Students' attitudes towards the integrated approach to writing instruction

مو اقف الطلاب تجاه المقاربة المتكاملة لتعليم الكتابة

Attitudes des étudiants à l'égard de l'approche intégrée de l'enseignement de l'écriture

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ملخص

هدف هذه الدراسة هو تقديم إستراتيجية عملية لأساتذة التعبير الكتابي عبر تدريس طلبة اللغة الأجنبية باستخدام أنواع مختلفة من المقاربات لتعزيز إنتاجهم الكتابي: المقاربة المتكاملة. المقاربة المتكاملة هي تركيب من العناصر الخاصة بكل من الأسلوب القائم على المنتج والأسلوب القائم على العملية والأسلوب القائم على النوع الأدبي مجتمعين مع بعض. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة آراء الطلاب تجاه المقاربة المتكاملة لتدريس الكتابة، وذلك بالنسبة لطلاب السنة الثانية تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة العليا للأساتذة بالأغواط للسنة الجامعية 22.21 بتعداد 48 طالب. كما تهدف الدراسة الحالية، وبناءً على آراء ومدى وعي الطلاب، إلى وصف وتأكيد التأثير الإيجابي للمقاربة المتكاملة على أداء الطلاب في الكتابة بنسبة 92 %. بناء على تحليل ونقد البيانات المحصل عليها من خلال الاستبيان، تم الوصول إلى استنتاجات إيجابية تؤكد أن الأساتذة الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يمكنهم اعتمادا المقاربة المتكاملة كإستراتيجية موثوق بها لمساعدة طلبتهم على أن يصبحوا كتاب ماهرين في اللغة الانجليزية. هذه النتائج تقترح المقاربة المتكاملة كإستراتيجية فعالة لتحسين مهارات الكتابة في التعليم العالي.

الكلمات الدالة: المقاربة المتكاملة؛ مهارات الكتابة؛ أداء كتابي؛ الأسلوب القائم على المنتج؛ الأسلوب القائم على العملية؛ الأسلوب القائم على النوع

Abstract

This study aims to suggest to teachers of writing a practical strategy through which EFL students are taught using different types of approaches to enhance their writing production: the Integrated Approach. The integrated approach is a combination of elements of the product, process, and genre-based approaches altogether. The present study investigates students' attitudes towards the integrated approach to writing instruction of 2nd-year students of English at ENS Laghouat during the academic year 21-22. This study, based on students' attitudes and perceptions, aims to describe and confirm the ameliorative effect of the integrated approach on the learners' writing performance. Depending on the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from the students' questionnaire, positive conclusions were drawn, confirming that EFL teachers can resort to the Integrated Approach as a reliable strategy to help their learners become effective writers in English. These findings show that an integrated approach is an effective strategy to improve writing skills in higher education through 92% of the population's positive responses.

keywords: integrated approach; writing skills; writing performance; the product-based approach; the process-based approach; the genre-based approach.

Résumé

L'objectif de cette étude est de proposer une stratégie pratique pour les enseignants de l'expression écrite en enseignant aux étudiants en langues étrangères en utilisant différents types de programmes pour améliorer leur production écrite : l'approche intégrée. L'approche intégrée est une combinaison d'éléments issus des approches axées sur le produit, axées sur le processus et basées sur le genre, réunis. La présente étude vise à étudier les opinions des étudiants à l'égard de l'approche intégrée pour l'enseignement de l'écriture, en particulier pour les 48 étudiants de deuxième année spécialisés en anglais à l'École supérieure des enseignants à Laghouat pour l'année académique 21-22. Sur la base de l'analyse et de la critique des données obtenues à partir d'un questionnaire, des conclusions positives ont été tirées confirmant l'impact positif de l'approche intégrée sur les performances en écriture des étudiants. Ces résultats suggèrent que l'approche intégrée est une stratégie fiable pour les enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère afin d'aider leurs étudiants à devenir des écrivains compétents en anglais avec un pourcentage de 92 %. Les mots-clés: approche intégrée, compétences en écriture, performances écrites, approche axée sur le produit, approche axée sur le processus, approche basée sur le genre.

Mots-clés : approche intégrée; compétences d'écriture ; qualité de production ; écrite à base opératoire ; production écrite à base de produit final ; production écrite à base de genre.

Introduction

Recently in EFL settings, much focus has been placed on the teaching of writing, where the major concern has been to develop the writing skill in a way that can meet the learners' needs. More precisely, writing is critical to English language learning as well as the learners' academic success.

