

Illustration of the Writing Techniques and the Writing Process According to Nation

Students of Adrar University: Ahmed Draia as a Case Study

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المخلص:

من خلال هذا العمل تطرقنا الى البرنامج المقترح في كتاب نيشن لتحسين فن الكتابة لدى الطلبة تطبيقيا اقتصرت دراستنا على رأي نيشن إزاء الكتابة كأسلوب متسلسل، من اجل ذلك قمنا بالجمع العشوائي لخمسة وعشرون ورقة امتحان كتابي لطلبة الإنجليزية لمستويات و مواد مختلفة ودراستها من أجل معرفة إلى أي حد وفقوا أو أخفقوا في كتاباتهم و إتباعهم للأسلوب المقترح من طرف الكاتب. علما أنه تم إتباعا الطريقة المزدوجة لتقييمهم (الكيفية والكمية أو الحسابية). و قد تبين أن معظم الطلبة لم يوفقوا في إتباع الطرق الصحيحة للكتابة مع ملاحظة تحسن في التمكن مرورا إلى مستوى الدراسي الأعلى مع استثناء بعض الحالات التي تملك المهارة في الكتابة مهما كان المستوى.

الكلمات المفتاح: آليات الكتابة، الكتابة المتسلسلة، تقييم الكتابة.

Abstract

Herein, we intended to highlight some writing techniques that are proposed as a programme in Nation's book *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing (2009)* to enhance the learners' writing skill. Practically, we limited our study to Nation's view of writing as a process. Accordingly, we analysed twenty-five (25) students' written exam papers, randomly collected from different levels and varied modules for assessing to what extent students succeed or fail in implementing the steps of the writing process. We adopted a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative). We concluded that our

informants almost failed to do so. Accordingly, the frequency of mistakes was gradually decreasing while assessing the papers moving from the license to the master level. However, some students were brilliant performing good pieces whatever the level is.

Keywords: writing techniques, writing process, assessing writing.

Introduction

I.S.P. Nation in his book *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* (2009) proposes some easily applicable techniques to teach both **spelling** and **the writing process** to students. He advances, especially, the idea of the spelling-focused programme which is based on including the four strands: spelling and meaning-focused input, spelling and meaning-focused output, spelling and language-focused learning, and spelling and fluency development to improve the students' writing skill. In addition, he adopts some techniques of teaching writing as a process besides clues to assess it. By selecting this topic, we aim to tackle to what extent students implement the steps of the writing process.

In this paper, we have two sections: a theoretical and a practical one. The former includes mainly definitions and descriptions of both the spelling-focused programme and the writing process. The practical part consists of methodology, and the assessment of twenty-five (25) exam papers. These are followed by the conclusion and the suggestions.

At the end, we should mention that in this work, we adopted the assessment that is described by Nation in his book¹ (and see the criteria in methodology), which enables us to choose the criteria that are suitable to evaluate the writing process.

I. Literature Review

1. Learning to Spell

Spelling, as Nation defines, "is a very limited and clearly defined area, involving only 26 letters and a definable set of combinations of letters."²

The English spelling is difficult because it is based on both regular and irregular rules. According to Nation (2009), four strands should be dealt with to improve spelling: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning and fluency development.

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing*. New York: Routledge. P.123-126.

² Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing*. op.cit p.15.

- 1.1. **Spelling and Meaning-focused Input:** Reading as a receptive skill helps to better spelling. Accordingly, constant exposure to written words enhances the written skill throughout time.¹
- 1.2. **Spelling and Meaning-focused Output:** Having the habit to write uncovers the gaps in the learners' spelling knowledge. Activities designed for improving writing are copying, delayed copying (read and write from memory), dictation, the different forms of guided writing, the use of dictionary, and free writing (diaries, poems, etc); yet excessive remarks about spelling might lead to avoidance strategies such as preference to use familiar words only.²
- 1.3. **Spelling and Language-focused Learning:** Deliberate attention to spelling can be undertaken with the adoption of multiple techniques among which: the deliberate memorisation of the spelling of individual words and the deliberate study of regular correspondences and rules.³
 - 1.3.1. **The Deliberate Memorisation of the Spelling of Individual Words:** There are six techniques that can be dealt with:
 - **Cover and Retrieve:** To list words according to their one or two initial letters in order to remember them, e.g., anaemia a or an.
 - **Using Analogies:** The teacher, and/or learners in pairs or groups think about a set of words that shares spelling features with the learners' difficult words. For example, achieve is a word that looks like retrieve.
 - **Using Word Parts:** Advanced learners break down difficult words into syllables (prefixes, roots, and affixes) and compare their roots to familiar words, which can help them to spell those words correctly e.g., root: part, *separate* not *seperate*.
 - **Pronouncing the Word in the Way it is Spelled:** For example, the letter /t/ of the word often can be pronounced or not, or

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *ibid*, p.18.

² Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *ibid*, p.18-19.

³ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *ibid*, p.19.

intentionally to mispronounce the silent /d/ in standard in order to spell it accurately.

- **Visualising:** The learner carefully observes the spelling of the difficult word or just its difficult part, which may be coloured in red for emphasis, closes eyes and visualises it in his/her mind.
- **Tests:** The techniques described above can be used to motivate learners enhancing their spelling such as dictation, retrieve, etc.¹

1.3.2. *The Deliberate Study of Regular Correspondences and Rules*

Three main techniques may be described as follows:

- **Noticing Patterns:** It is to classify together the words that share the same sound-spelling correspondences, so that learners distinguish between lists of varied correspondences.²
- **Studying Rules:** Intentional learning of some complicated rules is very helpful for an accurate spelling especially with advanced learners. For instance, the rule of free (long) and checked (short) vowels explains if whether we double the final consonant or not when the suffix (-ing or -ed) is added to stressed syllables taking into consideration some exceptions to this rule. In fact, a free vowel (f v) occurs before a consonant (c) that is followed by a vowel (v), i.e. **f v + c + v** such as face. While checked vowels (chv) apply two patterns: (a) **chv + c**, e.g., set; and (b) **chv + c + c + (c) + v**, e.g., lengthen. (Nation, 2009: 20-21).
- **Strategy Training:** Some well-practised strategies, amongst the strategies stated below, should be familiar to learners in order to: 1) memorise a newly met word's spelling, 2) accurately spell words while writing, and 3) correctly pronounce new words.
 - a) **A Strategy for Memorising Spellings:** It includes all techniques dealt with in (1.3.1) that the learners should be aware of, whether singly or in a sequence.

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *ibid*, p.19-20.

² Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *ibid*, p.20.

- b) **A Strategy for Finding the Spelling of a Word:** Herein, the learners, when miss the spelling of a word while writing, have to infer how it is spelled by making reference to similar sounded-words before referring to a dictionary. In other words, to try to find out the rule if possible.
- c) **A Strategy for deciding how to pronounce a Written Form:** The learners may refer to similar sound-spelling words, break words and apply stress rules, and use dictionary or ask someone else for the right pronunciation¹.

1.4. Spelling and Fluency Development

Both writing and reading a lot lead to fluency, besides maintaining a regular fluency activity that is ten minute writing, which is repeated trice a week and about an easy topic. The teacher gives remarks about the content rather than grammatical or spelling errors. Speed of writing of words per minute can be illustrated by each learner with a graph that increases². In fact, as Nation points, “[A] mastery testing involves repeated learning and testing until learners gain near perfect scores in what they have to learn.”³

1.5. Designing a Focused Spelling Programme

If learners suffer from spelling deficiencies, a balanced programme is needed. The latter consists of affective, cognitive, and social perspectives. From the affective perspective, motivation is at the core, and has to be sought through different elements (rewards, completion, using attractive aids, doing mastery test, etc). The cognitive side requires all the elements dealt with in learning to spell (part 1). And lastly, by taking into consideration the social factor, peer support and autonomy are emphasised⁴.

2. The Parts (sub processes) of the Writing Process

From the many ways of the writing process⁵, Nation introduces the following subdivision, noting that the order is not compulsory; rather it is continuous as a cycle and depending on the writer⁶:

- Defining the goals for writing (the purposes)

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). op.cit, p.21-22.

² Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.22.

³ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.22-23.

⁴ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.22-23.

⁵ See E Zemach. Dorothy & A Rumisek. Lisa. (2005). *Academic Writing from paragraph to essay*. Macmillan.

⁶ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.113-114.

