Chapter Two

Literature Review & Previous Studies

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the issue of classroom action research and other related topics with some emphasis on the nature of writing mechanics as the thesis is geared to discussing how to enhance students' academic writing abilities. Important findings and arguments from opponents and proponents of an English-only teaching method will be discussed. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first one is on the theoretical framework, and the other is on previous studies.

2.1 Action research

Research is conducted in countless ways. Each of these ways is used in various professional fields, including psychology, sociology, social work, medicine, nursing, education and so on. However, the field of education often uses **action research**, an interactive method of collecting information that's used to explore topics of teaching, curriculum development and student behavior in the classroom.

Action research is very popular in the field of education because there is always room for improvement when it comes to teaching and educating others. Sure, there are all types of teaching methods of teaching in the classroom, but action research works very well because the cycle offers opportunity for continued reflection. In all professional fields, the goal of action research is to improve processes. Action research is also beneficial in areas of teaching practice that need to be explored or settings in which continued improvement is the focus.

Let's take a closer look at the cycle of action research. As you can see, the process of action research first starts with identifying a problem. Then, you should devise a plan for problem that's by collecting data, analysis this data, writing a report of results and taking action then implement the plan. This is the part of the process of action research where the action is taking place. After you implement the plan, you will observe how the process of action research is working or not working. After you've had time to observe the situation, the entire process of action research is reflected upon. Perhaps the whole process of action research will start over again! This is action research!

Practitioners are responsible for making more and more decisions in the operations of schools, and they are being held publicly accountable for student achievement results.

The process of action research assists educators in assessing needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analyzing data, and making informed decisions that can lead to desired outcomes.

To sum up, typically, action research is undertaken in a school setting. It is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the "research." Often, action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change.

2.2 What is not action research?

Action research is not what usually comes to mind when we hear the word "research." Action research is *not* a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us. It is *not* problem-solving in the sense of trying to find out what is wrong, but rather a quest for knowledge about how to improve. Action research is *not* about doing research on or about people, or finding all available information on a topic looking for the correct answers. It involves people working to improve their skills, techniques, and strategies. Action research is *not* about learning why we do certain things, but rather how we can do things better. It is about how we can change our instruction to impact students.

2.3 Learning Through Reflection

Most of us go through life viewing our experiences as isolated, unrelated events. We also view these happenings simply as the experiences they are, not as opportunities for learning. Psychologists refer to this type of life view as an "episodic grasp of reality" (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman, & Miller, 1980), and it is not a habit we want to pass along to children. Instead, we want students to get into the habit of linking and constructing meaning from their experiences. Such work requires reflection.

Reflection has many facets. For example, reflecting on work enhances its meaning. Reflecting on experiences encourages insight and complex learning. We foster our own growth when we control our learning, so some reflection is best done alone. Reflection is also enhanced, however, when we ponder our learning with others.

Reflection involves linking a current experience to previous learning (a process called *scaffolding*). Reflection also involves drawing forth cognitive and emotional information from several sources: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. To reflect, we must act upon and process the information, synthesizing and evaluating the data. In the end, reflecting also means applying what we've learned to contexts beyond the original situations in which we learned something.

2.3 Reflective Practices in Action Research

Action research is a form of staff development that encourages and develops the skills of educators to become more *reflective practitioners*, more methodical problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers (Sparks & Simmons, 1989). Sagor (2000) believed that an important purpose for action research was "building the reflective practitioner" (p. 7). He explained that "when reflections on the findings from each day's work inform the next day's instruction, teachers can't help develop greater mastery of the art and science of teaching" (p. 7).

In addition, Danielson and McGreal (2000), Kemmis and McTaggert (1990),
McNiff (1997), and Schon (1983, 1987) focused on the importance of teachers critically reflecting on their practice. Each asserted that teacher introspection and on-going discussion about their own practice were very important. The process of action research provides a structured, disciplined approach to reflecting about the

teaching and learning process. Danielson and McGreal (2000) stated, "Few activities are more powerful for professional learning than reflection on practice" (p. 24).

Likewise, Schon (1983, 1987) referred to the thinking practices that occurred while in the midst of teaching as reflection in action. He described this reflection in action as thinking about what one is doing while one is doing it. Reflection on action evokes thinking critically about one's actions after they have occurred. This type of reflection helps us gain a deeper understanding of what we already know. More recently,

Danielson and McGreal (2000) elaborated on the importance of reflection for professional growth and stated, "The very act of reflection, it appears, is a highly productive vehicle for professional learning" (p. 48).

2.4 Models of Action Research

Three primary models of action research define the steps similarly. These models of action research incorporate a process of five steps. While the models have a variety of differences, they share the steps of data collection and analysis, and taking action on an identified focus. As noted in Table 1, the Sagor Model, Kemmis and McTaggert Model, and Calhoun Model each are a unique variation of a five-step process.

Table 1

Five Step Action Research Processes

5 step process	Sagor Model	Kemmis and MCT aggert Model	Calhoun Model
Step 1	Problem Formulation	Planning	Selecting the Area of Focus
Step 2	Data collection	Acting	Collecting data
Step 3	Data analysis	Observing data	Organizing data
Step 4	Reporting of results	Reflecting	Analyzing and interpreting data
Step 5	Action planning	Re-planning	Taking action

Although each of the above models uses different words, in essence, they each include using data to act or react to a defined problem or area of concern. According to the above models, action research can be summarized as a spiraling process that facilitates planning, acting, collecting, observing, reflecting, analyzing, reacting, and evaluating in a manner that is systematic but flexible in nature. These spiraling cycles of query identification, observation, organized data collection, reflection, analysis, data driven action and problem redefinition identify action research.

2.4.1The Sagor Model.

Richard Sagor is an Assistant Professor of Education at Washington State University. Sagor (1992) suggested that the collaborative action research process has five sequential steps: (a) problem formulation, (b) data collection, (c) data analysis, (d) reporting of results, and (e) action planning. Researchers identify the issues to be studied in the

first step. During data collection, the individuals involved in the collection process devise a plan for collecting and assembling three sets of different data. This allows the researchers to compare and contrast the independent sets of data. Sagor believed that data collection is the heart of the five-step process. It is the data that enable the teacher to look at the issue through different lenses. Next the data are analyzed. "If data collection is the heart of the research process, then data analysis is its soul" (Sagor, 1992, p. 11). It is during this step that the researchers look for trends or patterns and draw conclusions. During the fourth step, the researchers communicate their results. It is here that the education profession can benefit and learn the most. "Thus, it is imperative that teams of action researchers find as many appropriate forums as possible to share what they are learning about teaching and learning" (p. 11). The last step is action planning. After completing the action research process, action plans are used to readdress the original problem and to improve schooling practices.

2.4.2 The Kemmis and McTaggart Model.

Stephen Kemmis is a professor at Deakin University in Geelong, Australia. Robin McTaggart is the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Staff Development and Student Affairs at James Cook University in North Queensland, Australia. Kemmis and McTaggart (1990) developed a five-step process of educational action research. Their five spiraling steps were (a) planning, (b) acting, (c) observing, (d) reflecting, and (e) re-planning. Educational researchers use the first step to plan how they will change or how they will address a specific issue of

concern. In the first step, the researchers develop their research question(s). The researchers implement the second step to take action and experiment with ways that may lead to solutions. The third step, observing, is important for data collection. It is during this step that the researchers record specific elements for a series of lessons. This allows the researchers to look for issues to be studied in the first step. During data collection, the individuals involved in the collection process devise a plan for collecting and assembling three sets of different data. This allows the researchers to compare and contrast the independent sets of data. Sagor believed that data collection is the heart of the five-step process. It is the data that enable the teacher to look at the issue through different lenses. Next the data are analyzed. "If data collection is the heart of the research process, then data analysis is its soul" (Sagor, 1992, p. 11). It is during this step that the researchers look for trends or patterns and draw conclusions. During the fourth step, the researchers communicate their results. It is here that the education profession can benefit and learn the most. "Thus, it is imperative that teams of action researchers find as many appropriate forums as possible to share what they are learning about teaching and learning" (p. 11). The last step is action planning. After completing the action research process, action plans are used to readdress the original problem and to improve schooling practices.

