Abstract

This study deals with the effect of cooperative learning strategies on 1st year students writing skill. The aim is to investigate the effectiveness of using cooperative learning strategies on writing skill as wellas results perceptions towards its use and implementation at Ahmed Salhi University Centre ,department of foreign languages. The researcher has adopted questionnaires and students' essays throughout the data collection. Accordingly, the findings reveal that students after collection data made a progression in their writing. Moreover, cooperative learning strategies motivate students to write better. Thus, the results confirmed the hypotheses that the students write better in collaboration after research in which these strategies create a comfortable atmosphere for both the skilled and the unskilled students.

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1.1 Introduction

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to the explanation of the theoretical concepts related to the principal variables of research. This section represents the writing skill in the EFL classroom, related concepts including definitions, elements, characteristics and approaches to writing .In addition , it copes with cooperative learning strategies as the pillar variable of this actual study. The section also introduces CL definitions, purposes, elements and teaching procedures. The third section highlights the importance of collaborative writing in EFL classroom, its definition, types and strategies. It also provides a brief overview of previous researchers on the correlation between cooperative learning strategies and writing skill.

1.2 Writing Skill in EFL Classroom

Students communicate and express their ideas not only through speaking- oral language, but also through writing different topics. Writing is a skill for developing students' thoughts in the learning process (Oslo, 2012) Hence, writing develops and coordinates different related skills to achieve the intended goal. This includes being able to plan, construct, and revise texts relevant to content, purpose and audience (Ibid, 2012). Besides, mastering writing is a precondition for learning and for active and critical participation in civic and social life (Ibid, 2012). Writing Plan involves using different strategies and sources in constructing, and revising texts based on students and teacher feedback. Construct the written composition means to master spelling, grammar, sentence constructions, cohesion and text binding on paper together with other supports of expression such as pictures, figures and symbols if relevant(Nordquist,2017,p.4). Therefore ,Lisa, (2005, p.17) argued that :

(Writing is a very important skill for students who required writing an answer for tests, exams, assignment which may be a sentence, a paragraph, or a complete essay. Writing is a way to control ideas and get them down on paper but it

is hard and difficult for students to write an essay or an answer to a problem question.)

Henceforth, Lisa (2005) claimed that students find many difficulties when they start to write, when they have lots of ideas and ask questions such as: how to put those ideas down on paper? , what are the most important and relevant to the topic? , how to organize these ideas?.

1.2.1. Definition of Writing

Writing is a language skill that involves more sub-skills than any other academic task (Carel Aguilera, 2012, p.165).Aguilera, (2012) said that to write well, one requires combining multiple physical and mental processes to convey information and ideas: First, render letters then, remember rules of grammar and syntax; after that, place thoughts in an order that makes sense finally, think ahead to what we want to write next (ibid, 2012, p.165). As students' progress through school, they are asked to do more with writing. Because, writing is so integral to students' success or failure at school; they need to master and learn more about writing ,which is controlled by some methodological, grammar and punctuation rules in regard to the model treated and that makes it easier to be understood (Crème &,2003 & Borg, 2008)

1.2.2 Elements of Writing

1.2.2.1.Purpose

The purpose of writing deals with the reasons that help writers write for a particular composition. Indeed, the writers would understand the eager that they try to realize or accomplish for specific needs. Accordingly, the purpose statement is among the tools which help the writers to follow the organized goal.

1.2.2.2.Audience

Writing is to keep our reader in mind when we write. Writers should know who their audience is before they start writing. The writers keep their readers attached to every sentence in the written composition (Richard Walker. 2010, p 7-9). Therefore, the writers take into consideration the use of formal language in writing to show their consciousness to the conventions of an effective writing.

1.2.2.3Clarity

Any written assignment should be obvious because writers do not write for themselves but they write for different audiences or readers. The writers try to explain their point of view clearly without any ambiguous points by using precision or descriptive words (Richard and Walker, 2010, p10-11). In other words, the writers make the reader recognizes as clearly as possible what is written down.

1.2.2.4.Unity

Writers write sentences related to the topic sentence in order to ensure that each sentence follows the main sentence to maintain the unity of the whole paragraph. In the other words, the writer should be consistent in his/her ideas. That is to say, he/she should not jump from one idea to another.

1.2.2.5.Coherence and Cohesion

The writers write in sequential order to let the reader understand the ideas written down. As Murray and Hughes (2008) said, "coherenceis perhaps the single most important element in any kind of writing" (cited in Hadda. D, 2016, p11) , because with coherence the writers are keen on to achieve the required text. That is to say, the writers should organize the ideas which are flowed in mind by following crucial features such as the use of transitional words, phrases, and the correct tense to show the chronological order.

1.2.2.6.Word Choice

Students have to choose the convenient words that contribute appropriately to the intended context during the writing process. There are two aspects according to Starkey (2004) the students should consider while choosing the items: denotation and connotation (cited in Hadda .D, 2016, p.11). Denotation means the employment of literal meaning of the word and connotation includes the use of cultural assumptions. Hence, the word choice is really important to write appropriate ideas related to the assignment's needs.

1.3.1. Characteristics of writing

The characteristics of writing generally encompass all of the features the teachers of writing implement when grading students' work (Hunter and Robert, 1982, p6). The experts of EFL writing have grouped the characteristics into three categories: "discourse, syntactic and lexical" category (Hunter and Robert, 1982, p6).The discourse category consists of characteristics that are related more with the paragraph such as cohesion and coherence, "Syntactic" characteristics concern with the accuracy of the sentence, clause or phrase and; "lexical" characteristics concern the word or word unit (lexis). The 20 characteristics mentioned below are grouped according to these three categories, see Figure 1

Syntactic Characteristics		
Discourse Characteristics		
		Lexical Characteristics
1. Statement of thesis	10. Pronoun usage	16. Level of diction
2. Overall organization	11. Subject-verb agreement	17. Range of vocabulary
3. Rhetorical strategy	12. Parallel structure	18. Precision of diction
4. Noteworthy ideas	13. Idiomatic usage	19. Figurative language
5. Supporting material	14. Punctuation	20. Spelling
6. Tone and attitude	15. Use of modifiers	
7. Paragraphing and transition		
8. Sentence variety		
9. Sentence logic		

Figure1.1 The PWS Taxonomy

. This figure demonstrates the measures of writing a relevant essay about any topic (cooper, 1984, p17). Henceforth, these conventions show to students how to construct their essay or written composition in a reliable way.

