Strategy Training to Enhance Learners' Performance in Writing:

Strategy-Based Instruction in Writing

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Abstract

This paper tries to define the language learning strategies, to identify those required by the writing skill and to show our learners' need for strategy training in the skill. It also attempts to suggest some practical classroom activities that reduce learners' and teachers' anxiety and make both benefit from the classroom environment to enhance learners' writing process and production. Strategy-Based Instruction can be of help to both teachers and learners in order to develop self-monitoring and self/ peer evaluation skills through cooperative writing response groups.

Key Terms : Strategy-Based Instruction / self-monitoring cooperative writing response groups /continuous assessment / self - peer-assessment.

ملخص

يحـاول هـذا المقـال تعريـف اسـتراتيجيات تعلـم اللغـة، وتشـخيص تلـك التـي تتطلبهـا مهـارة الكتابة مع تبيان مدى حاجة طلبتنا للتمرن على تلـك الإسـتراتيجيات. بالإضـافة يقتـرح المقـال عددا من النشاطات العملية داخل القسـم التـي مـن شـأنها التخفـيض مـن تـوتر المـتعلمين والمعلمـين وتجعـل كلاهمـا يسـتفيد مـن محـيط القسـم لتحسـين عمليـة الكتابـة ومنتوجهـا، فالتعليم القائم على الإسـتراتيجيات سيسـاعد المعلمين والمتعلمين على تطوير خاصية المراقبـة الذاتية والتقييم الذاتي أو من طرف النظير مـن خـلال تشـكيل مجموعـات كتابيـة تعتمـد علـى التجاوب والتعاون.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language has grown through shifts of focus, from focus on the teacher and material, to that on the learner and the learning process. The cognitive theories of learning advocate that the learner plays an active decisive role in his/ her learning. The marriage between Psycholinguistics and pedagogical research put light on the learning strategies used by learners to acquire a language. What are language learning strategies and what is their importance in learning a foreign language?

Language Learning Strategies

Learning strategies have been defined in different ways. Cohen (1998:4-5) sees them as "learning processes which are consciously selected by the learner". The element of choice is stressed because it gives a strategy its special character. These conscious moves "may result in actions taken to enhance the learning or use of foreign language, through the storage, retention, recalled application of information about the target language." (Cohen et al 1998:4).

Practically speaking, learning strategies refer to "the specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford 1990; in Hsiao and Oxford 2002:369). Examples of these strategies are "seeking conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a different language task." (*ibid*). No matter how varied the definitions are, they all invoke notions of consciousness, problem orientedness, consistency of behavior, effectiveness and many others." (Mc Donough1999:51).

When we learn in general , "we use our minds, but also our feelings and our social and communicative skills in active ways." (Williams and Burden 1997 :144) in order to be effective. Unlike learning strategies which are seen as "optimal means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language" (Bialystok1978; in O'Malley and Chamot1999:10), learning styles are "a learner's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing , processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid 1995 ; in Clouston 2003:2). Learners have individual attributes to their learning process. Some rely on visual presentation, others on spoken language, and others learn better via hand on activities. Learning styles can be seen as the expression of personality specifically in the learning situation. Broom (1991) states that "Learning strategies do not operate by themselves, but rather are directly tied to the learners underlying learning styles (i.e their general approaches to learning) and other personality related variables such as anxiety and self-concept in the learner." (in Cohen et al 1998:15). In other words, a learning style has a significant influence on students choice of strategies because both styles and strategies affect learning outcomes (Oxford1989; in Djiwandono 2006:35). This implies that the students' preferences for interacting with their classmates and the types of learning strategies they employ to accomplish the tasks at hand are determined by their learning styles (*ibid*).

Characteristics of Language Learning Strategies
First, LLS are learner generated; it is the learner who resorts to them while learning. Second, they are used to enhance language learning. When used, they help in the development of language competence. This development is reflected in the learner's language four skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing in the L2. The third characteristic of LLS is that although these strategies are unobservable, they may have visible embodiment such as behaviours, steps, techniques…etc. Moreover, LLS involve information and memory of vocabulary, knowledge, grammar rules, etc…(Clouston2003:2). Some research (Oxford1990, wenden and Rubin 1978) insists on a desire for control and autonomy of learning on the part of the learner through LLS. (*ibid*).