- Identifying the audience (which model to be adopted)
- Collecting ideas (information)
- Organising them
- Transforming them into a written piece
- Reviewing
- Editing

2.1. **Defining the goals for writing and Identifying the audience:** while writing, the writer has a defined purpose (to convey/signal, inform, convince, persuade, entertain, etc) to write a piece (friendly/formal letter, academic/ journal writing [assignment, thesis], argument, résumé, narrative, etc) for a particular audience (self, specified person, group, classmates, public, etc) to seek a given feedback (immediate, new information, etc) and to play different roles (writing as yourself or as someone else). For practice, the learners should have occasions to write adopting different purposes and for various types of audience. Many techniques are used among which

- **Writing for Immediate Feedback:** The writer and reader are sitting one next to the other. The latter gives not only feedbacks on each sentence/paragraph that the former writes, but also both of them discuss what was already written and what should come next. According to Harmer¹, regular and instant writing boost the confidence of the learners.
- **The Teacher writes for Students:** herein, the teacher writes about his/her personal issues giving each student a letter that provides new bits of information, and has to be replied.
- **Situational Composition:** the learners are asked to write about different situations (answering a letter, writing a journal report, etc).
- **The Learners write for each other:** They (or from one classroom to another) write different types of letters (friendly/formal) for performing varied purposes (seeking appointment, looking for information, etc). Harmer² views

¹ Harmer, Jeremy. (2004). *how to teach writing* (12th impression). Pearson, P63-64.

² Harmer, Jeremy. (2004). *how to teach writing* (12th impression). *ibid*, P73-77.

collaborative writing as an occasion of learning from each other, and having access to the others' mind and knowledge. Examples of the collaborative writing are using the board to write sentence by sentence, expanding texts, and writing in groups and pairs.

- **Academic Assignments:** Forms of assignments and conventions for quoting and referencing must be known by learners. Hence, a marking schedule, which consists of the elements to be evaluated such as handwriting, spelling, grammar, coherence, referencing, etc, is very helpful for students before undertaking their tasks.¹

2.2. **Collecting of ideas (information):** Leibman-Kleine² classified techniques for gathering ideas into three groups:

- **Open-ended, free activities:** The learners recall their previous knowledge (ideas) while collecting information. Examples of these activities are brainstorming and quick writing that can be preceded by relaxation activities like exploration of a topic.
- **Systematic searching procedures:** questioning (who, when, where, why, how, etc) and filling in an information transfer diagram are examples of such procedures.
- **Tree diagram, concept diagram, or maps:** are techniques used for both gathering and organising ideas simultaneously. They help to arrange ideas according to their relationships (importance, level of generality, etc).

However, lack of ideas hinders writing. Techniques to cover this shortage are:

- **Group brainstorming:** Each learner advances any related idea that comes to his/her mind while one of them records them all. Rejecting and criticising ideas is at first denied, for they may offer hints to other useful ideas. In addition, saying aloud their thoughts (or practising think-aloud protocols), the learners

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). op.cit., p.115-117.

² Leibman-Kleine, J. (1987). Teaching and researching invention: using ethnography in ESL writing classes. *ELT Journal* (41: 2, 104-111).

become aware of the decision-making processes while writing through intensifying the mental activity.¹

- **List making:** Each learners lists ideas about the subject, then tries to organise them; while doing this, additional ideas may be included.
 - **Looping:** during about five (05) minutes, each student quickly writes on the topic, then learners read, think, and summarise what they have written in a single sentence. Repetition of this technique is allowed.
3. **Cubing:** is to tackle the subject from six angles: describing it, comparing it, associating it, analysing it, applying it, arguing for and against it. After that, learners should decide which part (s) is worth to be included while writing. Another technique is to ask these questions: who, when, where, why, what, how, then organise the obtained ideas to write the task.
 4. **Topic type grids:** adopting an information transfer diagram that relies on topic types (e.g. process, instruction, etc) is workable before writing.
 5. **Reading like a writer:** while reading, the learner tries to ask the questions that a writer might ask to write a topic such as what does attract readers to this topic? What was already written about it? And so on. Afterwards, organising answers in a concept diagram or an information tree facilitates writing.
 6. **Adding details:** the teacher offers the main ideas of a story then students use each idea and add extra information (descriptions, explanations, examples, details, etc) to write a paragraph, and so on.
 7. **Quick writing (speed writing):** It includes three conditions: write without stopping for a given time; neglect mistakes, errors, and the choice of words; and make emphasis on the content. For assessing the learners' improvement, they may record their speed of writing (number of words per minute) in a graph.
 8. **Expanding writing:** the learners leave blank lines (one or two) when writing the essay, and then count the written words. After that, they rewrite it adding details with a coloured pen

¹Cushing Weigle, Sara. (2002). Assessing Writing. Cambridge Language Assessment Series. Series Editors: Alderson, J.Charles & F. Bachman, Lyle. UK: Cambridge University Press.

using the first blank line, and then again count words. Next, they do so including more details and using another coloured pen. Finally, the teacher consults their writing and allows them to write the final version¹.

