notebook which helps them become conscious of their reaction, learners copy passages that have particular significance for them in one column, and then respond to them in the other. The responses to the passages can take such forms as summaries, reflective comments in relation to the passages, or expressions of learners' ideas.
- **Summarizing.** Summarizing is an effective technique which makes comprehension meaningful through constructing texts in their own words. It can be employed in different sessions, such as when learners are asked to write summaries of chapters of a novel they read, news stories, and academic articles. Not only will learners' writing proficiency be enhanced through the writing exercises; but, their reading strategies of selecting important information of the texts will be reinforced.

- **Reading to Write**

- **Mining.** It is a strategic approach that digs out valuable language resources such as grammar, which supports learners' writing. While reading different types of texts, learners are encouraged to pay attention to and learn

consciously about grammatical and lexical feature of the texts, organization of the articles, and expression which are unfamiliar to the learners. Through practicing, learners will improve their reading skills, and, at the same time, build the foundation of the future writing.

- **Free/voluntary reading.** It encourages learners to engage in reading activities outside the classroom and under less structured conditions than in extensive reading. The main purpose of this approach is to help learners develop pleasurable reading and become more motivated readers.

Reading and writing are two of the most important milestones that occur in learners' life, since both allow them to interact with surrounding world and communicate with others effectively; thus, it is very important to encourage learners to read and write. Reading and writing skills are the main determinants of individuals' educational lives and many others elements. So, it is up to teachers to encourage learners to read like a writer in order to help them improve their writing. But, how about speaking skill, is it a helpful tool to promote learners' writing? "Yes" or "no", it is the next point in this section.

III.2. Writing and Speaking

When we talk about "language", sometime we mean speech (spoken language), sometimes writing (written language). Speaking and writing are two major means of communication. Both are part of language skills; but, one is audible while the other is visible. Both must be learned, but not at the same time. Both have a vocabulary of visual and auditory images stored in the brain. Both can be learned; but, learning one often interferes with learning the others.

Writing and speaking are communication skills that are important in English language learning. Writing is the reflection of the spoken one. The relationship between speaking and writing has been a major issue in composition in the second half of the twentieth century; examination of that relationship has created efforts to revolutionize the way of writing.

The relationship between speech and writing can be analyzed in terms of differences. Learning to speak appears to happen naturally within the home; whereas, learning to write is usually associated with the beginning of formal schooling. Raime (1994:14) shared the same viewpoint and argued that “we learn to speak our first language without any instruction, while most people are taught how to write in their L1, given the complexity writing represents for them”. Another major different is the one mentioned by Brown and Yule (1983 cited in Nacira 2010: 24) who stated that the major difference between written and spoken language is the “elaboration and dense pack of information at the structure and the text level in written language”. This means the use of heavy grammar structure, connectors, syntax. Whereas, spoken language is simpler and therefore less elaborated.

Another view is held by Harris (1993, cited in Nacira 2010: 26) who states that “there are three ways of looking at the differences between speech and writing which are situation, grammatical choice, and lexical density.” He meant by this that speakers may drop or elide word-final phoneme or morphemes, and this can be interpreted by the listeners as conventional speech where correctness is not important. However, this is not the case with written language which must be well-structured.

According to Bright (n. d), there are many differences between writing and speaking. First, writing is written and read, while speech is spoken and heard. Second, speech goes to human beginnings, perhaps a million years ago while writing is relatively recent. Third, people everywhere start speaking during the first two years of life, whereas, learning to write builds on learning to speak. Finally, spoken language is everywhere and always undergoes continual change of which speakers may be relatively unaware. Whereas, written language, because of its permanence and standardization, shows slower and less sweeping change.

Crystal (2005:1) has his way at looking to the differences between speech and writing, in which he says that:

the distinction is transparent, speech uses the transmitting medium of ‘phonic substance’, typically air pressure movement produced by the vocal organs, whereas writing uses the transmitting of ‘graphic substance’, typically marks on a surface made by hand using and implement.

In simple words, he meant that in speech, speakers use sounds, whereas in writing writers use symbols.

Crystal (2005:2-3) also added that the relationship between speech and writing can be analyzed through seven point of contrast:

➤ **Speech:**

- Speech is dynamic. It is part of an interaction in which both participants are usually present.
- The speed of most speech exchange makes it difficult to engage in complex advance planning. The pressure to think while talking promotes looser construction, repetition, rephrasing, and comment clauses. It is often characteristically vague, using words which refer directly to the situation.
- Speakers can use such extra linguistic clues as facial expression and gesture to aid meaning. The lexicon of speech is often characteristically ambiguous, using words which refer directly to the situation.
- Unique features of speech include most of the prosody. The many nuances of intonation, loudness, rhythm, and other tones of voice cannot be written down with much with efficiency.
- Many words and constructions are characteristic of (especially informal) speech. Lengthy coordinate sentences, vocabulary may have no standard spelling.

➤ **Writing:**

- Writing is static, permanent. It is often the result of a situation in which the writer is usually distant from the reader.
- Writing allows repeated reading and closer analysis, and promotes the development of careful organization and compact expression, with often intricate sentences structure.
- Lack of visual contact means that participants cannot rely on context to make their meaning clear. Most writing therefore avoids the use of deictic expression. .
- Unique feature of writing includes pages, lines, capitalization, spatial organization and several aspects of punctuation. Only a few graphic

conventions relate to prosody, such as question marks and underlining for emphasis.

- Some words and construction are characteristic of writing, such as multiple instances of subordination in the same sentence, elaborately balanced syntactic patterns, and the long sentence found in some legal documents.

