Developing Students’ Writing Skill in Context of Note-Taking: The Case of First Year Master Students in Applied Linguistics and ESP at Ouargla University

Publicly defended
On:
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Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

My parents

My brother and sisters

My husband and his family

My lovely daughter Manel

My friends
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank ALLAH who paved us the way for the accomplishment of this work.

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List of abbreviations

AL: Applied Linguistics

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

M1: First Year Master Students

N: Number of the Participants

WM: Working Memory
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General Introduction

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Background

The main concern of EFL teachers is developing students’ foreign language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Despite of the importance of the four skills, writing skill is viewed as a significant skill which students need to master in order to perform a wide range of academic tasks. For example, they may be asked to write an essay, a report, a review, an article, dissertation, or summarizing a book using their way of writing, etc.

Writing is considered as a multifunctional tool in higher education situations. Studies have proved that through writing that one’s success at university is measured (Coffin et al., 2003; Murray & Hughes, 2008; Gillett et al., 2009). Broadly, it teaches the student how to think critically and objectively while clearly conveying complex ideas in a well-structured, concise format. Additionally, it gives EFL students an opportunity to appropriately use language and to make use of literacy resources for producing written texts (Lillis, 2001). Thus, students will be able to meet the demands of professional situations in which they may be working.

Hinkel (2011) proved that writing skill is a means for communicating, learning, thinking, and organizing ideas. Specifically, EFL students use it as a medium in which they organize their ideas to communicate with others. Moreover, effective writing is crucial on every university student, since much of the assessment that goes on at university is based, not only on what information students present, but also on how that information is presented or organised, in writing. To confirm this view, the goal of writing skill is not to work towards proficiency in writing per se but rather to expand general linguistic fluency (Currie and Cray 2004).

The ability to write appropriately and effectively is one objective for FL learners. In spite of the many years devoted to develop this particular skill (Tribble, 1996), and though it is regarded as an essential skill, it is considered as the most difficult skill to be mastered (Manchon, 2009). Typically, these difficulties may be due to the lack of language system knowledge or the inability to use the knowledge of language system to create a coherent text. These difficulties do, partially, prevent foreign language students from communicating effectively through writing. However, though EFL students receive a good amount of instruction in writing skill, they are not
able to write appropriately and effectively for academic purposes, simply, because they
do not practise writing skill very much in their daily life.

Due to the importance of writing skill, several studies have been conducted as to
what can improve it. Since knowledge of language system is necessary but not
sufficient for effective writing, therefore, students must not be instructed what they
should and shouldn’t use when they are writing, but rather they must be instructed how
to practise writing until they can communicate smoothly by means of writing. To
confirm this view, the one way that can promote fluency in writing skill is by requiring
students to use what calls workaday writing such as note taking (Stephen Tchudi, 1986).
It involves writing down information from different sources such as lectures, lab, text
book, other people’s knowledge. More specifically, several scholars have begun to
study the effectiveness of note taking as workaday writing in developing EFL students’
writing.

Statement of the Problem

Writing is an important skill that university students need to master to perform
several academic tasks. For example, they may be asked to do research paper, to write a
review, an article, to summarize a book using their own words, etc. To write well
structured text, they need to apply what they have learned concerning the knowledge of
language system, including punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, etc; and the non-
linguistic knowledge by which they link the written text to a particular sociocultural
situation to be much more understood.

In writing, language competence is necessary, but not sufficient. EFL students
who are linguistically competent may still be unable to display their competence
because of inefficient composing processes. Efficient composing processes, writing can
be developed via instruction as well as practise (McLaughlin et al, 1983). Accordingly,
it have been suggested that EFL students can practice it through workaday writing such
as note taking. In fact, note taking can reinforce certain kinds of learning and help
students to develop their writing for academic purposes.

To what extent note-taking method may enhance First Year AL & ESP Master
students' writing performance?
Objectives of the Study

The study consists of three objectives:

1- To find out First Year Master AL & ESP students' attitudes towards note-taking method.
2- To examine the impact of note-taking on developing students' writing skill.
3- To reveal the impact of students' use and application of note-taking when performing writing.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1- What attitudes do First Year Master AL & ESP students' develop towards note-taking?
2- Do they use note-taking technique to develop their writing skill?
3- What are the effects of note-taking method on students' writing performance?

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is:

If note-taking technique is developed in classroom, students will improve their writing skill.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is threefold. First, making EFL students aware of the nature of the writing strategy, namely note taking that enables them to establish new received information in their mind. Besides, since one of the aims of this study is to investigate students' attitudes towards taking notes, it is hoped that it will reinforce EFL students to make use of this writing strategy in their daily life in a way to improve their writing skill for academic purpose. Finally, whatever can be the extent to which EFL students take notes, this strategy does develop their writing for academic purpose, so it is expected that this study will motivate EFL teachers to teach them intensively through a study skill module.
Methodology

This study is limited to First Year Master AL & ESP students at Ouargla University. The subjects were chosen because the academic studies they are undertaking require of them to do much writing in their specialty. Consequently, they are likely to use some strategies in their writing.

Although there are many methods of conducting research, we opted for a descriptive method. This is due to the nature of the problem. To collect data, we used a questionnaire. We opted for a questionnaire in order to survey as many participants as possible. Besides, a questionnaire requires of the participants less time, and of the researcher minimum expense of both money and effort. The data collected were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics. Finally conclusions were drawn and some suggestions made as well.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations that we cannot ignore. In fact, it was conducted at one university. It, therefore, cannot be generalized unless the same results are found by other researchers by means of the same research tools. Besides, not by any means we can pretend to have covered all the writing strategies that students use in their writing for academic purposes. We have dealt with only the main one.