- 8.1. **Organising Ideas:** While writing assignments or responding exams, the way of organising ideas views not only the learner's print but also his/her uniqueness of organising ideas. Academic writing can be organised according to a given criterion or classifying them into groups. In fact, sub-headings are a clue to assess organisation.²
- 8.2. **Transforming Ideas into a Written Piece:** Some learners find a difficulty to transform ideas into a written text, or lack fluency to do so. Two causes are possible: the difference between the writing systems of the first language of the learner and that of the language of writing (Arabic verses English), and lack of practice in writing. The teacher's task is to discover that difficulty and find solution to it
- 8.3. **Reviewing:** The writer must check what has been written through looking to the following elements: ideas, coherence, flow of writing, and errors. Checklists or scales are useful tools to review the writing piece and improve writing. By adopting peer feedback, learners review their partial or complete written versions before the teacher views them.
- 8.4. **Editing:** It is to look for and undertake changes to the written piece by considering its organisation, style, grammatical and lexical correctness, and appropriateness. It, as all previous parts of the writing process, may occur—at any stage of writing. The use of a marking sheet that consists of the elements to be checked (handwriting, presentation and organisation, coverage of the relevant aspects of curriculum design, integration of experience and linking of the aspects, and possible improvements and overall impression) is a way to edit writing.³

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). op.cit, p.117-118.

² Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.119.

³ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). ibid, p.119-120.

II. Practical Study

I. Methodology

Sampling: We randomly picked up ten (10) papers from different exams, and then checked the presence of paragraphs or essays and the inclusion of questions in order to assess the writing purpose. As a result, twenty-five exam papers from different levels were evaluated (ten (10) from 1st Year Anglo-Saxon, ten (10) from 3rd Year Pragma-linguistics, and five (05) last exam sheets were taken from the 1st Year Master Contemporary USA); these papers are respectively ordered from student one (S1) to student twenty-five (S25). Therefore, the whole sample consists of twenty-five (25) students' exam sheets.

Criteria: Because of time constraints, we could not assess Nation's techniques; however, we included fifteen (15) elements that enable us to assess the students' writing process. Indeed, an interesting introduction means that the student is able to write the topic sentence and introduce his subject. The writing purpose shows that the communicative purpose is achieved and even the style is consistent (the relationship: writer- reader). While mechanics (handwriting, spelling, grammar, punctuation, register, cohesion, and coherence) help us to check whether the students have a control on how they connect their piece of writing or they do not. Moreover, the criterion 'content' provides a view about gathering ideas (if having enough to write about and within the students' print). Furthermore, the ability to communicate easily, organisation and presentation afford a hint about the organisation of ideas, their relevance, and probable edition too. Finally, editing was in fact evaluated through all those criteria especially by the presence of repeated errors. Despite of including length, we did not assess it because it was not mentioned in the exam papers. Note that we based on the assessment of Nation to denote the function of each criterion¹.

Methods: generally, we adopted a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) though the quantitative method was dominant. Accordingly, we have eight (08) pure, quantitative criteria (spelling, grammar, punctuation, register, repeated errors, organisation/presentation, cohesion, and coherence). Effective introduction, writing purpose and effective conclusion are qualitative variables despite that they seem quantitative in character; and they are quantitatively interpreted. The four (04) remaining elements: handwriting, content, ability to communicate, and length are qualitative, yet their interpretation is quantitative too.

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). op.cit, p.123-126.

