

Writing Instruction under the Competency-Based Approach in Algerian Secondary Schools Traditions Realities and Perspectives

Received: 02/10/2019 ; Accepted: 04/04/2020

Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the teachers' views on the teaching of writing within the scope of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) at second year secondary school level, and more importantly at bringing into view the teaching realities and classroom practices, with the intent to negotiate and hopefully scheme the quest for rendering writing instruction more effective. Assuming that effective writing instruction under the CBA partly results from teachers' awareness and consideration of the principles of the subject approach in the process of teaching writing, a questionnaire has been designed and administered to eighty-three secondary school teachers of English in Jijel. The results denoted the existence of some incongruity between the teachers' views and their classroom practices, making the teaching of writing a rule of thumb activity.

Keywords: Writing instruction; Competency-Based Approach; Teachers' views; Teachers' practices.

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Résumé

La présente étude vise à examiner les points de vue des enseignants sur l'enseignement de l'expression écrite dans le cadre de l'approche par compétences (APC) au niveau de la deuxième année secondaire, et aussi à mettre en évidence les réalités de l'enseignement et les pratiques de classe, dans le but de rendre l'enseignement de l'expression écrite plus efficace. En se basant sur la supposition que l'enseignement efficace de l'expression écrite résulte en partie de la prise de conscience des enseignants et de la prise en considération des principes de l'APC dans le processus d'enseignement de l'expression écrite, un questionnaire a été conçu et distribué à quatre-vingt-trois enseignants d'anglais du secondaire de la wilaya de Jijel. Les résultats ont révélé l'existence d'une certaine incongruité entre les points de vue des enseignants et leurs pratiques de classe, faisant de l'enseignement de l'expression écrite une activité pas totalement compatible avec les principes de l'APC.

Mots clés: Enseignement de l'expression écrite ; Approche par compétences; Points de vue des enseignants; Pratiques des enseignants.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في وجهات نظر الأساتذة حول تدريس التعبير الكتابي ضمن إطار منهجية المقاربة بالكفاءات لمستوى السنة الثانية من الطور الثانوي وكذا إظهار واقع التدريس وممارسات الأساتذة، بهدف وضع مقترحات من شأنها جعل تدريس التعبير الكتابي أكثر نجاعة وفعالية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على افتراض أن تدريس التعبير الكتابي الفعال ناتج عن وعي الأساتذة و مراعاتهم لمبادئ منهج المقاربة بالكفاءات في عملية تدريس التعبير الكتابي. في هذا الإطار، تم تصميم استبيان و توزيعه على ثلاثة وثمانين أستاذاً للغة الإنجليزية في الطور الثانوي بولاية جيجل. تدل النتائج على وجود بعض التناقض بين آراء الأساتذة وممارساتهم، مما يجعل تدريس التعبير الكتابي ممارسة لا تتوافق كلياً مع مبادئ المقاربة بالكفاءات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس التعبير الكتابي؛ منهجية المقاربة بالكفاءات؛ آراء الأساتذة؛ ممارسات الأساتذة.

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Introduction

Writing has always been a key component in teaching and learning a foreign language. Henceforth, developing an ever-improving competence in writing has shaped the concern of educators, teachers, and learners alike. Given its importance, the mastery of the writing competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) has implicated field practitioners into questioning the efficacy of writing instruction.

In the Algerian educational context, teaching English in secondary school level is action-oriented and has seemingly been refocused onto what learners can actually do with the language, rather than what they know about it. This implies putting learners in integration situations leaned towards problem solving and concretizing their knowledge and skills into measurable and evaluable productive outcomes.

Owing to the researcher's personal experience in teaching English in secondary schools, a deficiency as to the appropriate methodology to be adopted for teaching writing within the CBA scope was palpable. Moreover, having spent five years of writing instruction in English, pupils were unable to display their ability to produce written instances of the target language, nor did they succeed in using it for appropriate functioning in society.

The present article aims at exploring EFL secondary school teachers' views on the teaching of writing within the framework of the CBA and comes as an attempt to investigate the reasons behind such problematic situation; it hopefully seeks to question teachers' minds with regard to their conceptions of writing instruction in a CBA classroom and their practices. It puts forward the correspondence and correlation of the teaching realities and classroom practices to the CBA principles, as a rethinking of the efficacy of writing instruction in secondary school level in Algeria.

The present study, then, addresses the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do secondary school teachers of English hold towards the teaching of writing?
2. Are secondary school teachers of English knowledgeable enough about the principles of the CBA and its implementation?
3. Are secondary school teachers of English knowledgeable enough about the teaching of writing under the CBA?
4. Do teachers apply the CBA principles when teaching writing?
5. What are the different problems secondary school teachers of English encounter in the teaching of writing to second year secondary school pupils?

