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# Teaching Writing at Tertiary Level: EFL/ESL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

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## Abstract

This article from the practitioner's perspective presents the findings of a mixed method research that is designed to form an idea about teaching writing in the EFL/ESL context at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Data were collected from the tertiary level EFL/ESL teachers' practices and perceptions about L2 writing. The findings show that the classroom practices of teachers reflect their perceptions about teaching writing. There is lack of awareness among them about the current approach to writing, and consequently, their pedagogy is conventional. There is corroborating evidence that EFL/ESL teachers' unfamiliarity with the process approach in teaching writing has made them teach writing in the traditional manner following the product approach. Suggestions are made to make teachers familiar with the process approach of teaching writing. It is also recommended that participation in different training programmes, seminars, and workshops can enrich the writing and assist teachers to incorporate innovative techniques in their pedagogy. The findings of this study have significant implications for the policy makers, teachers and other relevant stakeholders in Bangladesh setting.

## Keywords

Product approach; process approach; teaching L2 writing

## Introduction

Teaching writing is a challenging task in the EFL/ESL (English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language) context. At the tertiary level it is even more arduous where students are generally evaluated through their writing skill. Writing is considered as an essential tool for learning at the university level (Weigle, 2002, p. 05). Therefore, at this level expertise in writing in the EFL/ESL classroom is highly expected from the students. However, in most of the L2 writing classes in Bangladesh, students fail to show the

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expected level of proficiency in writing task. Students at the tertiary level are expected to write meaningful sentences coherently and cohesively, choosing suitable words and idioms and using an appropriate writing mechanic. Nevertheless, in most cases, it is found that students may have knowledge about vocabulary and grammatical aspects (for example, using the right tenses, collocation and preposition), but they lack the ability to write coherently and find difficulty in re-structuring ideas after evaluating them (Alam, 2007). Such flaws in academic writing are undesirable in higher education. As writing is mostly done in the academic setting under the supervision of teachers, their timely intervention can be helpful to deal with this problem. Teachers' cognizance of effective approach of teaching writing help to build competent learner writers.

In order to improve the efficiency of learners in the EFL/ESL context, numerous measures have been taken by the government of the country. At different times National Education Commission of Bangladesh came up with various education policies accentuating the effective teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh. With the aim of it, new teaching approaches and methods were introduced at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Besides, most of the public and private universities (where the medium of instruction is English) are now offering a fundamental or functional English course in order to enhance students' proficiency in English. However, all these measures have been proven futile making the scenario remaining the same.

Despite the innovation of new approaches and the introduction of the new curriculum, writing is taught and practised in the traditional manner in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms where teachers play the role of sole authority in the writing class. Writing is taught in the traditional grammar-translation method-based language teaching, where both teachers and students are mainly concerned about teaching and learning textbook contents and grammar rules scarcely being involved in practical and participatory activities for teaching and learning language skills (Hoque, 1999, p. 95).

Albeit, teachers give students some writing tasks, such as writing paragraphs, essays and letters. In such writing tasks, teachers act as judges, and only give feedback on the finished written products, without intervening in the writing process of the students. Feedback is given on form and mostly in indirect way. However, writing practiced in this way improves neither grammatical accuracy nor writing fluency (White & Arntd, 1991). Grammatical accuracy includes appropriate vocabulary, correct sentence structure, spelling, and letter formation. Fluency includes development of ideas and integration of them to produce a cohesive and coherent piece of writing. Moreover, this method of teaching writing inculcates a conviction in the learners that writing is a natural gift, an innate ability which makes them anxious, and they begin to think less of themselves as writers. Consequently, learners tend to give up and work less if they believe that success is due to innate abilities (Weigle, 2002, p. 25). Furthermore, because of time constraint and the need to complete the syllabus, writing is often given as homework, and then is done by the students in an unsupported condition of learning. Writing practised in this manner

affects learners because they miss valuable opportunities for improvement through discussion, collaboration and feedback.

Such poor pedagogical practices in the L2 writing class point finger to our teachers' perceptions about writing and their mode of instruction. It draws our attention to the fact that whether they are familiar with the effective approach to teaching writing which was introduced in the last few decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, a paradigm shift took place in the concept of writing which initiated a changed approach of writing from "writing-as-a-product" to "writing-as-a-process." In this approach, more attention is given on cognitive process of the writers than on the written product. According to Osterholm, the change of focus from the written product to the process of writing has brought a change in classroom dynamics (Osterholm, 1986). In classroom, popular lecture-based instruction is now being superseded by writing workshops, conference and activities in peer groups. The role of teacher has also changed from "judge" to facilitator who aims to facilitate learners' writing abilities in learner-centred classrooms. However, writing pedagogy in our educational institutions presents a different scenario. Teachers still have outdated notion about teaching writing.

So, as an EFL/ESL teacher in Bangladesh, I am keen to address the issue from the pedagogical perspective. As teachers are "active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically oriented, personalised and content sensitive networks of knowledge thoughts and beliefs" (Brog, 2003, p. 81), I deem it worthwhile to know their perceptions about teaching writing, and how these perceptions are reflected in their practices in L2 writing class.

## **Research Aim**

This research aims to investigate tertiary level EFL/ESL teachers' practices and perceptions in teaching writing which consequently affect our learners' writing performance. Therefore, I have decided to address the issue from the pedagogical perspective.

## **Research Questions**

Based on the research aim, the following questions have been formed to explore the pedagogical techniques:

1. Which approach is followed by teachers in the EFL writing classrooms?
2. Is writing taught or practised?
3. How does the current approach to teaching writing of the teachers affect learners' writing performance?

## **Literature Review**

In order to have an insight into the EFL/ESL teachers' pedagogical techniques, I have discussed cognitive models of writing, the product approach, the process

approach, the role of teachers and feedback in L2 writing class, and the results of research on the composing process. Cognitive models of writing focus on the cognitive processes of skilled and unskilled writers. The product approach has informed about the current approach that is followed by teachers in L2 writing class. The process approach has helped to view a shift in writing pedagogy and its facilitative effect on teaching writing. On the other hand, role of teachers and feedback in L2 writing class has aided to understand the change that took place in these areas with the emergence of process approach to writing. Finally, results on the composing process have validated the recommendations I am going to make for my research context.

### *Cognitive Models of Writing*

With a view to improving the writing of second language learners, an interest was developed in 1970 to focus on writers' composing processes. This different view of composing process considers writing not as a result of literary creativity, but as a set of complicated cognitive operations. This view of writing was based on the techniques and theories of cognitive psychology. In an effort to identify these mental operations, researchers developed a good number of investigative methods.

Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Model (1977; 1980; 1981; 1984, as cited in Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) attempts to define writing as a problem solving activity which is recursive in process. The salient features of this cognitive model are: "a) writers have goals, b) they plan extensively, c) planning involves defining a rhetorical problem, placing it in a context, then exploring its parts, arriving at solutions and finally translating ideas on the page; d) planning, drafting, revising and editing are recursive, interactive and potentially simultaneous; e) plans and texts are constantly evaluated in a feedback loop; and f) the whole process is overseen by an executive control called a monitor" (Hyland, 2009, p. 21). This Cognitive Model of Flower and Hayes differentiates the composing and revision strategies of the skilled and immature writers. So, it can be summed up that immature writers can achieve competency in writing if they are instructed to use strategies of skilled writers.

Bereiter and Scardimalia's Two Model Theory of Writing (1987, as cited in Alam, 2007), points out that skilled and unskilled writers differ from each other completely. As a reaction to Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Model, it shows how skilled and unskilled writers compose differently. According to this model, while writing unskilled writers plan less than skilled writers, revise less and at the time of generating ideas, they search in their memory and procure necessary information that has been stored in the memory. On the other hand, skilled writers use the Knowledge Transforming model. They establish a continuous interaction between developing knowledge and text by contemplating the complexities of the task and sorting out the problems of content, form, audience, style, organisation (Hyland, 2009). Hence, this model attaches importance to feedback and revision in developing content and expression.

### *The Product Approach*

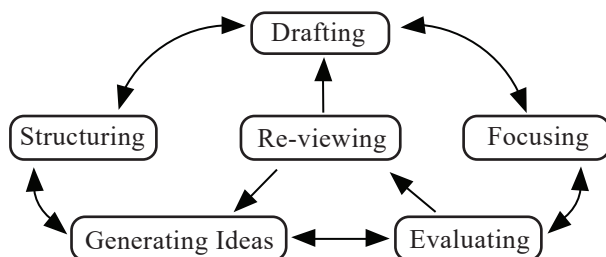
This is a traditional approach to writing. In this approach, teachers put emphasis on the final product of learners' writing. Learners usually imitate, copy and transform the material supplied by the teacher (Nunan, 1991). In this approach, writing is seen as being primarily about linguistic knowledge focusing on the proper use of syntax, vocabulary and the cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982). It is a teacher-centred approach where the feedback is provided on the final product. Feedback is mostly given on form (for example, grammar and mechanics) rather than content. From the beginning to the end of writing, a learner works in isolation to produce a text without any chance to interact, discuss or receive feedback either from the teachers or peers (Mourssi, 2013).

Researchers pointed out some major weaknesses of the product approach saying that this approach, for example, affects negatively learners' level of command of the writing skills as it focuses on more the final written product than on the different stages of writing processes such as planning, drafting, and revising (Kamimural, 2000; Badger & White, 2000).

The implication is that teaching writing in the product approach fails to make proficient learner writers. It does not teach the strategy of writing as learners' writing processes are ignored. Learners are not taught the thinking processes in planning, organising, and revising their writings. Again, feedback provided on the final product cannot improve learners' writings.

### *The Process Approach*

There has been a paradigm shift in writing pedagogy over the last few decades that has initiated a dramatic change from product to process approach of writing. Vanessa Steele defines that the process approach focuses on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use, brainstorming, group discussion and rewriting. According to Steele (1992), the Process Approach Model consists of eight stages, such as brainstorming, planning, mind mapping, writing the first draft, peer feedback, editing, final draft, evaluation and teachers' feedback. The implication is that in the process approach, writing is seen as a recursive process where focus is given on writers' thinking process by making use of several stages namely brainstorming, planning, drafting, feedback, and revision.



**Figure 1.** The Process Writing Model of Ron White and Arndt

**Source:** White and Arndt, 1991, p.11

Extensive research on the process writing shows its advantageous effect on L2 writing. Researchers found that the cognitive activities involved in the process approach improved the quality of papers written by adolescent writers (Breetvelt, Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1994; Rijlaarsdam & Van den Bergh, 2006; Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1996). Graham and Sandmel (2011) made a meta-analysis of studies on the process approach. They found that practicing writing in the process approach improved the writing expertise of students in general education classes. In her study, Susanti (2013) also found that the students who were taught writing using the process approach improved much more than the students who were not familiar with the writing process. Tsui (1996) in her much-cited article shared her experience of teaching writing in the process approach and considered it to be the best approach in her context. Besides, when learners create several drafts through reflection and incorporating teacher, and peer feedback, writing can be improved (Down, 2016).

According to Bayat (2014), process approach of writing can help to raise the confidence level of the students and lessen writing anxiety. Further, several researchers have found that different stages of the writing process such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, peer feedback, teacher's feedback and revision have a positive impact on writing and learners benefit from these (Lassonade & Richards, 2013; Tusi, 1996; Benjamin, 2008; Nation, 2009; Ferris, 2014 as cited in Sowell, 2020).

### *Role of Teachers in L2 Writing Class*

With the change in writing pedagogy, the role of teachers, which has altered their mode of instruction as well as their way of providing feedback to the students, has also been transformed. Teachers do not act as a judge, an authoritative arbiter of the finished product, rather they act as a facilitator, audience, task-setter and evaluator. According to Harmer (2001, pp. 261-262), teachers also take on the roles of a "motivator" and "feedback provider."

### *Feedback in L2 Writing Class*

Feedback is an indispensable component of L2 writing. Feedback that is provided to the learner writer helps him/her to identify the strengths and shortcomings of his/her writing. It helps learners to assess their performances, modify their behaviour and transfer their understandings (Brink, 1993; Hyland & Hyland, 2006 as cited in Hyland, 2009). The changing role of teachers initiated a number of studies where researchers tried to find out the right mode feedback for L2 writers. A common scenario in L2 writing context is to provide feedback on error corrections of surface level errors (spelling, punctuation, and grammar). However, Truscott (1996) did not accept this kind of feedback to be beneficial for students, rather spoke about its adverse effect on students' writing fluency and thought it should be given up. On the other hand, several studies recommended teachers' feedback on learners' writing content and organisation. These studies validated that such feedback improved students'

writing (Fatham & Whalley, 1990; Huntley, 1992). Huntley even upheld that feedback on content and organisation should be imparted to learners, whereas feedback on form should utterly be abandoned. She recommended second language teachers to integrate peer reviews and student-teacher conference as alternative modes of feedback over conventional error correction.

Again researchers (Ferris, 2011; 2012; Frodesen, 2014; Weigle, 2014 as cited in Brown & Lee, 2015) recognised that error correction is necessary within an optimum range, that is, an L2 writer should not be demotivated by overcorrection rather feel challenged receiving sufficient feedback by teacher. However, Fatham and Whalley (1990) advocated the efficacy of feedback on both form and content in developing L2 writers' writing. The implication is that while providing feedback a teacher should focus on both form and content.