1.3.2. Teaching Writing in EFL Classroom

Many students have specific needs that prompt them to work on writing skill such as academic study, examination preparation where writing is really required as a skill and a means of practicing and learning other subject matters. (Scrivener, n.d, p.190)

1.3.3.Teaching Writing as a Skill

Harmer (2001, p.79) claimed that the most important reason for teaching writing is that it is a basic language skill. Students need to know how to write variant compositions such as letters, reports, and essays and how to reply to advertisements (Harmer, 2001, p.79). In order to write these models, students need to master special writing conventions such as punctuation, paragraph constructions and grammar rules for more accuracy and appropriate.

1.3.4.Teaching Writing as a Means

Ur (1991, p.162) claimed that "writing is widely used within foreign language courses as a convenient means for engaging with aspects of language other than the writing itself". So, students use writing for other subject matters than writing. For instance, learners write down new vocabulary, copy out grammar rules, write out answers to reading or listening comprehension questions and do written test (Ur, 1991, p.162). In these examples, students use writing simply either as a means of practicing particular language point or as a convenient method of testing them (Ur, 1991, p.162).

1.3.5 EFL Writing Difficulties

Many studies have been carried in the field of writing which have come widely to the same end citing that writing is a difficult task either for native or non-native learners of English (such as, Graham, Harris & Schmidt, 1997; Tangpermpoon, 2008; Al-Badwawi, 2011;Soureshjani, 2013) . Specifically, as the findings of several researchers' reveal, Arab EFL learners encounter many writing problems including: spelling, vocabulary, grammar, syntax and in particular sentence structure, prepositions, articles and conjunctions (e.g.,Abdul Haq, 1982; Al-Khuweileh and Al-Shoumali, 2000; Al-Hazmi, 2006; Al-Samdani, 2010; Grami, 2010Adway, 2013; Saihi, 2013). Accordingly, Byrne (1988), views writing as a solitary process that requires clarity and accurateness skills from students under psychological, linguistic and cognitive lenses. In this respect, for Weir (1988), writing deficits are shown in producing

pieces of writing with high frequency of grammatical errors, poor spelling and punctuation. Similarly, Salido (2016) reported that learners produce more than 70% of lexical errors. The aforementioned writing problems are related to the field of language error analysis.

Moreover, writing involves sub-skills than any other academic task; "it involves … knowledge about grammar and vocabulary…"(Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997:73). For this sake, writing is related to language deficiency (Watcharapunyawong and Usaha ,2013), to a lack of language learning and cooperative strategies (Senécal, Koestner& Vallerand, 1995; Cohen, 2003; Magno, 2009), to unawareness of the stages of the writing process (AlMagableh, 1995; Alsawalha and Chow, 2012). In the Algerian context, Ghodbane (2010) identified that EFL university learners' poor writings are related mainly to their inabilities in structuring a sentence, inabilities in selecting the relevant word or syntax for a specific content, and inabilities in mapping and organizing the ideas.

1.3.6. Approaches of Writing

The literature in teaching writing has raised three main approaches: product, process and genre approaches. The product approach is concerned with the finished product or the text, the process approach is concerned with the processes of writing that enable the product to be achieved. Finally, the genre approach is concerned with the use of appropriate language in a given situation.

1.3.7. The Product Approach

The product approach emphasizes the final piece of writing (Guo Yan, 2005, p.19). It focuses on the students' limitation of the input of the teacher to reproduce a final written text. Accordingly, Badger & White (2000) views writing as basically concerned with knowledge about the structure of language and writing achievement. That is, writing is the result of the imitation of input transformed into output format delivered by the teacher (ibid, 2000). As, Pincas (1982b) said, writing is primarily about linguistic knowledge, the use of appropriate

vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices (cited in Badger & White, 2000, p.153). In short, product based approach focuses on the final draft of the students without taking into consideration the process used to achieve that final draft.

1.3.8. The Process Approach

This approach focuses on the composing process which writers utilize. This gives importance to meaning rather than form. In addition, this approach deals with the principles of learner-centeredness and motivates individuals to take more responsibility for their own learning (Jordan, 1989,). Students make decisions about the direction of their writing process through planning, drafting, revising the written words to form an effective composition (ibid, 1989). Hence, this approach has the advantage to raise the awareness to the constant need to draft, revise and let students be responsible for making achievements on themselves. In this context, White and Arndt (1991) see:

A process- focused approach to writing as an enabling approach … the goal of this approach is to nurture the skills with which writers work out their own solution to the problems they set themselves, with which they shape their raw material into a coherent message, and with which they work towards an acceptable and appropriate form for expressing it.(Jordan, 1991, p.168)

This approach looks at writing as a creative process. Here, the role of the teacher is to let students engage in this creativity which is arranged according to the stages and sequences of writing.

1.3.9. The Genre Approach

Swales' (1990) defines "a genre ... as a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes"(cited in Badger & White, 2000, p.155). Accordingly, Cope and Kalantzis (1993) state that the genre approach to writing consists of three phases, first, the target genre is modeled for the students, second, a text is jointly constructed by the teacher and

students, and third, a text isindependently constructed by each student (cited in Guyu Yan, 2005, p.20) . Henceforth, the approachstated that writing takes place in a social situation and reflects a particular purpose. In this way, learning can happen consciously through imitation and analysis, which facilitatesexplicit instruction provided by the teacher (Badger and White 2000, p.156). Genre approach is an approach to writing in which the context helps students to write appropriately such as the culture, circumstances, purpose and motives that dominate in particular settings and time (Paltridge, 2001, p.8).