Consequently, EFL writing methodology should not aim to restrict writing to class time but instead make it an effective medium to survive in novice situations outside the classroom. Therefore, EFL teachers are invited to maximize their efforts to make the learning of writing a meaningful activity to enable learners to discover the central role that writing plays in their lives and future careers. Takarroucht (2022), in this regard, views that it is about knowing the nature and requirements of the task, what the task needs, and which strategy is needed for successful completion of the task. In other words, task needs analysis is highly recommended to suitably select the best strategies to be adopted.

The outcome of all the above is that unless EFL teachers implement an appropriate and adequate approach to teaching writing, the learners' success may be far from their reach. In other words, the choice of the approach is a key element for the students' writing enhancement.

At the Higher College of Teachers in Laghouat, the setting of this study, students of English go through a curriculum that gives writing a great deal of importance in the first three years of their academic career. Conversely, teachers of the writing module have shown individual methodological choices in the teaching of writing in general and in the choice writing approach in particular. As a result, the problem that has been scrutinized is that students may not receive the necessary guidance and support they need to adequately develop their writing skills. Furthermore, using inappropriate writing approaches can lead   to students' disengagement and disinterest in writing, which can further hinder their progress.

To avoid the aftermath of these deficiencies, it is important for teachers of writing to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their adopted teaching approaches and adjust their methods as needed to ensure that they are providing the best possible support to their students.

The principal aim of the present study is to investigate students' attitudes towards the combination of product-, process-, and genre-based approaches to writing instruction. i.e., the integrated approach. In order to reach its

aim, the study first aims to identify the students' current attitudes toward writing skills and whether they face any problems when writing. Next, the study also aims to examine whether any of these challenges are due to the use of inappropriate writing approaches. Finally, the study, based on the students' attitudes towards the Integrated Approach, aims to assess whether the combination of the product-, process-, and genre-based approaches would be an effective method for improving the students' writing skills.

1.Literature Review

Hasan and Akhand (Hasan; Akhand 2010, p. 86) have observed that the context of EFL is one of those "where English exposure is very instrumental," [requiring] "more fruitful approaches to teaching writing" [to be implemented]. Thus, EFL writing skills have been taught using a bunch of approaches, three of which are well-recognized by EFL practitioners, including the product, process, and genre-based approaches; each has a distinct philosophy for getting the writing skill mastered.

1.1 The Product–based Approach

Until the 1980s, the product-based approach is believed to have been dominant and well-established in the teaching of writing. It is best defined by Gabrielatos (2002, p. 5) as "a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually presented and analysed at an early stage." This specific act of mimicking reminds of behaviourism, in which the roots of this approach are found, precisely in Russian scientist Ivan Pavlov's theory labelled "conditioned reflex," assuming that "the learning process consists of the formation of associations between stimuli and reflexive responses" (Ting, 2010, as cited in Fourssi, 2013, p. 733).

The product-based approach may be traditional as a result of either reason or both. First, the product-based approach is assumed to be traditional because it is more "teacher-centered" (Fourssi, 2013, p. 732). It places the teacher at the center of a writing class, where he supplies the learners with a model text as a "stimulus," seeking a "response," from which they will produce their own final piece of writing. The second reason is imitation, but in partial contrast to its implication; imitation in this specific context is a technique through which the learners are exposed to an original text and, by means of analysis, are acquainted with its features so that they will be given a safe departure and spared the side effects of failing to produce or, more accurately, imitate. Thus, imitation gives the learners a sense of what Harmer (2007, p. 268) has called "product pride."

In this approach, the writing ability corresponds to the equivalent view of the text, as perceived as the driving force of a product-based writing class. In this regard, two views compete: "(T) texts as autonomous objects" and "(T) texts as discourse" (Hyland, 2003, p. 6).

According to the former, the main concern is "the formal features of texts." Thus, writing ability is defined by how the learners react, preferably to the material and submissively to specific textual measures of correctness (Nunan, 1999, as cited in Jyi-yeon Yi, 2009, p. 56). Unlike the former, the central point of the latter is "the logical organisation of writing" (Raimes, 1998, as cited in Jyi-yeon Yi, 2009, p. 56).

1.2 The Process–based approach

Beginning in the late 1960s, the process-based approach appeared as a reaction to the product-based approach. This reaction appeared as a result of the weaknesses noticed by teachers who taught writing as a product. Researchers found that providing model texts for students to copy was not the best method to help them improve their writing skills. Those researchers who came out with the process approach see writing as a creative act. Thus, they deduced that using the product approach in teaching writing would lessen the creativity of the students in writing. Hence, a way to make students learn how to write without copying texts that may lead to losing their creativity is to teach them through the process-based approach.