Structure of the Study

This study contains for chapters: The first chapter – which comes after the general introduction, is devoted to giving an overview as to the nature of the writing skill that means definition of writing and its types of knowledge used in writing namely: linguistic and non linguistic knowledge, the importance of teaching writing and some difficulties that are faced by EFL writers. In the second chapter, we will define the writing strategy: note taking. Also, we are going to deal with the process involved in writing, reasons for taking notes, types, and some requirements to consider when taking notes. The third chapter is devoted to the methodology. It describes the research design along with the participants, and the collection of data. As well, it includes the interpretation of the collected data. The last chapter deals with the conclusion, and the recommendations.
Definition of Key Terms

**Writing** is the production of written words that result in a text but the text must be read and comprehended in order for communication to take place (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000).

**Note-Taking** is the process of writing down the information on paper received from listening; reading, observing or discussing resource.
Chapter one: Developing writing skill

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Introduction

The macro skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are very important in EFL learning. EFL learners seek to master those skills. Writing is of great importance in EFL learning. Usually, learners need to be effective writers in order to perform the academic tasks. For example, they may be asked to write an essay, an article, a review or a research paper. Hence, EFL teachers are trying to improve their learners' writing skill. And this is by looking for the right and appropriate strategies to teaching writing.

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the nature of writing. It does not however claim to review all what is about the writing skill. It rather tries to review some of its aspects, especially the ones which are of direct relevance to the nature of the topic under study in this dissertation. It is divided into five interrelated sections. The first section defines the skill of writing; section 2 deals with the process involved in writing; section 3 discusses the types of knowledge that writers need in a text production; section 4 presents the importance of writing; and the final section deals with some students’ difficulties while writing.

1. Definition of Writing

Writing is a fundamental skill that EFL learners need to learn. Researchers define the term writing differently.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, (2000) argued that “Writing is the production of the written words that result in a text but the text must be read and comprehended in order for communication to take place”(p.85). Ramelan (2000) takes the same view that writing is a means of communication. He argues that “writing can be used as a means of communication to convey massages by using written language or symbols” (p.41). Indeed, Writing is a medium of communication that represents language through the inscription of signs and symbols. With the exception of speaking, writing is the most popular and prevalent method of creating connections among people. As a means of building links between individuals and within communities, writing serves as the flexible foundation for almost every type of communications media. Print, video, audio, speech and interactive web media all begin with writing.

Massias (1828) argues that “writing or learning to write especially in a second language is not simply a matter of “writing things down”. It is one of the four basic skills that are very complex and difficult to learn”. (p.258). Moreover, Jim A.P (2010),
Writing Skill

explains that writing skill is complex and difficult to learn. For them, requiring mastery is not only grammatical patterns but also the rule of writing such as high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information and also choosing the appropriate vocabularies and sentence structure to create a style which is appropriate to subject matter. Hence, communicating effectively by means of writing is not as easy as it may seem. It is not, as some people may think, putting random words or sentences down on a piece of paper and sending them to someone who may be distant in time and place to work out what they are intended to mean. It is, as Byrne (1988) argues “organizing sequence of sentences into a text, into a coherent whole in a way which is as explicit as possible and complete in itself” (p.125).

According to Martínez-Flor, Usó -Juan and Solor (2006) writing is viewed as “an interactive, social and contextualized communication event” (p.139). The word “interactive” means it happens between two parts: the writer and the reader. By “contextualized” they mean that the writers write according to the context and the situation they are in.

Looking at all the definitions above-mentioned, we can come to the conclusion that writing is considered as an important tool of communication. It is not an easy skill to master; it needs a lot of time and energy. It does not involve only knowing about grammar, vocabulary and syntax, but it is an interactive, social and contextualized process.

2. Writing Process

Once you select a topic and complete enough research to commit yourself—at least tentatively—to your stance toward that topic, you are ready to begin writing. A successful writing is based on the way of writing or the methodology and this is what we call the writing process, this process requires different stages.

2.1. Pre-writing

Allis and Ann (2007) state that the prewriting stage is the first step in the writing process which requires generating ideas through listing, that is to say, the writer is going to choose a topic and write it at the top of the paper, then; s/he will make a list of words or phrases quickly.
2.2. Organising (outlining)

The second step in the writing process is organizing or outlining, that is to say, the writer will make an outline. Thus, for Savage and Mayer (2005), in this stage, the writer is going to organize her/ his ideas into an outline by deciding which one is important than the other, then, s/ he makes a list of ideas under each important element so that to plan her/ his ideas.

2.3. Drafting

Writing draft paper is based upon the writer's previous outline about the topic. In this stage, s/ he will write her/ his rough draft as quickly as possible without stopping or checking her/ his spelling, grammar, and punctuation. (Alice and Ann, 2007, p.16) Savage and Mayer (2005) asserted that through writing her/ his notes into a full sentence, the writer can expand her/ his outline into a draft.

2.4. Editing

After finishing writing the ideas down, the writer should check her/ his mistakes of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. (Savage and Mayer, 2005, p.160) Through following two main steps, the editing stage would be a successful one; the first one is to attack the big issues of content and organization, then work on smaller issues of grammar and punctuation. (Alice and Ann, 2007, p.18)

2.5. Publishing

The last stage in the writing process, then, is writing the final draft, that is to say, the writer is going to rewrite her/ his draft after the correction of all mistakes. The recursive writing process helps writers to produce stronger, more focused work because it highlights connections and allows for movement between research and the phases of writing. Writing doesn't have to be a one way path.