These immediate situations are devised into different genres of writing based on the function of language used and the context in which they are produced. Genre occurs on the structure and meaning qualifications that must be reorganized for a text to suit a social objective (Tribble, 1996). Furthermore, the genre teacher supports learners to progress on their written productions or drafts and target genre. Thus, genre pushes students to achieve their writing according to the around situation and the needs to write for specific purposes which contains in the same time distinctive register thus differs from domain to another.

1.4.1Writing Process

Before students write, they take into consideration many procedures in order to construct a relevant composition and creative expression. Hillocks (1987) & Murray (1982) said that writers concentrate on writing as a recursive process in which they have the opportunity to plan, draft, edit, and revise their work (cited in Kamehameha Schools, 2007, p2).The writing process is a series of steps to help students write a paper. It is like using a map to get to an unfamiliar place. The Writing Process encompasses five steps:

1.4.2.Pre-Writing

Murray (1982) argued that the first step in the writing process is called pre-writing. It accounts for a high percent of the writing time (cited in Kamehameha Schools, 2007,p3).It is the stage during which students transfer their abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas and let students translate their raw

insights into a form that will communicate meaning to audiences (Schmitz, 2012, p.380). Before writing, students begin by brainstorming ideas for topics, organizing an outline, and developing a plan using their meaningful ideas (ibid, p.381).

Thus, Students spend time thinking and planning to express their thoughts and having access to information and ideas.

1.4.3. Writing the First Draft

It is the stage in which students develop a first version of writing. The students develop an introduction to the topic, main points and supporting details, and write a concluding paragraph (Schmitz, 2012, P.408). Then, they ensure the use of facts, examples, and arguments. Henceforth, this step is so beneficial and encourages students for standard practices which motivate them to develop subtle ideas.

1.4.4. Evaluating and Revising

This stage involves student-writer to check his draft and make possible changes (Harmer, 2001: 258). Students, in this step, begin to evaluate and check out their paper. Therefore, the role changes from a writer to the role of a critic (Andy Schmitz, 2012, p424). Students try to examine their paper through the eyes of a reader in order to correct mistakes and make comments. In this context, Schmitz (2012) claimed that writers examine a piece of writing for clarity of ideas. Hence, revising includes adding, deleting, moving, or changing information in order to make the ideas more accurate, more interesting and more convincing (p224).

1.4.5. Editing

The editing step is a touch after proofreading to obtain an effective final draft . After proofreading, students make improvements in their piece of writing. As Schmitz (2012) stated that "Editing, often, involves adding or changing words, and fixing any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure"(p424). Hence, students look at the individual sentences and words in

their written format and meaning to maintain the intended message and goal (ibid, p.440).

1.4.6.TheFinal Draft

When students have corrected all mistakes, they are now ready to write the final draft. When writers have completed the final draft, they again make sure that they did not miss any mistakes, such as spelling, punctuation, and paragraph indention.

1.5.1 Writing Assessment

Writing assessment involves both teacher feedback and formal mechanisms for students' evaluation (Grabe and Kaplan 1996, p315). Barbara Kroll (1998) claimed that assessing the writing abilities of non- native English speakers becomes an increasingly complex issue and this complexity can be traced to the recognition that writing abilities develop in interaction with other language skills. Indeed, teachers apply writing assessment to assess written samples produced by students in academic context to grade their abilities (Barbara Kroll, 1998, p 219). Hence, assessing writing is an essential part of teaching and learning writing. When assessing writing, it is crucial to rely on some criteria according to teachers' and students' objectives, such as accuracy, spelling, grammar, punctuation, cohesion, structure…

Cooperative Learning Strategies in EFL Classroom

Cooperative language learning is part of collaborative learning method (Richard & Rogers, 2011, p192). Indeed, Cooperative learning is used to apply variant activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom (Richard & Rogers, 2001, p192). As Jacobs & Hall (2002, p 52) said, Cooperative learning principles and strategies are tools which teacher uses to encourage mutual helpfulness in the groupsand active participation of all members (Richard & Renandya, 2002, p. 52). So, this section deals with cooperative

learning definition, purposes, types of CL strategies, basic elements of CL, grouping and types of grouping, principles , advantages and disadvantages.

1. Definition of Cooperative Learning

Mandal (2009, p 96) said that "the concept of cooperative learning refers to instructional methods and techniques in which students work in small groups and are rewarded in some way for performance as a group". The idea behind the Cooperative Lea rning method is that when group rather than individuals are rewarded, students will be motivated to help one another to master academic tasks (ibid, p96-97). Indeed,Gillies & Boyle (n,d,p.4) stated that Cooperative learning involves students working together in small groupsto accomplish shared goals (Gillies, R., 2007). Thus, Cooperative Learning is a teaching strategy in which small teams of different levels and ability use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject matter (ibid,p97), as Slavin (1995) shows: Cooperative learning refers to a variety of teaching methods in which students work insmall groups to help one another learn academic content. In cooperative classrooms, students are expected to help each other, to discuss and argue with each other, to assess each other's current knowledge and fill in gaps in each other's'Understanding.(cited in Fehling, n.d. p.2)

1.5. The purposes of Cooperative Learning

There are, in the literature, several purposes forcooperative learning, among them:

1.6.Academic Learning

Cohen (1994) stated that "cooperative learning can help students learn academically. Students acquire the content of the subject and develop meta-disciplinary competence, such as higher order thinking skills" (Fehling, Kassel and Deutschland, p3). Indeed, cooperative learning helps students to find solutions for special problems (ibid, p3). As a result, they will be able to discuss and compass many ideas towards the subject matter. As Cohen (1994) cited out, "Cooperative

learning promotes greater ability to take the perspective of others and has the benefit both the input of other people's thinking and their critical feedback" (ibid).

