THE READING-WRITING CONNECTION: EFFECT ON STUDENTS’ SKILLS ACQUISITION

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Student Signature: __________________________ Date: June 2007
For you Mom and for my beloved family:

my husband, Anwar,

and my three children Bashir, Lama, and Baraa

You forever make my life meaningful and enjoyable.
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ABSTRACT

The exigencies of writing at the secondary school level need immediate action plans to be treated before students end the secondary cycle to turn to college. The direct method that could be applied simultaneously with the existing curriculum is to have a reading-writing connection in the activities students apply in the language classes. The literature on the relatedness between reading and writing skills enforces this conjecture and highlights the direct effect of reading-writing connection on students' growth in language. This study on a sample of secondary school students has supported the direct influence of reading on writing as well as on students' skills acquisition. However, the conditions that need consideration are that students have the proper strategy training, are motivated through challenging activities, receive the personalized constructive feedback that tends to their needs, and be subjected to authentic material in authentic situations where the audience to students' writing varies as well.

Key words: reading-writing connection, skills acquisition, strategy training, motivation, personalized constructive feedback, authentic material, audience.
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
Need for the Study

The level of academic writing among secondary school students started to be questioned by language teachers after the changes which the Lebanese curriculum underwent in 1996. Back then, secondary school students developed 300-500 word essays around a topic they had read in literature. The content of their essays would mainly rotate around the material they had studied. Expressive and creative essay writing was not a requirement that ought to be tested before students qualified for undergraduate studies. With the new curriculum, students are exposed to a variety of texts that present different theme-related topics. Students are expected to comprehend, analyze, and make use of ideas they meet in such texts in order to write on the topics in a variety of genres and essay types.

Competence in written communication skills and strategies has become a basic requirement to be fulfilled by students in the English Language class at the secondary school level as expressed in the Lebanese curriculum set in the General Education Curricula (1996) and the criteria for evaluation set in the Evaluation Guide (2000). According to the curriculum, written communication is demonstrated in both reading and writing; however, writing surfaces as a pivotal instrument for learning in all subject areas (Myers, 1986). The reason is that writing measures the students’ competencies in reflecting on how they conceptualize the material they learn and consequently express their ideas in a variety of forms.

Nevertheless, the achievement of the expected competencies varies among students at the secondary school level, and English language teachers report problems in students’ writing which are not limited to students in the Lebanese secondary schools. Fitzburgh (2006) reports that about 63% of students graduating from Massachusetts high schools have to attend remedial courses at colleges (p. 44).
He, seconded by Hawkins (2006), attributes the problem to the fact that students favor emotional and personal writing at the high school level. Both claim that students do not exhibit the knowledge they have gained from reading and understanding different subject matter when they write.

The aforementioned views call for a study of the crucial role reading plays in improving students' written communication skills. Krashen (2004) argues that writing does not seem to improve through more writing but rather through reading. The reason is that when students read, they summarize, paraphrase, acquire new vocabulary and develop grammatical competence (Krashen, 2004; Ray, 2006); they also abstract ideas and develop cognitive skills through discussions, arguments, syntheses, and evaluations (Schmoker, 2007);

Such arguments bolster the need for a direct connection between reading and writing in language classes in order to help students develop strategies that make them construct meaning from their learning. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) refer to a body of literature on the relationship between reading and writing. They argue that the effect of reading-writing relationship on students’ skills acquisition should be recognized even though it may not be the clear-cut remedy to develop students’ skills in that respect as much as it is for L1 learners (native learners).

Based on such premise, it is worth to observe how secondary school students in the Lebanese context acquire their competence in written communication. Moreover, it is instrumental to investigate whether conventional and non-conventional reading-writing activities which are applied in- or out-of-a classroom situation develop students’ skills and strategies that improve their thinking and performance in this domain. The result would enable teachers to know whether the focus on reading-writing connection yields competence in written communication
and skills acquisition, so they would plan their instruction in variant modes which make learning more effective.

Statement of the Problem

Language teachers at the secondary school level observe defects that surface in the students’ written communication. The flaws on both levels of content and form sometimes hamper the coherence and cohesion in students’ written essays. Based on diagnostic samples produced by students at the secondary school level (see Appendix A), the problems that appear are indicators of defects in investing the variety of input students receive from classroom instruction and interaction.

The essays that have been studied are evidence that although students are aware of the general theme they are dealing with, they do not exhibit a level of thinking relevant to their class and age level. Students have problems in developing supporting ideas in the form of evidence or examples they can derive not only from background knowledge but from reading experiences as well. The titles that ordinarily reflect the content are evidence of students’ incompetence to synthesize, a skill that needs to be practiced in reading comprehension. Hints of voice are rarely present in the students’ expressions, which is an indicator that students do not make good use of the vocabulary they meet in the different texts they read. Moreover, papers are not error free regarding the writing conventions which is clear evidence of students’ incompetence in the areas of mechanics (see Appendix B for criteria against which the writings have been measured).
Purpose of the Study

Since competence in the written communication domain is a requirement which students have to fulfill by the end of the secondary school cycle in order to qualify for official exams and admissions to universities, this research intended to study the effect of the reading-writing activities on their skills acquisition. The researcher wanted to trace how the variety in activities, which were particularly designed to make a reading-writing connection, affected students’ ability to comprehend and transfer strategies into new situations.

Moreover, the researcher intended to find out whether personalized constructive feedback which the students received when they were applying the activities, and throughout the writing process, motivated them to improve their performance. She wanted to determine whether such feedback aided in the development of the quality of the essays they produced.

Finally, the researcher wanted to experiment with the effect of audience on the students’ own writing products. She wanted to investigate whether when students wrote with a real audience other than their teacher in mind—such as when they wrote for the school magazine or for parents—they would have an incentive to write better (Bromley & Mannix, 1993), and hence, produce a different quality of writing.
Research Questions

The study attempted to answer a set of questions related to the reading writing connection and its effect on students’ skills acquisition. The most significant questions were:

1. Do reading-writing activities foster secondary school students’ understanding of the texts and improve their writing skills?

2. Are students able to gain strategies when they work on reading-writing activities which they could apply in their own writing in order to improve the quality of their work over time?

3. Would personalized constructive feedback affect students’ quality of writing?

4. Does the variety of in- and out-of- classroom activities affect students’ level of motivation and consequently enhance the quality of their performance?

5. Does students’ involvement in writing for a real audience other than their own teacher improve the quality of their writing?

Significance of the Study

The study aimed at finding techniques that would serve to improve students’ writing skills while at the same time encouraged the development of reasoning skills. The effect of better writing was to train students to become better knowledge seekers and more confident and educated citizens who could participate more effectively in their societies and make the world a better place to live in (Gammill, 2006; Leki, 2003; Schmoker, 2007).
A second target for this study was to observe whether by giving students strategic instruction through reading-writing activities, they would be able to have better control over their thinking and writing. This inquiry in the research was based on Enkvist’s (1990) hypothesis that the problem in students’ writing was not in lacking enough knowledge of the language but rather in their thinking which he equated to the capacity for logical argumentation.

Definitions of Terms

In this study, reading comprehension activities and reading-writing activities were used interchangeably. They were the tasks assigned to students upon reading a specific text regardless of their being oral or written. The researcher, who was the class teacher as well, assumed that students’ writing benefited in both ways. These tasks ranged from comprehending content at the lower thinking level, such as asking students to paraphrase or list items, to addressing higher-order thinking levels such as summarizing, drawing conclusions, inferring, deducing relations among ideas or paragraphs or identifying the writer’s tone or purpose (see Appendix C for a sample of the activities that have been used).

The in-class activities were those activities that students worked out individually or within their groups, and which enabled students to master the direct comprehension of the text before the higher-order thinking levels were addressed. The out-of-class activities were those that demanded students search for other theme-related texts from magazines, newspapers, or the internet. They would read the article in order to summarize it, identify its connection to the theme or to the main ideas that have been central to the theme under study, and to produce a writing
activity that was in the form of a report, a power point presentation, a poster, a chart, or a brochure.

The writing skills were referred to as the student’s ability to produce “a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing” (Nunan, 1999). This meant that students would be trained to develop a paragraph with a clear topic sentence that related to the central idea of the whole essay. They would be able to draw on evidence, examples, and facts to support their ideas logically. They would also be able to organize their ideas in a logical order, and to select the appropriate words that helped them to convey the meaning to the audience in a clear voice or tone. Finally, students would be able to draw the ties among the sentences and paragraphs that would enable them to present their essays in as much a fluent and error-free way as possible.

The quality of students’ writing was measured according to the scoring guide proposed by Culham (1995) with level 5 being the highest for a very good paper and 1 being the lowest for the paper that was extremely flawed. Scores 4 and 2 were used when the papers had a combination of the traits mentioned under each category.

The secondary school students according to the Lebanese system are the students who have completed Grade 9 of basic education and are preparing to qualify for standardized official exams or for SAT or TOEFL exams. In the context of this study, the secondary school students were Grade 11 students who have already completed one year of the secondary cycle and still had one more year to turn into college. The reason for choosing the sample of students from this grade level was that students have already received a year of training on how to deal with literary texts of different types and genres, and they were not limited by time constraints to prepare for official exams which are normally due by the end of grade 12.
Strategies in the context of this study referred to the conscious application of techniques that were not confined to one text or situation, but were adaptable to a variety of contexts and applications. This meant that students who have acquired strategies have already developed higher-level cognitive processing abilities that enabled them to select what needed to be used in a specific task—such as making an inference, drawing a conclusion, or revising and editing part of the written essay. Moreover, students who have been equipped with such strategies would be able to decide on how and when to use them appropriately.

The writing process involved students’ preparation for the writing product starting from reading content to select what ought to be used, to discussing and brainstorming or freewriting, to drafting and revising before redrafting, and finally editing and publishing the written essay.

The personalized constructive feedback was the term the researcher used to refer to the helpful and encouraging comments students received from their teacher during a one-on-one conference to address individual needs. The positive clues that guided the students on how to look at a mistake in order to improve it, added to the students’ level of motivation to learn and improve their performance. In addition to that, the best mark always went into the students’ grading record. Other than conferencing, the feedback students received on their writing in the context of this research was either in the form of oral whole class discussions of common mistakes, written comments on the margins of the essays upon writing their first draft, peer revision and discussions, or finally a combination of written and oral comments from the teacher to reinforce the comment.

Motivation was determined by the type of incentives that drove the students to write, whether in class or outside, and which marked their enthusiasm to work in
order to improve their writing skills. Motivation also depended on the type of activities which challenged students to work better. Hence, the choice of the reading texts as well as the variety in the tasks that addressed the students’ learning styles and preferences affected their level of involvement and motivation in their work.

The real audience was the readers of students’ writing other than the teacher who marked the papers. In the context of this study, the participants along with the rest of their classmates were subjected to two different kinds of audience other than their own teacher. At one time they wrote to their peers in the class who were in the other section so they would revise their work for them; another time was when they wrote for parents to read their essays and comment on their language, use of vocabulary, and level of thinking. That was a new experience added to both students and parents. (see Appendix F for the sample letter addressed to parents for that purpose).

In the context of this research, one of the participants also had additional practice in writing to a wider audience since he was a member in the school magazine club. The club was concerned with publishing a magazine or at least a newsletter every two to three months to inform the school community of the activities that took place in the school. Participants in the club would receive extra training on not only revising and editing but also on report writing, summary writing, and interviewing techniques.

‘Over the time’ in this study was the period of time along which the research extended—starting with the first diagnostic essay for the class the first week of November till the end of April of the same academic year—a period of six months out of the nine months of the school year. Before the research was launched students received the traditional way of instruction where they read texts and answered
comprehension questions. After that they wrote an essay related to the general theme of the lesson. The teacher would comment on the few major or general mistakes, and then mark the papers and return them to the students to rewrite for the purpose of correction.

Summary

The rationale of this research was to practically study the effect of the reading-writing connection on a sample of three Lebanese secondary school students. The students who agreed to participate in the study were diagnosed to have varying levels of competence in their essay writing that ranged from below level to above level according to Culham’s (1995) scoring guide of the 6+1 traits of writing.

The students received non-traditional instruction within a motivating classroom environment for a period of six months of the academic year. Especially designed activities that targeted higher-order thinking levels were implemented with every new selection they had to read. The students experienced the writing process through the reading comprehension activities which they worked on in or outside the classroom. In addition to that, personalized constructive feedback encouraged the students to discuss, argue, and refine their thinking before they produced the second draft of their essays.

The chapters included in this study detailed the literature pertaining to the variables that were studied so as to draw a comparison between the theories and the practical classroom implementation. Also included was a description of the methodology that the researcher used and the results that she reached when she analyzed the students’ essays, surveyed the students in the class through a questionnaire (see Appendix D for sample), and interviewed the student who was a
member of the school magazine club (see Appendix E for transcript). In addition to that, one chapter included the analysis and synthesis of the findings as the researcher interpreted them in comparison to the prescribed theories.

The process of the study, however, had its limitations because several factors interfered in the learning situations during the academic year. The final chapter detailed these limitations and suggested a set of recommendations that the researcher assumed would help teachers at the secondary school level to plan for more effective instruction.
Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW
Introduction

The ultimate goal of schooling as Heller (1995) and Grabe (2003) indicate is to improve students’ learning and create skillful readers and writers. They propound that through reading and writing students develop literacy skills, learn content, and acquire language abilities. The more students read, the more their cognitive skills develop (Krashen, 2004) and their language base enlarges (Hinkel, 2006); and when students write, they keep a “permanent record …” of their “thoughts and attitudes” Gammill (2006, p.756).

Writing is a tool through which students demonstrate their understanding of what they read, how they think and make connections among ideas, and consequently how they present content in all subject areas in a coherent manner (Beers & Howell, 2005; Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996; Hawkins, 2006; Leki, 2003; Myers, 1986; Sorenson, 1991).

Likewise, Cumming (2001) ascertains that writing in second language (L2) is an ability in relation to students’ other abilities in lexical and conceptual knowledge. He assumes that writing is also related to students’ other modes of communication like reading which students necessarily have to do to be able to write.

However, educators observe a variety of problems in students’ writing that exceed the need for stylistic revision and coherence among ideas or cohesion in syntax to a problem of writing without content. This raises the question of students’ actual cognitive development (Bizzell, 1986; Fitzburgh, 2006) before they are prepared to write coherent texts that convey the desired meaning to the audience.

Enkvist (1990) considers a text to be coherent only when it is interpretable and the reader can draw a world picture around it. He asserts that the students’ problem in writing is not in the choice of clear language but rather in thinking.
Enkvist claims that thinking is equivalent to the capacity for logical argumentation which is not only the ability to produce sentences and link them with cohesive devices and make “the discourse coherent by anchoring it in a plausible world …”, but the ability to march forth “one’s propositions in a justifiable order” (p.22).

Hinkel (2006) refers to a persistent problem in writing even when L2 writers are trained and advanced. To compound the problem, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) “indicate that students in the middle and secondary schools can write to communicate only at a minimal level, and that they have difficulty using critical thinking and organizational skills (Miller, 1999, p. vi).

To affirm causes for the problem in second language writing, Leki (2003) argues that in writing classes teachers do not show students how to use writing in order to learn content although improving the writing skills is a main goal in the curriculum for secondary schools as Myers (1986) puts forth.

Myers (1986) states that among the new goals outlined in the new reform movement is the acquisition of skills in problem-solving and interpretation which enables students at the secondary level to “construct meaning in their own writing and know how to use writing and other devices as strategies for learning and discovery” (p. 148). Similarly, the features of the new Lebanese curriculum proposed in the General Education Curricula (1996) for teaching the English Language in the country highlight the necessity and aims for teaching writing skills and strategies.

*Reading Comprehension: A Prerequisite to Writing*

Skehan (1998) assumes that students will be able to produce relevant output only after they receive rich input. Such an assumption was explored by Ferris and
Hedgcock (2005) who present a body of literature to ascertain the promotion of “good reading habits and efficient reading skills” (p.39) in order to develop competence in writing. Likewise, Krashen (2004) asserts that a good writing style with adequate vocabulary and advanced grammatical competence comes mainly as a result of reading. Such arguments imply that a possible solution for the problem of writing is the training of students to become good readers.

Nunan (1999) argues that although reading has been considered a passive skill, it is anything but passive. He explains that reading “involves highly complex cognitive processing operations” (p. 249) in addition to the processing of written language. Due to this complexity, Nunan considers that the teaching of reading requires more time than any other language skill and that a variety of strategies are involved during the reading performance.

Along a similar premise, Harvey (2006) claims that reading in a second language is difficult. He finds that the amount of vocabulary which students encounter when they read makes up the largest portion of a text. Harvey argues that unless students read a great deal, they will not develop the necessary skills needed for comprehension. This “axiom” (as Harvey calls it p.38) accords with the beliefs of Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) and Krashen (2004) about the positive effect of reading.

Similarly, Savage (1998) who points out that vocabulary acquisition is essential to reading and writing competence, asserts that words represent concepts which are tied to experiences that form students’ background knowledge, and which in turn is partly built through wide reading. Savage emphasizes the role that literature plays in the classroom because it reflects human experiences that connect to students’ real life. He also asserts the importance of literature in developing not only students’ vocabulary but their critical thinking as well, especially that they start to
determine purposes for communication that are useful in different areas in school life and they make their different choices accordingly.

Nevertheless, Harvey (2006) contends that along with the development of vocabulary through reading, the explicit instruction of pedagogic strategies in word formation, verb tense forms and constructions, and the understanding of discourse markers pay off and support students in the long-term. He, along with Chen (2007) and Enkvist (1990) explain that when students use a strategy they decide on how to think and they become more focused and more purposeful.

Nunan (1999) defines strategies as “the mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to learn and use language” (p. 55). He believes that strategy acquisition is in need of enough training, and effective learners are those who demonstrate the ability to use the appropriate strategies to control their own learning.

The purpose for students’ reading according to Nunan (1999) is to obtain information, follow instructions, or simply enjoy the literature. During the reading process students practice a number of learning strategies which can be direct such as memorizing, analyzing and reasoning, or indirect such as evaluating their own learning, and cooperating with others. In both cases the students are internalizing the language to be able to make use of it when they need to, and they select the strategies they need to use depending on their level of proficiency and their needs.

Every task teachers introduce in the class has a learning strategy underlying it, and Nunan (1999) acknowledges the fact that authors build strategies and strategy awareness into their material. The list of strategies that he has developed touches on five different domains: the cognitive such as predicting, classifying, inducing, note taking, concept mapping, inferencing, discriminating, and diagramming; the
linguistic such as the conversational patterns, practicing, using context, summarizing, selective listening, or skimming; the interpersonal such as cooperating or role playing; the affective such as personalizing, self-evaluating, or reflecting; and the creative such as brainstorming. Through the use of strategies Nunan illustrates the fact that students have responsibility for making decisions and controlling their own learning.

Similarly Van den Broek and Kremer (2000) explain that reading strategies are the mental and behavioral activities that students use when they are reading, and these strategies increase the likelihood of students’ comprehension. They maintain that awareness of strategies and metacognition (knowledge of when to apply them) play an important role in the reading process.

Savage (1998) explains that reading is not only related to metacognition but to metacomprehension (an awareness of and control over ones’ understanding) as well. He believes that reading demands cognitive involvement where students become aware of the meaning a text conveys. This in turn enables students to adapt strategies that fit the type of activities they use and their performance during the reading process.