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2.4.4 The Calhoun Model.

Emily Calhoun is the Director of Phoenix Alliance, which provides long-term support to school districts, state agencies, and regional

agencies that are committed to improving student achievement through investing in staff learning at the school level. Calhoun has been a teacher at both the elementary and high school levels. Calhoun (1994) viewed action research as a vehicle to facilitate change through shared decision making within a school setting. Calhoun's process includes five sequential phases: (a) selecting the area of focus, (b) collecting data, (c) organizing data, (d) analyzing and interpreting data, and (e) taking action.

Calhoun (1994) stated that engaging in action research involves progressing through steps of inquiry: choosing a focus area, collecting and analyzing data, studying professional literature, best practices, and taking action. She also emphasized the importance of teachers studying and researching the professional literature that targets their area of focus. This critical reading provides the teacher researcher with a foundation and framework for further study.

2.5 Improving Teaching Quality in an Individual Classroom

Now, there are some strategies, classroom techniques and approaches which can be considered along with classroom action research to help boost the issue intended to be examined namely writing in the resent research. We may define good teaching as instruction that leads to effective learning, which in turn means thorough and lasting acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and values the instructor or the institution, has set out to impart. The education literature presents a variety of good teaching strategies and research studies that validate them (Campbell and Smith 1997; Johnson et al. 1998; McKeachie 1999). In the sections that follow, we describe several strategies known to be particularly effective.

2.5.1 Write Instructional Objectives

Instructional objectives are statements of specific observable actions that students should be able to perform if they have mastered the content and skills the instructor has attempted to teach (Gronlund 1991; Brent and Felder 1997). An instructional objective has one of the following stems:

- *At the end of this [course, chapter, week, lecture], the student should be able to ****
- *To do well on the next exam, the student should be able to ****

where *** is a phrase that begins with an action verb (e.g., *list, calculate, solve, estimate, describe, explain, paraphrase, interpret, predict, model, design, optimize,...*). The outcome of the specified action must be directly observable by the instructor: words like "learn," "know," "understand," and "appreciate," while important, do not qualify.

Following are illustrative phrases that might be attached to the stem of an instructional objective, grouped in six categories according to the levels of thinking they require.

1. **Knowledge** (repeating verbatim): *list* [the first five books of the Old Testament]; *state* [the steps in the procedure for calibrating a gas chromatograph].
2. **Comprehension** (demonstrating understanding of terms and concepts): *explain* [in your own words the concept of phototropism]; *paraphrase* [Section 3.8 of the text].

3. **Application** (solving problems): *calculate* [the probability that two sample means will differ by more than 5%]; *solve* [Problem 17 in Chapter 5 of the text].

4. **Analysis** (breaking things down into their elements, formulating theoretical explanations or mathematical or logical models for observed phenomena): *derive* [Poiseuille's law for laminar Newtonian flow from a force balance]; *simulate* [a sewage treatment plant for a city, given population demographics and waste emission data from local manufacturing plants].

5. **Synthesis** (creating something, combining elements in novel ways)**:** *design* [an elementary school playground given demographic information about the school and budget constraints]; *make up* [a homework problem involving material covered in class this week].

6. **Evaluation** (choosing from among alternatives): *determine* [which of several versions of an essay is better, and explain your reasoning]; *select* [from among available options for expanding production capacity, and justify your choice].

The six given categories are the cognitive domain levels of *Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom 1984). The last three categories--synthesis, analysis, and evaluation--are often referred to as the "higher level thinking skills."

Well-formulated instructional objectives can help instructors prepare lecture and assignment schedules and facilitate construction of in-class activities, out-of-class assignments, and tests. Perhaps the greatest benefit comes when the objectives cover all of the content

and skills the instructor wishes to teach and they are handed out as study guides prior to examinations. The more explicitly students know what is expected of them, the more likely they will be to meet the expectations.

2.5.2 Use active learning in class

Most students cannot stay focused throughout a lecture. After about 10 minutes their attention begins to drift, first for brief moments and then for longer intervals, and by the end of the lecture they are taking in very little and retaining less. A classroom research study showed that immediately after a lecture student recalled 70% of the information presented in the first ten minutes and only 20% of that from the last ten minutes (McKeachie 1999).

Students' attention can be maintained throughout a class session by periodically giving them something to do. Many different activities can serve this purpose (Bonwell and Eison 1991; Brent and Felder 1992; Felder 1994a; Johnson et al. 1998; Meyers and Jones 1993), of which the most common is the small-group exercise. At some point during a class period, the instructor tells the students to get into groups of two or three and arbitrarily designates a recorder (the second student from the left, the student born closest to the university, any student who has not yet been a recorder that week). When the groups are in place, the instructor asks a question or poses a short problem and instructs the groups to come up with a response, telling them that only the recorder is allowed to write but any team member may be called on to give the response. After a suitable period has elapsed (which may be as short as 30 seconds or as long

as 5 minutes—shorter is generally better), the instructor randomly calls on one or more students or teams to present their solutions. Calling on students rather than asking for volunteers is essential. If the students know that someone else will eventually supply the answer, many will not even bother to think about the question.

Active learning exercises may address a variety of objectives. Some examples follow.

- *Recalling prior material*. The students may be given one minute to list as many points as they can recall about the previous lecture or about a specific topic covered in an assigned reading.

- *Responding to questions*. Any questions an instructor would normally ask in class can be directed to groups. In most classes—especially large ones—very few students are willing to volunteer answers to questions, even if they know the answers. When the questions are directed to small groups, most students will attempt to come up with answers and the instructor will get as many responses as he or she wants.

- *Problem solving*. A large problem can always be broken into a series of steps, such as paraphrasing the problem statement, sketching a schematic or flow chart, predicting a solution, writing the relevant equations, solving them or outlining a solution procedure, and checking and/or interpreting the solution. When working through a problem in class, the instructor may complete some steps and ask the student groups to attempt others. The groups should generally be given enough time to think about what they have been asked to do

and begin formulating a response but not necessarily enough to reach closure.

- *Explaining written material*. TAPPS (thinking-aloud pair problem solving) is a powerful activity for helping students understand a body of material. The students are put in pairs and given a text passage or a worked-out derivation or problem solution. An arbitrarily designated member of each pair explains each statement or calculation, and the explainer's partner asks for clarification if anything is unclear, giving hints if necessary. After about five minutes, the instructor calls on one or two pairs to summarize their explanations up to a point in the text, and the students reverse roles within their pairs and continue from that point.

- *Analytical, critical, and creative thinking*. The students may be asked to list assumptions, problems, errors, or ethical dilemmas in a case study or design; explain a technical concept in jargon-free terms; find the logical flaw in an argument; predict the outcome of an experiment or explain an observed outcome in terms of course concepts; or choose from among alternative answers or designs or models or strategies and justify the choice made. The more practice and feedback the students get in the types of thinking the instructor wants them to master, the more likely they are to develop the requisite skills.

- *Generating questions and summarizing.* The students may be given a minute to come up with two good questions about the preceding lecture segment or to summarize the major points in the lecture just concluded

2.5.3 **Using Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning (CL) is instruction that involves students working in teams to accomplish an assigned task and produce a final product (e.g., a problem solution, critical analysis, laboratory report, or process or product design), under conditions that include the following elements (Johnson et al. 1998):

1. *Positive interdependence*. Team members are obliged to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part, everyone on the team suffers consequences.

2. *Individual accountability*. All team members are held accountable both for doing their share of the work and for understanding everything in the final product (not just the parts for which they were primarily responsible).

3. *Face-to-face promotive interaction.* Although some of the group work may be done individually, some must be done interactively, with team members providing mutual feedback and guidance, challenging one another, and working toward consensus.