1.7. Social- Affective Learning

Students can learn to encourage and help each other as well as contribute in the group with positive interaction to fulfill the ultimate goal. These can lead students to break anxiety and fear to participate and engage in any assignment in the classroom. As Sudzina (1993) argued ,"cooperative learning is effective in reducing prejudice among students and in meeting the academic and social needs of students at risk for educational failure" (in Fehling, Kassel and Deutschland,p.4). Overall, the classroom environment enhances through cooperative learning. As Shevin (2004) shows it, "cooperative learning encourages mutual respect and learning among students with varying talent and abilities, languages, racial and ethnic backgrounds"(Qtd by Marr, 1997 in fehling, Kassel and Deutschland,p.3

1.8. Personality Development

Cooperative learning motivates students and strengthens the confidence in their abilities (Fehling, Kassel and Deutschland, p.3). Therefore, Huber (2004) mentioned that once the students' contributions are accepted in the group, their influenced contributions are important to the team learning, and this point can make students raise their self-esteem (in Fehling, Kassel and Deutschland, p.4).

1.9. Types of Cooperative Learning Strategies

Cooperative learning (CL) belongs to cognitive theory and their teaching style is based on student-centered learning (Mekki, 2016, p.64).The success of CL is crucially dependent on the nature and organization of group work while doing the process of writing. Accordingly, there are three types of cooperative learning:

1.9.1 Formal Cooperative Learning Groups

Johnson et al (1994) mentioned that the formal cooperative learning group   involves students who are working together for one class period or several weeks in order to achieve shared learning goal (Richard & Rogers, 2001,p.194). Therefore, Johnson,Johnson & Holubec (2013) addedthat this team working is required to complete a specific task or assignments such as problem solving, writing a report, conducting an experimentand learning any subject matter; they are imposed to do it in the classroom in collaboration to help each other to learn (Johnson & Johnson, 2017,p.5). As a result, Johnson & Holubec(1991) point edout that the teacher provides directions and objectives to the class; next, he/she forms the constructions of work teams and provides relevant materials (in Dennis Hale, n.d, p.114).The teacher explains the procedures, rules and the structure of cooperative groups. Then, he/she evaluates the teams'work products which reflect the learning and learners' achievement.

1.9.2. Informal Cooperative Learning Group

Johnson, Holubec & Smith (1998) mentioned that this ty pe consists of forming students to work together to achieve a joint learning goal in a short period and these temporary groups are short lived or last from a few minutes to one class period   (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p.69).Johnson   (1994)   demonstrates   the purpose of these ad-hoc (temporary) groups which is to focus student attention or to facilitate learning during direct teaching (Richard & Rodgers, 2001, p.196). In short, during a lecture demonstration, informal cooperative learning type can be used to let student focus their attention on the material to be learned which ensures that their cognitive process occurs on the subject being taught (ibid, p.69) As a result, this type students' improvement on the collaborative task for a temporal moment.

1.9.3. Cooperative Base Groups

Johnson (1994) determined that cooperative base groups arepermanent groups, lasting for at least a year and consisting of heterogeneous learning groups

with stable membership whose primary purpose is to allow students' members to give each other the support, help, encouragement, and assistance they need to succeed academically (in Richard & Rogers, 2001, p.196). These groups consist of members who "stay together" during an entire lesson or a degree program; in which, they interact with each other and exchange information (Dennishale, n.d, p.114). Accordingly, the use of base groups tends to improve the quality and quantity of the required skill which contributes to an effective learning during the school experience.

.1.9.4 Collaborative Skills

Gillies (2007) claimed that collaborative skill refers to interpersonal and small group which needs to cooperate successfully (Fehling et al, n, d, and p.1). In this respect, Olson & Kagan (1992) determined cooperative learning as the way students interact with each other as teammates (ibid, 2001, p.197). Therefore, some explicit instruction in social skills is needed to ensure successful interaction (ibid, p.197). Hence, it requires interpersonal skills; placing socially unskilled individuals in a group and telling them learning in cooperation does not guarantee that they will be so effectively, as well as itis not enough to enhance totally their skills (Johnson et al, 1999, p.71).

1.9.6.Grouping

In the EFL classrooms, teachers use pair and group work as an integral part of language learning (Dornyei and Malderez, 1997, p.1). Hence, collaborative learning work provides several opportunities for students to improve a range of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and discover different personalities and perspectives. Thus, cooperative learning plays an important role to realize the learning process (Dornyei and Malderez, 1997, p.14). Besides, Tuckeman and Jensen (1977) reported that "… the close relationshipformed during the learning process… has a significant effect on the group" (ibid, p.19). This effect develops cooperation among team members to work collaboratively in

fostering the skill provided. Indeed, it is up to the teacher to decide when CL is relevant to be implemented (George M. Jacobs, p 31).

1.9.7. Types of Grouping

There are, in the literature, four types of grouping:

1.9.7.1. Grouping Students According to Their Preferences

Students decide the members to work with. In this way students are likely to feel more comfortable in their groups and possibly share a similar working style (Jacobs, 2006, p32).

1.9.7.2. Grouping Students According to Their Common Interest

Students are formed on the basis of some commonality, as Reid,(1993) clarified, such as those who like a particular topic; those who have a similar problem in their writing or those holding different views on the same issue (Jacobs, 2006, p32). Thus, students share the same task, issue and topic to write in a collaborative manner.

1.9.7.3 Grouping Students Randomly

Students in random groups are quick and easy to form because it seems better to students to be selected in this way (Ibid: 2006, p32).

