

Written Error Correction Through Cooperative learning Method Among EFL learners

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Abstract:

Error correction is a main part of EFL classroom activity that rarely interests the learners particularly at tertiary level. When learners are given back their sheets of papers tests or exams they are interested in the mark earned not the errors occurred. This study employed cooperative learning method for helping EFL learners to correct their writing errors, and particularly to encourage them to learn from each other. Two groups in an Algerian University were involved in this study. The first one used traditional approach to deal with error correction while the other class employed the cooperative learning method as a group work in order to correct their writing errors.

Keywords: Error correction; written errors; cooperative learning method.

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1.Introduction:

Errors correction is a classroom activity that rarely interests the EFL learners. When they are given back their written tests they are interested in the marks earned not the errors made. However, the EFL learners' attempts in their learning process to acquire English as a foreign language, it is obviously that they will commit errors in their writing papers, so this is the most polemic issues in didactic field. In contrast, it is well known that committing errors is a natural part of the language learning process.

Moreover, the good teacher should not only be linguistically competent, but should be ever aware of his learners' written errors, and consequently integrate a new and innovative teaching methods and techniques that would help his learners to reduce, as far as is possible their writing errors.

This case study employs cooperative learning as an innovative technique for correction learners' errors in order to motivate them, raise their attention, and encourage them to learn from each other.

2.Literature Review:

Cooperative learning is one of the unfamiliar teaching models in our universities, although it ensures that the student raises the level of learning, develops his skills, and gives him positive attitudes and values. It also increases the spirit of group and participation by practicing brainstorming and live discussions among students. Whereas, cooperative learning has received increasing attention from the middle of the last century to the present day. The researcher has pointed out that the concept of cooperative learning means that the teacher employs a set of learning methods through which students work in small groups of different abilities aimed at solving a specific problems, performing a task or achieving a common goals (Artz & Newman, 1990; Artz & Newman, 1990; Slavin, Slavin, 1987).

However, collaborative learning in this way requires students to work and communicate collectively by harnessing and unleashing their mental energies and helping to motivate all members of the group to achieve a common goal by making a number of demands. Then, in this guide, we

presented the theoretical basis for cooperative learning represented in the developmental basis and the motivation basis. Then we explained the conditions for applying cooperative learning, and we ended up presenting one of the cooperative learning strategies, which is the strategy of individual and group achievement divisions (STAD).

Moreover, cooperative learning is a teaching/learning method based on a combination of different didactic techniques in which the learners work in teams to help each other to achieve common goals, and must depend on each other to reach those goals. Whereas, this pedagogical method was integrated in the educational process since the 1980's, because it is a teaching/learning practice that researchers considered to be one of the most innovative educational strategies in today's educational field (Fernandez-Rio, 2016).

Working in teams allows learners to be in an interactive and cooperative environment. This cooperation helps them to develop language and social skills. During cooperative learning situation learners are engaging with the activities and becoming responsible for their own learning.

However, working cooperatively is a useful learning technique because learners interact and cooperate to achieve the common goals. Then, learners develop positive interdependence through cooperative learning situation. This means that they help and share ideas and thoughts engaging each other to achieve a common objectives.

This section presents literature review of peer correction in English Foreign Language classroom and provides theories, definitions of some concepts and notions such as errors , mistakes ,teacher correction , self-correction and peer correction .The main focus of this section will be on some advantages and disadvantages of peer correction in EFL classroom.

2.1.Errors and mistakes definitions and classifications:

The most crucial research to consider is the article by (Hendrickson, 1978) , which gives an overview of the theoretical research carried out to this point. He noted that study in this field is insufficient , but that some important ideas can be selected from it. Summarizing published research ,

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he attempts to answer five questions : Should errors be corrected ?, and ; if so , which ones ,when , how and by whom ?

Within the context of learning and teaching foreign language , mistakes and errors are words commonly used to mention the learners wrong and missed performance in language acquisition. Rather than errors and mistakes had been used interchangeably; a long time before Corder (1974) divided and distinguished between errors and mistakes.

Rathermore , the distinction between error and mistake was made clear by Corder (1981) who characterizes mistakes in spontaneous speech or writing as being induced by slips of the tongue , or lapses in memory, arising from physical state and psychological conditions which have little to do with language competence but rather more to do with performance.