In the same context, Sun and Feng (2009) noted that the process approach to writing focuses on the importance of the writing process itself rather than just the end product. It encourages students' engagement in activities such as prewriting, brainstorming, outlining, revising, and editing activities. This approach assists students in becoming more confident and effective writers.

According to Flower and Hayes (1981), the process approach is helpful for teaching writing in academic settings, where students need to learn how to construct arguments and introduce their ideas in a well-organized manner. According to this approach, writing is a cyclical process in which writers pass through multiple stages, and it encourages students to engage in ongoing reflection and revision.

Faigley (1986) has mentioned two models of process approach: the expressivist and the cognitivist models. The expressivist model focuses mainly on the writer's voice, whereas the cognitivist model sees writing as a mental process where writers should receive explicit instructions to

understand the writing process and deal with a writing exercise as a problem-solving task (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Thus, the two process models emphasize fluency and meaning over accuracy and form (Tribble, 1996).

1.3 The genre-based approach

The genre-based approach, the "English for Academic Purposes Approach" (Silva, 1990, pp.16–17) or the "English for Specific Purposes Approach" (Dudley-Evans, 1997, pp. 151–152), is an approach that started being used by EFL instructors all around the world in the late 1980s. This approach was not a reaction but rather an extension of an earlier approach.

As regarded by Badger and White (2000, p. 155), the genre-based approach is "an extension of the product-based approach." These approaches meet in that both the product and genre approaches perceive writing as mainly about linguistic knowledge. However, the genre approach focuses on the specific language skills and vocabulary that students need to know to be able to read and write academic texts, such as research articles and textbooks, etc. In the same vein, Ahn (2012) (as cited in Zarei et al. 2013, p. 24) has stated that "the genre approach was developed in response to the limitations of the process approach, which left students to find the recurring text structures for themselves through experimentation and exploration."

One of the major concerns of the genre approach is teaching different genres and the rhetorical features of these genres to the learners, which they may need to master to succeed in appropriate situations. In order to achieve that, teachers who follow this approach emphasize the content of a text in addition to the context in which the text is produced.

2. The Integrated Approach to Writing
2.1. What is an "integrated approach to writing"?

It is undeniably difficult for teachers to select the best method to teach writing because all of the previously mentioned approaches believe that by introducing and comparing the three approaches, one can find the weaknesses and strengths of each approach and also find that the three approaches are largely complementary. Thus, EFL writing teachers are advised to combine the three approaches in order to achieve better results and assist students in overcoming their weaknesses. To clarify, the teaching of writing via the product approach leads teachers to focus only on form, disregarding both the process that students go through when writing and the social context or type of text. Using the process approach, however, may help learners develop their writing skills through the emphasis on the skills

used in writing, like brainstorming and editing, but it neglects the type of text, social context, and purpose of writing, which are essential in academic writing. Accentuating the context and purpose of writing, as the genre-based approach does, is necessary for EFL learners, but neglecting the skills students need in order to produce a text is a weakness that should be replaced.

James (1993), further suggested that combining the three approaches rewards teachers and students with the best of each approach. Teachers who utilise the integrated approach will find that teaching writing is easier and that students' writing skills improve.

Thus, combining product, process, and genre approaches is highly recommended for teaching writing to EFL learners. This combination is based on the teacher's adaptation to each approach. That is to say, if a teacher chooses the integrated approach, he or she may utilise one approach and then adapt it by combining its strengths with the strengths of all the other approaches so that all of its weaknesses disappear.

3. Methodology Presentation

Participants in this study are second-year students at ENS Laghouat's English department. There are 48 students in the sample group. They've been studying English for two years, and their exam success is heavily reliant on their writing ability. Seeking to know students' attitudes towards the integrated approach to writing instruction and whether the integrated approach is effective in improving their performance in writing, we targeted students who have been exposed to different ways of writing instruction.

This study aims at exploring the students' attitudes toward the impact of using different types of approaches on EFL students' writing performance. To obtain the above-mentioned objective, this study adopts one research instrument, a questionnaire, which is delivered to second-year EFL students at ENSL. In this study, the questionnaire is designed to collect data about the students' attitudes toward the integrated approach to writing and to determine to what extent combining the product, the process, and the genre approaches can improve their writing performance.