1.9.7.4. Grouping Students According to the Teacher Decision

In this type, teachers place students in heterogeneous group with such characteristics as language proficiency, on-task behavior, ethnicity and gender (Jacobs 2006, p32). This heterogeneous grouping is a means of helping students (ibid, 2006, p32).

1.9.8 Cooperative Learning Principles, Advantages and Disadvantages in EFL Classroom

1.9.8.1. Cooperative Learning Principles

Many principles have been attributed to cooperative learning, however, we tackle the most relevant to language teaching and learning

1.9.8.2. *Heterogeneous Grouping*

Cooperative learning is most often associated with heterogeneous grouping as Watson & Marshall (1995) suggested, "heterogeneous grouping of students in cooperative learning is so commonly accepted that it is often included as part of the definition of cooperative learning" (Baer, n, d, p.170).In this respect, it is important to make the teams heterogeneous in ability level, because it is undesirable to mform a group with only weak or strong students (homogenous group). As a result, in heterogeneous groups, the weaker students (unskilled students) gain from seeing how skilled students solve problems and overcome the difficulties in which the skilled students gain a deeper understanding of the subject by teaching it to others (Felder &Brent, n.d, p.7).

1.9.8.3. *Group Autonomy*

As Roger Johnson writes, "teachers must trust the peer interaction to do many of the things they have felt responsible for themselves" (Jacobs, n, d, p.4).This principle encourages students to rely on themselves to look for resources rather than rely on the teacher. Thus, it encourages students to look first to their group mates when they need help or want feedback (Jacobs & Seow, 2015, p.31).For instance, only When students' group have difficulties and they cannot overcome it without teacher's helps, then, it is very necessary for teachers to intervene either in a particular group or with the entire class (ibid, p.4).

1.9.8.4. *Equal Opportunity to Participate*

Kagan (1994) claimed that a frequent problem in groups is that one or more group members dominate (s) the group participation (Jacobs, 2016, p.4). Besides, Jacobs & Seow (n, d) argued that some group members are denying others' chance to interact with the task and with group mates (p.32). Thus, students who are excluded from the group participation or interaction may learn less and

enjoy less, at the same time, the rest of the group members loses the benefits of interacting with the excluded persons (ibid,p.320).

1.9.8.5. *Maximum Peer Interactions*

Maximum Peer Interactions encourages more student-student interactions and fewer teacher-student interactions (Jacobs & Seow, 2015, and p.32). So, the word 'maximum' refers to maximizing two aspects of peer interactions; first, the quantity of peer interactions increases when group activities are used; especially when the number of members in each group is kept small. Second, Chiang, et al (2013) determined the quality of peer interactions increases when students use higher order thinking skills (in Jacobs & Seow, 2015, p.32).

1.9.9. *Advantages*

Richards & Rodgers (2001) listed numerous advantages of cooperative learning in the context of the foreign language classroom:

- ✓ To enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate (Mekki, 2016, p.57).
- ✓ Cooperative learning develops higher level thinking skills, Skill building and practice learning activities in and out the classroom (Rani Mandal,2009, p.98).
- ✓ To enable focused attention to particular lexical items, language structures, and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks (Gillies & Boyle, n, d, and p.7).
- ✓ McGroarty (1989) mentioned that CL creates an environment for active, involved and exploratory learning and provides teachers with appropriate methodology that enables them to achieve collaborative learning , and can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings (e.g., content-based, foreign language classroom s; mainstreaming) (Richard & Rogers , 2001, p.195).
- ✓ It improves the performance of the weaker students when grouped with skilled students (Rani Mandal, 2009, p.89).
- ✓ It addresses learning style differences among students (ibid, 2009, p.89).

1.9.10. Disadvantages

Based on the advantages mentioned above, cooperative learning strategies have some weaknesses:

- ✓ During the group activity, the teacher cannot control the language used by the students because they prefer to use their L1 instead of English language while working in a group (Chamisah, 2013, p.143).

- ✓ Though the class size is formed for resolving the subject matter, students' participation depends on the weak or shy students who may prefer to sit silent or rely on other members (Wei & Tang, 2015, p.401).

- ✓ It is difficult to manage classes and maintain the students' discipline while engaging in any interesting activity because of different dynamics (Cloud, 2014, p.8).

- ✓ It is time consuming to organize a group work and not all studentsenjoy CL since they rather prefer to focus on teachers' attention rather than working in their group (ibid, 2013, p.143).

- ✓ Age is also a factor, as group work is difficult in case ofyoung students and mature students who have not the same thoughts and perceptions.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the general overview of the writing skill. the basic elements of writing and the importance of writing for learning and communicating with the target audience. In addition it has mentioned the characteristics of an effective composition, the writing process and the EFL difficulties. Furthermore discussed the cooperative learning in EFL classroom, the purposes and the types. . The following chapter is devoted to Methodological Consideration and Study Results and Recommendation.

2.1Introduction

The present study aims at identifying the effect of cooperative learning strategies on fostering EFL students' writing skills. thus, the study has opted for a pre-experimental methodology, using questionnaires and students' written samples analysis. Therefore, the research methodology section examines to which extent these strategies motivate students to write better. Hence, this chapter aims to provide an answer to this research questions findings, therefore this chapter introduces the methodology, the findings and some suggestions for future research.

2.2. Population and Sample (participants)

population in EFL students of 1st year at the University of Naama, Department of English.   Indeed, all groups which represent the whole population are asked to answer the pre-post questionnaire. The population encompasses 03 groups of 24 students .Our sample consists of one group. The group is composed of 24 students, but only 20 attended their writing classes regularly. The background information got from the pre-questionnaire revealed that our population consists of 16 females (78, 58%) and 04 males (21, 42%) ranging from 20 to 26 years old, with the mean age of 23 years old.