2.1.1.Error definition:

In the traditional educational environment the errors made by the learners are frequently corrected by the instructor and given feedback because the focus of classroom is on accuracy and fluency (Zublin, 2011).

Edge suggested in his book on Mistakes and Correction that we can divide mistakes into three broad categories :First , slips (mistakes which learners can correct themselves once the mistakes have pointed out to them). Second , errors (mistakes which can not correct themselves , and which therefore need explanation). Third , attempts (especially when a learner tries to say something but does not yet know the correct way of saying it) (Edge, 1989).

Generally, the word mistake and error are considered to be synonymous, but errors are usually produced systematically and regularly, so asking the learner to try again is one of the best ways of helping a teacher decide whether the incorrect utterance is an error or a mistake.

There are many definitions of error made so far and there seems to be no consensus on a single definition. Also the term corrective feedback is the teacher reaction that transforms, disapproves or demands improvement of the learner utterance (Chaudron, 1977).

According to Harmer, foreign language learners make the same kind of developmental errors as well. He illustrates with an example for mistakes occurred like ; she is more nicer than him where the acquisition of more for comparatives is over-generalized and than mixed up with the rule that the learner has learnt that comparative adjectives are formed with an adjective plus or minus and he concludes that errors of this kind are part of a natural acquisition process (Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, 2007).

Furthermore, errors are defined as a "deviation from the norms of the target language (Ellis.R, 1994). Whereas, errors is students' writing provide evidence of the learners' level.

2.1.2.Error correction:

There are several possibilities to correct errors. This include teacher correction, self correction and peer correction. These techniques are described in details.

2.1.3.Types of error correction:

Learners of English as foreign language make an errors during there learning. Just there are different kinds of errors there are also various ways of correcting them. Depending on who provides the correction, a distinction is made between teacher correction , peer correction and self correction

2.1.3.1.Teacher correction:

Error correction is one of the major role of the teacher's role inside English foreign language classroom. When teacher corrects his students errors, they play the role of just a passive receiver of information. This is why the teachers should be careful about error correction because some students are very sensitive when they are being corrected. Also teachers spend at least few minutes to get the error self or peer corrected before explicitly correcting the error. They tried different types of error correction to elicit correction from the learners and finally corrected themselves if learners fail. Whenever they used explicit correction, they get a learner to repeat the corrected utterance to make sure that the correct and the right form was understood. When correction of errors comes from the teacher, it

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reinforces teacher's authority because simply he is considered as the sole source of knowledge. (Sultana, 2009)

2.1.3.2. Self correction:

When any student makes an error or mistake , directly the teacher indicates that there is some thing wrong in what has been said and he should allow his student to correct his error. Because this is always the best way that students preferred to correct themselves. this technique has some advantages, especially students feel more confident and less stressful , also they are involved in the learning process. When the students correct their errors as a results they memorize the answers and avoid to occur errors again or an other time.

In the other hand ,there are a several problems with student self correction of errors. First, student can self correct only if he has the necessary language proficiency. Second, the students generally prefer teacher correction rather than to self correct his errors (Ellis, 2009).

2.1.3.3. Peer correction definition:

Peer correction simply is « if the student can not correct himself when he makes an error , the teacher encourages and allows an other classmate to supply correction (Amara, July 2015).

There is a tendency among teachers to regard error correction as part of their responsibility to improve their students' outputs. Witbeck (1976) argues the advantages of peer correction and outlines four techniques editing. He concludes that peer correction results in a greater concern for achieving accuracy in written expression in individual student and creates a better classroom atmosphere for teaching the correctional aspects of composition (Saito, 1994).

Peer correction had seen as a method of correcting work where other students in the class correct errors rather than having the teacher corrects everything. It is useful in that it means involving the whole class in the moment and it also allows the teacher to check what the rest of the class knows. If , for example , it becomes evident that no one in the class really

knows where the problem lies then the teacher can take appropriate steps to explain it to everyone.

Peer correction is a technique where student learn from their errors and provide a feedback to their classmates. This technique also makes learners gain confidence on the knowledge they are sharing and practicing among them (Arias, 2009).

2.1.4.The advantages of peer correction:

Firstly, some learners might find it easier being corrected by their classmates, and the involvement of peers in the correction process makes the classroom atmosphere more supportive and friendlier.