A good number of studies in L2 writing came up with some strategies for providing feedback. Among these, two strategies have caught the eye of the researchers, such as direct and indirect feedback. In providing direct feedback, teacher makes an explicit error correction. On the other hand, in indirect feedback, teacher points out error by ways like underlining, circling, and correction code. Though both the methods have facilitative effect on student's writing, researchers expressed different opinions regarding the efficacy of these two modes of feedback. Some researchers opined that indirect feedback is more accurate and effective than direct feedback and exert positive effect on students' long term writing development than direct feedback (Frantzen, 1995; Ferris, 2002). Indirect feedback, can be provided by correction code. In their investigations, researchers observed that coded feedback was efficacious for weak students.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these research literature is that if as a guide and facilitator, a teacher provides indirect feedback on the content and form, learners' writing fluency will be developed.

### *Research on the Composing Process*

Sondra Perl (1980) in her research, studied writing strategies of more proficient writers and noticed the recursive nature of the writing process. Like Perl, Sommers (1980) also studied the strategies employed by skilled and unskilled writers. She noticed that unskilled writers revised less and while revising they were much concerned with lexicon and teacher-generated rules and seldom modified their ideas that had been written earlier. On the other hand, Sommers noticed that the skilled writers changed the chunks of discourse and each of these changes showed a reordering of the whole.

Again, in order to identify the mental operations of L2 writers, Zamel (1983) made a study of the composing processes of ESL students. She opined that all writers concentrated on the surface level features, but the poorer writers struggled with it throughout the process of writing; whereas better writers focused on it at the end of the process. When their ideas were developed, they began to edit the surface level materials.

Raimes (1985) who investigated the writing process of L2 writers made

some observations about experienced writers. According to her, the reason that underlay the lacking of competence in writing is the writers' poor composing competence rather than poor language competence. So the implication that can be drawn from these research literature points out the fact that teaching methodology which guides students through a recursive process of planning, drafting and revising may improve their competency as L2 writers.

The theoretical analysis mentioned above have some crucial implications to teaching writing. Cognitive models of writing show that strategy based instruction can develop learners' writing skill. The product approach of writing shows the traditional classroom teaching which lacks innovative ideas to create successful learner writers. The process approach proffers the new approach to writing where the teacher can develop the expertise of learners by intervening in the different stages of writing process. Again, the writing research literature on the role of teachers and feedback shows that as a guide, facilitator, and counsellor a teacher can help to build proficient writers by providing different types of feedback. Research on the composing process emphasizes the recursive nature of writing and the efficacy of the revision strategy based writing instruction.

## **Methodology**

Mixed method has been applied to conduct this primary research in hand. Questionnaire and interview have been used to find out the opinions of the teachers teaching writing at tertiary level. Mixed method is applied "to achieve an elaborate and comprehensive understanding of a complex matter looking at it from different angles" (Dornyei, 2007). The questionnaire with closed ended questions comprising two parts were distributed among (15) fifteen teachers. The first part of this research instrument contains (18) eighteen questions which constitute factual questions, behavioral questions, and attitudinal questions (Dornyei, 2007). These questions cover issues like multiple drafts, student writers' awareness about audiences and different purposes of writing, teachers' providing regular feedback, use of correction code, and opinion about syllabus completion culture. The second part is designed to elicit EFL teachers' perceptions about teaching writing and it contains (7) seven options from which teachers were asked to choose any (3) three. Out of (15) fifteen participants (10) ten were full time teachers at the Department of English of a high-ranked private university located in Chattogram and other (5) five teachers are from the Department of English of different private universities in Chattogram. Teaching experience of all these participant teachers ranges from two to twenty two years. The structured questionnaire was distributed personally. It took around two weeks to collect the data from the teachers. The data was tabulated and presented in percentage terms. Pie charts are used to present data analyses elaborately. Later interviews were conducted with 4 of them.



## Data Analysis and Discussion

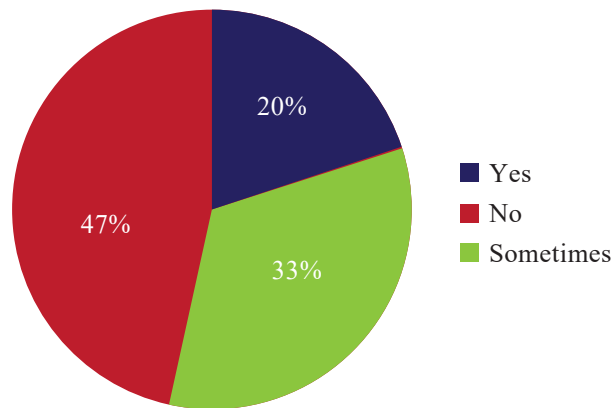
### Questionnaire

#### Part A

**Analysis of Question No. 1 and 2:** These factual questions put forward the fact that the teachers have varying level of experience ranging from 2 to 22 years. All of them did their M.A. in English Literature. Three of them obtained 2nd Masters in English Language Teaching (ELT). Three teachers are Ph.D. candidates.

**Analysis of Question No. 3:** Question No. 3 was intended to find out whether teachers ask their students to make multiple drafts of writing assignments. In answer to this question (20%) twenty percent teachers replied in the affirmative, whereas (33%) thirty three percent of them never require multiple drafts of a written assignment from their students. However, (47%) forty seven percent of them sometimes ask for multiple drafts.

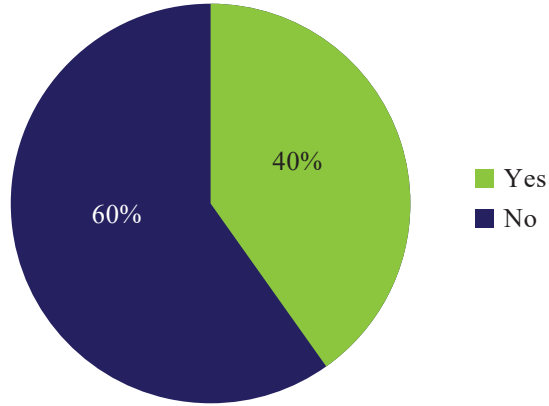
**Require multiple drafts from students**



**Figure 2.** Do Teachers Require Multiple Drafts from Students

**Source:** The author.

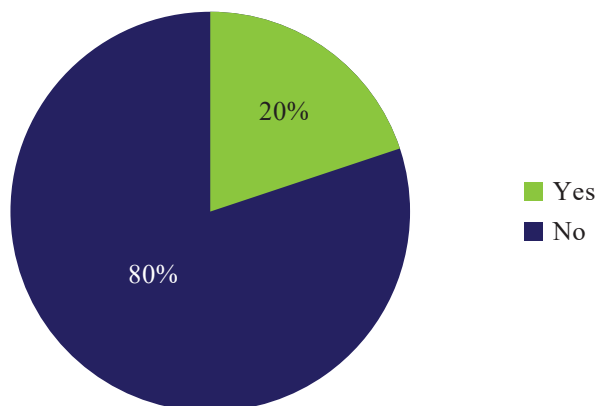
**Analysis of Question No.4:** This question was aimed at finding out the participant teachers' role in helping student writers to develop a sense of audience. While replying to this question, (40%) forty percent of respondents say that their students can write appropriately for different audiences. On the other hand, (60%) sixty percent of them say that their students cannot write appropriately for different audiences.