Harvey (2006) confirms that the explicit teaching of strategies is a must if students are to become better readers. He emphasizes the importance of pedagogic and support techniques to help students as much as possible. Likewise, Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1996) illuminate on the importance of reading strategies in the process of comprehending discourse because the use of these strategies enables students to have control over their own learning.

Chen (2007) suggests that students who are trained to use strategies demonstrate better language proficiency and engage more in the learning process.
She maintains that when students become confident at using strategies, their behavior and attitudes towards learning change due to their improvement, and their motivation to learn increases.

As students read they are making choices about which information is basic to be remembered, and how the meaning is related to their existing knowledge (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996; Hillocks, 1986). This in turn is based on their schema which is the organization of knowledge in their heads (Heller, 1995; Savage, 1998) and which will enable them to construct and express the message they intend to convey. This assumption is confirmed by Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) who state that the rich body of knowledge and experiences forms structures (schemata) which students make use of when they encounter new information.

Hinkel (2006) complies with the fact that readers gather visual information from texts and move from identifying word meanings to the processing of structures. She maintains that more reading improves the language base. This claim is also ensured by Rickards & Hawcs (2006) who display through a table of the author's craft minilessons (pp.371-372) how reading affects students’ word choice and structures. They point out how students experience the beautiful language which grabs their attention and helps them visualize images that consequently enable them to develop the skills of topic development, word choice, purpose, and writing conventions the author uses in the text.

Fortenberry & Fowler (2006) also emphasize the effectiveness of reading and the direct instruction of strategies such as inferring, summarizing or visualizing because awareness of these strategies helps students apply them in different contexts. They declare that when teachers articulate the purpose for reading, students will no longer see a strategy in isolation, and consequently, their comprehension of texts is
enhanced. Furthermore, Goodman, Watson, and Burke, (1996) point out that through the focus on reading strategies students “develop a conscious awareness and responsibility” (p. 16) for their involvement in the learning process.

The Teaching of Writing: An Overview

When students read and exploit the text structure and its lexis, they get used to “the habit of mind that experienced writers engage in all the time” (Ray, 2006, p. 242). Ray assumes that repetitive exposure to a variety of reading texts and their structures enables students to develop a vision for their own writing.

On the other hand, writing helps students learn not only disciplinary content but skills which they will use in their everyday lives (Leki, 2003). Krashen (2004) seconds this argument by stating that “actual writing can help us solve problems and make us smarter” (p. 132). Likewise, Hinkel (2006) assumes that a person’s “linguistic repertoire and writing skills determine one’s social, economic, and political choices” (p.124).

This is due to the fact that writing also determines a person’s prior knowledge which is both declarative (knowledge of the what) and procedural (knowledge of the how to make use of what is gained) (Hillocks, 1986, p. 72). Dean (2005) adds that conditional knowledge (knowledge of when to apply a certain strategy) is basic too since “control is key to conscious application of tools to write effectively” (p.83).

However, writing remains one of the most difficult skills an L2 student can work on in the process of language learning (Kroll, 2001; Nunan, 1999). A justification for this view comes from Carson (2001) who notices that L2 learners rarely achieve the proficiency of native speakers because they are affected by a
number of factors that include learning preferences, motivation and attitude, and learning strategies.

Furthermore, Kroll (2001) considers that L2 learners “take several years to achieve even a modicum of success” (p.230) in their writing, and the enhancement of students’ writing skills occurs when the school curricula incorporate both the process and product approaches to the teaching of writing.

The development in the way composition is being taught in schools according to Matsuda (2003), and the shift from the focus on textual features to the process started in the late 1970s based on the needs of L2 students. Matsuda highlights the fact that the process-based approach in the teaching of writing has emphasized both the meaning as well as the organization of the essay due to the fact that writing is not confined to production of essays but transcends it to writing in the other disciplines.

Throughout the process approach students share their work with others and receive feedback that improves the quality of their work. Consequently, when students produce their final drafts, they apply the techniques they have acquired from the discussion and reflection. They also demonstrate their ability to apply the rules and conventions they have acquired about written discourse (Nunan, 1999).

Applebee (1986) explains that the process of writing demands that students think through and organize their ideas before they write, and then they rethink and revise after their first drafts. Such a process optimizes their ability to think and make decisions about choices. It is part of their strategy building, even though their “own thinking” throughout the process “remains an afterthought” (pp. 99) because they are not being imaginative or expressive as they rewrite.
Nevertheless, Carson (2001) argues that L2 learners’ “writing is an ability that is typically developed in formal instructional settings” (p. 191) and she relates the development in the writing skills to a general competence in language acquisition. This assures the fact that learners benefit from different kinds of instruction and they need to be provided with different opportunities to write in order to learn (Leki, 2003).

Lam and Law (2007) recommend the use of instructional strategies that can stimulate the students’ curiosity in problem solving because they increase their motivation in writing. They add that students who are trained to use strategies become more autonomous and able to overcome failure by changing their strategies when needed.

Such a suggestion accords with Hinkel’s (2006) supposition that explicit instruction in both grammar and vocabulary has to be an integral part of the curricula to enable students to gain control of the written language. Nevertheless, Hillocks (1986) has argued that the teaching of grammar in the traditional or the transformational methods does not improve writing significantly and suggests the use of models as a significantly more effective approach to guide comprehension or production of discourse.

Similarly, Kroll (2001) warns teachers about giving excessive grammar comments during the teaching of writing and advises that comments on grammar be given toward the final stage along with editing; otherwise, the writing lesson will be turned to a grammar lesson. She opines that good writing comes from a process that “cannot be reduced to a set of formulaic rules” (p. 223) although some students who have received emphasis on grammar instruction tend to believe that they can produce problem-free essays.
The alternative method suggested by Dean (2005) is teaching writing through a process that is based on Culhan’s (1995) six traits which enriches students’ awareness of the rubrics to be followed as they write. The more students are aware of the what and how of writing, the better their higher-order thinking develops, and they become more critical and self-directed (Shosh and Zales, 2005). Shosh and Zales claim that this real writing will also result in great improvement and excitement because students find writing more meaningful to them.

Kessler (2005) too argues for what makes writing “extracurricular and meaningful” (p.90) and suggests that students “be prepared to enter the world of civic literacy” (p.95). She proposes that teachers of writing find ways to combine the good aspects of product, process, and “post-process” (p. 96) to instruct students in their classes.

The aforementioned ideas that call for the teaching of more authentic writing parallel what Myers (1986) has testified that students learn best when “writing is embedded in functional situations” (p.156), and with what Bromley and Mannix(2000) have assumed that when students’ writing is to be published, they gain an incentive to write. Bromley and Mannix propound that when students write for audiences other than their teachers or their peers, “they broaden their literacy perspectives by reading and writing … and engage in the process of real world writing ...” (p.154).

*Reading and Writing: The Connectedness*

Savage (1998) sees that building on the reading-writing relationship is the key to literacy in the classroom, whereas Heller (1995) theorizes that reading and writing are the products of skills acquisition. Furthermore, Grabe (2003) suggests
that students be trained through reading-writing activities because "reading and writing might reinforce or accelerate learning of content and the acquisition of learning abilities" (p. 242). His suggestion is asserted by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) who believe that the "schema theory highlights important links between reading and writing by identifying the processes readers use to discover ideas and points of view" (p. 36) that they themselves will use when they write.

From a similar perspective, Goodman, Watson, and Burke, (1996) consider that reading and writing almost occur simultaneously. They assert that reading and writing are tools that students use to explore, understand and enjoy the content that enriches their background knowledge. When students read they actively construct and produce meaning by integrating the new information, ideas, and feelings with what they already know.

In fact, Johns (1997) acknowledges that readers and writers share communicative purposes, knowledge of context, text features, text content, and register- the particular lexical and grammatical feature categories within a genre. However, she admits that when students write a text, they face the difficulty of deciding on content. They need to relate what they read to their previous knowledge, to understand the concepts of disciplinary practice and comprehend the vocabulary as it is used in a discipline.

In this context, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) assume that L2 writers "may have underdeveloped linguistic, rhetorical, academic, and strategic knowledge in English" (p.37) which does not allow them to write fluently as they are expected to. At the same time, Ferris and Hedgcock refute the claim that reading-writing connection may not be the clear-cut remedy for the development of writing skills for
L2 learners as much as it is for L1 learners; they present an elaborative defense of the benefits that improved reading skills have on writing.

Hinkel (2006) too, suggests that teachers expose students to readings from an array of genres to improve their grammar and lexis. Likewise, Vandrick (2003) argues for the use of literature to teach writing in L2 classes since literature is enjoyed and it reflects “human situations, concerns, problems, solutions, and emotions” (p.264). Furthermore, Beers and Howell (2005) see that “writing about what is being learned provides students with ownership of their learning” (p.4).

To achieve the goal of having students benefit from what they read, Kroll (2001) advises teachers to train them on a variety of strategies which students can apply when they read and write independently. Dean (2005) assumes that through such training students ultimately become conscious of what these strategies are and how and when to use them effectively. This might justify why Alderman (2004) encourages teachers to teach students specific strategies for remembering, comprehending, and problem solving.

In order to serve this purpose of strategy building, Grabe (2001) considers that students need to list, repeat, and paraphrase in order to write simple summaries; they need to take notes in order to remember; they need to write complex summaries to engage in problem-solving; and they cannot critique, interpret, or persuade if they are not able to learn and synthesize from texts.

This way of strategy acquisition requires that teachers think aloud to articulate the purpose of each strategy and the way of applying it. The think-aloud technique enables students to “get inside the teacher’s mind” (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007, p.435) and understand how and when to apply the strategy on a similar task. This articulation of purpose as Rickards and Hawes (2007) suggest,
facilitates for students the recognition of the connection between the strategies they learn and the texts.

The list of tasks which prepares for strategy acquisition bolsters the hypotheses that there is a direct connection between reading and writing. Kroll (2001) assures the fact that a nonproficient reader who is not fluent enough in language cannot develop into a highly proficient writer. She opines that students develop awareness of English Language prose style when they read and work on exercises that focus on stylistic and syntactic features in addition to methods of development and markers of coherence and cohesion.

Similarly, Vandrick (2003) emphasizes the essential role literature plays in helping students see the “complex ways that sentences and paragraphs can be put together” (p. 265). She asserts that the two skills of reading and writing are inseparable and that readings serve as models for good writing. For her the literature enables students to absorb grammatical patterns unconsciously, and students themselves become creative through their exposure to creative literature.

Vandrick (2003) presents the arguments raised against the use of literature in the writing class. She considers that instructors who do not favor the use of literature in the writing class point out that literature might pose difficulty to L2 learners and consequently they get discouraged; that students need more practical material when they write; and they need to be prepared for academic writing in the disciplines they learn.

The counter-arguments Vandrick (2003) presents impart the potential benefit literature provides to L2 writers since they have the opportunity to experience the best models language can offer. She believes that since students have to write in many types of situations that transcend the disciplines they learn at school, literature
gives way for them to practice how to think, analyze, and interpret what they need for their writing.

Rickards and Hawes (2006) propose that teachers use literature in the classroom as a tool to direct students’ attention to the craft of writing. They say that training students to make reading-writing links offers a multitude of reading and writing activities which prepare students to improve their writing skills.

Moreover, Grabe (2003) assures the bidirectionality of reading and writing and reports that the reading-writing relations support literacy and content learning. He suggests that students’ success requires extensive practice in reading and writing tasks as well as reflection on the processes involved in language and content in various disciplines. That is why he proposes that reading and writing instruction begin from task analyses where students have the opportunity to practice writing many types of genres and develop awareness of the text structure itself.

Gammill (2006) reiterates the idea that there is a reciprocal connection between the two skills of reading and writing. She explains that when students write, they improve their reading comprehension skills through problem solving techniques and thought processes which foster their critical thinking so they become better communicators and learners. Furthermore, Savage (1998) claims that writing “cements the reader-writer relationship” (p. 346) because both reading and writing involve transactions between a reader and a text.

On the other hand, Grabe (2003) asserts that limited reading abilities sometimes detain students from carrying out tasks that require reading and writing. Likewise, Krashen (2004) proposes reading as a means to “have less writing apprehension” because good readers have a “superior command of the written language” (p.36), and he overrates reading in comparison to direct instruction.
Nevertheless, research has proven that integrating reading and writing through activities such as note-taking, summarizing, reporting, critiquing, listing, creating graphic organizers, or responding to prompts develops both reading and writing skills and simultaneously improves academic skills (Grabe and Stroller, 2001; Kroll, 2001). Moreover, Miller (1999) proposes a variety of challenging activities to engage students in making meaning and investing the information they read.

However, Goodman, Watson, and Burke, (1996) and Kroll (2001) confirm that students need to learn strategies which they will be able to use when they read and write independently. This assertion explains why Dean (2005) assumes that strategic instruction gives students control over their writing. Similarly, Applebee (1986) has opined that thinking strategies which teachers present in the class help students “think through and organize their ideas before writing” (p. 85), as well as they assist them as they are revising their drafts. Similarly, Miller (1999) emphasizes the importance of students’ awareness of their own thinking in order to understand a text.

This concept of reflective thinking has been the concern in Heller’s (1995) analysis of the reading-writing connections because she believes that reflective thinking is basic for proficient writers. Heller contends that writers undergo an interactive process when they seek to construct meaning for an intended audience. She sees that authors are responsible for the comprehensible nature of the text and for structuring the information for the purpose of communicating ideas.

Better readers are better writers because they are able to construct meaning when they read, and they are capable of articulating their ideas in a more thoughtful
manner. This aspect also makes readers better thinkers because they are able to articulate meaning before, during, and after they read and write (Heller, 1995).

The importance of the reading-writing connection, as Grabe (2003) declares, emerges from the fact that it prepares students to engage successfully in different academic tasks. He maintains that students who are involved in reading-writing activities will develop the skills of analysis that make them strategic readers and writers while they are developing effective problem-solving techniques.

The Role of Feedback

Grabe (2003) considers feedback from peers and teachers an essential component for the success of any reading-writing curriculum. An assertion to this idea comes from Lam and Law (2007) who propound that when students do not receive feedback on their work except the grade, they focus on performance rather than on improvement. They assure that through feedback students are given suggestions on how to avoid mistakes and produce better work.

The central role feedback plays in the development of writing is already a focus for researchers (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Miao, Badger, & Zen, 2006; Ferris, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Goldstein, 2006; Hyland and Hyland, 2006a, 2006b; Kroll, 2001) because it is a key element which enables students to gain control over their composing skills thus improving their texts in the immediate and the long term-sense.

Alderman (2004) considers feedback one of the most important methods to increase self-efficacy especially that feedback indicates where the students are making progress on specific skills or strategy use. Furthermore, Hyland and Hyland
(2006b) claim that feedback is a crucial factor in the improvement of language accuracy though it is not alone responsible for it.

In their account of the research on feedback on L2 students’ writing Hyland and Hyland (2006b) highlight the fact that “changes in writing pedagogy and insights gained from research studies have transformed feedback practices” (p. 83) from summative feedback focusing on writing as a product to formative feedback which emphasizes students’ future writing and the development of the writing as a process.

Hyland and Hyland (2006b) point out that in addition to teachers’ written comments, feedback now comes in the form of peer feedback, oral-conferences, writing workshops, and computer-delivered comments. They maintain that although teachers are fully aware of the role feedback plays in the writing development, they are not making use of its full potential yet.

The effect of error correction and its direct effect on learning has been a controversial topic among researchers. Ferris (2003) indicates that when teachers cross out portions of students’ texts and make directive suggestions, students get frustrated, demotivated, and disempowered. Carson (2001) argues that correction has minimal effect on developing proficiency, and that recurrent errors get to be overlooked by teachers. She recommends classroom interaction instead, and she speaks about writing tasks based on content where students produce texts that reflect a specific content which can be controlled by the teacher.

Hyland and Hyland (2006b) see that although the marking of mechanical errors can be frustrating, the view that there is no direct connection between correction and learning is overrated. In a study reported by Ferris (2006), she asserts the “strong relationship between error markings and successful student revisions on the subsequent drafts of their essays” (p. 97). Ferris distinguishes between
“treatable” errors that are usually grammatical in nature and “untreatable” errors that are lexical such as word choice, idioms, and sentence structure. She notices that although students correct sentence structure errors directly, they don’t seem to learn them on the long term.

Ferris (2003a) suggests that in order for feedback to be effective, it has to be given in the form of written comments, oral student-teacher conferencing, and peer feedback. She adds that feedback has to be delivered clearly at intermediate stages, and on all aspects of the students’ texts. Ferris affirms that for students, feedback from both teachers and peers “may be the most significant component in their successful development as writers” (p. 119).

Kroll (2001) who confirms that providing feedback is central for the success of writing considers that the teachers’ traditional way of providing written feedback is ineffective and time-consuming. Her suggestion that feedback be a combination of oral and written comments as well as individual conferencing on student papers seems reiterated by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron, (2005), Hyland and Hyland (2006a, 2006b), and Ferris (2003a).

Goldstein (2006) and Huimin (2006) highlight the fact that the language form of the comment is to be considered since it determines the way students will respond and revise the written work. Goldstein explains that not only is the shape of the comment of influence on the student, but the clarity and precision in defining what to be corrected is what seems substantial. She clarifies that feedback has to be text-specific and allows students to decide on a way to respond and do their revision.

The types of feedback researched by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron, (2005) on students who study English as a second language (ESL) reveal that indirect feedback is more effective in helping students improve their accuracy than direct
written feedback which is not of significant effect especially if not coupled with
direct oral feedback.

Miao, Badger, & Zen, (2006) who confirm the importance of feedback in
students’ revision of writing fear that teacher feedback may reduce self-correction
due to the fact that students consider the teacher an authoritative figure. They
conclude in their research to compare peer and teacher feedback on Chinese
students, that despite the minimal effect of peer feedback on student improvement, it
appears to encourage student autonomy.

Huimin (2006) recommends peer evaluation because he has found that it
reflects better results. When students read each others’ composition they become
more aware of their use of language while at the same time they will not offend their
peer writers because they know that the purpose is to cooperate and learn rather than
criticize.

Ferris (2003a) argues that although peer feedback is appreciated by students,
the problem lies in novice student writers who lack the schemata to be able to assess
others’ writing and give the necessary comments that improve the language. She
considers that ESL writers attend to teachers’ feedback and utilize it in their
revisions. Nevertheless, Ferris favors face-to-face student-teacher conferencing
because conferences offer students the opportunity to directly negotiate and clarify
their mistakes.

Motivation: A By-Product or a Requisite

The role motivation plays in academic learning in general and in mastering
L2 in particular is widely known (Csizer and Dornyei, 2005). Enjoyable learning
experiences as Orlando (2006) asserts contribute to increase learners’ motivation,
and Carson (2001) considers that learners' attitudes are directly related to their motivation. This justifies why Kroll (2001) advises that students' mistakes be treated through a process that focuses on empowering students rather than restricting them, and Alderman (2004) emphasizes the fact that success raises efficacy expectations.

Goldstein (2006) links the effectiveness of feedback to motivation. She considers that "the concept of motivation seems particularly important in understanding how students might see their teachers' comments" (p. 201); she explains that students will be demotivated to work with "comments that focus heavily on the sentence level" (p. 202).

