



*Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards Using
DSS to Enhance Writing
The Case of First Year Students at Batna 2 University*

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Abstract ;	Article info
<p><i>The aim of this study is to investigate students' and teachers' attitudes, in the department of English at Batna 2 University, towards the use of digital short stories (DSS) to boost learners' paragraph writing. To carry out the study, a descriptive method was used, and two questionnaires were administered; one for 30 first-year EFL students, enrolled in the department of English, and another one for 10 teachers of written expression subject in the same department. The results revealed that both of teachers and students had positive attitudes toward using DSS in the writing sessions, and they approved using technology-based tools to teach paragraph writing.</i></p>	<p>Received 25 January 2023 Accepted 18 June 2023</p> <p>Keyword:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Attitudes:✓ Teachers :✓ Students :✓ DSS:✓ Writing:

1. *Introduction*

Broughton et al. (1980) claim that being able to learn a foreign language has a positive impact on learners. It helps them to express themselves using linguistic patterns totally different of the ones used in their mother tongue; it also, broadens their understanding to the world and their conceiving to the other peoples and their languages and cultures. Hence, many learners tend to learn foreign languages and do much effort to master them.

The mastery of any foreign language depends on the mastery of the four skills of this language, namely reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In addition, this mastery is exhibited through the ability of the learner to communicate effectively using the foreign language. Many learners from all over the world aim to learn English; the fact that enabled this language to become the world's lingua franca. Hence, learners and speakers of English are constantly increasing.

The increase of the number of students who are highly motivated to learn English is ascribed to many reasons. For instance, some of them would like to learn it because they have ambitions to study abroad, in one of the English-speaking countries. Some of them want to learn it because they see it as being the language of science and knowledge. Other ones like it because, simply, it is the language of media, songs and movies.

Despite the different motivating reasons to learn English, learning this language is deemed to be not easy for a number of students. The process of learning English requires learners to master

the four language skills, which are respectively listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Although many students can achieve good results in learning the first three skills, they face difficulties in learning writing. This latter is taken as the hardest skill to master for many reasons one of which is the nature of writing per se. Writing is a complex activity which requires the use of several cognitive activities simultaneously. Moreover, when writing, the writer is always under pressure of revising and editing. Likewise, some EFL learners are reluctant to learn writing in class.

To deal with the issue of reluctant students, teachers can employ a myriad of methods and techniques. For instance, technology has been approved by many researchers and scholars to be an effective tool to motivate learners and improve their abilities to communicate in English. We live in a digital era, where everything is based on technology. Nearly every aspect of life, including education, is based on technology. Recently, many nations have attempted to modernize their educational frameworks and curricula by incorporating technology into the classroom. This incorporation can be implemented in the classroom via different tools such as computers, smart boards, data shows, videos, and so on.

2. *Literature Review*

Stories and the art of storytelling are embedded in humans' history. What happened in the past and old events are

passed from generation to generation through story telling. Stories are important elements in the individuals' daily life. They are good ways to convey emotions, values, ideas, and culture of different peoples and societies. They are, as well, used to entertain and give fun and joy.

The use of stories can, however, go beyond mere entertainment and fun since they can be used for educational purposes as well. They are one of the best materials that assist learners in learning foreign languages. They are, also, good means to attract their attention and stimulate them to communicate (Mokhtar, Abdul Halim & Syed Kamarulzaman, 2011)

It is important to note that learners' achievement would be bettered if stories were introduced via digital format. Technology tools like computers, smartphones, and iPads capture students' interest and attention. There is no denying that incorporating the aforementioned tools into the classroom would inspire students and raise their level of language proficiency. As a result, many teachers include technology in their lessons because they understand how important it is for improving students' learning (Lam, 2000).

Technology today provides instructors with a wide range of simple and readily available ways to produce or teach stories in the classroom (Armstrong, 2003). In addition, DSS, which are short stories presented via digital tools, are good materials to improve not only learners' communicative competence but also their writing skills. According to Yancey (2004), using technology effectively can aid students in developing their writing proficiency.

3. Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to explore teachers' and students' attitudes towards the integration of DSS to enhance paragraph writing. In addition, the study aims to ascertain the awareness of writing teachers of the significance of technological media to boost learners' paragraphs, and whether they incorporate them in their writing classes.