**Teachers' idea about students' writing ability for different audiences**

**Figure 3:** Teachers' Perceptions about Students' Abilities to Write for Different Audiences

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 5:** Question no. 5 was meant to elicit from the teachers if they encourage their students to seek peer feedback. The responses yield that only (20%) twenty percent of the teachers encourage their students to take peer feedback and (80%) eighty percent of them do not want their students to respond to other students' work.

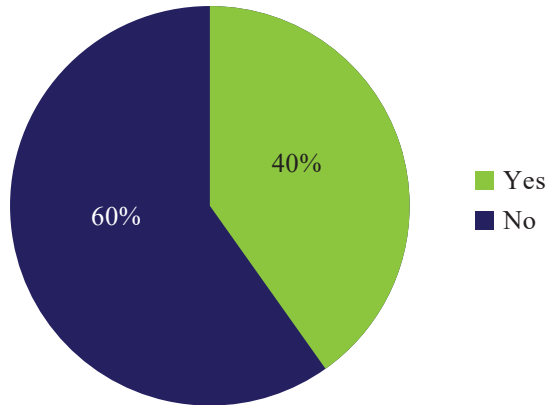
**Teachers want their students to respond to other students' works**

**Figure 4.** Teachers Want their Students to Respond to the Work of their Class-mates

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 6:** In response to the question “Can your students write appropriately for different purposes,” (40%) forty percent of the teachers replied in affirmative and (60%) sixty percent of the teachers replied in negative. In other words, their (60%) students are not aware of the fact that the organisation of a piece of writing should be appropriate to its purpose.

**Teachers’ perception about students’ expertise in writing about different purposes**

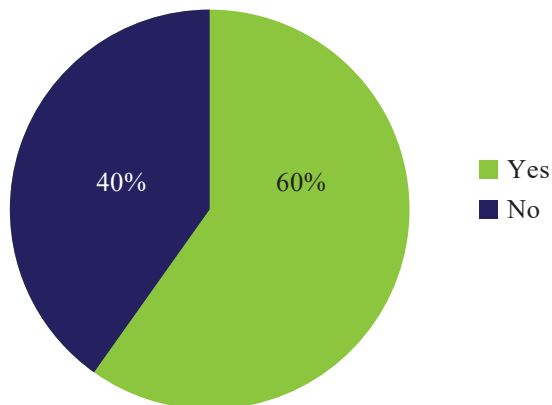


**Figure 5:** Teachers' Perception about Students' Ability to Write for Different Purposes

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 7:** This question was intended to know from the teachers whether they encourage their students to revise their writing. (60%) sixty percent of the respondents said that they don't encourage students for revision strategies. However, (40%) forty percent of them said that they encourage their students to revise.

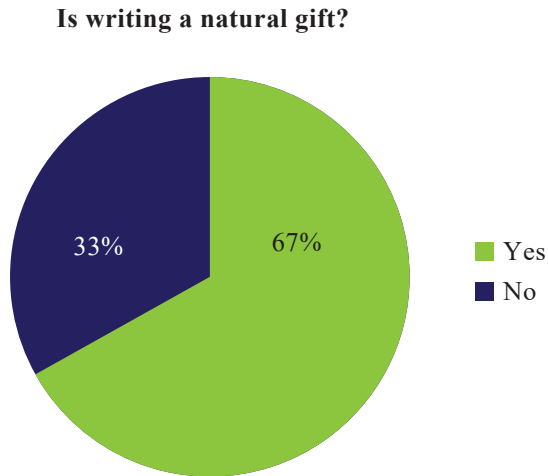
**Teachers’ encourage students to revise their writing**



**Figure 6:** Teachers Encourage Students for Revision

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 8:** Question no. 8 was intended to elicit teachers' perception about "writing as a natural gift." In reply to this question, (67%) sixty seven percent of the teachers thought that writing is a natural gift, whereas only (33%) thirty three percent of them do not consider writing as a natural gift.

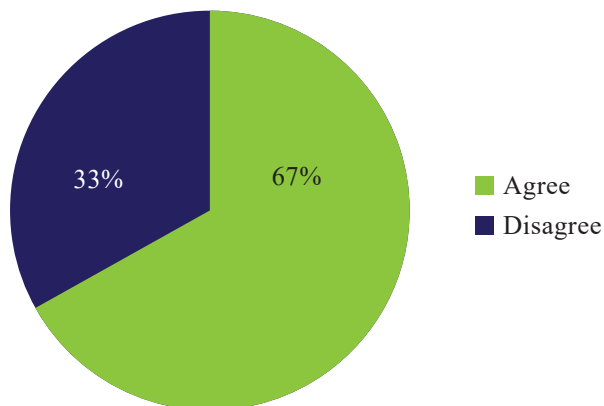


**Figure 7:** Is Writing a Natural Ability

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 10:** In response to the question "Curriculum based writing prepares students for examination but not for writing beyond academy," (60%) sixty percent of the teachers agreed with the statement, but (40%) forty percent of them disagreed with it.

**Grammatical accuracy rather than fluency is required in writing**

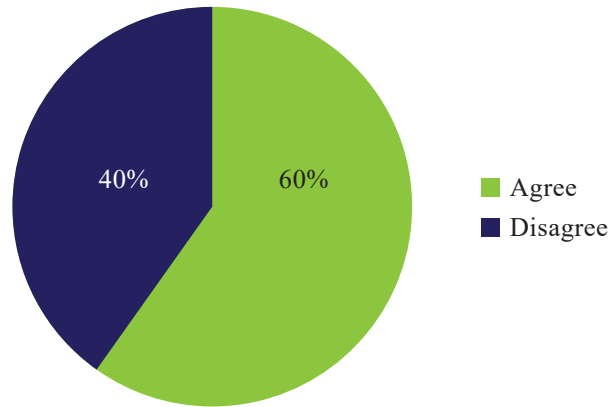


**Figure 8:** In Writing, Grammatical Correctness is More Important than Fluency

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 10:** In response to the question “Curriculum based writing prepares students for examination but not for writing beyond academy,” (60%) sixty percent of the teachers agreed with the statement, but (40%) forty percent of them disagreed with it.

