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**The Competency-Based Approach to Written Expression and its  
Constraints of Evaluation: Heterogeneous Class at CLS-Saida as a  
Case Study**

Dissertation submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in  
Didactics.

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## **Dedication**

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my beloved people.

To my supportive Papa (Mr. LAZREG. L)

To the sweetest Mama in the entire universe (Mrs. BOUDIA. N)

To my supportive sister Sara

To my everlasting best friends Ahlem and Sanaa who have always been there for me.

To Rania, my dearest companion all along this journey.

To my friends Bendjadi M and Naar N.H who were of great help.

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## **Abstract**

Writing is known to be one of the most difficult tasks to be learned especially for EFL learners. In this respect, this work is devoted to cover the teaching of writing through the implementation of the competency-based approach principles within heterogeneous classes. The present study tends to explore the teachers' overviews about the use of the CBA in mixed-ability classes and the learners' viewpoints about applying group work and collaborative writing in such classes. The methodology consists of the use of quantitative and qualitative research tools for data collection and they are a questionnaire distributed to 10 teachers, and three sessions of individual and group correction of the written expression samples of 13 learners who were picked randomly in a heterogeneous classroom. The findings revealed that both teachers and learners favor the implementation of collaborative writing in heterogeneous classrooms and agree to the effectiveness of the competency-based approach principles. It is abundantly recommended for future studies to conduct this issue on a large sample to see to what extent learners of diverse competencies enjoy working in collaboration. Future research is recommended to investigate the strengths learners of mixed-abilities gain from learning individually and in groups to compare the results.

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## **List of Acronyms**

CBA	Competency-Based Approach
CBE	Competency-Based Education
CBLT	Competency-Based Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second language
CLS	Center of Scientific Leisure

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A    Learners' Written Expressions Samples

Appendix B    Correction of the "Babylonian Civilization" Samples

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**General**

**Introduction**

## **General Introduction:**

Teaching a foreign language has always been a topic under discussion, since it is concerned with introducing EFL learners to the appropriate and the most significant use of the language to convey the most valid and relevant message possible. It entails the mastery of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. At the same time, teaching writing requires some criteria of acceptability relative to different aspects of writing such as; vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and language use. As simple as these steps might seem, writing is still a complicated cognitive task because it is an activity that demands careful thought, discipline and concentration. It thus appears to be a challenging task for EFL learners who still find difficulties in producing an adequate piece of writing.

Additionally, academic writing often seems to be a very troublesome task for EFL learners, especially when they are required to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through the various forms of writing such as writing long paragraphs, essays, reports, projects, exams, dissertations and theses. For the purpose of helping the learners achieve the best results in their professional and educational career, teaching writing entails skills and capacities from teachers and learners alike, especially when the classrooms consist of students with varied ways and qualities of learning i.e. each student has their own unique learning level, style, motivation, capacity, personality, performance, competence, interest, and so on. On one hand, all of these differences are quite beneficial for learners, for they learn to cooperate with each other and learn from each other. On the other hand, these differences can put the teacher in a critical situation, for they are required to cleverly manage their learners' mixed abilities and fulfill their needs.

In this respect, this study aims to investigate the effect of introducing the Competency-Based Approach to heterogeneous classrooms while teaching writing as an attempt to help developing the learners' writing skills and competencies. As we have seen that EFL learners encounter writing difficulties, especially when it comes to the correct use of the language in different academic contexts such as writing paragraphs, essays and dissertations . Thus, this study aims to explore the learners' and teachers' perspectives towards the implementation of group work and collaborative/cooperative writing within the principles of the CBA and how these aspects can contribute in developing the learners' writing proficiencies.

In the light of this study which is about the significance of the teaching of writing through the Competency-Based Approach in a heterogeneous classroom, this research addresses the following questions:

1. How would the implementation of the principles of the Competency-Based Approach in writing instruction affect the learners' writing?
2. How can the teacher manage to consider the heterogeneity of their learners' levels as a positive factor in teaching writing skills?
3. What are the difficulties faced by both teachers and learners when teaching/learning writing in a mixed-ability classroom?

In order to pursue this investigation, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. Within the CBA principles, learners are allowed to advance at their own pace. Therefore, learners may be given the opportunity to develop their language skills and creativity regardless of the environment where they learn.
2. Teachers may take the diversity of their learners' abilities to their advantage where they encourage their learners to assist each other by sharing knowledge.
3. We hypothesize that the difficulties faced by teachers and learners would be managing to teach and learn in a classroom environment (heterogeneous classroom) where learners exhibit diverse needs and competencies.

This study was conducted through the use of two research instruments, learners' written expression samples and a questionnaire for teachers. The learners were asked to autocorrect their written pieces individually first, then in groups. The teachers' questionnaire is a set of twenty questions including closed ended questions, open ended questions and questions that require justification.

During the time of conducting this research, we have faced a few limitations:

The first limitation is the coronavirus pandemic. The rigid conditions led to many restrictions while conducting this research such as the reduction of time and the number of the learning sessions.

Second, the lack of resources that led to restriction in finding authentic and suitable resources which obliged us to work with the few resources we have found.

Third, we have faced some difficulties reaching teachers because they have been extremely busy.

The present dissertation consists of three chapters. The first chapter deals with the literature review, it demonstrates the different theoretical aspects of the previously conducted researches about introducing the Competency-Based Approach to heterogeneous classrooms and its significance in teaching the writing skills in such classes. It also delineates the difficulties faced by learners while writing and the implementation of collaborative writing and appropriate classroom management to deal with those difficulties. This chapter also introduces the constraints of evaluation faced by teachers in mixed-ability classrooms. Chapter two involves the description of the tools used to gather data and the sample population. It also presents the collection of data and the analysis and discussion of the findings. The third chapter deals with the suggestions and recommendations provided for both teachers and learners concerning the implementation of the CBA principles into heterogeneous classrooms. It demonstrates the teaching strategies and activities that teachers can introduce in order to help EFL learners engage in the learning of writing and develop their writing proficiency.

# **Chapter One:**

# **Literature Review**



## **1. Chapter One: Literature review**

### **1.1. Introduction:**

As an outcome-based instruction, the competency-based approach to language teaching has always been adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers, and the community. The competency-based approach, advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study (Walton:2017).

*“Emphasizing the competencies that the student must master at the end of each school year and at the end of compulsory schooling, rather than stressing what the teacher must teach. The role of the latter is to organize the learning outcomes in the best way so as to bring their students to the level expected”*

(Rogers 2012, p. 106)

This chapter presents a review of the literature regarding the theoretical aspects of the application of the competency-based approach in the teaching of writing skills by shedding light on the differences between learners at the level of language proficiency and competency mastery.

### **1.2. The Competency-Based Approach:**

The competency-based approach has first emerged in the United States in the 1970s and it was initially adopted for the designation of vocational training programs to help immigrants and refugees learn English and life skills at the same time, it can be described as "an educational movement that advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.141).

The competency-based approach (henceforth CBA) is currently considered as a psychological idea that different individuals have different learning styles. Viewed as a positive agent of change in education, Richards and Rogers (2001:142) quoted Docking (1994:14) on CBA:

*“Competency-based approach to teaching and assessment offers teachers an opportunity to revitalize their education and training programs. Not only will the quality of assessment*

*improve but the quality of teaching and student learning will be enhanced by the clear specification of expected outcomes and the continuous feedback that the competency-based assessment can offer.” (Docking, 1994:14, in Richards and Rogers, 2001:142)*

Therefore, the main objective of the CBA is not ranking the students, but teaching them to achieve their goals which are set in the form of knowledge, behaviors, and skills which students should master by the end of their studies; i.e. focusing on the learning outcomes and addressing its basic ideas of what the learners shall learn to do rather than the more traditional goal of defining what they must learn. Harris et al., (1995: 16) argue that “The term competence focuses attention on learning outcomes. It is what people can do. It involves both the ability to perform in a given context and the capacity to transfer knowledge” As a result, this approach attempts to facilitate the orientation process for learners and provide various instructional routes, wherefrom future learners may choose the one that suits their personal learning style.

### **1.2.1. Competency-Based education:**

Before considering competency-based education, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by competency. Mrowicki (1986, as cited in Weddle, 2006) defines competencies as follows:

*“Competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors required for the effective performance of a real-world task or activity. These activities may be related to any domain of life, though have typically been linked to the field of work and social survival in a new environment.” (p. 2)*

Richards and Rodgers (2001) cite Docking (1994) who defines competency as:

*“An element of competency can be defined as any attribute of an individual that contributes to the successful performance of a task, job, function, or activity in an academic setting and/or a work setting. This includes specific knowledge, thinking processes, attitudes, and perceptual and physical skills.” (p. 145)*

Kouwenhoven (2003) presents a comprehensive definition of competency, according to him:

*“It is the capability to choose and use an integrated combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities to realize a task in a certain context, while personal characteristics such as motivation, self –confidence and will power are part of that context, and competence, is the capacity to accomplish up to a standard the key occupational tasks that characterize a profession.”(p. 36)*

Accordingly, 'a Competency' may be simply defined as the ability of a student or worker to accomplish tasks adequately, to find solutions, and to realize them in real-life situations.

Competency-based education (CBE) dates back to progressive education in the 1900s and, more recently, the mastery learning movement from the 1970s to the '80s ([Le et al., 2014](#)). CBE is an educational innovation that has been introduced in various countries around the world and which aims to improve the transition from the school environment to the workplace that students will encounter after graduation (Brockmann et al. 2008; Mulder, Weigel, and Collins 2007). Additionally, "It refers to an educational movement that advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills, and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 141). CBE is a model in education that focuses on what students know and can do rather than how long it took them to learn it (Klein-Collins, 2013). The need for CBE arose because it was found that graduates often possessed sufficient knowledge but lacked the skills and attitudes needed to function properly in a workplace (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder, and Wesselink, 2004).

The most important characteristic of competency-based education is that it is a mastery-based rather than a time-based approach. The time required for mastering a competence may vary within CBE, and the objectives set in the course of education shall remain unaltered, while several alternative ways for a learner to achieve the declared objectives is considered to be the highest concentration of such an educational approach. For greater flexibility in educational programs, CBE also calls for an authentic personalized educational environment in which students learn competencies that resemble a real working environment. For this purpose, students are required to steer their own learning process for later self-assessment. This allows students to move at their own pace and take control of their education.

The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, and assessment (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 144). CBE syllabus is based on a priori needs-analysis of the students (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). This might be taken to entail that it is learners' needs, expectations, and actual knowledge-to-skill competencies that determine to a great extent what category of lessons to incorporate into the syllabus since there are no ready-made syllabuses to be used for all groups of learners. Therefore, teachers must differentiate instruction and allow students to

“move on when ready,” with some students taking more or less time than others. For this purpose, competency-based and student-paced instruction present a new role for teachers as "designers, facilitators, coaches, and mentors" who seek to develop intrinsic motivation among students ([M. Haynes, 2013](#), p. 7)

### **1.2.2. Social Constructivism:**

The philosophy of competency-based education has its roots in social constructivism. On one hand, the overall idea of the constructivist theory views learning as a shift from knowledge transmission to knowledge construction by learners themselves. Kanselaaret.al., (2000, p. 01) support this by saying that:

*“Constructivism implies that learners are encouraged to construct their own knowledge instead of copying it from authority, be it a book or a teacher, in realistic situations instead of decontextualised, formal situations such as propagated in traditional textbooks and together with others instead of their own.”*

In the same context, Steffe and Thompson (2000) argue that “Constructivism is basically a theory of learning that attempts to show that knowledge can and can only be generated from experience” (p. 6). Also, according to Mascolo& Fischer (2005, p. 49)“Constructivism is the philosophical and scientific position that knowledge arises through a process of active construction.” This means that learners should be encouraged to be autonomous. So, constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is not simple information traditionally transferred by the teacher to students. Rather, learners engage in an active mental process of developing and constructing their own knowledge through interaction with their environment; learners are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge. On this, Dewey (1916: 46) asserts that “Education is not an affair of telling and being told, but an active and constructive process”. Other authors confirm this, such as Innes (2004: 01) who says that “Constructivist views of learning include a range of theories that share the general perspective that knowledge is constructed by learners rather than transmitted to them”. According to Von Glasserfeld (1989: 12) “children are not repositories for adult’s knowledge, but organisms, which like all of us, are constantly trying to make sense and to understand their experience”. On the other hand, the social constructivist approach is efficient in the teaching of competencies and social skills that it creates autonomous learners, inquisitive thinkers who question, investigate and reason, as it fosters critical thinking and creates active and motivated learners. On this Lev Vygotsky (1978) developed a social

constructivist theory, suggesting that children need learning environments containing guided interaction, but an allowance of reflection and the ability to change their thought process and communication. Social interaction allows children to gain increasingly more exposure to expert vocabularies (Vygotsky, 1978). Since thought development is determined by language, the importance of writing increases (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Miller, 1992).