2. The Exam Papers’ Assessment: Table One
 n: not mentioned

	S 1	S 2	S 3	S 4	S 5	S 6	S 7	S 8	S 9	S 10	S 11	S 12	S 13	S 14	S 15	To tal	
Interesting & effective introduction that states the main idea	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	9S 6F
writing discourse (purpose)	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	8S 7F
handwriting	A	1	1	G	G	A	G	A	A	A	1	G	A	A	1	4I L	
Spelling	1 3	2 5	1 3	6	8	1 7	4	8	1 0	6	4 2	8	3	1 1	6	18 0	
Grammar	2 6	2 1	1 1	7	5	3 3	6	1 5	1 3	2 9	1 9	7	6	1 1	7	21 6	
Punctuation	2 2	1 4	8	3	3	1 2	9	7	1	4	8	1 1	2	5	6	11 5	
Register	3	7	4	0	1	3	3	2	9	1	1 0	2	1	3	0	49	
repeated errors/referenci ng/careless errors	1	7	4	2	2	8	3	3	4	8	1 5	1 1	2	7	4	81	
organisation/pr esentation	1	2	4	2	3	3	1	4	5	5	9	6	2	4	4	55	
Sentence and paragraph structure: Cohesion	7	1 0	5	5	1 1	6	3	4	5	6	1 1	8	3	6	8	98	
Logical sequencing of ideas: Coherence	3	2	3	1	4	3	1	1	4	4	7	1	0	3	3	40	
Interesting & effective conclusion	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	5S 10 F	
Content	P	P	P	A	G	P	A	P	A	P	A	G	G	G	P	7P	

(originality, depth of thought, relevance & appropriateness)																4A 4G
Ability to communicate easily (clear and understood)	F	F	F	S	S	F	S	F	S	F	F	S	S	S	F	8F 7S
length	n	n	n	n	n	N	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Total	7 8	9 3	5 7	2 6	3 9	9 0	3 1	4 9	5 3	6 8	1 2 5	5 4	1 9	5 2	4 2	87 6

The Exam Papers’ Assessment: (continued) Table Two

	S1 6	S1 7	S1 8	S1 9	S2 0	S2 1	S2 2	S2 3	S2 4	S2 5	Tota l
Interesting & effective introduction that states the main idea	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	9S 1F
writing discourse (purpose)	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	8S 2F
handwriting	G	A	A	A	1	A	A	A	G	G	1IL
Spelling	6	2	7	9	8	17	2	2	4	1	58
Grammar	15	4	9	11	10	6	2	4	5	0	66
Punctuation	3	4	3	7	5	2	2	0	0	0	26
Register	14	6	3	3	3	5	2	1	3	2	42
repeated errors/referencing/care less errors	7	4	5	6	5	7	1	0	1	0	36
organisation/presentation	0	1	2	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	9
Sentence and paragraph structure:	5	8	6	6	8	4	1	4	1	1	44

Cohesion											
Logical sequencing of ideas: Coherence	0	0	2	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	10
Interesting & effective conclusion	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8S 2F
Content (originality, depth of thought, relevance & appropriateness)	G	G	A	A	A	A	G	G	G	G	0P 4A 6G
Ability to communicate easily (clear and understood)	S	S	F	F	F	S	S	S	S	S	3F 7S
length	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Total	50	29	39	47	50	46	10	11	14	04	300

3. Findings

	Total: 25 students	A
Interesting & effective introduction that states the main idea	18S 7F 0.59%	72% 28%
writing discourse (purpose)	16S 9F 0.76%	64% 36%
handwriting	5IL 0.42% 20 L	20% 80%
Spelling	238 20.22%	A14
Grammar	282 24%	A15
Punctuation	141 12%	A12
Register	91 7.73%	A10
repeated errors/referencing/careless errors	117 10%	A11
organisation/presentation	64	A9

	5.44%		
Sentence and paragraph structure: Cohesion	142 12%	A13	
Logical sequencing of ideas: Coherence	50 4.25%	A8	
Interesting & effective conclusion	13S 12F 1%	52% 48%	A7
Content (originality, depth of thought, relevance & appropriateness)	7P 0.59% 8A 10G	28% 32% 40%	A4
Ability to communicate easily (clear and understood)/organisation	14S 11F 1%	56% 44%	A6
length	n 0%		A1
Total	1176 100%		

S: succeed, F: fail, A: accepted, G: good, P: poor, L: legible, IL: illegible, n: not mentioned.