4. The Study

4.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite having all studied English for seven years prior to entering university, it has been observed that students in the English department at Batna 2 University frequently struggle to write an appropriate and meaningful paragraph. Additionally, a lot of students don't demonstrate motivation to write when they are assigned, either in class or at home, as homework. Some of them ascribe unwillingness to write to the difficulties of writing itself; whereas others claim that the teachers' methods are boring or unappealing to them.

To motivate learners and improve their educational achievement and proficiency, many researchers and practitioners call for using technological means inside the classroom (Becker, 2000). Nowadays, technology is a pervasive phenomenon that affects practically every aspect of people's lives and surrounds them everywhere. The majority of learners engage in daily activities using technological tools like computers and smartphones.

Many conducted studies are about the importance of the use of technology in teaching and its advantages. Although some of the studies done about using technology in teaching aimed to enhance writing, not many of them showed the attitudes of teachers and learners towards it. Hence, this research paper aims to highlight both of students' and teachers' attitudes, in Batna 2 University, towards the utilization of digital stories, as motivating means to enhance their writing abilities.

4. 2 Questions of the Study

The questions of the study are as follows:

1. How do students see using digital means like stories to enhance paragraph writing?
2. Do teachers approve or disapprove the idea of using DSS to teach the writing skill?

4. 3 Methodology

The methodology underpinning the study is a descriptive qualitative one. Bogdan & Biklen (2007) see that qualitative methods are good means to supply information about the subjects' attitudes and emotions.

4. 5 Participants

Participants of the study are, on one hand, 30 first-year students who studied

English as a foreign language in the department of English, at batna 2 University, in the academic year 2021/2022. The students are of both genders, 20 females and 10 males.

On the other hand, 10 teachers who teach written expression in the same department were involved in the study.

4. 6 Data Gathering Tools and Procedure

To gather data, the instruments used are two descriptive questionnaires delivered to the students and teachers of the department of Batna 2 University.

The questionnaire delivered to teachers aims to explore their ways and methods of teaching. In addition, it aims to elicit views of tutors about using technology in the writing sessions.

The students' questionnaire aims to explore students' views concerning the employment of technology in writing. The researcher provided adequate time for students, one hour, to enable them to answer the questionnaire.

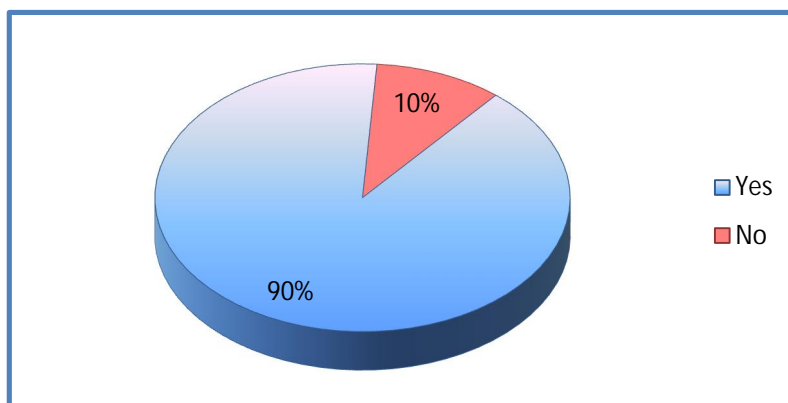
4. 7 Data Analysis

4. 7. 1 Teachers' Questionnaire

The first question was:

Do you think that the methods used in teaching writing need be updated and reformed by teachers?