The distribution of the students' questionnaire was followed by an explanation of its purpose. All the students responded to the questionnaire. The respondents were informed that the questionnaire was designed to collect data about their attitudes toward the integrated approach to writing

and to determine to what extent combining the product, the process, and the genre approaches can improve their writing performance.

The students were asked to answer the questions and put a cross in the appropriate answer boxes. The words chosen were simple words that suited the students' level. We did not ask for the identities of the students by not requesting that they write their names on the forms, which would have added more frankness and objectivity to their answers.

Our questionnaire comprises two parts. The first part consists of eight questions, whereas the second consists of two. However, the questions in both parts are interrelated and purposeful.

4. Results presentation

Pie-chart 1 students' level at writing


Sts' level at writing
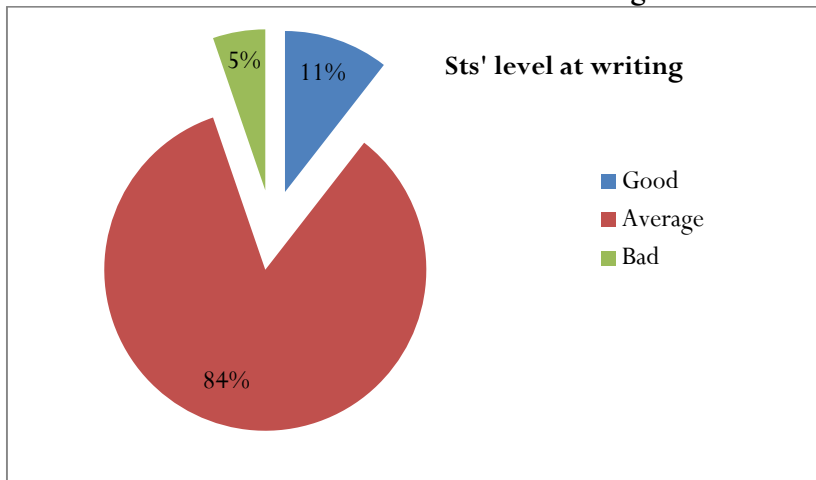
- Good
- Average
- Bad

Q: How good are you at writing?

The question was asked in order to know how good the students are at writing. Their answers showed that two students declared that their level is bad, four of them said they are good, and the rest believe they are average. These findings are indicators of the medium-level approach that teachers follow when instructing the writing module. Furthermore, the students' answers led us to deduce that they are capable of self-evaluation, which is of great help to us through the rest of the questions.

Pie-chart 2: The students' improvement in writing

The sts' improvement in writing

- A Lot
- A Little
- Not at All

13%

8%

79%
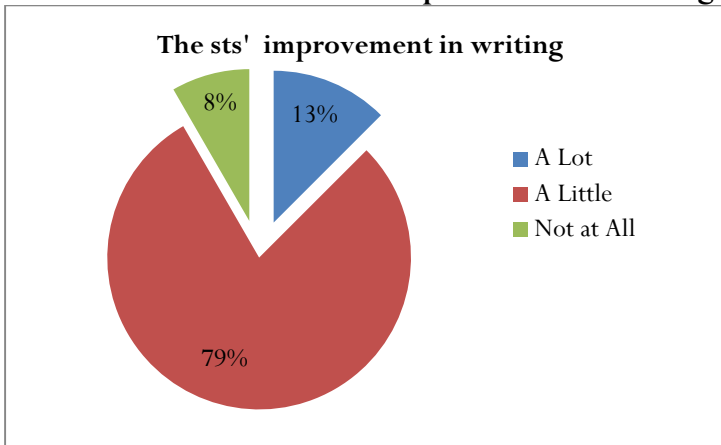
Q: To what extent has your level of writing improved over the years?

As the pie chart shows, only six students said that they have been improving a lot, and four students said they have not been improving at all. The remaining 38 students respond that they have been improving a little. EFL teachers of writing should pick the best approach to teach writing, and the proof of its success lies in the improvements students achieve.

