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To which Extent Does the 3 LSD Writing Syllabus Respond to Students' Needs?

**A Case Study of EFL Third Year Didactic Students at the University of Bejaia,
Algeria**

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work and extend my deep gratitude to my precious and dearest parents Fadhila and Abdelmadjid. They contributed with an ongoing support, understanding, and tenderness to realize this modest experience. They were by my side during all the years of my studies; I wish them long life. Dedication to my beloved sisters: Esma, Djidja, but significantly to my lovely youngest sister Lynda. I wish also to dedicate this work to my dear uncle Ahmad who encouraged and supported me, to all my aunts and uncles, to my friends who helped and supported me to carry out this work.

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Abstract

The aim of the present research paper is to investigate the needs of third year didactic students (3LSD) in relation to learning writing to measure the extent to which the syllabus of writing responds to such needs. The inquiry is made by means of questionnaire to gather the necessary data for testing our hypothesis. It is designed for EFL third year didactic students with a sum of forty (40) and three (3) writing teachers for third year LSD degree. The research project is divided into two main chapters. Chapter one is made up of three sections which examine the key definitions, distinctions, and various approaches within the literature related to our variables, needs analysis; syllabus; and writing. Chapter two is based on the practical field of study. It focuses upon the analysis and interpretations of students' and teachers' questionnaires. It further analyses one available syllabus of writing and provides some recommendations. Along with quantitative interpretation of the findings, the research results in the fact that students have needs in learning writing; however such needs are not completely met in their actual syllabus. Hence for the sake of remedying the existing discrepancies between students' needs and the actual syllabus, some tentative suggestions are in order. These include the need for more sessions and practice; variety in the content; incorporation of situational syllabus; trained teachers; in addition to the need for conducting needs analysis as a continuous process.

List of Abbreviations

CNP: Communicative Needs Processor

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

L2: Second Language Learner

LSD: Language Sciences and Didactics

LMD: License, Master and Doctorate

PSA: Present Situation Analysis

TSA: Target Situation Analysis

Glossary of Terms

Course: a year of study which involves a variety of syllabi.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students and Teachers: those learning and teaching English in the context where English is not the mother tongue.

Needs Analysis: also called needs assessment. *“It involves seeking and interpreting information about one’s students’ needs so that the course will address them effectively”* Graves (1996:12-13).

Syllabus: *“refers to the content or subject matter of an individual subject”*. White (1988:4).

Syllabus Design: *“the definition of linguistic content and a specification for the selection and organization of content and a description of the role of teacher, learner and teaching materials”*. White (1988:3).

Writing: *“the act of forming [graphic symbols] on a flat surface of some kind”*. Byrne (1988:1). It is the process of reflecting the sounds into graphic signs including letters, words and sentences.

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General Introduction

Learning English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) has become the major preoccupation of the majority of students hopefully to reach their objectives and meet their language needs. In fact, teaching and learning a foreign language is not an all at once matter. Some organizations and divisions of language aspects and elements are prior conditions to introduce the language for students. Hence each aspect of language is presented and organized under the form of syllabus.

Syllabus is viewed as an outline of specific language content to which students will be exposed. Institutes and departments of languages all over the world are expected to design a list of syllabi for the sake of transmitting language knowledge and experiences. English department of Abderrahman Mira University of Bejaia is one among them which provides various syllabi of English as a foreign language; the syllabus of writing is not an exception. Thus the basic principle of syllabus design is the importance attached to careful studies of students' needs for planning an educational program.

Needs analysis, the procedure for collecting information about the learners' needs, becomes an important prerequisite for effective syllabus development. It may be conducted for different reasons, studying the objective and subjective needs of the students, identifying students' actual capacities, and much more determining the gaps between their current level and targeted proficiency. Moreover, needs analysis can take place prior to, during, or after the syllabus implementation.

I. Statement of the Problem

Syllabus, whose specific objective is teaching writing skill, is among the existing syllabi in EFL/ ESL learning. At the Algerian Universities, specifically, Abderrahman Mira University, Bejaia, written expression syllabus is taught obligatory in the first three years. Third year is the last course (year of study) in which students receive lectures in written expression module i.e. by the end of the course they are expected to gain sufficient and necessary linguistic competence in writing skill, which allows them to practise their writing competence in different domains and situations. However, third year language sciences and didactics students (3LSD) feel that their needs in writing skill are not completely met in their written expression syllabus; hence the aim of our research is to measure the extent to which the syllabus of writing responds to students' needs.

II- Aim of the Study

The present study aims at identifying the needs of 3LSD students in learning writing. It additionally aims at measuring the extent to which the syllabus of writing responds to such needs.

III- Research Questions

- 1_what are the major needs of third year didactic students in relation to writing?
- 2_does syllabus of written expression respond to students' needs?
- 3_how could needs analysis contribute to the assessment of written expression syllabus?

IV_ Hypothesis

Our research study is based on a hypothesis related to the needs of students in learning writing: EFL third year didactic students seem to have language needs in their learning process in general, and in writing in particular. From this basis, we assume that students' needs are not really taken into consideration in teaching writing. Additionally, data gathered from needs analysis helps to identify what students really need and measure the extent to which the syllabus of written expression responds to such needs.

Going through a rigorous analysis of students' needs may help to acquire sufficient input that facilitates the analysis of syllabus materials and objectives to see whether students' needs are met in the existing syllabus of writing or not.

V- Research Design

V-1- Research Method and Data Collection Procedure

For the sake of getting accurate data to test our hypothesis, we have chosen the quantitative method. The tool adopted for collecting information is a questionnaire administered for both students and teachers. Students' questionnaire has been designed to gather information about students' needs and preferences in learning writing; as well as, questioning their attitudes towards their syllabus of writing in relation to their needs. Teachers' questionnaire, on the other hand, attempts to consider teachers' views about their students' needs, their contribution to needs analysis, and investigating the process of syllabus design for teaching writing.

V-2- Population and Sampling

Our research study restricted its population to didactics students (LSD students) and teachers of writing of English department, University of Bejaia. The selected sample represents forty (40) third year students of the LMD system (license, Master, and doctorate) and three (3) teachers of 3LSD degree.

The choice of third year students is not done at random but purposefully. On the one hand, they have already gone through four semesters in which they have submitted particular syllabuses of written expression. On the other hand, it is presumed that, they have developed somehow their writing skill and most importantly they become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and can easily identify their needs.

VI- Description of the Study

The dissertation is divided into two main chapters. Chapter one explores the literature review related to our variables and chapter two is devoted to the field study. Chapter one is made up of three sections. The first section begins with discussion of the theoretical issues related to needs and needs analysis. Hence, definition and types of both of them are reviewed. Moreover, some tools for practising needs analysis are explored. Section two presents the literature related to syllabus; therefore, definitions of syllabus and syllabus design are provided together with different syllabus types. Syllabus evaluation is reviewed as well. In section three, light is shed on the theoretical basis of writing. It covers definition, importance, and elements of writing.

Chapter two is devoted to the practical part of the research. Throughout this chapter students' and teachers' questionnaires are analyzed and insights upon the findings and results are provided. It additionally analyses a syllabus of writing provided by one teacher. Then finally, it provides some recommendations relevant to the present study.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Section One: Needs Analysis

Introduction

One interesting characteristic in modern language teaching which advocates the learner-centered approach is that the selection of the language content to be taught is widely based on careful analysis of students' needs. Thus needs analysis also called, needs assessment, becomes the first prerequisite step the syllabus designer takes into consideration for the purpose of planning an effective syllabus.

Researchers in the field provide various definitions for this concept with different views and opinions. Regardless of the differences in those definitions, needs analysis has been given an important and essential role by most of language specialists in the process of syllabus design. This section, therefore, sheds light on some definitions and types of the terms 'needs' and 'needs analysis', and, then reviews the different approaches associated to needs analysis. It finally, considers some methods and techniques that are used in the practice of needs analysis.

I- Definition of Needs

The word 'need' is an ambiguous term that really requires more clarification before conducting needs analysis. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005:1022), the word 'need' is defined as "*a situation when something is necessary or must be done*". This definition is too general since it is related to all aspects of life.

A well known definition of the 'needs' is the one established by Maslow (1943 cited in Boeree 1998) who draws up a 'hierarchy of needs'. He classifies the needs into five levels; to begin with the basic needs which include, **physiological needs** (the need to satisfy one's hunger and thirst, bodily conformed and sleeping); **safety needs** (the need to feel secure and being out of danger); **belonging needs** (need for love and being part of a community); and **esteem needs** (the need to gain approval and recognition in society). Together with the need which is considered to be at the higher level involving; **self- actualization need** (need to find self-fulfillment, and realize one's potential). Maslow (1943) believes that people satisfy those needs in a hierarchical order; from the lower level to the higher one, yet they cannot reach the belonging need if they have not yet satisfied the physiological and safety needs. (See figure 1)

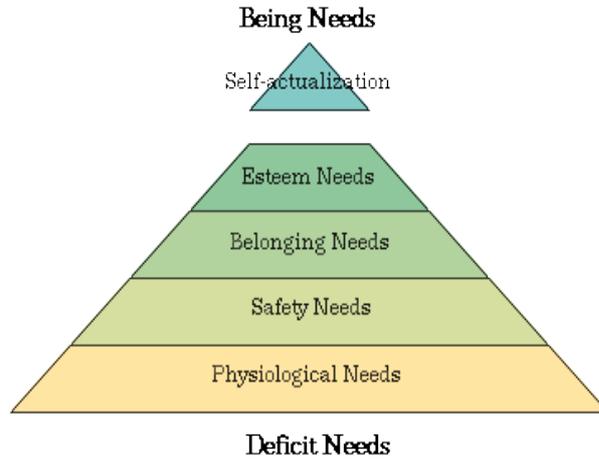


Figure 1: Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (cited in Boeree, 1998).

In foreign/second language context, many views on the definition of the needs exist; hence, a precise and exact definition has not yet reached. As Richterich (1983:2 cited in Brindley 1989:65) states, “*the very concept of language needs has never been clearly defined and remains at best ambiguous*”. This has a clear indication that scholars are unable to reach a consensus in defining the term ‘needs’.

Brindley (1989:65) defines the needs as “*the gap between what is and what should be*”. This definition shows that the needs refer to the gap between the actual level and the desired one. It also demonstrates that the needs are identified by another person rather than students themselves; syllabus designer or teacher, for instance. Nevertheless, many authors stress the idea of students’ awareness and perception of their needs. In this respect, Richterich (1984:29 in Hutchinson and Waters 1987:56) argues that “*...a need does not exist independent of a person. It is people who build their images of their needs on the basis of data relating to themselves and their environment*”.

Another definition that seems to be reasonable is the one provided by Berwick (1989:52) stating that the needs are “*a gap or measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state*”. This latter may refer to the gap between student’s actual level of proficiency i.e. what learners already know, and the desired level of proficiency, what learners need to know.

If we consider what a ‘need’ is in terms of language centered-approach, Hutchinson and waters (1987:54) sustain that it is “*the ability to comprehend and /or produce the linguistic features of the target situation*”. Considering Hutchinson and Waters’ definition, students’ needs are considered to be purely the mastery of the structural aspects of language that may

include syntax, grammar, sentence structure, etc of the language. Furthermore, looking at Munby's framework (1978), the needs, according to him, are considered to be those different speech acts and interactional components students need in specific situations in order to be communicatively competent.

As far as the definition of needs is our concern, it is worthy to take into account scholars' views of maintaining the process of determining the needs as an ongoing activity. Richetrich and Chancerel (1987 cited in Fatihi 2003:43) point out that "*the fact that needs vary too much from person to person, the system should have to be continually adapted*".

It seems that scholars and authors find it difficult to provide accurate and unified definition that can be applied and generalized to the concept 'need' in its all aspects and situations in second/foreign language context. In the present research, needs may refer to the necessities that students have in order to learn writing and their preferred learning methods.

II- Types of Needs

To make the concept of 'needs' more clear, it is necessary to refer to its different types.

II-1- Target Needs vs. Learning Needs

According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987:54), target needs refer to "*what the learner needs to do in the target situation*". They categorize the target needs into: necessities, lacks, and wants.

Hutchinson and waters (1987:55) define '**necessities**' as "*what learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation*". It is related to the learner's required knowledge in order to function effectively in the target situation. For example, student of foreign language who wants to develop communication proficiency has to learn grammar and syntax in order to produce correct sentences.

To clarify more the target situation, reference should be made to the '**lacks**'. If the necessities mean what the learner must know, the '**lacks**' include the necessities that the learner misses. The target proficiency is related to the present ability then the gap between them is referred to as 'learners' lacks'.

The '**wants**' are defined as the learner's views, thoughts, and perceptions of his needs; they reflect the subjective view of the target needs. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:56) say that "*learners may well have a clear idea of the 'necessities' of the target situation: they will certainly have a view as to their 'lacks'*".

Likewise; for the sake of getting information about the target needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:59-60) suggest a set of questions for analyzing the target needs such as, why language is needed; how will the language be used, and so on.

Determining the needs only in terms of target situation is not enough. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987:60), course designer needs also to know “*what knowledge and abilities will the learners require in order to be able to perform to the required degree of competence in the target situation*”. To put it clear, the emphasis is not on what should be learned, such as, language items, skills, and strategies, as the case in the target needs, but the focus is on how to learn these elements and what are the different means learner uses to reach the target needs. So, ‘learning needs’ refer to what learners need to do in order to know. Moreover, learning needs are related to the learner’s preferred learning styles, strategies, and preferences because learner becomes engaged and motivated when the learning process caters to his needs, interests, and wishes.

Similarly to the target needs, Hutchinson and Waters establish a list of questions for the purpose of analyzing the learning needs. These questions involve among the others: why are the learners taking a course? How do the learners learn? What resources are available? Etc.

II-2-2- Objective vs. Subjective Needs

Brindley (1989:70) distinguishes between the objective and subjective needs. He explains the objective needs as “*needs which are derivable from different kinds of factual information about the learners, their use of the language in real-life communication situations as well as their current communication proficiency and language difficulties*”. Objective needs are also referred to as the narrow or product-oriented needs, whereby the learners’ needs are considered as the needs that one can get from detailed information about the learner. Thus their needs are considered in relation to the language needed in a specific communication setting, that is, the need is the target language behavior; as well as, his actual abilities in using that language. In the objective needs, learner’s educational background and language problems and difficulties are concerned. According to Richterich (1983 cited in Brindley 1989:64), the objective needs, generally, serve as a starting point to the program development, and once the learning started, another kind of needs may come out. This latter is supposed to be the subjective needs.

Brindley (1989) considers subjective needs as the type of needs that come from cognitive and affective factors of the learner that affect the learning process. These needs are related to

the learner's personality, attitudes, confidence, learning wants, learning expectations, cognitive style of learning, preferred learning strategies, and wants in a learning situation. They reflect the process-oriented interpretation of the needs.