1. Literature Review

1.1. Teaching Writing in EFL: A review of the main approaches

The teaching of writing in EFL has always been to the core of any educational system and has seemingly witnessed successive changing flows and orientations which "...are more accurately seen as complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing." (Hyland, 2003, p.2). In this sense, a number of teaching approaches have long characterized and dominated foreign language teaching tradition of writing, resulting in the so called 'product', 'process', 'genre', and 'process-genre' approaches, each with its distinctive concern.

The product approach, as its name suggests, focuses on the final product of the act of composing and is concerned with issues relating to whether or not the product is readable, accurate, and more importantly whether it satisfies the different discourse conventions (Nunan, 1989; Yan, 2005; Brown, 2000). Within such orientation, products were measured against a set of criteria including content, organization,

vocabulary, grammar and mechanics such as spelling and punctuation (Brown, 2000). Advocates of such an approach viewed writing as a four-stage act consisting of familiarization, usually by teaching grammar and vocabulary through texts; controlled writing, by involving learners in the manipulation of fixed patterns; guided writing, by focusing on emulation of model texts; and free writing, in which learners reinvest previously-learned syntactic or discourse patterns to genuinely proceed to actual production (Hyland, 2003; Pincas, 1982; (as cited in Badger & White, 2000)).

It is as a reaction to the prevailing product-oriented writing methodology that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s a new fully-fledged pedagogy (Matsuda, 2003b; Susser, 1994; Yan, 2005) to emphasise writing as a process of developing organization as well as meaning (Matsuda, 2003a), as a process "...of helping students discover their own voice; of recognizing that students have something important to say; of allowing students to choose their own topic; of providing teacher and peer feedback; of encouraging revision; and of using student writing as the primary text of the course." (Matsuda, 2003b, p. 67). Matsuda (2003a) also explained that the use of invention strategies, multiple drafts, formative feedback by the teacher and by peers characterized process-oriented writing instruction. Put into practice, such an approach to writing instruction advocates the provision of a positive, motivating workshop environment, setting grounds to students to collaborate and work through their composing processes. Process writing teachers are supposed to make use of procedures (Susser, 1994) and additionally help students develop strategies needed to start generate ideas, to draft, to revise and to edit their drafts (Silva, 1994).

In the words of Hyland (2003),

...the process approach to writing teaching emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task. The numerous incarnations of this perspective are consistent in recognizing basic cognitive processes as central to writing activity and in stressing the need to develop students' abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, and propose and evaluate solutions (p. 10).

Different standpoints as to the stages making part of the whole process of writing are being reported in the literature, one of which is Hyland's (2003), consisting of the following stages:

- Selection of topic: by teacher and/or students
- Prewriting: brainstorming, collecting data, note taking, outlining, etc.
- Composing: getting ideas down on paper
- Response to draft: teacher/peers respond to ideas, organization, and style
- Revising: reorganizing, style, adjusting to readers, refining ideas
- Response to revisions: teacher/peers respond to ideas, organization, and style
- Proofreading and editing: checking and correcting form, layout, evidence, etc.
- Evaluation: teacher evaluates progress over the process
- Publishing: by class circulation or presentation, notice boards, Web site, etc.
- Follow-up tasks: to address weaknesses (Hyland, 2003, p. 11).

Susser (1994), Silva (1994), Tribble (2009), and Nordin and Mohammad (2017) identified the nature of the writing process as being non-linear, cyclical, recursive. It is also interactive, and potentially simultaneous, and productions can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised, in that writers will move backwards or forwards and revisit some of the writing stages of text composition they would view useful many times before a text is produced or is totally complete (Hyland, 2003). In the process-oriented classroom, writing is rather learnt, not taught, and the teacher guides students through the writing act, avoiding focus on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas. The teacher also facilitates writing skills practice, peer responses, and draws out the learners' potential (Raimes, 1992; (as cited in Hyland, 2003, p. 12); Nordin & Mohammad, 2017).

Dissatisfied with the process approach viewing the writing process as being identical for all writers irrespective of who wrote what, and deemphasizing the purpose for which writing is practised (Badger & White, 2000), the genre approach became popular in the 1980's, as it sees writing as a way to communicate with readers, to accomplish purposeful prose (Hyland, 2003). By genre, Hyland (2018) meant the following:

...the complex oral or written responses we make to the demands of a social context, and analysts set out to describe these responses. Like any productive concept, however, genre is not one, but several approaches, each one informed by a different view of what writing is and how it can best be taught (p. 2).

Relevant to the genre orientation is the work of Vygotsky (1978) of the view that optimal learning occurs when learners engage in tasks that are within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area between what they can do independently and what they can do with assistance. Henceforth, learning develops from verbal interaction and task negotiation with a more knowledgeable person, with the teacher scaffolding such a development. At earlier stages, direct instruction is prominent before students come to understand and reproduce the typical rhetorical patterns they need to express their meanings. Students, then, become more autonomous and the writing act is the outcome rather than an activity in itself (Hyland, 2003).