Qualitative variable



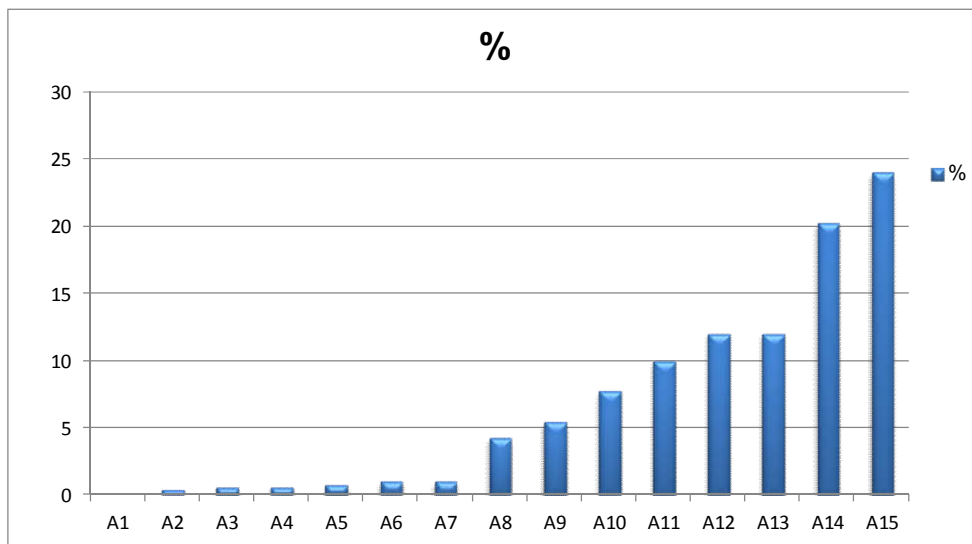
Quantitative variable (mechanics)



Calculated according to number of students (25)

Table Three: Rate of mistakes according to the selected criteria

The aforementioned table and the undermentioned diagram include the whole mistakes made by twenty-five (25) students in their writing during three exams (Anglo-saxon, Prgma-lingustics, and Contemporary USA), and the total is 1176 mistakes with an average of 47 mistakes for each student in a given exam. Taking into consideration exams that require answering through using brief paragraphs, 47 mistakes is too much; especially, a student has for instance made 125 mistakes in a short essay. In fact, this can mainly indicate that most students do not respect the writing process, i.e., they do not edit nor review their writing



Frequency of committed mistakes Vis-à-vis the selected criteria

Interpretation and Discussion: We, as previously mentioned, adopted assessment, which is described by Nation¹.

- The variable ‘Interesting and effective introduction’ that states the main idea shows that only 28% of the students failed in writing the introduction (opposed to 72% who succeeded), which is not significant, but also not negligible. This means that **some students really find it difficult to introduce their topic**, as the total absence of the key words in the introduction.
- On the other hand, many of them find difficulties to meet the discourse purpose 36% (opposed to 64%). In other words, they wrote in an inconsistent style (informal) such as the use of the reduced form in formal exams [don’t, it’s], sometimes, they were out of subject, and other times, they missed the writing skill (topic types: theory, process), i.e., **lack of the cohesive purpose**. For example, to the question “In what ways has Britain’s island position shaped its history and the identity of the people?” which may be initially answered by describing the physical structure or characteristics, many students spoke

¹ Nation, I.S.P. (2009). op.cit, p.123-126.

directly about the process of invasion (the successive conquerors). In other words, these students failed in matching the context validity of the task, i.e., they could not decode the wording of the question to perform in accordance to.¹

- Mechanics (handwriting, grammar, spelling, repeated errors, register, cohesion and coherence) were excessively found while assessing the exam papers. In fact, **they were the most committed mistakes [96.06%]** where grammar took a lead in classifying them [24%], which was followed by spelling [20.22%], then cohesion and punctuation [12% each], and then repeated errors [10%] and register [7.73%], and finally organisation/presentation [5.44%], coherence [4.25] and handwriting [0.42%]. (the above diagram) For instance, we found the following mistakes and errors: cans, cant not, to agreed, the Magna Carta it is, the use of adjective instead of noun: French rather than France, certain rules, omission of or inclusion of unnecessary words “...are many verbs / we can perform language...” “...performing / act /**from**/ which came...” repetition of the same error: ‘generale x 8’, ‘to mislinding x 3’, the use of inappropriate register like ‘thefts’ instead of ‘conquerors’, and misuse of punctuation: “...was signed in 1215. between Aristocracy and king John.” the misapplication of the structure: like to consider a sentence as a paragraph, etc. To sum up, there were many varied errors, no connection of some pieces, and some were poorly presented and organised; this means that **most students did not edit nor review their writing**. Furthermore, we may deduce that they failed to transform their ideas to a written text too.
- Despite the fact that coherence gives us a view about the organisation of the ideas, we deliberately assessed it in isolation through both variables ‘organisation/presentation’[5.44%] and ‘the ability to communicate easily’[44%] that can be interpreted as that many students still did not handle this step of the writing

¹ See context validity in D Shaw, Stuart & J Weir, Cyril. *Studies in Language Testing 26 Examining Writing-Research and practice in assessing second language writing*. Series Editors: Milanovic, Michael and J Weir, Cyril. University of Cambridge (first published 2007, reprinted 2008). Cambridge University Press.

process. A 1st year student's paper was impossible to comprehend:

“ The Britain it's a group of island position from each one we have many relationship between them the shaped many project because it is in the centre of earth it's like & one people they have the same history...they born in same planate a observe the same air.”