Secondly, this technique involves other learners to participate and share their knowledge with their classmates, which may give them self confidence. It may motivate learners who previously thought a foreign language was impossible to learn , especially when they see their classmates using it correctly (Walz, Error Correction Techniques for the Foreign Language Classroom , 1982).

Thirdly, student to student correction reinforces learning cooperation and collaboration inside the foreign language classroom. Fourthly, it helps the teacher to more control and assess awareness of other learners.

Fifthly, the classroom becomes less dominated by the teacher, because a greater or wider number of students participate in the class. And the last, peer correction increases the amount of time students talk in class in contrast it reduces the amount of time that the teacher must talk.

2.1.5Problems and disadvantages with peer correction:

Some of the problems with this techniques are :

Jeremy Harmer (2004) anticipates a possible problem with peer correction. According to him the student after getting corrected by a peer , might feel that he is inferior to his peers. In such cases, students prefer to be corrected by their teacher gently.

However, some students may feel reluctant to correct their friend's mistakes because correcting classmates' errors might harm their relationship. In other cases, some learners do not value their classmates'

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knowledge and they consider peer correction as a method that exposes them to the whole classroom which effects their self-esteem.

Furthermore , it is more informative way of correcting errors because it comes from someone who has the same experience. It is also less threatening because no grade is involved.

Obviously , the teacher has to be careful to avoid calling on the same student or small group all the time , because the others may be sensitive to favoritism.

2.2.Peer correction in speaking and writing:

peer correction as an error correction technique in a class on speaking activities is completely different from peer correction on writing tasks. Student to student correction happens When the teacher orally asks anything to a learner and he /she gives a wrong answer , then the teacher nominates an other student or even asks the whole class for giving the correct answer. On the other hand , when students Written works are given to their peers for checking , it is known as peer correction in writing. Since the nature and the way of correction are different, the issues of the technique are also different and those are explained below :

- In speaking tasks , peer correction becomes one of the student's embarrassment simply any student does not want to be insulted in front of the whole class. Also , students feel anxious especially when they corrected from their peer and as a result they are proven inferior to their peers.

- in contrast sometimes students have been found to not consider their classmates corrections for revision , because in such situations , correction lacks reliability. As a result , the whole purpose of this technique fails.

Furthermore, (Corder, 1967) had stated that students' errors are helpful not only to teachers, but also to researchers, and in particular to learners who commit errors: they are helpful to teachers because they allow learners progress and what else is to be learned; in addition the researchers investigate them in order to study how language is learned or acquired. Whereas, errors are helpful to learners because they will be able to test various approaches and strategies about the new language they are learning.

3.Methodology:

The current study investigates the effectiveness of introducing cooperative learning in EFL writing in reducing learners' writing errors and at the same time improving their writing accuracy.

The present section discusses the practical parts of this study which is the research design and methodology. First of all the researcher had adopted research method and design. Then, the research tools used for gathering data. Whereas, the researcher analysed the data collected to have a scientific results.

Therefore, adopting mixed methods research approach enables the researcher

3.1.Research objectives:

It is necessary to find a pedagogical method of responding to EFL learners' writing errors that encourages cooperation and interaction among learners in a positive and friendly atmosphere, where the learner does not feel threatened by his peers, but, on the contrary supported by them.

3.2.Research question:

Does the use of peer correction within cooperative learning method in the written expression lecture reduce EFL learners errors?

Does the integration of cooperative learning method in the written expression course enhance EFL learners writing accuracy?

3.3.Research Hypothesis:

Peer correction within cooperative learning method is a useful teaching practice that help EFL learners reduce their written errors and at the same time reinforce their writing accuracy.

3.4.Participants:

The present research engages two categories of participants, the first sample is EFL written expression teachers in Mustapha Istambouli University, Mascara, Algeria who responded to the interview.

While, the second research sample concerned the first year EFL learners at the English Department in the same university who were invited to answer the questionnaire.

3.5.Interviews:

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As for the type of interview, the researcher opted for semi structured interviews which are interviews with a given open-ended questions.

They are generally used in educational research to gather data on the more tangible aspects of the schools' culture. Therefore, semi-structured interviews encourages interviewee the interviewer interviewee to express his thoughts, views and feelings freely without the interviewer interference or guidance towards answering the questions in a certain way.