The genre orientation to writing instruction has been recapitulated by Hyland (2003) in the view of writing as a social activity concerned with the final product and emphasizing readers' expectations; it contextualizes writing for audience and purpose and makes textual conventions transparent.

Another approach which has come to be known as the process-genre approach to teaching writing was advanced by Badger and White (2000), incorporating insights from each of the previous orientations. It views writing as involving knowledge about the language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing (as in genre approaches), and skills in using language (as in process approaches). Such a view claims that writing development happens by drawing out the learners' potential (as in process approaches) and by providing input to which the learners respond (as in product and genre approaches) (Badger & White, 2000).

Yan (2005, pp. 21-22), explaining the putting into practice of this approach, summarized the teaching of writing as consisting of six steps:

- **Preparation**

The teacher first prepares students and introduces them to a situation that is supposed to define the genre required for a given written text. That way, students schemata would be activated and they will be able to preview the required structural features of this genre.

- **Modeling and reinforcing**

At that stage, the teacher introduces a model of the genre, and students are to determine the audience and the social purpose of the text. Then, the teacher, with students, discuss the structure and organization of the text used to reach the specific social purpose. Students can use other texts to reinforce their knowledge about the target genre.

- **Planning**

The aim of this step is to raise students' interest about the topic by activating their schemata via different meaningful activities such as brainstorming, discussing and reading the text.

- **Joint constructing**

This step is meant to prepare students for later independent composing. The teacher and the students work together and start writing a text through the use of processes of brainstorming, drafting and revising. Students provide ideas and the teacher writes the generated text. This final draft will serve as a model for students once they come to work on their own pieces of writing.

- **Independent constructing**

After having worked on model texts, students at this stage eventually come to compose their own text on a related topic. The teacher is to help them in the process of doing so. The writing assignment could be continued as homework.

- **Revising**

This is the step in which students' final drafts are subject to revision and editing, which could be done by the teacher or even by fellow students.

Owing to the previously cited elaborations, and given the challenging complexity of the nature of the writing activity and the diversity of the methodologies relevant to the teaching of writing, it would be worth examining, analyzing, and rethinking the best of each and make it fit the concern and demands of the teaching/learning situation, with the learner being the core of such a practice, for what we should be doing is not which single orientation to adopt, but how to include the best of each so as to guarantee optimal teaching and learning of writing to take place.

1.2. The Competency-Based Approach and the Teaching of Writing in Algeria

The CBA is a learner-centered approach to teaching that was introduced in Algeria under the educational reform movement launched in July 2002 by the Algerian Ministry of National Education, in collaboration with the PARE (Programme d'Appui de l' UNESCO à la Réforme du Système Educatif), after a period of rapid changes at the political, social, and economic levels around the world, with the aim of reinforcing and improving the quality of education. New programmes, syllabi, and textbooks have come to be elaborated by the National Commission of Educational Reform, and have come to shape the Algerian educational system. The reform of 2002 was, in fact, initiated as a challenging process covering three main axes: planning, training, and contents and methods. The Ministry of National Education revisited the three educational levels, namely, primary, middle, and secondary education, in terms of years of schooling and age conditions of access, resulting in a new educational framework with new curricula, syllabi and textbooks being elaborated with the fruitful joint contribution of the UNESCO and the BIEF (Bureau d' Ingenierie en Education et en Formation), under the leadership of the Algerian Ministry of National Education (Tawil, 2006).

In an attempt to trace back the CBA, Ameziane, Hami, and Louadj (2005) explained its communicative continuum:

...if the Competency-Based Approach expands on communicative approaches, it is in the sense that it seeks to make the attainment of objectives visible, i.e., concrete, through the realisation of projects in selected domains of instruction. It is all good to fix specific learning objectives, but this statement of objectives related to competencies will remain just a pious wish (as is the case in the traditional objective-based approaches) if the outcome is not visible and measurable (p. 17).

As such, the CBA is an extension of communicative approaches in that both aim at teaching language for communication, with the sole discrepancy that the former goes beyond objectives to make outcomes concrete, visible, and even successfully realized. The same perspective was advocated by Docking (1994), explaining the shift in focus from what students know about the language to what they can actually do with it, and highlighting the focus on competencies/learning outcomes as being to the core of curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting (1994, p.16; as cited in Wong, 2008, p. 181).