3. Types of Knowledge Used in Writing

Understanding what people mean by their writings is not an easy task. Readers are not to read a text empty-handed but are rather required to make use of a wide range of competences. There is a general consensus among researchers that such competence is of two types: linguistic and non-linguistic.

3.1. Linguistic Competence

Linguistic competence that people makes use of when writing a text is of different types. It comprises exclusively knowledge of the language system, i.e.,

3.2. Para-linguistic Competence

According to Anderson & Lynch (1988), Lynch (1996) and Buck (2001), the para-linguistic competence which writers use in order to reach a reasonable level of text production is also of different types: knowledge about the context in which the text is produced such as, text layout, graphic devices, syntactic devices, semantic devices and physical location in which the text appears. And schematic or background knowledge which is general knowledge about the world and how it works (socio-cultural and factual knowledge). Schematic knowledge covers a wide range of information and experience stored in memory and is different from one person to another.

From what is said above, the competence that writing requires is now known: linguistic and para-linguistic competence.

4. Importance of Writing

The writing skill is very important in English language learning. EFL learners feel that it is necessary to master it and they consider their success in acquiring the language is in being able to write. Sarosdy and Bencze (2006) argue that “Of all the four complex skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing), writing seems to be an important skill as people who know a language are referred to as “writers” of that language, as if writing includes all other kinds of knowing a language.”(p.57). Lazarton (2001) argues with Sarosdy and Bencze’s view and she said “The ability to write is synonymous with knowing that language since writing is a basic means of human communication” (p.103)

Through the writing skill, learners can express their ideas, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and so on. It is a skill by which students are judged. In addition, writing skill contributes in developing other skills. Furthermore, the writing skill helps the students in their academic and professional career, in that they may encounter writing tasks on a daily basis, especially informational or expository writing such as notes, grocery lists, work activity logs and forms, emails to family and co-workers, online service forms, and so on. The pervasiveness of writing in daily life underscores the need for learners and their instructors to focus on helping learners become flexible, confident writers. Also, students who are good writers of English, have a big chance to get jobs. That is why EFL learners consider the writing skill as an important skill to be mastered. In this
regard Goh and Burns (2012) say that “The mastery of writing skill in English is needed for many second language learners. Learners often evaluate their success in language, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their written language proficiency” (p.241).

Furthermore, through writing, learners can improve their communication skills since it provides a vehicle for expression and communication. No matter the age or grade level of students, diligent writing practice will boost both their skill and comfort level with revealing and relating their own thoughts and feelings. According to Emig (2001) the act of writing allows the writer to manipulate thought in unique ways because writing makes our thoughts visible and concrete and allows us to interact and modify them.

5. Writing Difficulties

Learning to write in foreign language is not easy for students. They face some difficulties, such as how to start writing, how to generate ideas, how to produce unified paragraphs, how to organize ideas logically, how to make grammatical sentences, how to beef up students' low motivation in learning English. According to Nurgiantoro (2001) there are some problems which are faced by students in learning writing. They are: Organizing ideas, lack of vocabulary, grammar accuracy.

From the problems above, we conclude that the students can learn writing easier if they can organize their idea, mastery of vocabulary, and also mastery of grammar.

In addition, Hymes (1972) remarks, competence does not only involve knowledge of grammar and lexis of a language, but also it involves knowledge of the aspects of the society in which language is used. Performance involves the ability to link the grammatical and lexical knowledge with the socio-cultural knowledge when communicating (Cited in Cook and Seidlholfer, 1995). From this, we can understand that students writing in FL are required to master, in addition to grammar and lexis, social aspects and that the problems that they may face are grammatically and socially related. It can be seen, then, that the problems that students writing in FL may encounter are related to the organization of sentences into a coherent whole, to the selection of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and sentence structure.
Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt to review the writing skill that seems simple in our everyday life, but in fact it is very complex. As a result, researchers define writing differently, partly due to its complexities and also due to the differing interests that people defining it show. Writing requires, however, a wide range of competences: linguistic and para-linguistic. Different writing contexts have also been categorized according to the purpose of the writer, academic and non-academic. Moreover, there are many difficulties that learners face when writing, difficulties ranging from ones that are related to knowledge of grammar and lexis of a language, or to knowledge of the aspects of the society in which language is used.
Chapter two: Note-taking as a Writing Method

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Introduction

The academic studies that learners are undertaking at university require of them to do much writing. Consequently, they are likely to use some writing strategies such as note-taking. Note-taking is considered as a part of the writing skill. It is of great importance in the learning process. Usually, learners take notes in order to gather data from different resources, to organize the ideas they are learning about, to revise their pieces of writing and expand their attention span. For this reason, teachers are trying to provide their learners with some strategies and techniques in order to improve their writing for academic purposes. In this chapter, we will try to provide a review of the literature relevant to note-taking and the requirements needed to comprehend this strategy. This chapter is divided into six interconnected sections. The first section defines the strategy of note-taking; section 2 presents the process involved in taking notes; section 3 discusses the reasons behind this strategy; section 4 deals with different contexts of note-taking; section 5 presents some requirements for better notes and the final section deals with the writing skill and note-taking strategy.

