

**Investigating the pedagogical practices of EFL writing teachers in Palestinian universities: A cognitive-ecological perspective**

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## **Abstract**

Teacher cognition studies are rare in the Palestinian context, as is also true in other contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. This study draws on theories of second language writing and teacher cognition to investigate the interplay between EFL writing teachers' cognitions and their pedagogical practices. It employs a qualitative design involving multiple case studies to explore how the pedagogical practices of twelve EFL writing teachers working in Palestinian universities are shaped by their cognitions and contextual factors.

Data were collected across the nine-month academic year through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, stimulated-recall interviews, and review of documents. A multiple case study research design was used, and constructivist grounded theory informed data analysis. Data were transcribed, coded, and analysed through the development of 12 case reports which were reconstructed into three clusters of cases. The cross-cluster analysis generated a cognitive-ecological model to explain teachers' choices favouring different pedagogical approaches to teaching EFL writing. Results reveal that teachers' cognitions about the nature of EFL writing, about teaching and learning writing and about themselves as EFL writing professionals influence their pedagogical practices. The findings also accentuate the role of ecological contexts as a mediating force influencing the interaction between cognitions and practices. These ecological contexts include classroom social and physical contexts, institutional context, broader educational context, and global community discourse. Classroom social and physical contexts were identified and perceived as the most significant barriers to teaching writing, while gaining access to the global community discourse was viewed as the greatest facilitator for adopting recommended practices. Teachers' cognitions about professional self also determine the weight assigned to the different ecological contexts, thus determining reactions to perceived ecological challenges. This may explain why teachers working in the same context under the same conditions teach differently. Some implications of these findings include the importance of encouraging EFL writing teachers to reflect on pedagogical cognitions and practices relevant to their working contexts as well as the need for introducing recommended models of teaching EFL writing in tertiary institutions. Other theoretical and professional contributions are addressed, and potential for further research is highlighted.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

This research explores the relationship between English as a foreign language (EFL) writing teachers' cognitions and their pedagogical practices in the context of Palestinian universities. It is underpinned by a rich description of the teachers' pedagogical practices when teaching EFL writing. Ecological contexts such as classroom and institutional contexts emerge in this study as influential factors which define teachers' practices and shape their cognitions. The outcome of this study is a cognitive-ecological perspective on teaching EFL writing. In this introductory chapter, the first section introduces the study by presenting the primary research concern, the motivations driving it, and the rationale for conducting the research. An overview of the research objectives and theoretical perspective and research questions are followed with a description of the teaching of English in the Gaza Strip context in Palestine, the context of this study. This chapter concludes with a brief outline of each chapter of the thesis.

#### **Background and motivations**

The stimulus for conducting this research stems from my experience as an EFL writing learner and university teacher. Writing in English has become a requirement for educational, occupational, political, and social success in Palestine. In Palestinian universities, EFL students' achievement depends on their performance on written tests and research papers. After graduation, writing has become an essential skill to get a well-paid job in international organisations working in Palestinian territories to support Palestinians. Employees in such organisations and government agencies are now expected to create reports, technical documents, and emails. Written English is also a means to convey a political message to the international community about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Other students who will be English school teachers need to have good writing skills as well.

From my experience as an EFL writing teacher, many university teachers in English departments in Palestinian universities in Gaza often express their dismay over the low standard of their students' writing. These teachers primarily attribute their students'

writing problems to the students' linguistic incompetence, immature mastery of rhetorical structure of the English text, and language transfer (Al-Hazmi & Schofield, 2007; Glasgow & Fitze, 2008). They tend to focus on their students' deficits rather than their responsibility in improving their students' writing practices and skills.

Teachers are the largest single source of influence which contributes significantly to variance in student achievement and academic success (Huitt, Huitt, Monetti & Hummel, 2009; Nye et al., 2004). How well students write is determined by how they are taught to write (Graham & Perin, 2007a). Being in a non-English speaking environment, Palestinian university EFL writers may have nobody to turn to in producing academic written work except their writing teachers and this need for guidance often occurs during their academic writing classes. Writing instruction is an essential part of providing the students with the necessary tools to be able to meet the requirements of their language programs and future careers. Besides, examining EFL writing teachers' practices and the influences on these practices may help raise the teachers' awareness of their current knowledge and also enhance reflection on their teaching (Bartels, 2005b). It is necessary to give teachers opportunities to reflect on their teaching practice and learn about new classroom approaches or innovations in teaching writing through meaningful educational experiences or teaching models (Farrell, 2006). Thus, my study aims to help teachers make sense of their teaching and promote their understanding of the complex nature of their classrooms.