The communicative approach to L2 teaching aims at the development of learner-centred curricula that will develop learner autonomy in learning. This autonomy will lead automatically to communicative competence in the L2. LLS can help students in doing so since they are tools for active, self-directed involvement essential for developing communicative competence; this gives them special importance, in the L2 learning context. The second point that gives LLS importance is that it is suggested that training students to use LLS can help them become better language learners. Teachers, then, can aid their students understand good LLS and train them in using them. (O'Malley and Chamot1990) study showed that effective L2 learners are aware of the LLS they use and why

[225]they use them. It is to be noted, however, that 'unsuccessful' language learners may be using the same strategies as those used by "successful learners but are less effective mainly because of the lack of "meta -cognitive" strategies that would enable them to assess their task and bring the necessary strategies for its completion." (Vann and Abraham1990; in Clouston 2003:3). The importance of LLS, therefore, lies in that they are a means of helping learners assess and improve their learning; they aid to build learner autonomy which requires the learner to take conscious control over his/her learning process. Learner autonomy is closely linked to the concept of self-regulation. It is the willingness to perform a language task with little or no assistance, with flexibility according to the situation, and with transferability to other contexts. Learning strategies free learners from over control and urge them to take the initiative for their success.

Strategy-Based Instruction
One of the most important characteristics of language learning strategies is that they "can be taught to L2 learners" (Chamot et al1998; in Chamot 2004:14). This belief gave rise to the strategy training movement or the Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI). SBI is a learner centered approach to teaching that extends classroom strategy training to include both explicit and implicit integration of strategies into the course content. The strategy training movement is predicated on the assumption that if learners are conscious about and become responsible for the selection, use and evaluation of their learning strategies, they will become more successful language learners.

The ultimate goal of strategy training is to empower students to become autonomous learners, able to understand the purpose and the process of learning and able to choose from available tools and resources. In other words , SBI aims to enable learners create a productive learning environment by improving their use of classroom time, completing home assignments and in class language tasks more efficiently .They may also enhance the target language use out of class to meet their individual learning needs of which they are completely aware. Since learners "need to know what their abilities are, how much progress they are making, and what they can (cannot yet) do with the skills they have acquired."(Blanche and Morino1989; in Cohen et al 1998:70), they ought to be provided with the L2 learner's "tool kit for active, conscious, purposeful and attentive learning [in order to] pave the way toward greater proficiency, learner autonomy and self-regulation" (Hsiao and Oxford2002:372).

The Writing Skill
Writing is a difficult skill not only for foreign learners [of a language], but also for its native speakers; only a few speakers of any language become writers. This is mainly due to the mental effort required by the skill. "It is by

the organization of our sentences into a text, into a coherent whole which is as explicit as possible and complete in itself, that we are to communicate successfully with our reader through the medium of writing." (Royn1982:01).

The difficulty of writing is due to three major problems the writer encounters while working. First, the psychological problems: writing is a solitary activity; that the writer does on his/her own without any kind of any other interaction. The reader is not present to give feedback that stimulates new ideas and clarifications of meaning. The writer is communicating to the space (Rivers 1968). A further source of difficulty in writing is the fact that writing is often imposed on us. This is why, we do not find what to say when we find ourselves at a lack of ideas and, even of words that we already know. Passing exams is the most familiar motive for learning to write. This decontextualizes the act and makes it senseless as it has no perspective of target audience. The second difficulty associated with this skill is linguistic. If ungrammatical and incomplete utterances are tolerated in speech due to the spontaneous nature of speaking, in writing we have to be clear and more grammatical in order to compensate for the absence of interaction. One has to keep the channel of communication open through one's own effort. To keep online with our reader, we have to carefully choose our sentence structures and to link them in an appropriate sequence so that our message is correctly interpreted. The third element that makes writing difficult is cognitive. While speech is acquired without conscious effort, writing has to be learnt through a process of instructions. The writer has to master a series of competencies required for successful communication through writing .These competencies range from the linguistic and discourse competences to the pragmatic and strategic ones which, altogether, constitute the communicative components of this skill. Moreover, one has to learn not only how to write but how to write what is worth writing. In addition, Leki (1991, cited in Yan, 2006:19) states that "the rhetorical conventions of English texts, the structure style and organization, often differ from the conventions in other languages. It requires effort to recognize and manage the differences", because in second language writing contexts, a learner needs to master different aspects of language writing, writers, as Hyland (2003:34) observes, "often carry out the burden of learning to write and learning English at the same time." All these difficulties explain, according to Purves why: "Texts produced by L2 writers are generally shorter, less cohesive, less fluent and contain more errors." (cited in Hyland, 2003: 34)