Diane, Glenn, and Ann (2007: 5) agree that there are three obvious physical differences between speech and writing. First, speech provides auditory information and writing provides visual information. Second, speech is generally temporary while writing is permanent. Third, speech has prosodic feature while writing does not. Harmer (2004: 9-11) suggested six differences between speaking and writing: First, Time and space; which means that spoken communication operates in here-and now world of immediate interaction; writing transcends time and space. Second, it is concerned with participants, i.e. we choose our word with more and less care on the basis of who these co-participants are. Third, he goes on to add the notion of process, and claims that one of the most obvious differences between writing and speaking has to do with the process that writers and speakers go through. Fourth, organization and language are another Harmer's way in differentiating between the two modes. Accordingly, he pointed out that the most noticeable dissimilarities between speech and writing are the level of correctness and the issue of well formedness. The fifth is concerned with signs and symbols where he reported that both writing and speaking have their own signs, symbols, and devices to make communication more effective. Thus writing has fewer signs and symbols than speech. Finally, the six one is concerned with the product where he argued face-to face conversation work in progress, writing usually turns up as a finished product.

In sum, even if speaking is so different from writing; but, they are two essential aspects of any language. They are both communicative skills and they share one characteristic which is arbitrariness. Hence, this section has demonstrated that reading, writing and speaking are all interrelated skills and separating one of them from the other will not lead to the development of learners' writing competence.

Conclusion

All along this chapter, we have provided some background knowledge about the writing skill. In the first section, we have introduced some definitions of writing, its importance in language learning, its elements, aspects, and characteristics. In the second section, we have displayed the approaches and strategies to teach writing for teachers and some strategies for learners to learn the process of writing. Finally, we have stated the relationship between writing, reading and speaking.

Chapter Two: Methodological Design and Interpretation of the Findings

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Introduction

After having dealt with the theoretical background of our topic, this chapter is therefore attempted to provide the practical part of the present study. It is divided into two outstanding sections. The first describes the population and sampling, and the method as well as the procedure for analyzing and treating data. The second is about the depiction and analyses of teachers and pupils' questionnaires. The aim of this chapter is to provide answers to our research questions.

Section One: Design of the Study

I. Description of the participant

I.1. population

The population of this study consists of five classes, the equivalent of 200 pupils of fourth year at “Ait Amara Hossin” middle school. The population is also extended to five (5) teachers of English at the same school.

I.2. Sample

The sample under investigation consists of 70 fourth year pupils at “Ait Amara Hossin” middle school of Timezrit. They had studied English as a foreign language for four years. Their age and sex are not taken into consideration in the present study. They are enrolled in the academic year 2014/2015. Hence, they are equipped with certain background knowledge about paragraph writing. Since, in middle school each unit ends with paragraph writing about different topics; thus, we consider they have had enough practice in the writing skill.

II. Description of the Procedure:

To identify the factors behind fourth year pupils’ poor writing production, an exploratory method is used to attain this aim. The tool used to collect data is the questionnaire which is administered to both teachers of middle school (all the teachers , the equivalent of five teachers) and fourth year pupils at middle school (three classes among five the equivalent of 70 pupils). We relied on frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics to analyze and treat data. The period devoted for collecting data was during the second term of the academic year 2014/2015. At that time, the pupils have studied nearly four units, so approximately four different paragraphs writing.

After collecting data, it was remarkable that most of the fourth year pupils suffer from poor writing production because of different factors like lack of vocabulary and the difficulties in using grammatical rules.

Section Two: Description of Questionnaire

I. Teachers' Questionnaire

I.1. Description of teachers' questionnaire

Section one: General Information (Q1-Q3)

The first section is made up of three items. It aims at collecting general information about teachers. It is mainly about their gender (Q1), age (Q2), and their teaching experiences (Q3).

Section two: Writing Skill (Q4-Q10)

This section comprises seven items. The first (Q4) is about the “features of good writing” according to teachers’ points view. The second (Q5) is designed to know which approaches teachers use in teaching the writing skill. Third (Q6) examines whether teachers exploit reading support in their writing courses. Fourth (Q7) is designed to see how often teachers ask their pupils to practice writing. Fifth (Q8) aims at discovering the amount of time allotted to writing expression. Sixth (Q9) is designed to see whether teachers encourage their pupils to write outside the classroom. The last question (Q10) investigates the opinions of the teachers concerning their pupils’ level in the writing skill.

Section Three: Factors behind Pupils’ Poor Writing Production (Q11- Q14)

This section is designed to determine the difficulties that pupils face when writing in English by asking our informants whether their pupils find difficulties when writing in English (Q11). Then, (Q12) is aimed to know the teachers’ opinions concerning the source of those difficulties mentioned before. After that, (Q13) depicts whether our informants help their pupils improve their writing. Finally, the teachers were asked to set the kind of problems they face when teaching writing (Q14).

Section Four: Suggestions and Recommendations

This section is designed for teachers, where we gave them freedom to add any information, comments, suggestions, and different opinions that would help us in our study.

I.2. Analysis of Teacher' Questionnaire

This part deals with the analysis and interpretation of teachers' questionnaire concerning the factors behind pupils' poor writing production. It includes four sections: the first is called "General Information", and it is designed to have a general idea about the informants. Section two is entitled "Writing Skill" which aims at seeking the teachers' opinions concerning the writing skill. Whereas, section three is devoted to the "Factors behind Pupils' Poor Writing Production" in which our objective is to find out the reasons as well as the causes behind pupils' failure at writing a short piece of paragraph. Finally, the last section is assigned to "free suggestions" where teachers give some suggestions, comment, opinions concerning the writing skill.

Section One: General Information

Q 1: What is your gender?

Table 1: Classification of Teachers' Gender

Options	Number	Percentage
Female	4	80%
Male	1	20%
Total	5	100%

Q 2: How old are you?

Table 2: Classification of Teacher's Age

Options	Number	Percentage
a. 25-30 year	1	20%
b. 30-40 year	3	60%
c. 40 year and more	1	20%
Total	5	100%

Q 3: How long have you been teaching ?