Fig.1. Teachers' opinions about the methods of teaching writing



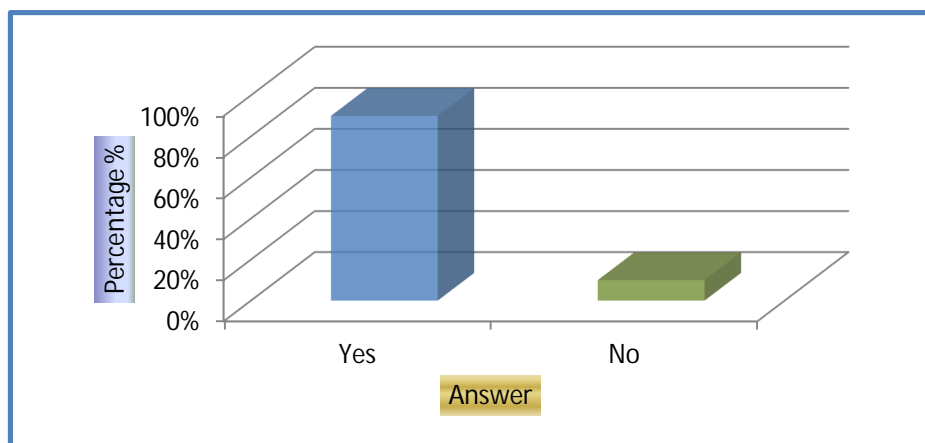
The aim of this question is to ascertain how much teachers are open to new techniques and methods in teaching writing. The results to this question display that most teachers (90 %) are with the idea of renewing and bringing new ideas and

techniques to teach writing. Only one teacher (10%) denied the necessity of updating the methods to teach writing.

The second question was:

Do you use the computer or other technological means to teach writing?

Fig.2. Teachers' use of technology in teaching writing



The aim of this question is to find out if teachers are aware of the use of technological-based means in their writing sessions.

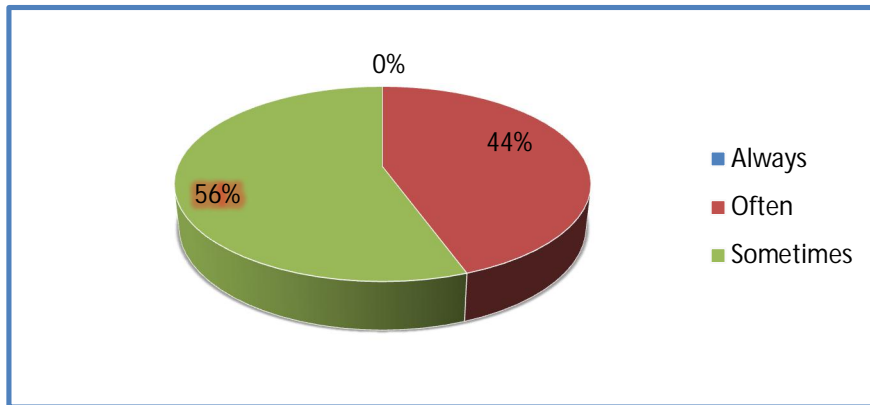
The results found demonstrate that the majority of the teachers (90%) answered that they make use of technological means

to teach writing. On the other hand, only one teacher answered that he does not use them.

The third question was:

If yes, how often?

Fig.3. The frequency of using technology in teaching writing



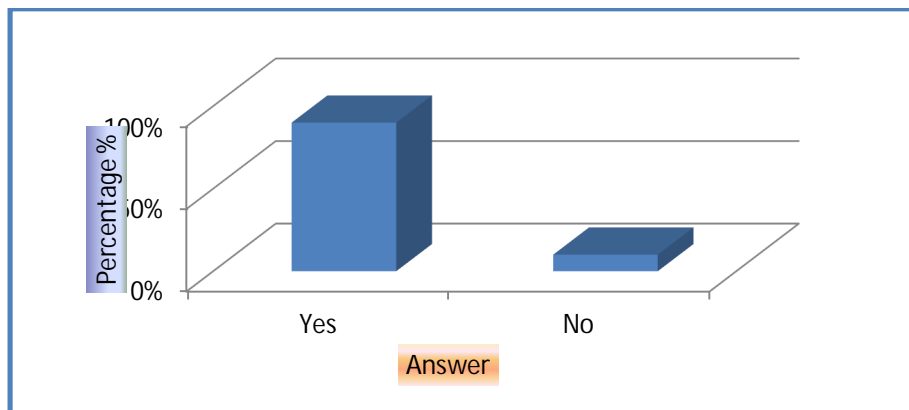
The aim of this question is to identify the frequency of the use of the technological means by the teacher who use technology in the writing sessions. The results display that none of the teachers (00 %) use technology in a regular way in the writing session. The number of the teachers who use technology often are four

teachers (40 %). The number of teachers who said they use technology sometimes is five (50%), which represents half of the teachers.