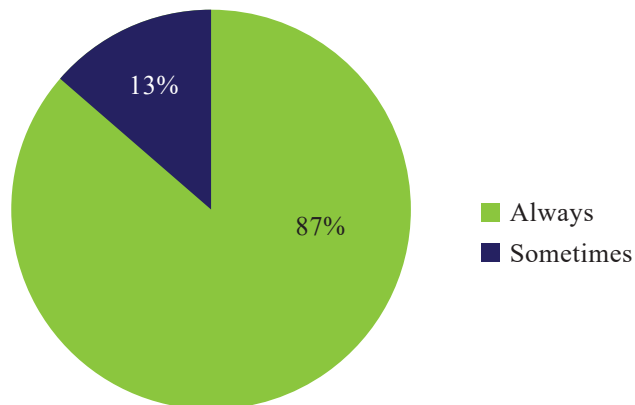
**Curriculum based writing prepares students for examination but not for writing beyond academy**



**Figure 9:** Curriculum Based Writing Prepares Students Only for Examination  
**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 11:** While replying to question no.11, whether they provide feedback on students’ writings, (13) thirteen out of (15) fifteen teachers that is (87%) eighty seven percent said that they always provide feedback on students’ writings and only (2) two of them that is (13%) thirteen replied that they sometimes provide feedback on students’ writing.

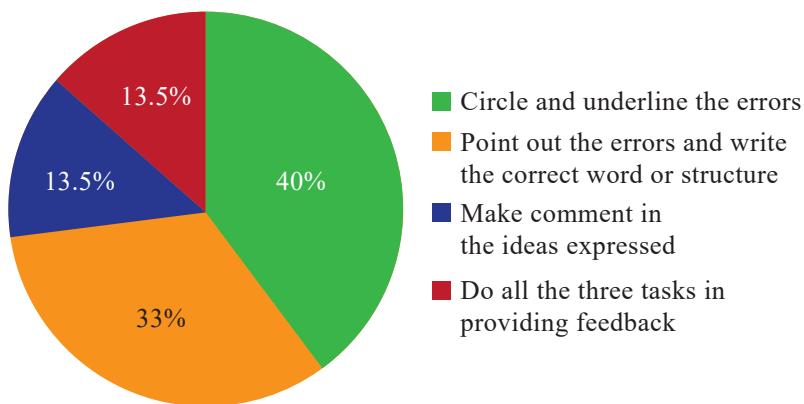
**Teachers’ idea about providing feedback on students’ writing**



**Figure 10 :** Teachers Provide Feedback on Students’ Writing  
**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 12:** Question no 12 was intended to elicit teachers' way of providing feedback on students' writing. This question enlists four options. In reply, (33%) thirty three percent of the respondents chose no. b., that is they "point out the errors and write the correct word or structure," and (40%) forty percent of them opted for no. c., that is they "circle and underline the errors." Only (2) two of them (13.5%) thirteen percent replied that they make a combination of "a" and "c" in other words they "make comments on the ideas expressed" and "circle and underline the errors." Again (2) two of them, (13.5%) thirteen-point five percent replied that they do all the tasks in providing feedback.

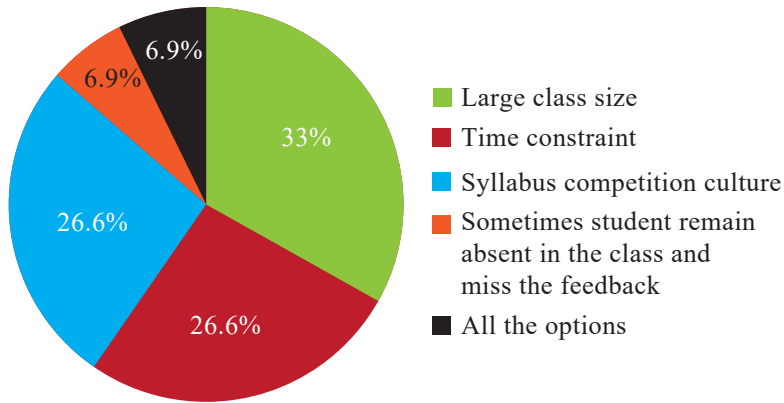
#### Teachers' way of providing feedback on students' writing



**Figure 11 :** Different Ways of Providing Feedback on Students' Writing  
**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 13:** Four options were included to find out the obstacles that the teachers face in providing feedback in the writing class. (33%) thirty three percent considered "large class as obstacle in providing feedback," whereas (26.6%) twenty-six-point six percent thought that time constraint is an obstacle. Again (26.6%) twenty-six-point six percent referred "syllabus completion culture" as obstacle in providing feedback. However, one teacher, (6.9%) six-point nine percent replied that sometimes the student remains absent in that particular class and misses the teacher's feedback. This is what the teacher apprehended as an obstacle in providing feedback. It is interesting to find that only one teacher considers all these options (large class, time constraint, and syllabus completion culture) as obstacles in providing feedback in the writing class.

**Obstacles in providing feedback in the writing class**

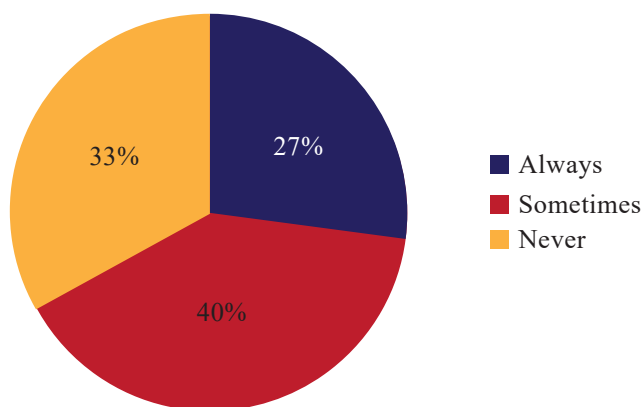


**Figure 12.** Barriers in Providing Feedback in the Writing Class

Source: The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 14:** This question tended to find out whether teachers use correction code in providing feedback in the writing class. It was found that (27%) twenty seven percent teachers always use correction code and (40%) forty percent of them sometimes use it. However, (33%) thirty three percent said that they never use correction code in providing feedback in L2 writing class.