Bar-graph 3: The frequency of the methods' uses in teaching writing

Sometimes
Always
Never

Number of Students

Methods Used by the Teacher
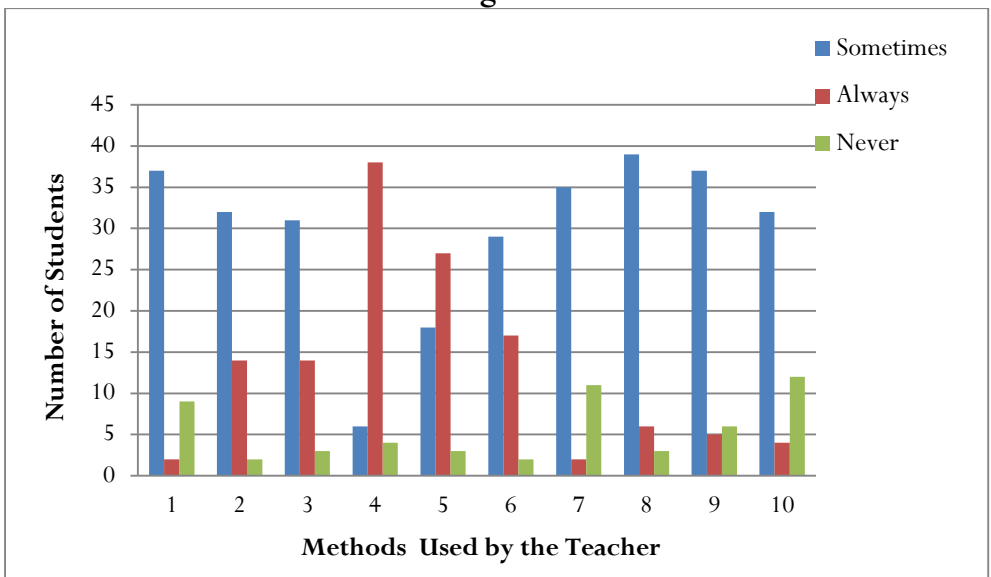
The bar graph is used to demonstrate the answers the students gave according to the three options they were given (sometimes, never, always). These options were a means to know the frequency of the methods used by a teacher of writing.

Method 1: The teacher gives you models of texts, and you imitate them.

The majority of students answered that "sometimes" the teacher provides models for them to imitate; eight students answered "never," and only two chose "always" as an answer. This suggests that the teacher may not be consistently providing models or that students may not be aware of this method.

Method 2: The teacher focuses on grammatical structures.

The second method also received a large number of students: 32 whose answers were "sometimes"; their teachers focus on grammatical structures; 14 students answered with "always", and only 2 chose "never".

Method 3: The teacher asks you to make a plan before you write.

Method 3 gathered 31 students who picked "sometimes," 14 picked "always," and 3 of them picked "never" when referring to the teachers' request of making a plan before writing.

Method 4: The teacher focuses on the form of your writing.

The fourth method was the one to which nearly the whole number of students responded with "always," which makes us deduce that nearly all teachers focus on form.

Method 5: The teacher focuses on the content you make.

When the question was about the focus of teachers on content, the students' answers were nearly balanced between "always" and "sometimes," whereas a minority chose "never."

Method 6: The teacher asks you to brainstorm on the topic before you start writing.

This question is about the frequency of asking students to brainstorm before writing. A large number of students chose "sometimes," a smaller number chose "always," and only two students chose "never."

Method 7: You work in groups to produce a piece of writing.

This question is asking whether students are working in groups. 35 students opted for "sometimes," 11 for "never," and only two chose "always."

## Method 8: You are asked to write texts that are related to the real world.

The question was about how often the students are required to write about real-world or contextualized topics. Thirty-nine students settled on "sometimes" as an answer, six on "always," and three on "never."

Method 9: The teacher is not the only one who reads your writing, your classmates do too.

This question was asked to know how often the students are allowed to read each other's written texts. The results showed that a greater part of the students answered with "sometimes," while only a small majority answered with "always" or "never."

Method 10: The teacher uses all of the above-mentioned methods in one class.

Through this question, we wanted to know if the teachers of writing use all the methods mentioned before in one class. More than half of the participants chose "sometimes" as an answer; twelve selected "never," and the small rest chose "always."

Pie-chart 4: Students' attitudes towards IA

Students' View

8%

92%

Yes ■ No
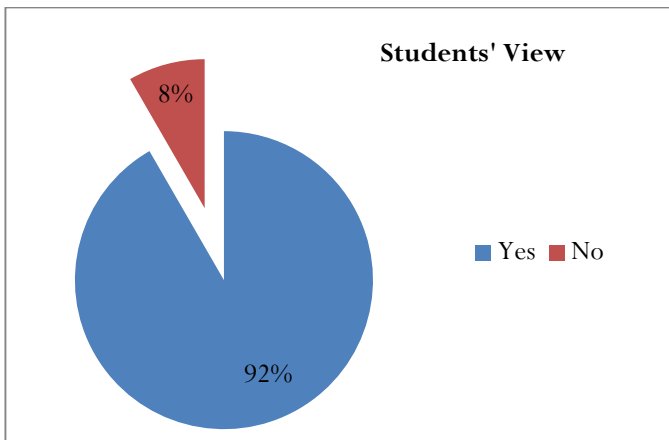
Q: Do you think that it is better when the teacher uses all the mentioned methods together?