### 1.2.3. Competency-Based Language Teaching:

As an application of the principles of competency-based education, competency-based language teaching (CBLT) focuses on outcomes of learning according to Richards and Rodgers (2001). Richards (2006) defines CBLT as follows:

*“Competency-Based language teaching is an approach that has been widely used as the basis for the design of work-related and survival-oriented language teaching programs for adults. It seeks to teach students the basic skills they need in order to prepare them for situations they commonly encounter in everyday life.”* (Richards, 2006:37)

CBLT requires learners to demonstrate that they can use the language to communicate effectively (Paul, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wong, 2008). Unlike traditional classrooms, if CBLT is to be successful some important changes should be taken into consideration such as the shift in focus from knowing about to doing with the language. Students must become active learners and teachers must step into their new role as facilitators. Materials must be authentic and task-related. Rather than grading students on their assignments, assessments must focus more on providing information about students' progress. In the end, what matters is that each student can master a competency before being able to move on to the next competency. Docking (1994) on CBLT argues that:

*“It is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting. Instead of norm-referencing assessment, criterion-based assessment procedures are used in which learners are assessed according to how well they can perform on specific learning tasks.”* (p.16)

Within CBLT, competencies are practical applications of language in context. Instead of being knowledge-focused, competency-based courses are built around the skills necessary to carry out specified tasks. Daily lessons would be planned around information and activities that

address the learners' needs. At each step along the way, students would receive information providing feedback about their individual progress toward mastering the competency. Unlike the traditional subject content, the CBLT curriculum underscores the unpredictable results of learning rather than mainly focusing on what learners are expected to learn about. Elsa Auerbach (1986) underpins this by distinguishing eight key highlights that portray the competency-based educational program:

1- A focus on successful functioning in society: The competency-based curriculum aims to enable learners to function properly in society and to fulfill the demands of the world.

2- A focus on life skills: Language is taught as a function of communication. Students are taught language forms/skills which will be used in concrete situations rather than in isolation.

3- Task- or performance-centered orientation: As a result of instruction, what will students actually manage to do with the language (overt behavior) is the main emphasis and not their knowledge about language and skills.

4- Modularized instruction: In language learning, objectives are narrowed into sub-objectives. Therefore, the process is divided into small parts. This way, both teachers and learners can get a clear sense of progress.

5- Outcomes that are made explicit a priori: Learning outcomes are specified in terms of "behavioral objectives" are made clear before the instruction process starts. As a result, learners know exactly what behaviors are expected of them.

6- Continuous and ongoing assessment: Learners might lack some skills; therefore they are pre-tested and post-tested continuously to determine whether they have fulfilled their lacks.

7- Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives: Assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviors rather than on the traditional paper-pencil tests.

8- Individualized student-centered instruction: Learning is individualized and learner-centered. Since learning is not time-based, learners are free to move at their own pace and can concentrate on the areas in which they lack competence. The teacher's main objective is to tackle the individual needs of students. (Auerbach, 1986, pp. 414-415)

### 1.3. Writing Skills and Difficulties:

In recent decades, the writing skills of a foreign language have been noticeable and considered as important skills of communication and fundamental content in the process of learning a language. Hyland (2004:20) states that “writing is a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning, drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts and audiences.” However, as a productive skill, it can be seen as the most difficult task especially for ESL/EFL learners since it requires so much effort, knowledge and determination. Jozef (2001: 05) confirms this by stating that "writing is among the most complex human activities. It involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representation of knowledge, and of experience with subjects". Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 303), add "Writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners since they need to generate ideas, organize them and translate these ideas into readable text which can be very difficult for students". Seely (2005) in his book “Oxford Guide to Effective Writing and Speaking”, summarizes those difficulties as follows:

#### 1. Punctuation

Seely (2005, p. 231) defines punctuation as “a set of conventions that make it easier to read written”. Many students make punctuation mistakes which make their piece of writing lose its strength and cohesiveness. Each punctuation mark has its function, for instance no one would disagree that a sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

#### 2. Spelling

Spelling can be considered as a major problem for several students. One main problem is the absence of complete correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it is spelled (the absence of correlation between phonemes and graphemes) however; Seely (2005, p. 209) mentioned that “Unlike Italian and other so-called phonetically-spelled languages, English cannot easily have a direct correspondence between sounds and letters”. Another source of confusion is the case of homophones, words that have the same pronunciation but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

#### 3. Vocabulary

Using the appropriate vocabulary is categorized as one of the main problematic tasks in the writing skill. Seely (1998, p.185-186) lists the major elements in vocabulary problems:

- A. Active vocabulary: it refers to the words and phrases that the students use in their writing.
- B. Passive vocabulary: these are the words that the students understand, but do not commonly use in their writing.
- C. Vocabulary that is seen to be passive: which includes the words that we have seen before, but their meaning is not clear.
- D. Vocabulary that we never dealt with: it consists of those words that we have never encountered and met before.
- E. Vocabulary words we have seen before, but their meaning is not clear.

#### 4. Grammar

Seely (2005) states that the most difficult aspect in writing is grammar. To write a comprehensive essay, paragraph, or even a sentence, the student should have a good knowledge of the structures of the language, the parts of speech, and its linguistic devices. For instance, compound and complex sentences, the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions besides verb tenses.

##### **1.3.1. Developing Writing Skills through the Competency-Based Approach:**

The CBA is based on the development of competencies, and one of these competencies is writing. Hedge (2000, p. 305) revealed his research results saying that "All the time spent in communicative activities, adults devote 45% of their energies to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading and 9% to writing". In this regard, EFL learners have to devote more time and put more effort into acquiring vocabulary and grammatical rules of English in order to develop their writing skills and practice these skills with more dedication. Kroll (1990) states:

*"If the aim behind the teaching of writing to advanced learners is to write essays that match the level of content and mastery of language skills required of native speakers in an academic environment, beginning learners, with regard to the limited amount of language at their command, need to be introduced to this skill in a fitted way so as to favour, at later stages, an effective communication of ideas through the written medium."* (p. 250)

Taking into consideration the importance of proper writing, learners should be made aware of the need to develop their writing skills, thus it is the teacher's responsibility to develop not only linguistic competence as in traditional approaches but also the social and strategic competencies to result effective learners. The development occurs through



different stages as stated by Hyland (2004, p. 23), "writing is a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning, drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts, and audiences." Also, Hedge (2000, p.124) claimed "Writing involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making drafts, reading and reviewing them, then, revising and editing. It involves a complex process which is either easy or spontaneous for many second language writers". On the other hand, Souad Belbachir (2007, p. 51-58) states her view on stages of developing a piece of writing as follows:

a. Drafting:

Drafting is the first stage where the writer starts putting his primary thoughts into words without worrying about grammar, punctuation, and spelling mistakes. Writing a draft is a messy process with cross-outs, additions, corrections. As a first try, a first draft may be written for the self only. The second try is a second draft which is written to be reviewed by the teacher. Throughout this process, the writer pauses to read, rethink and rewrite. In her article "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers." Sommers (1980) points out the answer of one of her students on her question "When a teacher tells you to revise a draft, what do you think he or she is asking you to do?":

*"I re-write as I write. It is hard to tell what a first draft is because it is not determined by time. In one draft, I might cross out three pages, write two, cross out a fourth, re-write it, and call it a draft. I am constantly writing and re-writing."*(p. 383)

b. Revising:

Revising means making decisions about what to keep, add, omit, alter, rearrange and rethink. It allows the writer to reshape and refine thoughts the way they are expressed. As another student of Sommers (1980) stated "It is a matter of looking at the kernel of what I have written, the content, and then thinking about it, responding to it, making decisions and actually restructuring." (p. 383-84)

c. Editing:

Editing occurs post the writing and revising stages, it involves proof-reading and correction of errors. As a final process, the writer makes his final

readjustments and checks accuracy to make the text accessible to the reader. Editing helps the writer to produce a clear and comprehensible paper to hand in and to prevent any misunderstanding that the reader might encounter when reading.

Additionally, since learners are mostly encouraged to write based on their level of interest, the teacher should have a clear idea on how to maintain that interest by providing them with topics that motivate them to produce better work.

#### **1.4. Heterogeneous Classes:**

“Heterogeneous class”, “mixed ability class” and “multilevel class” are terms used interchangeably to demonstrate the multiple differences among learners who are grouped together as well as a mix in their proficiency in the target language. Natalie Hess (2001) supports this by defining a heterogeneous class as one which “not only differed in language acquisition ability, but also in age, motivation, intelligence, self-discipline, literary skills, attitude and interest” (p. 1). Grouping heterogeneously means that the students must be grouped according to their varying intellectual abilities in order to learn from one another, both academically and socially (Daniel, 2007). In the same context, Gordon (2010, p.15) asserts that “It is clear that this descriptor is widely used by international educators and researchers. This descriptor tends to look at students who have similar backgrounds, who are in the same grade, but divided by their ability in subject area”.

##### **1.4.1. Teaching Writing in a Heterogeneous Classroom:**

Teaching the writing skills in a mixed ability classroom can be challenging to the teacher, yet advantageous to the learners as they meet the opportunity to improve their writing abilities and develop their capacities in the target language. The dissimilarities between learners allow shy or unmotivated ones to express their thoughts and ideas through writing since not all learners enjoy participating and interacting with the teacher. These learners tend to be better performers in writing tasks. Moreover, learners in heterogeneous classes learn from more than one source. For instance, students learn to better comprehend and envision difference, recognize it in themselves and others, and use it for their potential benefit. This can be realized through combining students of various levels into pairs or groups which require collaborative work. Jolly and Early (1974) point out:

*“Psychologically, group work increases the intellectual and emotional participation or involvement of the individual pupil in the task of learning a foreign language. Some pupils are more intelligent than others, while some (not necessarily the same ones) are more gifted in learning languages, some pupils are outgoing, communicative, extrovert personalities while others are shy, withdrawn introverts. In small groups, all these types of learners can meet and mix, compensating for one another’s strong points and deficiencies as language learners.”(p. 2)*

#### **1.4.2. Collaborative Writing in Heterogeneous Groupings:**

Collaborative writing is a methodology that expects learners to work in pairs or groups of three to compose a proper paper together. This technique will permit students with varying capacities to cooperate in finishing a writing task. "Collaborative writing presents not only a highly motivating learning experience for EFL/ESL students but also a creative pedagogical tool for teachers" (Montero 2005, p.36). Ferris (1994) believes that inadequate content, poor organization and stylistic inappropriateness are weaknesses of student writers. According to researchers, these weaknesses are assumed to be remedied through collaborative writing within heterogeneous groupings. Harmer (2004, p.77), “However, the main objective of writing activities done in groups or pairs is to involve everyone in the creation of written text”. Most teacher-researchers agree that low achievers are given the opportunity to learn from high achievers. Moody, Vaughn and Schumm (1999: 62) assert this by saying “Many regular and special education teachers believe that each student benefits from collaborative learning and the lower-level students especially are able to learn from the higher-level students when they are placed together in a heterogeneous group”. Collaborative writing in heterogeneous groupings is believed to help learners of low self-esteem gain confidence from other confident members within the same group. In this regard, Zimmet (2000: 104) expresses that in collaborative work “The written paragraph and small group discussion seem to give even the shyest students enough security to participate more frequently”. Learners also work on bettering their social skills when interacting with peer members while attempting to write. Widdowson (as cited in Montero, 2005: 36) points out that “When students work together they are dialoguing and making decisions due to constant feedback”. Additionally, Saunders (1989, p. 21) agrees that “Co-writers engage in a planning phase full of spontaneity and wide-ranges, and then reach a collaborative consensus during the composition phase, involving discussion and debate”.