4. *Appropriate use of teamwork skills.* Students are encouraged and helped to develop and exercise leadership, communication, conflict management, and decision-making skills.

5. *Regular self-assessment of team functioning.* Team members set goals, periodically assess how well they are working together, and identify changes they will make to function more effectively in the future.

An extensive body of research confirms the effectiveness of cooperative learning in higher education. Relative to students taught conventionally, cooperatively-taught students tend to exhibit better grades on common tests, greater persistence through graduation, better analytical, creative, and critical thinking skills, deeper understanding of learned material, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve, better relationships with peers, more positive attitudes toward subject areas, lower levels of anxiety and stress, and higher self-esteem (Johnson *et al.* 1998; McKeachie 1999).

Formal cooperative learning is not trivial to implement, and instructors who simply put students to work in teams without addressing the five defining conditions of cooperative learning could be doing more harm than good. In particular, if team projects are carried out under conditions that do not ensure individual accountability, some students will inevitably get credit for work done by their more industrious and responsible teammates. The slackers learn little or nothing in the process, and the students who actually do the work justifiably resent both their teammates and the instructor.

The following guidelines suggest ways to realize the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of cooperative learning (Felder and Brent 1994; Johnson et al. 1998; Millis and Cottell 1998; NISE 1997).

- ***Proceed gradually when using cooperative learning for the first time.*** Cooperative learning imposes a learning curve on both students and instructors. Instructors who have never used it might do well to try a single team project or assignment the

first time, gradually increasing the amount of group work in subsequent course offerings as they gain experience and confidence.

- ***Form teams of 3-4 students for out-of-class assignments.*** Teams of two may not generate a sufficient variety of ideas and approaches, teams of five or more are likely to leave at least one student out of the group process.

- ***Instructor-formed teams generally work better than self-selected teams.*** Classroom research studies show that the most effective groups tend to be heterogeneous in ability and homogeneous in interests, with common blocks of time when they can meet outside class. It is also advisable not to allow underrepresented populations (e.g. racial minorities, or women in traditionally male fields like engineering) to be outnumbered in teams, especially during the first two years of college when students are most likely to lose confidence and drop out. When students self-select, these guidelines are often violated. One approach to team formation is to use completely random assignment to form practice teams, and then after the first class examination has been given, form new teams using the given guidelines.

- ***Give more challenging assignments to teams than to individuals.*** If the students could just as easily complete assignments by themselves, the instructor is not realizing the full educational potential of cooperative learning and the students are likely to resent the additional time burden of having to meet with their groups. The level of challenge should not be raised by simply making the assignments longer, but by

including more problems that call upon higher level thinking skills.

- ***Help students learn how to work effectively in teams.*** Some instructors begin a course with instruction in teamwork skills and team-building exercises, while others prefer to wait for several weeks until the inevitable interpersonal conflicts begin to arise and then provide strategies for dealing with the problems. One technique is to collect anonymous comments about group work, describe one or two common problems in class (the most common one being team members who are not pulling their weight), and have the students brainstorm possible responses and select the best ones.

- ***Take measures to provide positive interdependence.*** Methods include assigning different roles to group members (e.g. coordinator, checker, recorder, and group process monitor), rotating the roles periodically or for each assignment; providing one set of resources; requiring a single group product; and giving a small bonus on tests to groups in which the team average is above (say) 80%. Another powerful technique is *jigsaw*, in which each team member receives specialized training in one or another subtask of the assignment and must then contribute his or her expertise for the team product to receive top marks.

- ***Impose individual accountability in as many ways as possible.*** The most common method is to give individual tests. In lecture courses, the course grade should be based primarily on the test results (e.g., 80% for the tests and 20% for team homework), so that students who manage to get a free ride on

the homework will still do poorly in the course. Other techniques include calling randomly on individuals to present and explain team results; having each team member rate everyone's contribution and combining the results with the team grade to determine individual assignment grades, and providing a last resort option of firing chronically uncooperative team members.

- ***Require teams to assess their performance regularly.*** At least two or three times during the semester, teams should be asked to respond to questions like "How well are we meeting our goals and expectations? "What are we doing well?" "What needs improvement?" and "What (if anything) will we do differently next time?"

- ***Do not assign course grades on a curve.*** If grades are curved, students have little incentive to help teammates and risk lowering their own final grades, while if an absolute grading system is used they have every incentive to help one another. If an instructor unintentionally gives a very difficult or unfair test on which the grades are abnormally low, points may be added to everyone's score or a partial retest may be administered to bring the high mark or the average to a desired level.

- ***Survey the students after the first six weeks of a course.*** As a rule, the few students who dislike group work are quite vocal about it, while the many who see its benefits are quiet. Unless the students are surveyed during the course, the instructor might easily conclude from the complaints that the approach is failing and be tempted to abandon it.

- ***Expect some students to be initially resistant or hostile to cooperative learning.***

This point is crucial. Students sometimes react negatively when asked to work in teams for the first time. Bright students complain about begin held back by their slower teammates; weaker or less assertive students complain about being discounted or ignored in group sessions; and resentments build when some team members fail to pull their weight. Instructors with experience know how to avoid most of the resistance and deal with the rest, but novices may become discouraged and revert to the traditional teacher-centered instructional paradigm, which is a loss both for them and for their students.

Cooperative learning is most likely to succeed if the instructor anticipates and understands student resistance: its origins, the forms it might take, and ways to defuse and eventually overcome it. Felder and Brent (1996) offer suggestions for helping students understand why they are being asked to work in groups and for responding to specific student complaints. These suggestions may not eliminate student resistance completely, but they generally keep it under control long enough for most students to start recognizing the benefits of working in teams.
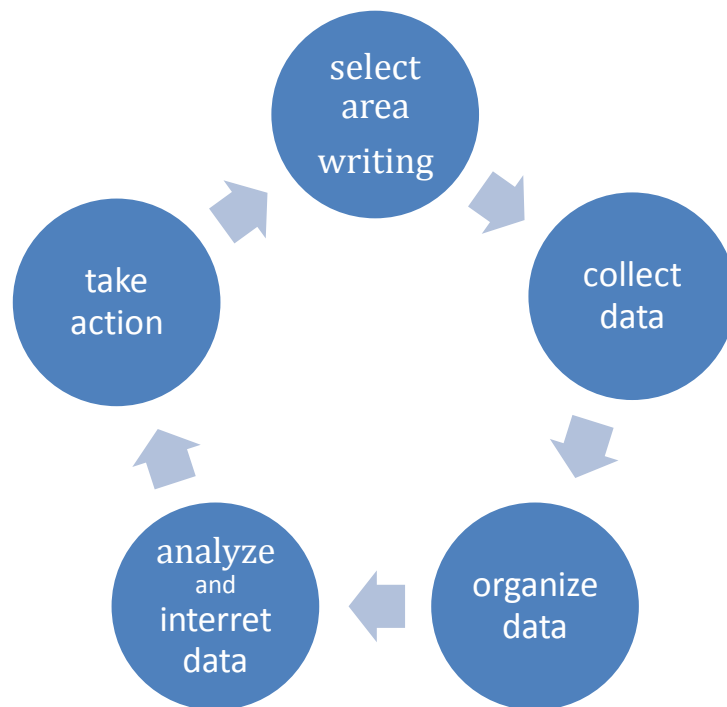
The Action research cycle

Figure No.3 Academic Writing (1996)

2.6 Academic writing

The issue to be handled here along the lines of CAR classroom action research is connected with academic writing at undergraduate level. The focus on academic writing processes is because of their importance in writing outcomes. The study will attempt to cover this issue thoroughly trying to find different types of writing and what writing processes should involve. To do this, the study will make use of the relevant literature in the field and various data collection techniques that will be used in this study. Based on the expected results, the study will eventually suggest ways to enhance and promote effective writing processes and suggest remedy for the ineffective ones.