**Use of correction code in providing feedback**

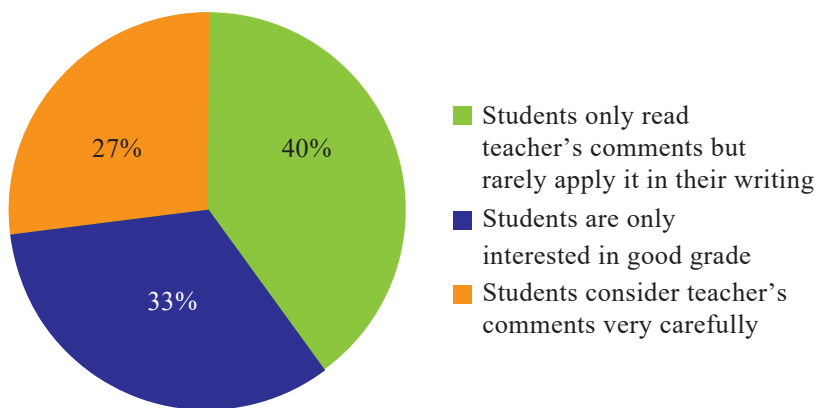


**Figure 13.** Use of Correction Code

Source: The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 15:** This question containing three options was designed to elicit teachers' idea about students' response to the teachers' feedback on their writing. Most of them, that is (40%) forty percent, expressed that "students only read teachers' comments, but rarely apply it in their writing. (33%) thirty three percent mentioned that students are only concerned about good grade and that's why they focus on it rather than teachers' feedback. However, only (27%) twenty seven percent claimed that students consider their teachers' comments carefully.

#### Teachers' idea about students' response to the teacher's feedback



**Figure 14.** Students' Response to the Teachers' Feedback

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 16 and 17:** These two questions of Part A are two statements designed to elicit teachers' perceptions about writing process.

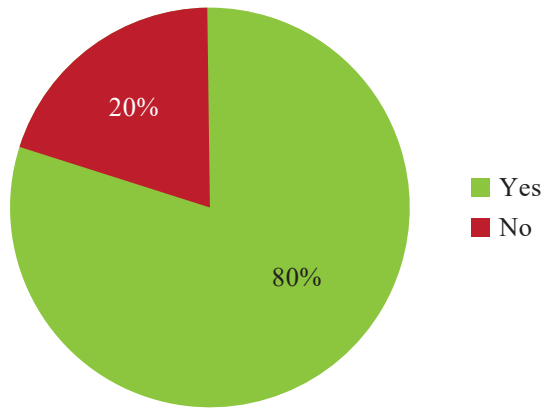
In question no 16, teachers were asked whether writing is a recursive process. It was found that majority of them, that is (80%) eighty percent, replied in affirmative and (20%) twenty percent replied in negative.

While giving opinion about question no 17, that is "writing is a linear process," (40%) forty percent of teachers said that it is a linear process. However, (60%) sixty percent of them thought that it is not a linear process.

Answer of these two questions put forward an interesting fact. It was found that although most of the participant teachers, (80%) eighty percent, believed that writing is a recursive process among this large number, there are some teachers who opined that writing is a linear process too. So here we find inconsistency on the part of the teachers.



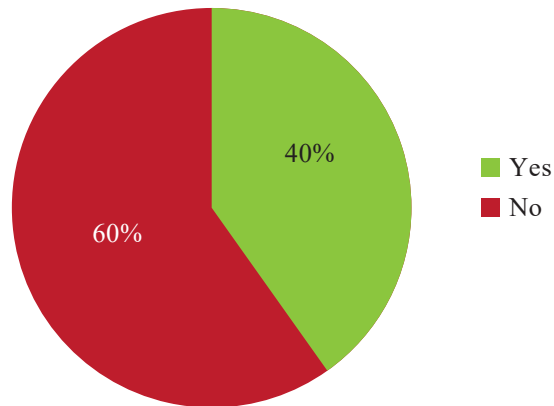
**Writing is a recursive process**



**Figure 15.** Writing is a Recursive Process

**Source:** The author.

**Writing is a Linear Process**

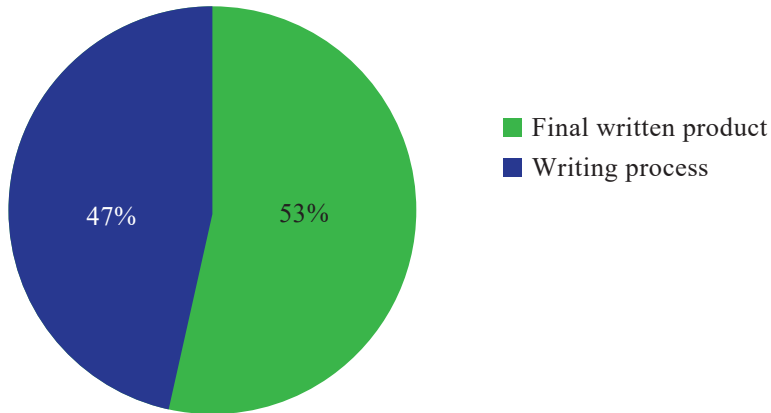


**Figure 16.** Writing is a Linear Process

**Source:** The author.

**Analysis of Question No. 18:** This question was attempted to elicit information about teachers' idea of providing feedback. In response to this question, (53%) fifty three percent teachers said that feedback should be given on the final written product, but (47%) forty seven percent expressed that feedback should be given on the learners' writing process.

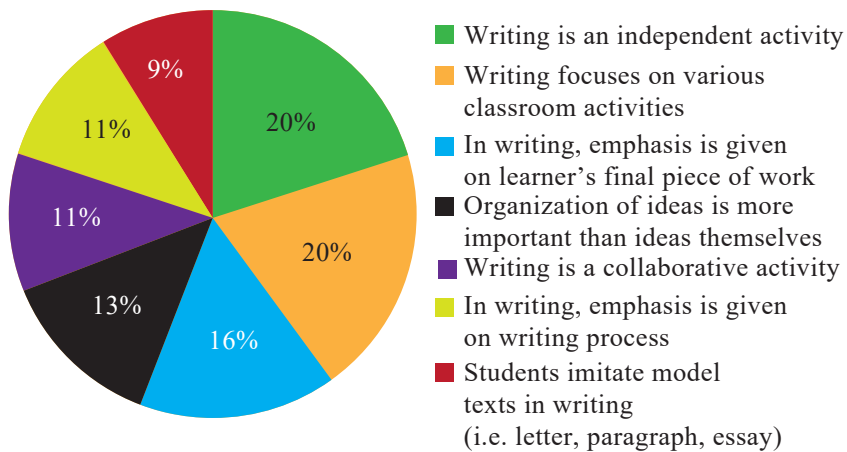
**Feedback should be given on the learners' final  
written product or writing process**



**Figure 17:** Feedback on the Learners Final Written Product or Writing Process  
**Source:** The author.

**Part B**

**Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Writing**



**Figure 18:** Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Writing  
**Source:** The author.

The question in Part B was designed to elicit information from the teachers about their beliefs about teaching writing. In this part participant teachers were provided 7 options and were asked to select three from them in accordance with their beliefs about teaching writing. It was seen from the responses that (11%) eleven percent teachers believed that writing is a collaborative activity, whereas (20%) twenty percent of them believed that writing is an independent activity, pointing out to the fact that learners do the activity solitarily. In expressing their beliefs about teaching, (13%) thirteen percent of the teachers thought that in writing, organisation of ideas is more important than ideas itself.