As a result, collaborative work helps learners take their thinking further than it might have gone when working alone because they learn from more than one source. Learners of mixed abilities use their writing qualities to express themselves by writing drafts and editing them with the whole group then rewriting and revising their final drafts and so on. When peers respond to and edit writing, students can help one another improve their writing through response (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Miller, 1992). Therefore, the exchange of ideas and vocabulary as well as continuous feedback and response broadens their field of learning and helps in building their social status which in return help pave the way to their future jobs and to better opportunities. Heterogeneous grouping can enhance relations among classmates, promote learner to learner tutoring, increase tolerance, decrease prejudice, and promote cross-cultural understanding (Kagan, 1985). Brumberger (1999) also states that learners are grouped into heterogeneous groups in order to enhance social skills.

### **1.4.3. Managing a Heterogeneous Classroom:**

Teaching in a mixed-ability classroom means that the teacher has to be wary of the individual needs of each student. Although it is a difficult task for the teacher, he/she is required to be aware of the needs of his/her students and how to manage to organize his/her classroom based on those needs. Penny Ur (2018, p. 2-6), summarized what she explained in her seminar on “*Teaching Mixed abilities*” saying that a good classroom management requires the application of a mixture of methods and strategies to cope with all the demands of each student. She summed all the methods and strategies up as follows:

1. Keeping them motivated:

Keeping their students engaged in the lesson can be one of the most difficult tasks for teachers. Ur (2018) added that in order to accomplish this task, students must follow these techniques:

- a. Teaching style: it is very helpful for teachers to reflect on the way they conduct their classes. As Ur (2018:02) stated “Think about your normal teaching style for a moment. Does it communicate (intentionally or otherwise) that you expect all the students to know the answers?”
- b. Variation: Variation is an important aspect of teaching. Ur (2018:02) asserts that “The teacher can teach all of the learners some of the time, some of the learners all of the time but not all of the learners all of the time.” Therefore, reaching an optimal overall balance requires teachers to vary their methods.

- c. Interest: it is the responsibility of the teacher to make sure that all learners are involved in one way or another. If a group of students was passive, it is necessary to make sure that the following day that group of students does tasks that interest them much more.
- d. Game-like features: any game has rules which stop you from achieving success too easily which can be challenging for participants which in turn can considerably increase their interest. Ur (2018) mentioned an example of an advantageous technique where learners are shown a picture and requested to write as many sentences as they can in a limited period of time. It is a simple, engaging technique in which students rarely rely on their mother tongue, and they use the structures they have learned.
- e. Visual materials: give them something to look at. When working in pairs or groups, referring to a particular visual element fosters collaboration. The funnier the visual aid or the video is, the better the interaction will be.
- f. Maximum participation: this is the key to effective teaching and learning. Everybody should be involved at the same time, rather than having a series of interactions between the teacher and single students.

## 2. Reaching the individual:

Ur (2018:04) mentioned that creating a successful learning environment requires teachers to consider their learners' individual needs and interests as demonstrated in the following techniques:

- a. Collaboration: working together, helps students get better results than they would on their own. Ur (2018:04) mentioned that an example of this is the activities based on recalling or brainstorming which can inspire collaboration in a mixed-level classroom. For instance, placing several words on the board where learners are given a short time to look at them. Then deleting them. Students have to remember as many as they can. They then, share their list with the group. It is also a very useful technique for other aspects of language, like spelling or revision of past tenses. So any individual, no matter how advanced, can benefit from this sort of activity.
- b. Individualization: The teacher should make sure that tasks can be done at different levels and different paces. He or she should allow for individual variations in

speed and level, even in a teacher-led or set exercise. According to Ur (2018:04) the following are some examples of techniques to encourage individualization:

- ) Different starting points. Learners choose where to start. This allows them to make choices based on their own interests and preferences at that moment.
  - ) Giving a time limit rather than a quantity-of-work limit. By giving an instruction like “Do as much as you can in five minutes” rather than “Do exercise 6”, the teacher enables students to work at their own speed and set their own limits.
  - ) Allowing self-checking and only asking the teacher when there is a problem. This allows students to take more responsibility for their learning and to work at their own pace.
- c. Personalization: the learners express their own opinions, thoughts and desires which relates to their personal experiences as individuals.
  - d. Open Ending: providing students with open-ended exercises and activities with many right answers, so learners can respond at different levels. This way teachers get more learner-talk than teacher-talk, and the answers are unpredictable and very often interesting. Some students will give easy answers, while others will give more difficult ones. This kind of technique develops creative, higher-order skills.
  - e. Compulsory plus optional: one more way of making lessons and activities personalized is by giving students the opportunity to do more than what is required. Such phrases as “Do at least...” “Optionally,” “If you have time...” are key components of instruction, particularly with mixed-ability groups.

### **1.5. The Constraints of Evaluation in a Heterogeneous Classroom:**

The process of teaching the writing skills through the CBA framework in a multilevel classroom comprises a big challenge for the teacher since s/he can be faced with multiple constraints. Allocating time and professional development for educators to engage in this kind of work is critical but also a challenge ([Le et al., 2014](#); [Scheopner Torres et al., 2015](#); [Stump et al., 2016](#)). For instance, if the learners were not properly evaluated, teachers can find difficulties in distinguishing the learning obstacles faced by the learners. Evaluating learners of mixed abilities includes a few tools of assessment such as assessment of learners’ needs, selection of competencies based on those needs, instruction targeted on meeting those needs, and evaluation of learners’ performance in meeting the competencies. Yet, teachers might not be able to give reliable and useful feedback on their learners’ progress due to the lack of

effective training that enables them to be familiar with the CBA principles. Moreover, students of a low level might feel as if they are treated unequally when comparing themselves with their classmates of a high level. It is easy to imagine that there may be several students who cover the same distance within the given period of time, putting in the same amount of effort, but will be awarded with different grades for their performance (Osváth, 2016). Adequately, maintaining a balance between all learners in order to create a homogenized level through the use of grouping might not be as easy as it might seem to the teacher. There are learners who are bright and can comprehend easily, learners who can hardly understand basic information and learners who fall somewhere in between these two extremes (Reyes & Rodriguez, 2005).

#### **1.6. Conclusion:**

As to the previously mentioned aspects of theory, we can conclude that the application of the competency-based approach to language teaching in the teaching of the writing skills is very significant for enhancing the students' abilities to use the language appropriately and to upgrade their writing competencies. Besides, the use of heterogeneous groupings in multilevel classes was proved to be a fruitful method to remediate the weaknesses of the students, improving their writing proficiency as well as realizing a homogenized level in the classroom. As a result, the application of the CBA in heterogeneous classrooms/groupings plays an important role in fostering students' learning autonomy, and raising their awareness towards their studying responsibilities, in addition to enabling them to be competent users of English in real life situations.

**Chapter Two:**  
**Data Analysis and**  
**Interpretation**



## **2. Chapter Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

### **2.1 Introduction:**

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the descriptive study that has been carried out with a heterogeneous class and the interpretation of the results which were obtained through the collection of some samples of the students' written expressions and a questionnaire for teachers. In addition, this chapter presents an overview of the sample population that shows some details of the learners' profiles and the research instruments used to gather data.

### **2.2 Aim of the Research:**

In this study, we aim to explore the learners' common mistakes of writing and the pedagogical criteria that allow us to determine the heterogeneity of the students' levels. We aim to investigate the efficacy of collaborative writing through the Competency-Based Approach and how it helps the learners of mixed-abilities in improving their writing skills.

### **2.3 Sample Population:**

The population chosen for this research is a heterogeneous class at the CLS-Saida (Center of Scientific Leisure). A class involves 20 pupils who came from different schools to improve their English levels and mostly their writing levels from whom we picked 13 pupils randomly.

### **2.4 The Research Instruments:**

Two research instruments are used in the present work, a test and non-test instruments. First, written expression samples are gathered in order to sort out the common writing mistakes among learners, classify them and then ask the learners to autocorrect their mistakes. Second, a questionnaire is administered to teachers to depict the difficulties they face when applying the CBA principles in teaching English writing in mixed-ability classrooms.

#### **2.4.1 Description of the Research Instruments:**

The following section of the present chapter aims at providing a description of the instruments used in this research in order to gather data.

### **2.4.1.1 The Written Expression Samples:**

The learners were given the choice between two topics: the Babylonian civilization and pollution (see appendix A). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the learning hours were restricted therefore; the learners were given only 40 minutes to finish their writing. The written expressions were collected without correction in order to sort out the mistakes and classify them in a table for later use. In the first correction session, the learners were given back their written expressions and were asked to correct them by themselves individually. In the second session, the learners were gathered into small groups and were given the table of mistakes, after that they were asked to correct the written expressions together based on the table. The third session was held to conclude whether the inclusion of collaborative writing in heterogeneous classrooms through the use of the CBA is of any benefit. Hence, learners were given the opportunity to correct their mistakes according to one of the two methods they preferred during the last two sessions i.e. correcting their mistakes individually or collaboratively.

### **2.4.1.2 The Teachers' Questionnaire:**

The teachers' questionnaires were handed directly to teachers. The questionnaire is used to gather information about the difficulties teachers face regarding the teaching of written expression in heterogeneous classrooms using the Competency-Based Approach, classroom management problems and evaluation constraints faced by teachers.

The questionnaire is a set of 20 questions including closed ended questions which invite respondents to choose from the pre-determined answers. Open ended questions, allowing respondents to answer using their own words in order to determine their opinions about the subject under study. There are other questions that require justification or other suggestions which help in obtaining clear and complete answers so that the number of ambiguous responses is reduced.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: the first section deals with the teachers' familiarity with the CBA and their opinions about the approach. The second section is about teaching the written expression in heterogeneous classrooms. And the third section deals with the evaluation and correction of written expressions.

## 2.5 Analysis and Interpretation of the Results:

The present section of this research provides an analysis of the data gathered and an interpretation of the results obtained from the analysis.

### 2.5.1 Results of the Written Expressions:

Grammar	Spelling	Punctuation	Vocabulary	Accuracy	Structure & Readability
<p>Babylone located  The Babylonians was the first who used sail  They felled  The Babylon founded around  Becomed  Began flourished  It's found around 2300 B.C  You should do not throw You can we do to</p>	<p>irthesi  yers  magor  with out deseppared  recored flow rished  bothe besedes gardents lik coussing exampele becose</p>	<p>mesopotamia  hammurabi  babylon  finally  in both the city and contryside at first, the air on the soil.  before the fertilizers the city and countryside. then soil  pollution</p>	<p>Pollution dangereux  It's collapse now  Impotent for santé  quantity of clean air</p>	<p>The history is full of many civilizations  Air pollution is made of many kinds of gases  The air plaines is pollute the aire by the carbon  Pollition is not a naturel it is man  The pollustion he is impotent for santé  You should do not throw dert Infide and on the soil</p>	<p>History shows that civilization began flow rished and then declind but sometimes deseppared with out traces  This civilization it's collapse now  Pollution is the introduction of pollutants into the natural environment  The pollution is in danger a environment  Air pollution it is phénomen very danger of the word</p>

**Table 2.1** Written Task Samples of Mistakes and Errors

The table above shows the findings of the mistakes and errors committed by the learners while writing. Analyzing these mistakes may facilitate highlighting the most common writing problems learners have.

### 2.5.2 Results of the Samples Corrections:

As a first attempt, the learners were given back their written expressions (The Babylonian civilization) to be self-corrected individually and without any instructions on how they should correct their mistakes in order to favor autonomy and install confidence among the learners. Therefore, the learners were given the opportunity to correct their mistakes according to their own perspectives and their own abilities. As a result the learners corrected the erroneous parts only. The mistakes were corrected as follows:

- A. History shows that civilization began flourish and then declined but sometimes disappeared without traces.
  - a. History show that the Babylone civilization began, flourished, and then declined but sometimes disappeared without trace.
- B. Babylone located in mesopotamia and become a major military power.
  - b. Babylone was located in Mesopotamia and they became a major military power.
- C. The Babylonians was the first who used sail.
  - c. The Babylonians were the first to use sail.
- D. The Babylon it's founded around 2300 B.C.
  - d. The Babylon it's was founded around 2300 B.C.
- E. The civilization it's collapse now because of wars and Natural disastes.
  - e. The civilization it's collapsed now because of wars and natural disasters.
- F. The history is full of many civilizations.
  - f. The history has many civilizations.
- G. The world has known many civilizations one of them is :babylonits found around 2300 B.C in Mesopotamia.
  - g. The world has known many civilizations one of them isBabylon, it's founded around 2300 B.C in Mesopotamia.