This so-called paragraph has no punctuation; in fact, it is a sentence, but even its structure is wrong. Could anyone tell what the idea of all that is? Herein, the student could not transform his/her ideas to a well written piece.

- **Handwriting [20%] was also a problem** since it is the only medium for communicating in a written exam. Accordingly, one student was writing between the lines, under them, or even on the upper side with an illegible script.
- The variable 'content' refers to shortage in mater of ideas [28%]. Some students wrote too brief essays because of lack of ideas, i.e., not having enough to say **shortage at the level of gathering ideas**.
- The absence of conclusion or the failure in how to write it properly has a considerable rate [48%]. This means that nearly half of our sample **did not well organise their timing. For that, they neither finished their writing, nor edited or reviewed it**. Indeed, there are a lot of repeated errors [10%], redundancy: “William I introduced Feudalism which the name of the system of government W I introduced it to England...”
- Referencing was totally absent though some quotations and indirect speeches were included. In other words, **students were neglectful in mentioning the sources**.
- The variable 'length' was not evaluated because it was not referred to in the studied exam papers.
- By referring to table 1 and 2, we notice that the rate of errors is reducing moving from student one to student twenty-five. Accordingly, we have classified them starting from 1st year students (10), passing by those of 3rd year (10), and ending by 1st year, master students (05). That is, 1st year students committed

higher numbers of mistakes (e.g. 93) than those of the master (04).

Conclusion

From studying the writing process of twenty-five (25) students during exams, we conclude that:

Mechanics were the most committed mistakes [96.06%]. This means that most students do not properly know how to organise their ideas while writing. In addition, they do not frequently edit and review their piece of writing. Sometimes, they find difficulties in transforming their ideas into a well-organised text. For that they could not communicate easily [44%].

On the other hand, a considerable number of students does not have enough to say, i.e., they do not gather sufficient ideas or fail to retrieve them. Therefore, 28% of students performed brief and/or poor contents, which is not to be neglected though it is a tiny rate in comparison with the other occurring mistakes [0.59%].

In addition, many students fail to *manage their timing* of exams. Accordingly, 48% of them do not conclude or write a poor conclusion. By behaving as such, they do not edit nor review too.

Furthermore, some students do *not focus on the writing purpose*. Indeed, 36% of them wrote in an inconsistent style (informal), did not consider the topic type (process, state situation, characteristics, etc), and lack the cohesive purpose (describe, analyse, etc).

Moreover, stating the main idea in the topic sentence and relating it with its supporting ideas was not easy for all students. 28% of them have deficiently introduced their subject.

Though its score is not significant [20%], *handwriting was a barrier to assess the written piece* since it is the only medium in a written exam. On the other hand, length could not be evaluated because teachers do not restrict the number of words that should be included in their exam papers.

Despite of the inclusion of some quotations and others' views and definitions, there was no reference to the sources. This is a clue to the absence of edition of writing. It must be a methodological mistake too.

Finally, we conclude that the different steps (sub-processes) of the writing process, which were described in Nation's book (2009), were mostly not respected by our informants. Consequently, shortage was found at the level of considering the goals of the writer (cohesive purpose), having a model of the reader (the formal style), gathering ideas, organising them, turning them to a written text, reviewing what has been written, and editing. The committed mistakes were decreasing while moving from one level to a higher one (from 1st year to 3rd year to 1st year master). This may be explained by the advantages of introducing the module of methodology to

the 3rd year and master students. However, other modules such as grammar and written expression are important in enhancing the students' performance too. Indeed, some students were brilliantly performing good pieces despite the occurrence of some mistakes, in fact as Cushing Weigle states, "writing can never be completely accurate (or proven)."¹ And models as Nation's writing process are helpful in knowing the factors that affect the writing process.

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