Table3: Teachers' Experiences in Teaching.

Options	Number	Percentage
a. 1-5 year	1	20%
b. 5-10 year	2	40%
c. 10 year and more	2	40%
Total	5	100%

From the answers of our informants, we notice that females (80%) are more than males; the majority of them (60%) aged more than 30 years. Concerning their experiences, most of them (80%) have worked as a teacher for more than five years.

Section Two: Writing Skill

Q 4: What are the features of a good writing?

Table 4: Teachers' Opinions about What is Good Writing

Options	Number	Percentage
a. Correct grammar	00	00%
b. Good ideas	00	00%
c. Specific vocabulary	00	00%
d. Spelling/punctuation	00	00%
e. Clarity coherence and focus	0	00%
f. All of them	01	20%
b+d+e	1	20%
a+b+d+e	2	40%
a+b+c+e	1	20%
Total	5	100%

The opinions of our informants differ from one teacher to another. The results show that 20% of them considered that a good piece of writing is the one that includes all these characteristics (correct grammar, good ideas, specific vocabulary, spelling/punctuation, clarity

/coherence and focus). According to them, all these aspects constitute a good piece of writing and the omission of one element affects negatively the quality of the writing. Whereas, 20% of others believe that a good writing is the one which consists of good ideas, spelling/punctuation, clarity/ coherence and focus. For them, these are the main characteristics which hold a good piece of writing. However, the majority of teachers 40% think that correct grammar, good ideas, spelling/punctuation, clarity, coherence, and focus are the essential elements of good piece of writing and for them specific vocabulary is not important because pupils' level do not demand to have a specific vocabulary. Pupils at middle school are in the primary stages of acquiring English, so we cannot expect from them specific vocabulary.

Q 5: Which approaches do you use to teach writing?

Table 5: Approaches Used to Teach Writing

Options	Number	Percentage
a. The product approach	00	00%
b. The process approach	2	40%
c. Both	3	60%
Total	5	100%

This question concerns the teaching method, in other words, the approaches that teachers use when teaching writing, i.e., the product approach, the process one, or both of them. The majority of our informants (60%) prefer to explore both of them when teaching writing. According to them, both of these approaches are important when teaching the writing skill. The product approach encourages pupils to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed before, and the process approach focuses more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use. Whereas, two other teachers (40%) believe that the process approach is the best one. For them, by applying process approach, learners pay more attention to the various stages that a piece of writing goes through.

Q 6: Do you exploit reading support in your writing courses?

Table 6: Exploiting Reading Support in Teacher’s Writing Courses

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	05	100%
No	00	00%
Total	05	100%

All the respondents (100%) prefer to exploit reading to support their writing courses for different reasons. The first argued that he uses reading support because it acts mainly as a model that pupils can follow to build their own, as far as the theme and the function are concerned. The second and third ones share the same opinions. They explained the reason by providing us an example in which they say: “when we read a text about British system of education, the pupils can use the vocabulary that they found in the text that they read before, to write a comparison paragraph between Algerian and British system of education”. Then, the fourth one argued that it is obviously important to deal with reading support in order to help pupils have some ideas and opinions concerning writing. Finally, the fifth one said reading is really a very helpful tool to support writing, by giving pupils a short text to read it, pupils can reproduce the same text with the same process but with different topic and vocabulary.

The data provided by the teachers indicates that exploiting reading support when teaching writing is very helpful for pupils to acquire new ideas, opinions, and vocabulary, and use it as a model to reproduce and write via following the model presented in reading courses.

Q 7: How often do you ask your pupils to write?

Table 7: The Numbers of Time Pupils are Asked to Write

Options	Number	Percentage
a. sometimes	00	00%
b. often	05	100%
c. very often	00	00%
Total	5	100%

According to the data displayed in table 7, all the teachers (100%) declared that they often ask their pupils to write. This means that teachers give their learners opportunities to practice writing skill.

Q.8. The time allocated for written expression is:

Table 8: The Time Allocated for Written Expression

Options	Number	Percentage
a. Very sufficient	00	00%
b. Sufficient	00	00%
c. Insufficient	05	100%
Total	05	100%

Table 8 displays that all the teachers (100%) claimed that the time allocated for written expression is not sufficient. They said that the pupils need more time to practice writing and improve it. Here we can consider the time as among the factors of EFL learners poor writing productions.

Q 9: Do you encourage your pupils to write outside the classroom?

Table 9: Teacher's Encouragement for Pupils to write outside the Classroom

Options	Number	Percentage
a. Yes	02	40%
b. No	03	60%
Total	05	100%

The data shows that the majority (60%) of teachers do not encourage their learners to write outside the classroom. However, 40% of others declared "Yes" which means they encourage their pupils to write outside the classroom.

- If yes explain:

The teachers, who answered "yes", provided us with some arguments in which they explained why they encourage their pupils to write outside the classroom:

1. “I ask them to write diaries, this is the least thing that they can do. I always tell them to write even if they do not find a reason for writing, or do not have vocabulary. I also tell them to write everything that comes to their minds”.
 2. “As a teacher, I should motivate my learners to write more and more; because, writing is a key skill to master any given language. Pupils write well when the ideas are watered by imagination”.
- If “No” please explain

Three teachers declared that they do not encourage their pupils to write outside the classroom; because, they do not do personnel work, they always rely on other persons to do it. They have tendency to copy really made papers from internet.

So, we conclude that teachers prefer not to ask their pupils to write outside the classroom; because, they do not take it seriously.

Q.10. Do your pupils achieve a satisfactory level in writing with syllabus of fourth year?

Table 10: Teachers’ Satisfaction of Pupils’ Level with the Syllabus of Fourth Year.

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	00	00%
No	05	100%
Total	05	100%

The answers we collected reveal that all of the teachers (100%) are not satisfied with the pupils' level with the syllabus of fourth year.