As a second attempt, the learners were asked to form small groups and were given back the same samples (The Babylonian civilization), yet this time instead of sorting out only the

erroneous parts they were asked to correct both the content and the structure in a form of an essay and according to the table of mistakes. The results of the corrections turned out to be quite different from the first attempt (see appendix B).

In the third correction session, we wanted the learners to correct their written expressions (which were about pollution) according to the method they preferred during the last two correction sessions. All of the learners preferred to correct their written expressions following the technique used in the second session i.e. within collaborative groups and according to their teacher's instructions (see appendix C).

### **2.5.3 Interpretation of the Findings:**

From the analysis of the learners' writing mistakes (see table 2.1), we deduced that the learners commit three types of mistakes while writing. The first mistake can be referred to as a slip, it is a mistake that learners make unintentionally while writing such as spelling (desseppared/becose/aire), word choice (pollution dangereux/the history is full of many civilizations) and meaning (Pollution is not a naturel it is man). This type of mistakes can be corrected by the learners themselves once it is pointed out to them by the teacher. Second, another accidental mistake that learners make can be referred to as an error which includes spelling, capitalization and punctuation. In many cases errors can be the result of quick writing. This indicates that both EFL/ESL learners are subjects to this type of mistakes since most of the time their main focus is on the content without taking the form into consideration. An error can also be corrected by the learners yet, with a little explanation from the teacher. Additionally, we can refer to the third type of the learners' mistakes as an attempt. An attempt happens when the learners try to form a sentence but they do not know how to express themselves or rather they translate their thoughts which can create an interference of the first or second language and results a defect in the meaning of the sentence (pollution dangereux/ the pollution he is important for santé). This shows that the learners do not have a native-level command of the target language and are in an abiding need for the teacher's help.

The findings of the correction sessions demonstrate different results in each session. The results of the first correction session show that the self-correction attempt did not meet with the level of our expectations. The learners took part in identifying some of their mistakes yet; they were not capable of readjusting or correcting them adequately. This suggests that the learners are not fully aware that the first draft is not the final product, and that writing a

second draft helps them reread and rethink in order to spot their mistakes and rewrite them correctly.

The results also suggest that the learners are either habituated to depending on the teacher's correction, or they are not familiar with correcting their own mistakes. In comparison to the first session, the last two sessions show that the learners' correction experience and results have improved. This emphasizes the fact that collaborative writing within heterogeneous groupings had a positive impact on the learners, as they were capable to point out each other's mistakes and share thoughts; thereby low achievers were given the opportunity to learn from high achievers. Accordingly, as the main objective of collaborative writing shows, the idea of sharing their work with the whole class gave every group of learners enough motivation to get involved in the correction of the written piece. This in turn was a kind of a competition between the groups. The results also reveal that throughout the correction process, besides developing their writing skills, collaborative writing helped the learners develop their social competencies as well as enhancing their confidence. Additionally, shy learners and learners with a low self-esteem were capable to participate in the correction even if their ideas or thoughts were false. On the whole, writing in mixed-ability groups reveals that the exchange of ideas, vocabulary and continuous feedback and response between learners broadens their field of learning and helps in building their knowledge.

#### 2.5.4 Results of the Teachers' Questionnaire:

**Section One:** the teachers' familiarity with the CBA and their opinions about the approach.

**Q01:** Are you familiar with the Competency-Based Approach?

	Yes	No	Total
Participant	10	0	10
%	100%	0%	100%

**Table 2.2** Teachers' Familiarity with the CBA

The table above shows that all of the teachers (100%) are well-acquainted with the Competency-Based Approach.

**Q02:** What do you think about the Competency-Based Approach?

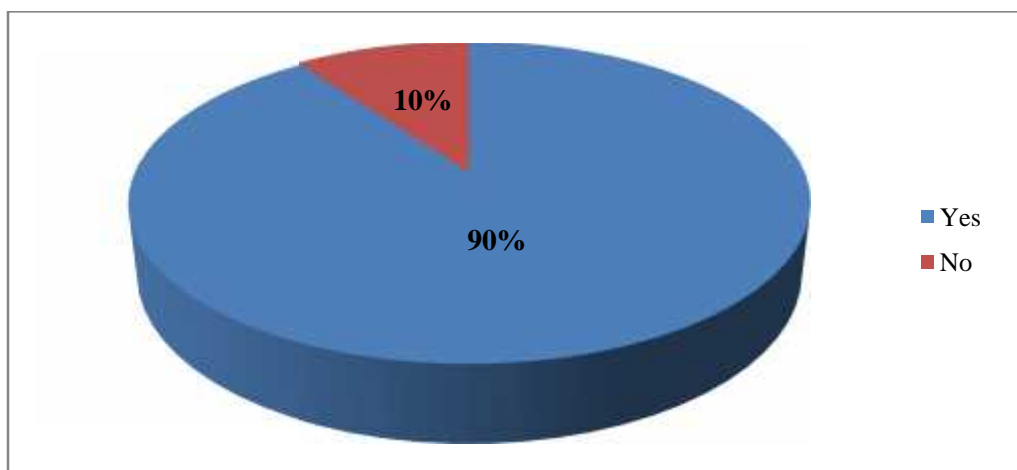
Options	Number	Percentage
It is not an adequate approach	0	0%
It is not applied appropriately by teachers.	4	40%
Teachers are not well informed about the competency-based approach	4	40%
Teachers are only using new course books, and not really applying the competency-based approach	2	20%

**Table 2.3** Teachers' Opinions about the CBA

Table (3) shows that (40%) of teachers claim that the CBA is not applied appropriately by teachers. Others (40%) believe that teachers have little information about the CBA. The rest (20%) say that teachers use simply course books without applying the CBA.

**Q03:** Do you use the Competency-Based Approach while teaching?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	09	01	10
%	90%	10%	100%

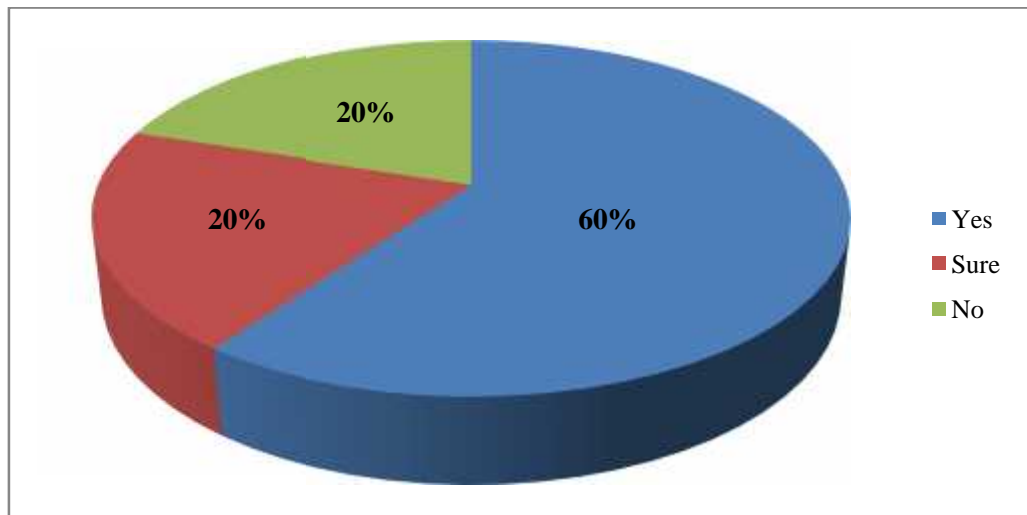
**Table 2.4** The Use of the CBA in Teaching.**Figure 2.4** The Use of the CBA in Teaching.

We can notice that almost all of the teachers (90%) use the CBA while teaching. However the remaining (10%) do not use the CBA.

**Q04:** Do you believe that a teacher could be using the Competency-Based Approach without being aware of it?

	Yes	Sure	No	I don't know	Total
Participants	06	02	02	0	10
%	60%	20%	20%	0%	100%

**Table 2.5** Unawareness about the Use of the CBA.



**Figure 2.5** Unawareness about the Use of the CBA

As shown in the figure, (60%) of teachers have agreed to the fact that some teachers can be using the CBA without being aware of it. Others (20%) claim that they are sure. The rest of the teachers (20%) said no.

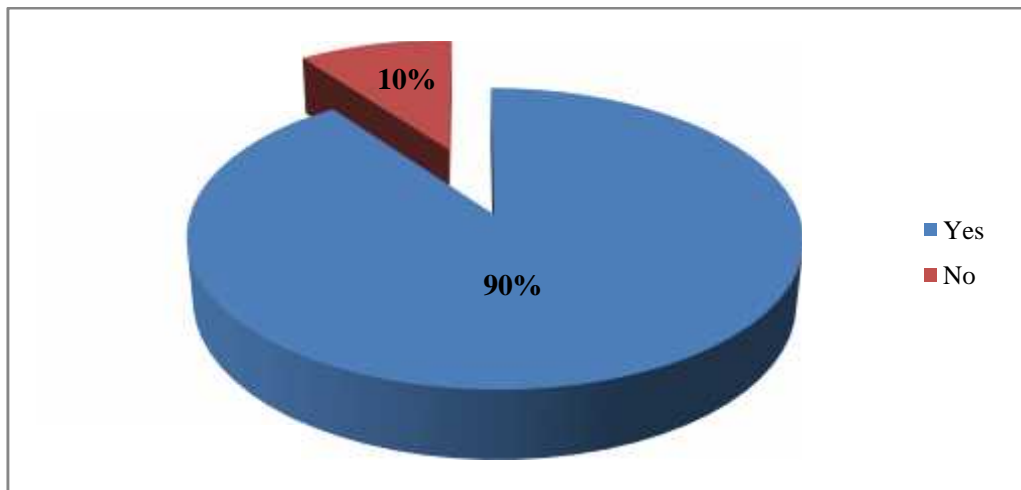
**Section Two:** Teaching the written expression in heterogeneous classrooms.

**Q05:** Do you think that your classroom is a heterogeneous one?

	Yes	No	I don't know	Total
Participants	09	01	0	10
%	90%	10%	0%	100%

**Table 2.6** The Heterogeneity of the Classrooms.





**Figure 2.6** The Heterogeneity of the Classrooms.

The results show that (90%) of teachers believe that their classroom is heterogeneous. However, (10%) claim that their classroom is not heterogeneous.

**Q06:** If yes, how did you come to the conclusion that your class is heterogeneous?

As far as the above question is concerned, the participants provided the following answers:

- ) Some students are good at using the English language while others are average.
- ) The varying levels of learners and their proficiencies in the oral and written expressions were noticed throughout their learning process.
- ) The learners are of different levels.
- ) According to their levels, their preferences, their interests and learning styles.
- ) When a test was held, the difference in their levels was easily noticed.
- ) By evaluating their written productions. Some are well written; others are either taken from the internet or copied from their classmates.
- ) Through the gap of knowledge between the learners abilities and levels.