1. Definition of Note-Taking

Note-taking is a valuable skill to learners and an important part of the educational experience. The term note taking means different things to different researchers. James Hartley (1978) argues that “Note-taking is the practice of recording information captured from another source” (p.42). For him, taking notes is the act of gathering data from lectures or while reading any material. Note taking is an essential tool in many information-transmission situations. At the university level, which is the level we are interested in here, note taking allows students to gather information from lectures, books, or any other situation that they will later have to memorize or use in order to successfully complete their academic program.

According to Faber, Morris, & Lieberman (2000) “This facet of note taking, the encoding function, is the process by which a learner abstracts and assimilates material in order to make it personally understandable. When the material is integrated with prior knowledge and is internalized, encoding is said to have occurred”. (p.99). Indeed, note-taking does not mean copying down every single word the teacher says in class, but rather filtering out the essential information and relating it to previous knowledge so that it makes sense to the learner. In other words, if information can be related to
previous knowledge, then it will more likely be retained, or encoded. Then this new knowledge can be built upon, scaffolding a new construct of knowledge.

Peverly et al 2007; Stefanou, Hoffman & Vielee 2008) explain “Note-taking is, after all, an incredibly complex task that requires many cognitive resources” (p.147). From this we can say that taking notes is a complex process since participants who take notes do not only write words and ideas, they also have to think to be able to produce the words and ideas that they write. The combination of thinking and writing was expected to result in more effective processing of the information, which would make retrieval of the information more likely. However, the balance or tradeoffs between comprehension and production during note-taking make the process a dynamic one that changes from one moment to the next (Piolat et al., 2005). For example, a student in a lecture class may elect to reduce his cognitive “burden” during instruction and devote all resources to production, and simply writes everything that the instructor is saying without worrying about comprehension during class.

With all these definitions of note-taking, we may say that through taking notes, students can gather information from different contexts. Moreover, note-taking is considered as a complex process in which learners try to comprehend the material and write down the appropriate notes.

2. Note-taking Process

During the act of note-taking many mental processes occur simultaneously. Learners have to pay attention to the instructor, understand the material, identify what is important to write down in their notes, and coordinate the physical writing of their notes, all while usually under severe time pressure.

Note-taking is further complicated by the fact that people typically speak at a faster rate than which they are capable of writing, making it extremely difficult to remember what the instructor said and write the associated information down before the instructor moves on to the next topic. Cognitively, note-taking depends upon working memory (WM) – the memory stores responsible for both short-term storage (what learners are currently thinking about) and the mental transformation of information (manipulating and modifying what they are currently thinking about; Baddeley, 2000). In the context of note-taking, WM is used for both comprehension (attention and understanding of course content) and production (identifying important content and physically generating notes). Due to the limited capacity of WM, however, the balance or tradeoffs between
comprehension and production during note-taking make the process a dynamic one that changes from one moment to the next (Piolat et al., 2005). Students often struggle to find the balance between understanding and production during note-taking. One solution is to reduce the cognitive burden associated with production by using stenography, or shorthand, while note-taking. To some degree, learners do adopt a unique version of shorthand while note-taking, yet interestingly there is considerable variability in shorthand practices, even by the same note-taker and within the same set of notes (Piolat et al., 2005).

Note-taking affects language on three different levels. First and as already discussed, abbreviating practices like shorthand can sometimes be decipherable only by the author. Besides, syntax can be transformed on notes, with arrows and other symbols being used to represent relationships that would otherwise be too time-consuming to write out with normal syntax and language. Last, the physical format of notes may be vastly different relative to other texts. Importantly, learners do not have to organize their notes in a traditional text-based or linear fashion (i.e., for English writers, writing coherently from left to right on a page and then from top to bottom) if they think it helps to convey the meaning of the course content. Based on these qualities, the form with which notes can take is variable based on both the student’s WM limits and their transformation of language during note-taking. As students become more familiar in a course’s subject matter their shorthand and overall quality of notes may change, thus leading to variability within a given learners’ notes for a course as well.

3. Rationale of Note-Taking

While most students anticipate that they will have to take notes at university, not many students take the time to discover how to take effective notes. In fact, some students even try to avoid taking notes by using tape recorders or by sharing notes with other students. Initially, these strategies may seem like a good idea, but in an academic context note taking is as important as assignment writing in that learners are taking in information and then writing it back out again as a learning process (Rowntree, 1976). The following list provides a few reasons for note taking:

Rowntree (1976) argues that “Taking notes will help learners to extend their attention span” (p.112). When reading or listening, students’ mind may tend to wander off. They might be inclined to think about work, money, or relationships. It is quite easy for other aspects of life to pop into their head while they are listening to a lecture or
while they are reading. Kesselman-Turkel and Peterson take the same view, for them, taking notes helps students to keep focused on their subject area and to the task at hand.

According to Kesselman-Turkel and Peterson (1982) “Taking notes will help students to remember what they have heard or read” (p.33). We learn more effectively when we use multiple senses and multiple activities. By writing down notes, learners are paraphrasing the lecture or reading material into their own words and into a format that they are more likely to understand when they review the notes. And learners are more likely to remember what they have heard or read if they take an active part in their learning. Rather than being a passive listener or reader, note taking makes them active learners. The notes that they produce are their own work and are a visible reminder of the effort they have put into the course. This in itself can be a motivational factor for their study!

It may be tempting not to take notes and to just sit back and listen to an interesting lecture or to become engrossed in an interesting reading. The disadvantage of these strategies is that at the end of the lecture or reading you may only have a vague recollection of the important and sometimes assessable issues. The lecture will be over with no chance to revisit the material, or the reading may have to be re-read, which is time consuming and sometimes tedious. The taking of effective notes during the lecture or while you are reading is an important academic activity that helps you to concentrate, stimulates your ability to recall, and helps you to be organized.