II-2-3- Perceived vs. Felt Needs

Berwick (1989) determines the needs of the learners that are expressed by expert individuals, such as, teachers, language specialists, analysts, educators, and other experienced people as the 'perceived' needs. However, the learners' awareness, thoughts, perceptions of their personal needs tend to be the 'felt' needs. They are referred to as expressed needs.

II- Definition of Needs Analysis

According to Brown (1995:36 cited in Kosomoto, p 2) needs analysis is

The systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirement of students within the context of particular institution that influence the learning and teaching situation

From Brown's definition, it is clear that both of objective and subjective needs are subjects of needs analysis. That is to obtain the factual data which includes the learner's age, nationality, language, cultural background, language needed in the target situation, together with the subjective facts concerned with learner's preferences, wishes, attitudes, motivation, affective and cognitive factors, and learning styles. Consequently, these information, necessarily contribute to the generation of the general goals and objectives of a specific program curriculum.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) claim that needs analysis must be an ongoing, continuing and cyclical process which allows the re-assessment of the outcomes and results. This statement has been supported by Graves (1996:16) who states that "*needs assessment should be viewed as an ongoing process, both in its development and in its use*". However, Brindley (1989:63) contrasts with Hutchinson's and Graves' definitions. He argues that needs analysis is "*a process of finding out as much as possible before learning begins about the learners' current and future language*". It seems as if needs analysis can only be conducted before the course begins. Richards (2001) points out that needs analysis can take place prior to, during, or after a language program.

While defining needs analysis, it is also worth noting that needs analysis originated in ESP courses (English for Specific Purposes). Nevertheless, researchers such as, George Yule,

Richards and others urged its application in general English classes and, thus becomes widely used in general English language courses. Yet, for Tarone and Yule (1989:31),

The term 'needs analysis', when it has been used in the context of language instruction, has usually referred to the collection and evaluation of information to answer the question: 'what aspect of the language does some particular group of learners need to know?'

This definition is significant in that Yule and Tarone give importance to the variety of language usage; thus needs analysis is necessary to decide upon the content. As an example, one learner would need English for formal writing whereas another learner needs it for everyday communication. So, needs analysis can be used in different contexts of general English courses and at different levels. In this respect, Jordan (1997) argues that needs analysis is a systematic fact finding or data collection activity. He (1997:23) suggests some steps for the needs analyst to follow in order to identify the needs of the learners: “1.Purpose of analysis; 2.Delimit student population; 3.Decide upon the approach (es); 4.Acknowledge constraints/limitations; 5.Select methods of collecting data; 6.Collect data; 7.Analyse and interpret results; 8.Determine objectives; 9.Implement decisions (i.e. decide upon syllabus, content, materials, methods, etc.); 10.Evaluate procedures and results”. Although, many definitions exist, needs analysis can be considered as a formal systematic process meant to determine the needs of the learners for the sake of syllabus development.

II-1- Approaches to Needs Analysis

The different types of the needs are analyzed and examined through various approaches which exist under the umbrella term of ‘needs analysis’. Among the existing ones are: ‘target situation analysis’, ‘present situation analysis’, ‘means analysis’, and ‘strategy analysis’. According to Jordan (1997), “target and present situation analysis” are the main approaches and the others are generally used as conjunctions between the two. In the present research all the approaches would be considered for the sake of investigating students’ needs.

II-1-1- Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

Robinson (1991) points out that target situation analysis (TSA) seeks to identify students’ needs at the end of a language course. The landmark work on the target situation analysis is the framework of Munby (1978). Munby provides a systematic procedure for analyzing participant’s language needs in the target situation. He adopts communicative needs processor (CNP), (figure 2, p 10), in which he establishes a set of parameters to gather input on the

communication needs of L2 participant (second language learner) to specify his target communicative competence and create his profile of needs. These parameters include: participant; purposive domain; setting; interaction; instrumentality; dialect; target level; communicative events; communicative key; and language skills. The information gathered on these parameters would finally result in a derivable syllabus.

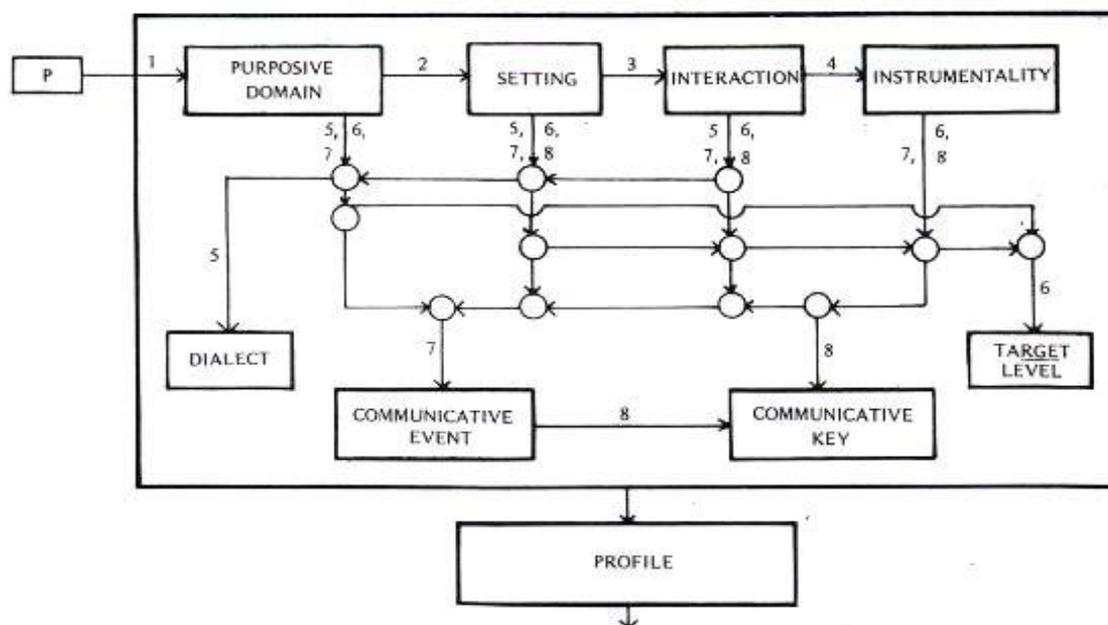


Figure 2: Communicative Needs Processor (CNP) from Munby (1978: 33).

Even though Munby’s communicative needs processor provides a comprehensive data which can be used as checklist for syllabus development, it was highly criticized. West (1994:9-10 cited in Songhori 2008:9) states that Munby’s model was too complex, long and complicated. Additionally, he argues that it gathers information about the learner, but the learner’s voice is neglected. Moreover, he was interested only in describing learner without any attempts to describe how to develop the syllabus.

II-1-2- Present Situation Analysis (PSA):

Jordan (1997:24) states that “*the PSA ascertains the students’ state of language development at the beginning of the language course*”. Present situation analysis (PSA) seeks to determine learners’ actual learning abilities. If the target situation identifies what students will be like, the present situation shows what the learners are like at the beginning of the course.

Additionally, Robinson (1991) and Jordan (1997) claim that the PSA may complement the target situation analysis. In this case, the assessment of the present situation of the learner is

called for if the target situation is to be investigated. Besides, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1988:124) point out that “*a PSA estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, learning experiences*”. It is clear that, the present situation is an attempt to identify and determine the learners’ background knowledge, for instance, the years of studying the target language, and their level of education, in order to determine their efficiencies and gaps.

According to Jordan (1997), the information in the present situation analysis can be derived from different sources; from the learners themselves or other interested members, such as, teachers, and sponsors using various instruments data collection. This latter may include, questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and so on. To conclude, the focus in this approach is on the learner since he is questioned and interviewed to get information from him, as opposed to Munby’ s model which gives little attention to the learners’ views.

II-1-3- Means Analysis

In order to design a practical and successful curriculum, means analysis should be considered as an adjunct to needs analysis. According to White (1988), means analysis examines those considerations that Munby (1978) has excluded such as political, economic, and administrative factors. As Jordan (1997:27) states, means analysis “*allows sensitivity to situations in any country and discourages the imposition of alien models (of teaching, methodology, learning, etc.)*”. It aims at adjusting the syllabus to the appropriate context around which it would be revolved. For instance, to adapt the program to what is culturally appropriate. Dudley Evans and St. John claim that “*means analysis looks at the environment in which a course will be run*”. This might include the awareness of social, political, cultural, and administrative factors that may influence the implementation of any syllabus.

II-1-4- Strategy Analysis

According to West (1998 cited in Songhori 2008:12), strategy analysis attempts to identify how the learners hope to learn rather than what they need to learn. Its principal feature is the investigation of the learners’ strategies and styles of learning. According to Jordan (1997), it is related to both learning and teaching strategies. Allwright (1982 cited in Jordan 1997), as the first to investigate this area of analysis, holds the view of students’ perceived needs and distinguishes between the ‘needs’, which are defined in Jordan (1997:27) as “*the skills which a student sees as being relevant to him/herself*”, the ‘wants’; “*those needs on which students put a high priority in the available, limited time*”, and the ‘lacks’; “*the difference between the*

students' present competence and the desired competence". These concepts were already adapted by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) who advocate the learning-centered approach and emphasize how the learners learn.

III- Methods for Practising Needs Analysis

For the purpose of conducting needs analysis, it is important to adapt certain methods, and procedures. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the most frequent methods for analyzing the needs are: questionnaires; interviews; observation; data collection e.g. gathering texts; informal consultations with sponsors; learners and others.

Additionally numerous tools for data gathering in the process of needs analysis are suggested by Jordan (1997). These include: advance documentation; self-assessment; observation and monitoring; class progress tests; surveys, structured interview; learner diaries; case studies; evaluation; follow up investigations; and previous research.

West (1994: pp, 7-8 cited in Bindaka and christopoulou) also suggests some techniques as, precourse placement/ diagnostic tests; entry test on arrival/ a diagnostic test; observation of classes; surveys based on questionnaires; structured interview; learner diaries; case studies, and final evaluation/feedback. Additionally, West (1994: p, 5) claims that the analysis can be: "off-line", which is conducted before the course starts; "on-line", which is conducted when the learners start the course; "on-going needs re-analysis", which rechecks the objectives continuously in order to be sensitive to the demands of the target situation.

Conclusion

Considering these theoretical background, needs analysis is an important and valuable process in providing an effective validation of English language syllabus. Moreover, it is considered as an ongoing activity which aims at identifying the needs of the learners for the sake of maintaining the learners' motivation, and leads them through a syllabus that responds to their wants and interests. On this basis, the present research attempts to analyze the target, present situation, and the learning needs of 3 LSD students by means of a questionnaire to identify how much their needs and syllabus objectives match together.

Section Two: Syllabus design

Introduction

Designing what to teach and how to teach is the major concern of foreign language teachers and syllabus designers. In that, a clear statement and specific outline of how and on what basis language would be selected is a matter of syllabus design. Accordingly, pedagogues provide a wide range of definitions for the term 'syllabus' to specify the language type that would constitute it. This section, therefore, provides some definitions of syllabus and syllabus design, types of syllabus, then discusses the issue of syllabus evaluation and its types.

I- Definition of Syllabus

The definition of 'syllabus' varies among linguists. Scholars hold diverse opinions and views on its nature and content, thus, the definition of the term 'syllabus' is sometimes confused with the concept 'curriculum'. However, in some contexts they are used as synonymous. In this research work, the two words 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' will be used interchangeably. Hadley (1998:52) states that "*the term syllabus has been a much more difficult concept to define*". This statement supports that the term 'syllabus' has been approached by many researchers and becomes the subject of controversy among them as to what syllabus means, and what constitutes it. Traditional definitions associate the word 'syllabus' with the selection and grading of the content. Brumfit (1984a, cited in White 1988:3) defines a syllabus as

the specification of the work of a particular department in a school or college, organized in subsections defining the work of a particular group or class; It is often linked to time, and will specify a starting point and ultimate goal; It will specify some kind sequence based on:
a) Sequencing intrinsic to a theory of language learning or to the structure of specified material relatable to language acquisition; b) Sequencing constrained by administrative needs, e.g. materials; It can only specify what is taught; it cannot organize what is learnt; It is a public document and an expression of accountability.

Such a definition indicates that a syllabus is a document that outlines the content of one subject of study in a particular educational setting, i.e. it is specific to one field or area of study. For instance, a syllabus of 'phonetics' of English department at university, a syllabus of 'mathematics' at secondary school which is generally designated to a special group of learners

with common learning goals. Moreover, syllabus represents the content which is organized in the form of subsections, topics, chapters, and units; in the sense that, language is not taught at once, but is broken down into parts that would be completed and exploited in a limited time and obey to some sequences. These sequences are the order units should follow; as an example, the content might be presented from what is considered easy to be acquired to what is regarded as most difficult, or from simplest to the most complex forms, as the order can be drawn up by educational policies, and administration due to the available resources, and materials.

Additionally, syllabus' essential concern is to set up goals from the beginning. It states clearly what are the intended outcomes of the learners, i.e. what they are expected to know by the end of the course. This latter includes the different objectives of each unit and the general aim of the whole course.

What is interesting in Brumfit's definition is that a syllabus is considered as a public document which ensures access to any interested member including teachers, course designers, consumers (learners, parents). It can be scrutinized and criticized by those members on the basis of its content in relation to the learner's level, whether the content is compatible with learners' capacities or not, and the resources accompanied the different chapters.

Moreover, Brumfit views a syllabus as a statement of what will be taught. It seems as if what learners would acquire and master cannot be predicted a head before; relatively, whether the transmitted knowledge received by the learners remain hypothetical. However, Hutchinson and Waters (1987:80) state that "*syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt*". A careful examination of this definition may result in a thought that the predefined objectives and outcomes will be certainly achieved, and learners will probably reach the desired outcomes.

In general, the two above definitions are rather traditional which support the 'narrow view' of syllabus. i.e. it restricts the task of syllabus to the grading and selection of the content without considering any kind of methodology. However, with the development of second language acquisition researches, many language specialists recommend the integration of methodology in designing a syllabus. Yalden (1984:14, cited in Nunan, 1988:5) claims that

[the syllabus] replaces the concept of 'method', and the syllabus is now seen as an instrument by which the teacher, with the help of the syllabus designer, can achieve a degree of 'fit' between the needs and the aim of the learners (as social being and as individual) and the activities which will take place in the classroom.

In this definition another issue arises, that of methodology. It is clear that different tasks and activities should be involved in the syllabus in order to facilitate the learning and acquisition of the language materials. Yalden holds the 'broader view' of syllabus i.e. methodology has a considerable value and cannot be separated from the syllabus. Indeed, the syllabus will specify what to learn and acquire, that is the content, and it further demonstrates how to go about this content which is in essence the matter of methodology. So, methodology and the content are complementary in developing appropriate syllabus that addresses the needs of the learners.

All in all, the definitions discussed in this review are stemmed from two views: the 'narrow view' which draws a distinction between syllabus and methodology; generally considered as traditional with the main focus on the product, and the 'broader view' in which methodology plays an important role besides the content.