The fourth question was:

Do you think that the use of digital stories may have a positive impact on enhancing student' paragraph writing?

Fig.4. Teachers' opinions about the use of DSS to teaching writing



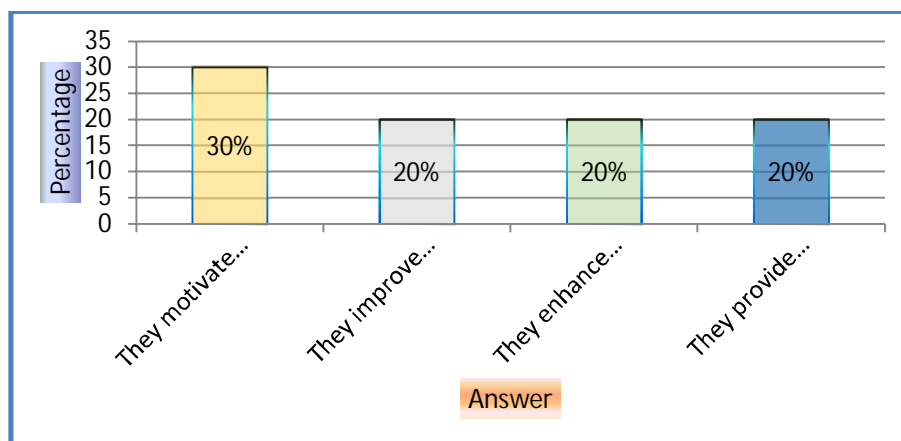
The aim of this question is to depict the view of teachers with regards to the integration of DSS in the writing classes. The results display that the majority of teachers (90 %) approve the

implementation of DSS to teach writing paragraphs. Only one teachers (10 %) disapproves it.

The fifth question was:

If yes, why?

Fig.5. Reasons behind teachers' use of technology in writing



The aim of this question is to know in which way teachers see that the DSS enhance students' paragraph writing. The results show that three teachers (30 %) answered that the DSS motivate students to write. Two of the teachers (20 %) answered that they improve students' grammar. Two

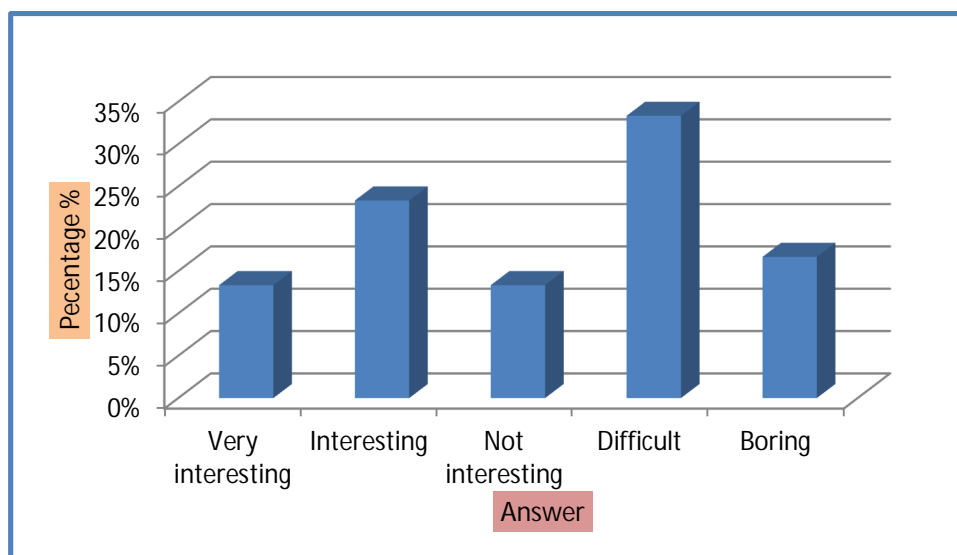
other teachers (20 %) answered that digital stories enhance students' vocabulary; and two others (20 %) said that they provide students with ideas.

4.7.2 Students' questionnaire

The first question was:

How do you consider writing?

Fig.6. Students' views about the writing skill



The aim of this question is to ascertain students' views about writing in general.