**Q07:** As a teacher, do you take into consideration the differences between your students' levels and abilities?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	10	0	10
%	100%	0%	100%

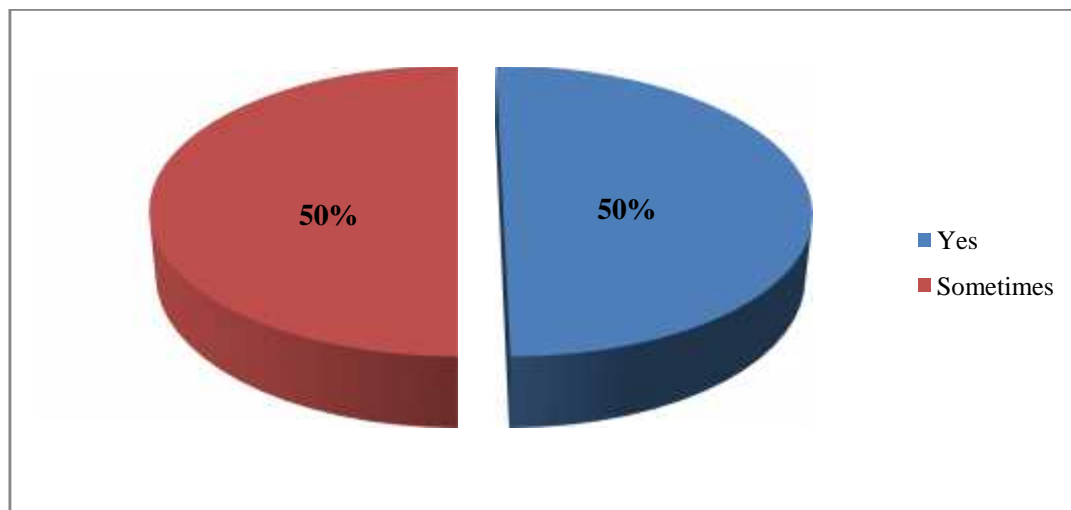
**Table 2.7** Considering the Learners' Differences

The results obtained denote that all the teachers (100%) take into consideration the differences between their learners' levels and abilities.

**Q08:** Do you plan your lessons and activities to cope with the differences of your learners' competencies?

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
Participants	05	0	05	10
%	50%	0%	50%	100%

**Table 2.8** Planning Lessons According to the Learners' Differences.



**Figure 2.8** Planning Lessons According to the Learners' Differences

The figure above shows that (50%) of teachers claim that they plan their lessons and activities according to their learners' competencies. Whereas others (50%) say that they do it sometimes only.

**Q09:** Do you think that your program of teaching writing is improving the students' levels?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	06	04	10
%	60%	40%	100%

**Table 2.9** The efficacy of the Teaching Program.

The results of the table above denote that (60%) of teachers claim that their teaching program is efficient for improving their learners' levels. However, the others (40%) claim that their teaching program is of no efficiency when it comes to improving their learners' levels.

The teachers who answered with “no” provided the following reasons:

- ) Because of their weakness at the level of grammar.
- ) The learners are only used to their schools’ programs only and it takes so much effort to get them used to out of school programs.
- ) Because the Algerian program ignores the importance of the writing skills hence, teachers do not often deal with writing. Therefore after-school programs cannot be very efficient either.
- ) The learners’ deficiency in grammar and their weak vocabulary make the program seem of zero efficiency.

**Q10:** When teaching the writing skills, do you immediately verify whether your students have assimilated the current skill or do you move directly to the next skill?

	Yes, I verify	No, I move directly to the next skill	Total
Participants	10	0	10
%	100%	0%	100%

**Table 2.10** Verifying the Learners’ Assimilation of the Writing Skills.

With regard to the table above, (100%) of the teachers claim that they make sure that their learners have assimilated the skill being learned before moving to another skill.

**Q11:** Is collaborative writing included in your program of teaching writing?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	09	01	10
%	90%	10%	100%

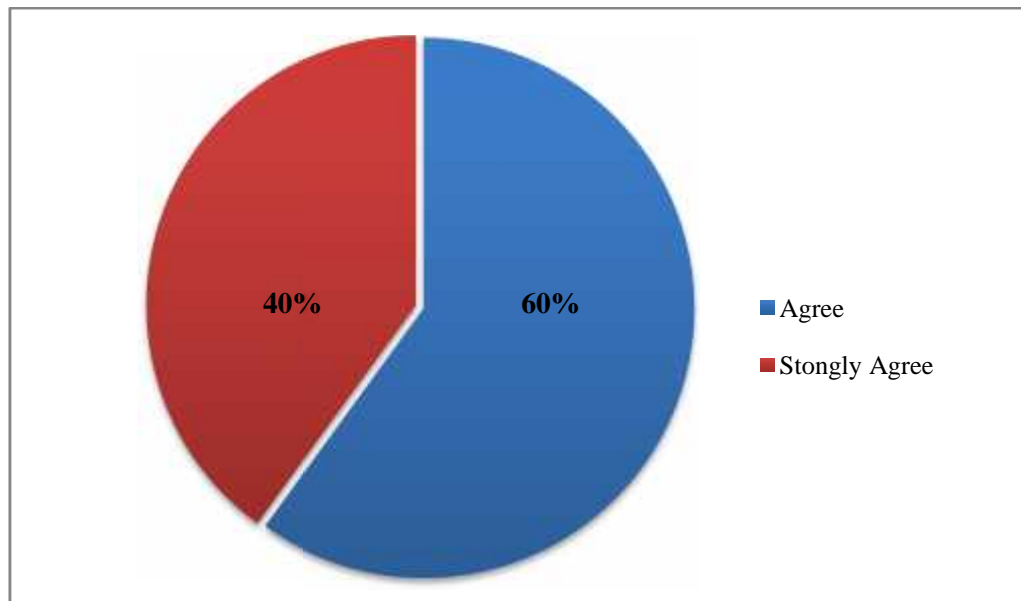
**Table 2.11** The Use of Collaborative Writing.

The results obtained from the table above denote that (90%) of teachers say that they include collaborative writing in their teaching program, whereas (10%) claim that they do not.

**Q12:** If yes, do you agree that implementing collaborative writing results in effective learning outcomes?

	I strongly agree	I agree	I am neutral	I disagree	I strongly disagree	Total
Participants	04	06	0	0	0	10
%	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%	100%

**Table 2.12** The effectiveness of Collaborative Writing.



**Figure 2.12** The effectiveness of Collaborative Writing

As shown in the figure above, (60%) of teachers agree to the fact that collaborative writing results in effective learning outcomes. Others, (40%) state that they strongly agree.

**Q13:** Do you find difficulties in pairing and grouping students?

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
Participants	0	05	05	10
%	0%	50%	50%	100%

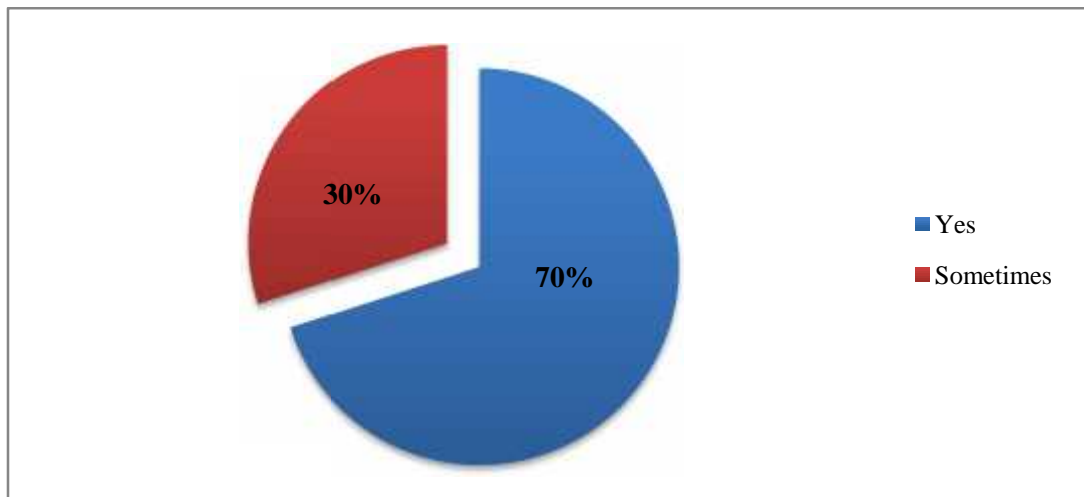
**Table 2.13** Difficulties of Grouping Students.

From the table above we can conclude that half of the teachers (50%) say that they do not encounter any difficulties in pairing and grouping their learners. However, the other (50%) of teachers claim that they encounter difficulties sometimes.

**Q14:** Do you take your students' preferences into consideration?

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
Participants	07	0	03	10
%	70%	0%	30%	100%

**Table 2.14** Considering the Learners' Preferences



**Figure 2.14** Considering the Learners' Preferences

From the figure above it is noticed that (70%) of teachers take into consideration the preferences of their learners, whereas (30%) do it only sometimes.

**Section Three:** Dealing with the correction and evaluation of written expression.

**Q15:** Do you use remedial and correction sessions for your students?

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Total
Participants	10	0	0	10
%	100%	0%	0%	100%

**Table 2.15** The Use of Remedial and Correction Sessions.

The table above shows that all teachers use remedial sessions for their learners.

**Q16:** If yes, have you noticed any progress after each remedial session?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	10	0	10
%	100%	0%	100%

**Table 2.16** The Efficacy of Remedial Sessions.

The table above denotes that all teachers claim that they have noticed progress after each remedial session.

**Q17:** What do you focus on when correcting students' writing?

	The form	The content	Both	Total
Participants	0	02	08	10
%	0%	20%	80%	100%

**Table 2.17** The Teachers' Main Focus when Correcting a Piece of Writing.

According to the table above, (20%) of teachers focus on the content when correcting their learner's writing, whereas (80%) of teachers focus on both the content and the form.

Two teachers provided the following reasons for "why the content is more important than the form":

- ) The content has a relation with vocabulary and grammar use so it is more important than the form.
- ) The ideas should be systematically ordered with respect to the grammatical functions.

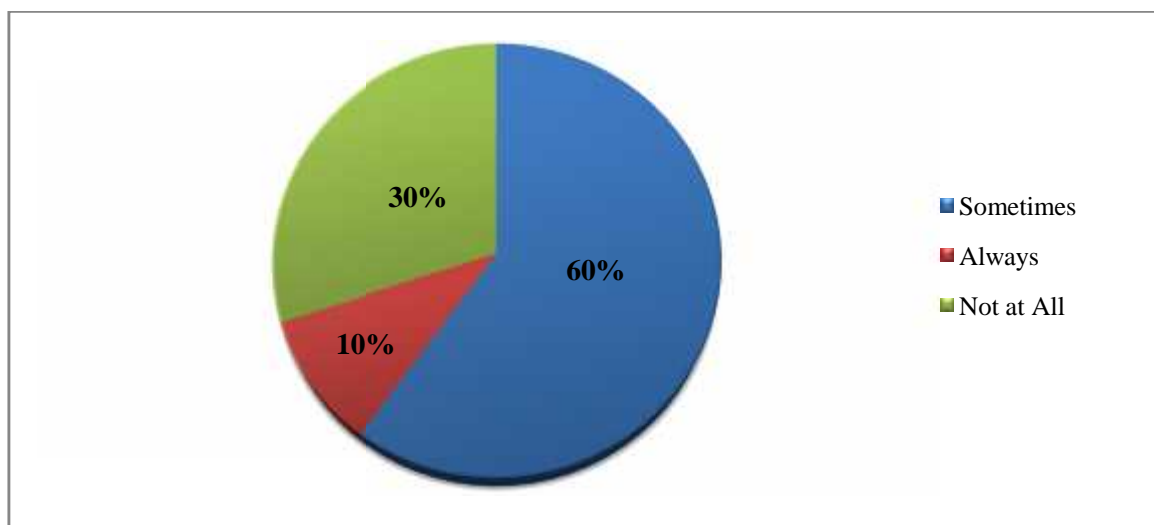
Eight teachers provided the following reasons for "why both the content and the form are equally important":

- ) Because a written production is a combination of both the content and the form such as language, coherency, meaningful sentences and ideas.
- ) Because putting language in a good layout results in a well-written piece.
- ) Both are important since a piece of writing is a string of ideas which cannot be understood unless the content is meaningful and the form is correct.
- ) Because the content and the form go hand in hand with each other and one completes the other.

**Q18:** Do you face difficulties when you evaluate your students?

	Sometimes	Always	Not at all	Total
Participants	06	01	03	10
%	60%	10%	30%	100%

**Table 2.18** Difficulties in Evaluating Learners.



**Figure 2.18** Difficulties in Evaluating Learners

The results of the figure above show that (60%) of teachers sometimes face difficulties when evaluating their learners. Others, (10%) face difficulties always and the remaining (30%) do not face any difficulties at all.