In a similar vein, Auerbach (1986, pp. 414-415) listed the features involved in the process of implementing competency-based programs in language teaching:

1. A focus on successful functioning in society: The goal is to enable students to become autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.
2. A focus on life skills: Rather than teaching language in isolation, competency-based language teaching teaches language as a function of communication about concrete tasks. Students are taught just those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function. These forms are determined by needs analysis ((Findley & Nathan, 1980; as cited in Auerbach, 1986, p. 414).
3. Task- or performance-centered orientation: What counts is what students can do as a result of instruction. The emphasis is on overt behaviors rather than on knowledge or the ability to talk about language and skills.
4. Modularized instruction: Language learning is broken down into manageable and immediately meaningful chunks (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1983; as cited in Auerbach, 1986, p. 415). Objectives are broken into narrowly focused sub-objectives so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress.
5. Outcomes which are made explicit a priori: Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioral objectives so that students know exactly what behaviors are expected of them.
6. Continuous and ongoing assessment: Students are pretested to determine what skills they lack and post-tested after instruction in that skill. If they do not achieve the desired level of mastery, they continue to work on the objective and are retested. Program evaluation is based on test results and, as such, is considered objectively quantifiable.
7. Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives: Rather than the traditional paper-and-pencil tests, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviors.
8. Individualized, student-centered instruction: In content, level, and pace, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs; prior learning and achievement are taken into account in developing curricula. Instruction is not time based; students progress at their own rates and concentrate on just those areas in which they lack competence (Auerbach, 1986, pp. 414-415).

Leaning towards the teaching of language in relation to the social situations in which it is always used as a medium of communication and interaction, the CBA is based on developing communicative competence consisting of smaller, correctly-assembled components (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The CBA is a cognitive approach emphasizing learners' cognitive activity and relating to Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives, a framework for classifying statements of expectations in terms of what students had learnt after instruction. Put differently, all educational objectives can be classified as 'cognitive' (to do with information), 'affective' (to do with attitudes, values and emotions), or 'psychomotor' (to do with bodily movements), and that cognitive objectives form a hierarchy by which the learner must achieve lower order objectives before s/he can achieve higher ones. This framework could be implemented to mobilise the knowledge and skills, gradually integrate them at higher order levels of thinking, apply them to new situations, and finally come to evaluate both the process and product of thinking. Given its socio-constructivist orientation, the CBA values the role of the teacher in facilitating the process of language acquisition through the development of appropriate learning strategies, in being a resource person to help learners who possibly meet with special difficulties in the route of developing/constructing by themselves their competencies through a process of classroom interaction, and more importantly in assessing, and providing feedback in order to bring the final touch to their performance (Ameziane, Hami, & Louadj, 2005).

Thus, central to the CBA is the development of competencies, considered by Lenoir and Jean (2012) as a social construct that could neither be observed, nor measured directly. Kouwenhoven (2003, p. 71) asserted that competency is "the capability to choose and use (apply) an integrated combination of knowledge, skills and

attitudes with the intention to realise a task in a certain context, while personal characteristics such as motivation, self-confidence, willpower are part of that context.”

Henceforth, a number of elements constituting a competency have been identified by Jonnaert (2014). Firstly, a competency is always related to a given situation. Fields of experiences of a person or a group of people implicated in the treatment of such a situation do determine the development of a competency; such experiences include people’s knowledge. Moreover, the development of such a competency is based upon the mobilization and coordination of a person or a group of persons’ resources. It is only in case of achieved, successful, and socially acceptable treatment of a situation that a competency is said to be developed. Additionally, a competency is the result of a complex process of the treatment of a more or less circumscribed situation; competency is not such process; process is rather the treatment of the situation. A competency is not predictable and could not, then, be defined a priori; it depends on the actions of a person or a group of persons, on their proper knowledge, on their comprehension of the situation, on their views on what they can do in such a situation, on the resources they have, on the difficulties they encounter in the treatment of the situation, on their experiences, etc (Jonnaert, 2014).

A competency, then, calls for the spontaneous mobilisation of resources (Peysser, Gerard, & Roegiers, 2006), be they abilities, knowledge, know-how skills, etc. As explained by Roegiers (1999), it is outcome oriented in that it has a social function, and is linked to a family situation, which in turn relates to the variety of situations. It is disciplinary in that it is defined through a given category of situations, corresponding to specific problems within the same discipline; it is evaluable given the fact that it measures the quality of task performance and outcome (Roegiers, 1999).

Within the scope of the CBA, learners should actively and consciously participate in the process leading them to autonomy. They should monitor their learning by developing self-assessment skills in relation to the target competencies. For successful mastery of such competencies, learners need to develop a repertoire of learning strategies to be implemented for communication purposes, and to be able to transfer their previous knowledge and apply their skills out of the classroom setting successfully (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). They engage in peer interaction and find diverse ways to perform the tasks using their knowledge and resources and, finally, proceed to evaluating their own learning. Interestingly, learners learn to learn and will have to share, exchange, and cooperate with others to be able to solve problems they may encounter (Document d’Accompagnement du Programme d’Anglais de Première Année Secondaire, 2005, pp. 11-12).

In a CBA classroom, the teacher plays multiple roles. Above all, the teacher is a needs analyst whose role is of paramount importance in considering learners’ needs in the choice of competencies. Teachers also guide learners and help them use appropriate learning strategies to be able to cope with the requirements of the target situation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). They should interact with the learners and guide them towards the mastery of such strategies. Teachers, then, facilitate, guide, assist, counsel, co-learn, and evaluate. Hence, their attitude becomes less authoritative in that it puts forward negotiation and considers learners’ styles, preoccupations, and problems. Teachers should also target learners’ autonomy in learning and may, if only needed, practice one-to-one teaching (Document d’Accompagnement du Programme d’Anglais de Première Année Secondaire, 2005, p. 11).