3.5.1. Description of the interviews:

The different parts of the teachers' interviews and the questions directed to the interviewees are described as follows:

The teachers' interview:

It comprised ten(10) questions(see appendix 01) which were grouped in four parts.

Part 01(Q1, Q2, Q3) : it devoted at eliciting the teachers' attitudes towards the integration of cooperative learning method in the written expression lectures and the impacts of this educational techniques on the learners' writing skill achievement.

Part 02(Q4, Q5, Q6): it aimed at collecting data about the benefits of cooperative learning method on errors correction.

Part 03 (Q7, Q8): within this part, the teachers were asked about the difficulties their EFL learners encountered when applying cooperative learning method in written expression lectures.

Part04 (Q9, Q10): the last part included the teachers' views and suggestions concerning the integration of cooperative learning method in correcting learners' written errors.

3.6. The questionnaire:

The main objective of the current study is to explore the actual situation of EFL writing skill learning at the English Language Department in Mustapha stambouli University, Mascara, Algeria.

Whereas, in order to achieve this aim the questionnaire was designed by the researcher to attain the following objective:

To explore the learning process of first year EFL written expression classes, identifying the difficulties the learners encountered for the method they use in their written expression activities.

However, the researcher has opted for the questionnaire as a data collection tool. In fact questionnaires are one of the favored and widely used data gathering tools in educational research because they are very useful research instruments for collecting a reliable information.

3.6.1.The participants:

In educational research action learners are considered a reliable source of information when learning foreign language because they could express their thoughts and feelings freely in accurate way.

4.Results and discussions:

Do you think that teachers should follow a certain approach to teach the writing skill?why or why not?

Number of teachers	07	03
answers	yes	no

Table 01: The necessity of adopting a particular method in teaching written expression.

The findings represented in table 01 above reveal that the most of teachers participated in the interview(70%) are aware of the necessity of adopting a particular method when teaching written expression. Because using a specific method in teaching writing skills is must to motivate the EFL learners to master this skill.

In contrast, the rest of teachers about 30% considered that they do not have to follow a particular method in teaching written expression. They had justified their point of view with no need to employ a specific approach to teach this skill.

The combination of cooperative learning method and writing process approach:

At which step of the writing process do you think that cooperative learning method can be integrated?

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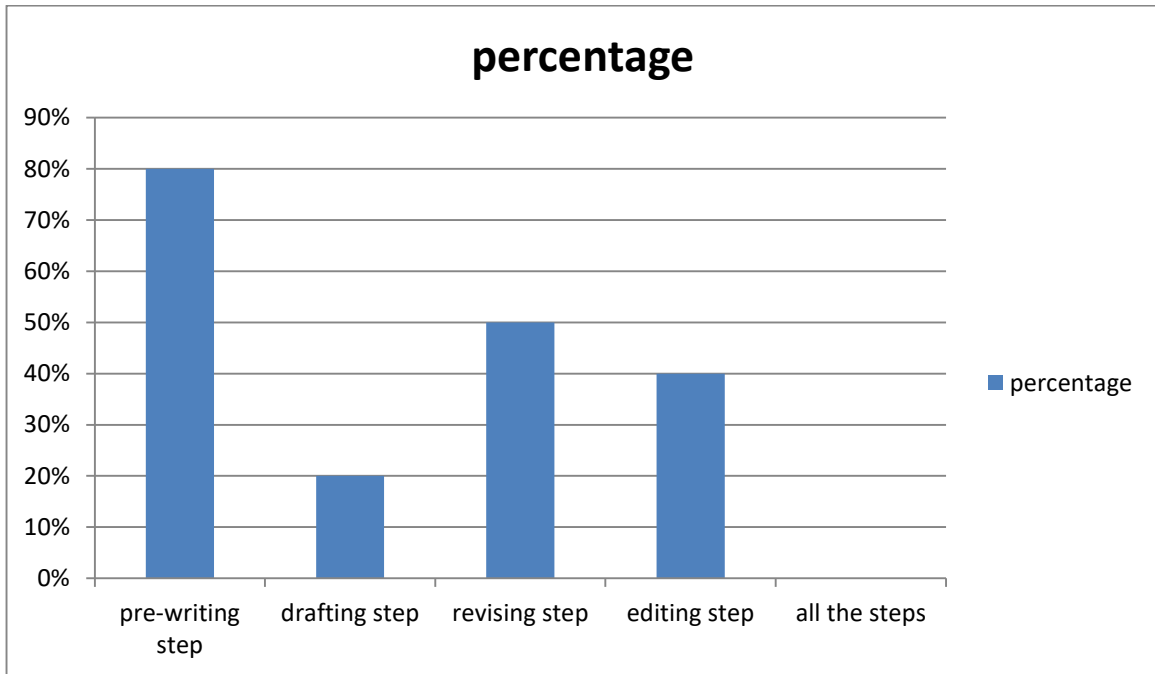