2.3 Design and Methods

Our choice of the methodology used is based on the objectives of the study.   the aim to deal with the effects of cooperative learning strategies on students' writing skill. More specifically, aim at testing the cause/effect relationship between the cooperative learning strategies and writing skill. The reason is to motivate students to write an academic essay in cooperation, and help them to overcome their writing difficulties. Accordingly, this study relies on a Pre-experimental study, the lack of control and the use of one experimental group with a pre-posttest show our choice of pre-experiment (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2000; Best & Kahn, 2006). Moreover, to increase our research validity, we

adopted for a mixed methodology consisting of the pre-experiment with a pre-post questionnaire and textual analysis.

2.4.1. The Quantitative Method

Biggan (2008: 86) argued that quantitative method "refers to research that is concerned with quantities and measurements such as proportion and number. Hence, to collect quantitative data we used a questionnaire for students.

2.4.2. Students' Questionnaire

In this research, used a questionnaire to collect data on the students' attitudes and perceptions towards collaborative writing. We handed the questionnaire to the students of the 1st year in the department of English. Hence, the questionnaire is divided into five parts; the first part contains 3 questions about general information. The second part consists of 5 questions about the writing skill. The third part compromises 6 questions about collaborative learning. The fourth part contains 7 questions about writing in collaboration. The final part deals with 1 question about further suggestions. We also used the post-questionnaire and the students' written samples to examine the writing skill development during and after incorporating the cooperative learning strategies.

2.4.3. The Qualitative Method

Qualitative research is linked to in-depth exploratory studies where the opportunity for quality responses exists"(Biggan, 2008, p86). Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) hold that qualitative research involves studying 'things in their natural settings, attempting Tomake sense or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (cited in: Biggan, 2008, p.86).

2.4.4 Teacher's Interview

In this research, used teacher interview to collect data about the teacher attitudes and perceptions towards the effect of collaborative writing. gave questions to the teacher of Naama university which to have amount of information's that helps student in writing skill contains 08 questions to examine the writing skill development during and after incorporating the cooperative learning strategies.

2.4.5. Text Analysis (written samples)

Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2005) said that "Qualitative research is often used as a source of hypotheses for later testing in quantitative research"(p.17). In study, it consists of textual analysis of students' essays. Text analysis is based on a description of students' essays in terms of coherence, cohesion, language, creativity and essay development. This analysis permits to evaluate students' essays in terms of quality and determine any improvement in their writing after using the cooperative learning strategies. The students' essays are analyzed and evaluated by the teacher of the group for more reliability.

2.5. Data Collection Procedures

Designed a lesson plan on the basis of the text genre dealt with. In the last session, we conducted the last session of the experiment and directly administered the post-questionnaire to ensure the presence of all the participants.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The data obtained from the quantitative method (students' questionnaire) will be analyzed using the description of the data relying on percentages. Concerning the qualitative method, we selected five groups consists of two or four members for each to evaluate their essays (the total of all written samples is 16 essays). The textual analysis is based on a description of students' essays in terms of coherence, cohesion, language, essay development, grammar mechanics, style, format and students' use of imagination and creativity with illustrations from their essays on the basis of an essay scoring rubric.

2.7 Analysis and Discussion

In this section, to analyze the results and discuss them as well. Tabulation is used for reporting the statistical data obtained from preliminary, post-questionnaires using frequency values and graphs for demonstrating the significant difference. At the end, discussion of the results is covered in relation to previous scholars' findings.

2.8 Data analysis

The teachers 'questionnaire consists of fourteen (14) open-ended and multiple choice questions divided into two sections as follows:

In this section, we ask teachers some questions in order to seek general Information about the teachers' gradation, teaching experience. this section seeks information about some aspects of the writing skill like the different difficulties that face them in teaching writing skill. In addition to that, teachers are required to state their views about their students' level in writing. In addition to that ,we ask them if their students find difficulties when they work in group, how they solve these problems. At the end teachers are required to say whether they think that cooperative learning enhances students' writing skills or not and what is his role in these activities.

2.9. Discussion of teachers interview:

Question1 : Do you enjoy in the classroom while you talk about written essay ?

.**Question2**: Have you ever encountered difficulties while you write an essay in the classroom lessons?

Question3: What are the rules that you used on while writing an essay?

Question4: Have you noticed improvements in students' writing performance while being exposed to write an essay?

Question5: Do your students show interest while learning written expression ?

Question6:According to you, are learning writing skill enough to boost students' write proficiency ?

Question7: Can you suggest some other techniques that may be taken for granted while teaching write skill?

2.9.2 Analysis of Students 'Questionnaire

The whole population consists of students in the department of English at the University of Naama. Thus, we used a questionnaire to collect data about the students' attitudes and perceptions towards collaborative writing. Then, we handed the questionnaire to 24 students but only 20 students handed it back. Indeed, the sample included 24 students of first year to implement the empirical study in order to overcome written expression difficulties and to which extent the use of cooperative learning strategy is appropriate to write better. Hence, the sample group consisted of 24 students; however, only 20 students were included in the experimental study since the other 4 students were never present.

2.10. General Information:

The first item deals with background information of the whole population. The results showed that the students' age goes around 20 to 26 years old. The responses to the second question showed that 16 of the participants that represents 78, 58% are females and 04 students that represents 21, 42% are males. This concludes that the number of the females selecting English as a subject of study out-number the males. The third item results revealed that 90% of our population enjoys being a student of English and only 0% answered with "NO ". The above results are summarized in the following table.