Classroom observation and English teachers' reports, in addition to third year secondary students' low achievement in English writing show that students face writing difficulties either to lack of awareness of writing processes or inappropriate use of them. The researcher, being a teacher of English for nearly thirty years, thinks that this weakness is a crucial result of adopting traditional approaches that mainly focused on the product of writing which resulted in restricting students in what they can write, and encouraging them to use and memorize the same forms of writing regardless to content. White (1988), Jordan (1997), and Escholz(1980) argue that adopting the product approach encourage students not to produce texts but to focus on model, form and duplication.

Thus, this study focuses on what goes on before students write. In other words, the study focuses on the writing processes that will enable students to make clear decisions about the direction of their writing by means of brainstorming, drafting and feedback.

More importantly, the study attempts to find better ways to train and encourage students to use good writing processes to ensure good writing products and bearing greater responsibility for making their own improvements.

To achieve this goal, the study attempts to analyze and evaluate the academic writing processes at undergraduate level to find out what writing processes they use. On one hand, enhance good writing processes, and on the other hand, suggest remedy for the ineffective ones.

2.6.1 What is writing?

Lindemann (2001) defines writing as"a process of communication that uses a conventional graphic system to convey a message to a reader"(p.10). When people write, they use graphic symbols: that is,

letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds people make when they speak. According to Byrne (1991), writing can be said to be, "the act of forming these symbols: making marks on a flat surface of some kind." (P.1). The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences (Byrne, 1991).

Writing is an intricate act of meaning making (Elbow, 1986). It is a complex process of problem solving involving memory, planning, text generation, and revision (Flower & Hayes, 1981). A unique language act, writing requires thinking methods different from those used for listening, reading, or speaking (Emig, 1983). As well as being the means through which testing and assessment of learning regularly take place, for the learner writing is an important skill in supporting other learning experiences, " as a mean of recording assimilating and reformulating knowledge, and of developing and making through his or her own ideas. It may be a means of personal discovery, of creativity and self-expression." (Johnson 1999.359). According to (Keith, J.& Helen, J. 1999) writing is viewed as, " a problem-solving cognitive activity, involving strategies of goal-setting, idea generation, organization, drafting, revising and editing   (p.346).

2.6.2 Why writing is difficult

Many professional writers believe that writing is a difficult activity for most people. According to (Yavuz&Genc, 1998), most students, low and high achievers alike, find writing difficult and view it as something they just have to persevere through in order to pass certain exams (cited in Al Asmari, 2013). Byrne (1991) attributes this to three factors:

1. Psychological factors: As we use speech as a normal medium of communication in most circumstances, we normally have someone physically present from who we get feedback. Writing, on the other hand, is essentially a solitary activity and the fact that we are required to write in our own makes the act of writing difficult.

2. Linguistic factors: As oral communication is sustained through a process of interaction, the participants often help to keep it going. Because speech is normally spontaneous, people pay little attention to organizing their sentence structure or connecting their sentences. Through interaction, people can repeat, backtrack or expand depending on how other people react to what they say. Unlike speech, in writing, people have to compensate for absence of speech features. To keep the channel of communication open, people have to use their own efforts. They have to ensure that the text they produce can be interpreted on its own through the choice of sentence structure and by the way how sentences are linked together and sequenced.

3. Cognitive factor: People grow up learning to speak and in normal circumstances; people spend much of their time doing it. People appear to speak without much conscious effort or thought and generally they talk because they want to. People usually talk about matters which are of interest and relevant to their social affairs or professions. Writing, on the other hand, is learned through a process of instruction. In order to write, people have to master the written form of the language, and to learn certain structures which are less used in speech, but are important for effective communication in writing. Also, people have to organize their ideas in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present. To many people, writing is a task which is often

imposed on them. In many situations, people find it difficult: what to write. For many of us, being at a loss for ideas is a familiar experience especially when are obliged to write. According to Hedge (2010), writing is a difficult task to large numbers of English-language students. He agrees with Byrne that a writer is unable to exploit all the devices available to speaker such as gesture, body movement, facial expression, tone of voice, stress, and hesitation. Hedge (2010), stated that:

> Effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of information, ideas or arguments; a high degree of accuracy; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and a careful choice of vocabulary, grammar patterns, and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers. (p.7)

2.6.3 Why do people write?

People write for different reasons. Hedge (2005) summaries different reasons for writing:

- for pedagogicpurposes, to help students learn the system of language;
- for assessment purposes, as a way of establishing a learner's progress of proficiency
- for real purposes, as a goal of learning, to meet students' needs
- for humanistic purposes, to allow quieter students to show their strengths
- for acquistional purposes, as a careful mode of working with language which enables students to explore and reflect on language in a conscious way

- for educational purposes, to contribute to intellectual development and to develop self-esteem and confidence.

Hedge argues that a good deal to writing in the English-language classroom is undertaken for the first purpose listed above, as an aid to learning. This type of writing allows students to see how they are progressing and to get feedback from the teacher, and it allows teachers to monitor and diagnose problems.

2.7 Principles for Teaching Writing

The following principles can be used to evaluate teaching and learning activities so that the best are chosen for use. The principles can also be used to evaluate a writing course or the writing section of a language course to make sure that learners are getting a good range of opportunities for learning. Within each strand the principles are ranked with the most important principle first.

2.7.1 Meaning-focused Input

• Learners should bring experience and knowledge to their writing. Writing is most likely to be successful and meaningful for the learners if they are well prepared for what they are going to write. This preparation can be done through the choice of topic, or through previous work done on the topic either in the first or second language. We will look at experience tasks later in this chapter.

2.7. 2 Meaning-focused Output

• Learners should do lots of writing and lots of different kinds of writing. There are many elements of the writing skill which are peculiar to writing and so time spent writing provides useful practice for these elements. This is a very robust principle for each of the four skills. Different genres use different writing conventions and draw on

different language features (Biber, 1989) and so it is useful to make sure that learners are getting writing practice in the range of genres that they will have to write in. Bellow a topic type describes one approach to different kinds of writing.

• Learners should write with a message-focused purpose. Most writing should be done with the aim of communicating a message to the reader and the writer should have a reader in mind when writing. In the following parts we will look at ways of doing this.

• Writing should interest learners and draw on their interests.

• Learners should experience a feeling of success in most of their writing.

• Learners should use writing to increase their language knowledge. The section on guided tasks in this part focuses on this.

• Learners should develop skill in the use of computers to increase the quality and speed of their writing. As we shall see, computers provide very useful ways of providing feedback, especially when the learners submit their writing as a computer file.

• Writing instruction should be based on a careful needs analysis which considers what the learners need to be able to do with writing, what they can do now, and what they want to do.

2.8 Language-focused Learning

• Learners should know about the parts of the writing process and should be able to discuss them in relation to their own and others' writing.

• Learners should have conscious strategies for dealing with parts of the writing process.

• Where the L1 uses a different script or where learners are not literate in their L1, the learners should give attention to clarity and fluency in producing the form of the written script. Such activities can include careful writing, copying models, and doing repetitive writing movements.

• Spelling should be given an appropriate amount of deliberate attention largely separated from feedback on writing. We have already looked at the teaching and learning of spelling in Chapter 2.

• Teachers should provide and arrange for feedback that encourages and improves writing. Chapter 10 looks at responding to written work.

• Learners should be aware of the ethical issues involved in writing.

2.8.1 Fluency Development

• Learners should increase their writing speed so that they can write familiar material. The following section looks at how tasks can be designed.

2.8.2 Designing Tasks

Imagine that a teacher wishes to help learners in her class improve their writing skills. To do this she will get them to work on writing tasks that will take them beyond their present level of proficiency. But to make sure that the learners are successful in doing the tasks, she may have to provide some help. There are several ways in which she could do this.

1. She could think of a topic that the learners are very familiar with, such as a recent exciting event. She then gets the learners talking

about the event so that the ideas and the organisation of the ideas are clear and so that the learners have an oral command of the language needed to describe the event. When all this previous knowledge has been stimulated, the learners are then told to put it in writing. As the ideas, organization and necessary language are all familiar to them, the learners have only to concentrate on turning these ideas into a written form.