Again, (11%) eleven percent of the teachers thought that in writing, emphasis is given on writing process, on the contrary, (16%) sixteen percent were of the opinion that emphasis is given on learner's final piece of work. About teaching writing, (9%) nine percent thought that students imitate model texts in writing such as letter, essay, and paragraph. A greater number of teachers that is (20%) twenty percent believed that writing focuses on varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use.

**Interview:** In the semi-structured interviews, teachers were asked questions about "teaching writing in the class," "ideas about providing feedback," "views about writing process," "thought about different writing approaches." Interviews were conducted face to face. During the interview sessions, I took notes and later reviewed them and elicited the main ideas.

When asked about the teaching writing in the classes, all the interviewees said that they begin with the discussion of the format of a particular text, teach specific phrases, sentence structure, then the students are asked to produce a text which is similar to the model text. After students' submission of their tasks, feedback is given on the writing. Teachers seemed to vary in their opinions about feedback. One of them said that general oral feedback is given. Three teachers said that they write comments and point out the language problems. But none of them use correction code while providing feedback. Students are not required to make multiple drafts according to three teachers. They attributed it to the time constraint and learners' apathy. Only one teacher admitted of requiring a second draft from the students but occasionally. None of them encourage peer feedback in their class. When they were asked to express their views about writing process three except one believed that writing is a linear process.

As teachers were asked about the different approaches to writing, their consensus opinion was that they have not heard about the different approaches to teaching writing. But they were keen on knowing about the innovative pedagogical techniques and opined that through the participation in seminars, workshops, and training programmes organised for language teachers, they will be able to enrich themselves. One teacher emphasised the fact that students must practise writing beyond their curriculum as writing can be improved through writing.

## Findings

The study in hand reveals that teachers' writing pedagogy is deeply rooted in their perceptions about teaching which is utterly traditional. The questions incorporated in "Part A" shed light on the pedagogical practices of the participant teachers. The issues that arise, presents the fact that teachers in the context of the current research consider writing as a natural gift and hardly require their students to make multiple drafts of their writing assignments and not even encourage their students for revision beyond surface level. This is the traditional view of teaching writing where teachers view writing as the final product which they check and give grade and return to the students without any chance of future revision. But according to the researchers, drafting stages are important for learner writers, where they can brainstorm and generate ideas. The revision stage is also important as it provide learners opportunity to rearrange the sentences, make additions and deletions, and proofread grammatical errors and incorrect spelling (Brown & Lee, 2015). Thus, the revision strategy instills a belief in the learners that writing can be improved before the final submission.

In addition to this, teacher and peer feedback help them to repair their writings by editing, conferencing with teachers, infusing peer ideas and practicing writing collaboratively instead of facing writers' block or anxiety while writing solitarily. Regular conferences of teacher- student between drafts are efficacious as it helps students learn about areas need to be worked on (Zamel, 1982).

In this study, though the participant teachers are found to provide feedback to their learners, most of them state that in providing feedback they "circle and underline the errors." Again, many them "point out the errors and write the correct word or structure." Only two of them opine that they "make comments on the ideas expressed" and "circle and underline the errors." Other two teachers say that they do all these tasks in providing feedback.

So it brings forth the fact that in L2 writing class, teachers are more concerned with teaching language than directing their students to produce a cohesive, organised, piece of writing. It is corroborated by the results of question no.4, 6, and 9 where most of the teachers hold the view that their students cannot write appropriately for different audiences and for different purposes and in addition to this, around (67%) sixty seven percent of the teachers consider that "grammatical accuracy rather than fluency is required in writing." This fact is further validated through the interviews where the teachers say that oral feedback and sometimes written feedback are provided which are mostly given on language than content or ideas. However, it does not designate the fact that teachers should not try to improve students linguistic proficiency. Rather linguistic features like syntax, vocabulary and rhetorical form should be taught not as ends in and of themselves but as the means with which a learner writer can better express his meaning (Zamel, 1982).

While providing feedback, only (40%) forty percent say that they use correction code, (33%) thirty three percent never use and merely (27%) twenty

seven percent are found to use it always. But use of “correction code” help students to correct their own errors. It also encourages students to look at writing as a skill that can be improved and guide them to explore the areas for improvement (Hedge, 2014, p.316). However, most of the participant teachers point out large class, syllabus completion culture and time constraint as obstacles in providing feedback in the writing class. This is a common objection by most teachers, although there are theoretically established methods of providing feedback in a large class. About students’ response to the teacher’s feedback, teachers say that students only read teacher’s comments but rarely apply it in the writing. It indicates that teachers’ way of providing feedback without any use of correction code may seem ambiguous to the learners. It also unfolds the fact that since teachers respond to writing assignments as fixed or final products, they neither require their students to write multiple drafts nor encourage them for revision. Consequently, fail to see whether students apply teachers’ feedback and bring changes in their writings. Besides, a large number of the respondents (53.3%, fifty three percent) say that feedback should be given on writing product and (46.6%, forty six point six percent) believe that it should be given on the writing process. It presents the fact that feedback given on the writing product fail to bring any changes in the learners’ writings when writing experience is no longer fresh in their minds.

Moreover, majority of the teachers (80%) think that writing is a recursive process, but among this large number of respondents there are many who opine that writing is a linear process too. So here we find a self-contradiction on the part of the teachers. It seems that their idea about the process of writing is vague. Further, in the interviews, when asked about the writing process most of the teachers say that it is a linear process. Moreover, they want to know about the features of “linear” and “recursive” process. So, it is found that teachers are not trained enough to differentiate between “linear” and “recursive” process in writing and teach writing accordingly. Examining the writing strategies of more skilled writers, Sondra- Perl (1980) observed that writing process is recursive in nature, in which writers go back in order to move forward (as cited in Zamel, 1982).

The responses of participant teachers to the questions in “Part B” yield that most of them (60%, sixty percent) believe that writing is a solitary activity that is, a learner completes the task independently. Only (33%) thirty three percent of the teachers believe that writing is a collaborative activity. But in order to enhance the expertise of L2 learners and to make them produce a coherent piece of writing, a teacher should establish a collaborative relationship with his/ her students “drawing attention to problems, offering alternatives and suggesting possibilities” (Zamel,1985).

In expressing their beliefs about teaching writing, only five teachers among fifteen suggest that in writing emphasis is given on writing process, whereas seven teachers believe that in writing emphasis is given on learners’ final piece of work. Thus, it is clear that teachers in my research context still teaching writing in the traditional product approach where like judges they test the writ-

ing ability of their students by evaluating their writing without intervening in the writing process. But as a facilitator, consultant and ally a teacher must provide assistance to the learners to bring necessary changes in their written products by teaching them different writing strategies. In reality, it is found that their approach to writing influences their classroom practices as it is confirmed by the response of question no.5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12. Instruction provided in this way does not take into consideration important factors like purpose, audience and the process of writing rather evaluate writing assignments after giving certain types of instruction. Moreover, since the students do not get any opportunity to make necessary changes in their writing by incorporating teachers' and peers' comments, they begin to belittle their ability as writers.