### **Study rationale and significance**

Second Language (L2) teacher education research literature has shown that teachers' cognitions have a significant impact on the way they teach in the classroom (Borg, 2006; Flores, 2005; Phipps & Borg, 2009). To understand how teachers teach, it is necessary to understand their cognitions because these lie at the heart of what they do. Teacher cognition is defined as "what teachers know, believe, and think" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). According to Johnson (2006), the emergence of a substantial body of research now referred to as teacher cognition is the most significant advancement in the field of L2 teacher education. Studies of teacher cognition have "helped capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers" (Johnson, 2006, p. 236). This work has provided insights into the mental lives of teachers as well as into how cognition

shapes the instructional decisions teachers make. Furthermore, investigations of the interplay between language teachers' cognitions and their classroom practices in specific curricular areas such as writing are valuable; they can lead to findings which are significant to the field of language education (Borg, 2003).

However, the existing research on L2 teachers' cognitions has been limited. One limitation is the context of research. Much of the research has been carried out in developed countries with teachers who speak the target language as their home language (e.g. USA, New Zealand, and Canada). Another limitation is the classroom setting which consists mostly of small groups of motivated adult students (Borg, 2006; Andrews, 2007). Studies investigating the cognitions and pedagogical practices of teaching working in foreign language university settings have been limited (Borg, 2009). Because of such contextual gaps in the literature, Borg (2006) calls for conducting more research into the cognitions of teachers in other less developed, non-Western contexts, who are non-native speakers of the target language and who teach large classes of mixed abilities.

No research has been published internationally on contemporary writing classroom practices and writing teachers' cognitions in Palestinian universities. Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2008) suggested that future research needs to continue to investigate the pedagogical practices of teaching L2 writing and the development of teachers' knowledge in different contexts. Despite the increased amount of scholarly work on how students write in relation to both first and second language contexts, there is a "paucity of research on how EFL teachers teach and learn to teach writing" (Lee, 2010, p.1). There is, therefore, a pressing need for insights into Palestinian writing teachers' daily professional lives to be gained by research. This study deals not only with a Palestinian site, but it is also set in a type of educational context underrepresented in the literature. This is a context characterised by non-native English-speaking teachers working with large monolingual classes in an exam-oriented educational system.

This research investigates the pedagogical practices in the writing classroom in an EFL university context and how they are influenced by teachers' cognitions and other influential factors that emerge out of this investigation. It is also hoped that this study will stimulate discussion and further work in the Palestinian educational context so that

such research can inform teacher educators, policy makers and other stakeholders when making decisions to improve the teaching of EFL writing in Palestinian universities. Teachers can expand their understanding about writing instruction through professional development programs. Although teachers realise the importance of lower-level mechanical accuracy of students' writing, introducing them to other writing instructional approaches may help them focus more on different elements of writing (Sengupta & Xiao, 2002). This study also aims to provide insights to language teacher education programs in Palestine and similar contexts.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach adopted for this study makes a methodological contribution to language education research in the context of Palestine. In Palestine, educational research is in its infancy, and uses mostly questionnaire-based studies, analysed statistically. EFL writing research in Palestine has focused on issues related to students' linguistic problems in writing (Mourtaja, 2004) or on the relationship between writing and reading (Abu Saleem, 2010). There is a lack of classroom-based qualitative studies.

Hence, this study aims to fill these gaps and contribute to the ever-increasing volume of scholarship on studies of teachers' practices and cognition through investigating Palestinian teachers' cognitions and practices of teaching EFL writing. This study proposes a cognitive-ecological model (CEM) that can be used to investigate and inform the teaching of EFL writing in tertiary level. The model explicitly describes how teaching practices of the writing teachers are shaped by their cognitions and their surrounding ecological contexts. The model also captures the complexity of the interplay between cognitions and the multiple ecological contexts affecting their relationship.