2. The teacher could think of a topic and then put the learners into groups of three or four. Each group has to plan and produce one piece of writing. By helping each other, the learners in each group are able to produce a piece of writing that is better than any one of them could have produced by working alone.

3. The teacher finds or makes a guided composition exercise, such as a series of pictures with accompanying questions and useful language items.

4. The teacher chooses a topic and then lets the learners get on with their writing. They may ask for help if they need it, but they are mainly left to work independently. These four kinds of tasks are called experience tasks, shared tasks, guided tasks, and independent tasks.

One way to look at these types of tasks is to see their job as dealing with the gap which exists between learners' present knowledge and the demands of the learning task. Experience tasks try to narrow the gap as much as possible by using or developing learners' previous experience. Shared tasks try to get learners to help each other cross the gap. Guided tasks try to bridge the gap by providing the support

of exercises and focused guidance. Independent tasks leave learners to rely on their own resources.

2.9 Experience Tasks

A very effective way of making a task easier is to make sure that the learners are familiar with as many parts of it as possible. This has several effects. First, it makes sure that learners are not overloaded by having to think about several different things at the same time. Second, it allows the learners the chance to concentrate on the part of the task that they need to learn. Third, it helps the learners perform a normal language activity in a normal way with a high chance of success.

2.9.1 Bringing Tasks within the Learners' Experience

One of the most common examples of an experience task in foreign language learning is the use of graded readers. Once learners have a vocabulary of 300 words or more, they should be able to read Stage 1 graded readers because these are written within that vocabulary level. Normally, such learners would not be able to read books written in English because unsimplified texts would be far too difficult for them. However, because

Stage 1 graded readers use vocabulary that is familiar to the learners, use familiar sentence patterns, and involve simple types of stories, elementary learners are able to read Stage 1 readers without too much difficulty and with a feeling of success. The task of reading a graded reader is made easier because the writer of the graded reader has brought many of the parts of the task within the learners' experience.

In Chapter 2 we saw another way of doing this for reading which is often used in New Zealand primary schools. The teacher sits with a

learner who has just drawn a picture. The learner tells the teacher the story of the picture and the teacher writes down the learner's story in the learner's words. This story then becomes the learner's reading text. It is not difficult for the learner to read because the language, the ideas in the story, and the sequence of ideas in the story are all within the learner's experience. The unfamiliar part of the task, which is also the learning goal of the activity, is the decoding of the written words.

Here is an example of how a writing task could be brought within the learners' experience. The learners are given a task to do which involves some reading and a following problem-solving activity that they have to write up. After doing the reading, the learners get together in first language groups and discuss the reading and the activity they will have to do in their first language. When they are satisfied that they have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, they then individually do the activity and write it up in English. The discussion in the first language makes sure that they truly understand the knowledge needed to do the task and the nature of the task.

There are several ways of presenting or controlling a task so that much of it is within the learners' experience.

Making Sure Learners have the Experience to do a Task

If learners do not have enough experience to do a task, then either the task can be changed so that it is brought within their experience, or the learners can be provided with the experience which will help them do the task. A common way of providing learners with experience is to take them on a visit or field trip. For example, the

teacher may take the class to a fire station. While they are there, they find out as much as they can about the fire station. They may even have a set of questions to answer. After the visit the writing task should be easier because the learners have experienced the ideas that they will write about, they have used or heard the language items that they need in the writing task, and they can choose how they will organise the writing. Their only difficulty should be putting the ideas into a written form and this is the learning goal for the task. Learners may already have experience that they can draw on, but 1they are not aware of the relevance of this experience or their knowledge of the experience is largely unorganised. By discussing and sharing experience, learners can prepare themselves for certain tasks. A more formal way of providing learners with experience to do a task is by pre-teaching. For example, before the learners read a text, the teacher can teach them the vocabulary they will need, can give them practice in finding the main idea, or can get them to study some of the ideas that will occur in the text.

Table 7.1 shows the three main ways of making sure learners have the experience needed to do a particular

Table 1 Ways of Providing Experience

_____

Control through selection or simplification

Using simplified material

Using carefully graded material

	Using learner produced material
	Using material based on first language material
Recall or sharing of previous experience	
	Discussions and brainstorming
	Questioning peers
Pre-teaching or experiencing teaching of sounds, vocabulary, grammar,	Direct
	text types . . .
	Visits and field trips
	Direct teaching of content

task. Experience tasks are ones where the learners already have a lot of the knowledge needed to do the task. Preparation for experience tasks thus involves choosing topics that the learners already know a lot about, providing learners with knowledge and experience to use in their writing and, through discussion, stimulating previous knowledge relevant to the writing task. Here are some experience tasks for writing:

In **draw and write** the learners draw a picture about something that happened to them or something imagined, and then they write about

it, describing the picture. The picture provides a way of recalling past experience and acts as a memory cue for the writing.

Linked skills tasks are the commonest kinds of fluency task. The writing task is set as the final activity in a series that involves speaking about, then listening to and then reading about the topic. By the time they get to the writing task, the learners have a very large amount of content and language experience to draw on. Such linked skills activities fit easily into theme based work (Nation and Gu, 2007).

In **partial writing**, working together the learners list useful words that they will need in the following writing task.

Ten perfect sentences involves the teacher showing the learners a picture or suggesting an easy subject like my family, cars, etc., and the learners must write ten separate sentences about that. They are given one mark for each correct sentence. At the beginning of a course, each learner chooses a topic that they will research and keep up-to-date each week during the course. This recording of information is their **issue log**. At regular intervals they give talks to others about their topic and prepare written reports.

Setting your own questions is an amusing activity. Each student produces the question they want to write about. This is then translated into good English and is made into an examination question which the students answer under examination conditions (McDonough, 1985).

2.10 Shared Tasks

A task which is too difficult for an individual to do alone may be done successfully if a pair or group does it. A well-known example is group composition where three or four learners work together to produce a

piece of writing that is superior to what any one of the group could do alone. There are several reasons why this happens, particularly in second language learning. First, although learners may be of roughly equal proficiency, they will certainly have learnt different aspects of the language (Saragi et al., 1978). Second, although learners may know a particular language item, they may find difficulty in accessing it. The prompting and help of others may allow them to do this. Third, where groupscontain learners of differing proficiency, there is the opportunity for more personalised teaching to occur with one learner working with another who needs help.

Many experience tasks and guided tasks can be done in a group, thus increasing the help that learners are given with the tasks. Most shared tasks have the advantages of requiring little preparation by the teacher, reducing the teacher's supervision and marking load, and encouraging the learners to see each other as a learning resource.

When doing a **reproduction exercise** the learners read or listen to a story and then they retell it without looking at the original. This type of composition is easier if the learners are allowed to read or listen to the story several times, before they write it. The teacher can tell the learners to try to write the story so that it is very similar to the original, or to add extra details and make changes if they wish. The same technique can be used with spoken instead of written input. The teacher reads a story to the class. After they have listened to the story, they must write it from their memory. If the teacher wants to give the learners a lot of help, the teacher reads the story several times, but not so many times that the learners can copy it exactly. As

the learners cannot remember all the words of the story, they have to make up parts of it themselves. This gives them practice in composition. This exercise is sometimes called a **dicto-comp** (Ilson, 1962; Riley, 1972; Nation, 1991), because it is half-way between dictation and composition. Marking is easy.

The exercise can be made more difficult to suit the abilities of the learners. Here are three different ways of doing this, the second way is more difficult then the first, and the third is more difficult than the second.

1. The teacher reads a short passage several times.

2. The teacher reads a long passage once or twice. The learners can take notes while the passage is being read.

3. The learners listen to the passage once. When they write they must try to copy the style of the original (Mitchell, 1953).

This activity is called a **dicto-gloss** (Wajnryb, 1988 and 1989) if it is done as group work and if the learners take notes during two listening sessions.