Teachers who answered “yes” stated some of the difficulties they face:

- ) The majority of students write with spelling mistakes, and they don't have as much vocabulary as they need to transmit what they want to say.
- ) The number of students and the time allocated is not always helpful when evaluating all of the learners.
- ) The learners' bad handwriting and their disrespect for punctuation and capitalization.
- ) The multitude of spelling and grammar mistakes in addition to the use of translation.

**Q19:** In your opinion, do you think you could reach a homogeneous level in your heterogeneous class?

	Yes	No	Total
Participants	09	01	10
%	90%	10%	100%

**Table 2.19** The Possibility of Reaching a Homogeneous Level in the Classroom.

The table above shows that the majority of teachers (90%) claim that they can reach a homogeneous level in their classrooms, and (10%) of teachers claim that they cannot.

**Q20:** If yes, what strategies do you use?

As far as the above question is concerned, the participants provided the following answers:

- ) Classifying and arranging the learners in groups according to the shared abilities.
- ) Including a lot of group work, homework and projects.
- ) Choosing a variety of different activities.
- ) Maintaining the learners' interests by providing activities of their preferences.
- ) Giving learners the opportunity to write sentences or short passages after each learning session in order to reinforce their grammar and vocabulary.
- ) Choosing one piece of writing to be written on the board and corrected by the whole classroom with the feedback of the teacher.

### **2.5.5 Interpretation of the Results:**

The analysis of the first section of the teachers' questionnaire reveals that all teachers (100%) are familiar with the Competency-Based Approach and the majority of teachers (90%) rely on this approach while teaching. However, some teachers (40%) have also claimed that the CBA is not applied appropriately. This denotes that teachers are either not well informed about the approach or they simply use course books while teaching. Some of the teachers' answers (60%) state that teachers could be using the CBA without being aware of it; others (20%) state that they are sure of this act and the rest (20%) say that this suggestion is not true. This clearly indicates that most teachers are not adequately informed and knowledgeable about the CBA therefore, they might not be capable of recognizing the slight differences between this approach and other nearly similar ones. This also shows the lack of effective training that enables them to be familiar with the CBA principles.

The second section of the teachers' questionnaire reveals that the majority of teachers (90%) believe that their classes are heterogeneous, whereas other teachers (10%) claim that their classes are not of mixed levels. This clearly indicates that these teachers are fully aware of their learners' competencies and the variance of their levels. Additionally, teachers who have answered saying yes to the previous question (Q5) have assured that the heterogeneity of their classes is due to the variety of the levels of learners that teachers have noticed throughout the teaching-learning process, or through a test. Teachers have added that the mixed levels of the learners are easily noticed when evaluating their written expressions as they have mentioned some are well written while others are not.

Moreover, the answers to (Q7) denote that all teachers (100%) take into consideration the differences between the levels of their learners. This clearly demonstrates that teachers are fully aware of their roles such as observing their learners, becoming familiar with their learners' strengths and weaknesses and facilitating the learning process based on these factors. Furthermore, (50%) of teachers claimed that they plan their lessons and activities to cope with the differences of their learners' competencies while others (50%) claimed that they do it only sometimes. This suggests that teachers are wary of the differences of their learners therefore, they diversify the lessons and activities in order to assure the understanding and participation of all learners of different abilities. Teachers cannot possibly provide learners with activities that go well with their competencies all of the time, that is why sometimes teachers resort to different activities that may contribute in upgrading the learners' levels. In addition, teachers



(60%) mentioned that their programs of teaching writing are improving the learners' levels, while others (40%) have mentioned that their programs are of no effectiveness. The supposition drawn from this is that the majority of teachers are mindful on the right methods and ways of delivering knowledge to their learners. However, the remaining minority might either not be equipped with enough knowledge or experience on how they should convey a comprehensible message, or their lesson and activity choice must not comply with the needs and the levels of their learners. Yet, these teachers have also mentioned that the ineffectiveness of their program of teaching writing is also due to the insufficient prior knowledge of their learners and their deficiencies at the level of grammar and vocabulary as well as the difference between the school and after school programs which make attaining adequate writing levels difficult. Additionally, (100%) of the teachers claimed that they make sure that their learners have assimilated the skill being learned immediately before moving to another skill. It is clear, therefore, that within the CBA, teachers cannot move to teaching another skill before ensuring the mastery of the current one.

Moreover, the answers obtained from (Q11) denote that (90%) of teachers say that they include collaborative writing in their teaching program, whereas (10%) claim that they do not. The inference to be drawn from this is that the majority of teachers are abundantly apprised about the importance of implementing collaborative writing particularly in mixed-ability classrooms. Consequently, (60%) of teachers have agreed to the fact that collaborative writing results in effective learning outcomes. Others, (40%) strongly have agreed to the effectiveness of collaborative writing. From both answers, we can say that within heterogeneous classes in particular, collaborative writing plays a great role in helping low achievers learn from high achievers, build their grammar and their vocabulary besides their confidence and their social skills.

It is worth to mention that most teachers declared that they take into consideration the preferences of their learners, whereas (30%) said that they do it sometimes only. This indicates that teachers are conscious that an effective and productive learning-teaching process can be planned by considering these individual differences of the students.

The third and final section of the teachers' questionnaire reveals that (100%) of teachers claim that they use remedial and correction sessions for their students. This highlights the fact that teachers are completely cognizant of the significance of remedial and correction sessions in helping learners with low capacities to strengthen their weaknesses and catch up to their

peers of higher levels. Accordingly, all teachers (100%) claim that they have noticed progress in the levels of the learners after each remedial session. The suggestion here is that remedial sessions help students identify their learning gaps and what they have missed throughout the previous courses and grasp supplementary information provided in remedial sessions. Moreover, according to the teachers' answers (20%) focus on the content mainly whereas the majority (80%) focus on both the form and the content. This explains that the content and the form are equally important as the majority of teachers have mentioned, because putting language in a good layout results in a well-written piece. Furthermore, the answers to (Q18) show that the majority of teachers (60%) stated that they sometimes face difficulties when evaluating their students, some (10%) mentioned that they always face difficulties always and others (30%) said that they do not face any difficulties at all. Followingly, teachers have stated the reasons behind these difficulties explaining that the numbers of students, time, multiple repeated mistakes and the use of translation are all factors contributing in creating obstacles for teachers when trying to evaluate their learners.

Additionally, (90%) of the respondents claim that they believe they are capable of realizing a homogeneous level in their heterogeneous classroom, only one teacher claims that they do not think they can. The supposition drawn from this is that teachers are conscious of the methods, processes and tasks to be used in order to at least approximate the levels and competencies of the learners if not realize a homogeneous level in the classroom. Teachers have subsequently mentioned some of the strategies used such as including extensive sessions of writing where they include a lot of group work, choosing a variety of different activities, providing learners with activities of their preferences as well as giving learners the opportunity to write sentences or short passages after each learning session in order to reinforce their grammar and vocabulary.

## **2.6 Conclusion:**

The conclusion drawn from this chapter is that both teachers and learners favor the implementation of collaborative writing in heterogeneous classrooms within the competency-based approach principles. Adequately, this strategy has shown satisfactory results in the remedial sessions where learners were able to identify their own mistakes and learn how to correct them from their peers within the same heterogeneous group. Also, even the shiest learners were capable to share ideas and thoughts as well as gaining confidence and building

their social skills. As a result, this chapter has shown that collaborative writing is the key to establish a well-managed heterogeneous classroom and result positive learning outcomes.

**Chapter Three:  
Recommendations  
and Suggestions**

## **Chapter Three: Recommendations and Suggestions.**

### **3.1 Introduction:**

The present chapter aims at providing suggestions that can help both teachers and learners throughout the process of teaching and learning the writing skills in a mixed-ability classroom through the application of the Competency-Based Approach principles. Additionally, this chapter aims at providing a few recommendations that can contribute in helping raising the learners' awareness towards the importance and effectiveness of collaborative writing as well as helping the teachers to establish a well-managed heterogeneous classroom.

### **3.2 Recommendations:**

In view of the data gathered and the findings, we conclude that the teachers are well aware of the importance of the competency-based approach and the benefits of collaborative writing within heterogeneous groupings as well as the constraints they face while teaching writing in a mixed-ability classroom.

In consideration of these results, a few recommendations and suggestions are provided for teachers in order to help their learners develop their writing skills and encourage them to learn from their peers of higher levels through group works.

#### **3.2.1 Teaching the Writing Skills:**

Being one of the most difficult productive skills to teach and to learn, writing can be very intimidating especially for some EFL/ESL learners since it requires so much effort, knowledge and determination. Hyland (2004:20) states that "writing is a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning, drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts and audiences." In light of this saying, some recommendations and suggestions are provided for teachers to help them provide their learners with better information for better learning results.

- ) As a first suggestion, raising the awareness of one's learners to the importance of reading and its correlation with writing.
- ) Second, raising the learners' awareness to the importance of the knowledge of language and its aspects such as grammar and vocabulary.

- ) Informing the learners of the steps to be followed in order to accomplish the perfect piece of writing.
- ) Helping the learners develop their pre-writing and their planning skills such as brainstorming, outlining and quick writing.
- ) Ensuring that the learners are already informed about the form of an essay and how it should be organized.
- ) Instructing the learners on the significance of the content of an essay and how it should follow a chronological order to ensure its readability.
- ) Making sure that the learners are fully conscious that both the form and the content of an essay are adequately important.
- ) Putting an emphasis on the importance of drafting and making sure the learners understand that a first or a second draft cannot always be the final product.
- ) Increasing the learners' awareness on the great importance of revising their final products before finishing.
- ) Encouraging the learners to start journal writing in order to develop their writing skills.
- ) Encouraging the learners to make mistakes and to put their thoughts into words however they appear and then editing them.
- ) Informing the learners that it is from one's mistakes that a person learns, and that making the same mistakes more than once is totally fine; as long as they get corrected later throughout their learning process.
- ) Allocating 10 to 15 minutes at the end of each writing session in order to help the learners with some activities which can help them nourish their vocabulary and develop their grammar levels.
- ) Encouraging the learners to reach out for the teacher or their peers in case help was needed.
- ) Instruct the learners how to expand their basic sentences into more elaborate ones for a more understandable written piece.
- ) Instruct the learners in how they can use dictionaries in order to expand their vocabulary and use them while writing.
- ) Selecting a few sessions to be devoted to some reading activities in order to endear reading to the learners.

### 3.2.2 Teaching the Writing Skills through the CBA:

Helping in developing their learners' writing competencies through the competency-based approach comprises a big challenge for teachers, yet a challenge that teachers are capable of overcoming. Since the CBA is mastery based rather than time based, all the time provided for teachers is devoted to helping their learners in mastering the writing skills. Thus, some recommendations are suggested to help the teachers establish a better learning environment and realize better learning outcomes.

- ) Taking into account the differences between the learners' abilities and their competencies in accomplishing a certain skill.
- ) Teachers need to take into consideration the needs of their learners and raise their learners' awareness to their needs as well.
- ) Teachers need to be wary that some learners are not as quick as others and they should be given time to learn at their own pace.
- ) Teachers can try to avoid ranking their learners and also avoid making low achievers feel less competent than the high achievers.
- ) Teachers need to be aware that within the CBA not great importance is given to time but rather to the mastery of the writing skills.
- ) Teachers need to take into account that unless their learners have fully assimilated the current skill they cannot possibly move to teaching the next skill.
- ) Motivating students to be better writers through the use of more effective strategies such as rewarding learners who wrote the best essays.
- ) Teachers can provide the learners with pieces of advice and remarks which might help them enhance their writing performances such as preventing low achievers from comparing themselves with high achievers.
- ) Motivating the learners to continue on working on attaining their desired levels of mastery instead of quitting halfway.
- ) Teachers can provide their learners with continuous constructive feedback in order to maintain their motivation.