Parallel to the development of foreign language teaching methods, there has been a development in the approaches for teaching the writing skill. These approaches range from those which focused on how a final piece of writing will look like, and thus called 'the Product Approach', to others whose emphasis was put on how a writer produces such a text, so called 'the Process Approach'. Another view called 'the Genre Approach' stresses the

[227]analysis of the different types of text forms and the content they express to help learners communicate in writing. Termed by Badger and white (2000), the Process Genre Approach tries to combine the positive points of both approaches to forge a more practical and useful approach to teaching writing because we need not rigidly adopt just one approach in the writing classroom. The new approach allows students to study the relationship between purpose and form for a particular genre as they use the recursive processes of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing.

Each approach puts a particular emphasis on one facet of the text. The teacher's role, then, is to adopt "informed eclecticism" (Larsen-Freeman, in Ancker2001) which enables the teacher "to choose wisely from among the available practices to create his/her own unique blend that would be appropriate for his/her own personality and teaching style, for the environment in which the teaching is taking place"(*ibid*). The teacher's task is to look for the "teachable moment" (*ibid*) and to assign writing tasks that can "unite form and content, ideas and organization, syntax and meaning, writing and revising and above all, writing and thinking." (Raimes 1983:266

The Importance of Teacher's Response and Feedback
Our task as teachers of a foreign language is to help learners to acquire accuracy as well as fluency in the target language. Writing does provide feedback of the degree of fulfilment of our objectives. It is a means of communicating to the teacher not only content, but also how accurate and fluent the students are. The response to the message is crucial

Rivers (1968:307) remarks that "Ideally individual efforts at writing should be read by the teacher as soon as possible after completion." She advocates that "short writing assignments, given at frequent intervals and then carefully corrected and discussed, provide the most effective form of practice." She adds that teachers should follow an organized correction system to help them evaluate the work from all aspects. This system should be motivating and monitoring because it is very discouraging and disheartening to receive "a veritable forest of red marks and comments on a piece of writing over which we had toiled in the belief that we were achieving something worthwhile." (Rivers and Temperly 1978:231)

Using symbols and writing comments as a response to writing appears effective in that it involves the learner himself in the correction stage because correction is worthless if students just read the grade, if available, and simply "discard the paper, often in disgust at the injustice of receiving a low mark for an essay they had worked hard on."(Leki1990:62). Symbols and comments, if systematically used, will encourage self-correction. The latter will activate the learner's linguistic competence and foster language awareness through reflection. Self-correction and rewriting will consolidate and help internalize grammar rules and 'wean' students from dependency on the teacher. More important is the sense of self-sufficiency and confidence that learners will gain. Learners, hence, are given an opportunity

to learn from their mistakes. We may say that it is true that there may be cases for 100 percent correction, but over-correction is generally demoralizing. Teachers need to understand the sources of errors so that they can decide how, when, and to what extent they will respond to students' errors, the skill in correction, as Corder (1973:294) puts it, "lies in the direction of exploiting the incorrect forms produced by the learner in a controlled fashion."

Strategies Required for the Writing Skill

Writing is a multifaceted, complex skill; it requires the writer to master a number of sub-skills and strategies to be effective. It requires linguistic, discourse, pragmatic as well as strategic competencies. "Writing is a productive skill that is likely to be performed in isolation, with more complex syntax and extensive revision." (Ellis and Beattie 1986, in Matlin 2003:342). In writing as Raimes (1991, in Paltridge 1995:43) states, "the attention is given to form, content, writer, and reader". The writing act consists mainly of three phases: pre-writing or planning, sentence generating or the writing act itself, and revising or evaluating. Each of these phases requires different kinds of strategies.