Syllabus designers should not limit the scope of the syllabus to the content only or include the materials that may contradict with the learners' needs. As Yalden (1987:77) states "[syllabus] it should not be rigid, but flexible, not closed, but open ended; and not static, but subject to constant revision as a result of feedback from classroom". It is clear that syllabus is open to scrutiny at any time, before, during, or after its implementation. It should not be restricted to the standard established by educational policies, but subject to adjustment as a result of experience and feedback from the classroom.

II- Definition of Syllabus Design

Nunan (1988:4) defines the designing process as follows

we can look at curriculum planning, that is at decision making, in relation to identifying learners' needs and purposes; establishing goals and objectives; selecting and grading content; organizing appropriate learning arrangements and learner groupings; selecting, adopting, or developing appropriate materials, learning tasks, and assessment and evaluation tools.

Nunan (1988) considers the process of designing as the decision to make about the development of the curriculum. Apparently, syllabus design is regarded as a systematic process which follows sequenced steps. The first step is the investigation of the learners' needs that is a data gathering activity meant to identify the needs of the learners as discussed previously in section one.

According to him, the first step serves as the basis for the second step, the statement of the goals and the objectives which are considered as the desired outcomes of the whole year of

study. Once the needs and the objectives are determined, course designers shift to the selection of the appropriate content, organizing and grading of the language materials in adequate and reasonable order. The subsequent and final step is the evaluation. The designing process might entail and list the adequate evaluation techniques, that is to say, syllabus designers could suggest various types of evaluation.

So, the process of designing is considered as organized steps that syllabus designers, teachers, and language specialists would follow to result in a suitable syllabus that would respond to the needs of the learners.

III- Types of the Syllabus

Different types of syllabi have been introduced in the field; Rabbini (2002) synthesizes them into two major types: “**product and process-oriented syllabi**”.

III-1- Product-Oriented Syllabuses

The sort of syllabuses that emphasize the language product learners have to acquire after the completion of their course. Such type of syllabi consists of three approaches: structural, situational, and notional functional approaches.

Structural approach serves as an organizing principle for the grammatical content which is given priority in the process of selection and grading. What is expected to be taught is restricted to items like sentence structure, tenses, singular/plural, nouns and adjectives, etc. Wilkins (1976) terms this kind of syllabi as “synthetic syllabuses” in which the structural aspects of the language are dismantled into separate units that would be taught step by step, then learners will synthesize the whole language structure. Moreover, structural syllabus was introduced by White (1988) as “Type A” syllabi, so that the focus is pre-eminently teaching the pre-defined language content which teacher provides to the learners. Despite the beneficial effect structural syllabuses could have, they are highly criticized. Wilkins (1976) argues that they are completely grammar structures, whereas the meaning is neglected.

Situational syllabi; on the other hand, are made up of the lists of situations in which language would occur outside the classroom. Thus the language content is predicted in accordance with the concerned situation they could serve. White (1988:63) considers the aspect of situation in terms of the **setting** (where language will be used; for instance at the bank); **participants** (who will use the language, as an example: a bank clerk, customer); **relevant object** within the setting (what to talk about, e.g. traveler’ cheque). On the basis of

these aspects, syllabus designer might predict the appropriate lexical, grammatical, and structural elements appropriate for each specific situation. Even though, situational types aim at exploring language in context, it has been criticized on the basis that syllabuses built on situations could not effectively cover all situations that learners would need. This results in an alternative syllabus.

The functional type was proposed by Wilkins (1976) as a reaction to situational syllabi. Wilkins (1976:24) claims that “...*only a syllabus that covered both functional (and model) and conceptual categories would be a fully notional syllabus*”. Notions and functions are the basic constituents of the functional syllabus. Dubin and Olstain (1986:90) define ‘notion’ as “*the conceptual meaning expresses our perception of events, entities, states, causes, location, time, etc*” and ‘function’ as “*the particular utterance functions in a certain context as a request, an apology, an invitation, etc*”. So, the notions in the syllabus refer to the ideas that has been expressed in the form of the language to express special meaning, whereas, functions represent the particular purposes for which language might be used. For instance, to express a request some adequate notions like (‘*could you please*’, and ‘*do you mind if*’) would be required. So the core of this model is to achieve communicative purposes by learning notions to fulfill different functions. Critics come out on this type of syllabi. White (1988:77) claims that “*language functions do not usually occur in isolation*”. That is to say, different functions cannot be understood outside the context in which they occur, otherwise many interpretations would appear.

The three approaches of product-oriented syllabi even different in the content they provide, their basis remain the same, teaching a special content, being it grammatical, situational, or semantic.

III-2- Process-Based Syllabuses

The kind of syllabi having as their ending aim the process. This type was introduced by white (1988) as ‘**Type B**’ syllabi in which learning process is learner-centered. As Allen (1984:65, cited in White, 1988:45) states, process-based syllabi aim at immersing and involving the learners in their learning experience. Breen and Littlejohn (2000:29) claim that “*[process syllabus] distinguishes itself from conventional content syllabuses by identifying classroom decisions as potentials for negotiation whereby teacher and students together can evolve and work through the actual curriculum of the classroom group*”. It is apparent that process syllabi revolve around common grounds between teacher and learners on what to

teach i.e. the content would not be incorporated unless it is negotiated and agreed on by both teacher and learners. According to Rabbini (2002), Procedural or, task based; learner led; and proportional are the main constituent approaches to process-based syllabi.

Rabbini (2002) states that in procedural syllabi *“the focus shifts from the linguistic elements to the pedagogical, with an emphasis on learning or learner”*. The focus is on the process of learning rather than the product.

The core of the task-based syllabi is to enhance communication through practice. They aim at practicing the language that students would face in the real world. Nunan (2004:1) distinguishes between ‘real world/target tasks’ which *“refer to uses of language in the world beyond the classroom”*, and ‘pedagogical tasks’ *“that occur in the classroom”*. Long (1985:89 cited in Nunan 2004:2) outlines a list of target tasks; these include: dressing a child; filling out a form; buying a pair of shoes; making an airlines reservation; taking a driving test, typing a letter; and helping someone across a road etc. Whereas, Nunan (2004:4) states that pedagogical tasks *“involve communicative language use in which the user’s attention is focused on meaning rather than grammatical form”*. Pedagogical tasks reflect those tasks carried out in the classroom for the sake of communication, for instance drawing a map while listening to a tape. So, it is a kind of syllabi that is built around target and pedagogical tasks learners would carry out to learn to communicate in the target language.

Another approach of procedural syllabi is learner-led syllabus. Rabbini argues that this type is suggested by Breen and Candlin (1984) in which a great deal importance is accorded to the learners’ involvement in the process of syllabus development. Learners decide upon what to learn. The premise they had for opting for such type of syllabus is that learners’ interest and motivation would be maintained, and increased when they are aware of what they are studying. Like the previous types, learner led syllabus is highly criticized on the basis that learners’ accountability to the learning process may result in an aimless language program.

Proportional model is also a kind of procedural syllabi; it is developed by Yalden (1983; 1987) aiming at developing a global competence in the process of ESL/EFL learning. He holds the view of equalizing the importance of and the time devoted for learning the two aspects of language, grammatical structures and notional semantic meaning. Yalden (1987:94) argues that *“one might begin with grammar and pronunciation only, as one does in a structural approach, but introduce work in the language functions and in discourse skills fairly early, and in time increase this component of the course”*. It is hoped that teaching formal aspects come at the initial stage, and then shifting to the informal side that is interactional components in order to develop communicative competence. Likewise the

proportional syllabuses are usually joined through themes which play a linking role between units.

Even though many approaches exist on the issue of what would be the main constituent of foreign language teaching, one should not restrict the content of syllabus to one kind and neglect the others. Swan (1985b cited in Hutchinson and Waters 1987:89) claims that “*the real issue is not which syllabus to put first: it is how to integrate eight or so syllabuses (functional, notional, situational, topic, phonological, lexical, structural, skills) into a sensible teaching programme*”. Hence it is preferable to use the different kinds of syllabi in an eclectic manner to result in a syllabus that suits all kinds of topics and learners’ objectives.

IV- Syllabus Evaluation

IV-1- Definition

Scriven (1991:1) defines evaluation as “*the process of determining the merit, worth and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process*”. The issue to come out from this definition is that evaluation is the process of identifying the quality and effectiveness of a given syllabus. As Tomlinson (1998:97) states, “*the act of evaluation ..., faces the teacher/writer to examine whether s/he has or has not met objectives*”. The aim of syllabus evaluation is to evaluate how successfully the program has achieved its intended outcomes i.e. to assess whether the objectives tailored to specific language educational program are achieved or not. Additionally, Lynch (1996:2) considers syllabus evaluation as “*the systematic attempt to gather information in order to make judgments or decisions*”. Considering this definition, another objective of syllabus evaluation is to collect information in regard to syllabus to result in a value judgment and decision alternatives. These decisions might be: maintaining the syllabus as it is, modifying it, or eliminating it.

IV-2- Types of Evaluation

Scriven (1967 cited in Mc David and Hawthorn 2006) distinguishes between formative and summative evaluation. His distinction lies in the implementation issues and program effectiveness.

Mc David and Hawthorn (2006:21) point out that “*Scriven associated formative evaluations primarily with analysis of program implementation, with a view to providing program managers and other stakeholders with advice intended to improve the program “on the ground”*”. Formative evaluation aims at providing information to syllabus developers

before the program is implemented in the classroom. Lynch (1996:32) adds that “[*formative evaluation*] looks at a program as it is developing in order to make suggestions for improvement”. In this type of evaluation, expert evaluators assess the program in the process of its designing in order to provide syllabus developers with information for improvement. This information can be decisions, modifications, and suggestions. For instance, the selected material and learning activities might be reviewed and improved; spelling errors might be discovered, alternative strategies and order of sequencing could be suggested if the existing ones seem ambiguous.

Contrary to formative evaluation, summative evaluation is conducted after the program has been implemented. As Scriven (1967 cited in Mc David and Hawthorn 2006:21) states, “*summative evaluation dealt with whether the program had achieved intended objectives*” Lynch (1996:22) argues that “[*summative evaluation*] refers to an evaluation designed to determine whether or not a program has been successful”. Such statements indicate that summative evaluation is conducted after the full implementation of the program to determine whether the objectives are reached and responded to the needs of the learners or not. Dane (2011:299) refers to summative evaluation as an “outcome evaluation”. In this step, evaluators make decisions as to maintain, modify, or reject the adopted syllabus.

Conclusion

The definition and types of syllabus has become the subject of controversies among linguists. More importantly is that a syllabus can take various forms. From the literature review, it is preferable to use the types of syllabi in an eclectic way so that to teach writing, because each type stresses an important aspect in writing development. Moreover, syllabus can be assessed in its process of development or after its full implementation in the class. In the present research summative evaluation would be appropriate to analyze whether the syllabus of writing responds to students’ needs or not.

Section Three: Writing Skill

Introduction

Learning a foreign language requires the mastery of necessary basic skills. Writing is among those skills; it allows EFL students to produce a sequence of sentences and paragraphs in a written format. This section reviews definition, importance, and elements of writing.

I- Definition of Writing

Byrne (1988:1) claims,

making marks on flat surface of some kind. But writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, ... the symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences

In such definition, writing is simply the process of reflecting the pronounced sounds into letters. More importantly is that the combination of that letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs should necessarily obey to certain agreements and conventions; that are the rules of grammar and punctuation governing the writing process.

Kane (1988:3) argues that “*writing is a rational activity..., that it is an exercise of mind requiring the mastery of techniques anyone can learn*”. This definition implies that writing is a skill that requires a mental process which allows the learning of strategies and techniques to develop writing capacity. It additionally holds that writing competence may differ from one learner to another depending on his cognitive abilities. This definition considers, in particular, writing as an exercise of mind. In this respect, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986:792 cited in Cohen and Macaro 2007:229) state that “*expert composing [is] a form of problem solving. It is a heuristic search through a space consisting of mental representations of possible text*”. Writing is a process which is cognitively demanding. In fact many trials have to be made if better writing is to be achieved.

The two above definitions consider writing as a difficult mental activity, rather than the process itself. Brown and Hood (1989:1) define writing as “*a process which always requires some preparation, drafting and revising*”. This definition explains writing as a conventional process based on three essential stages: preparation, drafting, and revising. Kane (1988:17) argues that “*writing in its broad sense-as distinct from simply putting words on paper has*

three steps: thinking about it, doing it, (and doing it again and again and again, as often as time will allow and patience will endure)”.

Writing is a process which requires three essential steps; the first is ‘to think about it’, that is the stage in which the writer selects and thinks about the topic. Galko (2001) considers this step as a ‘getting started’ stage. The second step ‘doing it’ reflects the drafting stage defined by Kane (1988:34) as “*an early version of a piece of writing*”. In this stage, the writer jots down all the sentences and words coming to his mind in relation to the topic; no matter how well the paper is structured since it is not the final one. The final step, ‘doing again’ is the revising stage. In this step, Galko (2001:73) states that the writer looks at three main levels: content; structures; and mechanics. The writer has to review whether the intended meaning has been achieved or not; how the paper is structured including grammar, punctuation, and usage. Moreover, Kane (1988:36) considers the revising stage as a more thoughtful and critical step. These steps are referred to by Harmer (2001) as a process approach to writing which emphasizes how the writer writes rather than what he writes. Brown and Hood explain this process in the following figure.

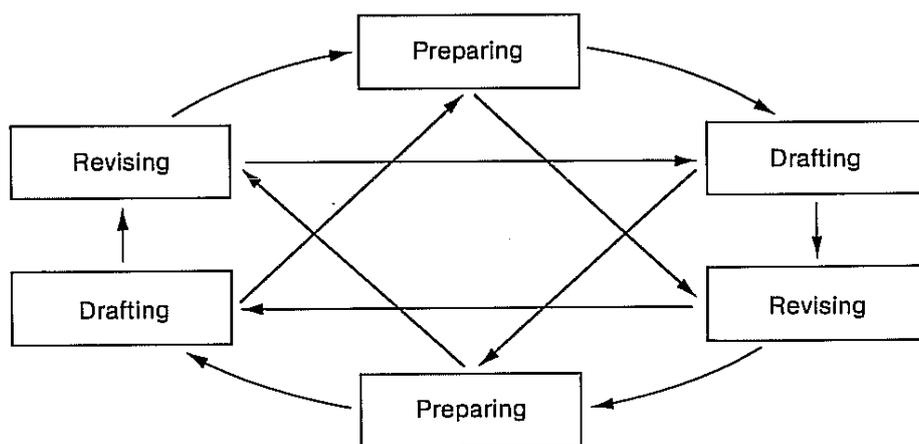


Figure 3: Brown and Hood (2001:6)’s process writing model.