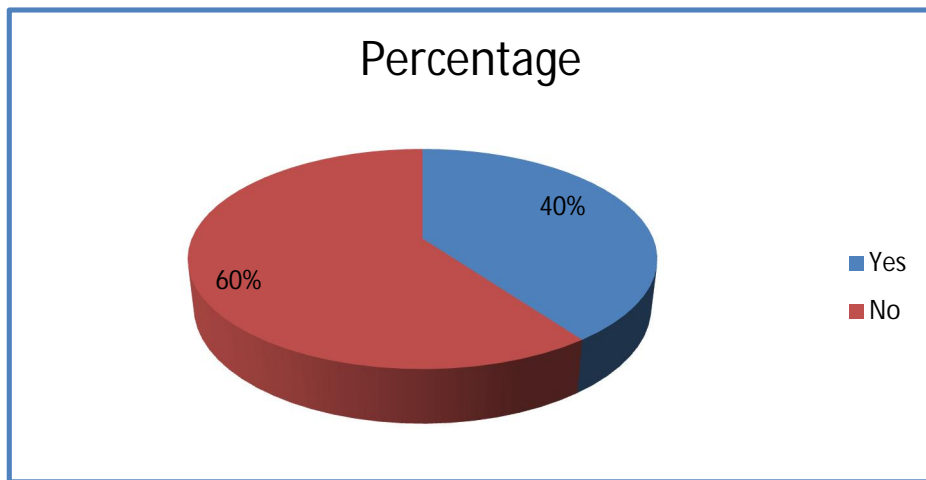
Starting from the highest number to the lowest, the results display that ten students (33.33 %) see that writing is a difficult and hard task. Seven students (23.33%) see it as

interesting; Five of them (16.66%) say it is boring; four of them (13.33%) say it is not interesting; and other four students (13.33%) see that it is very interesting.

The second question was:

Do you use your smart phone, computer, or laptop to help you in writing?

Fig.7. Students' use of technology in writing



The aim of this question is to know the number of students who rely on technology to help them with their writing skill.

The results indicate that the majority of students, eighteen (60 %), ones answered that they do not rely on technological means to help

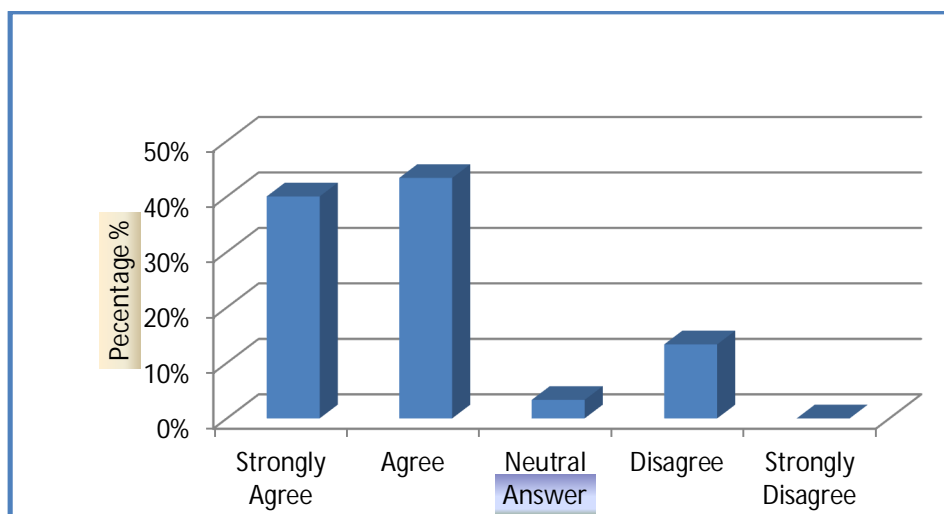
them in their writing. The number of students who answered that they use technology in their writing was only twelve (40 %).

The third question was:

How much do you agree with the following statement?

“The use of technology enhances the writing skill”.