	Age	Gender		Enjoying being student of English	
Student participants	20-26 years old	Female	Male	Yes	No
		16	04	20	00
Total	(100%)				

Table 2.1: students background information

2.11 Students' perceptions toward the writing skills

concerning the students' perceptions toward the writing skill , 20 students answered with "YES " (100%) and 00 students answered with" NO" (00%)

Option	Yes	No	total
Students	20	00	20
Percentages	100%	00%	100%

Table.2.1 Students' Perceptions toward the Writing Skill

Concerning our population writing difficulties, the results showed that 100 % of the first year students answered with "Yes" and 00% said "No". Among the alternatives, the students were asked to choose regarding the difficulties they face:

- ✓ the lack of ideas or background
- ✓ do not master the grammatical rules
- ✓ facing difficulties to write because of the inability to organize the ideas or words
- ✓ difficulties to follow the academic methodology

2.12 Analysis of teachers interview

On the basic of the analysis of teacher's interview:

Question 01: The findings show that the majority of teachers teach written expression module. This implies that the teachers are aware in developing students writing proficiency.

Question02:Teachers think that their students face many difficulties when they write, they think that all of them have problems in grammar, lack of vocabulary, sentence structure, cohesion and coherence; in addition to, content, organization, and punctuation. For that teachers should take in consideration this

difficulties and work hard in order to solve them, and help students to develop their writing in classroom.

Question03: The finding shows that the majority of teachers believe that cooperative learning is an effective strategy that enhances students writing proficiency in English and promoting interaction between students.

Question04: The teacher has an important role in developing students' writing skill in classroom. His role differs according to the activity.

Question05: the findings show that students are very interest while learning written expression as results to express thoughts very simple and with clarity.

Question06 : according to my point of view learning writing skill enough to boost student's write proficiency and to explore their skills.

Question07 : there are a lot of techniques that may be taken for granted while teaching write skill through deep listening to the teacher and it obliged to focus very carefully to each point and write down all the necessary point moreover ask the teachers about anything that may help students.

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

This section is devoted to three main elements of each research. It provides some fruitful and helpful implications for teachers of written expression and EFL students on the implementation and the application of cooperative strategies. It also deals with the limitations encountered throughout the research; as, it provides some recommendations for further research.

Implications

Our main objective from this research was to confirm the hypothesis that cooperative learning strategies promote students' writing. Accordingly

Limitations of the Study

The present study was carried out at the University of Naama SALHI AHMED. We conducted a research on "improving students' writing skill through cooperative learning strategies". Hence, it is experimental study. We have faced some limitations such as:. The time allotted to implement the strategies was not sufficient. Finally, the sample was not enough to generalize the result for the whole population and it would be better if the research includes a huge number of students.

Recommendations

In the light of the present study, some recommendations are raised:

First of all, in this research we tested students by asking them to write in pairs/ in small groups an essay about a specific genre in one session during written expression. Thus, we recommend the future researchers to ask students to write individually and then write in collaboration to compare the written samples (before and after the implementation of cooperative learning strategies) and start their training early to avoid any obstacles. Second, researchers would increase   the   awareness   of   students   toward   writing   and   show them   the importance of writing in their academic learning process and even in their career. Hence, researchers would recommend another writing session per week because it is not enough to enhance students' writing in one session and let t hem be aware about the significance of writing skill. Furthermore, the researcher would implement CL strategies in a large sample in regard to the population for an effective and reliable result. At last, we recommend students to read more since reading is a powerful tool that promotes critical thinking, vocabulary enrichment. These latter improve writing in a considerable way (Jordan, Carile & Stack, 2008, p.195). Then, in order to improve the writing skills, students would write frequently and read variant topics and books. As, we stress that knowledge transforming on paper also is important (writing) not just knowledge telling (speaking) (ibid, 2008, p.195). According to this present research, students point out the lack of background while writing. Thus, it is obvious that reading would

enable students to write better with valuable content. Indeed, further researchers could conduct a research about improving writing through reading skill.

2.9.Conclusion

This chapter is practical in nature. It allowed us to frame out the data gathering procedures the research design opted for, the work validity, reliability and ethical considerations. Furthermore, we presented the findings; we explained how the hypothesis is confirmed by the results obtained. Furthermore, we highlighted the fact that the deductions arrived to remain with the samples' limits and cannot go further to the whole population in the light of the short training duration with a little scoped sample. We finally closed the research work with some implications and recommendations for future researchers in the same field of interest. Finally, we summarized the shortcomings or defects of the present work.

Dedication

To the most precious people to my heart, to the ones who gave me birth and meaning to my life every day, to the persons who gave me strength and hope and for those who encourage me. I dedicate this work:

- ☐ To my dear mother and father

- ☐ To my sister and brother: Salim,Aya

- ☐ To my fiancée Nouria

- ☐ To all my family members

- ☐ To my class mates and all my friends

Writing involves the encoding of a message of some kind that is we translate our thoughts into language" . but in the same time, writing is a difficult activity for most people among them EFL students (Byrne, 1993, p.4). As Renandya& Richards point out there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for first learners to master (2002, p303).to implemented Cooperative Learning strategies to overcome the writing difficulties of 1ST year EFL students. Lewis (2017) said that Cooperative learning is a form of active learning where students write together to perform specific tasks .In this respect, small group and pair group were used to provide knowledge between students and increase their interaction about the subject matter. In cooperative learning, students share their thoughts and obtain benefits from each other to achieve a specific goal in academic circumstances. As, Kagan (n.d) argued, cooperative learning equals to content and structure in which these structures are designed to increase participation, comprehension and achievement . Accordingly, objective of using collaborative writing was to enhance students' writing in the department of English at the University of Naama. Therefore, to raised these following questions in order to confirm or disconfirm our hypothesis:

1) what are the effects of cooperative strategies on EFL students' essay writings?

2) Do cooperative learning strategies help learners in structuring their written essays?

3) what are the students' perceptions and attitudes towards collaborative writing?

The suggested hypothesis from the beginning of the research is If students write in collaboration, they would develop their writing skill better.