II- Importance of Writing

Researchers acknowledge the importance of writing because of the valuable functions it could serve in the different domains. Byrne (1988: 6) suggests that writing skill could act as an aid for the learners who are reluctant at oral practice. In that they can perform the language in a written style. It is, therefore, argued that writing is important for self-expression where an individual can speak out his thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a form of written words.

Likewise, writing can be an influential criterion for judging a person's knowledge and intellectual abilities. Thus how good or successful one's writing product is presumably determined by evaluating his pieces of writing as Byrne (1988:6) claims, "*writing is often needed for formal and informal testing*". Another beneficial effect of writing lies in the statement of Williams (1996:11) "*[writing] is an ideal choice for recording information*" i.e. written products can persist and endure for a long period of time. It is additionally argued that writing develops flexibility and maturity; the reinforced practice of writing makes a person more mature and aware of the reader's needs. Thus, the process of writing becomes more flexible to the reader's requirements. Moreover, writing is important for communication in business affairs where transactions are fulfilled through written format; it also plays a major role in job applications as Williams (1996:12) claims, "*writing is often the first choice when formality is required*".

III- Elements of Writing

Writing is a process which requires many crucial elements. Grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling, coherence, cohesion, and style are among its necessary elements.

III-1- Grammar

Grammar is an important element with weighty value to writing skill. According to Kane (1988:13), grammar is "*the rules which structure our language*". Grammar is the conventional order language should follow; hence a sentence in English language takes the form of (subject+verb+object) is a rule. Johnson (1991:2) states that "*grammar is not a set of rules that we should obey when using language but a set of observations of how we do use language*". This definition implies that grammar rules do not govern language; in fact, they are deduced from the language itself. For instance, from observing a native speaker saying 'between I and you', it may be concluded that in English grammar the proposition 'between' could have the pronoun 'I' as its object. Johnson (1991) argues that the grammar elements are studied more systematically and contain their special terms such as, conjunctions, gerund, predicate, propositions, and pronouns. Moreover, Byrne (1988:17) suggests that grammatical devices are important for the cohesion of the text, particularly necessary devices for back reference in the text as anaphoric and deictic devices.

III-2- Punctuation

Punctuation can indicate the limits of sentences and paragraphs, for instance, capital letters are always expected at the beginning of the sentence and period at the end of the sentence. Byrne (1988) considers punctuation as a matter of convention. For Starkey (2004:2), *“proper punctuation makes your essay more polished and technically correct”*. Johnson (1991:81) points out that *“punctuation can be thought of as a means of indicating in writing the pauses and changes of tone that are used in speech to help communicate the meaning of sentences”*. Some marks of punctuation have parallels in speech and can be heard at a given point of a sentence, such as, a period, a comma, a dash, a question, an exclamation point, and so on; a question mark, for instance, marks a rise in tone of the voice. Kane (1988:382) refers to this type of punctuation marks as ‘the stops’, and distinguishes them from ‘visual signals’ that do not mark pauses like apostrophe, hyphen, quotation marks, parentheses and brackets etc.

III-3- Vocabulary

Vocabulary reflects all the words and lexicons of the language that carry meaning. Some language specialists refer to the term vocabulary as ‘lexical devices’. Mc Carthy (1990) argues that when we refer to vocabulary of the language we are speaking about the words of that language. Mc Carthy (1990:1), claims that *“it is most conventional to think of words as free standing items of language that have meaning”*. Vocabulary items (words) can be thought of as independent and dependent morphemes in any language. As an example, the word ‘eating’ can be divided into two parts; ‘eat’: independent morpheme; ‘ing’: dependent morpheme. However those independent morphemes having meaning are thought to be the vocabulary of the language.

III-4- Spelling

Templeton (2003) defines spelling as the representation of the sounds in a consistent way i.e. to represent the sounds in a form of letters in a correct manner. It is also called ‘orthography’ and in almost cases considered as an arbitrary system. Brown and Hood (1989:26) point out that *“spelling is visual. We see if spelling is right or wrong. We remember the way it looks”*. Therefore, Spelling is the graphic side of writing.

III-5- Coherence

Coherence is the chronological and natural order throughout which sentences and paragraphs progress. Lepionka (2008:118) states that “*coherence is the quality of sequenciality and integrity, or togetherness*”. For instance, composing a narrative paragraph on the basis of the sequence of events, one might start from the earliest to the latest event to establish coherence.

III-6- Cohesion

According to Stott and Chapman (2001:132), “[*cohesion*] looks at how sub-units within a text hold together. It refers to the way a speaker or writer uses the built-in relationships between words, phrases and sentences to create a sense of shape and ‘connectedness’”. The definition indicates that cohesion is used to create unity of the text, which is the matter of maintaining the same idea, meaning, and thought of the writer throughout the text. This might be achieved through the use of appropriate vocabulary and cohesive devices such as, connective words.

III-7- Style

Johnson (1991:21) states that there are two ways to think of style, first, it is “*the way writers and speakers combine diction and manner to express themselves*”. In light of this statement, style may be thought of as the choice of the words, word relationship, and the way they are used to express meaning. Second, it is how the elements of writing are used, for instance, the use of figures, capitalization, and italic and bold forms.

Conclusion

Many language specialists acknowledge that writing is an important and cognitively demanding skill in EFL learning. However, teaching writing would result in better progress if students’ needs are the basis of the process.

Chapter Two: Field Study

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the field study. It first describes the methodology adopted for the present research, then interprets students' and teachers' questionnaires, analyses and discusses the results. It further attempts to analyze the syllabus of writing; and finally sets some suggestions and recommendations.

I- Research Design

I-1- Method

To achieve the aim of the research, we have opted for a questionnaire as a research tool for collecting the required data. Brown (2001:6 cited in Dörnyei and Tatsuya 2010:3-4) defines questionnaires as *“any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”*. The motivations and beliefs justifying our choice for such tool is that a questionnaire is considered as a more formal tool for collecting data in educational research, and perhaps is mostly recommended as one of the methods for investigation of language needs. Mackey and Mountford (1978:21) point out that *“there are basically two formal ways of gathering the necessary information: by a questionnaire to be completed by the learner or teacher, or by means of a structured interview”*. Additionally, Graves (1996:15) argues that *“questionnaires are a common needs assessment tools”*.

I-2- Sample

The questionnaire has been designed to third year didactics students at University of Abderahman Mira of Bejaia. It was administered to a sum of 40 students; unfortunately, only 34 students answered and gave back the questionnaires as Robinson (1991:12) claims, *“the disadvantage is that not many people will bother to fill it in [questionnaire] and return it”*.

The reasons for choosing such sample is that students have already received 3 years of full English language instructions in which they are supposed to develop some linguistic abilities. In this case, they are presumably aware of their lacks, and can easily estimate their needs. Another alternative questionnaire was administered for teachers of written expression module of third year didactics students. As Long (2005) states, needs analysis should also involve insiders and domain experts. Due to the restricted number of teachers, only 3 teachers participated to fill in a questionnaire.

I-3- Aim of the Questionnaires

Students' questionnaire aims at eliciting information on students' needs and identifying their views about their syllabus in relation to their needs in learning writing. It additionally aims at realizing the discrepancies that might exist between the actual syllabus of writing and students' needs. Teachers' questionnaire; however, is meant for supporting and complementing students' questionnaire as well as investigating teachers' implementation of needs analysis and their contribution to syllabus design. It further aims at comparing between teachers' perceived needs and students' felt needs.

I-4- Description of the Questionnaires

I-4-1- Students' Questionnaire

It includes eighteen questions; they are designed to support all the elements explored in the literature review. The questions take the form of two point scale 'yes' or 'no' questions; multiple choice questions, in which students can choose one or more alternatives. In this type of multiple choice questions, the option of 'others' is maintained for students whose views and expectations are not covered in the suggested options. Open-ended questions are included as well in which students are invited to provide their suggestions and comments. The questionnaire is divided into four sections emphasizing some areas like general background information, students' needs as they learn writing, their views about the importance of writing skill, and their attitudes towards their syllabus of writing in regard to their needs. A brief description of the questionnaire is provided.

- Section one entitled "*General Questions*" explores students' general background information. It is made up of three questions aiming at identifying students' age; their choice of learning English; and the importance they attach for learning English.

- Section two entitled "*Writing Skill*" involves four (4) items. It is designed to enquire whether students practice their writing outside the class; their perception of their level in writing assignments; the degree of importance they accord to writing; and the amount of writing practice they get in the class.

- Section three is about "*Students' Needs in Learning Writing*". It includes five (5) questions which examine how often students need to practice their writing; the amount of time they need to learn writing; the purposes for which they need to learn writing; in addition to their proffered syllabus type for learning writing.

- Section four entitled “*syllabus of writing and needs analysis*” involves six questions. The first two questions (13, 14) aim at realizing whether the syllabus of writing matches with the needs of students or not and the reasons for the existing discrepancies between students’ needs and the actual syllabus. Whereas, the two subsequent questions (15, 16) inquire the process of needs analysis and its implementation in learning writing. The item number seventeen (17) looks for students’ views about needs analysis in syllabus design. Finally, the last question (18) is open for students’ suggestions.

I-4-2- Teachers’ Questionnaire

It includes sixteen (16) questions. The questions are ‘yes’, ‘no’ and multiple choice questions. Some questions are left open for justifying certain answers. They are about teachers’ training in teaching writing; their views about their students’ needs in relation to writing; their contribution to syllabus design; and practice of needs analysis. The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

- Section one entitled “*writing skill*” encompasses four (4) questions. These questions aim at collecting information about teachers’ training in teaching writing; their perception of the importance of writing for their EFL students; and students’ written practice outside the class. It also investigates how often teachers ask their students to write.

- Section two investigates “*teachers’ perceived needs in learning writing*”. It involves four (4) items. The purpose of asking these questions is to find out how teachers perceive the needs students would have in learning writing. These needs are regarded in terms of the time required for learning writing; the purposes for which students need to learn writing; syllabus type students would prefer for writing module.

- Section three includes four (4) questions, which are concerned with “*syllabus design*”. The reason behind this section is to determine whether teachers follow any pre-selected syllabus or not; it also aims at investigating who is the designer of that syllabus; and seeks to find whether that syllabus responds to students’ needs or not.

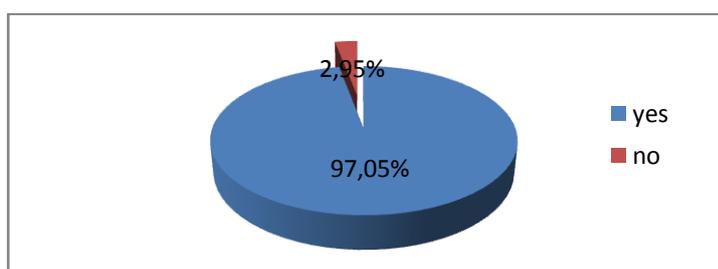
- Section four (4) involves four questions; it is entitled “*needs analysis*”. This section aims at investigating whether teachers conduct needs analysis; when they implement needs analysis; and their attitudes towards needs analysis in the process of syllabus development. The last item (16) is an open-ended question for teachers’ further suggestions.

II- Data Analysis and Interpretation

II-1- Students' Questionnaire

The first question (appendix 1, p 'i') is designed to limit the age of the population. Students' age ranges from '21' to '29' years; however, the majority are between '21' and '23' years. One important feature of needs analysis is that students should be aware of their specific needs. The sample population in the present study consists of adult students who are conscious of their needs.

Question N° 2 (appendix 1, p 'i'), inquires students' choice of learning English; the following graph reports the results.



Graph 1: Students' Choice of English

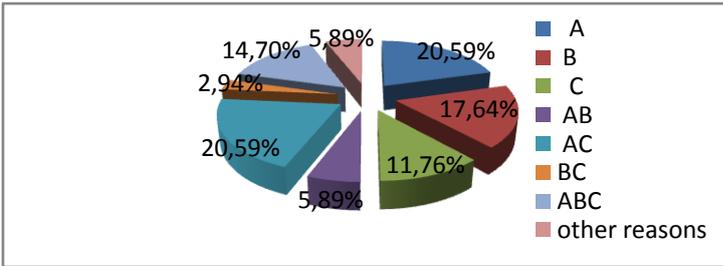
The results of this question show that students recognize the importance of learning English, since (97, 05%) decide to learn English by their will, and English was imposed to only (2, 94%) of the proportion. Since the majority of students chose to learn English by their will, it means they have pre defined needs and objectives they want to achieve. This is also due to the role of English as an international language, which is incorporated in many countries as an important subject in the school curricula. As Ch and Ham (2005 cited in Spolsky and Hult 2008:313) state, "*a certain high level of ability to communicate in English seems to be becoming in many countries a new kind of basic literacy*".

In question N° 3 (Appendix 1, p 'i'), the importance of learning English is investigated; the findings are recorded below.

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
to master English language (A)	7	20, 59
to speak and write English appropriately (B)	6	17, 64
to get a job after your graduation (C)	4	11.76%

AB	2	5.89
AC	7	20.59
BC	1	2.94
ABC	5	14.70
<u>Others:</u> -To study in USA or UKA -For travelling abroad	2	5.89
Total	34	100

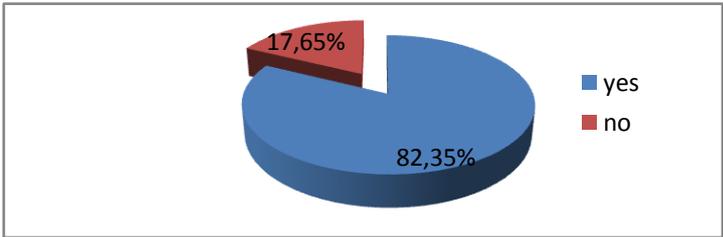
Table 1: Importance of Learning English



Graph 2: Importance of Learning English

This question seeks to find out the importance of learning English. The majority of the participants (20, 59%) sees learning English as important to master that is to gain a complete understanding and control of the language. The same proportion (20, 59%) attached the importance of learning English to the ability of mastering it and getting a job after their graduation. Whereas, (11, 76%) of the participants considered English as important only to get a job. Considering these results in relation to students’ target needs, students need to be introduced to different skills and techniques to master the writing skill. They also need instructions on academic conventions which allow them to perform in their future profession. Additionally, (17, 64%) of the population sees the importance of learning English in the ability to speak it and write it appropriately. Students need to be fluent and accurate.