To make a **blackboard composition** the whole class works together. The teacher or the learners suggest a subject and a rough plan for the composition. Members of the class raise their hands and suggest a sentence to put in the composition. If the sentence is correct it is written on the blackboard. If it is not correct, the class and the teacher correct it and then it is written on the board. In this way the composition is built up from the learners' suggestions and the learners' and the teacher's corrections. When the whole composition is finished, the learners read it and then it is rubbed off the

blackboard. The learners do not copy it in their books before this. Then the learners must rewrite it from memory. This last part can be done as homework (Radford, 1969). The teacher has only to prepare a subject. Marking is easy as the learners usually make very few mistakes when rewriting.

The learners are divided into groups for **group-class composition**. The teacher gives the subject of the composition and then the learners in their groups discuss and make a list of the main ideas that they will write about. Then the teacher brings the class together and, following the learners' suggestions, makes a list of the main ideas on the blackboard. After this is discussed, the learners return to their groups and write a composition as a group. When the composition is finished each member of the group makes a copy of the composition. Only one copy is handed to the teacher for marking. The learners correct their copies by looking at the marked copy when the teacher gives it back to them. It is useful if they discuss the teacher's corrections in their groups.

In **group composition**, the learners are divided into groups or pairs. Each group writes one composition. Each learner suggests sentences and corrects the sentences suggested by the other learners. When the composition is finished, each learner makes a copy but only one composition from each group is handed to the teacher to be marked. When the composition has been marked, the learners correct their own copy from the marked one. The teacher just has to suggest a subject. Marking is usually easy because the learners correct most of the mistakes themselves before the composition is handed to the teacher. The teacher marks only one composition for each group.

When **writing with a secretary**, the learners work in pairs to do a piece of writing. One member of the pair has primary responsibility for the content and the other has to produce the written form.

2.10.1 Guided Tasks

Most course books make tasks easier by using exercises that carefully guide the learners. This usually has the effect of narrowing the task that the learners have to do. For example, guided composition exercises, such as picture composition, provide the ideas that the learners will write about. The exercises often provide needed vocabulary and structures and determine how the piece of writing will be organized. The learners' job is to compose the sentences that make up the composition. Guided tasks provide a lot of support for the learners *while* they do the task. This has several effects.

1. First, as we have seen, the task is narrowed. That is, the learners only do a part of the work that would normally be required in such an activity. This is good if that part of the task is worth focusing on and helps learners achieve a useful learning goal. It is not good if the narrowed task results in learners doing things that bear little relation to the normal wider task. Substitution exercises have often been criticized for this reason.

2. A second effect of the support given during guided tasks is that it allows grading and sequencing of tasks. Experience tasks require the teacher to be sensitive to learners' familiarity with parts of a task and to provide and stimulate previous experience where necessary. Guided tasks, on the other hand, are designed so that guidance is provided as a part of the activity. It does not have to be provided by the teacher. For this reason, most course books for English language

teaching contain a lot of guided tasks. For the same reason, teachers may be reluctant to make their own guided tasks because of the amount of skill and work that has to go into making them.

    3. A third effect of the support given during guided tasks is the high degree of success expected. If learners make errors in guided tasks this is often seen as a result of a poorly made task; that is, the guidance was not sufficient.

There are several types of guided tasks which can work at the level of the sentence, paragraph or text.

Identification

In identification techniques the learners are guided by being presented with an item which they must repeat, translate, or put in a different form with a related meaning to show that they have understood or correctly perceived the item, or to show that they can produce the related foreign language item. Dictation, copying, and writing from information transfer diagrams are identification techniques. Identification techniques can also include translation from the first language.

In **translation** the learners translate sentences or a story into English. This exercise is easier if the story is specially prepared by the teacher so that it contains very few translation problems.

With **look and write** the teacher performs an action, or shows the learners a picture of a real object, and the learners write a sentence to describe what they see. This is easier for the learners if the teacher gives them an example of the sentence pattern.

For **picture composition** the teacher shows the learners a picture or a series of pictures. Under the picture there are several questions. By answering the questions with the help of the picture, the learners can

write a composition. If the teacher wishes to make it easier for the learners, the learners can answer the questions aloud around the class before they do any writing.

The **delayed copying** technique is designed to help learners become fluent in forming letters and words, especially where the writing system of the second language is different from that of the first language. It also helps learners develop fluent access to phrases. The learners have a paragraph on a piece of paper next to them. They look at a phrase, try to remember it, then look away and write it. They should only look at each phrase once, and they should try to break the work into phrases that are as long as they can manage (Hill, 1969). This exercise is even better if the learners pause while not looking at the passage before they write the phrase. This delay accustoms them to holding English phrases in their head. This technique is similar to the read-and-look-up technique (West, 1960: 12–13) and could be called the look-up and write technique. Copying letter by letter, or word by word is of little value in improving a learner's knowledge of English. Any passage that contains known words and sentence patterns can be used for delayed copying.

2.11 Understanding Explanations

In some techniques the learners follow explanations and descriptions and act on them. Here are some examples. (1) The teacher explains a grammar rule to help the learners make correct sentences following a rule. The teacher says, "When we use going to talk about the future, going to is followed by the stem form of the verb, for example, I am going to see it. The subject of the sentence should agree with the verb to be which comes in front of going to. Now you make some

sentences using going to." (2) The teacher tells the learners a rule, for example a spelling rule or a rule about singular countable nouns, and the learners apply the rule to some material.

2.12 Writing with grammar help

This type of writing involves guided compositions which are based on special grammar problems. Usually the rules are given first for the learner to study and then they must use the rules when doing the composition. Here is an example based on countable and uncountable nouns. The first part just deals with countable nouns. The second part deals with uncountable nouns and the third part mixes both together. Only part one is shown here. Other exercises like this can be made for verb

groups, joining words, *a* and *the*, and so on

To make this exercise, the teacher finds a story that is not too difficult for the learners, and takes out certain words.

Countable nouns

1. Countable nouns can be singular or plural.
2. A singular countable noun must have *a*, or *the*, or a word like this,

3. *Many*, *several*, *both*, *a few*, *these*, *those*, *two*, *three*, etc. are only used in front of plural countable nouns.
4. *Each*, *every*, *a*, *another*, *one* are only used in front of singular countable nouns.
5. *People* is a plural countable noun.

Uncountable nouns

1. Uncountable nouns cannot be plural.
2. Sometimes an uncountable noun does not need *the*, *this*, etc. in front of it.
3. *Much* is only used in front of uncountable nouns.

Part 1

All these words are countable nouns. Put them in the correct place in

---

the story. You must use some of the words more than once. Follow the rules for countable nouns.

language, country, word, kind, world, people, dictionary.

_____living in different_____ use different _____ of words Today there are about 1,500 different in the_____ . Each _____has many_____ . A very big English dictionary has four or five hundred thousand words. Nobody knows or uses every_____ in a dictionary like this. To read most books you need to know about five or six thousand words. The words that you know are called your vocabulary. You should try to make your vocabulary bigger. Read as _____many as you can. There are many_____ in easy English for you to read. When you meet a new_____, find it in your_____.

Answering Questions

In some guided tasks the guidance comes through questions. True/false statements are included in this type. Questions can be asked or answered in the first language. For example, in some reading courses where writing is not taught, questions on the reading passage are written in English but the learners answer in their first language. The questions can also be asked or answered by means of pictures and diagrams. Learners can take the teacher's place and ask the questions while the teacher or other learners answer them. There is a wide variety of question forms and types. Stevick's (1959) excellent article on teaching techniques describes some of these.

In **answer the questions** the teacher writes several questions on the blackboard. These questions are based on a story that the learners have just heard or read, or have heard or read several days ago. The answers to the questions give the main ideas of the story. The learners answer the questions and add extra ideas and details if they are able to. The composition is easier if the learners have heard or read the story recently and if there are many questions. It is easy for

the teacher to make the questions because they can be closely based on the original story. When marking the teacher should allow the learners to change and add things as they wish.

The composition can be based on the learners' own experience or can ask them to use their imagination. The more questions there are, the easier the composition is.

Here is an example.