Planning is the pre-writing step that effective writers go through. It is the phase where the writer makes the decisions of what the piece of writing will look like. It is believed that "the quality of writing is related to the amount and the quality of planning; outlining also improves one's writing" (Matlin 2003:347). The outline gives the writer clear guidelines that will help him achieve his objectives. Planning, of course, is a meta-cognitive strategy that sometimes "required greater cognitive load than others, mainly depending on the instructions for the writing task." (McDonough1986:55). If learners are provided with a general topic without any extra guidelines, they will find planning a difficult task, but providing some helping ideas will make the picture of the topic clearer and the emotional burden lighter; however, (Zamel 1983, in Graham 1997:64), argues that insisting that students make plans before writing can limit the flexibility of ideas, the interweaving between thinking, writing and rewriting which is the mark of the proficient composer. The second phase in the composing act is ideas generating. Ideas generating is a strategic effortful activity. It requires strategies for finding words the writer needs to express meaning. These strategies range from substitution, translation, transfer, resourcing and circumlocution/ rephrasing. These strategies or some of them, at least, may hinder the process of writing instead of making it easier. If learners, for instance, overuse translation and transfer, their compositions will be fragmentary and unstylish. (Graham 1997:67). Moreover, frequent pausing due to hesitation and uncertainty will interrupt the flow of writing. Cohen (1991, in Graham 1997: 68) found that ineffective writers seemed "to be so preoccupied by vocabulary, spelling and surface structure that they were unable to see that the inaccuracies in the phrases they produced prevented

[229]this meaning from emerging for the reader." Effective writers, however, tend to use strategies like reading their writings aloud to themselves to help them concentrate, and to ensure that what had been written sounded like correct in terms of words   linked together. No essay is perfect from the first draft. This is why monitoring is a primordial strategy in the writing activity. Monitoring involves a series of evaluation acts including the assessment of our outline, the accuracy, the clarity and fullness of our expressed meaning and the sophistication of the language used. Techniques of monitoring include auditory and visual monitoring; i.e. one revises his draft to see if it looked or sounded right. Referencing to rules or patterns to check the accuracy of our structures, we have to notice that effective writers focus, firstly, on meaning and content and then, on formal aspects (Graham 1997:65), whereas "ineffective writers devoted a great deal of effort to checking their work for surface errors as spelling" (Perl 1979, in Graham 1997:68). Proofreading is one of the most effective strategies used to evaluate writing people proofread other's writings more accurately than their own." (Matlin 2003: 347). It is important to stress that the three phases of writing are not linear but rather overlapping.

Strategy Based Teaching of Writing
Strategy Based teaching of Writing is predicated on the assumption that "more and less successful learners at varying levels of proficiency can learn how to improve their comprehension and production of a foreign language." (Cohen and Weaver 1998:07).Strategy Based Teaching of writing represents a shift of language instruction, towards the needs of individual learners. It helps them become aware of the strategies they use to approach a writing task, to evaluate their strategies' efficacy and to adopt new ones to improve their strategic performance in order to enhance their written production.

Instructors, in Strategy Based Teaching of Writing, proceed through studying the learners; their interests , their learning styles, their motivation and needs, the materials and one's own teaching so that focus can be put on the writing strategies within their specific context. First, learners are encouraged and assisted to identify their own writing strategies. Next, a range of new strategies is introduced and discussed to enable students to select new ones. Then, opportunities to practise and reinforce these strategies are provided to train learners to use them. Finally, pupils are urged to transfer the strategies to different contexts. Training is essential, mainly because the manner in which students use strategies is important to write effectively. "With some exceptions, the strategies themselves are not inherently good or bad ,but have the potential to be used effectively, whether by the same learner from one instance within an activity to another…or across learners." (ibid:02)

Effective writers focus firstly on meaning and then on format aspects. They are "able to employ strategies unconsciously, and then be able to call their meta-cognitive awareness into play as and when necessary when faced with a difficulty." (Williams and Burden 1997:155).This implies

identifying the strategies required by the writing skill and instructing and training learners to select the suitable ones for them.