Lam and Law (2007) consider that the writing ability contributes to the general academic success. Hence, continuous attention needs to be paid to motivational conditions because writing is as much emotional as cognitive. They declare that students will exert effort only when a task meets their perceived values and expectancy of success; so teachers need to continuously provide students with challenging and achievable tasks to keep them motivated. Their research findings assert that instructional practices affect the level of students' motivation and consequently their writing performance.

However, in a study conducted by Csizer and Dornyei (2005) on 13- and 14-year-old Hungarian pupils to assess their attitudes toward the five different languages they were studying (English, German, French, Italian, and Russian) the researchers report "four broad motivational profiles" that range from the "least motivated learners who were basically not interested in foreign languages, cultures, and language learning" (p. 654) to the most motivational ones who showed great concern across the seven motivational dimensions that have been tested:
"Integrativeness, Instrumentality, Vitality of the community, Attitudes toward L2 speakers, Cultural interest, Self-confidence, and Milieu" (p. 624).

Csizer and Dornyei (2005) conclude that the more often the participants were motivated the more their desire to learn mounted and the higher amount of effort they wanted to invest. The researchers assume that these students "have successfully developed a salient ideal L2 self" (p.655). On the other hand, the two interim groups either had a lack of professional future relevance of the L2 or they have not internalized the language and were not motivated enough as they were learning.

Granted that goal orientation and relevance are effective factors in motivation to learning an L2, Grabe and Stoller (2001) observe that motivation is also behind persistence and positive feelings toward an activity and teachers need to consider how to motivate students in order to actively engage them in reading-writing tasks. As they propose different ways that keep students focused on tasks, they assert that though success is not easily maintained, it is possible if students are aware of the goals of the activity and are able to understand what they are doing.

Lam and Law (2007) ascertain that students are motivated to write when they are allowed more autonomy in the writing processes. Similarly, Dornyei (2001) supposes that motivation reaches a peak when students are provided sufficient autonomy, set worthwhile goals, are competent, receive feedback, and are affirmed by others. These factors are in line with what Alderman (2004) considers contributors to intrinsic motivation.

Both Alderman (2004) and Dornyei (2001) highlight the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on students’ work. They define intrinsic motivation as engagement in actions for the purpose of challenge, interest, learning, and
satisfaction; whereas extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior as a means to an end. Dornyei also mentions a third type of motivation, amotivation, which he defines as the "lack of any regulation, whether extrinsic or intrinsic", and he refers to this type as "there is no point ... feeling" (p. 27).

Praise and positive comments encourage students to improve their performance while at the same time they satisfy their curiosity as they experience the pleasure of achievement and challenge (Alderman, 2004; Dornyei, 2001). Such comments are effective when they come from peers, and Huimin (2006) considers that peer feedback increases intrinsic motivation and stimulates students so they become more interested in language learning.

On the other hand, Dornyei (2001) sheds light on the role which teachers play in motivating students by providing mentoring, guidance, and support. He considers teachers "powerful motivational socializers" (p. 35), while Alderman (2004) considers teachers' behavior a primary extrinsic motivator to students through the verbal praise and positive feedback.

Extrinsic motivation ought to recognize the students' competencies and progress, and the classroom climate is one extrinsic factor that fosters development. According to Alderman (2004) the emphasis on strategies and effort, learnable intelligence, meaningful learning, students' dignity, and recognition of students' efforts are all characteristics that mark the climate of a class that fosters the development of competence.

Likewise, Dornyei (2001) believes that all students are motivated to learn under the right conditions, and he sets key units for a framework for motivational strategies which include encouraging positive self evaluation and a pleasant and supportive class atmosphere. These strategies accord with what Hyland and Hyland
(2006b) call for when they state that the ultimate goal for any form of feedback is to move students to an independent role whereby they can critically evaluate their processes and products and improve them according to their needs.

Conclusion

Educators are unequivocally positive about the role reading and writing play in preparing students for lifelong learning. The focus on reading-writing connection is due to the fact that growth in one area will naturally affect the other (Heller, 1995). This stipulates that students practice writing from text resources extensively in order to acquire foundational skills for more advanced task demands (Grabe, 2003), while at the same time serves in strategy building which enables students to make the necessary choices as they read and write.

Readers have to construct meaning and interact with the text as they read just as writers have to construct meaning as they produce written work (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996). This relation between reading and writing is said to empower the connection between reading comprehension and writing processes and products.

Through the variety of literature that students encounter, they are exposed to a wealth of ideas, immense vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and a range of communication strategies which motivate them to create with the language a new way of expressing their ideas or feelings (Rickards & Hawes, 2006). When students are trained to use strategies and participate in a wide variety of writing, they stretch their thinking and gain confidence which serves them for all the writing they would do in their lives (Dean, 2005).
Nevertheless, motivation remains the key to successful reading and writing with an impact on skills development. Lam and Law (2007) see that motivating instructional practices give students incentives to work, and this in turn improves their writing performance. Goldstein (2006) taps on the fact that the concept of motivation seems of particular importance in understanding how students might respond to their teachers’ comments. Ultimately, it is “motivation and the chemistry between students and teacher in the classroom” that appears to be of great significance (Orlando, 2006, p. 47).

From another perspective, the concern that has become “the primary goal of educators worldwide is to provide a classroom environment” (Heller, 1995, p. 16) where students have the best chances to become lifelong learners. In order to accomplish that goal, Orlando (2006) suggests that students be provided with informal learning opportunities that will serve to enhance their autonomy as well.

In this sense, it is important to note that students appear to appreciate and value both teacher and peer feedback because it helps them improve their learning (Ferris, 2003a). Research confirms that feedback in any of its forms aims at moving students to a more independent role where they can critically evaluate their work and change the process or product as necessary (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). The researchers add that although its long term effects on writing development are not close to understanding feedback remains crucial for encouraging and consolidating learning.
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY
Introduction

Reading and writing are active cognitive processes that are the direct products of skills acquisition. Students need to employ both bottom-up and top-down skills if they are to become proficient language learners (Heller, 1995; Hinkel, 2006; Savage, 1998). Hence, the competencies students develop and the skills they acquire as they connect reading to writing through the variety of activities differ among individual students due to the difference in their cognition and their schemata.

Subjects

The study of the effect of the reading-writing activities on students' skills acquisition required that the researcher observe student cases in a class over a definite period of time. The observation would allow her to examine the effect of the different variables pertaining to the use of activities on the students. The subjects for the study were three grade 11 students from the sociology and economics section in a private secondary school in Lebanon.

The researcher, a direct participant in the study, selected the three students from among 49 of their peers in the same grade level who were divided between two sections in the school. The purpose of the selection was to have students who would be representative of the levels in class in general. The sampling was purposive and convenient (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) because the three students were selected from among the few who were the most enthusiastic about the purpose of the study which the researcher communicated to them in class; they granted the researcher a verbal consensus to participate. Their selection was based on the level of their performance in the English language class in addition to their grades on a diagnostic test in writing (See Appendix A for samples).
In this research, the students were referred to as Student A- an above average female, Student B- an average male, and Student C- a below average male. However, the effect of gender on the students’ performance has not been considered a variable in the current study.

All three students received the same type of instruction in the classroom whereas the type of feedback differed according to each student’s needs. Student B was also enrolled in the school magazine club and the effect of the activities he participated in were examined through his own reflections that were analyzed based on a semi-structured interview (See appendix E).

Variables

In the process of the study, the reading-writing activities were considered the independent variables that were expected to bring about the change in the students’ cognitive skills which would be the dependent variable (Fraenkel & Wallen 2006; Kumar, 1996). The change in the students’ skills acquisition depended on the type of activities they practiced and the amount of feedback they received in addition to their level of motivation as they were working in the language classes. The extraneous variables in the study that affected the relationship between the aforementioned types but could not be measured- as Kumar (1996) explained- were the varying types of the reading-writing activities and their levels of difficulty, the students’ level of performance based on how they have been categorized, and the level of their motivation.
Approach

The study of the influence of the reading-writing activities as an independent variable on the students’ skills acquisition as the researcher hypothesized might undergo a cause-effect relationship (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Hence, a case study that involved an investigation into the different variables and their interdependence has been chosen to best fit this correlational type of research (Kumar, 1996).

Keeves (1997) and Sturman (1997) support the appropriateness of the selected approach to the type of research. Keeves stated that a holistic or case study approach serves the purpose in educational research because the case study approach is systemic. He attested that “the discrete elements that make up the whole are considered to be interdependent and inseparable” (p. 279). The data in such research must consider the many outcomes that need to be examined simultaneously since they function in unison with the variables. Moreover, Sturman (1997) stated a belief that individuals “develop a characteristic of wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits” (p.61).

That being the case, analyzing the phenomenon of the reading-writing connection and its effect on students’ skills acquisition demanded that a case study be adopted on the sample of three students. The results obtained served to explain how the reading-writing activities and the personalized constructive feedback students received affected their cognition which was reflected in their essay writing. The hypothesis was further validated through a questionnaire addressed to all the 49 students in the class (see Appendix D). The questionnaire investigated the students’ attitude toward the different variables and the interplay among them, which would affect their cognitive abilities and their written production.
Design

Due to the recognition of the value of blending different methodologies (Sturman, 1997) a “mixed methods” approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) that required quasi-experimentation (Kumar, 1996; Wolf, 1997) was used throughout the case study. The research entailed qualitative and quantitative techniques to tease out the interrelationships between the variables (Keeves, 1997).

Wolf (1997a) claimed that quasi-experimentation is designed to have multiple observations on the same individuals over time in order to investigate a specific point. Its purpose is “to provide a theoretical justification for the conduct of studies in field settings where the absence of randomization does not necessarily invalidate results” (p. 420).

Walker and Evers (1997) justified the use of qualitative techniques in research because the researcher must grasp the individuality of persons. They believe that knowledge of human affairs and attitudes is irreducibly subjective and human dimensions cannot be captured by statistical generalizations. However, they fear that this type falls short of high standards of objectivity and the tight criteria for truth that quantitative research provides.

Based on such arguments that were also supported by Sturman (1997) who said that the qualitative research could be useful to develop the concepts that would then be tested through quantitative approaches, the qualitative technique was employed in this research to fathom the interrelationships between the variables while the quantitative method enabled the testing of the effect of the variables on the majority of the students in the class in order to validate the results obtained from the particular cases that have been studied.
A further justification for the use of the two qualitative and quantitative methods was what Kaplan (1997) propounded that “hypotheses are necessary to arrive at meaningful data, but valid hypotheses can be arrived at only on the basis of the data” (p. 115), and data that is only impressionistic might be spurious.

**Instruments and Validity Controls**

The first month of the academic year the students were reading texts in literature, responding to different types of questions, and then writing an essay that stretched their ideas beyond the text. The first essay they wrote back then determined the incompetence they had in writing, and the investigation to remedy the level of their performance began.

In order to establish coherence between the preliminary observation and the existing theories (Kaplan, 1997), the researcher provided all the students in the class with the lists of traits proposed by Culham (1995) that detailed how ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentations of essays could be maintained. They studied the first list against their essays and rewrote their drafts in order to improve them. The traits were used every time the essays of the students under study were corrected, and their application in class would be detailed in the procedures to follow.

In addition to the rubrics, the researcher focused on reading-writing activities that were designed to motivate students and enable them to focus on a purpose while reading. At the same time students had to make use of the reading material while they were accomplishing the activities (See Appendix C for a sample of the activities given). The activities were used after whole class readings, individual readings, or extensive reading done as homework assignments. While some of the activities were
adapted from Miller (1999), Robb (2003), and White (1995), some others were the brain-child of the researcher based on the need of the text or the design of the objective.

Another measurement technique the researcher used to validate the established hypothesis and add reliability to the results obtained about the variables (Wolf, 1997b) was a semi-structured questionnaire (See Appendix D) which the researcher designed and administered in the class on all 47 of the students (one student in each of the two sections was absent on the day the questionnaire was administered). The reason why it is semi-structured is that the researcher was present while the students were responding. It required reflective thinking from their side into the procedures followed during the reading-writing activities. Because responding to the questionnaire was left optional, only one of the students refrained from responding reducing the total number of respondents to 46.

The design of the questionnaire complied with the measures assigned by Miller and Cannell (1997) and Wolf (1997b) in that it created a shared meaning between the researcher and the respondents. The concepts were clear and did not require any form of explanation upon administration. They matched the objectives and the variables assigned for the study, and they did not require more than seven to ten minutes to be completed. In addition to the above mentioned criteria, the questionnaire provided the structure needed for the respondents to answer their own internal questionnaire by allowing them to review thoroughly their own relevant experience and arrive at almost accurate responses.

The researcher piloted the items of the questionnaire upon constructing them on a group of different students. She then limited the questions to the variables of primary interest (Wolf, 1997b). The questions tapped on the students’ perspectives
on their level of participation in the reading-writing activities they worked on in class. They also investigated the effect of the focus on strategy training on them, the students' level of motivation during the activities, the effect of the different type of feedback on their writing, and their attitudes, opinions and aspirations about writing to audiences other than their own teacher.

The researcher also conducted a 15 minute interview with the average student who was involved in writing as a member in the School Magazine Club. The semi-structured questions which the researcher prepared for the interview (see Appendix E) targeted the same variables that were the focus of the research. The purpose for interviewing that student was to examine the student’s behavior within a context outside the classroom. His responses provided access to better understand the experience he was involved in (Seidman, 1998).

Procedures

At the beginning of the school year when the students wrote their first essays, a problem in writing was noticed. The researcher identified the possible reasons that were mainly shortage or even lack in content in the first place, in addition to the varied language mistakes. She alerted all the students to that and provided them with the lists of rubrics that were suggested by Culham (1995) as a scoring guide (See Appendix B). The students studied the rubrics pertaining to ideas in class and they revised their work based on the three levels suggested by Culham. The students then were provided with the other six lists on the basis of one or two per week to assure that they were focusing on each trait separately.

At that time the researcher communicated her intentions about conducting the study to research the connection between reading and writing and its effect on the
students' skills acquisition. The plan was put, and the students were selected. A set of instructions and practice were given to students with every lesson with a great focus on reading-writing activities that have been specifically designed to match the purpose of the study.

Each student had to write a graded essay every four to five weeks, and the three students' written essays were scrutinized 5 times during the academic year (end of October throughout April): 1) the diagnostic assessment at the end of October, 2) the 3 formative assessments (one every four to five weeks) throughout November to end of April, and 3) the post test by the first week of May. The procedure of writing, feedback, and rewriting was continued throughout those months, and the best grade went into the grading book. That created a positive reinforcement to the students and they wanted to improve their essays every time. This type of feedback was termed by the researcher as 'personalized constructive feedback'.

The students wrote the fourth essay during the last week of April after they were informed that they were writing to an audience other than their teacher- the parents. Those essays were not used by the researcher for the purpose of evaluation, but as a means to study the effect of a different audience on the students.

Based on what Ferris (2003a) claimed about the nature and effects of teacher response to student writing, written comments were recorded in response to students' essays and one-on-one conferences were held with cases A, B, and C upon which they were encouraged to revise their essays and submit a new version to be graded.

A session for feedback was given to the whole class to discuss common mistakes when there was a need for that- for example when a new type of writing was introduced. Although the procedure was applied on the three cases in particular, some of the other students who wished to rewrite their essays could not be deprived
of the opportunity, and there were always four to five other students who sought a higher grade.

The changes or improvements in the three students' performance were always traced based on the same criteria of Culham's (1995) scoring guide. The researcher administered a posttest during the first week of May for the final evaluation of the process (Appendix A includes the different samples) and did the final analysis on each of the students’ essays following the standards in the aforementioned scoring rubrics.

Toward the end of the period assigned for the study, all the students in the class responded to a questionnaire which aimed at investigating their attitude towards the process they have been going through to improve their written communication skills. The questionnaire also touched on their motivation and their own perception of the changes that have taken place at the level of their performance.

The person in charge of the school magazine club was supposed to be interviewed to voice her opinion on Student B’s level of participation in the activities and his overall performance in the club. The purpose was to relate the students’ work for the magazine to his level of work in class as well as to his level of motivation and improvement- in case that has been observed.

Due to specific circumstances, the person in charge of the school magazine left the country before the interview was completed; she would not respond through mail even though she was approached. The researcher had then to interview Student B himself and transcribe and analyze his responses. It is notable to mention that Student B was very enthusiastic about the interview, and his responses revealed much more achievement than what the reality of his writings told.
Keeves (1997) stated that in case study research, it is important to employ a number of techniques that addressed the same variables in order to establish the generality and validity of the findings. The aim of the use of the rubrics, the questionnaire, and the interview was to triangulate the results to ensure that the data gathered about the students' performance reflected their standards as far as possible. Only the variables related to students' motivation and evaluation of the level of challenge the activities posed on them would always remain difficult to measure due to their changing nature in the variety of situations students might encounter.

_Ethical considerations_

Sturman (1997) considered ethical issues paramount in a case study because this type of research involves the portrayal of persons which might enable recognition. In this research, the ethical concerns were carefully considered by the researcher. On one hand was the relevance and usefulness of the research in improving the students' cognitive and writing skills because it is unethical to waste the respondents' time if the research does not improve their conditions (Kumar, 1996); on the other hand the work produced by the three subjects was to be portrayed for scrutiny.

Moreover, the subjects voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and they granted the researcher their verbal consensus without being provided with any incentive since that was unethical (Kumar, 1996). Their only incentive was intrinsic motivation due to their belief that the process might improve their cognitive and writing skills.

Furthermore, the three subjects were informed of the purpose and the process of the research- adhering to the principles described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) -
and they were protected from any mental discomfort. On the contrary, they were encouraged to improve their skills through the constructive feedback they received on their writing, and any comment was directly shared with them individually and confidentially.

The use of appropriate methodology (House, 1997; Kumar, 1996) was explained and justified earlier in this chapter. Moreover, the detailed description of the findings, the use of quantitative methods in addition to the qualitative methods, and the triangulation that is demonstrated through the use of three different instruments: the rubrics, the interview, and the questionnaire, prove the objectivity of the researcher in presenting and analyzing the findings.

What the Research Added

1- To accomplish the desired effects, the researcher designed a set of reading-writing activities some of which were original and legible for publishing. They have been tried out in a variety of school settings and the researcher received positive feedback about them.

2- The idea of personalized constructive feedback matched the students' needs and motivated them to rewrite and improve their work especially that they are learning in a test-oriented environment where the grade is meaningful to them.

3- Training students on a set of reading strategies through the think-aloud method served them to become more independent as learners. They demonstrated their abilities when they were assigned a mini project to find an authentic article from a current magazine or newspaper and analyze it through responding to a set of tasks (explained in Appendix C).
4- Students were asked to write to a different audience other than the teacher. For that purpose, they wrote once to their peers for the purpose of revising and editing, and another time for parents they did not know. For that purpose, a letter was addressed to parents who showed interest in the idea (See Appendix F), and the researcher sent each a sample of 4 essays to read and respond to. The results were communicated in the following chapter on the findings.
Chapter IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS
Analysis of Essays: An Overview

The researcher analyzed each of the students’ essays (See Appendix A) successively in order to study the effect of the reading-writing activities on their skills acquisition. The analysis was based on the rubrics proposed by Culham (1995) for each of the writing traits (See Appendix B). Following what Culham clarified, the researcher used the traits “to note strengths and weaknesses in the work” (p. 13) while it was in progress. The results that the researcher reached for every essay starting with the first diagnostic essay in November until the posttest in the first week of May, including an essay written with a different audience in mind, revealed different levels of improvement in the various traits in each of the student’s work.