Good and Bad Guests

Do people sometimes visit your house? Who are they? Do they sometimes stay at your house for several days? Do you sometimes stay at other people's houses? Do you find that you enjoy having some guests, but that you do not enjoy having certain others? What sorts of people do you like as guests? What sorts of people do you dislike as guests? What sorts of things make a person a good guest? What ones make a person a bad guest? (from Hill, 1966, p. 35).

Correction

In correction techniques the learners look for mistakes either in ideas or form and describe them or correct them. They include techniques like finding grammar mistakes in sentences, finding unnecessary and unusual words which have been put in a reading passage, finding wrong facts in a reading passage, finding the word that does not go with the others in a group of words, describing inappropriate items in pictures, and so on.

Learners show that they have found mistakes by

• Underlining or circling them

• writing the corrected item.

Completion

In completion techniques the learners are given words, sentences, a passage, or pictures that have parts missing or that can have parts added to them. The learners complete the words, sentences or passage by filling in the missing parts, or by saying what is missing from the picture.

For **complete the sentences** the learners are given sentences with words missing. They must put the correct words with the correct form in the empty spaces. A few words can fill all the empty spaces. This type of exercise is used to practice *a* or *the; some, any*, etc.; prepositions, etc. The missing words can be given at the beginning of the exercise.

*Put **at**, **on**, or **in** in the empty spaces.*

1. He arrived _____ ten o'clock.

2. The meeting begins _____ Friday.

3. My uncle died _____ July.

4. My birthday is _____ 21st January.

5. It begins _____ midnight.

In another form of the exercise each missing word is given but the learners must use the correct form. This type of exercise is used to practice tense, verb groups, singular/plural, pronouns, questions, etc.

1. One of the _____ was there. (boy)
2. Every _____ tried to get as many as possible. (person)

When verb groups are being practiced the learner sometimes has to add other words.

1._____ you_____ to leave now? (want)

2._____ you _____him last week? (meet)

Some explanation of the grammar can be given at the beginning of the exercise.

In **back writing** the learners read a passage. After they have understood the text, they copy some of the key words from the passage onto a sheet of paper. Only the base form of the word is copied (i.e. *walk* not *walking*). The learners then put the text away and write what they remember of the passage filling in around the key words that they copied.

Ordering

In ordering techniques the learners are presented with a set of items in the wrong order which they must rearrange in the desired order. For example, the learners are presented with a set of letters *o k o b*. They must rearrange these letters to make a word, *book*. Words can be rearranged to make a sentence, sentences to make a passage, pictures to make a story, and so on. Ordering techniques can easily be combined with other types of actions. For example, the learners are presented with a set of letters that can be rearranged to make an English word. The learners respond by giving the first language translation of the word.

With **put the words in order** the learners are given sentences with the words in the wrong order. They must rewrite them putting the words in the correct order.

is city it very a important

Follow the model shows the learners a pattern and gives them a list of words. They must use the words to make sentences that follow the same pattern as the model.

He made them cry.

saw I laugh let she go her fight heard him

Instead of all the words, just the content words can be provided. Some ordering techniques, like the examples given above, can be done without the learners referring to any other clues. Other ordering techniques contain extra information so that the learners can do the ordering correctly. For example, the learners are given a set of words. The teacher reads the words quickly in a different order and while listening to this information the learners' number or put the words in the same order as the teacher says them. Here is another example. After the learners have read a passage, they are given a set of sentences containing the main points in the message. The learners must put these sentences in the right order so that the order of the main points in the sentences is the same as the order in the passage.

Substitution

In substitution techniques the learners replace one or more parts of a word, sentence, passage, picture, story, etc. So, the input of a substitution technique has two parts, the frame which contains the part where the substitution must be made, for example a word, sentence, etc., and the item which fits into the frame. So, if the frame is a sentence, *He seldom goes there.*, the teacher can give the item *often* which is substituted for *seldom*

in the frame to give the response *He often goes there*.

The learners can write sentences from a **substitution table**.

1	2	3	4
He	said		it was not a problem.
They	agreed	that	it was the right time.
I	decided		nothing could be done.
We	pretended		

The substitution table gives the learners the chance to practice making correct sentences, and to see different words that can be in each place in the sentence (George, 1965).

In **What is it?** the teacher writes some sentences on the blackboard. The sentences describe something or someone. Here is one plan (Nation, 1978).

It is <u>thin.</u>

It is <u>black</u>.

It has <u>many teeth</u>.

It is made of <u>plastic</u>.

We can find <u>it near a mirror</u>.

It costs <u>a pound</u>.

<u>Everybody</u> uses it.

It is used for <u>combing your hair</u>.

What is it?

The teacher shows the learners how to change the sentences to talk about different things. While he does this the teacher follows the plan very closely. For example, a <u>needle</u>.

It is thin.

It is silver.

It has a sharp point.

It is made of steel.

We can find it in our house.

It costs five pence.

You need good eyes to use it.

It is used for sewing things.

What is it?

Then the teacher gives the learners the name of something, for example a pen, and they must describe it using the plan. He gives a few new words if they are needed in the description. Each learner can be given a different thing to describe. When the learners know how to follow the plan, it can be played as a game. One learner writes a description of something and then the others try to guess what it is. As they improve, the learners can add some sentences that are not in the plan and make other changes.

The exercise can be made more controlled by asking the learners to follow the sentence patterns of the plan very carefully. It can be made freer by telling the learners to add any sentences that they need to make their description. Thus, everybody in the class can do the exercise with the better learners doing it in an almost free way and with the others doing the exercise in a very controlled way.

2.13 Transformation

In transformation techniques the learners have to rewrite or say words, sentences, or passages by changing the grammar or organization of the form of the input. This type of technique also includes rewriting passages, substitution where grammar changes are necessary and joining two or more sentences together to make one sentence.

In **change the sentence** the learners are given some sentences and are asked to rewrite them making certain changes. Here are some examples.

Rewrite these sentences using the past tense.

1. He wants to see me.

2. Do you like it?

Make these sentences passive. Do not use the subject of the active sentence

in the passive sentence.

The arrow wounded him. He was wounded.

1. Some people pushed her over the bank.

2. The noise frightened her.

For **join the sentences (sentence combining)** the learners are given pairs of sentences. They must join together the two sentences to make one sentence. This type of exercise is used to practise conjunctions, adjectives + to + stem, relative clauses, etc. Here are some examples.

This coffee is hot. I can't drink it.

This coffee is too hot to drink.

1. She is still young. She can't marry you.

2. He is tired. He can't go.

I met the man. You talked about him before.

I met the man who you talked about before.

1. Your friend is waiting near the shop. The shop is next to the cinema.

2. I will lend you the book. You wanted it.

There has been a lot of first language research on sentence combining generally showing positive effects (Hillocks, 1984; Hillocks, 1991). The motivation for sentence combining for first language learners is that the most reliable measure of first language writing development is a measure related to the number of complex sentences (the T-unit). Sentence combining is thus seen as a way of focusing directly on this aspect of writing development.

In **writing by steps** the learners are given a passage. They must add certain things to it, or make other changes. Here is an example from Dykstra, Port and Port (1966). The same passage can be used several times
for different exercises at different levels of difficulty.

Why the Hyena has Stripes (Part 1)
1 Ananse, the spider, and his neighbour, the hyena, decided to go to the river together. 2 There they met the King of the river who presented them with a gift of many fish. 3 Ananse and the hyena made a

fire, and as Ananse cooked the fish, he threw them over his shoulder on to the river bank to cool.

4 However, the greedy hyena caught and ate all of them.

5 When Ananse turned to eat his fish, tears of anger filled his eyes.

6 The hyena asked the spider why he was weeping, but Ananse calmly replied that the smoke from the fire was in his eyes. 7 Nevertheless, he was already planning his revenge.

1. Copy.

2. Rewrite the entire passage changing the word hyena to zebra each time it appears.

3. Rewrite the entire passage changing Ananse, the spider to the spiders. (When either Ananse or the spider appears alone, change it to the spiders.) Remember to change both the verbs and pronouns whenever it is necessary to do so.