Though some participant teachers are found to assume that in writing emphasis is given on the writing process, they do not follow it in their classroom practices. Besides, in the interview sessions, it becomes clear that teachers in my study context are not familiar with the new approaches to teaching writing. They think that their orientation with the new approaches to teaching writing may enrich them to bring necessary changes in their pedagogy. They have also opined that their current pedagogy is stemmed out of their accumulated knowledge and experience. However, a large number of teachers (60%, sixty percent) believe "writing focuses on varied classroom practices which promote the development of language use," but their classroom instructions do not testify any such activities. Some teachers believe that in writing students imitate model texts, such as letter, essay, and paragraph. This kind of belief about writing creates an expectation among the teachers to look for such standard patterns in the students' written products. Consequently, to meet the expectations of the teachers, learners also practice these fixed patterns of writing only. So, they fail to achieve fluency in their writing and cannot write in organised, coherent way on the subjects beyond their curriculum.

A comparison of the current study can be made with Sommers's study done on teachers' comments on students' writing. In her study, Sommers made an analysis of the teachers' response and comments on students' writing that can facilitate students' writing expertise. But in the present study, attempt is made to explore the teachers' perceptions about writing and their class room practices.

The findings of the current study are analogous to the study done by Zamel. She studied (105) one hundred and five students' written texts, examined ESL teachers' responses to student writing and suggested a revision strategy considering writing as a process rather than as a finished product. But how L2 teachers' perceptions about writing influence their writing pedagogy that is not addressed by the previous research.

## Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted on fifteen tertiary level EFL teachers, taking into account their perceptions in teaching writing. Data were collected through questionnaire and interview, but it would have been more conclusive if class observation were included with it as the research instrument. The study was done only from the perspective of the teachers. Students' opinions were not included. But the fact is, the study intends to address the EFL/ ESL teachers' writing pedagogy. The findings of the study cannot be generalised as the data were collected from fifteen teachers of some private universities. Further extensive research can be done based on the findings of this research.

## Conclusion

This study elucidates the fact that EFL/ESL teachers' perceptions about teaching writing are traditional, and it influences their classroom practices. Teachers teach writing following the product approach in which teachers judge their students' writing ability by considering their written texts as the final products not requiring them to make multiple drafts. Teachers are more concerned with teaching language and particular format of writing texts rather than teaching strategies intervening in the different stages of writing to produce a cohesive, well-organised piece of writing. Learner writers are not taught revision strategies, even feedback is given on the surface level only, without making any comments on the ideas expressed. In the whole writing process, a learner struggles solitarily to produce a writing text. The writing process is utterly neglected. So, it is clear that they only practise writing, it is not taught to them.

Consequently, the current practice of teaching writing fails to enhance learners' writing competence. Again, teachers' incognizance of the process approach causes them to stick to the traditional product approach. However, researchers have found that in the field of ELT the student-oriented, practical approach that is the process approach is making the learning of writing more effective, generating better results than before. So, all we need to do is to orient our teachers especially the writing teachers to this new, strategy-based process approach to teaching writing. Teachers must improvise themselves coming out of their conventional teaching method and except changes and innovative classroom techniques. Measures can be taken to organise seminars and workshops for our writing teachers to make them familiar with this new approach to writing. Besides, steps can be taken to set up writing centres in the institutions where students can practise writing copiously other than their academic writings. In addition to this, teachers must come out of their authoritative stance, create a supportive, non- threatening writing environment, act as a facilitator and guide the learners to become proficient writers.

Thus, by making the change in their pedagogical techniques, if teachers teach writing as a "guide on the side" – not as a "sage on the stage" – we may expect our learners to grasp this productive skill and acquire fluency in it.

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## Appendix- 1

### Questionnaire for teachers

To carry out a study entitled “Teaching Writing at Tertiary Level : EFL / ESL Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices” I need your co-operations. The study aims to have an idea about tertiary level EFL teachers’ approach to teaching writing. I am giving you assurance that the information provided in the questionnaire will be used only for the purpose of research and will remain confidential. I hope you will assist me giving valuable information to the following questions. Thanks in anticipation.

#### Part A

[Please tick one appropriate answer and fill in where necessary]

**1. What is your educational qualification? (Please indicate the highest achievement only)**

.....

**2. Total years of teaching experience.**

.....

**3. Do you require multiple drafts of the writing assignments of your students?**

a) yes b) no c) sometimes

**4. Can your students write appropriately for different audiences?**

a) yes, b) no

**5. Do you want your students to respond to other students’ works in the writing class?**

a) yes b) no

**6. Can your students write appropriately for different purposes?**

a) yes b) no

**7. Do you encourage your students to revise their writings?**

a) yes b) no

**8. Do you think writing is a natural gift?**

a) yes b) no

**9. Grammatical accuracy rather than fluency is required in writing.**

a) agree b) disagree

**10. Curriculum based writing prepares students for examination not for writing beyond academy.**

a) agree b) disagree

**11. Do you provide feedback on your students’ writings?**

a) always b) sometimes c) never

**12. Which of the following tasks do you do in providing feedback on students' writings?**

- a) make comments on the ideas expressed
- b) point out the errors and write the correct word or structure
- c) circle and underline the errors
- d) others (please specify).....

**13. Which of the followings do you consider as an obstacle in providing feedback in the writing class?**

- a) large class size
- b) time constraint
- c) syllabus completion culture
- d) others (specify).....

**14. Do you use correction code in providing feedback in the writing class?**

- a) always b) sometimes c) never

**15. How do your students respond to the teacher's feedback on their writings?**

- a) students only read teacher's comments but rarely apply it in their writings
- b) students consider teacher's every comment carefully
- c) students are interested in good grade so they only concentrate on it

**16. Writing is a recursive process**

- a) yes b) no

**17. Writing is a linear process**

- a) yes b) no

**18. Feedback should be given on the learners' .....**

- a) final written product b) writing process

## **Part B**

**[Please tick one appropriate answer and fill in where necessary]**

- a) writing is a collaborative activity
- b) writing is an independent activity
- c) in writing organisation of ideas is more important than ideas itself
- d) in writing emphasis is given on writing process
- e) in writing emphasis is given on learner's final piece of work
- f) students imitate model texts in writing ( i.e. letter, essay , paragraph)
- g) writing focus on varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use

## **Appendix- 2**

### **Interview**

#### **Interviewees will be asked:**

- # How do you teach writing in the class?
- # What is your idea about writing process? Is it linear or recursive process?
- # How do you provide feedback to a learner's writing?
- # Are you familiar with the different approaches to teaching writing?