Results for Student A

The results of the analysis of Student A’s essays showed that the student stayed on balance and the strengths in her work as a whole outweighed the weaknesses. She was able to nail the ideas and develop the themes in as organized a manner as possible. However, her ideas always showed but did not tell very clearly what she wanted to express. Little revision was needed to add examples and details that strengthened each of her essays. The essays were pretty easy to follow although the ending never grabbed the attention of the reader who she was trying to speak to mostly in very ordinary language. Moreover, Student A always provided titles even though they were not always very reflective of the content. Nevertheless, analysis of each of the essays separately showed a slight variation as the work proceeded (See Chart A).
Chart A: Analysis of Student A’s essays

Ideas

Analysis of the first diagnostic sample showed that the student deserved a score of 3 according to the scoring guide. She had a focus in ideas with relevant examples even though they were not original. The details the student provided remained limited. There wasn’t much change at the level of ideas in the second essay either. The student always drew from personal experience, and she highlighted only one of the three examples she mentioned.

The change was noticeable in the third essay. Her selection of ideas and elaboration on them were manageable and significant, and the details she provided reflected knowledge on the topic. Nevertheless the conclusion remained below the average level of the whole essay and left the reader with unanswered questions.

The ideas in the fourth essay, the one addressed to the parents as an audience, became more logical although she kept them far from being personal to reflect experience. The reader felt that there were generalizations throughout the second paragraph. Although the third paragraph of the same essay contained a real life
example, the conclusion was again generalized which showed that the writer did not yet focus the topic beyond the obvious. The comment on the conclusion was also given to her by the parent who read the essay.

The essay written on the posttest—the final one for assessment—did not vary from the last two. Although the student stayed focused on the topic, she did not include material evidence from readings or from life experience to support the ideas she presented, and the same comment remained for the conclusion.

**Organization**

When the researcher looked at the organization of the subsequent essays based on the guide proposed by Culham (1995), she found that the organizational structure was strong enough to move the reader through each of the texts, and all essays had titles as requested. However, the elaboration in the introductory paragraphs did not become effective before essay 3 which also continued throughout essay 5 (See chart A for comparison). The change in the way the conclusion was written became observable as of essay 2 even though it remained remarkable that all four conclusions were fairly brief and did not fully grab the attention of the reader, a fact which did not allow the score to exceed the 4.

**Voice**

The voice, the trait that made the writing come to life and engaged the attention of the reader (Culham, 1995, p.102), was the third trait the researcher analyzed in each of the essays (See Chart A for voice). Based on Culham’s guide for voice, the researcher noticed that the writer seemed sincere in her writing. She presented pleasant and often personal essays, but they remained not very compelling.
Although the reader could come across delightful examples, credibility was not built throughout the essays. The major defect was the number of generalizations that were recurrent in the 5 essays.

The major change was observed in essay 3 only because the reader felt strong interaction with the writer who showed honesty in expressing her point of view. Her writing in essay 3 reflected strong commitment to the topic, and she was able to show the reader why (s)he should care.

**Word choice**

Word choice is about beautiful language (Culham, 1995, p. 142). In student A’s essays, the language was almost functional. Words were correct and adequate in general, and they communicated the message although they did not capture the reader’s imagination. The words throughout the 5 essays looked as if they were the first things that popped into the writer’s mind although in essay 3, for example, Student A showed that she could be selective and chose lively words that enhanced the reader’s understanding and interaction with the topic.

**Sentence fluency**

Culham (1995) defined sentence fluency as the variety in structure and length, the logic and creative phrasing of sentences, and the parallel construction and word order that makes reading feel natural (p. 178). The analysis of the 5 essays at the level of sentence fluency showed that although the writing had an easy flow and most sentences were well built, they mostly got the job done in a routine fashion. A greater variety in the sentence structure appeared as of the second essay, and the connecting words and phrases became clearer. Only at certain times were parts of the
text expressive; at some other times sentences were choppy and repetitive. This aspect kept the score stable from essay 2 throughout essay 5 as clarified in Chart A.

Conventions

According to Culham (1995) the purpose of conventions is to make the ideas readable. Whereas the first five traits are the revision as Culham claims, conventions allow the writer to edit the text and make it "understandable in a uniform way (p. 214).

Student A showed reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. In the first essay, little corrections were necessary to polish the text and free it from few grammatical mistakes, but the second and fourth essays demonstrated much better standards of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage. The paragraphs tended to be sound and reinforced the organizational structure, and the correct grammar contributed to clarity and style. Nevertheless, a slight decline in the standard was observed in essays 3 and 5 especially in spelling and capitalization which brought the score back to 4 (See Chart A for comparison).

Results for Student B

The results of the analysis of Student B’s essays showed that the student had strengths and weaknesses in his work as a whole, but the progress in certain traits throughout the process of the study outweighed the weaknesses.

The start of Student B in writing was awkward. He had some ideas but the information was limited and unclear which gave the reader hard time to sift out what was important. The problems he had with the language made his thoughts disconnected at the beginning. However, the analysis of the subsequent essays
asserted a great change—though not quite consistent—in the level of his work (See Chart B for comparison).

Chart B: Analysis of Student B’s essays

Idea

In the first essay, Student B started to define the topic but the missing details distracted the meaning. He attempted to give an example, but he couldn’t flesh out the key issue in the essay as a whole. However, a remarkable difference was observed in essays 2 and 4— the latter being the one addressed to parents as an audience. The writer was focused; he added examples from his readings which showed that he was drawing on his knowledge on the topic. He generally stayed on the topic even though he did not demonstrate high performance, and the parent who read his paper positively commented on his level of thinking.

The third and fifth essays were fairly equal in quality, and the student stayed on topic; yet, he did not respond to the assigned theme in essay 3, and he confined himself to generalities throughout the essay. In essay 5, the posttest, he attempted to
support his ideas but he had difficulty going from the general observations to the specific details (Refer to Chart B to note the scores).

**Organization**

The analysis of the organization trait of the subsequent essays written by Student B, and which was based on the guide proposed by Culham (1995), showed that the organizational structure was acceptable to move the reader through each of the texts, and all essays except for the last one had titles as requested. However, the introductory paragraphs were not effective enough except for essay 2. Essays 3 through 5 were consistent in that although the connectors were present, at certain times they did not tie the essay in a coherent manner. The reader sometimes felt the need to modify or move things around. The conclusions the student reached were too brief and did not grab the attention of the reader (See chart A for comparison).

**Voice**

When the researcher analyzed the voice in the essays of Student B, she sensed that at the beginning he was distancing himself from the topic and the audience. The writing was so brief that little was accomplished beyond introducing the topic. The writing was mechanical and only one example was introduced to support the idea.

The case changed in the subsequent essays. The second and the third essays communicated the ideas in an earnest and pleasing manner. There was good engagement in the second essay, and the third essay reflected a perspective on the topic although there were a lot of generalities.
The fourth essay, the one addressed to parents, was more personal, and the examples the student provided were reflective of readings and experience. Similarly in the fifth essay, the student seemed to be mature in voicing his opinion.

**Word choice**

In the first essay, Student B demonstrated limited vocabulary which affected the flow of the intended meaning. The problems the student had with the language left the reader dissatisfied with the work in hand. However, the case changed with the rest of the essays, and the students started to use more functional words and phrases. He attempted at colorful language and showed willingness to stretch and grow; yet, most of the words and phrases he used rarely captured the reader’s imagination (refer to Chart B for scores).

**Sentence fluency**

The sentences of Student B’s first essay reflected real problems in language. Many of the sentences did not communicate meaning, and the paper did not seem to be edited. Sentences were choppy and awkward, and phrasing did not seem to be natural.

However, in the next four essays the student seemed to have put extra effort to come up with better work. Many sentences were correctly constructed and sounded coherent even though they sometimes were doing their job in a routine fashion. The reader sometimes had to look for clues to interrelate ideas; yet, parts of the texts were expressive and variety was maintained (refer to Chart B for comparison).
Conventions

Unlike the work in essay 1, Student B showed reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions in essays 2 through 5- the latter being the best. In the first essay, a lot of corrections were necessary to make the text free of grammatical and spelling mistakes so that it could be read and understood, but the essays that followed demonstrated much better standards of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage. Paragraphing was attempted, and the paragraphs tended to be sound and reinforced the organizational structure. The grammar mistakes tended to be less serious, and they contributed to the clarity of the work (See Chart B for comparison).

Results for Student C

When the researcher analyzed Student C's essays subsequently, she found that the results reflected general weaknesses in his work. Throughout the process of the work Student C stayed on topic as he wrote his essays, but he rarely developed his ideas to demonstrate his skills in writing which remained almost elementary progressing only to a medium level in certain traits throughout the 5 essays (See Chart C for comparison).
Chart C: Analysis of Student C’s essays

**Ideas**

The ideas that student C presented focused on the main topic, yet they hardly stimulated memories or feelings. The analysis of the essays (see Chart C) enabled the researcher to notice slight changes at the level of the student’s work; however, nothing was unusual about the way he presented his topics. The major defect was that he did not engage experience in his writing, was not insightful in looking at the topic, and more importantly, he did not seem to personalize his work or show that he knew much about what he was writing.

It was evident that Student C showed progress in essays 3 through 5. The researcher could sense where the student was heading because he attempted at presenting the ideas and finding support for them, but that remained insignificant. He demonstrated difficulty in moving from general observations to specifics, and he hardly dealt with the topic beyond the obvious.
Organization

Student C's essays always had an introduction, a body, and a conclusion; yet, they lacked a real lead that strongly tied the content. The introduction lacked what created a sense of anticipation, and the conclusions were not able to tie up all the loose ends. Sequencing showed some logic; however, it needed more work to support the main ideas the student raised.

Although the pattern of organization developed across the 5 essays (see Chart C), the student never seemed to spend time to give examples and details that would bring life to his essays. The titles were missing in two of the essays, and those that were written were not inspirational. They were there only because they were requested. Finally, the reader felt like adding or modifying few ideas during the process of reading the essays.

Voice

The reading of Student C's essays showed that the tone of the student did not add interest to the topic. It was very mechanical, and the reader did not sense any interaction with the writer. Although there was slight change across the five essays (see Chart C), the reader could hardly identify with the student because his language was not compelling.

Even though Student C reflected some commitment to the third topic, he was not able to show the reader that (s)he should care. Only very few moments in the writing were delightful; nevertheless, they quickly faded away because they did not reflect sincerity or a deep perspective on the topic.
**Word choice**

As Chart C describes, Student C did not make effort to care for details in his writing or select effective words that reflected his ideas. The use of advanced or lively verbs, nouns, or adjectives was minimal, and he did not consider an audience in mind as he was writing. In the first essay only a limited meaning came from the words that were employed, and in the next four essays familiar words could hardly capture the imagination of the reader. Although the words looked refined in few places, the language appeared more like impromptu expressions without prior consideration.

**Sentence fluency**

Looking into the sentence fluency trait of Student C’s essays showed that the student had great problems in formulating sentences. His sentences rarely began differently, and at certain times the paper did not sound smooth to be read. His writing was almost consistent throughout three of the essays; a remarkable change was observed in the essay about his own country- essay3- and the one addressed to a different audience. His score on those two essays rose to 3 (See Chart C for comparison).

Except for essay 3, connectives other than 'and' and 'but' were rarely observed in the 5 essays; this weakened the structure of sentences in the student’s writing. Many parts of the texts were stiff and choppy, and the reader had to hunt for clues to recognize how sentences were interrelated.
Conventions

In comparison to other traits, Student C had problems in conventions; however, that trait was quite manageable in the five essays. Paragraphing was attempted, and most words were capitalized correctly. Problems with grammar or usage were not serious enough to distort meaning and moderate editing was required to free the essays from few scattered mistakes that could have been avoided. Spelling mistakes throughout the 5 essays were observed, but the problem was not drastic as it was for the other traits. Nevertheless, the final essay contained errors that reflected ignorance of basic rules in language use, and these errors affected the meaning of the work in general (See Chart C for comparison).

Results for the Questionnaire

Another instrument that the researcher used to compare the results of reading-writing activities on students’ skills acquisition with all the variables it entails was the questionnaire (See Appendix D) which was addressed to the whole class. 46 students out of 49 in the two grade 11 sections responded to the semi-structured questionnaire that meant to investigate students’ level of involvement in the reading-writing activities, the effect of strategy training on them, their level of motivation during the activities, the effect of feedback on their work, and finally the effect of the audience on the way they wrote.

The researcher assigned numerical variables for each of the responses to the five variables of: involvement, strategy training, motivation, feedback, and effect of audience, and then she processed the data. The numerical variables ranged on a Likert scale from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree. Later on, the
researcher examined the results through looking at the mean and standard deviation for each variable.

**Students' Involvement in Activities**

The first variable which intended to examine the students' involvement in the reading-writing activities contained 8 statements that reflected the students' a) focus on the reading text if they were not involved in an activity, b) if writing enhanced their recall of the text, c) if they usually made use of what they read, d) if they felt reading was only an obligatory task, e) if reading affected their writing style, f) if reading-writing activities enhanced their understanding of the text, g) if reading-writing activities enabled them to read with more focus, and finally h) whether reading developed their ideas for writing. The results were summed up in tables 1-a and 1-b below.

![Involvement](image)

**Table 1-a:** Percentages of students’ involvement in activities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>valid</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>I don't Know</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1-b: Results in figures of students’ involvement in activities

Statements 1, 2, 6, and 7 reflected students’ direct involvement in reading-writing activities. Statements 3 and 4 reflected how much they appreciated reading and made use of the content they read, and statements 5 and 8 checked the direct effect of reading on their writing.

For the first statement, the statistics showed that only one student did not respond to the statement whereas 28.3% of the students disagreed, 15.2% were not certain about their response, 41.3% agreed and 13% strongly agreed that they would not read the text thoroughly if it were not related to an activity. As for the second statement, only 4.3% strongly disagreed, 8.7% disagreed, 17.4% were not sure, whereas 45.7% agreed, and 23.9% strongly agreed that writing activities enhanced their recall of the text. Concerning the sixth statement, the majority of 54.3% agreed seconded by 26.1% who strongly agreed. The percentage of each of those who did not know or disagreed was 8.7% each, and only 2.2% strongly disagreed to the statement. Finally, for the seventh statement, one student did not respond and none of them had “strongly disagree” as an option. 28.3% were not sure of the answer in comparison to 39.1% who agreed, 17.4% strongly agreed and only 13% disagreed.

For statement 3 the difference ranged between 32.6% who disagreed to 26.1% who agreed, whereas 19.6% were not sure of their responses, 13% strongly disagreed and only 8.7% strongly agreed. The paradox was in the responses to the
fourth statement where the percentage of 28.3% was equal among those who agreed or disagreed to the statement. One student did not respond to the statement, 10.9% were not sure, and 8.7% strongly disagreed in comparison to 21.7% who strongly agreed.

Concerning the effect of reading on students’ writing style- statement 5, 60.9% of the students agreed to the statement and none of them said that they strongly disagreed. 17.4% were not sure of their responses, whereas 13% strongly agreed and only 8.7% disagreed. As for statement 8, the highest percentage 47.8% was for those who agreed followed by 32.6% for those who strongly agreed. The lowest, 2.2% was for strong disagreement followed by 6.5% for disagreement and only 10.9% were not sure of what to say.

*Effect of Strategy Training*

In the second variable- strategy training- each of the five questions was intended to examine an effect of the variable on students’ skills acquisition. The researcher intended to find out whether strategy training affected in the sense of recognizing details, text structure and organizational patterns, thinking beyond the text limits, realizing techniques used by writers, and relating texts to real life. The ultimate aim was to study the effect of this type of training on students’ own writing. Tables 2-a and 2-b display a summary of the results.

The first statement under this variable focused on the recognition of details. 54.3% of the students agreed, and 13% strongly agreed that the activities helped them in that sense. 17.4% gave neutral responses whereas 10.9% disagreed and only 4.3% strongly agreed to the statement.
For the second statement, the majority of 45.7% also agreed that the activities made them look at the text from a different perspective. The 13% who strongly agreed to it were equal to the percentage of those who disagreed. 23.9% were not sure about their responses and only 4.3% showed strong disagreement.

![Strategy Training Graph](image)

Table 2-a: Percentages for effect of strategy training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Training</th>
<th>valid</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>I don't Know</th>
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<td>2.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2-b: Results in figures for effect of strategy training

The case with the third statement was almost similar; 47.8% agreed that the activities enabled them to recognize the text structure and the organizational patterns and 8.7% strongly agreed to that. A great percentage of 30.4% had a neutral answer whereas only one student strongly disagreed and 10.9% only expressed disagreement.
Results for statement four that focused on the specific techniques a writer uses in writing a text showed that one student did not respond whereas 60.9% agreed and 6.5% strongly agreed to the statement. 17.45% disagreed and 13% were neutral.

The last statement that reflected the connection students made between a text and real life showed the greater percentages to agreement 47.8% and strong agreement 32.6%. Only one student strongly disagreed and 2 disagreed whereas 13% were neutral about the response.

**Effect of Motivation**

The third set of five statements dealt with the students' level of motivation (See tables 3-a and 3-b for results). The first statement focused on whether students enjoyed the activities, and the results were 45.7% for agreement and 26.1% for strong agreement. The 8.7% who strongly disagreed were equal in percentage to those who disagreed, and 10.9% had a neutral response.

The second statement focused on the procedures that led to students' involvement in activities and students' responses were quite similar to the previously described results in that 47.8% agreed and 15.2% strongly agreed. None of the students expressed strong disagreement but 17.4% expressed disagreement and 19.6% remained neutral.

The third statement examined the effect of peer work on students' motivation. The results revealed that 54.3% agreed that peer work positively affected their level of motivation and 30.4% strongly agreed to that. The 4.3% of those who disagreed equaled those who expressed strong disagreement and 6.5% were not sure about the response.
Table 3-a: Percentages for effect on motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>valid</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>I don't Know</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3-b: Results in figures for effect on motivation

Statement four of the set examined the level of challenge reading-writing activities laid on students and the results of 34.8% were equally distributed between agreement and strong agreement whereas only one student strongly disagreed, 8.7% disagreed, and 19.6% did not know how to decide.

The last statement in the set about motivation checked whether the students were neutral about the reading-writing activities. The results emphasized that 41.3% disagreed to the statement and 23.9% strongly disagreed to it. No one expressed strong agreement, but 21.7% expressed agreement and 13% were not decisive about the response.
Effect of Feedback

Set four which consisted of seven statements was concerned mainly with the effect of feedback on students’ writing and skills acquisition (See tables 4-a and 4-b for results). The first, third and fourth statements meant to examine students’ realization of their mistakes upon revision, receiving direct feedback, or referring to a scoring guide. The fifth, sixth, and seventh statements focused on the students’ preferred form of receiving feedback whether direct from the teacher, written, or from peers. The second statement examined whether writing a second draft improved the students’ work or not.