Figure 01: The combination of cooperative learning method and writing steps

Regarding to the previous results about the integration of cooperative learning method in the different steps of writing process approach, the most teachers more than 80% believed that cooperative learning is an effective method when it integrated in the pre-writing step because they justified their answers with the need of sharing and exchanging ideas and thoughts between group members. While 20% of the teachers declared that the appropriate step of integrating and introducing cooperative learning method is the drafting step because the teachers considered that the use of cooperative learning method in this step would increase the development of ideas and at the same time they will be aware of their mistakes.

Moreover, the data collected above showed that 50% (half of the informants) think that cooperative learning method can be used in the revising step and 40% of them preferred its integration in the editing step.

Which type of error correction do you usually use to control your learners' written errors?

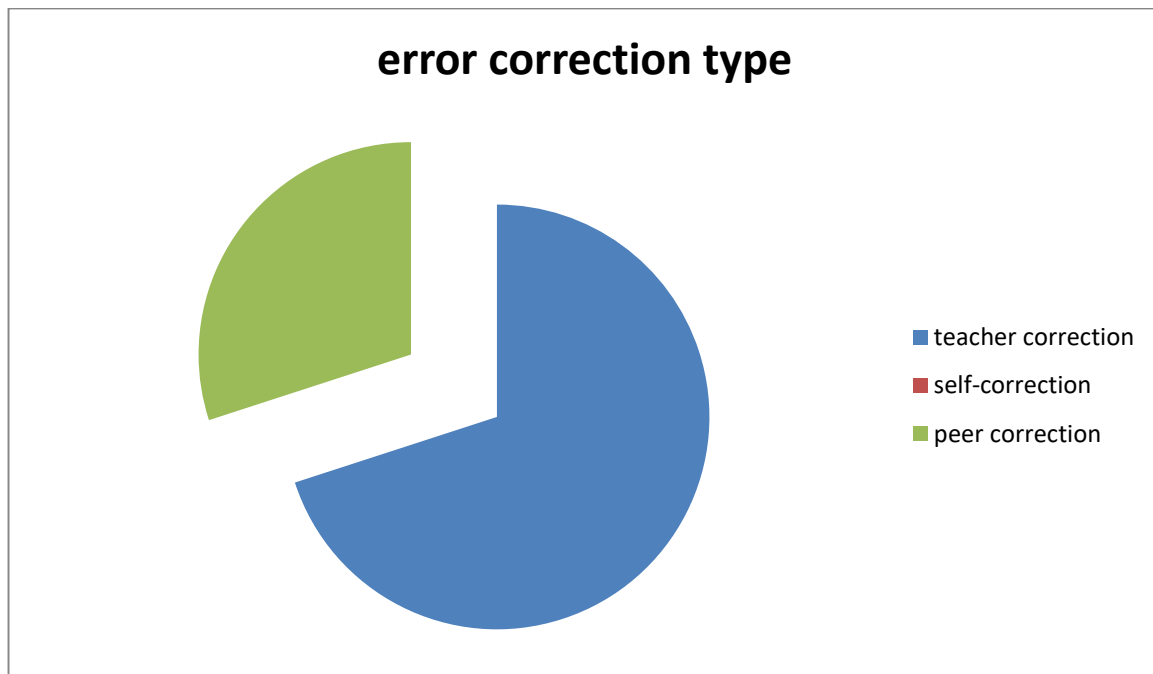


Figure 02: teachers' answers about type of error correction.

The gathered data show that most of teachers participated more than 70% are using the traditional direct writing errors correction or simply the teachers' correction because this kind of error correction is less time consuming and it allows learners to learn directly from their errors. Whereas, the rest of them (30%) considered that peer error correction because they preferred this type of error correction to respond to learners' written errors because it helps learners learn from each other.

While none of teachers responded chose the self correction. Simply it will be difficult to apply this type of error correction among their learners.