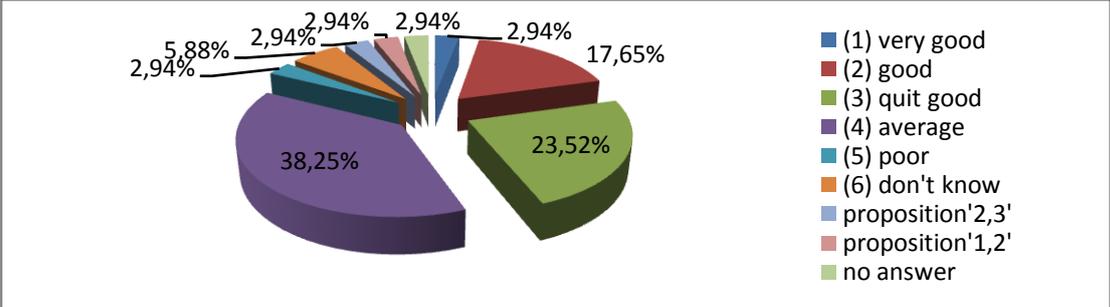
Question N° 4 (Appendix 1, p ‘ii’) inquires the practice of writing outside the classroom.



Graph 3: Written Practice outside the Class

As the results show, (82, 35%) of the respondents practise their writing skill outside the classroom. It is clear that students make trials to develop their writing capacities. However, the minority of the proportion (17, 64%) does not get supplementary practice of their writing ability; it means that these students' written practice is restricted to the classroom. As stated in the review of the literature, writing requires high-order skills of thinking and synthesizing, so, students need and have to practice whenever there is an opportunity, inside or outside the classroom. The majority of students asked are aware of the importance of practice.

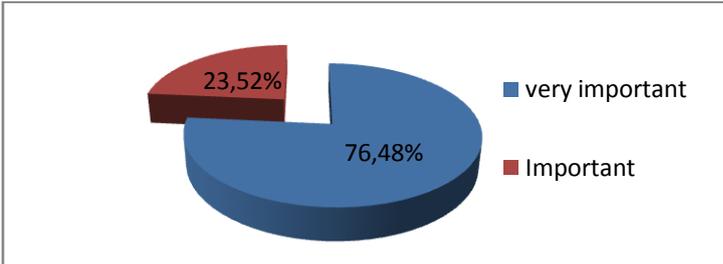
Question N° 5 (Appendix 1, p 'ii') is about students' level in writing.



Graph 4: Students' Views about their Levels in Writing

This question helps students to estimate their level in writing. The findings show that a considerable number of the proportion (38, 23%) rated their level as average; (23, 52%) of the respondents considered their level as quiet good; and only one student (2, 94%) viewed his level as 'very good'. The critical issue to be risen here is that students need more practice in the writing skill for the sake of improving their writing ability, because the majority ranked their level as average and for advanced third year students the level average is not enough. 3LSD students are required to write a final training report which needs and asks for a considerable ability in writing.

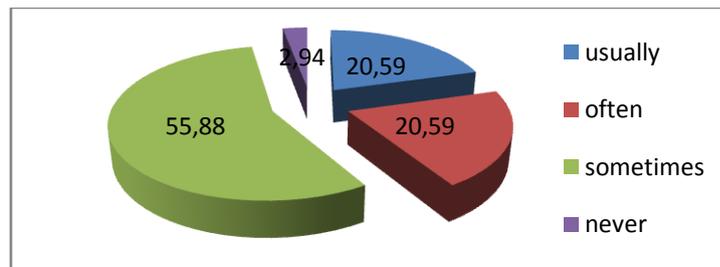
Question N° 6 (Appendix 1, p 'ii') explores the importance of writing.



Graph5: Importance of Writing Skill

The results of this question show that all students attached a great importance to the writing skill, in that (76, 47%) of the subjects regarded it as very important and (23, 52%) of the proportion considered writing as important. Students recognize the benefit of writing skill in EFL learning, thus they appreciate the success they would achieve through acquiring this skill. Additionally their awareness is important because it helps them to find their needs, their lacks, and their requirements.

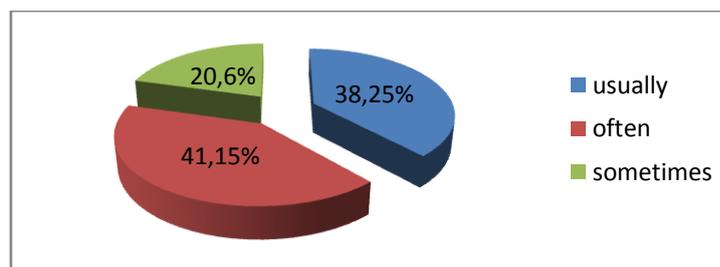
Question N° 7 (Appendix 1, p ‘ii’) deals with the frequency of written practice in the class.



Graph 6: Written Practice in the Class

Half of the population are often or usually asked to practise their writing in the class since (20, 59%) answered with ‘often’ and (20, 59%) answered with ‘usually’. In this sense, students are provided frequent opportunities to improve their writing abilities in the class. However, (55, 88%) of the participants are sometimes asked to practise in the class; for these proportion, written practice is not a usual activity in the class. Hence, we can say that in class students have some kind of opportunities to practise writing, so, may be the problem does not come from the class.

Question N° 8 (Appendix 1, p ‘ii’) aims at identifying how often students need to practice.

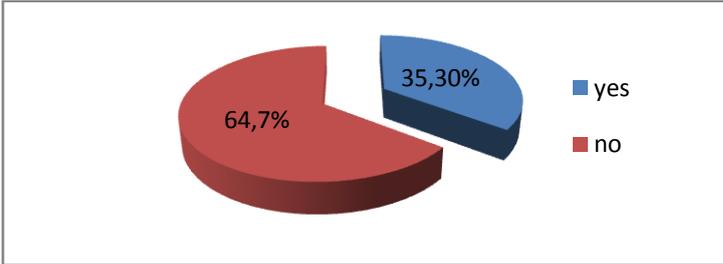


Graph7: The Need for Written Practice

What is being sought in these results is that (38, 25%) of the proportion need to practice their writing ‘usually’, (41, 15%) of the population need to practice their writing ‘often’, and a

minority (20, 60%) need to practice their writing skill ‘sometimes’. The fact that the majority requires frequent practice; means that students consider writing as an important skill as revealed in the findings of question six. Moreover, the results of this question contrasts somehow with the previous one in which half of the proportion is asked to write sometimes, whereas in the present findings only seven (7) students need to practise sometimes, and the remaining proportion needs frequent practice. So, there is a discrepancy between what students need and what is explored in the class.

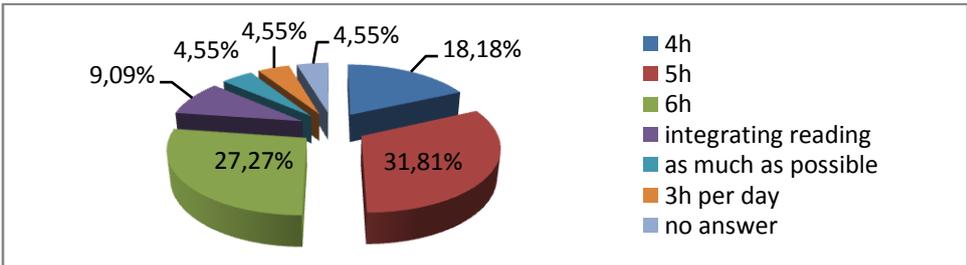
Question N° 9 (Appendix 1, p ‘iii’) looks for students’ attitudes towards the time devoted for written expression module. Are they satisfied or not.



Graph8: The Time Devoted to Written Expression Module

According to (35, 29%) of the population, the time allotted to written expression module is enough to develop the required capacities; whereas (64, 70%) of the proportion see the time devoted for the module insufficient. The majority of the students are dissatisfied with the time devoted for learning written expression module; they feel that three hours per week are not enough to develop their writing competence. This means that they lack practice, so they need more time to do so, as writing is for them a difficult skill. This also indicates that students are aware of the amount of time required from good writing development.

In question N° 10 (Appendix 1, p ‘iii’), students suggest the amount of time they need to learn writing.



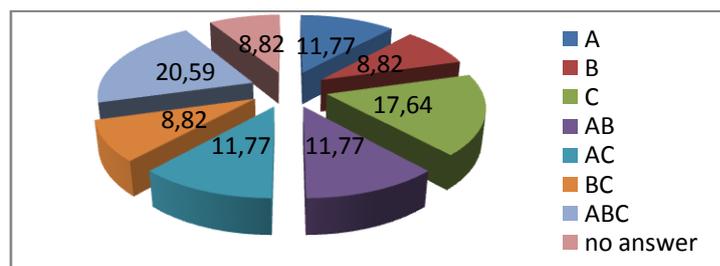
Graph9: Prerequisite Time for Learning Writing

The purpose of this question is to support the previous one. Students who think that three hours per week are not enough to learn writing (64, 70%) provide their suggestions as follows: (31, 81%) out of (22) students think that they need at least five hours, (27, 27%) recommended at least six hours, (18, 18%) suggested four hours per week; and (9, 09%) need the integration of reading . The findings show that students are not satisfied with their present scheduled time for learning writing, hence they need more sessions for written expression module; and propose the integration of reading in their writing sessions. Students think that reading can be connected with writing to develop the writing abilities. As Karoll (1990: 88) notes, “reading in the writing classroom is understood as the appropriate input for acquisition of writing skills...reading passages will somehow function as primary models from which writing skills can be learned”. These results then reveal that students are conscious about their needs.

Question N° 11 (Appendix 1, p ‘iii’) is concerned with purposes for which writing is needed.

Options	Number of Students	Percent (%)
For academic Studies (A)	4	11,77
For informal social life (B)	3	8,82
For future profession (C)	6	17,64
AB	4	11,77
AC	4	11,77
BC	3	8,82
ABC	7	20,59
No answer	3	8,82
Total	34	100

Table 2: Purposes for Which Writing is Needed



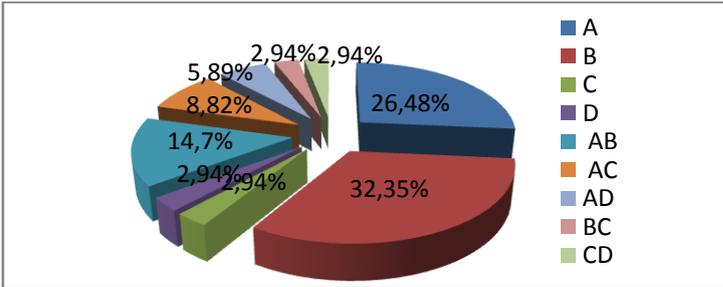
Graph10: Purposes for Which Writing Skill is Needed

The results reveal that a large proportion (20, 59%) needs writing for the three purposes (formal academic studies, private social life, future Careers). The majority of the students need writing to perform in all domains; they need a syllabus that comes in touch with aspects of academic writing, and informal situations of writing. Besides, (17, 64%) need writing for their future careers, that is students need to learn the different writing conventions needed at different professional domains. The same proportion (11, 77%) needs writing for both (formal academic studies/private social life) and (formal academic studies/future profession). Students need a syllabus that cover all kinds of writing, but more emphasis should be on conventions related to academic and professional writing, such as writing different types of letters, and research projects.

Question N° 12 (Appendix 1, p ‘iii’) is asked to identify the kind of syllabus (es) students prefer for learning writing.

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Structural syllabus (A)	9	26,48
Situational syllabus (B)	11	32,35
Notional syllabus (C)	1	2,94
Procedural syllabus (D)	1	2,94
AB	5	14,70
AC	3	8,82
AD	2	5,89
BC	1	2,94
CD	1	2,94
Total	34	100

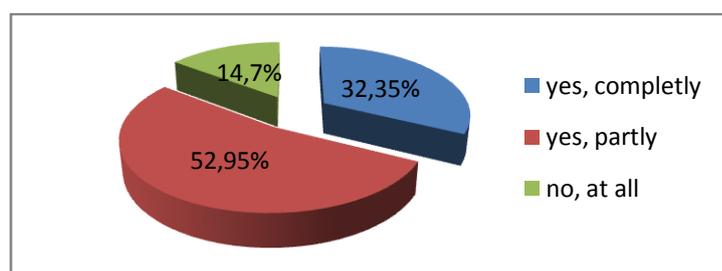
Table 3: Students’ Preferred Syllabus (es)



Graph11: Students’ Preferred Syllabus (es).

On the basis of the results recorded in the graph above, (32, 35%) of the participants prefer to relate their writing to the situational language. In this respect, they need exposure to different situations where writing could be used, for instance, how to write a job application letter, that is the matter of situational syllabus. Likewise, (26, 48%) of the population like to learn writing under the form of grammatical and structural aspects of language (Structural syllabus). In this case, students are interested in learning the aspects and elements of writing related to structures, as an example, learning about sentences and paragraphs, types of sentences and paragraphs, punctuation, etc. Moreover (14, 70%) need both situational and grammatical aspects of the language. However, only (2, 94%) of the respondents prefer to learn the notions and functions of the language i.e. they are interested in the semantic side of the language. Functional syllabus would be appropriate to respond to those needs. And the same proportion (2, 94%) wishes to suggest their own topics for learning (learner-led syllabus); hence students want to take part in teaching/learning environment. The conclusion to be drawn from these results is that the majority of students prefer situational and grammatical syllabi or the incorporation of the two types. In this respect proportional syllabus would suit their needs.

Question N° 13 (Appendix 1, p ‘iv’) is meant to determine whether the actual syllabus of written expression responds to students’ needs or not.



Graph12: the Degree of Fit between Students’ Needs and the Actual Syllabus

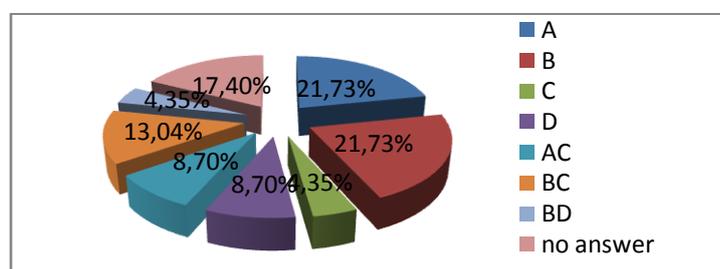
The results indicate that some students viewed their needs as completely met in their actual syllabus (32, 35%). Whereas, nearly more than half of the subjects think that their needs are partly addressed (52, 95%) i.e. some needs are met whereas others are not addressed. However (14, 70%) of the population think otherwise, which means, their needs are not addressed at all; this is because those students do not find any harmony between their needs and what is being learnt. The point to be made here is that there are some discrepancies

between the actual syllabus of writing and students' needs since the large proportion thinks that their needs are partly addressed or are not met at all.

Question N° 14 (Appendix 1, p 'iv') attempts to identify the reasons for the existing gap between students' needs and the existing syllabus.