The results of the students’ responses showed that for the first statement the highest percentage of 54.3% was given for agreement and only 10.9% strongly agreed. On the other hand none of them strongly disagreed, but 19.6% disagreed and 15.2% said they did not know. The responses to the third statement about the teacher’s direct feedback were mostly positive and showed that 43.5% agreed and 29.3% strongly agreed to the statement. While no one showed strong disagreement, only 6.5% expressed disagreement and 26.1% remained neutral. On the other hand, the students were not at ease with the scoring guide and the results revealed equal percentages of 28.3% for those who disagreed and those who did not know the exact response. 13% strongly disagreed whereas those who agreed were 19.6% and those who strongly agreed were only 10.9%.
The next set of statements about the preferable form of feedback to students resulted in the following: For the fifth statement which said that written comments were enough to improve students’ written work 41.3% disagreed, 6.5% strongly disagreed, 30.4% agreed, 6.5% strongly agreed, and 15.2% remained neutral. The results of the sixth statement which focused on the teacher’s oral feedback were quite different. 41.3% agreed and 39.1% strongly agreed to the statement. Only 10.9% disagreed and the 4.3% who strongly disagreed equaled to the percentage of those who did not know. As for the seventh statement about the effect of peer revision on the improvement of students’ writing 41.3% agreed to the statement and
10.9% strongly agreed to it. 28.3% said they did not know and 15.2% disagreed whereas 4.3% strongly disagreed.

The last category in the set about feedback was the second statement that checked whether the rewriting of the first draft improved the students’ work and the responses were 47.8% for strong agreement and 26.1% for agreement. The 10.9% who disagreed were equal in percentage to those who did not know, and only 4.3% expressed strong disagreement.

**Effect of Audience**

The final set of five statements examined the effect of audience on students’ writing. The first two statements focused on the students’ acquaintance with the teacher’s responses whereas the next three statements examined the effect of a different audience (See tables 5-a and 5-b for results) on students’ quality of work.

The responses for the first statement which highlighted the fact that students get used to their teacher’s response to their work were 45.7% for those who did not know, 34.8% for agreement and 4.3% for strongly agreement; however, 13% disagreed and one student strongly disagreed. 47.8% of the students said they anticipated how the teacher would evaluate their essays in response to the second statement, and 4.3% also expressed strong agreement to that. Nevertheless 26.1% did not know and 19.6% disagreed while one student expressed strong disagreement.
The percentage of students who agreed that they focused more on the content when they were aware of a different audience mounted to 43.5% and those who strongly agreed reached 21.7%. Only 2 students did not know, 23.9% disagreed, and 6.5% strongly disagreed. When the possibility of more focus on grammar and spelling was raised, 28.3% agreed and 21.7% strongly agreed. However, 26.1% expressed disagreement, 13% strong disagreement, and 10.9% were neutral in this respect.

The final statement meant to investigate the students’ level of challenge students had when they wrote to a different audience, and the results were 39.1% for
agreement seconded by 28.3% for strong agreement. 13% did not agree added to 10.9% who strongly disagreed. Only 8.7% did not know what to answer.

Results for the Interview

The researcher intended to interview Student B, a member of the school magazine club, in order to explore with him (Seidman 1998) the effect of his experience of participating in an extra-curricular activity. The researcher aimed at exploring whether writing for the school magazine had an effect on his own writing skills as well as his motivation to improve himself as a writer. Another purpose was to investigate whether there was a relation between the in-class and out-of-class writing activities with the student’s readings. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to find out whether the feedback the student received from someone other than the teacher had a similar effect to that provided in class, and whether writing to a different audience affected the way he looked at the writing process.

Effect on Strategy Training

What student B emphasized in his answers to the researcher’s semi-structured questions was that he benefited from his involvement in the club at different levels. He said that the person in charge of the magazine helped him discover how to be selective about words used in magazine writing and emphasized the importance of summarizing ideas to have them as concise as possible. This made him avoid repetition in his writing, as he said. He asserted the fact that he had been guided to improve his expression of ideas and his decision concerning words to be used.
Effect on Motivation

Student B seemed highly motivated about his involvement in the club and said: "Now I have curiosity; I want to write and I want to know how to write, so I should read". He also added that he recognized the importance of reading and analyzing a text to know how to answer questions and learn how to write.

The Effect of Feedback

Student B considered feedback whether from the person in charge of the club or from peers as highly effective. It was obvious that the direct feedback from the club supervisor was beneficial since it trained him how to become economic and selective about ideas and choice of words.

As for peers, he said that they not only shared ideas but they also enabled him to evaluate his own writing against theirs. This gave him an incentive to improve his own writing.

Effect of Audience

Student B considered that writing to a variety of readers was a responsibility which would make him focus on his style in order to impress them. He highlighted the point that awareness of readers' needs was a must in order to reach them in a better way.

Overall Impression

Student B concluded that his involvement in the school magazine changed his focus from writing to gain a grade to caring about how to write. He asserted the
fact that improving his writing skills and his style in writing have become priorities to him.

Conclusion

The researcher used multiple methods in the case study to be able to thoroughly examine the effect of reading-writing activities on students' skills acquisition from different perspectives. She utilized both qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to strengthen the findings and the relationships recorded (Keeves, 1997).

Moreover, the researcher utilized three different instruments to validate the interrelationship between reading-writing activities and students' skills acquisition (Kaplan, 1997). She used Culham's (1995) scoring rubrics to analyze the three students' essays, the semi-structured questionnaire to investigate the effect of reading-writing activities on students' skills acquisition, and the semi-structured interview to allow one of the subjects to communicate the effect of his experience in the school magazine club on his skills acquisition. The findings that were interpreted through charts, tables, and explanations, would be analyzed by the researcher in the following chapter.
Chapter V

Analysis, Synthesis and Discussion
Summary of the Study

The researcher conducted a case study for a period of six months on three 11th grade students in the sociology and the economics section in a Lebanese secondary school. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of the reading-writing connection on students’ skills acquisition because she had noticed that there were flaws in secondary school students’ written communication skills—particularly in the essays which they produced (see Appendix A). The researcher reckoned that instructional settings where students read a variety of texts and examined the strategies and structures that writers employed in composing their work, would sharpen the students’ own thinking and writing skills which they needed for life (Carson, 2001; Schmoker, 2007).

To focus the study, the researcher raised a set of five questions in order to investigate whether reading comprehension activities improved secondary school students’ writing skills. She wanted to observe whether students were able to invest the strategies they learnt in reading comprehension in their writing process when they were provided with constructive feedback. Moreover, the researcher wanted to examine whether participating in a variety of activities—some of which were extracurricular—would affect students’ motivation and encourage them to perform better at writing tasks; and whether students’ awareness of a different audience would improve the quality of their writing.

The researcher experimented with the variables using multiple methods in order to validate her findings (Denzin, 1997; Keeves, 1997). She analyzed 5 samples of the students’ essays, surveyed the class through a questionnaire (see Appendix D), and interviewed the student who was a member in the school magazine club (see Appendix E for the transcript). The results which the researcher obtained enabled her
to form a clear consensus regarding the effect of the designed activities on three levels of students whom the researcher assumed were representative of almost all their peers in the class.

The students who had agreed to participate in the study were selected on the basis of the analysis of their first diagnostic essays which was done according to the scoring guide proposed by Culham (1995) for the 6+1 traits of writing. The analysis determined that one of the students—referred to as Student A—was above average, the second, Student B, was almost average level, while the third, Student C, was below average. Such scores were applicable to all different students in the class except for 3 or 4 other students whose scores ranged between 4 and 5 on the scoring guide and who demonstrated better competence than the rest of their peers, a feature which was common to all classes.

*Analysis of the First Research Question*

The first research question asked whether reading-writing activities fostered secondary school students’ understanding of the texts and improved their writing skills.

The potential for reading activities to improve students’ thinking skills along with their writing was explored in this question. Not surprisingly, the results were positive in proving the theories proposed by Blair, Rupley and Nichols (2007), Grabe (2003), and Schmoker (2007) among the many other supporters for the reading-writing connection. Models in reading provided students with a framework that started to leave its traces on their writing.
What the Essays Showed

Analysis of the three students' essays which mounted to 5 within the period of the study revealed that students started to demonstrate slow progress in specific areas around a month after the researcher began with the application of the reading-writing activities. Such expected results correlated with Kroll’s (2001) and Hinkel’s (2006) arguments which stated that improvement in writing needed quite a long period of time that might extend for years.

The varying level of progress which was noticed in the different traits of writing in the students’ samples directly started around a month after students were receiving the training on reading-writing connection. During that period, the students were gathering visual information from written texts and identifying word meanings (Hinkel, 2006) prior to producing a draft of an essay related to the theme under study.

The results which Student A, the above average representative of the class, showed (see Chart A p. 53) were the least to display a direct effect of reading on her writing concerning content. The analysis of the four essays that followed the first diagnostic sample reflected stability in the progress the student made throughout the period of experimentation. There was little progress at the level of ideas, organization, voice, and sentence fluency starting from the second essay. However, in the third essay there was improvement at the level of voice and word choice which could be due to the fact that that essay was “expressive” and “the student explored the subject with her own feelings about it” (Bizzell, 1986, p. 55).

Contrary to Student A’s work, the comparison of Student B’s first essay with the other four he produced reflected a marked difference in the student’s level of writing. Chart B (p. 57) reflected direct improvement in the student’s writing starting
with the second essay which exhibited greater progress at the level of ideas and organization due to the fact that the student seemed influenced by the reading material he was working on in class (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996). The ideas he used in his second essay demonstrated the fact that Student B seemed to have ownership of what he had learned (Beers & Howell, 2005).

The result of the analysis of Student C's essays (see Chart C p. 61) confirmed the effectiveness of the use of reading-writing activities even though the level of the student never exceeded the score of 3 according to Culham’s (1995) guide. The student proved to be able to make better use of ideas in the second essay, and the progress at the level of ideas continued throughout the 4 essays even though a thorough reading of his work did not reveal a direct influence from the content of the readings he had worked on. The essays showed that Student C was able to construct meaning for himself in the context of what he already knew, and that he was making use of the declarative knowledge of form that he gained from the readings which enabled him to identify the relationship between parts of the text (Hillocks, 1986).

This synthesis was supported by the progress the student showed in the trait of organization in the four subsequent essays, the better clarity in voice in the final three essays, and finally in the improvement in sentence fluency in the third and fourth essays. Such changes were proof that the use of literature models were significantly effective in the student’s case (Hillocks, 1986) and had worked their ways into his writing.

*What the Questionnaire Showed*

The first set of eight questions in the questionnaire that was addressed to all the students in the class targeted their involvement in the reading-writing activities in
order to explore the effects of such activities on the students’ writing. The statements checked whether the students would focus on the reading text if they were not involved in an activity; whether writing enhanced their recall of the text; whether they usually made use of what they read or whether they felt that reading was only an obligatory task; whether reading affected their writing style; whether reading-writing activities enhanced their understanding of the text and enabled them to read with more focus, and finally whether reading developed their ideas for writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1.0531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Inv08</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.0217</td>
<td>.9543</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Level of students’ involvement in reading-writing activities

Students’ responses to the eight statements as shown in Table 6 indicated that the means for statements 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were 3.7609, 3.7826, 3.6222 and 4.0217 respectively, which all rounded to become 4 relative to “agree”. On the other hand, the means to the responses to statements 1, 3 and 4 were 3.4000, 2.8478 and 3.2667 respectively which rounded to become 3 relative to “I don’t know”. This meant that whereas some students thought that reading-writing activities positively affected their writing, others were not sure of the effect of the activities on their work.

However, the standard deviations for the first two statements (1.0531, 1.0580 respectively) were highly dispersed, and the standard deviations for statements 3 and 4 (1.2105 and 1.3382 respectively) were even more highly dispersed. This meant that students did not have similar attitudes towards the activities and there seemed to be little or no correlation among their responses. A higher level of correlation appeared
in the response to statement 5 (.7864) which explicitly suggested for the students that reading-writing activities affected their writing style, and acceptable levels of correlation were clear in the students’ responses to statements 6, 7, and 8 (.9522, .9364 and .9453 respectively) which also explicitly targeted the effect of activities on students’ understanding of texts, their focus as they read, and the effect of the readings on their ideas for writing.

Based on these results, the researcher predicated that the students were positive about the importance of the link between reading and writing production (Rickards & Hawes, 2006) since a great number of them could estimate the value of reading-writing activities on their work. She concluded that students have developed the notion that there existed a direct link between reading and writing which was basic to the development of their writing (Savage, 1998), and that the reading material could become the vehicle that would influence their writing in the future.

*What the Interview Showed*

What was evident from the responses of Student B to the questions during the interview was his emphasis on the importance of reading in improving his writing skills. He seemed quite aware of the fact that reading would show him how to write because the way the summary and analysis were done in class demonstrated for the students the procedures to follow. Similarly, the emphasis on summary writing during the club activity correlated with his class work to sharpen his skills. Consequently, the student felt the need to empower himself with further readings to be able to write better.

The conclusion the student reached accorded with what Grabe (2003) advised that tasks which reflected real-world language use would improve students’
performance in various situations. It also agreed with Hinkel’s (2006) assumption that the practice of reading a wide variety of genres would become a useful springboard for focus on written register.

Based on the results obtained from the analyses of the three instruments— the essays, the questionnaire, and the interview, the researcher surmised that the reading-writing activities had a positive effect on the students’ performance in writing. This conclusion was strengthened by the fact that students became aware that reading activities that focused on text structure and strategies which writers employ would enhance their skills to produce improved academic writing (Hinkel, 2006).

Analysis of the Second Question

The second question enquired whether students were able to gain strategies when they worked on reading-writing activities which they could apply in their own writing in order to improve the quality of their work over time.

The results clarified that the assertions suggested by Blair, Rupley, and Nichols (2007) concerning the think-aloud strategy, along with the strategies proposed by Rickards and Hawes (2006) affected students’ writing to a great degree. However, the detailed analysis of the results confirmed that strategy training required extra time and effort to be maintained.

Examination of Essays

The direct examination of the three students’ essays throughout the period of the study showed the consistency in the improvement they made. This change was an indicator that the time factor was significant in the study, and that students gathered specific writing strategies from experiencing with written texts (Hinkel, 2006). The
students were able to focus on the main idea in the text and they were aware of what supportive details they should add to clarify it; in certain cases they tried to be selective about words and structures, and they knew the patterns of organization they should use in each type of writing they produced which was an indicator of the effect of strategy training on them (Chen, 2007).

The uniformity in the writing products which students showed (refer to Charts A p. 53, B p. 57, and C p.61), drove the researcher to conclude that over time, strategy training would have a more direct effect on students’ writing because it would enable them to use textual resources appropriately in their writing tasks (Grabe, 2003). This concurred with Chen (2007) who concluded in his research on the impact of strategy training on learning that strategy training resulted in improving learning techniques which were manifested in long-term changes in learners’ behavior and attitudes towards language learning rather than rapid improvements in language proficiency.

Examination of the Questionnaire

The next set of five questions in the questionnaire explicitly focused on the use of strategies in the reading-writing activities and their effect on the students’ comprehension of texts and on their writing.

The means of the students’ responses to statements 1, 4 and 5 were 3.6087, 3.5778 and 4.0453 respectively, which rounded to become 4 that was equivalent to “agree”. The means to the responses to statements 2 and 3 were 3.5000 each which equally rounded to become 4- equivalent to “agree”; however, the standard deviations for these two statements differed and indicated better significance. The standard deviation for statement 2 was 1.0274 which meant that the responses were
highly dispersed, whereas that for statement 3 was .8222 and it showed acceptable correlation among students’ responses.

Moreover, the standard deviations for the responses to the first and second statements (.9995 and 1.0274 respectively), showed that the responses were dispersed, too. The first sentence stated that the activities made the students notice specific details about the text they would not have noticed otherwise, and the second one stated that the reading-writing activities made them look at the text from a different perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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<td>.9179</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Effect of strategy training on students’ writing

The standard deviation for the fourth statement (.8657) showed the highest level of correlation among the five. The statement maintained the help of reading-writing activities in focusing on techniques the writers used, and students seemed positive about that.

The third sentence interrogated the extent to which reading-writing activities helped students recognize the structural and organizational pattern in the text, and the fifth statement checked whether the activities enabled them to realize the connection between the text and real life. The standard deviations for the responses were .8882 and .9179 respectively which reflected relatively acceptable levels of correlation.
Based on the results which the researcher reached concerning teaching students strategies which enabled them to make connections with and respond to texts (Gammill, 2006; Grabe, 2003), she concluded that although the students were relatively positive about the importance of the use of strategies in training them to better comprehend texts and improve their writing skills, they still needed further explicit training on the effectiveness of the use of strategies to develop their thinking and enable them to become strategic readers and writers.

Examination of Interview

The responses of Student B in the interview correlated to a great extent with the results obtained from the two other instruments, the analyses of essays and the questionnaire. When asked about the extent to which his participation in the club activities reflected on his work in school, Student B said that he got to know the importance of reading so he could analyze texts and be able to come up with efficient summaries. He maintained that the teacher’s work in class was the model he could follow which meant that learning to write was an appropriate aid to reading comprehension (Gammill, 2006; Grabe, 2003; Savage, 1998).

The results that the researcher reached, and that were supported by the body of existing literature on strategy training (Ferris and Hedgecock, 2005; Gammill, 2006; Grabe, 2003; Hinkel, 2006; Savage, 1998) confirmed that L2 writers needed strategy training for the purpose of becoming independent fluent writers. The use of strategies would become habitual over time and would lead not only to their improvement in language proficiency, but more importantly to changes in their learning processes (Chen, 2007).
Analysis of the Third Question

The third question investigated whether personalized constructive feedback affected students' quality of writing.

In this statement, the researcher encapsulated a distinct implication for the term “personalized constructive feedback”. Although Ferris (2003a, 2003b), and Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) spoke of the need for personalized feedback due to the fact that different students might require different types of feedback, the form of feedback they referred to in that case was mostly written notes at the end of the piece of writing.

In this study, the researcher combined written feedback with direct one-to-one conferencing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b) with the participants and gave further encouragement by selecting the best mark they took on the topic to go into her grading book. This was referred to as “constructive” feedback since students were provided with suggestions for improvement as Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) suggested, and at the same time an incentive to rewrite and improve their work.

Effect of Feedback on Essays

The students received consistent “personalized constructive feedback” on their essays because the researcher created an interpersonal link with the participants, and the comments that were given to them throughout the writing process were targeted to their needs (Ferris, 2003a, 2003b; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b; Leki, 2003). This served in the progress that started to be observed in the students’ essays.

For example, in her second and fourth essays, Student A seemed to have better control over the mechanics of writing especially that the feedback she received
on the first essay alerted her to the strengths and weaknesses in her writing (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1996).

Moreover, Student B reflected better control of voice in the final essay, and he was able to rectify the mechanics in his writing to a greater extent which supported what Ferris (2003b) confirmed that error correction helped students’ accuracy in revision over time.

A similar effect of feedback was observed in Student C’s essays. The “personalized constructive feedback” caused a change in the quality of his work in all the traits of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency. It was remarkable too, that both students B and C sought the researcher’s comments every time they worked on a writing activity because they were after improving their performance which directly affected their grades.

*Effect of Feedback in Questionnaire*

The fourth set of seven questions in the questionnaire surveyed the students on the effect of feedback on their writing. The statements focused on the effect of revising the essays and rewriting them; the effect of the teacher’s direct oral feedback, her written comments, or the combination of both; and finally the effect of peer feedback on their writing.