Peper & Mayer (1978) clarify that taking notes can result in broader learning outcomes in addition to improving mastery within course content due to this generative processing and making connections between ideas' units, allowing students to apply their gained knowledge to novel contexts. Kiewra (1991) explains that “students who take notes score higher on both immediate and delayed tests of recall and synthesis than students who do not take notes” (p.78). Consequently, the more students record, the better they perform on exams.

4. Contexts of Note-taking

Note-taking is right at the heart of academic studies. Students will make notes when they attend lectures or while reading in order to support their writing of essays, reports, dissertations, and theses. To take notes is fundamental to these activities.
4.1. Lectures

Wallace (2004) clarifies that many learners attend lectures in order to get better notes which help them to reach highest level of comprehension. To take effective notes from lectures, it is important that students read and search about specific subject before attending class in order to get a general idea or to have background knowledge. In other words, the learners should think about title, outline and its connection with the rest of module.

When learners attend class, it is better to sit down in the front of the class in order to listen actively to the lecturer, discuss and write down the important ideas. So, when it seems to the learners that word is important, s/he writes it by using colors, highlights or underlines it. Also, using abbreviation and symbols can help the learners to write every important idea and get better understanding of lecture.

After reading before attending a class, turn-taking in class, it is useful to rewrite a clear summary of lecture by using linear or branching notes which assist the learners to organize their ideas in a good way. Also, comparison of note taking between learners make them remember and see themselves if they are missing something. Overall, all these points help the learners to remember what they receive from lecture.

4.2. Readings

Glendinning & Holnostrom (2004), state that “Taking notes is an important way of learning from a text and making it easy to revise our knowledge in the future” (p.67). For them, reading is a tool from which students can take notes. In addition, Fajardo (1999) said, “as a student you will find that there is always too much to read. It is important therefore that you can quickly select the most appropriate source for your needs. To do this, you must have a clear purpose for your reading and you must be able to predict which source will help you most to meet that purpose”. (p.25) i.e. the students should set a purpose in order to select the appropriate source that helps them to achieve their needs.

During the reading process, it is better that note-takers underline, circle, or highlight the key words and link the ideas with sub ideas by using arrows to show the relationship between them, use abbreviation and symbols, record the examples and their explanation in margin, ask and put question that they do not comprehend, then write
down all the important points in the form of summary to appreciate text in the easiest way.

After reading, the learners use their own system (method) of note taking to introduce the whole ideas of text, then compare and discuss with others.

5. Note-taking Techniques

There is no right or wrong way for students to take notes. They can develop their own style of note taking that is most effective for them. There are some requirements which assist the learner to take better notes.

First, attending class is considered as an effective factor to take efficient notes. So, the learners should attend class to achieve what they need to learn. Second, abbreviation and symbols play an important role. For this reason, the learners use them to save time and help them to receive huge number of information in a short time. Wallace (2004) clarifies that there are three types of abbreviation and symbols: field, symbols and abbreviation. Learners specialized in certain field or subject area will learn symbols and abbreviation as part of the study that field. For example, the learners of chemistry will know that C stands for carbon and Ca for calcium. Using these symbols and abbreviation assist learners to better take notes that can make studying more productive. Wallace (2007) proposes “Personal symbols and abbreviation used by individual learners, if you find yourself having to frequently note down a certain word phrase, it is sensible to find a quick way to represent it. For example, English literature learners listening to lecture on poet words worth might well use the initial letter W instead of writing out the poet’s name in full each time they have to refer to it” (p.222). Also, the learners should condense what they receive into brief and meaningful statement to understand the lecture. Third, the learners should use colours while taking notes because it helps them to remember without reading it again. Fourth, using group notes is useful to take better notes. The discussion with classmates make learners to be good note-taker so that the learners should form group to turn take good notes in order to gain the whole understanding of the lecture.

In order to take effective notes, note-takers have to attend lectures, use symbols and abbreviation, use colors and group notes in which they discuss their notes with others.
Note-Taking Strategy

6. Interrelationship between Writing and Note-Taking

Due to the importance of writing skill, several studies have been conducted as to what can improve it. Since knowledge of correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, diction, thesis statements, topic sentences and cohesive links within a paragraph, and global organization of texts are necessary but not sufficient for effective writing, therefore, students must not be instructed what they should and shouldn’t use when they are writing, but rather they must be instructed how to practice writing until they can communicate smoothly by means of writing. To confirm this view, the one way that can promote fluency in writing skill is by requiring students to use what Stephen Tchudi (1986, p. 20) calls workaday writing. Workaday writing is a strategy that teacher can apply to their students by ordering them to write more often and focus on some specific content. Langer & Applebee (1987) states that there is some evidence that particular kinds of workaday writing can reinforce certain kinds of learning writing and also can help students learn the content of their courses. Workaday writing includes the following activities: note-taking, journals and mini-essays.

Taking notes involves writing down information from different sources such as lectures, lab, text book, other people’s knowledge. More specifically, several scholars have begun to study the effectiveness of note taking as workaday writing in developing and improving EFL students’ writing.

Note-taking, for example, may help students in their writing and assist them to focus on the main ideas of the course (Smith, 2004, pp. 108-110). Nunan (1989) share the same view with smith. He indicates that the activity on note-taking can be considered part of writing across the curriculum. It crosses over all disciplines and has the two characteristics of writing across the curriculum: note-taking helps students learn, and note-taking helps students learn to write. For them, when students take notes, they will develop their learning process. Taking notes allow learners to gather, organize and revise information. The more they take notes, the better they perform. Besides, through taking notes learners learn to write. Since note-taking is considered as a workaday writing in which students are ordered to write more often, they will be able to write better.