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Teaching materials do not help to improve the writing skill needed (A)	5	21,73
Reception of instructions and lack of opportunities for practice (B)	5	21,73
Teacher do not initiate students to a lot for writing (C)	1	4,35
Content and exercises do not vary in types (D)	2	8,70
AC	2	8,70
BC	3	13,04
BD	1	4,35
No answer	4	17,40
Total	23	100

Table 4: the Reasons for the Existing Discrepancies between Students' Needs and the Actual Syllabus

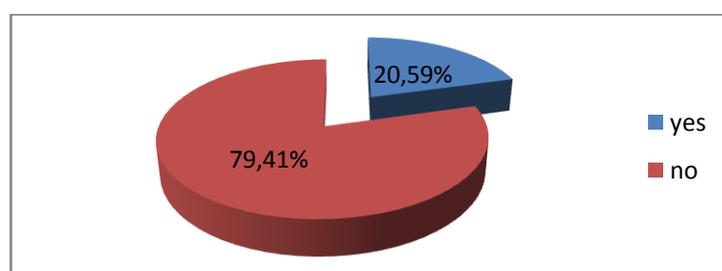


Graph 13: The Reasons for the Existing Discrepancies between Students' Needs and the Actual Syllabus

In light of the results recorded in the table and graph above, (21, 73%) of the respondents representing the large proportion find that the teaching materials do not help to improve their writing i.e. language materials do not cater to their expectations and wants. The same proportion thinks that their needs are not addressed due to the extensive reception of instructions and lack of opportunities for practice. This shows that there is a demand for

renewal in teaching materials and methods which allow more opportunities to practice writing. (13, 04%) of the proportion think the reasons are: 1- teacher does not initiate them a lot for writing, 2-lack of variety in the content and exercises. (8, 70%) of the respondents consider the content and exercises as not varying in types. In this case students need a varied content, but they do not seem to meet this need. Thus for example, Byrne (1988: 48) states that “[in writing programs] we need to make the activities as varied as possible, avoiding a monolithic approach which relies on a limited range of exercises types”. The results imply that the majority of the students are not satisfied with materials being taught, as well as the methods adopted by teachers emphasizing mainly the provision of instructions, lacking some kinds of practice and the variety in the content.

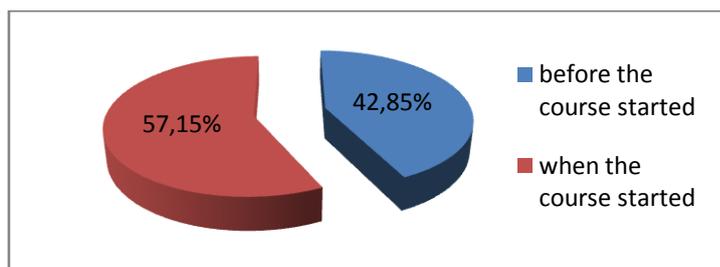
Question N° 15 (Appendix 1, p ‘iv’) is designed to know whether students’ needs in learning are negotiated and analyzed by their teachers or not.



Graph14: Needs Analysis in Teaching/Learning Writing

The results indicate that (20, 59%) of the respondents’ needs are assessed by their teachers, in that teachers consider students’ voices in teaching process. However, the majority of the students (79, 41%) responded by ‘no’ i.e. their needs are not negotiated by their teachers. Thus for Brindley (1989:73) “*the necessity for consultation and negotiation between teachers and learners is not something that all teachers agree on*”. Comparing the results of this question and those found in question thirteen (13, p 39), some contradictions come out. In this question the sum of twenty seven students (27) state that their needs are not analyzed; however in Question 13 the majority of students claim that their needs are either completely or partly addressed. It seems that students are not really aware of their needs. This is explained by Richterich and Chancerel (1987:3 cited in Fatihi 2003:44) as claiming “*Experience shows that in general the learner is little aware of his needs and, in particular, he is unable to express them in very clear terms*”.

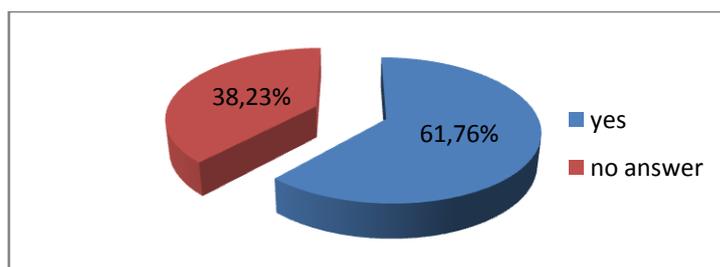
Question sixteen (Appendix 1, p ‘iv’) aims at identifying when needs analysis takes place. Before the course starts; when the course starts; or is it a continuous process?



Graph15: Needs Analysis Implementation

For (42, 85%) of the respondents, the process of needs analysis takes place before the course started i.e. teachers conduct needs analysis as an informal action in the classroom before starting teaching, whereas for the proportion (57, 15%), needs analysis takes place when the course started. The fact that some students’ needs are taken into consideration, means that teachers recognize the importance of needs analysis in syllabus development. Long (2005: 1), in this respect, points out that “*no language teaching program should be designed without a thorough needs analysis*”.

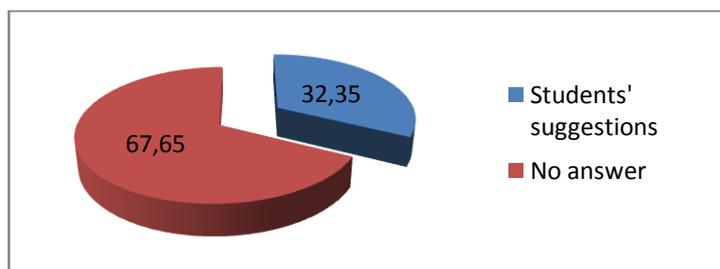
Question seventeen (Appendix 1, p ‘v’) considers students’ attitudes towards needs analysis.



Graph 16: Students’ Attitudes towards Needs Analysis

‘21’ students (61, 77%) of the respondents agreed that needs analysis is an important procedure. One of the subjects claimed “*yes, certainly, it will provide an efficient and helpful program since it depends on students’ needs*”; another student said “*yes, of course the program of written expression module will be with regard to students’ needs and their weaknesses in writing*”. Others answered by, “*yes*”; “*yes, of course*”; “*yes, I think so*”; “*yes, indeed*”. However, ‘13’ students (38, 23%) did not answer the question.

In question eighteen (appendix 1, p 'v'), Students are invited to comment and provide their suggestions.



Graph 17: Students' Further Suggestions

Only eleven students (32, 35%) contributed to provide their opinions. Below suggestions that have relation with our topic are reported.

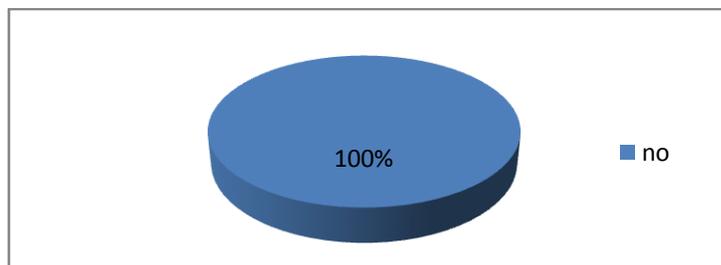
- Teachers have to follow a useful program and include reading to improve students' writing skill.
- We need more opportunities to practise our writing skill.
- English department has to analyze students' needs continuously.
- We need good teachers.
- Our department uses bad methods for teaching, and lack the analysis of what students want.
- Our module should base on students' needs to create active learners.
- We need more opportunities to learn what we want.
- Writing skill is very important for us to master English language, so we have to focus on it.
- Written expression is an interesting module and reading is important to improve writing.
- We need competent teachers and interesting program.

Conclusion

In an attempt to analyze students' questionnaire, we have concluded that students express their needs in relation to writing. More importantly is that some discrepancies exist between those needs and the actual syllabus. To support the data gathered so far to confirm our hypothesis, we try to analyze teachers' questionnaire.

II-2- Teachers' questionnaire

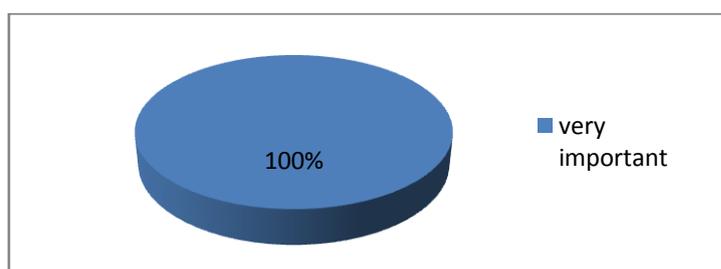
Question one (Appendix 2, p 'vi') investigates whether teachers have been trained to teach writing or not.



Graph 18: Teachers' Training for Teaching Writing

The findings improve that all teachers are not trained to teach writing. So, teachers do not have a pre defined method and content designated for teaching writing; hence each teacher adapts his own way and materials. Teacher training is an important element, because as writing demands high-level skills, teachers should be competent in order to raise these skills in the learners.

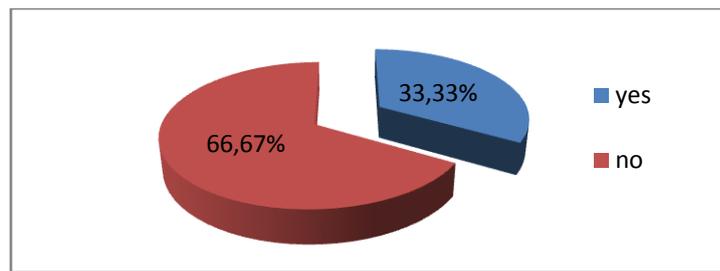
Question two (appendix 2, p 'vi') looks for teachers' attitudes towards the importance of writing for their EFL students.



Graph 19: Importance of Writing Skill from Teachers' Perspectives

As the results show, all teachers (100%) consider writing skill as very important for their students. There is a consistency between students' and teachers' views towards the importance of learning writing. As both teachers and learners are aware of its importance, its teaching and learning would have a special significance for both. Kane (1988: 3) claims that *"writing is worth learning. It is of immediate practical benefit in almost any job or career"*.

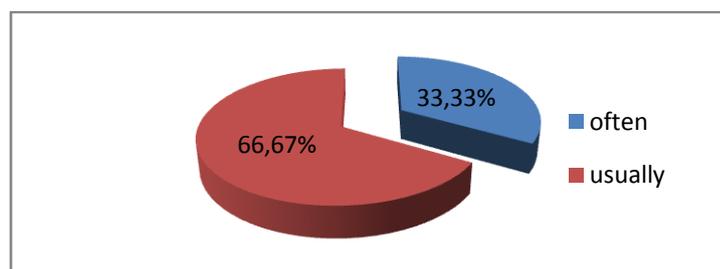
In question three (Appendix 2, p 'vi') teachers are expected to estimate whether students practise their writing outside the class or not.



Graph 20: Written Practice outside the Class from Teachers' Perspective

The majority of the teachers (66, 67%) think that their students do not practise their writing outside the class. This contradicts to some extent with students' responses for question four, (p32) in which the majority of them (82, 35%) claim that they practise their writing outside the classroom. It appears that teachers notice students' deficiencies in writing, this leads them to think that their students do not write outside the class. On the other hand, (33, 33%) of the participants think that their students try to perform their writing outside the class; it means that, these teachers are satisfied with the efforts made by their students.

Question four (Appendix 2, p 'vi') attempts to identify how often teachers ask their students to practise their writing.

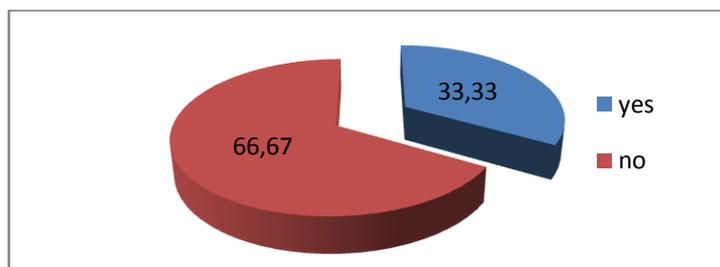


Graph 21: Teachers' Contribution to Written Practice

The analysis of this question shows that (66, 67%) of the teachers argue that they 'usually' ask their students to write, and (33, 33%) of the respondents state that they 'often' ask them to write. It is clear that all teachers allow frequent practice to their students; however, students' responses for question 7 (p33) show the opposite, hence, a large population (55, 88%) mention that they are 'sometimes' asked to practise. Only (20, 58%) of the proportion, claim that they are 'usually' or 'often' allowed opportunities to practise. It seems that some teachers allow frequent practice in their classes, whereas, opportunities to practise are very limited

with other teachers since a considerable number of students are ‘sometimes’ asked to practise. In this sense teachers might not have a clear perception of their students’ needs, or learners and teachers do not share their perceptions of each other’ s expectations, thus what is expected by teachers as frequent is not perceived alike by students.

Question five (Appendix 2, p ‘vi’) investigates whether teachers are satisfied with the time devoted for written expression module.



Graph 22: Teachers’ Attitudes towards the Amount of Time Devoted to Written Expression Module

Two (2) teachers (66, 67%) do not find 3 hours per week enough to develop writing skills; the same view is held by the majority of the students (64, 70%) in question nine, (p 35). Both teachers and students express their dissatisfaction in regard to the time allotted for teaching and learning writing. So, the majority of students and teachers need more sessions for written expression module. One teacher (33, 33%); on the other hand, sees three hours sufficient for developing better writing i.e. he is totally satisfied with the time devoted for written expression module. This teacher thinks that his students can meet their needs in this duration. In general, teachers of writing do not share the same views concerning their teaching process. This means that three teachers do not discuss neither the content nor the way of teaching writing. This leads to the conclusion that each one tries to develop his/her specific objectives.

In question six (Appendix 2, p ‘vii’), teachers are asked to justify their answers for the previous question. Teachers who express their dissatisfaction for the time allotted for the writing module justify their answers as follows:

-It is not enough because one and half an hour per week is not sufficient; learners need to practise more.

-It is not sufficient in the sense that it does not help the learners to develop the necessary skills related to writing skill.

The following suggestion is provided by the teacher who thinks that 3 hours per week is sufficient to develop writing competence:

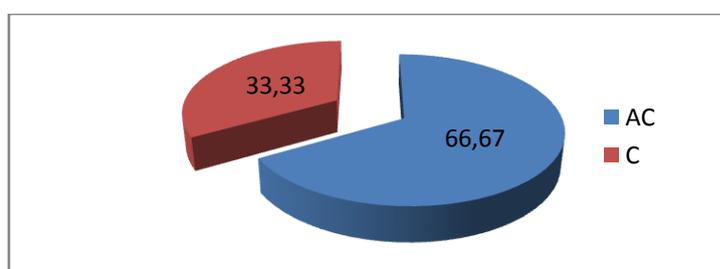
-It is yes if they organize themselves both the teachers and students. Yet, outside the classroom is a core fact to improve their writing skills.

In this respect, this teacher speaks about the procedures used to teach writing and the matter is not time by the way. In fact he emphasizes the active role of the learners who can explore their efforts outside the class instead of total reliance on the opportunities teachers provide. To quote, Long (2005:3) argues that *“learners are far more active and cognitively-independent participants in the acquisition process than is assumed by the erroneous belief that what you teach is what they learn, and when you teach it is when they learn it”*

Question seven (Appendix 2, p ‘vii’) considers teachers’ views in relation to the purposes for which students need writing.