Table 8 reflected the means for the students’ different responses with their standard deviations. The means for the first, second, third and sixth statements were 3.5652, 4.0217, 3.8478 and 4.000 respectively which rounded to become 4-equivalent to “agree”. On the other hand the means for the responses to the fourth, fifth and seventh statements were 2.8696, 2.8913 and 3.3913 respectively which rounded to become 3 and were equivalent to the response “I don’t know”.
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<th>Mean</th>
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<td>3.3913</td>
<td>1.0215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Effect of feedback on students’ writing

However, the only response that showed high correlation among students according to the standard deviations for the responses was that for the third statement (.8684) which meant that students favored direct feedback from the teacher to any other form of feedback.

Moreover, the standard deviation for the response to the first statement was .9346 which meant that there was correlation among the students’ responses concerning the benefit of rewriting the essays even though it was not of a high level. The standard deviations for the rest of the responses were 1.2016, 1.2039, 1.1201, 1.1353 and 1.0215 for the second, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh statements respectively which showed that the standards of deviation for the students’ responses were dispersed and that students did not have similar attitudes towards rewriting the drafts, referring to a scoring guide, written feedback or the combination of both written and oral feedback, or feedback from peers.

The researcher concluded that the results the questionnaire reflected were supportive of the theories on the topic of feedback proposed by Ferris (2003a), Huimin (2006) and Hyland and Hyland (2006a) in that both teachers and students tended to be positive about face-to-face oral comments which supplemented the written feedback. They believe that these combined methods for feedback have proven effective to improve students’ work.
However, the value of peer feedback as discussed by Ferris (2003b), Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), Huimin (2006), and Hyland and Hyland (2006b) was not yet appreciated by students for they did not voice enthusiasm about the effectiveness of this type of feedback. This meant that peer feedback needed further implementation and instruction so students could become aware of what and how to place their comments.

Effect of Feedback in Interview

The responses of Student B to the questions during the interview manifested the positive effect of feedback on his work and attitude. Student B seemed to be highly appreciative of the gains he noticed from the different forms of feedback he received. He said that feedback enabled him to become aware of what to write and what to avoid in the reports he prepared. Moreover, he was supportive of peer feedback which confirmed what Ferris (2003b) theorized. He claimed that peer feedback helped him recognize the quality of his own writing in comparison to that of his peers.

The analysis of the findings on feedback confirmed the fact that when teachers communicated feedback, students tended to utilize suggestions to improve the quality of their essays (Alderman, 2004; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ferris, 2003a) and that students increased their effort to develop their skills and continued to perform well with hard work. This fact was also demonstrated in the fact that students did not only correct grammatical errors based on teacher’s suggestions, but they tried to better the content and ideas in their essays as well (Hyland & Hyland, 2006b).
Analysis of the Fourth Question

In the fourth question the researcher attempted to know whether the variety of in- and out-of-classroom activities affected students' level of motivation and consequently enhanced the quality of their performance.

Research on the importance of providing several dimensions for students to learn stemmed from the direct relationship between learning and application on real life situations. Orlando (2006) claimed that outside the classroom learning ought to be promoted and developed because it provided a variety of learning opportunities that motivated students.

How the Effect of Motivation was reflected in the Essays

The third essay which the students wrote had to do with personal feelings about the country they would choose to spend their life in. The three students happened to choose their mother country and wrote about it in an impressionistic style.

Student A showed better performance in the traits of voice and word choice and she was motivated to write in a highly sensitive way. Student B's work in general was progressing due to his being motivated by the type of feedback he received. Although he showed average work in the third essay, he reflected consistency in all 6 traits. The reason was that the interpersonal motivation the student was provided with through the quality of relationship with the teacher affected his intrinsic motivation and performance (Reeve & Jang, 2006). Likewise, Student C seemed motivated to improve in 5 of the 6 traits and remained stable in word choice due to the fact that his store of vocabulary needed more time to develop.
Such findings supported the schema theory that was elaborated on in the literature on the topic (Ferris and Hedgecock, 2005; Savage, 1998) because motivation drove the students to draw from their databases which were their experiences to produce their essays.

How the Effect of Motivation was reflected in the Questionnaire

The third set of statements in the questionnaire addressed the issue of motivation. They checked whether students enjoyed the reading-writing activities they did in the class, and whether they favored the way the activities were implemented. One statement focused on peer work and one focused on the effect of motivation on performance. The last statement investigated whether they would reflect indifference towards the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mot05</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.3261</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 9: Effect of activities on students' level of motivation

The means for the first four responses were 3.7174, 3.6087, 4.0217 and 3.9130 respectively which rounded to become 4 and was equivalent to the response "agree". The only neutral response "I don’t know" was for statement 5 with the mean of 2.3261. However, the standard deviations for the responses differed. Whereas the standard deviations for the last two statements were highly dispersed (1.0504 and 1.0761 respectively), the first statement was even more highly dispersed (1.2049). The standard deviations for the responses for the second and the third statements (.9540 and .9773 respectively) seemed to correlate to a certain extent.
The results which the researcher obtained showed that not all the students were motivated by the activities in the same manner. Alderman (2004) justified this result in her theory that even though both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could be present at the same time, their strength might vary from situation to situation. It would then be the teacher’s role to influence attention and persistence in students to enable them to acquire the knowledge needed.

How the Effect of Motivation was reflected in the Interview

In response to the question about his involvement in the school magazine activities, Student B was very positive. He explicitly stated that he liked it very much, and that he was motivated not only to write, but to read as well. He said, “Now I have curiosity. I want to write and I should know how to write, so I should read”. Student B added that his participation in the club activities also reflected positively on his work at school. This meant that he not only had extrinsic motivation, but he was driven by intrinsic motivation as well (Alderman, 2004; Dornyei, 2001).

The results which the researcher obtained about motivation supported the theories on the topic and asserted the fact that enjoyable learning experiences increased students’ level of motivation. Added to the experiences would be the “chemistry between students and teachers in the classroom” (Orlando, 2006) which appeared to be a significant incentive as well.

Analysis of the Fifth Question

The fifth question aimed at knowing whether students’ involvement in writing for a real audience other than their own teacher improved the quality of their writing.
Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, and Tower (2006) claimed that learning could not happen in abstract. They maintained that learning occurred best when the learning context matched well the functional context. For that purpose, the researcher varied the activities and tried to include what served a true communicative purpose. She decided that the parents and peers be a real audience for students to communicate with, and she experimented with that to study whether the change in audience would have an effect on students’ quality of writing.

Effect of the Audience on the Essays

The fourth essay the students wrote was meant to be read by a different audience-the parents. The three charts A p. 53, B p. 57, and C p. 61 were clear evidence that the students focused on some of the traits differently. Their awareness of addressing a different audience could have created excitement which led to an improvement in their work (Shosh and Zales, 2005).

Student A for example produced a minimal number of errors which meant that she focused on the trait of conventions. Improvement, too, was noticed in Student B’s fourth essay. The change was at the level of ideas and voice. The reason could be, in addition to what Shosh and Zales (2005) justified, that the student was motivated to address a real audience, and the writing was more meaningful to him (Kessler, 2005). On equal basis, the effect of the different audience made Student C care more for sentence fluency in addition to the other traits in the fourth essay he wrote.

These observations confirm what Myers (1986) theorized that students learn better not from studying but when they are put in real situations. Kessler (2005), too, encouraged teachers to make writing more authentic by encouraging students to
compose for delivery. She believed that in that way students would be motivated to
improve their writing, which was the case of the participants in the case study.

Effect of the Audience As Seen in the Questionnaire

The final set of five questions in the questionnaire surveyed students on the
effect of the audience on their work.

The first and the second statements meant to check whether the students
estimated the teacher's evaluation of their work in advance because that would affect
their performance. The last three questions examined the students' attitude towards
having to write for a different audience. As shown in Table 10, the means for their
responses to statements 1, 2 and 4 were 3.2608, 3.3261 and 3.1957 respectively
which rounded to become 3 equivalent to the response "I don't know"; whereas the
means for statements 3 and 5 were 3.5000 and 3.6087 respectively which rounded to
become 4 equivalent to the response "agree".

<table>
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<td>46</td>
<td>3.1957</td>
<td>1.3924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect05</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.6087</td>
<td>1.3246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Effect of audience on students' writing

The standard deviations however gave the researcher a clearer idea about the
students' attitudes towards their audience. Whereas the standard deviations for the
responses to the first two statements were to an extent correlated- .8282 and .9202
respectively, the responses to the final 3 statements were highly dispersed- 1.2605,
1.3924 and 1.3246 respectively. This meant that the students' attitudes differed
concerning the effect of a different audience, and not all of them would write better if someone else other than the teacher was to read their paper.

These findings do not quite correlate with the results obtained from the analysis of the essays and consequently do not support the literature on the topic which said that when students wrote for a real audience they would be provided with an incentive to write better (Bromley and Mannix, 2000).

Effect of the Audience As Seen in the Interview

Bromley and Mannix’s (2000) claim was asserted in Student B’s responses in the interview for he said “…it’s the best way you should know what the reader wants. … in which style I write and in which way … to attract the reader.” In response to another question Student B said that writing for the magazine changed his focus from writing to gain a grade to writing in order to learn how to write and improve his skills.

This was clear cut evidence that writing for the school magazine, or writing for delivery (Kessler, 2005) focused the student’s attention on style and served in improving his written production.

With such results obtained the researcher could conclude that students ought to be more prepared to write beyond the academic classroom (Grabe, 2003; Kessler, 2005) and that teachers ought to use tasks that reflected real-world language uses.

Discussion

The purpose that led the researcher to triangulate the methods in the study she conducted to prove the effect of reading-writing activities on students’ skills acquisition was to overcome any weaknesses or biases of one method and prove that
the results which she obtained from the three instruments that she used were validated (Denzin, 1997).

The researcher used the scoring guide proposed by Culham (1995) for the traits of writing to analyze 5 of the essays that the participants in the study wrote within six months— the period along which the study extended. She administered a questionnaire that tapped students’ perceptions and evaluation on the different variables that entailed the application of reading-writing activities in class and the effect of these activities on their skills development. Finally, she interviewed one of the participants who was a member of the school magazine club to explore whether the further practice in writing he did in the extra curricular activity correlated with the effects of the activities he was doing in class.

The researcher surmised that reading-writing activities fostered text comprehension and improved the students’ skills acquisition which was reflected in students writing. The data collected from the three instruments which the researcher used, and which were measured qualitatively as well as quantitatively with sharp focus (Kaplan, 1997), confirmed the influence of reading activities on students’ writing and their skills acquisition.

The results obtained supported some of the observations made in the existing body of literature. For instance, Ferris and Hedgecock (2005) claimed that the ESL instructor’s job was to facilitate students’ acquisition of comprehension, problem-solving, and production skills. For this purpose they commanded that teachers show language learners “that reading and writing can help them to acquire and display knowledge” (p. 52). This was the case applied by the researcher in the study and the results confirmed the implementation.
Savage (1998) asserted that both reading and writing are instructionally related in that teaching one skill involved teaching the other. This assertion complied with the basic hypothesis made by the researcher and which encompassed the work throughout the period of the study. Students received explicit instruction in reading strategies because the researcher assumed that it would affect their writing and their skills acquisition. The relationship between the content and process was emphasized. Students were thoroughly guided on what to read and how to read and write. Finally, students practiced reading and writing in meaningful contexts, and they had a variety of purposes as they accomplished the assigned tasks.

Moreover, Savage (1998) explained the importance of providing students with knowledge on the organizational patterns of texts. The explicit instruction which students received concerning text structures fulfilled that purpose and enabled students to improve the organizational trait in their writing. Students were able to use some of the text features not only in responding to analytical questions on the texts, but also in their own writings.

Furthermore, although the area of motivation belonged to the affective domain and was not easy to measure, its role and effect were emphasized in the study. The researcher set off the work considering that motivation was the “mediator between instructional practices and writing performance” (Lam & Law, 2007). She provided various challenging activities to facilitate reading comprehension, problem-solving, and production skills (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). Consequently, the students’ interest in learning was raised to an acceptable degree (Alderman, 2004; Dornyei, 2001; Lam & Law; 2007; Savage, 1998; Weinert, 1997).

The final two issues addressed in the study were those of feedback and the effect of the audience. The analysis of the findings were supportive of the use of
Culham's (1995) scoring guide in the process of reflecting on students’ essays and giving feedback (Ferris, 2003b; Schmoker, 2007). Ferris criticized error hunt while looking into students’ essays and claimed that excessive focus on errors was demoralizing for students. That was a reason to look into writing traits and comment on each one separately so students could focus on the trait they should improve.

Another support came from Schmoker (2007). He reported that the two schools whose students were high achievers on standardized tests in the United States were focusing on reading, arguing, and writing, and that they were using the revised edition of Culham’s (1995) guide that appeared in 2003 for treating students’ problems in writing.

The bottom line, the quality of the instruction students received was a factor that contributed to their learning and growth (Blair, Rupley & Nichols, 2007). Added to that was the variable of strategy training to enable them to infer, compare and contrast, make anticipations and predictions, evaluate and provide justifications for what they propose (Schmoker, 2007).

Personalized constructive feedback contributed to the students’ level of motivation and improved their performance in comprehending and writing because it addressed their direct needs in writing (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). Finally the scope of varied activities that were made as authentic as possible through the varying audience made the reading-writing connection a successful attempt. Even though the results may so far seem germinal, they are promising to empower students and affect their skills acquisition.
Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Summary of the Study

Competence in the communicative skills of reading and writing is a requirement for students to fulfill before they turn into college. Students who have problems in these basic skills “are placed at a disadvantage in almost every educational and real world setting” (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007, p. 437). Based on classroom observations in secondary classes in the Lebanese context, the researcher assumed that finding a treatment for the problem of writing that secondary school students demonstrated was an exigency.

For this reason, the researcher carried out a study during the academic year to explore the effect of reading-writing connection on students’ skills acquisition. The researcher experimented with a sample of three 11th grade Lebanese students, in the sociology and economics class in a secondary school in Lebanon, for a period of six months. Her purpose was to prove the effectiveness of linking reading to writing through challenging activities that addressed students’ higher-order thinking skills. Backed up with the body of literature on the topic, she presumed that development in the reading skills and strategies would ultimately lead to improved writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Heller, 1995; Miller, 1999; Krashen, 2004; Savage, 1998).

The researcher, who was the class teacher at the same time, prepared a set of reading-writing activities to serve her purpose (see Appendix C for samples). She selected a set of activities for each reading selection the students were expected to work on in the class. She also made sure that the activities prepared the students for a variety of writing types. Throughout every theme the students worked on, they went into the process of writing an essay which was finally to be assessed by the researcher (see Appendix A for sample essays).
In order to measure the effect of the reading-writing activities on students’ skills acquisition, the researcher selected three different instruments. She worked on Culham’s (1995) scoring rubric (see Appendix B) to analyze the three students’ essays. She administered a questionnaire (see Appendix D) for all students in the class to tap on their perspective on the work they were doing. She also interviewed one of the participants who was a member in the school magazine club to investigate the effect of an extracurricular activity on his writing.

The researcher planned to have the activities as authentic as possible to match students’ needs for life (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006). She focused on the effect of strategy training on students’ skills acquisition, and consequently, on their writing. With that assumption underlying the work, the researcher has adopted the belief that strategy training would prepare students to become autonomous learners (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005).

Moreover, the researcher considered what Weinert (1997) predicted about students’ learning habits and learning achievements. Weinert said that these are related to students’ cognitive abilities, knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivation. So the researcher provided a motivating environment during the process of the study to figure out how motivation was a factor that contributed to students’ growth. She also worked on personalized constructive feedback to address the students’ needs in order to have them improve their writing. Finally, the researcher experimented with the audience by making students write to a real audience other than their own teacher.
The Value of the Study

The results that the study yielded confirmed the theories that the literature on the topic of reading-writing connection presented. The three subjects who participated in the study, and who were a representative sample of the levels in their class ranging from above average to below average, started to show improvement during the process of learning how to produce more developed pieces of writing. They were encouraged to use problem-solving skills and thought processes, and they were implementing reading comprehension strategies in order to be able to improve their writing (Gammill, 2006).

During the study, students had open opportunities to argue, synthesize and justify their positions (Schmoker, 2007). They were also trained to present their arguments more logically by providing facts, examples, or supporting details. These oral activities which preceded the writing trained students on logical thinking and ordering of ideas.

Students showed more interest in activities that related to authentic situations. An example was demonstrated in their producing brochures that advertised a home for the elderly after they read a text on a topic related to the needs of those people. They also conducted interviews which they transcribed and reported to the school newsletter. They prepared speeches to address the United Nations on global issues, and they worked on plans to propose improvements for the educational system in the country. Although most of the material emerged from the texts they read, the researcher made good use of newspaper and magazine articles that discussed topics of concern to the students (Ryall, 2006).

Another major part of the innovations in the students' work was the focus on mini-projects. Students had to research articles related to the themes required in the
curriculum and present them to the class using posters or different forms of technology. Such presentations challenged students to improve their performance as they were practicing their skills.

In short, the multitude in reading and writing activities supported by the think-aloud strategy (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007) which the students worked on during the period of the study started to show their effect on students’ performance. Authenticity in the work (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006) was the key for motivation; added to that was the challenging environment in the classroom and the recognition of students’ efforts. Moreover, the personalized constructive feedback was the new factor that served to support the students’ learning, and the cooperation of some parents made the change in audience all possible.

Limitations

However, the study had its own limitations. The students had difficulty in accommodating with the idea of group work and accountability. They did not have prior training on sharing responsibility and contributing to each others’ growth before the implementation of the reading-writing activities in class.

Another limitation was in the tight schedule students had for the language in relation to the amount of subjects they have to attend to in school. They have the feeling that language should not be a priority, and consequently they do not read. This underdevelopment in reading has caused a delay in their critical thinking, and it is affecting the way they approach any reading selection.

Furthermore, students do not have the habit of applying strategic thinking in approaching a problem. This affects their ways of dealing with texts, and it needs to be nurtured and followed through since early childhood. They need to be able to
equate skills acquisition to real life, and it was abundantly clear that they lacked awareness in that aspect.

Finally, with the grading system which requires that students be continuously tested to have their grades go into the report cards, implementing the personalized constructive feedback was not that easy. Many of the activities such as the mini-research were not meant to be graded for the purpose of testing because the researcher was after training the students to work for the fun of learning. Moreover, the accomplishment of all the activities that entailed this type of work required extended time which conflicted with the testing schedules set by the school.

It is essential then to match the needs of the students while working on non-conventional learning methods to bring about a motivating environment into the classroom; otherwise, learning will remain for the purpose of improving performance rather than developing skills and acquiring strategies needed to fit the person into life.

Recommendations

The study has enabled the researcher to gain further insights into the teaching methods that underlie classroom practices. Through the development of activities to implement in the language classes, the researcher felt the need for changes in some of the conventional teaching modes that are usually applied in most schools even though the new national curriculum has called for a change to a student-centered approach to learning.