As it is mentioned before, the writing skill is considered as the most difficult skill to be mastered (Manchon, 2009). Typically, these difficulties may be due to the lack of language system knowledge, or due to the lack of practice. According to Mc
Laughlim et al (1983) “writing can be developed via instruction as well as practice” (p.87). So, instruction is necessary to improve writing but it is not sufficient. Students who are instructed what they should and shouldn't use while writing may be unable to write effectively because of the lack of practice. Accordingly, students should practice writing through workaday writing such as taking notes. Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock (2001) indicate that “note-taking as a workaday writing lead to an increase in students' writing” (p.20). That is to say, when students usually take notes, they will improve their level in writing. Through practicing note taking, students can develop their writing.

Conclusion

Academic writing is much likely to be different from the writing students used to do at primary and/or secondary school. Thus, university students write for a number of academic purposes. To achieve these purposes successfully, students need to develop writing skills and strategies. And the best way to acquire writing skills and strategies is simply to write and write a lot (Buzan, 1999). To get into the habit of writing a lot, students can make use of workaday writing such as note-taking, which requires of them to write as much as possible.

In this chapter, we have examined note-taking as a writing strategy. We have seen that by developing skills and strategies, students become active, critical and efficient writers. Consequently, the more students learn how to take notes, the more they will able to become active listeners and readers and creative writers.
Chapter three: Methodology and data Analysis

Introduction

1. Methodology and Procedures
2. Data Analysis and Interpretation
Methodology and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology for data collection and the techniques used to analyse the findings. It also discusses the results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire.

Methodology and Procedures

This study is limited to First Year AL & ESP Master students at Ouargla University. Its main purpose is to investigate the extent to which note-taking technique may develop EFL students’ writing skill. These students have been chosen because the academic studies they are undertaking require of them to do much writing in their specialty. The questionnaire has been administered to 30 students of the two genders: females and males. The students have been asked to answer all the given questions.

To achieve our goals, we have collected data by means of questionnaire which contains 18 questions. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first one is constructed to investigate students’ attitudes towards writing skill. In the second part we attempted to investigate note-taking tasks and frequencies. The third part is devoted to the functions of note-taking.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The answers collected from students’ questionnaire are presented in the form of tables, and then analysed according to the order of the questions.

Part One

The first part of the questionnaire consists of 04 statements describing the attitudes of the students towards writing skill. In fact, each statement is followed by five-point Likert Scale of agreement. Students' answers were as the following:

Table.1.1 Importance of Writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Writing is an important skill for students</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table.1.1 it is noticed that 83.33% of the participants answered by “strongly agree”, and 13.33% answered by “agree”, while 0% were neutral, and the same
Methodology and Data Analysis

proportion 0% answered by “disagree”, whereas 3.33% answered by “strongly disagree”. Since the large proportion chose the first answer “strongly agree”, we can conclude that writing is an important skill for students.

Table.1.2 Writing for Self-expression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Writing is a means of self-expression</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.1.2 indicates that 23.33% replied by “strongly agree”, and 53.33% replied by “agree”, while 16.66% were neutral, whereas 3.33% replied by “disagree”, and the same proportion replied by “strongly disagree”. Since the large proportion replied by “agree”. This means that writing is a means of self-expression.

Table.1.3 Writing for Communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Writing is used for communication</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>23.33%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.1.3 reports that 20% of the participants chose the first answer “strongly agree”, and 33.33% of them chose the second answer “agree”, whereas the rest are equally split between “neutral” 23.33% and “disagree” 23.33%. This reveals that writing is used for communication.

Table.1.4 Writing as a Complex Task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Writing is a complex activity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results obtained from table 1.4 show that 33.33% of the participants answered by “strongly agree”, and 30% answered by agree, while 16.66% were neutral, whereas 13.33% answered by “disagree”, and 6.66% answered by “strongly disagree”. This affirms that students' face difficulties when they are writing. Hence writing is a complex activity.

The results obtained from all the statements in Part one (from statement one to statement four) demonstrate that the choice of “strongly agree” and “agree” has the largest proportion in all the questions. This shows that writing skill is really important for students. It is a means of self-expression and used for communication.

**Part Two**

The purpose of this part is to elicit note-taking tasks and frequencies. Students' answers are as follows:

**Table.2.1** Taking Notes in Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N⁰</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>I take notes in class</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2.1 indicates that 83.33% replied by “always”, whereas 16.66% replied by “sometimes” and 0% replied by “never”. From these results, it is apparent that students always take notes in class.

**Table.2.2** Teaching a Formal Note-taking Method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N⁰</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>I have been taught a formal note-taking method</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2.2 shows that 50% of the participants asserted that they have always been taught a formal note-taking method. Other participants with the same percentage 50% asserted that they have never been taught such method. This affirms as that some of the participants have always been taught a formal note-taking method, while others did not.
Table.2.3 Re-reading Notes after Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>I re-read my notes after class</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2.3 shows that 30% of the participants answered by “always”, and the majority of them 63.33% answered by “sometimes”, whereas only 6.66% of them answered by “never”. Based on the results obtained from this statement, one can see that students sometimes re-read their notes after class.

Table.2.4 Reviewing Notes before Exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>I review my notes before taking the exam</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76.66%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results obtained from table.2.4 reports that the majority of the participants 76.66% opted for “always”, while 16.66% opted for “sometimes” and only 6.66% opted for “never”. Since the large proportion chose “always”, we can say that students always review their notes before taking the exam.