Teaching and Assessing Writing in the Algerian Context
A Glance at *New Prospects*

Different from the previous textbooks, the new school manuals adopt a competency-based, learner-centred and project-geared approach (*New Prospects*, 2007:iv). *New Prospects*, the coursebook intended for the third year secondary level classes, consists of six units. Each unit is made up of two parts; language outcomes and skills and strategies outcomes. Writing is found everywhere throughout the unit and learners are made aware of its recursive nature in almost every writing task. In the "Think, Pair and Share" rubric, for instance and as its name suggests, students are invited to re-invest the language elements so far acquired in speaking or writing. They proceed by individually collecting ideas according to given instructions, then to exchange drafts with partners for error checking and finally to rewrite a revised version and present it to the class. This, of course, gives learners an immediate "safe" feedback and provides them with an equal-ranked authentic audience which reduces their frustration.

The second part of the unit is concerned with skills and strategies outcomes. Proceeding by an obvious integration of the skills, learners here are required to respond to problem solving situations .Here and there, hints are given about different types of discourse (p40). Guidance is also provided in planning, selecting, drafting, peer-assessment before handing the final draft to their teacher.(p41…)

The real writing task, however, comes through the project outcomes. Here, the learners are required to research and report. This research should, normally, develop via a three-steps plan throughout the unit; the project announcement, the class workshops and the report or presentation step. The project develops through "brainstorming, fact finding, organizing, writing up and assessing." (p vi)

In short, writing is dealt with differently. It is developed throughout the whole unit in a strategic way; explicitly and implicitly. It is integrated into each of the other language skills. Learners are urged to benefit from the class environment to address an audience less frustrating than the teacher, which reduces their anxiety and makes them concentrate on what to say rather than on how to say it. Then to seek their peers' assistance to assess their work and help them improve their drafts before handing them for the final 'judgement'. Explicit guidance about layout, planning, drafting, revising…is given here and there (pp. 40, 69, 95, 101, 130…).

In order to find out how familiar our students are with writing strategies after studying in The New Prospects, a questionnaire consisting of

[231]21 questions was designed to elicit information about students' use of strategies during the different phases of their composition. The questionnaire was distributed to 29 students of the first year English in the university centre of El-Oued .

The analysis of the questionnaire results shows that learners are using different writing strategies at varying rates. In the pre-writing phase (Q1-Q7), the strategies used need a sensitive analysis and evaluation together with the students. In collecting ideas, for instance, if only 33.82% write down any words and ideas that come to their minds, how do the rest proceed, especially that all of them claim that they do not start writing directly? In addition, planning can be helpful in the organization of the topic, but only one student reported using it as a strategy.When stuck while editing, students claim not writing any words in their mother tongue. This is not always beneficial since jotting a word in Arabic and continue writing can help in the smooth flaw of ideas similarly to keeping its place blank.This flaw should not be interrupted by stopping to look up unknown words in the dictionary adopted by 82.75% of the informants.Circumlocution can help in expressing one's ideas smoothly, still only one student reported using it.. Writing a whole paragragh in Arabic then translating it into English is a too effort consuming, a less fruitful strategy, however, 60.06% of the learners reported "sometimes" adopting it.Students are generally not aware of the rhetoric differences between their mother tongue and the target language, and after a big effort, they come up with a piece of writing that is meaningless and devaluated which leads, in most cases, to give up writing. Self monitoring through reading one's own writing is an effective strategy that is almost absent. Only one student admitted using it.The post writing phase; revising is dealt with in questions from 15 to22**.** Revision is done through a variety of strategies. Still they are not widely used. Two (2) to three (3) revisions cannot be enough and most students (68.06%) revise for local errors. Learners seem not familiar with strategies like reading aloud to check if their compositions sound appropriate. Only 13.79% report doing that.Another strategy adopted by effective writers is putting one's piece of writing aside and returning to check for errors later 24.13% only of my informants said they do it.