Fig.8. Students' attitudes towards the use of technology in writing



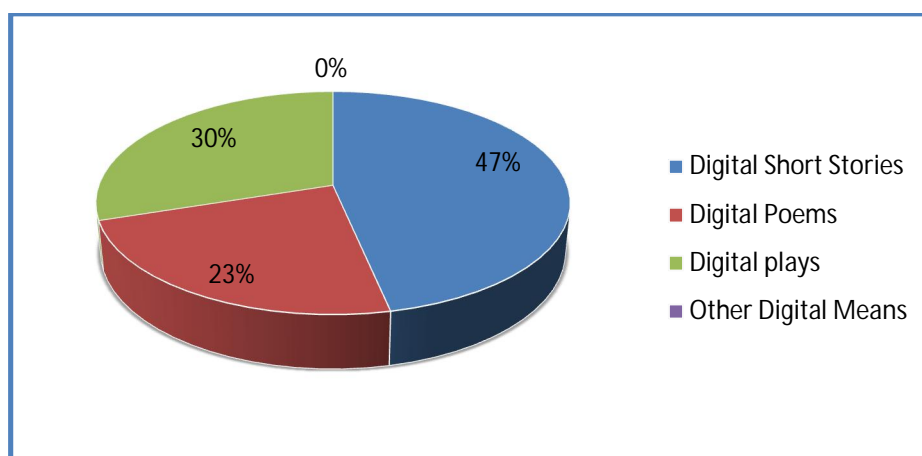
The aim of this question is to find out about students' attitudes regarding the use of technology to improve writing. The results indicate that twelve students (40%) answered that they strongly agree that technology enhances writing. Thirteen of them, almost the majority of them (43.33%), answered that they agree that technology enhances writing. On the other hand, one student kept neutrality towards

the statement; four students (13.33%) disagreed with the statement, but none of them strongly disagree with the idea that technology enhances writing.

The fourth question was:

If your teacher were able to use one of the following means to teach you writing, what would you choose?

Fig.9. Students' opinions towards using DSS



The aim of this question is to find out about students' attitudes concerning the preference for DSS to other digital means to enhance writing.

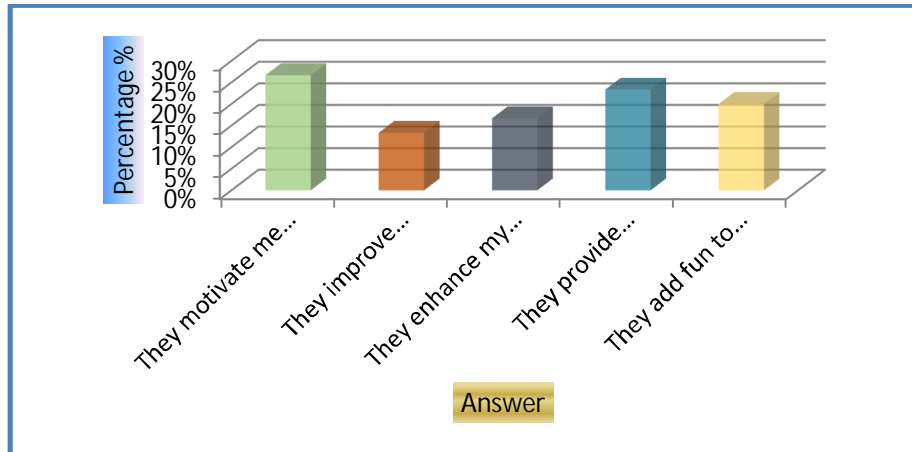
The results demonstrate that the majority of students (46.66%) prefer the utilization of short stories. Some of them (30%) prefer the use of digital plays. Other ones

(23.33%), prefer the use of digital poems. However, none of them preferred other digital means to enhance writing.

The fifth question was:

In your opinion, what are the benefits of DSS in improving your writing?

Fig.10. Students' opinions towards using DSS to enhance writing



The aim of this question is find out how students view the benefits of using DSS to improve their writing. As shown, the results reveal that students have different answers concerning the impact of DSS. Eight students (26.66%) consider short stories as motivating tools

for writing. Seven of the students (23.33%) believe that they provide them with ideas to write. Six students (20 %) answer that they add fun to the writing sessions. Five of them (16.66%) see that DSS enhance vocabulary; and four of them (13.33 %) think that they improve their grammar.

5. Discussion

The results obtained from the two questionnaires revealed many important points. First, teachers of writing, at batna 2 University, are convinced that the methods of teaching writing should undergo innovations, because most of them answered that they are with the change in the conventional ways of teaching. They are, as well, open to inserting new methods and techniques to the writing sessions.