With a particular reference to teaching English, the CBA aims at developing the three basic competencies: the interactive competency, relating to the ability to use the target language orally for the sake of interacting with others, the interpretive competency, concerned with the ability to comprehend written or spoken language and to adequately interpret it, and the productive competency, which is the ability to generate relevant and coherent texts or messages be they spoken or written. In a nutshell, teaching English is to help the Algerian society integrate harmoniously in

modernity, by sharing and exchanging ideas and scientific, cultural, and civilisational experiences (Document d'Accompagnement du Programme d'Anglais de Première Année Secondaire, 2005). The teaching of writing, within such flow of thought, goes beyond the mere mastery of rules of usage to develop learners' metacognitive awareness about the different processes involved in doing writing tasks, and knowledge of the varied strategies to be implemented for efficacy of the writing act. As explained by Ameziane, Hami, and Louadji (2005), learners should always be asked to write with a purpose in mind and the writing tasks should target the product as much as the process (Ameziane et al., 2005).

Given its socio-cognitive nature, writing is concerned with language, skills, context, purpose, and audiences (Hyland, 2003). Writing under the CBA should be practised with the concern of helping learners consolidate previously learnt items to produce written messages using written discourse that corresponds to the given communication situation, and more importantly with respect to the basic principles of the CBA. This will hopefully pave the way for the mastery of the language writing competence for communication purposes and for appropriate functioning in society (Document d'Accompagnement du Programme d'Anglais de Première Année Secondaire, 2005).

Relevant to such thread is the mid-stand position of synthesizing the varied writing methodologies, and making use of the best of each to fully understand writing and learning to write. This was echoed by Hyland (2003), who argued for the cause maintaining that teachers need to be concerned with multiplying opportunities for students' experiences of texts and reader expectations, as well as with providing them with an understanding of writing processes, language forms, and genres. Hence, incorporating and extending relevant insights of the main orientations (Hyland, 2003) in relation to the demands of the teaching/learning situations and with consideration of both the basic principles of the CBA and of the aim of ensuring complete mastery of the writing competence displayed after successful mobilisation of the necessary resources in the target integration situation is by and large the magic formula for successful teaching and learning of writing under the CBA.

2. The Study

Given its descriptive delineation, this study attempts to elicit teachers' opinions and views with regard to the teaching of writing under the CBA in secondary school level in Algeria. As one of the widely used elicitation techniques, the questionnaire stood to be of particular relevance; it was administered to all (114) secondary school teachers of English in Jijel, Algeria, with the intent to address the total target population and get a much broader view. 83 teachers were involved in the study as the remaining 32 teachers did not return their questionnaire copies. The administration phase started on February 28th, 2019 and copies were handed back by the end of March, 2019.

The questionnaire consisted of 36 open-ended and closed questions organized into five sections: general information relating to teachers' academic degrees, teaching experiences and everyday teaching conditions, teachers' views on the writing skill and its teaching, teachers' views on the CBA and its implementation in the Algerian context, teachers' views on the teaching of writing under the CBA and further suggestions.

3. Findings and Discussion

The results of the study are to be reported and discussed with respect to the sections as organized in the questionnaire.

3.1. General Information

The findings of the first section revealed that only 31.3% of the teachers have graduated from the Training School of Teachers; these are supposed to have spent five years of theoretical courses including one year practical training to be well-prepared and equipped to teach English at secondary school level. 66.2% of the teachers have spent teaching English for a period ranging between 1 to 10 years, while the remaining 33.8% have been teaching English for more than 10 years. This directly points to the fact that not all of the participants are really experienced in teaching English. The findings also suggest that the teaching conditions as to class size are not favourable in that 75.9% of the classrooms consist of more than 25 pupils, resulting in classes with a few pupils with excellent writing abilities, a few pupils with good writing abilities, some with average writing abilities, many pupils with poor writing abilities, and also many with very poor writing skills, as displayed in the table below:

Table 1
Teachers' Estimations of Pupils' Writing Abilities.