First year licence students' writing achievement:

The teachers were asked to evaluate their learners' writing achievement since they considered a reliable source of information for controlling learners and assessing their weak points.

How do you evaluate your learners' writing achievement?

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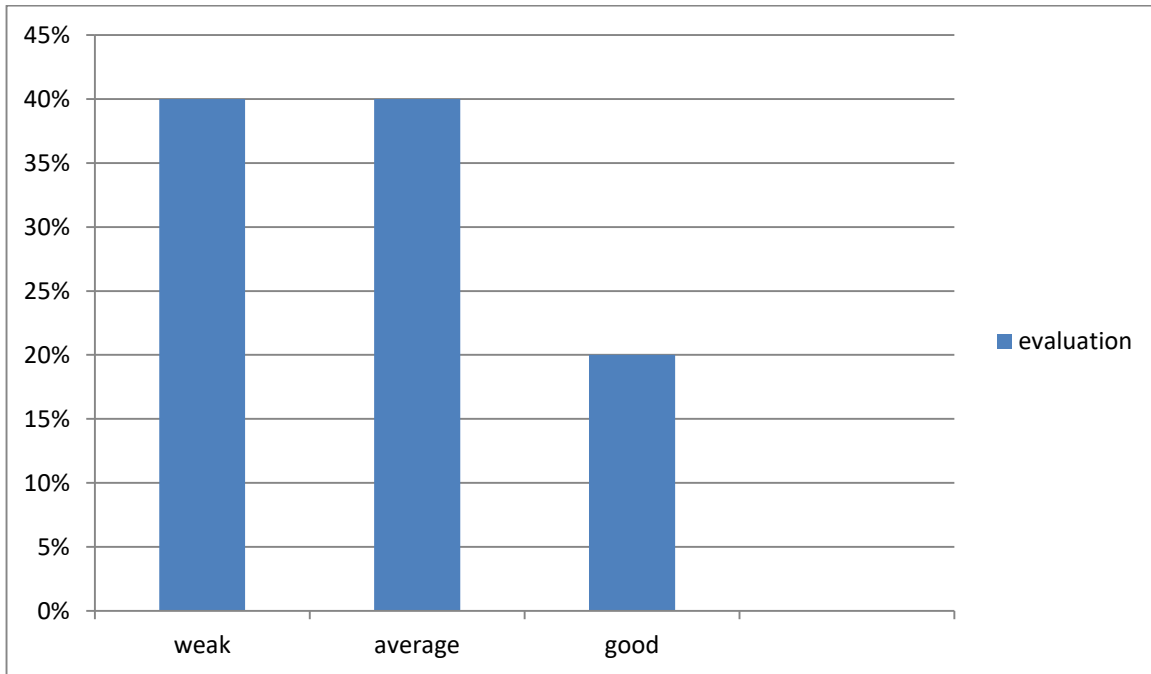


Figure03: Learners' Writing Achievement.

The results indicate that most of teachers about 40% responded considered that their learners writing achievement as weak while 40% of them noticed that their learners' writing performance as average. Whereas, the rest of them (20%) considered that their learners were good in written expression production.

Teachers' Difficulties in Teaching Written Expression:

What are the difficulties that you face when teaching written expression?

The teachers participated in the current study listed a set of difficulties that encounter when they teach written expression. They illustrated different factors that denied them to achieve their teaching goals.

On the other hand, the majority of teachers tied these difficulties with learners' low proficiency, lack of vocabularies, and the complexity of the writing skills.

Table 02: EFL Learners' Written Expression Errors:

Types of errors	Percentage
Grammar	80%

Spelling	80%
Lack of Vocabulary	60%
Writing conventions	50%
Word choice	40%
Fluency	30%
Cohesion and coherence	30%

In the current study, the questionnaire designed to EFL learners in the Department of English Language and Literature of Mustapha Stambouli University, Mascara(Algeria) was administered with the objectives of investigating the EFL learners' attitudes and feelings towards the integration of cooperative learning method in the written expression lectures.

Moreover, the results of the questionnaire are showed in the following points, helped the researcher investigate the research question mentioned previously.