It is essential to practically meet students' needs in order to attract them to the habit of learning so they become autonomous lifelong learners. This is better be worked on than spoken about among teachers and educators. It is the practical
involvement of students in authentic settings that creates the desire in them to explore and start the process of skills acquisition. Hence, the set of recommendations the researcher has come up with can be classified into two main categories: a) those for secondary school teachers in particular as well as other school teachers in general, and b) those for further research.

**Recommendations for Teachers**

Due to the fact that there is an integral connection between the processes of learning to read and learning to write, students develop competence in both skills simultaneously, and the development in one area influences the development in the other (Savage, 1998). Through this link between reading and writing, teachers are able to help students make "the powerful connections between writing processes and products" (Fortenberry & Fowler, 2006, p. 372). It is pivotal then that writing teachers make students better "understand the whole process of working on a piece of writing, to give more time to a task, and to make the time spent more productive" (Bizzell, 1986, p. 52).

For this reason, the researcher highly recommends that teachers explicitly foster learning competencies and motivation (Weinert, 1997). Moreover, she recommends that teachers “define- and monitor- what students will learn, which texts they must read, and which scoring guides they should follow” (Schmoker, 2007, p. 65). In this way students are trained on how to make their own selection of texts and how to focus on specific traits when they write rather than get distracted with the grammatical and spelling mistakes that usually surface their written essay.

It also implies that teachers at the secondary school level make sure that writing assignments prepare the students for life as they sharpen their critical
thinking skills (Schmoker, 2007). So, the amount of written assignments is to be monitored to ensure the quality over the quantity in students' products. Consequently, writing will serve its purpose of contributing to the growth of a citizen who is able to work efficiently for the welfare of the society.

On the other hand, since reading is "an interactive process between variables among which are students' background knowledge, the context, the material itself, and the learning goals"(Blair, Rupley, & Nichols 2007, p. 437), reading instruction ought to be challenging and students' needs ought to be considered during the learning process. Teachers must demonstrate the reading-writing connection using a framework that shows students how and when to apply strategies in various contexts. Although such a demand is a must at the secondary school level, yet, teachers must start the implementation of strategy training and building at an early age to get the students into the habit of the required type of work.

Finally, it is recommended that classes be kept small so that the teacher knows the students and responds to the thinking they develop while they are writing individually; it is quite possible that teachers may not be able to apply personalized constructive feedback in large classes. Furthermore, the writing curriculum has to be structured to encourage recursive composing processes (Bizzell, 1986). This would also serve in the implementation of the personalized constructive feedback that the researcher recommends.

Recommendations for Further Research

Since the topic of reading and writing connection has clearly proven its effect on students' skills development, it is important to study this phenomenon at the level of young learners. Moreover, it is beneficial to examine the impact of the
grading systems schools apply on the students' growth in schools at various grade levels. What worries and leads to such inquiry is the fact that students are becoming more grade-oriented and they always try to improve performance rather than skills, an issue to be considered by educators if they truly believe that their role is to prepare students for a better world.
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Appendices
Appendix 1: Students' Sample essays

Student A: Diagnostic essay

*Changeable Destiny*

Many people believe that our life is planned out for us, and that we can't change our destiny. While others say that fate is alterable and that we can manipulate it. I believe that we can change our fate, and that not everything is planned out for us.

In my case, everyone used to tell me that I was doomed to be an introvert and a rejected person, but in the end, I proved them all wrong. As a child, I was always the shy, quiet and lonely kid. I was always left at my grandmother's house. I never had any siblings, so I grew up to be quiet and bashful and had low self-esteem. For instance, if I didn't understand a certain point in class, I would be too timid to ask. However, when I became my teenage years, I became more mature and open-minded.

My life took a total turn! I became more outgoing and I became more fun to go out with. I became a whole new different person. It means that no one is destined to be the same their entire life.

A person changes every second. He either becomes dumber, happier, sadder, taller, ... etc. Everything is changeable, even fate. One can choose to change whatever he wants in his life: his stature, success, fortune, personality, friends ... etc. Every person has his own destiny and fate, but we can always change it or work on changing it.
Student A: Essay 2

Friendship isn’t a word found in the dictionary. Friendship has a deep meaning that you can only find out by experience. Friendship consists of many bases such as sacrifice, sisterhood, respect, supporting each other, unconditional love, and loyalty. In my opinion loyalty, support, and sacrifice are the most important elements of friendship.

The first element of friendship is loyalty. Without loyalty, friends can’t build a friendship without it. Loyalty is keeping secrets and cherishing your partner. For instance, if friends gossip about each other, then they aren’t called friends.

The second element of friendship is support, to be there for your friend and to make them feel like they matter. A friend is supposed to be there for you, in your highs, and in your lows. Otherwise, he wouldn’t be a friend.

The third and final element of friendship is sacrifice. In order to be a friend, you have to sacrifice a lot of your time. I could be out with my friends on Saturday and my friend in Hawaii might call me on Sunday to come to her place. And I should be there for her, to help her get through her troubles. That shows the true meaning of a friend.

In conclusion, friendship, like everything else, has building blocks, and important elements that without, it wouldn’t exist at all. Friends are the people who will stand with you throughout our lifetime.
My Beloved Lebanon

There are hundreds of countries in the world, thousands of capitals and states, and millions of tiny villages and provinces. However, one can only feel happy and joyful in one country. Only one village or capital will be missed when left behind. The country I always long to and miss terribly when I am away is Lebanon. I love this country because of its freedom, diversity, and its beauty.

Lebanon is a Democratic Republic, and this means that you are free to do whatever you want, but with the law protecting your and protecting others' rights. In Lebanon, you can say whatever you want on TV shows, newspapers, magazines, people are very outspoken and blunt. However, you can do whatever you want to, but there's still a code of respect because you cannot go out and say, 'I have the right to do this.'

In addition, Lebanon was never divided according to religions, and sects, and everyone lived perfectly well with the other. Even though Lebanon is divided according to religions, politically, the Lebanese are constantly working together, all people go to work together, buy things together, eat, and the Lebanese always work hard and bury their pasts. When the country experienced an instance in the past where the people who were in the danger zones were killed by others to live with them, the Lebanese teachers, hotels, and empty houses were reopened in order to provide shelter for those people.
Johor is a very beautiful country. You can go to the beach in the day and then go to the mountains at night to enjoy the cool breeze. Being in a hot weather, the upland areas of Johor have all kinds of activities to do. There are restaurants and hotels that cater to the needs of the visitors. The mountains are covered with greenery and flowers, making it a very refreshing location. Every village has its own traditions, which I find really interesting. There are so many reasons that make Johor a country that I would love to spend my life in.

In conclusion, even though Johor has many differences and interesting places, it makes it worth living here. These three reasons aren't the only ones that make Johor so special. There are a million other reasons to why I love this country.
very good
courageous
as well
good
examples.

On the other hand, while some people may think
about failure, others just give up. Some people
consider it as a way to "safeguard" their self-esteem
and avoid facing the possibility of failure. However,
the real key to success is the willingness to face and
overcome challenges. Education is the process in which new learners
experience failure and find ways to overcome it. This process is
essential for personal growth and development. Failure is not
something to be feared, but rather something to be
embraced, as it can teach valuable lessons.

To write effective essays, it is important to
understand the audience and tailor the content
accordingly. The essay should be clear, concise,
and well-organized. It is also important to use
appropriate language and tone, taking into account
the reader's perspective. The fist person point of
view can help the audience relate to the
experience, making it more personal and
engaging.
Final exam essay

In conclusion, education is learned by failure. One always learns from life's mistakes, however, even though some people give up, they still learn from their failures.

Overall, your essay was well-written and it portrayed good arguments. Some of your examples were also strong. However, you should take into consideration that the conclusion is the last part of your essay that the reader will read. Therefore, it must be effective in order to leave a good impression. Yet, overall your essay was very interesting.
An essay on experience may affect one's behavior.

An ancient saying, "Nature affects one's character and behavior," holds true even in my opinion. There is a root difference between nature and nurture. In one's genetic inheritance, traits are qualities and traits are not found in one's genetic traits. On the other hand, nurture is one's daily life experiences.

I disagree with the saying. I believe that one's behavior is determined, but life experience builds one's personality and behavior.

An essay on experience may affect one's behavior drastically, not specifically so. It is known that one's behavior is altered or modified by childhood events or trajectories. For instance, child abuse and violence can cause low self-esteem. This implies that this person cannot have a positive or normal life. That is why children who have been abused against the laws in most countries. On the other hand, pampering and spoiling children would make them spoiled. That is why children should be corrected. Harsh failure can make one more persevering and determined to achieve. One always learns from our mistakes, and strives for success. I strongly believe that experience and failure build character.

In conclusion, life experience helps in making one wiser. Harsh experience alters one's personality and behavior for the better. Therefore, we should always benefit from our experiences.
C. Writing: Is human actions predetermined?

Many people have a blind belief in pure fate that governs a person's life. Human actions are not predetermined 100%. Are human actions all predetermined?

Human being is a creature that god created. Human actions are predetermined, but not all his actions. Our actions are some chose and the other are predetermined. If all human actions are predetermined, then god won't judge us. God will judge all people, so human are not predetermined purely. Some times you have the right to choose between a lot of things.

ex: human can choose if he wants to study medicine or to study economics. This example is very simple. Can we live in our life. In our daily life we have the opportunity to choose our daily life path.

Human is half-preordained and half-well chosen. Human can control his own life freely without any disturbance. Human actions are not predetermined for us and I don't believe this say.
Friends form a team!

There are two ways that people can deal with friendship. Friendship is a treasure and curse in the same time. A treasure for people who value it, and a curse for others who take friendship to fulfill certain needs.

Friends who believe that friendship is a treasure can enjoy having friends. This kind of people can form a strong team. This team will be able to face any of life’s ordeals. Problems would push this team to solve problems one-handed. This will strengthen their friendship among each other. All of the above characteristics will lead to one and important word, trust. Friendship means trust.

Friends who take friendship to fulfill certain needs are a curse. This kind of friendship appears for a certain need, so after this need is done, the friendship won’t be affective. This friendship ends after a while. This person will keep on changing his friends with respect to his needs. This person won’t be stable. This person at last won’t be trusted by people.
Once there were two friends that were going through a trip. They had a fight while they were walking into the desert. One of the friends hit the other in the face. The one who had been hit was hurt; he wrote down in the sand, "Today my best friend hit me in the face."

They continued their way moving into the desert. The one had been hit got caught in the mud and was about to drown, but the friend saved him. After he had been saved, he wrote down on a stone, "Today my best friend saved my life." The friend who saved him asked him:

"After I hit you again write in the sand and now you are writing on stone, why?"

The friend answered, "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand so that the wind can forgive us by blowing it away, but when someone does something nice for us, we should engrave it in stone, where no wind can ever blow it away."

My advice to all people who like to have honest friendship is to forgive. In order to protect your friendship you should follow the common saying that says: "Learn to write down your pain in sand and to engrave the good experiences in stone."
THE DESTROYED HEAVEN!!

It was really easy to choose when I was asked which country you like to spend your life in, the answer would be Lebanon of course without any hesitation. Lebanon is a unique country because it contains 17sects living together. Lebanon is also a nation for a lot of cultures and nationalities and it contains varieties of traditions.

Even Lebanon is consisted of 17sects but it is characterized by its system. The Lebanese system is democratic. Our rules and obligations help people to express easily what they feel and what they want to say. Respecting others opinion is spread in our society. Freedom of the individuals is an important point that Lebanese people are characterized by. Lebanese rules and obligations are not practical up to ambition of educated and loyal people. They are still old regulations which do not suit the development of different societies of other countries. Unity is the most important character the Lebanese people must have, and this is result of the small geography of Lebanon and the little number of the Lebanese citizens. Lebanese citizens must respect all religions without interfering these things in the system. Lebanese People must evaluate others by their manners and there deeds and giving's to his country and not by religion whom do they belong to, because all Lebanese people in their different sects must belong to their country only. This will be the correct path into solving the Lebanese problem and into fixing Lebanon. This will lead to build the new Lebanon by the Lebanese people by themselves.

We must all work on these steps in order to improve our country and to help our presenters to present Lebanon in the best picture outside Lebanon. If every person works on this path to improve Lebanon at this moment we will find Lebanese people are helping Lebanon only and developing there country and improving it. This way will prevent any other country of pretending helping Lebanon while its working for her own benefit...
Failure is almost to succeed.

Failure in life is necessary for education to take place. In order for the human to succeed in life and in his education life specially she must face things and try to get over his problems.

John Hersey wrote, "Learning starts with failure; the first failure is the beginning of education." John Hersey used learning as a gate to explain for us that failure is necessary in our life in order to try again and again to succeed. In my opinion success can be an experience for a failing person who overwhelmed his life ordeals, or a successful person who does not need any of failure to has his own taste of success. These people are mature people who can experience life in a path full of success.

Education specially could be successful after a path of failure. My experience in Education is really full of failings and success. My success is revealed after a really hard path I walked through and after I failed a lot of times.
Ghandi is known to be one of the highest achievers who battled the British and never gave up in spite of his massive failure. Ghandi has experienced failure in a large number and it was the hardest. Losing people and soldiers in a battle is not easy and this was a big ordeal that Ghandi succeeded in his life.

I believe that John is right because only those who fail learn to achieve better goals.
Nature is genetic inheritance, while nurturing is one's life experience. Some people think that nature affects human character and behavior, but others say that nurture plays a big role in building human character. In my opinion, both (nature and nurture) take place in developing one's behavior.

Through the first three years of life, nature affects one's character and behavior. A lot of things are going to be inherited from his/her parents. With these inherited behaviors, we can notice that it comes from nature and it can not be grasped by life experience. For example, a child who is two years old can not take his/her own choice with something, and we also inherit our personality from our parents if he/she is calm or aggressive.

Nurture, which is life experience, is gained from the community and school. It plays a big role because we learn from our teachers and friends and the surroundings. When he/she meets and sees a lot of people, he/she will know how to treat and communicate with people. So these small factors will affect one's personality because he/she will get used to be treating people in that way.

Nature and nurture both play a big role to build one's behavior and character.
Student C: Essay 1

Writing

Person's Fate

Every person in life has a way of living his life, and what problems could he face. The fate in a person's life makes a big difference in the sequence of events of life.

Some people say that fate, our human actions are predetermined, and nothing to do in fate. And this life is drawn for us from before, not we will change our life or change our fate, but our fate will change our life.
On the other hand, other people say that we can control our fate. That we can change our life from bad to better by our actions and personality.

Fate isn't whole thing in life that makes our life harder. Good, but we can control fate by to better make a better life.
A friendship is a universal relation that links between people regardless of who or where they are. Every person needs a friend to tell his problem and to share his/her ideas in order to improve or to solve it.

Friendship is a treasure that is hard to find and easy to lose. It is sharing ideas, problems and secrets between two friends. Also, friendship doesn't built on selfishness and greed that undergoes...
Rights and problems and it will not be a true friendship between the friends. On the other hand, friendship may cause problems among the friends if there is no trust and true feeling. A friendship, although choosing friends is very hard and need time to find a true friend that can understand you more than anyone. I think that friendship is important in cultures to be in it some sharing and handling problems between each other.
I went to many countries and I saw many environments, places, and people. I saw how their life, way of life, and way of thinking varied and even the way of communicating with each other. Then after all, I chose that Lebanon is the most beautiful country in the world, with all its problems.

I chose Lebanon the country that I spend my life in. Maybe because it is my country and I adore it, and the other my country is facing many problems, but I choose it because all my relatives are here, and the person will not be happy or satisfied in another country. My country Lebanon mingle all the kinds of way of living as the freedom and individualism enjoy. Also Lebanon contains all the kinds of environment we can do any sport activity swimming, skiing at the day. On the other hand, Lebanon is a country of democracy, and we can express on the other our self with freedom and I see that my country Lebanon is so secure to live in stability with our neighbors and around our neighbors.

I chose it for my country Lebanon because it gains all the civilization to and all ways of living in the same country and in living with stability.
Learning starts with failure

During our life, every person faces ups and downs to achieve a certain goal or purpose. People may face many problems and failure during their life, and some of the smartest people that learn from their experience that they have to make their life better.

Failure is the worst thing in life that a person could face during his life. Some people can benefit from their failure to make it better and not to fall in the same mistake or problem another time.

On the other hand, people may succeed during their life in work or social life. That may let it and when a person succeeds consecutively, they may achieve their goals and targets that they wish to reach.
Every person could face failure, but a person must be determined and work harder to perform better and work to reach their goals. The success will come, but all it's need is determination, time and hard work.
Inheriting or Experiencing

In life, people gain certain traits and characteristics from their parents where as they gain other complex traits from the experiences they are exposed to. Different people have different opinions about whether human behavior is affected by nature or nurture.

People inherit some of their parents' traits and characteristics such as their looks. By meeting many people, help us to gain new experiences that affect our behavior.

There are also different opinions of whether nature affects one's personality or nurture. I know a person whose character changed due to a certain environment he was living in. On the other hand, other people usually inherit their traits from their parents. For example, people I know look or act like their parents.

I believe that people inherit their traits from their parents no matter how much people blend in the society they will still have their traits that they inherited from their parents.

### Scoring Guide: Ideas

5. This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anachor and details enrich the central theme.
   - A. The topic is narrow and manageable.
   - B. Relevant, quality details give the reader significant information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.
   - C. Reasonably accurate details are present to support the main ideas.
   - D. The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original.
   - E. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.
   - F. Insight—understanding of life and a knack for peeking out what is significant—in an indication of high-level performance, though not exceptional.

3. The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.
   - A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is heading.
   - B. Support is strong, but there isn't enough in developing the main point or story line.
   - C. Ideas are somewhat clean, though there may be details, personalization, or expansion of ideas.
   - D. The writer is developing an idea, but may be jumping from general observations to specifics.
   - E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
   - F. The writer generally stays on topic but does not develop a clear theme. The writer has not yet defined the topic beyond the obvious.

1. As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. Its content is weak, and the reader must make inferences based on subtle or missing details.
   - A. The writer is still in search of a topic or theme and is not sure what the main idea of the piece will be.
   - B. Information is fragmented, and the length is not adequate for development.
   - C. The idea in a very simple statement of the general topic or theme to the question with little or no elaboration or detail.
   - D. The writer has not begun to define the topic; it is a fragmented, personal statement.
   - E. Everything seems interrelated and everything that the reader has read at this point is important.
   - F. The text may be repetitious, or it may lack a sense of direction and development. Related details are with no discernible point.

### Scoring Guide: Organization

5. The organization enhances and strengthens the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.
   - A. An interesting introduction shown the reader in. A satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
   - B. Thoughtful sentences clearly show how ideas connect.
   - C. Details seem to fit where they're placed, sequencing is logical and effective.
   - D. Pacing is well controlled; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
   - E. The end (if repeated) is original and captures the central theme of the piece.
   - F. Organization flows so smoothly the reader hardly thinks about it, the choice of structure matches the purpose and audience.

3. The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without much confusion.
   - A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie up all loose ends.
   - B. Transitions usually work well, or other times, connections between ideas are hazy.
   - C. Sequencing shows some logic, but is not necessarily coherent. Sometimes, in fact, it is so predictable and familiar that the structure detracts from the content.
   - D. Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes loses the reader quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
   - E. A title (if repeated) is present, although it may be unoriginal or a restatement of the prompt or topic.
   - F. The organization sometimes suggests the main point or story line; at other times, the reader feels unsure of the importance of the elements.