### **Research objectives and theoretical perspective**

As Nespor (1987) states, "to understand teaching from teachers' perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work" (p.323). The study's objectives were to develop in-depth interpretive descriptions of writing teachers' cognitions and practices and to develop a theoretical framework that describes teaching EFL writing in Palestinian universities. The main research questions of this study were:



1. How do teachers in Palestinian universities in the Gaza strip teach EFL academic writing?
2. How do EFL writing teachers report their cognitions about the teaching of EFL writing?
3. How do teachers' cognitions correspond to their L2 writing instructional practices?
4. What factors shape and inform Palestinian EFL writing teachers' cognitions and practices?

A qualitative multiple case study design (Stake, 2000, 2006; Yin, 2003) was used. The case study design enabled the collection of in-depth data of the pedagogical practices and cognitions of EFL writing teachers. Data analysis was informed by constructivist grounded theory data analysis methods (Charmaz, 2006) to develop a comprehensive model describing the teachers' intrapersonal cognitions and the emerging ecological factors which influenced the teaching of EFL writing in Palestinian universities. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, stimulated recall interviews, and analysis of course documents. Data were transcribed, coded, and analysed first through the development of twelve individual case reports. Then these twelve cases were restructured into three clusters based on the similarities in the teachers' classroom focus drawn from their coded data. The process of synthesising the findings resulted in the cognitive-ecological model (CEM) of teaching EFL writing which may provide insights into the complexity of teaching EFL writing.

### **Overview of language education in Palestine**

"The social, institutional, instructional and physical settings in which teachers work have a major impact on their cognitions and practices" (Borg, 2006, p. 275). This section provides a brief account of English language education in Gaza Strip schools and universities. The Gaza Strip, the context of this study, is a Palestinian territory in the Middle East. It is located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt on the southwest (11 km) and Israel on the east and north (51 km). It is 41 kilometres long, eight kilometres wide. The population of Gaza Strip is about 1.7 million people. It is densely populated and impoverished, and is mainly inhabited by Palestinian refugees (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

### ***The teaching of English in Gaza Strip***

English was first introduced to the Palestinian education system by means of occupation during the British Mandate (1918 – 1948) as the language of the ruling country. Since then it has been the only foreign language in the school syllabus. During the British Mandatory period, English became the major language of the government of Palestine in order to “inculcate the skills, knowledge and beliefs necessary to the functioning of the government and economic system of the Mandate” (Al Zaroo & Lewando Hunt, 2003, p.168). Knowledge of English at that time was necessary for social promotion. Following Britain’s decision in 1947 to terminate its mandate on Palestine, Jewish leaders declared the state of Israel on Palestinian land. Much of the territory under British Mandate fell to Israeli rule, with Egypt occupying the Gaza Strip. At that time 200,000 Palestinians from other areas of Palestine escaped to Gaza Strip as refugees. The United Nations for Refugees and Works Agency (UNRWA) was responsible for educating the refugees. Governmental and UNRWA schools in Gaza switched to the Egyptian curriculum. The Egyptian administration expanded the education system, but the focus was “on quantity rather than quality” (Brown, 2003, p.198). Education was free of charge and composed of an elementary stage covering grades 1-6, and a preparatory stage covering grades 7-9. The secondary stage, grades 10-12, was not compulsory (Abu-Duhou, 2000). Students in governmental schools were learning the Egyptian English curriculum as a compulsory school subject in grade seven, but students in UNRWA schools started learning English from the fifth grade for two classes a week.

In June 1967, Israel won the Six-Day War, gaining a victory over Arab states. The war resulted in Israel occupying Arab territories, including the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Military Governor was in charge of Palestinian education; he retained the education system developed under Egyptian rule (Nicolai, 2007). Schools, libraries, laboratories and teaching standards were all in steady decline, and teacher training received little to no support (Brown, 2003). In the Gaza schools, the Egyptian Ministry of Education continued to administer exams after 1967. Because of the occupation, the traditional methods remained for twenty seven years (Nicolai, 2007). The teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) methods adopted were very traditional. Thus, teachers taught according to their own personal beliefs about teaching and language acquisition to compensate for a lack of training or skill.