The EFL learners have benefited a lot from the cooperative learning method concerning the cognitive aspect, the researcher stated that the EFL learners exchanged ideas and discussed about the content of the piece of writing which made them reinforce their critical thinking skills, also via writing in a cooperative learning situation, EFL learners wrote better paragraphs in terms of organization, accuracy and fluency. On the other hand, the researcher declared that cooperative learning had positive effects on the EFL learners' social skills as well as he confirmed that after engaging them in cooperative learning situation learners became more sociable.

Regarding to the context of the teaching/learning of the written expression in the Department of English Language and Literature of Mustapha Stambouli University, the information gathered from the interpretation of the interview show that the most of teachers use in their teaching of written expression the traditional instruction.

Moreover, the researcher has confirmed that organizing learners in cooperative learning activities develops their communication and interaction inside the classroom and enhances their social skills. In addition

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they became more tolerant towards others. Whereas, the integration and implementation of cooperative learning in the written expression lectures made EFL learners more relaxed during the writing tasks.

Concerning learners' writing achievement, the data collected show that their writing level is weak for several reasons as; the students' lack of motivation, weakness in grammar and syntactic aspects, poor vocabulary, first language interference, and the lack of reading. Whereas, based on the previous results and the difficulties that the EFL teachers are facing. In addition to students low writing achievement and their lack of motivation towards learning the essential language skill; the researcher assumes that there is a gap in the teaching/ learning context of the written expression in the Department of English Language and Literature at Mascara University.

From the teachers' duties is to search for appropriate method to teach written expression. whereas, positive findings were recorded as most of teachers were conscious of the importance of adopting a particular method of teaching written expression. Whereas, teachers' awareness of the actual teaching strategies and techniques is of great importance as it helps them make a shift from theory to practice in order to look for an accurate and appropriate teaching approach.

5. Pedagogical implications

Based on the findings of the current research, the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in reducing EFL learners' written errors has been proved. So, the integration of this educational method in the written expression has a positive impact on EFL learners' language learning skills. While the use of cooperative learning method in written expression has a positive influence on EFL learners' writing accuracy with a few errors.

However, the data collected from the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data collected in the current study have numerous implications that could reinforce the teaching and learning process of EFL writing skills.

Regarding to the findings of the present study, the teachers' interview results revealed that first year licence students have a low writing

proficiency level and lack motivation via learning this important skill. In addition, the EFL learners commit a lot of written errors, particularly spelling errors and mistakes of writing conventions aspect which are frequently repeated in their writing and catch them from producing accurate passages.

According to the most of teachers participated in the interview the errors are a real challenge for the writing teachers who spent a lot of time and efforts correcting errors that will mostly be repeated in the future written texts.

6. Conclusion:

After discussion, analysis and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data which were collected within this study confirms the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in reducing EFL learners' writing errors and enhancing their writing achievement in terms of fluency and accuracy.

Moreover, integrating and implementing cooperative learning as an innovative method within written expression lectures enriches learners' vocabularies and enables them to exchange ideas and share thoughts inside the classroom about the topics discussed. As a results, this teaching method facilitates writing an essays cooperatively in an easier way than writing it individually.

However, learners faced some difficulties when they work cooperatively with each other but this did not affect their positive attitudes towards cooperative learning method in correction their written errors.

The purpose of this research paper was to investigate the effectiveness of implementing cooperative learning strategy in the written expression lecture of first year licence EFL learners in reducing errors in terms of different writing aspects, then reinforcing their writing accuracy.

The focus within this research was on learners' common writing errors committed particularly the errors of grammar and writing conventions. Regarding to the hypothesized that was formulated concerning the implementation and integration of cooperative learning method in the EFL

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writing class will reduce EFL learners writing errors and enhance their writing accuracy.

Furthermore, working cooperatively within groups allows learners and particularly the low achievement ones to ask their peers for help and to benefit from the cooperation and the interaction that occur within their classmates.

Based on the previous findings and the challenges that the EFL learners are accoutering, in addition their low writing achievement and their lack of vocabularies towards learning written expression. However, the researcher had confirmed that there is a gap in the teaching/learning context of the writing skill in the Department of EFL learners of Mustapha Stambouli University, Mascara(Algeria). Whereas an intervention should be made and a teaching approach that addresses all these issues should be integrated so as to enhance learners' writing achievement and reduce their written errors.

These results of the qualitative and quantitative data have proved the effectiveness of cooperative learning method in reducing EFL learners writing errors and enhancing their writing accuracy.

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