How to Teach Strategies in the Syllabus
As seen above, writing strategies are there. All teachers need to do is to get to know the syllabus they are dealing with and before that their learners and the strategies they are using. In addition, they need to be aware of their new roles because "As we move from sitting in judgement on our learners, we need to keep finding and researching creative and authentic ways to make their development the primary focus of the assessment process." (Carol 1997:03). In other words, teachers have to identify their learners' needs and find out where to introduce them in the syllabus if they are not already there. The mere presentation is not enough, exemplification is necessary and

exercise and practice are crucial. We need to create opportunities for our learners to invent the appropriate strategies for themselves. We have to take care as McDonough notes, "Because the nature of strategic behaviour is fluid, responsive to problems and dynamic, it would be no good teaching people to use certain strategies repeatedly in a rigid way since that would deny the dynamic nature of development.(in Gotterall and Crabbe 1999)

Others' Experience in Strategy-Based Teaching
Cooperative writing response groups and self-evaluation.
Benefiting from Bryans' (1996) cooperative response groups where groups of three or four students take turn to read their written work to the other group members who give their feedback in accordance with specific instructions, Porto (2001) turned the idea into a two-step procedure to name it cooperative writing response groups and self-evaluation. The procedure consists in selecting a topic through teacher/student negotiation. Then, learners develop the topic at home and bring their first draft to the writing response session. The first response is given to content; learners ask for clarifications/examples, suggest improvements, and give opinions…focusing mainly on the important thing(s) the writer says (content). This helps the author to find value in his/her piece and consider whether a section is (un)clear and if there is a room for different interpretations. The teacher now prompts self evaluation by encouraging learners to reflect over through responding in writing to some questions such as:

> -What do I do well as a writer?
> - What is the most recent thing I have learnt to do as a writer?

After redrafting the work in the light of the feedback obtained from group members, and their reflection, revision is now used in another cycle of cooperative writing response groups and self-evaluation focusing on grammar, mechanics, and style, following instructions like:

> -Write one word /expression you like. Why ?
> - What does the author say that is well-written?
> - Choose one or two sentences you think can be expressed differently/ make suggestions for improvements.

Porto remarks that this practice led to consciousness raising about the writing process. The students realized that different people approach writing in different ways.

Continuous Assessment
The term assessment, according to McTighe ant Ferrara (1994, in Carol 1997:03), "refers to the process of gathering and integrating information about learners from various sources to help us understand these students and describe them." The variety of sources enables us to have a more credible picture of our students since it follows their task development to see

[233]their strengths as well as their weaknesses and thus bring the appropriate assistance as soon as necessary without frustrating them. "Evaluation [however] is the process of making a judgement of a product, a response, or a performance based on criteria"(ibid) introduced and built into the instructional process, assessment is likely to reduce test takers' anxiety and confusion. With the new school reform, teachers need to focus on the developmental process not on the product only.They ought to move assessment from judgemental role to a developmental one. Continuous assessment combines both ongoing, informal assessment and evaluation *(ibid)*. It uses various devices such as journals, reading logs, work samples, teacher observation, interviews, questionnaires, learner profiles, portfolios…etc

Reform means change and change generally brings suspicion. Teachers need to familiarize themselves with new methods, new devices and adapt new roles since focus, now, is no longer on teaching, but rather on learning, learners and their learning styles and strategies. In writing, Carol (1997: ?) reports having experienced a continuous assessment programme of a five steps procedure using different techniques and devices such as self-assessment, peer assessment, assessment by lecturers, portfolios and reflective statement. Here is the summary of her experience:

A topic is selected together with the students since this increases learners' involvement and motivation. Carol believes that "Together with the learner, teachers can generate creative, authentic learning tasks that can be used as assessment tasks" (ibid:09). When learners write their first draft, they fill out a self-assessment sheet on their own topic .The sheet monitors the writer about form, content, coherence…etc. Now, learners redraft their work on the basis of this self-assessment and exchange drafts and fill out a peer-assessment sheet. They are encouraged to do their assessment in pairs or in groups. Each, then, rewrites his/her draft in light of the peer assessment and hand it, together with the two previous drafts to the teacher who assesses the whole work using an evaluating by lecturer form which considers what the learner did well, what is needed, evaluates the control of the English language, the self-assessment and the peer-assessment and gives a mark and a remark. At this level, learners keep their drafts packet in a portfolio and choose one draft to be typed and published and hands it, together with a one-page written reflection justifying their choice.(carol 1997, passim?)