- Please explain why?
1. Pupils are weak at writing skill; they are not interested in most of the subjects dealt with the syllabus. The number of hours per week is not enough to fulfill the objective of the program.
 2. Because the focal point is on grammar and text comprehension in the classroom.
 3. Pupils face difficulties in finding words, in applying grammar rules and with ideas concerning the topics.
 4. Pupils encounter obstacles; because, they lack vocabulary and some techniques of writing. Even if they work hard, these difficulties and obstacles affect negatively their level in writing.

5. I am not satisfied, but sometimes when the topic interests them, they can produce good paragraphs.

These answers indicate that lack of interest; lack of vocabulary; difficulties of applying grammar rules, unsatisfactory time allotted are among the reasons behind pupils' poor writing production.

Section Three: Factors behind Pupils' Poor Written Productions

Q.11. Do your pupils find difficulties when writing in English?

Table11: Teachers' Opinions Concerning Pupils' Difficulties when Writing in English

Options	Number	Percentage
-Yes	05	100%
-No	00	00%
Total	00	100%

100% of our informants declared that the majority of their pupils face difficulties when writing in English. These difficulties are due to many factors which will be explained in the next question. Which means that writing is really a very difficult task for pupils.

Q. 12. These difficulties are due to:

Table 12: Pupils' Difficulties in Writing Production from Teachers Points of View.

Options	Number	Percentage
a. Teaching method	00	00%
b. Syllabus	00	00%
c. Pupils	00	00%
d. Others	00	00%
a+c	01	20%
a+b+c	04	80%
Total	05	100%

Teachers' opinions concerning the difficulties behind pupils' poor written production differ from one teacher to another. 20% of them declared that the reasons behind pupils' poor writing production are due to the teaching method and pupils. However, 80% chose "syllabus" as the main difficulty behind pupils' poor writing production; because, the level of their pupils is not in harmony with the syllabus of fourth year besides the teaching method. For them, "some teachers focus more on the program and are not innovative, they just follow the book. In addition, they claimed that they are not well trained for this complex skill. Finally, they mentioned pupils' demotivation and passivity in the classroom.

Q.13. As teachers, how can you help your pupils to improve their writing skills?

Through this question, we want to know the teachers' solution in order to help their pupils improve their writing skill. They suggested that:

1. By teaching them how to write a good paragraph, provide them with more lessons about punctuation and vocabulary. In addition to encourage them to read to have background knowledge.
2. Two of our informants suggested the design of effective methods and more practice of this skill.
3. Whereas, others (two other teachers) proposed a crucial element which is helping pupils widen their thinking and imagination, and encouraging them to read because reading is a key to improve writing.

Q.14. What kind of problem do you face when teaching writing?

This question is designed to see the kind of difficulties teachers of English face when teaching writing. All the teachers declared that the major problems they encounter when teaching writing is the insufficient time allotted for this skill, as well as pupils' lack of motivation. They added that writing skill needs also workshops to practice it.

Section four: further suggestions

Q.15. Please, feel free to add any comment

This space is left for our informants to provide us with their further opinions concerning the writing skill. All the teachers (5) shared the same ideas about the importance of teaching writing skill.

They declared that teaching writing skill in English as a second or foreign language is not easy at all. First, teachers are not well trained for this task; they need to have an adequate training. Secondly, pupils are not well motivated in most cases. Moreover, pupils have to master several and complex language points, such as the mastery of spelling, vocabulary, accurate ideas, organization, and coherence. They should also be encouraged to read in order to develop their writing skill; because, reading is a key for overcoming writing difficulties.

They also added that as teachers, we should every time show and remember our learner about the major role of writing in their future life. This can be through teaching them effective strategies and techniques, advising them to write everyday a short paragraph and make self-assessment, because this can be useful to help our pupils improve their writing level.

Finally, they suggested that since learners use technology in their everyday life, we can use internet-based writing as a tool to encourage pupils to write and ameliorate their writing skill.

From the analysis and interpretation of the teachers' questionnaire, we came to the following conclusion:

All the teachers preferred to use both approaches when teaching writing: process and product approach because according to them these approaches are complementary. All the teachers used reading as a tool to support the writing skill because they all argued that reading is an important element for enhancing the writing skill. So, teachers declared that they should motivate and encourage their learners to read in order to increase their level in the writing skill.

The learners are often asked to write even if the time allotted for written expression is insufficient as it is declared by the teachers. For this reason, they encourage their pupils to write outside the classroom to develop their writing skill.

The pupils do not achieve a satisfactory level in writing skill with the syllabus of the fourth year, and they have difficulties to assimilate the writing skill because of many reasons (lack of vocabulary, lack of motivation, and lack of reading).

Among the factors that hinder pupils when writing, as being reported by our respondents are: lack of vocabulary, limited background knowledge, and problem with using grammar

appropriately. To help their learners improve their writing, skill they suggested some solutions:

- Teachers need to be well trained in order to teach this subject because writing skill is very complex and difficult.
- Pupils are totally demotivated, so as a teacher, we should motivate them to learn and to write.
- Teach them techniques and strategies for writing a short paragraph.
- We should teach them punctuation and spelling.
- Provide them with a list of vocabulary for each unit.
- Encourage them to read and to write outside the classroom.
- Show learners the importance of writing in their future life.

II. Pupils' Questionnaire

II.1. Description of Pupils' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

The first section is composed of 4 items. Its aim is to collect general information about pupils. It seeks about pupils' gender (Q1), age (Q2), and their experiences in studying English (Q3). Finally, the last question is designed to see if they like/dislike English (Q4).