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
For formal academic studies (A) For their future profession (C)	2	66, 67
For their future profession (C)	1	33, 33%
Total	3	100%

Table 5: Purposes for which Writing is Needed from Teachers’ s Perspectives



Graph 23: Purposes for which Writing is Needed from Teachers’ Perspective

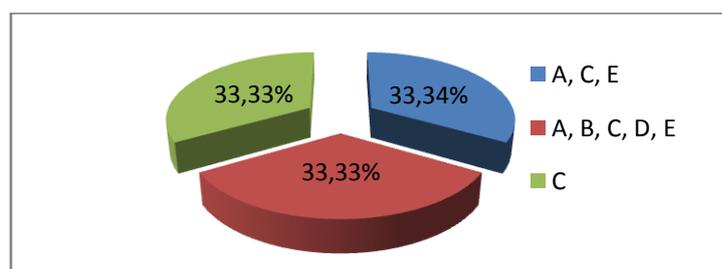
The majority of teachers (66, 67%) think that students need writing for both academic studies and future profession; one teacher (33, 33%) attached students’ needs in writing to their future profession. Teachers consider the needs of their students only in terms of

academic and future career and neglect the needs for knowing aspects of informal writing. Even though (11, 76%) of students hold the same view as their teachers, teachers' 'perceived needs' do not completely match with all students' 'felt needs'. This is because the majority of the students (20, 58%) accorded their needs in writing to all domains, academic studies; informal social life; and future profession. These results show that teachers' views about their students' needs and students' felt needs could not be usually the same. Graves (1996:16) states that "*students' perceptions of needs may not match those of the teacher*". This can result in the conclusion that teachers do not always consider the needs of their students.

Question eight (Appendix 2, p 'vii') seeks to identify teachers' views about the type of syllabus (es) students would prefer for learning writing.

Options	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
A- structural/grammatical C- notional functional language E- Procedural syllabus	1	33, 34
A B- Situational syllabus C D- Task-based Syllabus E	1	33, 33%
C	1	33, 33%
Total	3	100%

Table 6: Type of Written Expression Syllabus

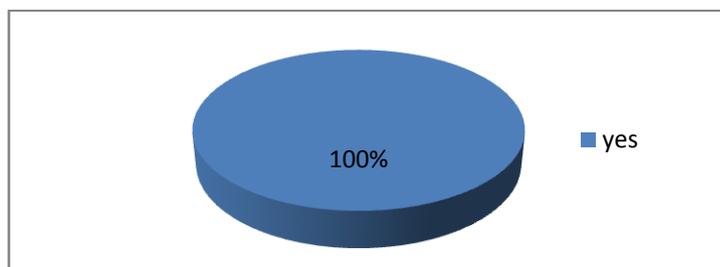


Graph24: Type of Written Expression Syllabus

One teacher (33, 34%) considers structural, notional, and procedural types the adequate ones .i.e. he thinks that students would prefer grammatical, semantic items; and topics suggested by themselves. This participant did not give any interests to situational language

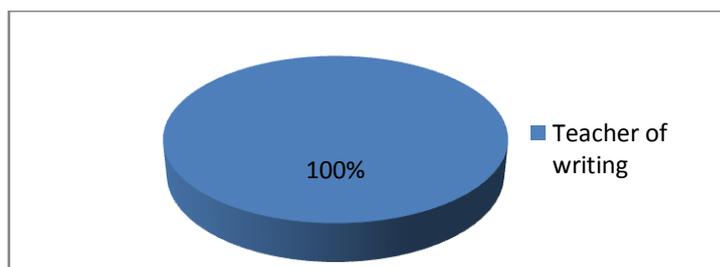
which is central to students' preferences; this explains why students find the teaching materials not corresponding to their needs. Another participant (33, 33%) considers all types as appropriate for teaching writing: grammatical, situational, functional, task-based and procedural syllabi. The participant thinks that when teaching writing, all language aspects should be covered, that is students need to be introduced to all different types and conventions of writing. One subject (33, 33%) opts for the functional and notional aspects of the language. From the findings, teachers do not share the same views concerning the syllabus type students would prefer for learning writing, while the majority of students (32, 35%) have a great interest in situational syllabus, and structural syllabi come at the second rank (26, 47%). The findings show that the difference between teachers' views is due to the lack of training in teaching writing; moreover the discrepancies between their perceived and students' felt needs prove that needs analysis is not part of their teaching process.

Question nine (Appendix 2, p 'vii') is asked to see whether teachers of writing follow any preselected syllabus or not. All teachers answered 'yes'.



Graph25: Syllabus of Written Expression Module

Question N° 10 (Appendix 2, p 'vii') seeks to identify the designer of that syllabus.

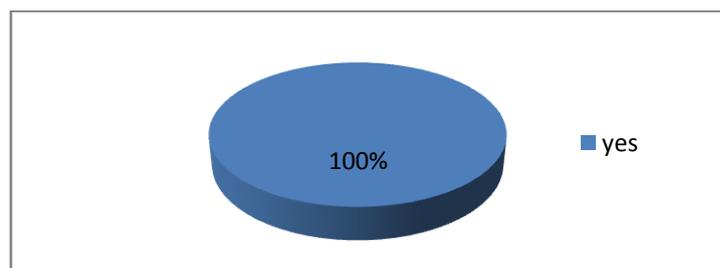


Graph26: Syllabus Designer

The two questions (9, 10) aim at identifying the syllabus of writing adopted for 3 LSD students and its designer. The results demonstrate that all teachers (100%) follow a syllabus

which is designed by themselves i.e. there is no unified syllabus; each teacher is the designer of his own syllabus. The reason is that teachers do not negotiate the content and students' needs between them when attempting to design their syllabi. It might additionally be inferred that the administration does not provide a syllabus for those teachers, or teachers are not satisfied with the syllabus suggested. This actually attests the idea that teachers do not share the same views throughout the questions asked.

Question eleven (Appendix 2, p 'viii') examines the degree of fit between the syllabi adopted by the teachers of writing and their students' needs.



Graph 27: Degree of Fit between Students' Needs and Syllabus of Writing

The purpose of this question is to investigate teachers' perceptions on the syllabi they adopt in relation to their students' needs. As the graph above shows, all teachers (100%) think that their syllabi respond to their students' needs. However the large number (52, 94%) of the students state the opposite in question thirteen 13 (p 39); they claim that their needs are partly addressed. Furthermore, (14, 70%) state that their needs are not addressed at all. Teachers' perceptions are validated somehow, in that (32, 35%) of the students consider their needs as completely addressed. Clear the fact that the syllabi adopted by teachers of writing do not respond to all students' needs as a result of the existing differences in 'perceived' and 'felt needs'.

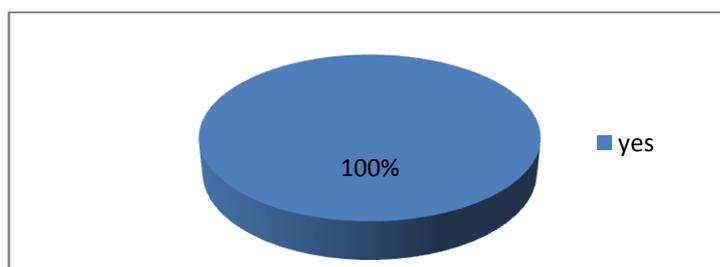
Question twelve (Appendix 2, p 'viii') is designed to justify the previous one. Two teachers provide us justifications as claiming:

-Because I always tell them to write about what they want and about what they need now and in their future career.

-I use a variety of texts that tackle different language purposes.

The question that arises here perhaps is: is what these teachers do sufficient to satisfy students' needs? Obviously it is not.

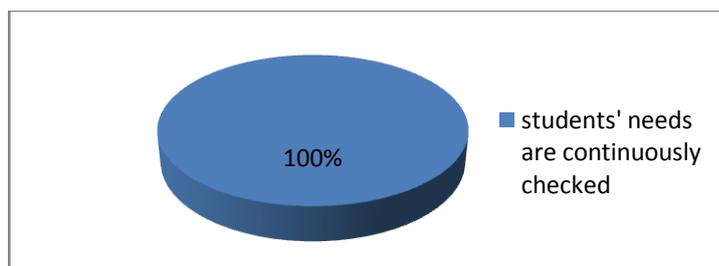
Question thirteen (Appendix 2, p 'viii') deals with teachers' contribution to needs analysis.



Graph28: Needs Analysis

In light of these results, all teachers (100%) conduct needs analysis. Some contrasts appeared in comparison with students' responses for question fifteen and sixteen (p 41), in which (79, 41%) of the students claim that their needs are not assessed by their teachers. This is on the one hand, if we consider teachers' responses for question eight (p 45), on the other hand, all of them differ in their views about the type of syllabus students would prefer for writing. This shows that teachers do not really conduct needs analysis as it should be.

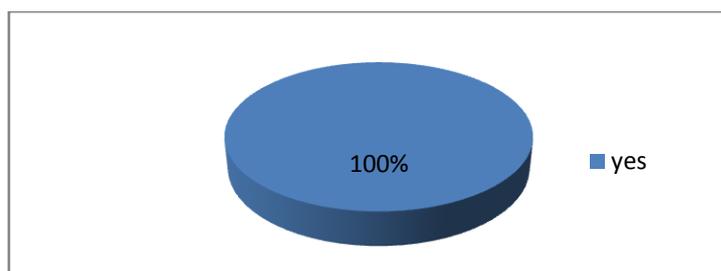
Question fourteen (Appendix 2, p 'viii') looks at when needs analysis takes place



Graph 29: Needs Analysis Implementation

The findings mention that all the teachers (100%) conduct needs analysis continuously i.e. they follow an ongoing process for checking their students' needs. However, the minority of students (20, 58%) whose needs are analyzed, state that their needs are assessed either before or when the course starts. As the results highlight, there is no consistency between teachers' and students' responses. So, the syllabus of writing is not founded on the basis of students' needs, and needs analysis does not seem to be a continuous activity in the teaching/ learning process.

Question fifteen (Appendix 2, p 'viii') investigates teachers' attitudes towards needs analysis.



Graph 30: Teachers' Attitudes towards Needs Analysis

All teachers (100%) acknowledge the importance of needs analysis in the process of syllabus design. Long (2005) states that needs analysis is a crucial condition for developing an effective syllabus. Teachers are aware of the benefit of needs analysis since it facilitates the focus of teaching/learning process; this is why they claim that they conduct it continuously. However the results show that needs analysis is not part of writing syllabus design.

In question sixteen (appendix 2, p 'viii'), teachers are invited to provide their suggestions. They claim that:

-Writing is a skill that should be focused by learners, and the best way is to investigate their needs in order to attract them and to help them develop their abilities in different contexts.

-Teachers should unify their syllabuses, and allow a frequent practice. They should provide feedback which serves as encouragement for students.

Conclusion

The data gathered from teachers' questionnaire are very assistant and supportive for students' questionnaire since the process of needs analysis should be conducted by teachers. The data allowed us to investigate the process of designing the syllabus of writing and needs analysis. It additionally helped us to establish a comparison between teachers' and students' responses to get insight upon the existing discrepancies between perceived and felt needs. This finally contributed to confirm our hypothesis.

II-3- Discussion of Teachers'/ Students' Questionnaires

One section of this chapter (field study) covers the analysis of teachers' and students' questionnaires then communicates the findings and the results. Considering the questionnaires, they seem to be complementary to reach the aim of the study and test our hypothesis. In light of the results some points are worth mentioning. First of all, teachers and students hold the same points of view concerning some questions and in almost cases they differ in their attitudes and perceptions. In that both of teachers and students consider writing as a very important skill which is needed mainly for academic studies and future professions, even though the majority of students consider writing as important for all domains. However in other questions, some contradictions appeared, all teachers claim that they continuously conduct needs analysis and think that their syllabuses of writing respond to the needs of their students; whereas students claim that their needs are partly addressed and are not analyzed by their teachers.

What is most noticeable in these results is that teachers do not have special training for teaching writing and their syllabi of writing are not unified. Additionally, students are dissatisfied with the number of hours devoted for written expression module; the content addressed in this module; and the way they are taught writing. Besides, students expressed their needs in terms of frequent practice and variety in the types of the content and tasks rather than reception of instructions; preference for situational syllabus for their writing module. They also ranked the structural syllabus at the second level; they claimed more sessions for written expression module, at least five or six hours per week; access to different situations where writing could be used; inclusion of reading skill in the writing syllabus; trained and competent teachers in writing; and the needs for an interesting syllabus of written expression module based on their needs. Additionally, both students and teachers value needs analysis as a tool for developing an interesting syllabus.

So, both of the questionnaires contributed to identify the major needs of students and the discrepancies between the actual syllabus and those needs. In order to ensure that our hypothesis is confirmed, we try to through light on one syllabus of writing provided by one LSD asked teacher.

III- 3 LSD Writing Syllabus Analysis

Our hypothesis is based on the extent to which the syllabus of writing responds to students' needs. In order to test it we should compare between the available syllabus and students' needs revealed in our research findings recorded so far in needs analysis. Mc David and Hawthorn (2006:19) argue that *"asking whether a program is still relevant can be answered in part by conducting a needs assessment"*. As shown in the results, teachers of writing do not have a unified syllabus. Fortunately, one teacher was willing to provide us with her syllabus. The syllabus' objective is to teach students how to write an essay .i.e. the objective needs perceived by experts, may be teachers, are that students need to be able to write an essay.

Syllabus of 3 LSD students:

➤ Paragraphs:

1. Paragraph structure
 - Topic sentence
 - Supporting details
 - Closing/ concluding sentence
2. Paragraph writing characteristics
 - Paragraph length
 - Paragraph coherence
 - Paragraph cohesion
 - Paragraph unity
3. Types of paragraph
 - Definition
 - Classification
 - Description
 - Sequence
 - Compare and contrast paragraph

- Narrative
- Argumentation and persuasion.

If we consider the present syllabus, it is structural (synthetic) in nature. It introduces students gradually to the structure, characteristics and types of a paragraph. Wilkins (1976: 2) describes synthetic syllabus as “*one in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step-by-step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts*”.

Reviewing the present syllabus adopted by one teacher participant in terms of its type with relation to students’ needs, responds to some students’ needs who want to learn writing in a structural way (26, 48%). It partially responds to students preferring the incorporation of structural and situational aspects (14, 70%); structural with language functions (8, 82%); and structural with procedural syllabus (5, 89%). However, it does not address at all those students’ preferences for situational syllabus, reflecting the majority (32, 35%); those who prefer notional syllabus (2, 94%); and procedural syllabus (2, 94%); in addition to students who prefer the integration of situational and notional syllabuses (2, 94%); and notional with procedural syllabuses (2, 94%). So, the present type does not respond to the needs of the majority of students.