In this respect, the method implemented is pre-experimental to test the cause/effect relationship between cooperative learning strategies and students' writing. Concerning the data collection, we have opted for pre-post questionnaires and students' written samples for the aim of implementing CL strategies in EFL classroom as a way to enhance and improve students' writing. Besides, in this

context, our population consists of 1ST year EFL students at the university of SALHI AHMED Naama, department of English. Our sample consists basically of 24 students but only 20 students were present the entire time. Accordingly, the results obtained from the analysis demonstrate that collaborative writing helped students to develop their writing skill. The participants showed their positive attitudes to the importance of cooperative strategies in structuring their written essays. Concerning the students' perception toward the incorporation of collaborative writing, the students welcomed it positively. The finding also shows that students argued that cooperative writing boosts their motivation and makes them more relaxed to write and express their thoughts. Overall, the present study shows the importance of integrating cooperative learning strategies into the writing sessions to increase the students' motivation to write, reduce their writing difficulties and encourage peer correction and negotiation of ideas. This is for increasing their opportunities of writing and clearing up the borders of writing as a difficult skill. All in all, these results occur that the hypothesis has been confirmed.

People write to share ideas with others and communicate with words to transmit a message. As Byrne argued that writing involves the encoding of a message of some kind that is we translate our thoughts into language.

Writing is a system of graphic and symbols that can be used to convey meaning. Therefore, writing is about selecting and choosing words carefully to express complex ideas to a class of readersand audiences. Indeed, Writing is used for many general purposes such as making knowledge conscious, remembering facts, analyzing concepts and constructing new knowledge. Accordingly, it is the act of composing a text which is a skill used by any literate people. In ELT context, learning to write is among the core objectives since writing is not only a skill but also a means of learning other subject matters. Thus, students need to learn different types of writing "argumentative, descriptive and narrative and write within different genres "political, scientific, literary and academic".

Academic writing is used by university students and researchers to convey a list of information about a particular subject (Nord Quist, 2017, p.1). Hence, students use writing to translate concepts, gathering facts for analysis, and adjust themselves to the task demands of specific courses and fields (Benjamin, 2006 in Nord Quist, 2017). As academic writing is more organized than any other kind of writing, students need to master all the conventions and particular methods to write for an academic community (ibid,2017) . Thus, student 'writing is important for learning in higher education. Though there exists a module of written expression which introduces students to how to write an essay, they still face difficulties because of the genre of writing this essay imposes or requires. Indeed, there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for students to master (Richards and Renandya, 2002, p303); because it is often expressed with particular grammar and language. The skills involved in writing are highly complex and students should pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice and so on (ibid,p.303). Accordingly, academic writing is more objective and has more formal structure that students need to acquire and manipulate in many different practices such as

paragraph, essay, assignment, summary, report…. Students are always appealed to produce an adequate composition for specific academic purposes such as exams, training, dissertation and thesis.

Furthermore, in the results of the questionnaire administered to first year students attributed their unwillingness to write to different reasons. For example, students claimed their unfamiliarity with the topic, lack of language resources, lack of ideas, lack of thematic vocabulary and contextualized grammar. For these reasons, it has been proposed the implementation of cooperative learning strategies to help students overcome their writing difficulties and develop it accordingly. Therefore, the arisen questions are:

1) What are the effects of cooperative learning strategies on EFL students' essay writing?

2) Do cooperative learning strategies help students in structuring their written essays? How ?

3) "What are the students' perceptions and attitudes towards collaborative writing?

All these circumstances need a number of learning strategies for improving clarity which is group- learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange held accountable for students own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Accordingly, the hypothesize that:

01) If students write in collaboration, they would develop their essay writing skills better ". The objective of this study is to adopt collaborative learning as a teaching and learning strategy to improve students' writing at the University of Naama in the department of English.

The aim is to show that cooperative learning strategy, in essence, and to write in pairs and/or small groups, in particular, is effective to enhance students' writing in English. Our research strategy is pre-experimental since our overall aim is to examine the effects of Cooperative learning strategy instructions to enhance

students' writing .It requires the presence of one group to experiment the CL strategies on students' writing. Thus, we opted for a hybrid methodology of both qualitative and quantitative nature encompassing questionnaires and students' written samples. This end is for the sake of evaluating the development of students' writing skills during and after the intervention. In this research, we used a questionnaire to collect data on the students' attitudes and perceptions towards collaborative writing. We handed the questionnaire to the students of the 1st year in the department of English. Hence, the questionnaire is divided into five parts; the first part contains 3 questions about general information. The second part consists of 5 questions about the writing skill. The third part compromises 6 questions about collaborative learning. The fourth part contains 7 questions about writing in collaboration. The final part deals with 1 question about further suggestions. We also used the post-questionnaire and the students' written samples to examine the writing skill development during and after incorporating the cooperative learning strategies. Our population consists of the 1st year EFL students at the University of NAAMA SALHI AHMED, Department of English. Our sample consists basically of 24 students but only 20 students (16 females) (04 males) an were present the entire time and to whom the cooperative learning strategies are implemented. This research is divided into two main chapters, a theoretical chapter and a methodological design chapter. First, the theoretical chapter contains sections, the first section deals with writing in EFL classroom cooperative learning strategies , Second , the methodological design chapter consists of two sections, the first section deals with the methodological design of the study, the second section deals with analysis and discussion of data using pre-post questionnaires and written samples of students after the instruction.

List of Acronyms

- CL: Collaborative Learning
- CLL: Cooperative Language Learning
- CW/: Collaborative Writing
- EFL: English as a Foreign Language
- ELT: English Language Teaching
- ESL: English as a Second Language
- ESP: English for Specific Purposes
- PWS: Performance Work Statement
- SLA: Second Language Acquisition
- WPS: Write-Pair-Share

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SECTION OF ENGLISH

Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Skill through Cooperative Strategies

Case of First Year LMD Students of English at the Centre University OfNaama SALHIAHMED

Dissertation submitted in partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Linguistics

Submitted by: Supervised by:

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Chapter Two: Data collection and Analysis