Section Two: Writing Difficulties

This section is made up of 13 items. It is designed to determine the different difficulties that fourth year pupils at middle school encounter when writing. Questions (5,6) are designed to see which of the four (speaking, reading, listening, and writing) skills pupils prefer and we asked them to classify each one of them from the most difficult to the least one. Then, questions (7, 8) are designed to know if pupils encounter difficulties and reasons behind those difficulties. Question nine (Q9) is about pupils' organization of their ideas, whether they face difficulties when organizing their ideas and in understanding teachers' questions in writing expression (Q10). The other questions (11, 12, and 13) are concerned with practice. (Q11) is

designed to know how often pupils practice writing (everyday, sometime.....etc.). (Q12) is designed to see whether pupils prepare their homework or not. (Q13) aims at exploring whether pupils write outside classroom, if yes what do they enjoy to write about. If no, they were asked to explain why. We designed question fourteen (Q14) to check whether pupils ask their teachers or family members to help them when writing. Question fifteen (Q15) is designed to know whether pupils of fourth year could evaluate themselves from the marks they get in English (good, very good.....etc). Question sixteen (Q16) seeks information about whether our informants try to improve their writing. Finally, we want to know whether pupils take into consideration the observation that their teacher makes when correcting their written production.

Section Three: Further Comments

In this last section, pupils are free to give their opinions, suggestions, and ideas concerning writing.

III.2. Analysis of Pupils' Questionnaire

This part deals with the analysis and interpretation of pupils' questionnaire. This later includes three sections; each of them collects information on a particular aspect. The first section entitled "general information" which aims at gathering information about the pupils' personnel data. Whereas, the second section is called "Writing Difficulties", and aims at investigating pupils' opinions on some aspect of writing skill and the major difficulties that they face when writing in English i.e., the factors that hinder them to write correctly. Finally, the third section deals with pupils' suggestions concerning writing skill.

Section one: general information

Q 1: Gender: are you:

Table 13: Pupils' Gender.

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Male	31	44%
b- Female	39	56%
Total	70	100%

Q 2: How old are you?

Table 14: Pupils' Age.

Options	Number	Percentage
a- 14	14	20%
b- 15	22	32%
c- 16	20	28%
d- More than	14	20%
Total	70	100%

Q 3: How long have you been studying English?

Table 15: Period of time pupils have been studying English

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Four year	14	20%
b- Five year	22	32%
c- More than	34	48%
Total	70	100%

Q 4: Do you like English?

Table16: The Numbers of Pupils Who like /dislike English

Options	Number	Percentage
- Yes	59	84%
- No	11	15%
Total	70	100%

This table displays that, the numbers of female are more than male. (20%) have fourteen years old and 32% have fifteen, the equivalent of fourth year of studying English. (28%) have sixteen and 20% have more than sixteen which means that they have been studying English for more than four years. 84% of the pupils like English; however, (15%) do not. The reasons will be explained in the next section.

Section Two: Writing Difficulties

Q 5: Which of the following skills do you prefer?

Table17: The Preferred Skills by Pupils.

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Speaking	16	22.9%
b- Listing	34	48.9%
c- Speaking	12	17.1%
d- Writing	8	11.4%
Total	70	100%

This question reports that listening is the most preferred skill for the pupils (48.9%). (22.9%) preferred speaking from others skills. 17.1% preferred reading, and only (11.4%) preferred writing.

Q 6: Classify the following skills from the most difficult to the least difficult one?

Table18: Classification of Skills from the Most Difficult to the Least difficult One.

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Listening	00	00%
b- Speaking	21	30%
c- Reading	9	12.8%
d- Writing	40	57.2%
Total	70	100%

This table shows that, pupils considered reading (12%) and listening (00%) as the least difficult skills, they do not face many difficulties whether to read what is written in a given text or listen to what a teacher says . So, reading and listening are not difficult for the pupils of fourth year. However, speaking (30%) and writing (57.2%) are the most difficult skills that pupils face when learning English. This can be because they are productive skills which need a great deal of efforts and commitments.

Q 7: Do you find difficulties when writing in English?

Table 19: The Numbers of Pupils who Find Difficulties when Writing

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	70	100%
b- No	00	00%
Total	70	100%

All the pupils (100%) of fourth year at “Ait Amara Hossin “middle school declared that they faced difficulties when writing in English. For them. It is a very complex task to write in English

Q 8: Are these difficulties due to:

Table 20: Sources behind Pupils' Writing Difficulties

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Vocabulary	00	00%
b- Grammar	00	00%
c- Punctuation/spelling	00	00%
d- other	00	00%
a+b	60	85.8%
a+b+c	10	14.2%
Total	70	100%

The data collected shows that vocabulary and grammar are the major sources of pupils' poor writing production. 85.8% of the pupils declared that when writing in English they found difficulties at the level of vocabulary and grammar. 14.2% of the pupils considered all of vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and spelling as sources of their failure to write in English.

-Please explain

- Most of the pupils shared the same point of view; they stated that the reasons behind their failure when they write in English are:
- Grammar: they found difficulties in how to combine words and sentences, which conjunction they should use when and where to use them, in addition to difficulties in choosing tenses.
- Vocabulary: is another factor behind pupils' poor writing production. They stated that when writing in English, they spend a longer period of time searching for words. They declared that they need more lessons about vocabulary, synonyms, and antonyms. Also, they added that they do not understand the meaning of words when teachers ask them to order sentences to shape paragraph.
- Punctuation and spelling: some of them said that they do not know when and where they should put punctuation marks such as comma, semicolon, period, and parentheses ...etc .

Q 8: Do you find difficulties in organizing your ideas?

Table 21: Pupils Difficulties in Organizing their Ideas

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	48	68.6%
b- No	22	31.4%
Total	70	100%

The majority of pupils (68.6%) face difficulties in organizing their ideas. They pointed out that they have ideas in their minds; but, sometimes they rely on their mother language or Arabic to write. However, to write well in English, they need some efforts and instructions.. 31.4% do not find difficulties in organizing their ideas because they use simple words to express their ideas.