1. Writing lacks a clear sense of direction and focus; ideas, details, or events seem unrelated or are slanted in some other fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure.
   - A. There is no real lead to support what follows, no real conclusion to wrap things up.
   - B. Connections between ideas are confusing or not even present.
   - C. Sequencing needs lots of logic and flow.
   - D. Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader expects to move with it, and vice versa.
   - E. No title (if requested) is present or, if present, does not match well with the content.
   - F. Problem with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the content or story line.
Scoring Guide: Voice

5. The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the piece with an awareness of and respect for the audience and the writing's purpose.

A. The tone of the writing adds interest to the message and is appropriate for the purpose and audience.

B. The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer, seeing the person behind the words.

C. The writer takes a risk by revealing who he or she is consistently throughout the piece.

D. Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by showing why the reader needs to know this and why he or she should care.

E. Narrative writing is honest, personal, and engaging and makes the reader think about and react to the writer's ideas and point of view.

3. The writer sounds sincere but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant, or even personable, but not compelling.

A. The writer seems aware of an audience but does not personalize messages in favor of obvious generalities.

B. The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing, yet safe manner.

C. Only one or two moments here and there intrigue, delight, or move the reader. These places are often strongly for a line or two, but quickly fade away.

D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic to build credibility.

E. Narrative writing is reasonably sincere, but doesn't reflect unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1. The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or detached from the topic and/or the audience.

A. The writer is not concerned with the audience. The writer's style is a complete mismatch for the intended reader, or the writing is so broad that little is accomplished beyond misunderstanding the topic.

B. The writer speaks in a kind of monologue that threats no potential high or low in the message.

C. The writing is hampered and "tied down."

D. The writing is lifeless or mechanical, depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or filled with jargon.

E. The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is present—ap, are, which, such.

Scoring Guide: Word Choice

5. Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.

A. Words are specific and accurate. It is easy to understand what the writer means.

B. Strong words and phrases often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.

C. Language and phrasing is natural, effective, and appropriate for the audience.

D. Lively verbs add energy while specific nouns and modifiers add depth.

E. Choices in language enhance the meaning and clarify understanding.

F. Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put the right word or phrase in just the right spot.

3. The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. It is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.

A. Words are adequate and correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.

B. Familiar words and phrases communicate but rarely capture the reader's imagination.

C. Attempts at colorful language show a willingness to stretch and grow, but sometimes reach beyond the audience (theme runt overload).

D. Despite a few successes, the writing is marked by passive verbs, everyday words, and mundane modifiers.

E. The words and phrases are functional with only one or two fine moments.

F. The words may be refined in a couple of places, but the language looks more like the first thing that popped into the writer's mind.

1. The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.

A. Words are so nonspecific and distancing that only a very limited meaning shines through.

B. Problems with language leave the reader wandering. Many of the words just don't work in this piece.

C. Audience has not been considered. Language is used incorrectly, making the message secondary to the words with the words.

D. Limited vocabulary and/or misuse of speech seriously impair understanding.

E. Words and phrases are so nonspecific and distancing that they detract from the meaning.

F. Inexpert or clunky nouns or verbs, flabby modifiers may distract the reader.
Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

1. The writer has in practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretation.
   A. Sentences are choppy, incoherent, out of context, or jumbled.
   B. Sentences are awkwardly constructed and hang together.
   C. Sentences are not all alike; some are similar in structure or expression.
   D. The reader has to hunt for ideas that show how sentences connect:
      whether through connecting words and phrases.
   E. The text does not invite expressive oral reading; it may be well written.

2. The text flows along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical.
   A. Although sentences may not seem initially control or natural, they get
      the job done in a routine fashion.
   B. Sentences are usually constructed correctly.
   C. Sentence beginnings are not alike; some variety is incorporated.
   D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for ideas that show how sentences connect:
      whether through connecting words and phrases.
   E. The text invites expressive oral reading; it may be well written, choppy, or poetic.

3. The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions.
   A. Spelling is usually correct, even on more difficult words.
   B. The punctuation is accurate, consistent, and guides the reader.
   C. There is a thorough understanding and consistent application of capitals
      and punctuation rules are present.
   D. Consistent and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
   E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.
   F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—most is workable.
   The piece is very close to being ready to publish.

4. The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g.,
   spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage, paragraphing) and uses
   conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be few.
   A. Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
   B. The punctuation is accurate, consistent, and guides the reader.
   C. There is a thorough understanding and consistent application of capitals
      and punctuation rules are present.
   D. Consistent and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
   E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.
   F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—and it works. The piece is very close to
      being ready to publish.

5. Improving writing skills:

Scoring Guide: Conventions

1. Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage:
   A. Spelling errors frequent, even on common words.
   B. Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.
   C. Capitalization is random, and only the writer shows awareness of correct use.
   D. Errors in grammatical usage are quite noticeable, frequent, and affect
      meaning.
   E. Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or too frequent (every sentence) and
      has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
   F. The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning.
      Extensive editing (removal of every line) would be required to polish
      the text for publication.
Scoring Guide: Presentation

5. The form and presentation of the text enhances the ability for the reader to understand and connect with the message. It is pleasing to the eye.
   A. Handwriting is readable, although there may be inconsistencies in letter shapes and forms, slant, and spacing that make some words or passages harder to read than others.
   B. Words and phrases are clear and distinct, with proper use of line breaks and word spacing.
   C. The use of white space on the page allows the intended audience to focus on the text and message without distractions. The formatting meets the purpose for writing.
   D. The use of a title, side headings, page numbering, bullet points, and evidence of correct use of a style sheet makes it easy for the reader to access the desired information and text.
   E. There is effective integration of text and illustrations, charts, graphs, maps, and tables. There is clear alignment between the text and visuals.

3. The writer's message is understandable in this format.
   A. Handwriting is readable, although there may be inconsistencies in letter shapes and forms, slant, and spacing that make some words or passages harder to read than others.
   B. Excessive use of fonts and font sizes is unsuccessful in some places, but begins to get less cluttered as others. The effort is not consistent throughout the text.
   C. White space may be present, but too much may be used, leading to inconsistent spacing. Although a different choice may make text more accessible.
   D. Although some numbers are correct (title, numbering, bullet, side bars), they are not used to their fullest potential as aids for the reader to access the greatest meaning from the text.
   E. An attempt is made to integrate visuals and the text, although the connection may be limited.

1. The reader receives a garbled message due to problems relating to the presentation of the text.
   A. Because the lines are irregularly shaped, formed incorrectly or incorrectly, and the spacing is unbalanced or not even present, it is very difficult to read and understand the text.
   B. The writer has gone wild with multiple fonts and font sizes. It is a major distraction to the reader.
   C. The spacing is random and confusing to the reader. There may be little or no white space on the page.
   D. Lack of numbers leaves the reader wondering how one section connects to another and what the text is organized in this manner on the page.
   E. The visuals do not support or further illustrate the ideas presented in the text. They may be misleading, irrelevant, or too complex to be understood.
Appendix C: Samples of Reading-Writing Activities

1) Activity to focus on making use of the parts of speech in a text:

Instructions: Select 5 basic nouns you believe are important in conveying the meaning in the text. Place them on the “Hand”, then compose a summary of the text making use of the selected words. Make sure that your summary does not exceed 5 sentences.

Variants: a) The teacher may provide the nouns the first time she gives the activity to make it easier on students to work out.

b) The nouns may be replaced with verbs, adjectives, or any type of phrases depending on the type of focus in the lesson.
2) Activity to relate prior knowledge to text under study before students start to draw conclusions from the text:

Instructions: Complete the segments of the circle as required. You may draw your own radii to write on, or you may write on semi-circular lines.

Another objective for this activity is to help students organize their thinking as they work on a text. This will aid them in organizing their own writing.
3) This activity is chosen from Miller (1999, p. 298). Students are supposed to follow the instructions on the chart to complete it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictions</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Personal Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What may happen in this material?</td>
<td>What have I learned from reading this material?</td>
<td>What don't I understand yet about this material?</td>
<td>What do I think about this material?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose behind this activity is to help students focus on learning strategies. They anticipate, evaluate their learning, and make justified judgments about conclusions they reach. The activity relates reading to speaking and writing in an attempt to develop the students' skills acquisition.
4) This activity is meant to train students on paraphrasing while they challenge their higher-order thinking (Adapted from Robb, 2003).

Instructions: Select a sentence/part from the text you are reading. Copy it on the Chart below; then complete the chart as instructed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines I select</th>
<th>My own paraphrase</th>
<th>What I think the writer means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) This activity is adapted from Miller (1999, p. 305). Its objective is to train students on creative thinking.

Instruction: Write your own cinquain (five-line poem) on the lines below. Refer to the topic you are studying about in literature to gain ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>two adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four words that convey a feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a single word that refers back to the first line</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6) This activity helps students in character analysis. At the same time it enables them to relate language experience to life experience as they draw conclusions about the characters they meet in literature. In this way, they will have more ownership of their own learning. The activity is adapted from Robb (2003).

Instructions: Select a character you felt you identified with in the reading selection. Write the character’s name in the triangle; then complete the chart as instructed:

```
  What the character said

Character

  What the character did

  What others said about him/her

  What I conclude
```
7) This activity also helps students in character analysis. At the same time it enables them to identify with the characters they meet in literature. In this way, they will again have more ownership of their own learning. The activity is adapted from Robb (2003).

Instructions: Select a character you liked/disliked in the story. On the chart below, list a set of his/her character traits, and support your choice of trait with evidence from the text. Then, on the other side of the chart, write how this character is similar or different from you. Provide life examples to support your ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character's traits</th>
<th>My own traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Sample of the Questionnaire

Grade Level: __________
The following questionnaire measures your attitude toward the work on reading and writing that has been going on so far in the English language class. You are expected to respond to the statements (1 through 30) as honestly as possible. Simply mark the response that best describes how you consider each of the statements.

**Involvement**

1) I do not read the text thoroughly if I do not have to work on an activity.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
2) Writing during or after I read makes me remember the text better.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
3) I usually read to enjoy literature, but I don’t make use of what I read when I write.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
4) I usually read because I have to (It is a requirement).
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
5) Reading texts affects my writing style a great deal.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
6) The reading-writing activities I work on with the lessons increase my understanding of the texts.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
7) The reading-writing activities make me read the text with more focus.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
8) I gain ideas for my writing when I read.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree

**Strategy training**

9) The reading-writing activities make me notice specific details about the text I would not recognize otherwise.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
10) The reading-writing activities make me look at the text from a different perspective.
    a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
11) The reading-writing activities enable me to better recognize the structure and organizational pattern in the text.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
12) The reading-writing activities help me focus on specific techniques the writer uses.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
13) The reading-writing activities enable me to realize the connection between the text and real life.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree

Motivation
14) I enjoy the reading-writing activities I work on in the class.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
15) The way we work on reading-writing activities makes me more involved in learning.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
16) The interaction among peers during the reading-writing activities makes the classroom more interesting.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
17) I am challenged to improve my performance when I am working on reading-writing activities.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
18) It’s all the same for me whether I am simply reading or working on a reading-writing activity.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree

Feedback
19) I realize my mistakes when I review my essay.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
20) My second draft in writing is always better because I rewrite to improve my work.
   a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
21) I realize my mistakes in writing when I receive direct feedback from the teacher.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
22) I realize my mistakes in writing when I refer to a scoring guide.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
23) The written comments I receive on my writing are enough to improve my work.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
24) I prefer to have oral feedback from the teacher along with written comments.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
25) I find peer revision of my written work effective to improve my writing.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree

**Effect of Audience**
26) I write the essay smoothly because I have got used to how the teacher responds to my work.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
27) I know in advance how the teacher is going to evaluate my writing.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
28) When I know that someone else is going to read my essay, I focus more on the content.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
29) I pay more attention to my spelling and grammar when I know that someone else other than the teacher is going to read my essay.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
30) It is challenging to write to an audience other than the teacher.
a- strongly agree  b- agree  c- I don’t know  d- disagree  e- strongly disagree
Appendix E: Question and Transcript of the Interview

a) Semi-structured questions for the interview:

1) What tasks other than writing articles do you work on for the school magazine club?
2) What happens when you write?
3) Who checks your work?
4) What type of feedback do you receive?
5) What was the effect of the feedback on your work?
6) Did you use the vocabulary that you learnt in the class in your writing for the magazine?
7) How did this practice reflect on your writing in class?
8) How much do you think you need to read in order to write for the magazine?
9) How did that benefit you? Can you just evaluate yourself?
10) How much do you like to get involved in the school magazine activities?
11) How did the activity motivate you?
12) Do students evaluate each others’ work? How?
13) How do you look at your writing now? Do you still care only for the grade, or there is more to care for?
b) Transcription of the interview

- Interviewer: My interview with you is for one purpose: we want to make sure I want to make sure that what the students are taking in the magazine, school magazine club is of efficiency, of importance to them to improve their written skills. So, you are a member of the school magazine club.

- Interviewee: yeah

- Interviewer: And you write for the magazine, or what are the other tasks that you do there?

- Interviewee: Uh, at first I was asked to write a text about a trip we went with the school, so I wrote it but she told me to summarize it later, so I summarized it and then after this we worked on the design because there's nobody to work on design.

- Interviewer: Ok, so mainly, what happened when you wrote?

- Interviewee: Uh, I was writing

- Interviewer: You were writing, and who checked your work?

- Interviewee: The teacher.

- Interviewer: The supervisor, the club supervisor. Ok. Did she correct for you? Did she give you feedback? How did she work?

- Interviewee: Eh, she gave me a feedback about what I should write, about my feelings, about what we did there, then she re-corrected it.

- Interviewer: Alright, and you felt that when she was retelling you... when she was giving you feedback, you felt that your work was improving or you still wrote in the same way?

- Interviewee: Yeah, she taught me how to write a text, uh how to, which things I should put in the text as the text about the trip for example. Yeah, she taught me, I knew how to write a text about a trip, what should I put and what should I not put, then should I summarize into five lines for example.

- Interviewer: And did you use the vocabulary that we usually take in the class or you just uh...
• Interviewee: Eh, I search about some vocabulary because it was so brief, I should only write five lines, so I searched about some vocabulary that we used in class, and I put them.

• Interviewer: Ok. She encouraged you to employ your vocabulary or it wasn’t of that importance to her?

• Interviewee: No she told me inno we should write it brief, don’t write a lot of lines. So I got it, inno I should use vocab much.

• Interviewer: You should be selective about your word choice

• Interviewee: Eh, yes.

• Interviewer: Ok. And how did this reflect on your writing in class?

• Interviewee: Class, like...

• Interviewer: Did it affect you in any way when you were writing in class or no, the magazine work was something and the writing in class was something else?

• Interviewee: It depends on the subject.

• Interviewer: Mmm. But in general, the techniques of writing. Did you start focusing on your word choice in class or no?

• Interviewee: Eh of course, I started to focus, and I knew how to summarize something. For example, like repetition, I repeat all time the same sentence. Eh I started to know what should I do...

• Interviewer: You started to avoid repetition. Ok. How much you think that you need to read in order to write for the magazine?

• Interviewee: Eh, I should read a lot. I should be, uh, knowing everything happening, I should read well and understand the subject I am doing, and uh, I am writing about.

• Interviewer: Ok...

• Interviewee: Without reading I can’t uh...

• Interviewer: Uh, you think that without reading you don’t know how to write.

• Interviewee: Even, even anybody, if anybody told me about the subject, I can’t uh, I can’t write as well as when I read a text.
- Interviewer: Ok, now, tell me about the feedback. You said she used to give you, the teacher gave you or the supervisor gave you feedback. What sort of feedback did she give you?
- Interviewee: Feedback, I told you, about should I write and what should I avoid in writing in such a magazine for example.
- Interviewer: She gave feedback about ideas or about your style?
- Interviewee: Ideas, eh ideas, and a little bit style, how should I write to attract readers
- Interviewer: Alright, and how did that benefit you? Can you just, evaluate yourself?
- Interviewee: The magazine I think is the ideal thing that people read, most of the time, it’s the best way you should know what the reader wants. So I knew some stuff about what should I write and which style and in which way I should express feelings to attract the reader.
- Interviewer: How much do you like to get involved in the school magazine activities?
- Interviewee: After this, I like it very much
- Interviewer: You are motivated
- Interviewee: yes, motivated.
- Interviewer: And it motivated you to write only or to read or to do what?
- Interviewee: Uh, in order to write I should read. It motivated me for everything.
- Interviewer: It motivated you to know how to write
- Interviewee: yes. I now have curiosity, I want to write and I want to know how to write, so I should read.
- Interviewer: Ok. Ok. How much did it reflect on your school, on your class work?
- Interviewee: Also. The same. Curiosity, I should read for example a story, I should know how you are analyzing, how you got this answer.
- Interviewer: Do students evaluate each other’s work?
- Interviewee: At the magazine?
- Interviewer: Yes
Interviewee: Uh, they give ideas only.
Interviewer: They give ideas.
Interviewee: Yes, like, you should write like this…
Interviewer: So they give you feedback.
Interviewee: Yes
Interviewer: What sort of feedback? Only at the level of ideas?
Interviewee: level of ideas, the style, also, everything. They share everything. We are sharing everything.
Interviewer: Ok, and your presence with a group of students who are going to write on the same maybe topic or for the same purpose, did that affect you in any way?
Interviewee: Inno she divided the work, every person should write about a certain topic. There are no two persons writing the same topic.
Interviewer: Alright, but you usually worked with each other, you sat with each other and you shared ideas.
Interviewee: eh of course, I see like, texts much better than, uh, than mine. Eh, I could evaluate myself better in that way, on the same subject.
Interviewer: Ok, and you feel that this sort of work motivated you to write better?
Interviewee: Yes.
Interviewer: Ok. Did you try to write better?
Interviewee: In this, the last time? Not so much
Interviewer: Why?
Interviewee: If the magazine continued, of course I would be able to improve myself and to write much more and I will be hearing some comments from people and students, so it will be a motive, but it was cancelled.
Interviewer: Ok, now regardless of its being stopped as an activity, did it affect your learning or you were only after proving that you were, that you could do something? Did it affect the way you learn in general, or no?
Interviewee: Of course…
• Interviewer: So you believe that when you participated in the school magazine club, you started to know how to work, regardless of the grade that you are after?

• Interviewee: Yes, yes, at first, the most thing I care about the grade only, now there is the style, then... Now there is everything...

• Interviewer: The skills.

• Interviewee: yes, yes.

• Interviewer: Thank you, good luck.
Appendix F: Sample Letter to Parents

From: Juheina Yakzan
English Language Teacher

Dear Madam / Sir

Date: April 27, 2007

As a teacher of the English language at the secondary school level, I am trying out a variety of techniques that help promote my students' competence in writing.

One of the ways I am experimenting with is changing the audience to find whether this will raise the students' responsibility as they write. This is why I am sending you a sample of my students' essays that have been accomplished in a 50-minute session in class.

I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this respect, and kindly ask you to read the samples and simply send your comments based on your own opinion on the following:

- Students' thinking level (relative to class and age)
- Level of language employed (use of advanced vocabulary)
- Order and development of ideas
- Accuracy of structure

As I look forward to observe the progress in the students' work, I remain grateful to you for your understanding and cooperation.

My sincere regards,

Juheina Yakzan
English Department