### **3.2.3 Teaching Writing in a Heterogeneous Classroom:**

Throughout their teaching journey, teachers can be faced with considerable challenges such as providing diverse learners with effective methods and activities which can contribute in developing their writing skills in ways that can meet their needs and their interests. Heterogeneous classes can be very advantageous for the learners as they meet the opportunity to improve their writing abilities and develop their competencies in the target language through the assistance of not only their teachers but their high achieving peers as well.

On light of this, a few writing activities which can contribute in helping teachers attain effective and successful learning outcomes are suggested:

#### **3.2.3.1 Suggested Writing Activities:**

Teachers need to be thoroughly cognizant of the needs, interests as well as the preferences of their learners in order to select activities which can target these interests and maintain their learners' engagement in the group activities. Saunders (1989) created dimensions of peer interaction in writing; these terms have implementations for heterogeneous group work. Saunders' dimensions are the following: "co-writing," in which peers are collaborating on every task; "co-publishing," in which individuals create a collaborative text based on individual texts; "co-responding," in which individuals are interacting only through the process of revision after a text is already completed; and "helping," in which peers help one another during the writing process (Hertz-Lazarowitz & Miller, 1992).

The following are group writing activities which are thought to be helpful in developing the learners writing skills according to their learning paces and competencies:

##### **A. Free/Random Writing Assignments:**

Random or free writing activities may seem very simple for teachers, yet very enjoyable and significant for learners. The objective of this activity is to give the learners' the opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts, and to put their emotions into written words. Every once in a while, such activities give the learners plenty of choices to choose from and allow them to write about their interests such as their favorite hobbies, their favorite persons, their passions, a childhood memory and so on. Such assignments are very enjoyable for most learners as they get very engaged in the given task and get even the most unmotivated learners



can get engaged. Another benefit of random writing is that it raises the learners' curiosity to what their peers are writing about. Therefore, to make the task even more interesting, teachers can ask their learners to exchange their essays with their classmates to be read and corrected with a little help from the teacher at the end of the session. This in turn, can help even the shiest learners construct their social abilities in addition to their writing abilities.

#### B. Group/ Collaborative Writing:

Even though writing seems like an independent activity, it does not always have to be done independently. Composing a proper paper sometimes requires the collaboration of two or more learners therefore; a teacher can always turn writing into an engaging activity that requires more than one learner.

Additionally, since a collaborative writing activity can have many of the same benefits as a group speaking activity, it is believed that a teacher can always help his/her learners remedy their writing weaknesses through collaborative writing within heterogeneous groupings. A teacher can carry out some of the following steps in order to get everyone involved in the creation of a written text:

1. **Step One:** gathering learners of diverse abilities (high achievers, low achievers and the ones who fall somewhere between these two types of learners) into a group of three or four. A teacher might as well let their learners choose their group mates occasionally.
2. **Step Two:** distributing pictures to the groups of learners (a different copy for each group), and then ask them to write a paragraph about what they have grasped from the picture.
3. **Step Three:** the teacher should make sure that each member in each group contributes in writing the paragraph. For instance, asking each learner to write a sentence or two, and then pass the paper for another member to do the same and so on. Throughout this step, discussing the writing process obviously provides more opportunities for learners to interact and exchange ideas in English, a benefit in itself.
4. **Step Four:** the teacher also needs to make sure that all groups of learners are writing their paragraphs using the same tense.

5. **Step Five:** once all groups are done writing their paragraphs, each group should assign one member to read the paragraph out loud. Groups should listen carefully, so they can decide on the correct order of the story (paragraphs) that the pictures tell.
6. **Final Step:** finally, learners can decide on any necessary additions or changes to be made in order to turn all paragraphs into a coherent whole.

An additional suggestion concerning this activity (collaborative writing) for teachers in order to stimulate competitiveness between the groups of learners is to give them opportunity to vote for the best written paragraph at the end of the activity.

The learners in this activity help each other without feeling embarrassed. Therefore, this learning style would lead to better learning. In order to process this activity effectively D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (1987) described characteristics and steps of cooperative learning as follows:

- 1) All the group members share the common responsibility together. They cooperate to accomplish the assigned task with the common targeted goal and also share information as well as materials among the group members.
- 2) The group members have a good interaction to each other. They discuss and exchange the opinions and ideas with one another.
- 3) Each of the group members has his or her own responsibility in the assigned task with the utmost goal of working at their best effort.
- 4) The group members have small group skills and a good human relationship. The teacher has the duty in evaluating the group performance of the students.
- 5) The group members apply the group process in learning and working. The group process includes the recognition of good leadership and membership, having a good work procedure i.e. knowing what and why they are going to do, where to do, and who else do it. It also includes the evaluation of resulted work and the individual group member performance as well as the group's performance as a whole (p. 23).

### C. Collaborative Creative Writing:

Another collaborative activity suggestion where diversity is embraced and ideal writing platforms are provided for learners to foster and encourage creativity is “collaborative creative writing”.

Farrah (2011) acknowledges the benefit of collaborative activity in a process writing class as stating:

*“This type of learning enables students to be engaged in new learning styles as it provides them with a myriad of opportunities to interact while sharing their views, values and interests. Furthermore, collaborative learning has the potential to increase comprehension, promote critical thinking, maximize motivation, foster the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and create an interactive and relaxed atmosphere where students have an additional responsibility for their own learning”* (p. 139)

For this activity, the teacher will pick out a few learners and give each one of them the opportunity to choose their group members. Next, the teacher will ask the learners to come up with a “What If” question and encourage them to be as creative as possible and to think outside the box. For instance “What if all your employees started working for your biggest competitor?” or “What if the world we live in is actually a computer simulation?” Then, the teacher is to ask the learners to fold the papers where they wrote their questions and run a little basket through each group so they put the papers in the basket. The following step is to ask each group to pick out one paper and start writing. The learners should be given a generous amount of time since such an activity requires the creation and development of new ideas. The teacher should encourage the learners to put even their oddest thoughts into written words without being afraid of the other peers’ judgments. Once all groups have finished writing they should be asked to give their written piece to the group who came up with the question. As a last step, the teacher is to ask the learners to decide on any additions, omissions or modifications to be done on the written piece. As a bonus step, the teacher will vote for the most creative question and the most creative piece of writing.

At the end of the session, the learners will have learned to recognize their competencies, their strengths and weaknesses, the diversity of their thoughts, and their ability to generate new ideas and share them with his/her group members. Additionally, the

learners will become able to see the link between generating interesting hypothetical questions and the creation of an entertaining piece of writing.

As a result, collaborative writing and group activities which involve learners of mixed levels usually allow shy or unmotivated learners to express their thoughts and ideas. This category of learners (shy and unmotivated learners) tend to express themselves better in written tasks rather than in spoken ones since they do not enjoy participating and interacting with the teacher.

### **3.2.3.2 Classroom Management:**

Setting and maintaining a well-managed learning environment and an effective multi-level classroom can often be a difficult task for teachers, yet very crucial as they are required to be fully aware of the needs of their learners so they can organize their lessons and activities based on those needs for the best learning outcomes. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 196) indicate the following procedures to be followed in setting up groups:

- a) Deciding on the size of the group: this will depend on the tasks they have to carry out, the age of the learners, and the time limits for the lesson. Typical group size is from two to four.
- b) Assigning students to groups: groups can be teacher-selected, random, or student-selected; although a “teacher selected” group is recommended as the usual mode in order to create groups that are heterogeneous on such variables as past achievement, ethnicity, or sex.
- c) Assigning students’ roles in groups: each group member has a specific role to play in a group, such as a noise monitor, turn-taker monitor, recorder, or summarizer

Additionally, a few further suggestions could always help teachers throughout their teaching journey:

- ) Teachers need to take into account the different learning styles and the varied intelligences of their learners.
- ) Teachers can provide the learners with activities that challenge their current learning levels.

- ) Learners need to be given the opportunity to explore different ways of accomplishing a certain task.
- ) Teachers need to be familiar with the interests of their learners, their preferences and the best strategies that can help them.
- ) Teachers need to know when a certain activity requires collaborative/cooperative work and when it requires a learner to work alone.
- ) Teachers need to take into consideration that some learners do not often enjoy working in groups thus; they should plan activities that do not involve group work from time to time.
- ) Similarly, teachers need to take into account that group work is optional and a learner should not be forced to work in a group unless they wanted to.
- ) A teacher need to know whether his/her learners have assimilated the current skill or not, and when to move on to teaching the next skill.
- ) Teachers need to know that a learner learns best by “doing” (and not just by “absorbing” the lesson) which is why an extensive number of activities should be provided for learners to help them develop their levels.
- ) Teachers can try to ask their learners to suggest a few activities of their own choices once in a while to make learning more enjoyable.

### **3.2.4 The Role of the Teacher in a Heterogeneous Classroom:**

Since teaching in a mixed-ability classroom requires teachers to play a vital role in ensuring all students have access to a richer educational experience, teachers are to shift their focus more on the way they do things and not focus mainly on what they do .Harmer .J. (2007) said that “a good teacher has the ability to adopt a certain role in the class that depends on what students are doing.”(p25). He claimed that among these roles, the teacher is a controller, yet if he/she always acts as so i.e. always standing and dictating and controlling his/her students learning process, they will then lose responsibility for their learning. Therefore, the teacher should act as a controller mainly when strongly needed. He added that a teacher should also act as a prompter who motivates his/her learners and encourage them and help them to do more. While assessors, are teachers who grade their students and inform them about their progress. The teacher can be a source of language information that learners can consult whenever they felt helpless. Finally, he added that a teacher can also be a tutor whose duty is advising and guiding students. (Harmer. J, 2007)

The following are a few suggestions that might help teachers in adapting the suitable role for each situation in a multilevel classroom:

- ) The teacher needs to maintain discipline within the classroom by reflecting his/her own personality on the learners. Quoting the psychiatrist Karl Menninger “What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches.” (Quoted in “Secrets of Good Teaching” 2006, P. 79)
- ) The teacher can have a seating plan taking into consideration the learners’ levels and behaviors (traditional rows, U-shape, horseshoe, and cluster seating arrangement).
- ) The teacher can shift roles depending on the situation, yet still adapt the role of a facilitator more to make the learning process much easier.
- ) Providing learners with continuous reliable and useful feedback and assessment to help them improve their levels.
- ) Treating all learners equally and avoiding the comparison between low achievers and high achievers.
- ) The teacher need to make sure that each and every learner is learning effectively by observing whether they are progressing or not.
- ) Teachers need to undertake every single detail in order to cover all what is going on in class.
- ) Teachers need to support advanced students by supplying additional academic challenges and help students who fall behind receive the assistance they need to catch up.

### **3.2.5 Recommendations for Learners:**

As crucial as it is to provide teachers with recommendations and suggestions that might help in guiding them throughout their teaching journey, learners are also responsible for their learning progress and can benefit from a few recommendations as well. Therefore, the following are a few recommendations to help learners benefit more from learning:

- ) Learners should be well aware that the responsibility of their learning does not lie on the shoulders of the teachers alone, but on them as well.
- ) Learners should habituate themselves on learning alone and should not always wait for the teacher’s help.

- ) The best way for the learner to get to know oneself is to write down the strengths, weaknesses, preferences and needs on a piece of paper and draw a learning plan based on these factors.
- ) Learners need to know what works best for them and should be aware of the learning strategies that suit them well and ask the teacher to apply them once in a while.
- ) Learners need to accustom themselves to reading because writing requires prior information and the latter can only be gained from reading.
- ) Learners should develop a daily writing habit by keeping diaries and writing prompts or a small paragraph every day.
- ) Adopting one or two of their favorite writers' writing styles can be of great motivation and help for the learners.
- ) Writing compositions and short stories and participating in competitions, clubs, conferences to ameliorate their productive skills and abilities.
- ) Seeking inspiration inside and outside the classroom and maintaining their affection for writing as a passion can help learners become great writers in the future.
- ) Learners should not be afraid of suggesting activities which they believe are beneficial and enjoyable.
- ) Learners should know when to stop comparing themselves to their classmates and should be aware that different learners cover different learning paces and abilities.
- ) Being attentive and taking into consideration the remarks, instructions and pieces of advices provided by the teacher.
- ) Learners should learn that it is acceptable to acquire information from their high achieving classmates and ask for their help as well.
- ) Maintaining a good and strong relation with their mates when working in pairs/groups can be the first step to realize better learning outcomes.
- ) Understanding that group work or collaborative writing might not be one of their preferences yet it is still beneficial for them.