Options	Pupils with excellent writing abilities	Pupils with good writing abilities	Pupils with average writing abilities	Pupils with poor writing abilities	Pupils with very poor writing abilities
All	0%	0%	2,4%	2,4%	1,2%
Many	2,4%	3,6%	18,1%	71,1%	37,4%
Some	3,6%	39,8%	56,6%	10,9%	36,1%
A few	60,3%	42,2%	12,1%	8,4%	15,7%
None	27,7%	6,0%	2,4%	0%	4,8%
Total	94,0%	91,6%	91,6%	92,8%	95,2%
No answer	6,0%	8,4%	8,4%	7,2%	4,8%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

3.2. Teachers' Views on the Writing Skill and its Teaching

From the teachers' responses to the questions in section two, a considerable number of teachers (91.6%) held a positive attitude and view the writing skill as being central to learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, 57.8% of them considered the act of writing as entailing knowledge about how to write while 30.1% of the participants viewed writing as knowing how to write for the purpose of learning (writing for learning). Additionally, a small number of teachers (28.9%) claimed that the major focus of writing should relate to grammatical accuracy, vocabulary building, mechanics, appropriateness of ideas, unity, coherence, cohesion and genre. With regard to the aim of the writing instruction, the teachers had very different opinions in that only 10.8% claimed the aim was to help the pupils enlarge their knowledge about a given topic/genre, to make the pupils engage in the writing activity, to help them learn grammar rules and correctness, to enable them learn vocabulary skills, correct spelling and punctuation, to enable the pupils to link ideas appropriately, and write using appropriate format/layout. Interestingly, from the analysis of the teachers' responses to the question meant for eliciting information on the most successful approach to writing instruction, more than half of the population (57.8%) qualified the process approach as

being the most successful one. A proportion of 14.5% opted for the process-genre approach, 12% of them for the genre approach, and 10.8% considered the product approach as the best one to adopt in teaching writing.

3.3. Teachers' Views on the CBA and its Implementation in the Algerian Context

The results of the seven questions making this section seemingly suggested that secondary school teachers of English are knowledgeable about the CBA and its implementation. As noticed from the teachers' responses, a percentage of 60.2% of the teachers estimated their knowledge about the CBA as being sufficient, and this is confirmed from the findings of the remaining questions, relating to the principles and aims of the subject approach and its role in improving pupils' achievements. For example, a considerable number of teachers (90.4%, 66.2%, 89.2%, 96.4%, 93.9%, 89.2%, 90.4%, and 89.1% respectively) agreed with the suggested statements relating to promoting learners' autonomy, outcome explicitness, diversity of teachers roles, implementation of diagnostic evaluation, cooperation, collaboration, and continuous assessment, learners centeredness, and resources mobilization and skills integration for successful functioning in society.

As to the teaching realities, almost all of the teachers (90.4%) reported their dissatisfaction with the teaching/learning conditions and went further to qualify them as being unfavourable to CBA implementation mostly because of the unavailability of communication technology resource materials, the insufficiency of the time devoted to teaching English, the very large class size, and the absence or lack of teacher training programmes. Surprisingly, the teachers' responses appear to result in contradiction in that 74.7% of the teachers claimed that the CBA has moderately succeeded in improving pupils' achievements. This can but point to the reality that though dissatisfying such an approach may seem to be for the teachers, it has a better prognosis than previous approaches to teaching EFL.

3.4. Teachers' Views on the Teaching of Writing under the CBA

A. Writing Materials

This sub-section includes seven questions. The results show that 50.6% of the teachers considered the second year syllabus of English significantly helpful in developing the learners' writing abilities. 44.6% of them claimed that the second year syllabus of English moderately helps develop learners' writing abilities. 51.8% of them viewed the writing component as being appropriately and sufficiently covered in a significant way in the second year secondary school textbook while 42.2% of the respondents claimed it was done moderately.

Table 2

Correlation of Teachers' Views on the Syllabus Efficacy and Writing Component Coverage in the Textbook.

	Efficacy of the syllabus in developing learners' writing abilities	Appropriate and sufficient coverage of the writing component
Extremely	2,4%	2,4%
Significantly	50,6%	51,8%
Moderately	44,6%	42,2%
Not at all	1,2%	1,2%
No answer	1,2%	2,4%
Total	100%	100%

Even though there exists some kind of satisfaction with the writing materials at least for half of the population (see table 2), 78.3% acknowledged they sometimes practised textbook adaptation because the activities were beyond pupils' level of ability (7.5%), because the activities were not interesting to pupils (18.75%), because the activities did not match to the students' needs and academic expectations (10%), or even because of these three reasons (16.25%). Table 3 displays the findings in numerical data:

Table 3
Correlation of the Teachers' Adaptation Practices and Use of Alternative Materials.

	Frequency of textbook adaptation practices	Teachers' use of alternative materials for teaching writing
Always	10,9%	12,1%
Sometimes	78,3%	61,4%
Rarely	7,2%	19,3%
Never	1,2%	4,8%
No answer	2,4%	2,4%
Total	100%	100%

Additionally, more than half of the population sometimes resorted to alternative materials for teaching writing such as authentic materials (40.2%), ready-made ones (26%) from the internet, or both of them (23.4%).

B. Teaching Methodology

In an attempt to summarise the different classroom practices of writing instruction, the following table illustrates some of the most frequent and least frequent ones in relation to teaching writing.

Table 4
Frequency of Classroom Practices of Writing Instruction.