Likewise, examining the present syllabus on the basis of its content, (21, 73%) find the teaching materials do not help to improve the writing skills needed. Similarly, (21, 73%) are not satisfied with the existing syllabus because of the reception of instructions and lack of opportunities for practice in the classroom. From the syllabus mentioned above, the content is a kind of instructions prescribing the necessary elements students should know to write a paragraph, such as, topic sentence and types of paragraphs. However, practice is not included. Moreover some students consider the content as not varying in types (8, 70%), in which much reliance is on structural instructions and lack of different situations where writing would be performed. Besides the content is purely the learning of formal units of writing, but the informal aspects of writing are not covered, like differentiation between phrasal verbs that are used in informal writing and single verbs which are frequent in academic writing.

In general, noticeable discrepancies exist between the present syllabus and students’ needs. The syllabus responds partially to some students’ needs. It does not cover all aspects students need to learn. As the results show, the majority of the students need writing for academic, informal social life, and professional careers which thought to be the subjective needs, whereas the present syllabus’ aim is to teach how to write an essay (Objective needs).

Likewise the technique adopted for teaching writing does not satisfy students. It emphasizes the provision of instructions and does not allow a lot of opportunities for practice; though students express their need for frequent practice. What is also remarkable is the fact that the syllabus does not refer in anyway to the process of writing (how to write a paragraph); an aspect most needed in writing. The content, parts, and types of paragraphs can be deduced from a database or from a reading selection, but the steps of writing a paragraph or an essay should be taught. In addition, the objective of the syllabus is to help students to write an essay, while a glance at the content of this syllabus reveals that it is based only on paragraphs and no reference is made to an essay.

IV- Recommendations

From the data recorded in our research, it is apparent that students do not completely meet their felt needs in learning writing. Yet, students express their dissatisfaction for the time devoted for this module; their desire for more practice and variety in the content that would touch all the situations where writing would be performed. Moreover, the majority of students show their preferences for situational and structural syllabi. Additionally, they recommend trained teachers for this module, and the inclusion of needs analysis in a continuous manner. In an attempt to provide some solutions for the existing discrepancies between students' needs and their actual syllabi, we provide some tentative suggestions.

IV-1- The Need for more Sessions and Practice

From students' and the majority of teachers' perspectives, three sessions per week are not enough to develop the required skills in writing. Yet, we suggest four sessions per week; one session would cover reading; another one would be devoted for introducing some instructions, types, and forms of writing. Whereas the two remaining sessions would deal with written practice. In this case teachers might find sufficient time to provide opportunities for practice and vary their content.

In the Algerian context in which English is taught as a foreign language, students tend to require more practice, thus much focus on practice is recommended. In this respect, Reid (2006: 30) states that "*writing in a second language is an even more complex set of cognitive tasks than writing in a native language*", hence practice is crucial.

IV-2- The Need for Variety in the Content

The content, activities, and tasks should vary in type. They should be designed to cover all students' needs. As the findings of the research show, students need writing for academic, informal private social life, and professional careers, so there should be an exposure to the different writing conventions related to these domains. Teachers have to attune their content to these diversities. In teaching academic writing such as citations, bibliography, and writing research projects, teachers for instance, might refer to the book of Jordan (1999) entitled "*academic writing Course: study Skills in English*" (unit 14 and 16). They can additionally adopt Joy M. Reid's book (2006) "*Essentials of teaching academic Writing: English for Academic success*" (chapter 11). Moreover, teachers have to relate their content to some aspects of formal and informal writing. In doing so, they can use the book of Abdelhamid

Zoubir (2007) as a guide, “*A Workbook for Basic writing composition: Second and third year Licence D’ Anglais*” (unit 7). Additionally, students have to be prepared for different professional writing, for instance, how to apply for a job, writing letters for resignations etc.

IV-3- The Need for the Incorporation of Situational Syllabus

For the sake of achieving the degree of fit between students’ needs and the syllabus of writing, the syllabus content and activities should cover the different situations where writing would be applied. So, there is an urgent need for immersing situational syllabus. Byrne (1988:27) claims that “*we must also attempt to identify those forms of writing which are most likely to be relevant to the learners’ needs, such as various types of personal communication (formal letters, reports), and to establish classroom contexts for practicing them*”

On the basis of the syllabus reviewed before and students’ needs shown in the results, we suggest some modifications. We propose the incorporation of situational syllabus to the existing one with more writing practice which would be given at different level within each unit. Additionally, some units will focus on the language functions that are used to express a particular notion or idea in order to address the needs of all students. The structural and situational syllabi would complete each other; in some cases students can suggest their own topics as well. Hence, on the basis of our findings, we have suggested a sample unit of a desired syllabus. The objective of the unit is to write a paragraph and apply it in a job application letter situation. The initial phase of the unit will explore structural aspects i.e. the structure and vocabulary aids should be provided ahead before. For the first phase, we propose the adoption of Abdelhamid Zoubir’s book mentioned before.

Sample Unit: paragraph writing and its practical use in a job application letter

Unit one: paragraph writing

1. Paragraph

- Reading a sample paragraph (job application letter, p 108, to adopt from the book of Virginia Evans (1998) entitled ‘*successful writing proficiency*’).
 - Paragraph discussion
- Definition
- Paragraph structure: topic sentence; coordinate details; supporting details.

- Paragraph type: persuasive. (teach how to persuade: lesson six from the book of Francine De Galko (2001, p 57)
- Steps of writing: prewriting; drafting; revising.

2. Paragraph writing

- Paragraph organization (adopt a lesson p 18 from the book of Abdelhamid Zoubir)
- Punctuation (use the book of Thomas Kane 1988 “ *The Oxford Essential Guide to Writing*” p 377)
- Cohesive devices: Connectives; transitions (p 101, Abdelhamid Zoubir’s book)

3. Practice

3-1- Sample letter (p 80-81 in Robert W. Bly’s book (2004) “*Weber’s New World: Letter Writing Handbook*”). (This is a model for writing a parallel version below).

- Pick out the topic of the letter
- Suggest another beginning and ending for the letter
- Summarize the letter in a consistent paragraph

3-2-Write a job application letter

- Write a topic sentence stating your subject and reason for writing
- Write a body paragraph in which:
 - you introduce your self
 - your career (education, qualification, previous experiences)
 - your interests
- Write a conclusion sentence (Closing remarks)
- Relate the topic sentence with the body paragraph to form your letter

3-3-Analysis of some letters written by students

IV-4- The Need for Trained Teachers

In order to satisfy the needs of students, teachers have to get some initial training. As Byrne (1988:27) claims, “...since writing is a different way of communicating from speech, it follows that writing skills requires special teaching too”. In fact, teachers are required to communicate between them to decide upon the content. It is also advisable to contact experienced teachers of writing to get some guidance and training if they are novice.

Moreover, they are expected to consult different resources for the selection of materials to make the class relevant to students' needs and interest. Reid (2006:53) argues that teacher of writing is responsible for communicating clear course objectives; developing a well-planned curriculum and daily classes; assuming multiple roles: teacher, facilitator, mentor, responder, coach, and evaluator. What also is important is coordination between teachers of writing so as to give students the same opportunities.

IV-5- The Need for Conducting Needs Analysis

Needs analysis should be an indispensable prerequisite for designing the syllabus. In that teacher of writing has to play the role of needs analyst. He must start investigating the objective needs of the students before the course starts, then shifts to identify the subjective needs which arise throughout the progression of the course to ensure harmony between the content and the newly detected needs. Brindley (1989:63) argues that "*needs analysis is a vital prerequisite to the specification of language learning objectives*". Teachers have to follow needs analysis as an ongoing process in order to have an updated syllabus.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the interpretation and analysis of students' and teachers' questionnaires; a sample writing syllabus was analyzed as well. The results therefore show that students have needs in relation to learning writing; however such needs are not completely met in their present syllabi. This is mainly attested when the syllabus in hand was analyzed. Hence, hopefully to remedy the existing discrepancies between students' needs and the syllabus of writing, some recommendations were suggested.

General Conclusion

Needs analysis is at the basis of syllabus design in foreign language teaching. It is of paramount importance in the process of selection and grading of the content. Evidently, EFL third year didactic students have needs in relation to writing. The present research is therefore conducted by means of questionnaires with the aim of identifying the existing needs of 3 LSD students in learning writing to measure the extent to which the syllabus of writing responds to those needs.

Some reasonably worthy conclusions were drawn with regard to the findings of our research, thus students express the need for the stretch in the time duration devoted for writing sessions; teachers argue this need as well. Moreover students reveal the need for more practice in writing; variety in the content; and introduction to the diversity of writing conventions related to all domains including academic, informal, and professional areas. They additionally prefer situational and structural syllabi for learning writing and argue the demand for competent teachers with an ongoing diagnosis of their needs. Moreover, the analysis of the syllabus we have at our disposal helped us to validate our hypothesis. The results demonstrate that the syllabus in hand responds partially to some students' needs; this is attributable to the existing discrepancies between students' needs and their actual syllabus of writing.

For the sake of surpassing those gaps, we have provided some tentative suggestions hopefully to be taken into account by writing teachers and administration to improve and make the syllabus of writing responsive to the needs of students.

We have conducted needs analysis in terms of students' needs in relation to writing. Thus the research remains open for further investigations; it can be broadened still further to cover other language aspects or EFL learning needs in general with different tools and methods of research.

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Appendix One

Students' Questionnaire

Dear student, this questionnaire is designed to achieve a research work for a Master 2 degree in English.

We will be thankful if you spend a little of your time to answer honestly the proposed questions to have an idea about your needs in learning writing, your attitudes towards your syllabus of writing in relation to those needs.

Please tick (-) the appropriate box, as you can propose your personal view as well as some questions can require more than one answer. Thank you for your cooperation.

Section one: General questions

Q₁. How old are you?

.....

Q₂. Was the study of English your choice?

a- yes

b- no

Q₃. Why is it important for you to learn English?

a-to master the English language

b-to speak and write English appropriately

c-to get a job after your graduation

Others please, specify.....

Section two: Writing Skill

Q4. Did you use to write some pieces in English outside the classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

Q5. How would you rate your level in writing assignments?

1) very good	2) good	3) quit good	4) average	5) poor	6) don't know

Q6. How is important the writing skill to you?

a-very important

b-important

c-not important

d-don't know

Q7. How often are you asked to write in the class?

a-usually b-often c-sometimes d- never

Section three: Students' Needs in Learning Writing

Q8. How often do you need to practice your writing skill?

a-usually b-often c-sometimes d- neve

Q9. Do you think that 3 hours per week devoted for written expression module are sufficient to develop the capacity of writing for different purposes?

- a- Yes
- b- No

Q10. If 'no' how many hours do you think you need?

.....

Q11. For which purpose do you need the writing skill?

- a- writing is essential for my formal academic studies
- b- writing is essential for my informal private social life (writing personal letters, e-mail messages, diaries, etc)
- c- writing is essential for my future profession

Others please, specify.....

Q12. Which of the following language aspects do you prefer to learn in written expression module?

- a- structural/grammatical aspects of language (sentence structures, tenses, adverbs, adjectives, verbs and so on)
- b- situational language (language used in different situations e.g. use English at 'airport, at the bank')
- c- notional functional language (to use English to perform certain functions e.g. 'request, apology')
- d- Task-based language (to learn writing in the form of tasks (activities))
- e- suggesting your own topics

Section four: Syllabus of Writing and Needs analysis

Q13. Does the program adopted by your teacher for developing your writing abilities satisfy your actual needs?

a- yes completely

b- Yes, partly

c- No, at all

Q14. If your answer is ‘yes partly’ or ‘no at all’ indicate if the following statements could be the reasons.

a- The teaching materials doesn’t help to improve the writing skill needed

b- reception of instructions and lack of opportunities for practice in the classroom

c- teacher does not initiate us a lot for writing

d- Content and exercises do not vary in types

Others please, specify.....

Q15. “Have you been diagnosed by your teacher of written expression module about your needs in the writing skill? (i.e. have you negotiated with your teacher the language content you want to explore in the writing session, your difficulties and lacks in the writing skill?)

a- Yes

b- No

Q16. If ‘Yes’, did the negotiation of your needs happen:

a-before the course started

b-when the course started (after completing some sessions)

c-your needs are continuously negotiated

Q17. “Do you think that the analysis of your needs will result in an interesting program of writing?”

.....

Q18. if you have any other suggestion, please do write them here.

.....

.....

.....

Appendix two

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher, this questionnaire is designed to achieve a research work for a Master 2 degree in English.

We will be very thankful if you spend a little of your time to answer the following questions, concerning your program of the written expression module and your students' needs for developing the writing skill.

Section one: Writing Skill

Q1. Do you have any special training to teach writing?

a- Yes

b- No

Q2. How important is the writing skill for your EFL students?

a- Very important

b- Important

c- Not important

Q3. Do you think that your students practise their writing skill outside the classroom?

a- Yes

b- No

Q4. How often do you ask your students to practise their writing skill?

a- Usually

b- Often

c- Sometimes

d- never

Section two: Teachers' Perceived Needs in Learning Writing

Q5. Do you think that three hours per week are sufficient to teach and learn writing?

a- Yes

b- No

Q6. Please justify your answer

.....

Q7. For which purpose do you think your students need the writing skill?

a- For formal academic studies

b- For informal private social life

c- For their future profession

Q8. Which of the following language aspects do you think your students prefer to learn in written expression module?

a- structural/grammatical aspects of language (sentence structures, tenses, adverbs, adjectives, verbs and so on)

b- situational language (language used in different situations e.g. use English at 'airport, at the bank')

c- notional functional language

d- Task-based language

e- students suggesting their own topics

Section three: Syllabus Design

Q9. Do you follow any pre-selected syllabus (program) in teaching writing?

a- Yes

b- No

Q10. If 'yes', who is the designer: is it

a- You

b- Administration

c- Ministry

Q11. Do you think that the program you design for developing their writing ability satisfies their actual needs.

a- Yes

b- No

Q12. Please justify your answer

.....

Section four: Needs Analysis

Q13. Did you use to diagnose the needs of your students to select your teaching materials?

a- yes

b- no

Q14. If 'yes', When do you analyze their needs?

a- Before the course starts

b- When the course starts

c- Students' needs are continuously checked

Q15. Do you think that needs analysis will result in an interesting syllabus of writing?

a- Yes

b- No

Q16 If you have any other information relevant to the aims of the questionnaire, please do write them here.

.....

.....

Appendix Three

Syllabus of 3 LSD Students

➤ Paragraphs:

1. Paragraph structure
 - Topic sentence
 - Supporting details
 - Closing/ concluding sentence
2. Paragraph writing characteristics
 - Paragraph length
 - Paragraph coherence
 - Paragraph cohesion
 - Paragraph unity
3. Types of paragraph
 - Definition
 - Classification
 - Description
 - Sequence
 - Compare and contrast paragraph
 - Narrative
 - Argumentation and persuasion.