4. Rewrite the entire passage supplying adjectives before the words spider, hyena, and river (sentence1); shoulder (sentence3); eyes (sentence5); and fire (sentence6).

5. Rewrite the entire passage supplying your own verbal phrases at the beginning of the following sentences. Begin your phrase with the verb form given here: sentence1 (having heard); sentence3 (having agreed); sentence6 (seeing).

In guided activities a large part of the writing has already been done for the learners and they focus on some small part that they must do. The activity provides support while learners do the writing.

With **marking guided writing** guided compositions can be marked by a group of learners using model answers before they are handed

to the teacher. The teacher just checks to see that the learners have done the marking correctly.

2.13.1 Independent Tasks

Independent tasks require the learners to work alone without any planned help. Learners can work successfully on independent tasks when they have developed some proficiency in the language and when they have command of helpful strategies. These strategies can develop from experience, shared, or guided tasks. Let us look at learners faced with a difficult independent reading task, such as writing an assignment.

1. *An experience approach*. The learners could write several drafts. During each rewriting, the learners have the experience gained from the previous writings and preparation.

2. *A shared approach*. The learners could ask the teacher or classmates for help when they need it.

3. *A guided approach*. The learners could guide their writing by asking questions, by using an information transfer diagram or a well worked out set of notes that they have prepared, or by finding a good example of the kind of writing they want to do.

A good independent task has the following features: (1) it provides a reasonable challenge, i.e. it has some difficulty but the learners can see that with effort they can do it; (2) it is a task that learners are likely to face outside the classroom.

The difference between an experience and independent task lies in the control and preparation that goes into an experience task.

Experience tasks are planned so that learners are faced with only one aspect of the task that is outside their previous experience. Independent tasks do not involve this degree of control and learners may be faced with several kinds of difficulty in the same task.

2.14 Using the Four Kinds of Tasks

The aim in describing the four kinds of tasks is to make teachers aware of the possible approaches to dealing with the gap between the learners' knowledge and the knowledge required to do a task, and to make them aware of the very large number of activities that can be made to help learners. When teachers are able to think of a variety of ways of dealing with a problem, they can then choose the ones that will work best in their class. Let us end by looking at another example of the range of tasks available in a particular situation.

Your learners need to write about land use in the Amazon basin. For several reasons this task will be difficult for them. There are new concepts to learn, there is new vocabulary, and the text should be written in a rather academic way. What can the teacher do to help the learners with this task?

The first step is to think whether an experience task is feasible. Can the teacher bring the language, ideas, needed writing skills, or text organization within the experience of the learners? For example, is it possible to bring the language within the learners' proficiency by pre-teaching vocabulary or discussing the topic before going on to the writing? Is it possible to bring the ideas within the learners' experience by getting them to collect pictures and read short articles

about the Amazon basin? Can the possible organization of the text be outlined and explained to the learners? If these things are not possible or if more help is needed, then the teacher should look at making the writing a shared task.

The writing could be made into a shared task in several ways. The class work together doing a blackboard composition, or they form groups with each group working on a different aspect of the content. If this is not possible or further help is needed, guided help can be given.

Some of the simpler guided tasks could involve answering a detailed set of questions to write the text, completing a set of statements, adding detail to a text, writing descriptions of pictures of the Amazon, and turning an information transfer diagram into a text.

The distinctions made here between experience, shared and guided tasks are for ease of description and to make the range of possibilities clearer. Experience or guided tasks can be done in small groups as shared tasks, just as experience tasks may have some guided elements.

One purpose of this chapter is to make teachers aware of the variety of ways in which they can support learners in their writing. Another purpose has been to describe some major task types that teachers can use to give them access to the large range of possibilities that are available to them when they try to close the gap between their learners' proficiency and the demands of the learning tasks facing them. The job of these tasks is to help learners gain mastery over the language, ideas, language skills and types of discourse that are the goals of their study.

2.2 previous studies

As far as the researcher is concerned no similar study has been conducted in classroom action research in Sudan. However there are so many ones were carried out. **Classroom research: a tool for preparing pre-service teachers to become reflective practitioners.** In this study, including classroom research methodology in undergraduate is not a common practice. In order for practicing teachers to conduct classroom research in their own classrooms it is critical that they are involved in some form of planning preparation during their pre-service years. In this study, classroom research was included in one undergraduate education course for the following purposes 1) analyzing the involvement of pre-service teachers in action research through a two day field experience and, 2) assessing how this experience impacted students' view regarding classroom research as a tool for improving reflection and classroom decision making 3) assessing ways in which undergraduate faculty can improve projects to enhance student experiences and skills in using action research as a tool for instruction and assessment. Students selected topics that they were able to observe related to classroom practice, analyze and develop alternative design. Results from this study indicate that most participants experienced an increased comfort level about conducting classroom research as a tool for improving reflection, and solving classroom issues.

Another study was conducted under the title **The What, Why and How of Classroom Action Research** Classroom Action Research is a method of finding out what works best in your own classroom so that you can improve student learning. We know a great deal about good

teaching in general (e.g. McKeachie, 1999; Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Weimer, 1996), but every teaching situation is unique in terms of content, level, student skills and learning styles, teacher skills and teaching styles, and many other factors. To maximize student learning, a teacher must find out what works best in a particular situation.

A third one entitled Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners which is a form of a booklet in which the author emphasized that There is an urgent need to improve the quantity and quality of instruction for ELLs, both in special programs and in basic classrooms. All teachers of ELLs, and those in mainstream classrooms in particular, are searching for effective teaching strategies for these students.

This book makes a crucial contribution to the field by providing solid information and ideas for teaching ELLs. These ideas can be implemented in mainstream classes that are heterogeneous with regard to language, ethnicity, social class, and academic achievement. This book also proposes that second language learning is a long-term process that must be considered in instructional planning over the span of many school years and in multiple curricular contexts. Among the many strengths of this book is its acknowledgment of the diversity of the ELL population without presenting it as a problem to be solved. The authors do not homogenize ELLs by lumping them into one generic group, but instead exhort teachers to learn about these students, their languages, their heritages, and their interests. This book also honors parents, and places the responsibility for parent involvement in the hands of school districts and school leaders as well as individual teachers.

The tone of this book reflects a respect for classroom teachers and their expertise, and engages them in the quest to develop and implement innovative instructional programs for ELLs. This book also makes a very strong case that caring and compassionate mainstream teachers can and should be part of the team working to ensure equitable and effective learning opportunities for the nation's ELLs.

A fourth research was entitled: **Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Australian Schools.** International research identifies several steps that governments can take to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, and thus levels of student achievement and wellbeing, in primary and secondary schools. A first strategy available to governments is to work to raise the status of teaching as a career. A number of countries have recognized the importance of this task and have succeeded – sometimes on relatively short timelines – in making teaching more attractive as a career, increasing competition for entry into teacher education courses and raising the overall quality of beginning teachers.

There are significant differences across countries in the status of teaching in the community. In Finland, teachers are held in high esteem, competition for entry into teacher education programs is strong and teachers are selected from among the highest-achieving school leavers. Almost all teachers in Finland complete a master's degree. In Australia, teachers tend to be recruited from the middle of the distribution of school leavers and there are increasing concerns about the low cut-off scores for entry into teacher education courses

at some universities. Students often enter teaching as a fall-back, having failed to gain entry to their course of first choice.

A fifth study was a form of a report which was conducted in USA on **Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness How Teacher Performance Assessments Can Measure and Improve Teaching** This report discusses a promising approach to the question of how to measure teacher effectiveness. Specifically, it describes the ways in which assessments of teacher performance for licensing and certification can both reflect and predict teachers' success with children so that they can not only inform personnel decisions, but also leverage improvements in preparation, mentoring, and professional development. It outlines progress in the field of teacher assessment development and discusses policies that could create much greater leverage on the quality of teacher preparation and teaching than has previously existed in the United States.