Second, most of the teachers utilize the computer or other technological means in their writing sessions. This fact demonstrate that the teachers are aware of the importance of integrating technology to

teach writing. However, most of the teachers do not make use of technological means on regular basis; the teachers' answers revealed that they use technology in writing when it is possible. Hence, this could be explained from different perspectives; some teachers are afraid of the constant use of technology because they think that it is time consuming, and because they have limited time to finish the curricula. Hence, they tend to use technology occasionally. On the other hand, some teachers are afraid of the use of technology because they are not well

trained, and their knowledge of how to use it is restricted.

In addition, the findings revealed that teachers have a positive attitude towards the use of DSS in teaching writing although their views differ in terms of the reasons underlying their positive impacts. Some teachers reckon that DSS are good to improve students' grammar. The same number of teachers think that they are good to enhance vocabulary. Some other teachers believe that DSS provide learners with myriad of ideas that can help them to write. However, many teachers approve the use of them because they admit that they motivate students and encourage them to write.

Moreover, the questionnaire of students revealed that a big number of students have negative attitudes towards the writing skill, in general. Their answers showed that many of them think that writing is a difficult and hard skill. This could be explained by its complexity, because as known when writing, the learner uses many cognitive and linguistic skills. The fact that makes writing boring or not interesting to some learners. Contrary to the previous negative views regarding writing, some students tend to view writing as interesting, and a very small number of them see it as a very interesting activity. This may be explained by the fact that writing teachers may need to use new ways and techniques to alter students' negative opinions about writing. Therefore, technology is a good resort.

6. Recommendations

According to Watts (1993), writing has an important status compared to the

Furthermore, students answers showed that only a limited number of learners make use of the technological means such as the computer, the laptop, or the smartphone to help them in writing. This could be explained by the common belief among learners that the previously mentioned technological tools are used to develop other skills such as listening and speaking. Although students do not use technological means in writing, they support the idea of using them by their teachers in the writing classes.

Equally important, the findings revealed that a high number of students opted for DSS as a supporting means to teach writing. Almost half of this number selected digital plays. And a less number approved the use of digital poems to teach writing. As a result, students' attitudes concerning DSS is positive.

It is worthy to mention that although many students agree with the importance of DSS to enhance writing, they hold different views on how it is so. For instance, some of them believe that they motivate them to write. Approximately, the same number of students claim that they supply them with ideas to write. At the same time, some of them believe that they add fun and joy to the writing sessions. Whereas, some students hold on to the idea that DSS improve vocabulary and grammar. Comparing the answers of teachers and students, we sum up that both of them agree that DSS are good means to motivate students to write.

other subjects in the academic programmes because it has many functions, at the same time. It is a way to acquire knowledge and spread it. Moreover, it is used to display

individuals' ideas, emotions, and devotion. In addition, writing contributes to develop many sides of the student's life, such as building connections with other individuals and strengthening his/ her communication, which, per se, helps to construct effective citizens in society.

To enhance students' writing achievement, based on the findings of the study, it is urgent to suggest some recommendation that could be beneficial for both of students and teachers. First, teachers should use innovation in their classes. According to Chapelle (2003), teachers should adapt their methods and ways of teaching to go hand in hand with the technological developments. Hence, technology should be implemented in our classes to hook students' attention and their interest in learning.

In addition, technological tools, in general, could be good means to enhance the writing skills. Peregoy & Boyle (2012) emphasised the importance of technology in boosting the reading and writing skills. Digital stories are effective means to motivate reluctant students to write, and improve other aspects such as vocabulary and grammar.

Furthermore, tutoring educators and instructors and preparing them to integrate technology would help them to boost their confidence. It would also, eliminate teachers' fears of technology use in class and assist them in achieving their teaching objectives with less time and effort. In this context, Tomlinson (2003) claimed that efficient training would impact positively the learning process and this appears clearly when teachers are able to create

their own materials to suit their learners' needs and levels.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of the study indicated that both teachers and students hold positive attitudes towards using technology, in general, and DSS, in a specific way, to enhance their writing skill. This research is descriptive by nature; it could be conducted using experimental methods of research. Time limitations were reasons to limit the number of subjects; however, the same research could be carried out with a large population.

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