The most frequent classroom practices	Percentage	The least frequent classroom practices	Percentage
Teachers act as a guide, encourage pupils, and provide positive constructive suggestions on what has been written.	89.1%	Teachers ask pupils to revise each other's first drafts.	35%
Teachers engage pupils in different meaningful activities (brainstorming, discussing, reading the text).	86.8%	Teachers ask pupils to proofread and edit each other's final drafts.	30.1%
Teachers help pupils when writing their own texts and check their progress.	86.8%	Teachers ask pupils to provide their peers with feedback on their texts.	30.1%
Teachers ask pupils to revise their first drafts.	73.5%	Teachers ask pupils to assess, correct, and score their own written productions.	16.9%
Teachers introduce the project at the start of each unit.	91.6%	Teachers ask pupils to assess, correct, and score each other's written productions.	18.1%

Teachers ask pupils to present their written projects in class.	80.7%
Teachers correct pupils' projects and give a score.	84.3%

As table 4 partly demonstrates, a considerable proportion of the teachers (89.1%) claimed they regularly acted as a guide, they encouraged pupils, and they provided positive constructive suggestions on what has been written. Such classroom practices can but directly point to the process-genre orientation, as explained by Yan (2005). Of the most frequently practised activities in relation to writing are pupils' engagement in activities such as brainstorming, discussing and reading of written texts (86.8%), in helping pupils generate texts, checking their progress (86.8%), in encouraging self-revision of drafts (73.5%), and in introducing, presenting, and correcting pupils' written projects (91.6%). Moreover, involving the pupils in class presentations of written projects (80.7%) and correcting them (84.3%) were also widely practised. However, peer review and editing of final drafts and peer feedback on and assessment of pupils' written products were not widely practised.

Though knowledgeable they may be about the CBA principles, and having reported views on the process approach as the most successful one to writing instruction, the teachers do not really seem to put pupils in situations where they are supposed to invite peers for collaborative class work. This can but implicitly reflect the teachers' limited knowledge about process-oriented and process-genre pedagogies advocating the importance of peer response in the writing act.

Furthermore, the results also suggest that learners' needs and interests were to some extent (69.8%) being considered in choosing writing topics. More than half of the population (69.9%) claimed they engaged learners in implementing various writing strategies. The findings also reveal that skills integration was sometimes practised in the writing class, but with changing degrees (45.8% of the teachers sometimes integrated other skills in the writing class while 43.4% did it more regularly). Moreover, a proportion of 63.9% claimed that pupils' writing abilities were being evaluated at the start of the school year, a practice that seemingly approves the teachers' views, concerned with implementing diagnostic evaluation, which is by and large, as elaborated in the Accompanying Document (2005), one of the main considerations of the CBA. In addition, self-proofreading and editing of pupils' drafts and teachers' feedback were not all the time practised in the writing class (only 47% and of the teachers). Henceforth, noticeable is the reality that teachers do not take into consideration all the principles of the CBA in teaching their pupils the writing skill.

The results obtained from the teachers' answers clearly indicate again that the teachers are not knowledgeable enough about the characteristics of the process and the process-genre approaches to writing instruction and their role in teaching writing under the CBA in that only 9.6% of them explained that the major focus of writing should be the processes and strategies involved in production while 22.9% claimed the major focus of writing should be both the final written product and the different processes involved in production. As to feedback, the results suggest that 27.7% of the teachers used verbal comments, written comments, and marks, all being provided by the teachers themselves. Only a proportion of 2.4% of the teachers used teacher-student conferencing as part of the class feedback. This implies that the pupils are not really involved in such a process and that peer feedback is not much solicited. In addition, a percentage of 48.2% of teachers asserted they implemented classroom debates as a tool to evaluate writing in class while only 4.8% and 3.6% of them used the portfolio and the reflective journal respectively to evaluate writing, which means that the teachers are not really well informed about the relevance and importance of these in teaching writing under the CBA.

C. Problems and Solutions

The results obtained from the teachers' answers to the questions indicate that writing instruction under the CBA in Algeria stands to cause problems to most if not all teachers. 69.9% of the teachers reported they had moderately succeeded in teaching writing in their classes and this is confirmed from their responses, indicating that 97.6% of them encountered difficulties in teaching their pupils writing, and that such difficulties mostly related to pupils low level of ability (37.1%), to both pupils' poor writing abilities and the difficulty of the writing activities (18.5%), and to both textbook implementation and pupils' low levels of ability (17.3%).