#### **3.2.4 General Recommendations for Further Studies:**

It is really demanding for more future studies to focus heavily on the use of cooperative learning, collaborative writing and group work for mixed ability classes since it is beneficial and enriching for every single student in developing their learning competencies and process. This issue may be conducted on a large sample to see to what extent students enjoy working

in collaboration and to investigate the strengths they gain from learning individually and in groups. It would be more beneficial if studies focus more on the way mixed ability classes are taught by showing methods and strategies that each teacher should undertake for establishing better learning environments which in turn can help in resulting positive learning outcomes.

### **3.3 Conclusion:**

Teaching classrooms in which students have a wide range of previous academic achievements and varying levels of oral and written proficiency in the English language can be very difficult since organizing, planning and presenting lessons may constitute another challenge for teachers in such classes where students' abilities might differ considerably. Additionally, this chapter aimed at presenting some recommendations and suggestions about teaching writing to EFL learners in heterogeneous classes and how teachers need to be familiar with their learners' levels and needs in order to help in enhancing their students' motivation and engagement in learning how to develop their writing competencies. Moreover, this chapter highlights the fact that for such classrooms (mixed-ability classrooms), employing various strategies such as cooperative, collaborative and group work are a highly recommended and a well-documented instructional strategy. Finally, this chapter provided a few suggestions of some activities that show teachers how to equalize participation among members of a group; how to design learning tasks that support conceptual understanding, mastery of content, and language development; and how to assess group products as well as individual contributions.



# **General Conclusion**

## **General Conclusion:**

The present study aimed at investigating the significance of the competency-based approach while teaching writing within a heterogeneous classroom and the impact of implementing collaborative groupings in such classes. This study helped so much to shape an understanding concerning the effectiveness of cooperative and collaborative learning when having students of different levels and diverse abilities.

The study focused on answering the research questions raised and the examination of the hypotheses introduced. The first research question was about the effect of the Competency-Based Approach on the learners' writing. It has been hypothesized that learners may be given the opportunity to develop their writing skills (linguistic competence) and their creativity at their own pace and regardless of the learning environment (heterogeneous classes). As a result, it enables them to perceive the significance of the CBA and how it enables them to become competent writers who can rely on themselves rather than on the teacher. The second question was about managing to look at the heterogeneity of the classroom as a positive factor while teaching the writing skills. The hypothesis was that teachers may take the diversity of their learners' abilities to their advantage where they encourage their learners to assist each other by sharing knowledge. Because the teacher can easily turn a mixed-ability classroom into a productive cooperative/collaborative environment where high achievers assist low achievers and help them achieve a better understanding of the skill being learned. The third question investigated the difficulties faced by both teachers and learners when teaching/learning writing in a mixed-ability classroom. The hypothesis was that one of the difficulties faced by teachers and learners would be how to manage to teach and learn in a classroom environment where learners exhibit diverse needs and competencies. Owing to the fact that learners have different needs, interests, and preferences that the teacher must always take into consideration. Additionally, low achievers often tend to compare themselves to their high achieving classmates, in the sense that even though they cover the same amount of time and put on the same amount of effort on learning a certain skill, yet the results turn out to be different. This in turn makes the learners feel that they are unequal to their peers, which requires the teacher to provide continuous motivation for these learners.

To conclude, the results obtained from this study provided interesting insights regarding the teaching of writing to EFL learners through the Competency-Based Approach framework in heterogeneous classrooms. It highlighted the advantages of collaborative writing and

remedial sessions in building the learners' writing competencies, social skills and confidence. This study demonstrated the constraints of evaluation faced by teachers in mixed-ability classes and the suggestions to create better learning environments for realizing the best results as far as heterogeneous classes are concerned. To this regard, a great work is still to be done to make the implementation of CBA as fruitful as expected and to make the conditions of the learning process more favorable. It would be very considerate if future studies focus more on the way mixed-ability classes are taught, by showing methods and strategies that each teacher should undertake for establishing a better learning environment.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Learners' Written Expressions Samples

##### Copy Number 01

History shows that civilizations began, flourished and then declined, but sometimes disappeared without traces.

The Babylon located in Mesopotamia and they became a major military power under Amorite King Hammurabi, who ruled from 1792 to 1750 B.C. Then Babylon was also famous for its gardens, places, towers, and artwork. Also, King Hammurabi established the first written law that was recorded on clay tablets and tall pillars of stones called steles. The Babylon was the capital city of Babylonia in Mesopotamia.



The world has known many civilizations  
one of them is: Babylon civilization its  
found around 2300 B.C in Mesopotamia.

The city of Babilonia was located in  
Ephrates river in present-day IRAK.

The Babylonians the first to use sail for  
propelling their ships and boats. They were  
also famous for their gardens, palaces, towers  
and art work.

This civilization ~~was~~<sup>has</sup> collapse now. because  
of wars, natural disasters, etc.



History shows that civilizations  
flow rished but sometimes disappeared  
without traces.

The Babylon located in  
Mesopotamia and they become a major  
military power.

Babylon was also famous for its  
gardens, places, towers, and artwork.

and it's the capital city of Babylonia  
in Mesopotamia and established  
the first written language that was  
recorded on clay tablets and tall  
pultan of stone called stelae.

\* The world has known 26 or 27 civilizations so far, one of these civilizations is the Babylon Civilization.

\* It started in Mesopotamia, The King of Babylon was Hammurabi, this kingdom was famous for its gardens, places, towers and artwork.

\* The Babylonians developed new concepts in architecture like arch and dome, as well as The Tower of Babylon located along Euphrates River in present day IRAQ, they had to found around 2300 B.C by the ancient Akkadian-speaking people of southern Mesopotamia.

\* The Babylon Civilization gradually collapsed due to wars and many other problems.



### Copy Number 05

~~the pollution is important for south because fresh  
air from  $CO_2$  (and) absorption and  $O_2$  generation the  
pollution of the water is important by people's because  
will die the stabilisation of soil & erosion control~~

### Copy Number 06

Air pollution is made up of many kinds  
of gases and particles that reduce the quality  
of clean air in both the city and the  
countryside at first, the air planes is  
pollute the air by the carbon, as well as from  
smoke from wood and crop fires to the trees  
fumes. Besides fumes of cars & cars  
pois on the air with carbon dioxide  
in addition has been read.

### Copy Number 07

~~Pollution is not a natural it is man, it has many  
causes at first, people, through the rubbish cube  
as well as factories are gases into the air Besides,  
industries poison our air.~~

result of pollution

Pollution is the introduction of pollutants into the natural environment causing damage to them and causing disturbance to the ecosystem.

Also, pollution is in danger an environmental because pollution is like a human and the pollution animal and it is damaged and global warming and the pollution is like a human and causing disturbance of the ecosystem.

you can use to protect in pollution you should do not throw dirt about you should plant trees and Radio Car use.

## Appendix B

### Correction of the "Babylonian Civilization" Samples

#### Copy Number 01

The world has known many civilizations  
one of them is: <sup>the</sup> Babylon civilization its <sup>B</sup> <sup>It was</sup>  
found around 2300 B.C in Mesopotamia <sup>•</sup>  
<sup>founded</sup>  
The city of Babilonia was located in  
Euphrates River in present-day IRAK. <sup>d</sup>  
The Babylonians <sup>were</sup> the first to use sail for  
propelling their ships and boats. They were  
also famous for <sup>their</sup> gardens, palaces, towers  
and art work.  
This civilization <sup>was</sup> ~~collapse~~ <sup>now</sup> because  
of wars, natural disasters, etc. <sup>natural disasters</sup>



History shows that civilizations began, flourished and then declined but sometimes disappeared without traces.

The Babylon <sup>was</sup> located in Mesopotamia and they became a major military power under the great king Hammurabi, who ruled from 1792 to 1750 B.C. Then Babylon was also famous for its gardens, palaces, towers, and artwork. Also, King Hammurabi established the first written law that was recorded on clay tablets and tall pillars of stones called steles. The Babylon was the capital city of Babylonia in Mesopotamia.

Unfortunately, Babylon <sup>the first</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>lost</sup> and it ~~became~~ <sup>is</sup> no longer one of the oldest civilizations on earth.  
1. ~~King~~ <sup>was</sup> located

History shows that civilizations  
flow rished but sometimes disappeared  
without traces.

The Babylon located in  
Mesopotamia and they become a major  
military power.

Babylon was also famous for its  
gardens, places, towers, and artwork.  
and it's the capital city of Babylonia  
in Mesopotamia and established  
the first written <sup>the Babylonian</sup> language that was  
recorded on clay tablets and tall  
cylinder of stone called stelae.

Finally, ~~this~~ AS all civilizations this great  
civilizations gradually collapsed due to the  
wars and other problems.

## Appendix C

### Correction of "Pollution" Samples

#### Copy Number 01

Pollution is a global phenomena which causes damage to an environment, to nature and to the ecosystem.

Pollution is endangering the planet because of the spread of diseases that threaten humans, poisons that kill animals. We can protect the environment from the danger of the pollution by avoiding throwing dirt like plastic, reduce the use of cars and planting trees.

Protecting the environment from pollution is very important and it is the duty of every person.

#### Copy Number 02

Pollution is harmful for the environment and for the health of humans and animals. This is why we should protect the environment from it.

People are obliged to protect the environment to live a healthy life and to protect it we must reduce the production of  $\text{CO}_2$  by not using cars and help produce  $\text{O}_2$  by planting trees and not throwing dirt and plastic in soil and water.

Finally protecting the environment is the obligation of everyone on the planet.



**Appendix D**

**Appendix D**

**The Teachers' Questionnaire**

The following questionnaire is as an attempt to gather data about the difficulties teachers face regarding the teaching of written expression in heterogeneous classrooms using the Competency-Based Approach. As it aims to unveil the classroom management problems and evaluation constraints faced by teachers. We would be very grateful if you answer these questions .All information that is collected in this study will be treated confidentially. Thank you for your cooperation.

**I. The teachers' opinions about the Competency-Based Approach.**

1. Are you familiar with the Competency-Based Approach?

Yes

No

2. What do you think about the Competency-Based Approach?

a. It is not an adequate approach.

b. It is not applied appropriately by teachers.

c. Teachers are not well informed about the competency-based approach.

d. Teachers are only using new course books, and not really applying the competency-based approach.

Other opinions

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

3. Do you use the Competency-Based Approach while teaching?

Yes

No

4. Do you believe that a teacher could be using the Competency-Based Approach without being aware of it?

a. Yes

b. Sure

c. No

d. I don't know

**II. Dealing with heterogeneous classes when teaching written expression.**

5. Do you think that your classroom is a heterogeneous one?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

6. If yes, how did you come to the conclusion that your class is heterogeneous?

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

7. As a teacher, do you take into consideration the differences between your students' levels and abilities?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Do you plan your lessons and activities to cope with the differences of your learners' competencies?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

9. Do you think that your program of teaching writing is improving the students' levels?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If no, please explain why

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

10. When teaching the writing skills, do you immediately verify whether your students have assimilated the current skill or do you move directly to the next skill?

- a. Yes, I verify
- b. No, I move directly to the next skill

11. Is collaborative writing included in your program of teaching writing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12. If yes, do you agree that implementing collaborative writing results effective learning outcomes?

- a. I strongly agree
- b. I agree
- c. I am neutral
- d. I disagree
- e. I strongly disagree

13. Do you find difficulties in pairing and grouping students?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

14. Do you take your students' preferences into consideration?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

**III. Dealing with the correction and evaluation of written expression.**

15. Do you use remedial and correction sessions for your students?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes

16. If yes, have you noticed any progress after each remedial session?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If no, can you explain why?

.....  
.....

.....  
.....

17. What do you focus on when correcting students' writing?

- a. The format
- b. The content
- c. Both

Please explain why

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

18. Do you face difficulties when you evaluate your students?

- a. Sometimes
- b. Always
- c. Not at all

If yes, please state some of the difficulties you face

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

19. In your opinion, do you think you could realize a homogeneous level in your heterogeneous class?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. If yes, what strategies do you use?

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