Table.2.5 Taking Notes and Making better Scores in Exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>I make better scores in formal exams when taking notes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2.5 indicates that 33.33% of the participants declared that they always make better scores in formal exams when taking notes, while 56.66% of them declared that they sometimes do, whereas only 10% confirmed that they never got better notes in formal exams when they take notes. As a conclusion, students sometimes make better scores in formal exams when taking notes.

Table.2.6 Awareness of the Important Ideas to Write.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>I know what are the important ideas to write</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46.66%</td>
<td>46.66%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology and Data Analysis

Results obtained from table.2.6 confirm that 46.66% of the participants chose “always”. Other participants with the same percentage 46.66% chose “sometimes”, whereas the rest 6.66% chose “never”. This demonstrates that students always know what are the important ideas to write.

Table.2.7 Putting Class Notes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>I can put class notes from texts in my own words</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>73.33%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.2.7 shows that 20% of the participants replied by “always”, while 73.33% replied by “sometimes”, and only 6.66% replied by “never”. This shows that students sometimes put class notes from texts in their own words.

The results obtained from this part revealed that the majority of the participants take notes in class and are aware of the important ideas to write, since they have been taught a formal note-taking method. Additionally, it demonstrates that students do not only re-read their notes after class, but also before taking the exam. This may help them to make better scores in formal exams.

Part Three

The objective of this part is to demonstrate the functions of note taking.

Table.3.1 Taking-notes and Useful Record of Ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Taking notes creates a useful record of important ideas for future use</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53.33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results obtained from table.3.1 show that 53.33% of the participants answered by “strongly agree”, and 30% answered by “agree”, while 06.66% were “neutral”, and 10% answered by “disagree”, whereas 0% answered by “strongly disagree”. As one can see, taking note creates a useful record of important ideas for future use.
Table 3.2 Taking-notes and Understanding Lectures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Taking notes helps understanding lectures</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73.33%</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 indicates that 73.33% replied by “strongly agree”, and 16.66% replied by “agree”, while 10% were “neutral”, and 0% replied by “disagree”. Other participants with the same percentage 0% replied by “strongly disagree”. From these results it is apparent that students’ success in understanding lectures relies on their ability to take notes in class.

Table 3.3 Taking-notes and Examination Revision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Taking notes helps examination revision</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56.66%</td>
<td>26.66%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 confirms that 56.66% chose “strongly agree”, and 26.66% chose “agree”, whereas 13.33% were “neutral”, and 3.33% chose “disagree”, while 0% chose “strongly disagree”. Since the majority of the respondents replied by “strongly agree”, one can see that taking notes helps examination revision. The more students record, the better they perform on exams.

Table 3.4 Taking-notes and Summarizing Texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Taking notes assists summarising things up briefly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>36.66%</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methodology and Data Analysis

Table.3.4 show that 43.33% of the participants opted for “strongly agree”, and 36.66% opted for “agree”, while 13.33% were “neutral”, and 3.33% opted for “disagree”. Other participants with the same percentage 3.33% opted for “strongly disagree”. Based on the results obtained from this statement we can say that taking notes assists summarising things up briefly.

**Table.3.5** Taking-notes and Ideas Flowage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Taking notes allows ideas flow</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.66%</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.3.5 indicates that among all the participants, 26.66% answered by “strongly agree”, and 56.66% answered by “agree” while 10% were “neutral”, and 6.66% answered by “disagree”, whereas 0% answered by “strongly disagree”. This reveals that taking notes allows ideas flow.

**Table.3.6** Taking-notes and Remembering Ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Taking notes helps planning and remembering ideas</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53.33%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>00%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.3.6 reports that 53.33% of the participants replied by “strongly agree”, and 33.33% replied by “agree”, while 10% were “neutral”, and 0% replied by “disagree”, whereas only 3.33% replied by “strongly disagree”. This means that taking notes helps planning and remembering ideas.

**Table.3.7** Taking-notes and Writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Taking notes improves writing performance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56.33%</td>
<td>26.66%</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table.3.7 indicates that among all the participants, 56.66% chose “strongly agree”, and 26.66% chose “agree”, while 3.33% were “neutral”, and 6.66% chose
“disagree”. Other participants with the same percentage 6.66% chose “strongly disagree”. This shows that taking notes improves students' writing performance. Results obtained from all the questions in Part two (from question one to question seven) confirm that the choice of “strongly agree” has the largest proportion in all the questions (Q1. 53.33%, Q2. 73.33%, Q3. 56.66%, Q4. 43.33%, Q5. 56.66%, Q6. 53.33%, Q7. 56.33%). This reveals that taking note has different functions. It creates a useful record of important ideas for future use. Besides, it helps understanding lectures and helps examination revision. In addition, taking notes assists summarizing things up briefly and allows ideas flow. Moreover, it helps planning and remembering ideas. Finally, when students take notes, their writing performance will be developed.