As to tentative strategies for effective teaching of writing, the teachers stand to be of different opinions. The majority of the teachers claimed that among these were the following:

- Brainstorming topics, mind mapping, journal writing, free writing, outlining, reviewing and editing
 - Stimulating creativity in writing; encouraging reading, conversation and dialogues to master language forms, as these pave the way for writing
 - Providing samples of written texts
 - Using debates to discuss writing topics
 - Continuously evaluating pupils' productions
 - Using group work writing activities; using the four square writing method
- With reference to the teachers' views on how to improve pupils' writing performances, the following answers have been mostly recorded and seem to be noteworthy:
- More practice of writing should be the concern of both teachers and pupils alike.
 - Writing should be practised in a way as to develop critical thinking skills.
 - Writing should be an interactive, not a static process comprising both the teacher and the learner.
 - Teaching writing should be approached as a step by step process.
 - Pupils should be encouraged to express their ideas freely.
 - Pupils should be involved in selecting topics for the writing act, and these should be chosen/ discussed with consideration of pupils' needs, interests, and life expectations.
 - Motivating pupils to write is a key element to improve writing performance
 - Reading and summarizing help develop pupils' writing potential.
 - Exposing pupils to different genres is likely to promote writing development.
 - Writing cooperatively has shown to be effective as a writing strategy.
 - Reducing class size helps make supervision of the writing act possible and more lucrative.
 - Remedial work sessions should be programmed regularly within the same unit.
 - Textbooks should be designed with consideration of learners' needs.
 - Given its importance, the teaching of writing should be attributed more time and effort on the part of both teachers and pupils.
 - Improving pupils' cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, etc) helps make learners regulate their own learning and make it more conducive to writing development.
 - Practising topic sentences, thesis statements, etc, and the different rhetorical patterns of writing empowers learners' writing creativity.
 - Peer assessment and self-assessment should be solicited.
 - Integrating skills and making pupils aware of the necessity to write for an audience for real purpose.
 - Writing materials should be authentic and should relate to pupils' social life.
 - Giving pupils written homework in the form of integration situations for problem solving.

The overall findings of the study demonstrate that the teaching of writing in Algerian secondary schools knows some malfunction and discontentment. At first glance, secondary school teachers stand to hold positive attitudes towards the teaching of writing in that the majority argued for its centrality to teaching English as a foreign

language. Moreover, though not enough knowledgeable about the process and process-genre traditions to writing instruction, the teachers pleaded in favour of these as the most successful orientations to writing instruction. Similarly, the results denoted the teachers' awareness of the CBA tenets, namely, learner-centeredness, outcome-orientation, promoting learners' autonomy, diversity and non-centrality of teachers' roles, implementation of diagnostic evaluation, cooperation, collaboration, continuous assessment, resources mobilization, and skills integration for successful functioning in society.

However, the teachers have acknowledged the existence of some problems in relation to class size, syllabi and textbook implementation, unavailability of materials, and absence of any teacher training framework to help qualify teachers for the difficult task of teaching writing. As to the teaching realities, these do not seem to be congruent with what theory spells. Put differently, teachers do work in conformity with the CBA principles but not to its fullest end: they do not encourage pupils to practise self and peer-assessment, peer revision and editing of drafts, peer feedback, or even to implement portfolios as a medium to assess or to learn the art of composing. Additionally, the teachers reported their dissatisfaction with the writing component of the second year secondary school textbook 'Getting Through' and argued in favour of adapting some activities and units. Almost all of the teachers viewed the teaching of writing as being problematic for them and a considerable number of the teachers went further to acknowledge their failure in teaching their pupils writing.

Conclusion

Owing to all these findings, it is very noticeable that the current reality of teaching writing in second year secondary school level in Algeria is somehow defective and requires rethinking as to the basic conceptions underlying both writing instruction and the CBA. On the one hand, teachers seem to be lacking knowledge of the basic teaching traditions of writing and their putting into practice. Needed is, then, to programme training courses, seminars, and workshops for teachers on the different approaches to teaching writing, in hope to inspire their teaching practices and make them in the route for efficiency, for the implementation of the approach in itself is still causing trouble and ambiguity to field practitioners, and because teaching writing necessitates being eclectic by selecting what suits whom for what purpose.

Furthermore, teachers need to extensively incite pupils to practise writing, for this familiarizes them with the act of composing and promotes their creativity. More importantly, the educational authorities need to periodically engage in textbook and syllabi design, revision, adaptation, and renewal projects, with the active participation of in-service teachers and required consideration of learners' needs.

In summary, and in an attempt to offer alternative solutions to such false-trail reality, it but is crucial to interrogate our know-how to do for the ultimate goal of developing the writing competence in EFL. This demands willingness, deployment, and commitment on the part of both teachers and learners who, in the process of so doing, fall victims of despondency due to the false-trailing of theory and practice of writing instruction in the CBA classrooms.

For that, and with particular reference to writing instruction at secondary school level, eminent but also very relevant is what Raimes (1991, p. 407) called '*emerging traditions reflecting shared recognitions*'. Such emerging traditions do not necessitate resorting to any unique teaching tradition of writing in its own, nor do they corroborate the supremacy of any in writing instruction. Rather, they implicate conventional knowledge of the how, the how often, the where, the when, the who, and the whom to teach writing to. Venturing into the scrutiny of these with the intent to master the writing competence regardless of the teaching orientation will by all means empower the writing activity and make it an enjoyable experience.

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