Q 9: Do you find difficulties in understanding teacher's questions in writing expression?

Table 22: Pupils' Difficulties in Understanding Teachers' Questions

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	41	58.6%
b- No	29	41.4%
Total	70	100%

This table (22) shows that (58.6%) of our informants find difficulties in understanding teachers' questions in writing expression and (41.4%) do not find difficulties in understanding their teachers' questions.

Q 11: How often do you practice writing?

Table 23: The Numbers of Time Pupils Practice Writing.

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Everyday	00	00%
b- Sometimes	70	100%
c- Rarely	00	00%
d- Not at all	00	00%
Total	70	100%

The results displays that all (100%) the pupils sometimes practice writing, but not every day. However, they need to practice writing in every session in order to overcome all the difficulties.

Q 12: Do you prepare your homework?

Table 24: Pupils' Preparation of Their Homework

Options	Number	Percentage
a- yes	36	51%
b- no	34	49%
Total	70	100%

Homework is a task given by the teachers for pupils to do it at home in order to revise their previous lectures at the same time. It is a very helpful tool to improve pupils' writing production. However, the table shows that only (51%) of them prepare their homework. (49%) of others declared that they do not do their homework. This means that pupils are not interested and motivated to write.

Q 13: Do you write outside the classroom?

Table 25: The Numbers of Pupils who Write/do not Write Outside the Classroom

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	20	28.6%
b- No	50	71.4%
Total	70	100%

Through this question, we want to know whether pupils try to write outside the classroom or not. We notice that (28.6%) of our informants affirm that they write outside classroom. They stated that they like writing about nature, daily life, sport specially boys, the lyrics of the music, what happens in classroom...etc. The others (71.4%) declared that they do not write outside because they are not interested and also because of the difficulties that they face at the level of grammar (tenses, adjective, adverbs...etc) and vocabulary.

Q 14: Do you ask your teacher or family member for help when writing?

Table 26: The Numbers of Pupils Who Ask for Help from Their Teacher or Family member

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	40	57%
b- No	30	43%
Total	70	100%

Table (26) shows that 57% of our informants ask their teacher and family member for help when writing, whereas 43% of others do not ask for help.

Q 15: According to the marks that you get in English how do you evaluate your writing?

Table 27: Pupils' Evaluation of Their level in Writing Expression

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Good	00	00%
b- Average	30	43%
c- Poor	40	57%
d- Satisfactory	00	00%
Total	70	100%

For this question no one declared that his/her level in English is good. (43%) stated that their level in writing is average according to the marks that they get in English which means that, they write but with some difficulties. Whereas, (57%) declared that their level in writing in English is poor because of the different obstacles they face when writing.

Q.16. Do you try to improve your writing expression?

Table 28: Pupils' Attempt to Improve their Writing Expression

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	21	30 %
b- No	49	70%
Total	70	100%

Only (30%) of the respondents try to improve their writing in English because of the brevet exam that they will take at the end of the year. 70% of others do not try. This proves the lack of motivation from the learners' side.

-If "yes" please explain how?

- Preparing their homework.
- Writing outside the classroom.
- Asking my teacher to help me when writing.

Q 17: Do you take into consideration the observations that your teacher makes when correcting your written production(s)?

Table 29: Pupils' Attention to the Observations that their Teachers Make when Correcting their Written Expression(s)

Options	Number	Percentage
a- Yes	40	57.2%
b- No	30	42.8%
Total	70	100%

The answers we collected revealed that the majority of the informants (57.2%) take into consideration the observations that their teachers make when correcting their writing production. (42.8%) of others do not.

-If “yes” please explain why?

They all declared that they take teachers’ observations into consideration when correcting their written productions with the intention of knowing about their weaknesses and strength in order to correct them and do better in the next work.

Section Three: Further Suggestions

Q 18: As pupils of middle school, what do you think about writing?

This space is meant to give our pupils the opportunity to add any comments concerning writing. Here are some of their answers:

- They declared that even if writing is a very difficult task and that they face difficulties (vocabulary and grammar); but, it is an important skill they need to master.
- Some of them declared that they like writing either in class; what the teacher asks them to do, or outside the classroom especially the lyrics of the English music and about what happens in their everyday life, sport write e-mail and letters for their friends in English.
- Finally, they mentioned that with writing, they can express more their ideas and feeling and memorize more the vocabulary they have learnt before.

From the analysis and interpretation of the pupils’ questionnaire, we came with the following conclusion:

The majority of pupils considered writing as the most difficult skill. All of them find difficulties when writing which are mainly at the level of grammar (difficulties of the rules), vocabulary (lack of vocabulary), spelling, and punctuation (difficulties where they put especially comma (,), semi-colon (;) period (.). most of the pupils have ideas but do not know how to organize them and put them into written text and form (sentences and word).

Besides, teachers have the responsibility to guide and provide their pupils by using some techniques and methods which can attract them.

Conclusion

All along this chapter, we have presented in details the description of teachers and pupils' questionnaires and the analysis as well as the interpretations of the findings. Hence, the pupils' questionnaire showed that pupils of middle school at "Ait-Amara Hocin" find difficulties in writing at the level of grammar and vocabulary. For the teachers' questionnaire, they reported that teaching method, motivation and pupils' level are the major factors behind their pupils' difficulties in writing.

Chapter Three:

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

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Introduction

This research work investigates the major factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production at middle school of "Ait Amara Hossin" of Tmezrit which are a lack of vocabulary and difficulties in using grammatical rules. Hence, the present chapter has been committed to display three outstanding elements which are: pedagogical implications, limitations and some suggestions for further research.

I. Pedagogical Implications:

Besides demonstrating the main factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production, this study generates a number of implications that would be of interest to teachers, pupils and administrators.