92 percent of the population answered "yes," which leads us to the conclusion that almost all of the students think that it is better when their teachers of writing combine all the mentioned methods together. The remaining 8 percent of the population chose "no" in a way to say that they do not think that using all the methods together will be good. EFL students are therefore fully aware of how combining the approaches will improve their performance.

Since the majority of the students chose the "yes" option, there should have been sound reasons behind their choice. In their explanations, some students said that it would be very beneficial for the students' writing improvement if the teacher used all the methods together in one class.

Others' answers were that all the methods complement each other, so they should be used together and not separately. Another view was that not all the students have the same capacities, yet when a teacher uses a combination of the methods, all the students would be given an opportunity because of the variety of the methods.

Some students held the view that combining the methods will make writing more enjoyable, less boring, and more effective, and that only artistic and successful teachers will apply the methods together. "One method is not sufficient to improve the students' writing performance," is another opinion given by a student. For those who had the opposite view, they thought that combining the methods would be tiring for the students. However, combining various writing strategies will undoubtedly benefit EFL teachers and students in large measure.

5. Results Discussion

The first major deduction is that writing is compulsory for students' academic success. For this reason, teachers should do their best when teaching this module, and they should be aware of its major role in either the success or failure of the students in all the modules. For this reason, Hamdoud (2020) states that students involved in university studies are expected to make use of a range of techniques that allow them to cope with the demands of highly challenging academic tasks. Among these tasks, particularly in language learning settings, are reading and writing. Her view implies that instructors should be equipped with all the necessary techniques to better select the most suitable one, notably in heterogeneous EFL classes.

More importantly, the students' answers about the methods adopted in teaching writing showed that the teachers separately use the three main approaches. In other words, their implementation of the main approaches to teaching writing is not done simultaneously. According to Brookes et al. (1990), teaching the writing approaches separately frequently results in unbalanced writing performance. The second-year students' replies supported this theory by demonstrating that their writing performance has not improved over time as a result of their teachers' usage of isolated techniques for each student individually.

The responses collected through the questionnaire also revealed that EFL teachers can depend on the Integrated Approach to help EFL learners minimize writing difficulties. The difficulties mentioned by the students can all be solved through the use of the Integrated Approach in teaching. If the teacher guides, facilitates, and clarifies how a piece of writing can be done, the students will then face no difficulties and achieve the best results. James (1993) (as cited in Olajide, 2013, p. 917). has confirmed this by stating that "combining the three approaches rewards both the teachers and students with the best of each approach."

On various occasions, the integrated approach was looked at as a manifestation of inclusion when it came to the learning styles of students because it makes the writing class more inclusive for all the students. These views were interpreted as being in favour of using the IA because no other writing strategy allows for a comprehensive treatment of the skill.

Conclusion

This study was conducted in order to explore attitudes of second year students of English at ENS Laghouat, Algeria during the academic year 21-22 towards the integrated approach to writing instruction of. The population of the study consisted of 48 second-year students enrolled in the English language department.

The study initially sought to determine students' current views regarding their writing talent and whether they encounter any difficulties. The study also intends to investigate if any of these difficulties are brought on by the employment of improper writing strategies. Last but not least, the study intends to determine if combining the product-, process-, and genre-based methods would be a useful strategy for raising the students' academic performance

In order to reach the aim of the study, a students' questionnaire was conducted with a total of 40 participants to gather information about their attitudes towards the integrated approach to writing instruction. Data from the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using content analysis.

From the analysis, it was found that an integrated approach to writing instruction can be the best way to improve students' writing skills. By combining the elements of the product-focused approach, the process-oriented approach, and the genre-based approach, the integrated approach addresses the various needs of students and leads to an improvement in the quality of their writing

Moreover, the results of the study have implications for writing instruction in the classroom and suggest that teachers should consider using an integrated approach in their writing instruction.

To sum up, it can be argued that the integrated approach's implementation is a way to ensure the success of both teachers and learners.

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