This experience is worth considering, adapting and adopting since it clearly stresses the element of choice of the topic which motivates students and involves them in the task. Self-assessment monitors the content and the form of their written production and raises their awareness of the recursive nature of the skill. Peer-assessment, on the other hand, provides them with an authentic audience other than the space, or the red pen of the teacher and teaches them to consider their audience and the purpose of writing in their next tasks. The lecturer assessment provides an effective feedback as it takes into account the whole process. Collecting the different drafts keeps

evidence of the developmental process of the skill mainly to the learner and the written reflection urges learners to think over their work and to reconsider the different steps which is the core of strategic learning which will enable them to be autonomous.

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is a writing technique where "students write marginal annotations about problems in their evolving compositions to which the teacher responds also in writing." (Cresswell 2000:235) It steps through a three-phase procedure: raising awareness, demonstrating annotations, and evaluating them. By writing their annotations such as "I wonder if this is the right form, word… to use here" and "I am not sure if I have to start a new paragraph", students direct the feedback to their needs. They collaborate with the teacher to improve their written performance. Research shows that "The composition process…becomes blocked when language learners lack of linguistic resources. This leads them to abandon or simplify pre-verbal ideas"(ibid). By signaling the language problem together with their intention, their worry/block is removed and they feel free to continue, enabling the teacher to offer the appropriate help to each student. Annotations help the teachers know their students' hypotheses about language use in context and thus give informed correction, or positive feedback, to reinforce acquisition and establish the linguistic item in the productive repertoire.(Charle 1999, in Cresswell 2000)

To train learners use the technique, the teacher starts by demonstrating the importance of annotations and self-monitoring. Students then are invited to study a list of a self-monitored annotation and their purposes in order to provide them with a metalanguage resource. Students read and discuss a topic and write marginal annotations with the teacher available to give help with metalanguage. The teacher then evaluates whether these annotations help him/her to formulate a response clearly perceived by the student in the clarifying phase, and whether all major problems have been referred to by annotations. Like writing, annotating, evaluating ,feedback, clarifying… are recursive processes. Peers can share in evaluating annotations and giving feedback. The sensitiveness of the teacher is crucial to respond effectively to students' annotations. Questionnaires can be used as a follow up to elicit learners' needs/problems and to evaluate the clarity of the instructor's response and, of course, the effectiveness of self-monitoring. (Cresswell 2000,passim?)

[235]Conclusion

Foreign language learning and teaching moves towards encouraging learners' autonomy by inciting teachers to change their attitudes towards their concepts first, and to adopt the new roles they have to play as supervisors, co-operators and advisors and not as spoon feeders. Teachers need to discover their learners' needs, their potentialities and their preferences in learning in order to provide them with the suitable training that will enable them to carry on the learning process on their own wherever they are hence to be competent effective individuals able to plan their work, retest their hypotheses about learning and to step out of their production to evaluate it and to cooperate with others in order to bring necessary improvement.

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Appendix

Strategies Used by the Students for Writing.

Writing strategies used by students	N	%
1- Take their pens and start directly writing	00	00
2- Start thinking and collecting ideas.	29	100
3- Write any words/ideas that come to their minds.	13	44.82
4- Draw charts, maps and arrows.	11	37.93
5- Insist on writing full sentences.	02	06.89
6- Sometimes write notes in Arabic.	05	17.24
7- Plan and outline their essays.	14	48.27
8- Write unknown words in Arabic and continue writing.	00	00
9- Keep its place blank and continue writing.	03	10.34
10- Stop to look unknown words in the dictionary.	24	82.75
11- Paraphrase the unknown words./ Circumlocution.	01	03.44
12- Ask their teacher /peers.	08	27.58
13- Read the text to monitor and remember.	01	03.44
14- Sometimes write their paragraphs in Arabic then translate into English.	18	62.06
15-Revise their essays.	28	96.55
16- Revise only once.	09	31.03
17- Revise from two to three times.	20	68.96
18- Revise for content and ideas first.	11	37.93
19- Revise for form first.	18	62.06
20- Read their paragraphs to themselves aloud.	04	13.79
21- Give their essay to another to check for errors. –Always	05	17.24
-Sometimes.	20	68.96
-Never.	04	13.80
22- Sometimes put their paragraphs aside, then return to re-read them to check for errors.	07	24.13