I.1. Teachers: Teachers should find ways to develop their pupils' writing expression and help them overcome the different problems that they might face. For example: through giving instructions on how to write effectively as well as focusing on the process rather than on product. The following are however some pivotal elements that teachers need to consider in their classroom. These are as follows:

Motivation: Increasing pupils' motivation to write is among the crucial implications that teachers should emphasize in their classroom. This can be done through:

- Writing with purpose is the primary motivator in producing high quality of writing. Hence, teachers should choose topics which are appropriate to their pupils' needs and interest.
- Teachers should encourage pupils to use strategies while writing such as: planning, monitoring...and find their areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- At the end of each lecture, teachers should ask their pupils to spend five minutes writing a summary of the content of the lecture; then, exchange each other's writing.
- It is up to the teacher to accept different forms of writing on the same topics.
- Teacher should encourage their pupils to read in order to reinforce their writing quality since reading and writing are interrelated skills, and reading is mainly considered as one of

the contributing factors in the writing process. Accordingly, he/she should provide sufficient time for classroom practice to both reading/writing activities.

- Since all the pupils use technology in their daily life (forums, e-mail), teachers should motivate their pupils to use it as a tool for learning to help them increase their writing skill.
- Raising pupils' awareness of the importance of writing in their future life.
- The teacher's role is also to choose appropriate methods and techniques (brainstorming, draft, mechanical correction, and the final draft) to help learners assimilate the writing process.

Positive feedback: positive feedback on the content of the learners' writing can be very helpful to increase their attitude to writing:

- Written feedback tells the learners that their work is being read, understood, and helps them to check the mistakes/errors and correct them.
- According to Nation (2009:138), "publication is another positive feedback and this can have many forms, for example; reading written work aloud, posting the written work in the wall is another way of publication".

I.2. Pupils:

- Pupils should take care of their studies by revising their lessons and do their homework. In addition, they need to develop their writing skill by reading short stories.
- The majority of the pupils listen to English music; hence, they should take profit to write the lyrics of that music and ask their teachers to correct their mistakes.

I.3. Administrators:

- Since, all the teachers claimed that the time allocated for writing is insufficient; the administrators should supply teachers with additional sessions for writing skill (workshop) in order to give an opportunity to pupils to practice more this skill.
- Schools should have well-qualified libraries and provide learners with good and varied books to motivate them and enhance their writing as well as their reading skills.

III.2.Limitations of the Study:

The present research work examines the factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production. However there are some limitations which are:

First, this study involves a sample of 70 fourth year pupils at middle school of Timezrit, so, the finding cannot be generalized to all pupils of different middle schools.

Second, strike is the major problem that we have faced when conducting our research work. During three months we could not have access to the university, see our supervisor, or even bring books from the library. So, the research is conducted in a very limited period of time.

III.3. Suggestions for Further Research:

Since, the present research work deals with the factors of EFL' poor writing production over a short period of time; thus, we suggest for a follow-up study to conduct a longer-term one to investigate the factors behind pupils' poor writing production.

In addition, this study explores the factors behind pupils' poor writing production of the fourth year at middle school. Future studies may focus on the effect of those factors.

Furthermore, the present study focuses on the factors behind pupils' poor writing production at the middle school. So, future studies may focus on students' at secondary school or at university.

Moreover, this study is limited to 70 pupils and only five teachers. Hence, future research can conclude larger population.

Finally, the present research is only concerned with writing skill. Hence, future studies are required in others skill as speaking, listening, and reading.

General Conclusion

Conclusion:

The present study investigates the central factors behind fourth year pupils' poor writing production at "Ait AmmaraHossin" middle school of Timzrit. Hence, we selected 70 out of 200 fourth year pupils as a sample for our investigation. In order to explore a research problem, and for the sake of finding solutions, we hypothesize that fourth year pupils faced several difficulties when writing their writing productions. The main aim of this study is to identify the major factors behind pupils' poor writing production and find solutions to the problem.

To achieve the goal of the present study, we relied on the exploratory method and data have been collected through the use of the questionnaire, through which we detected the major factors behind poor writing production among fourth year pupils at "Ait Ammara Hossin" middle school. Many pupils face difficulties in writing and this is why their pieces of work need a great deal of improvement. In doing so, we have therefore answered the first question in our research which is "*why do our pupils produce poor writing production?*"

According to the data gathered from the pupils' questionnaire, pupils associate their failure to write a short piece of paragraph to the difficulty of the writing skill, the grammar rules and the lack of vocabulary. In addition, teachers attribute their pupils' failure to write a short piece of paragraph to the teaching method in which they declare that they are not well trained to teach this complex skill. The majority of teachers reported that the pupils are not motivated and their level is weak in comparison to the program. They also declared that the time allocated for writing is insufficient. This is a response to our second research question which is "*what are the major factors that prevent fourth year pupils to produce a correct piece of writing?*"

Therefore, more practice of grammar rules and exposing pupils to the vocabulary of each unit and ask them to revise it is necessary. Also, raising the pupils' awareness of the importance of writing in their future life is another criterion to take into consideration. Furthermore, it is up to the teacher to choose an appropriate method of teaching and motivate their pupils to learn. These are some of the pedagogical implications (see pp. 49-51) which will serve both teachers and pupils in the future. This is therefore an answer to our research question: "*What should be done to improve the situation?*"

By answering these questions, we can say that our hypothesis has been confirmed.

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Appendices

Appendices

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Appendix 01



Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Colleague:

This thesis deals with some factors that hinder pupils' achievement in writing. Hence, the aim is to identify and analyze those factors. Then, we will suggest ways that may help solve this problem and improve pupils' writing. This questionnaire is administered to all teachers of English at middle school of Timezrit. Answering it would be of great help. Would you please put a (x) in the corresponding!

Thank you for cooperation

*Miss. Saida Benali
Department of English
Faculty of Languages
University Abderrahmane Mira of Bejaia*

Section one: general information

1: What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

2: How old are you?