After having analysed the findings of the questionnaire, it we found that taking notes develops writing skill. This may be due to the fact that since students were taught a formal note-taking method and were aware of the functions of note-taking, they always take notes in class. Thus taking-notes may enhance students' writing skill. All in all, note taking technique is an effective way to improve students' writing skill.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have presented the methodology and tools used to collect data from the participants. We have adopted a descriptive design in which we administered a questionnaire to 30 students. The results obtained from the questions in part three show that taking notes enhance students' writing skill. This may be due to the fact that, as found in part two, students always take notes in their class. From the analysis of results obtained from each question, we noticed that our hypothesis has been confirmed. In other words, our suggestion that note-taking may develop students' writing performance is appropriate.
General Conclusion

The objective of this study is to identify the extent to which note-taking technique can develop the writing of First year Master students in AL and ESP at Ouargla University. To achieve our objectives, we have asked the following research questions: (i) What attitudes do First Year AL & ESP Master students develop towards writing? (ii) Do students really use note-taking technique to develop their writing skill? (iii) What are the effects of note-taking method on students’ writing performance?

To answer these questions, we have examined students’ attitudes towards writing and problems they encounter when performing writing tasks. In this study we have attempted to explore the impact of note-taking technique on students' writing performance. Based on students' perceptions and views, if note-taking is practiced and well-directed in class, it may develop their writing abilities.

The above mentioned questions require answers for which we have conducted a review of the literature which encompasses two parts related to this study. The first one tackles some important concepts and notions as to writing skill; the second is concerned with note-taking technique. Then, we have collected data by means of questionnaire which includes 18 statements. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part contains 04 statements turned about students ‘attitudes towards writing. The second part consists of 07 statements by which we attempted to identify note-taking tasks and frequencies. The third part comprises 07 statements which examine the functions of note-taking strategy. The questionnaire was administered to 30 participants from both genders males and females.

To analyse the questionnaire, we have used SPSS system (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). In the first part of the questionnaire, we can be seen that the majority of the participants develop moderate attitudes towards writing skill since they view it as an important communicative and expressive skill. While the second part of the questionnaire is devoted to investigate note-taking tasks and frequencies. The results obtained from this part revealed that the majority of the participants take notes in class and are aware of the important ideas to write, since they have been taught a formal note-taking method. Additionally, it demonstrates that students do not only re-read their notes after class, but also before taking the exam. This may help them to make better scores in formal exams. The results obtained from the third part show that taking notes has many functions. It creates a useful record of important ideas for future use. In
Discussion and Recommendations

addition, it helps understanding lectures and examination revision. Moreover, taking notes assists summarising things up briefly and allows ideas flow. Furthermore, it helps planning and remembering ideas. Last, taking notes improves students’ writing performance.

From the outcome of our investigation it is possible to conclude that note-taking develops students' writing skill.

**Suggestions**

Based on the major findings of the present study, we can formulate the following recommendations.

Since this study has confirmed that students see writing as an important, communicative and expressive skill, it is suggested that teachers should encourage students to practice writing as much as possible and provide opportunities for them to practice that skill.

This study has revealed that the students surveyed frequently face writing problems, it is recommended that further studies be carried out to ascertain the causes of these problems.

Since this study has shown that note-taking technique provides opportunities for students to practice writing in class, teachers should teach students a formal note-taking method.

This study has demonstrated that note-taking is an important method in developing students' writing skill, it is recommended that it should be taught intensively by making it as a habit in their daily life. Teachers should teach students the value of note-taking, making explicit the relationship between recording what is said in class, reviewing notes periodically and performing well on tests.

Teachers should collect notes periodically and confer with students to improve their note-taking abilities, and survey the lecture to set the purposes for listening and noting. They also should lecture at moderate speed, slowing down for important points or allowing a few minutes for consolidation.

Since strategies that students spontaneously use will vary depending on the subject domain, difficulty, and the way the text has been written, further research should be conducted to explore the effectiveness of note-taking practices as a function of various learning situations and demands.
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Appendix: Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how note-taking method may improve writing skill. Through this questionnaire we aim at investigating and evaluating students' attitudes towards the use of note-taking technique.

**Part one: Students' attitudes towards writing.**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Please read and put a tick in the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Writing is an important skill for students
2. Writing is a means of self-expression
3. Writing is used for communication
4. Writing is a difficult task

**Part two: Note-taking tasks and frequencies.**

How often do you perform the following activities when taking notes?

Please read the following statements and put a tick in the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I take notes in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have been taught a formal note-taking method</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I re-read my notes after class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I review my notes before taking the exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I make better scores in formal exams when taking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I know what are the important ideas to write
I can put class notes from texts in my own words

**Part three:** Functions of note-taking.

In your opinion, what are the functions of note-taking?

Please read and then put a tick in the appropriate box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Taking notes creates a useful record of important ideas for future use
- Taking notes helps understanding lectures
- Taking notes helps examination revision
- Taking notes assists summarising things up briefly
- Taking notes allows ideas flow
- Taking notes helps planning and remembering ideas
- Taking notes improves writing performance

**Thank you so much for your participation**
Abstract

The main concern of EFL teachers is developing students’ foreign language skills. Despite of the importance of the four skills, writing is viewed as a significant one which students need to master. Though techniques for understanding and writing texts are widely taught and practiced throughout a students' university career, few of them are taught basic note-taking skills. In this study, we attempted to demonstrate the activity of note-taking which is considered as an inseparable part of writing. At the university level, which is the level we are interested in this study, we explored three aspects of note-taking: 1) the main functions of note-taking: learning to write; 2) The main note-taking strategies practiced by students; 3) The learning contexts that help effective note-taking. Based on these aspects, we attempted to determine the extent to which the use of note-taking in class may enhance the writing performance of First Year AL & ESP Master students at Ouargla University. By adopting a descriptive method, the data were collected by means of a questionnaire which was administered to a total number of 30 students. The data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results of this study revealed that through the use of note-taking strategy, students' writing skill will be developed.

Keywords: writing skill, writing strategies, note-taking.