- a. 25-30 year
- b. 30-40 year
- c. 40 year and more

3: How long have you been working as a teacher?

- a. 1-5
- b. 5-10
- c. 10 year and more than

Section Two: Writing Skill

4: What are the features of good writing?

- a. Correct Grammar
- b. Good Ideas
- c. Specific Vocabulary
- d. Spelling/ Punctuation
- e. Clarity, coherence, and focus
- f. All of them
- g. Others

-Please explain!

.....

.....

5: Which approach do you use to teach writing?

- a. The product approach
- b. The process approach
- c. Both
- d. Others, please specify

.....
.....

6: Do you exploit reading techniques in teaching the writing skills?

a. Yes

b. No

- If "Yes", please explain how

.....
.....

7. How often do you ask your pupils to write?

a. Sometimes

b. Often

c. Very often

8: The time allocated to written expression is:

a. Very Sufficient

b. Sufficient

c. Insufficient

9. Do you encourage your pupils to write outside the classroom?

a. Yes

b. No

- Please explain

.....
.....

10. Do your pupils achieve a satisfactory level with the syllabus of fourth year?

a. Yes

b. No

-Please explain

.....
.....

Section three: Factors behind pupils' poor writing productions

11. Do your pupils find difficulties when writing in English?

a. Yes

b. No

12: If yes, are these difficulties due to:

- a. Teacher
- b. Syllabus
- c. pupils
- d. Others,

-Please explain

.....
.....

13: As a teacher, how can you help your pupils improve their writing skill?

.....
.....

14: What kinds of problems do you face in teaching the writing skill?

.....
.....

Section four: Suggestions and Recommendations

15. Please feel free to add any comments!

Appendix 02



PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear pupil:

This research work deals with some factors that hinder pupils' achievement in writing. Hence, the aim is to identify and analyze them. Then we will suggest ways that may help us solve this problem and improve pupils' writing. Answering this questionnaire would be of great help.

Please put (x) to the corresponding box or give a complete answer.

Thank you for cooperation.

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Section one: general information

1. Gender: are you:

- a- female
- b- male

2. How old are you?

- a- 14
- b- 15
- c-16
- d-more than

3. How long have you been studying English?

- a- four year
- b- five year
- c- more than

4. Do you like English?

- a- Yes
- b- No

Section two: writing difficulties

5 . Which of the following skills do you prefer?

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

6. Classify the following skills from the most difficult to the least difficult one?

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

7: Do you find difficulties when writing in English?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Are these difficulties are due to:

- a. Vocabulary (words choice)
- b. Grammar
- c. Punctuation/ spelling
- d. Others

- Please explain:

.....
.....

9. Do you find difficulties in organizing your ideas?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. Do you find difficulties in understanding teacher’s question in writing expression?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. How often do you practice writing?

- a. Everyday
- b. Sometimes
- c. Rarely
- d. Not at all

12. Do you prepare your writing home-work?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. Do you write outside the class?

- a. Yes
- b. No

a- If “Yes”, what do you like writing about?

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

b- If “No”, please explain why.

.....
.....

14. Do you ask your teacher or family member for help when writing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. According to the marks that you get in English do you think that your writing expression is:

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

16: Do you try to improve your writing expression?

- a -Yes
- b- No

-Please explain how:

.....

17. Do you take into consideration the observation(s) that your teacher makes when correcting your writing production?

a- Yes

b- No

- Please explain why:

.....

.....

Section three

As pupil of middle school what do think about writing :

.....

.....

Appendix 03

Content of the fourth year written expression program

File one: It's my dream

- Writing instructions.
- Transforming a text giving advice about table manners into set of instructions.

File two: You Can Do It

- Writing a short magazine article/school report.
- Transposing information into graph.
- Drawing a graph.
- Writing texts from a graph.

File three: Great Expectations

- Transferring information.
- Transforming prose into song.
- Summarizing.
- Writing about one's expectations.

File four: Then and Now

- Avoiding repetition in writing.
- Writing from note.
- Writing a short biography.
- Writing about one's reminiscences.

File five: Dreams, Dreams.....

- Writing letters to ask for and give advice.
- Using link words.
- Completing a letters of opinion.

Five six: Fact and Fiction

- Writing a sequel to a fairy tale.
- Editing (punctuation and capitalization).
- Writing note about an unlucky day.
- Transforming newspaper heading into full sentence.
- Writing newspaper article about an accident.

Résumé

L'enseignement des langues étrangères avec ses quatre compétences constitue un processus complexe surtout la compétence de production écrite. Cette dernière représente le module qui pose plus de problèmes pour les enseignants ainsi que les apprenants. La présente étude s'intéresse aux facteurs qui sont derrière le niveau faible des productions écrites des apprenants de quatrième année moyenne du collège de Timzrith.

L'objectif consiste, d'abord, à identifier ces facteurs, ensuite, les analyser, et enfin, proposer quelques recommandations pour les enseignants ainsi que les apprenants pour qu'ils améliorent leurs compétences. Nous avons adapté la méthode du questionnaire pour la collecte d'information. Après étude et analyse, nous avons constaté que les enseignants trouvent des difficultés quand ils enseignent l'écrite. Parmi ces entraves, nous pouvons citer la démotivation des apprenants quant à l'apprentissage de l'écrit, les enseignants ne sont pas suffisamment préparés pour enseigner l'écrit. Il leur faudrait plus d'entraînement pour y aboutir. Les apprenants considèrent l'écriture comme la compétence la plus difficile car ils rencontrent beaucoup d'obstacles quand ils rédigent leurs productions écrites. Entre autres le manque flagrant de vocabulaire et aussi le problème des règles grammaticales. Enfin, cette étude offre quelques recommandations pédagogiques pour les enseignants et leurs apprenants, aussi quelques suggestions pour de futures recherches.