During the Israeli occupation, overcrowded and poorly equipped classes in the Gaza schools posed a big problem (Al-Masri, 1993). School teachers received little in-service training and they were not motivated because of the low salary. In addition to the ineffectiveness of the syllabus, Al-Masri (1993) referred to the problem of poorly equipped classrooms being hot in summer and cold in winter, and students depending on the blackboard and textbooks alone. He maintained that due to the political instability, and the crowded, unequipped classes, and students' academic attainment was decreased. Strikes, curfews, demonstrations, and military closures caused a loss of 35% to 50% of school days. During the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, English served as a lingua franca between Palestinians who did not know Hebrew and Israelis who did not know Arabic (Amara, 2003).

The political situation may have made Palestinians see education in general and English in particular as the only hope for a better future. Palestinians regarded English as the language of international negotiation through which they could tell the world about their catastrophe (Mourtaja, 2004). They needed good English skills during the uprising when large waves of mass media crews visited the Occupied Gaza Strip.

In 1993, the Oslo Accord was signed between Israel and the Palestinians and led to a transfer of power from Israel to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in primary social services. Education and culture were the first of these to be handed over on 29 August 1994 (Nicolai, 2007). As a result of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was established, and Palestinians were responsible for their own education system for the first time in history (Nicolai, 2007). Since the takeover by the Palestinian Authority in 1994, remarkable efforts have been exerted to improve the teaching and learning of English in Palestine. The most important of these was the Palestinian Ministry of Education designing *English for Palestine* (2000-2008) textbook series for first grade to twelfth grade. The new Palestinian Curriculum shows an international orientation which is an essential part of the policy. Accordingly, the learning and teaching of English have become a primary concern in identity formation (Amara, 2003). The *English for Palestine* curriculum is different from the old one in three ways:

- English is perceived as the language of modernity. English is perceived as an important vehicle for Palestinians to achieve modernity.

- English is a world language. Since the Palestinians are in a transition state, and at a stage of State formation, Palestinians perceive English as a window on the world.
- The proposal to teach English from the first grade in all Palestinian schools, government as well as private, is completely different from the current situation, and very courageous in comparison with other Arab countries (Amara, 2003, p. 223).

According to the developers of the curriculum, new books are needed to “improve employment opportunities, to teach students to value cultural diversity, to enhance mental capacity, and to address the demands of internationalisation” (MoEHE, 1999, p. 2). The new curriculum envisions the teaching of English from the perspective of the constructive involvement of the Palestinians with the modern world. Consequently, Palestinians should acquire and master the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and appreciating English as a world language. This can be accomplished by teaching English throughout all twelve years of education (Amara, 2003). The implementation process was completed in 2008. The Egyptian textbooks that had been used thus far were mainly reading and structure-based textbooks written by the British and edited by Arab scholars. Contrary to these textbooks, the new curriculum is based on the belief that “language is functional, that language learning is culture learning, and that acquisition occurs through meaningful use” (MoEHE, 1999, p. 2). The development of communicative competence is another goal of the new curriculum: The core objectives of teaching English in Palestine fall under the rubric pragmatic competence” (MoEHE, 1999, p. 8). To achieve these goals and overcome inefficiency in learning English, especially in the oral skills of students, the curriculum has placed more emphasis on aural/oral and integrated skills alongside the more traditional grammar-and-reading-based books.

The second intifada commenced in 2000 just as the focus began to shift to improving education quality for Palestinians by creating a new curriculum and improving teaching. There was a blockade imposed on Gaza and there were many wars with loss of lives. The new *English for Palestine* (2000-2008) curriculum is still the sole source of teaching material. Fattash (2010) analysed the Palestinian teachers’ assessment of the English curriculum and its correspondence to the communicative approach. According to the study, this curriculum conforms only to a

very few aspects of the communicative approach. It revealed lack of training for teachers in terms of the curricular syllabus, in which the teachers felt that they did not receive adequate training on specific aspects of the syllabus such as teaching writing skills. According to the teachers in Fattash's (2010), supervisors are very concerned that all the pages and all the exercises in the book are covered. Teachers, therefore, tend to fall back on traditional ways of treating the textbooks, namely, using them as sources of exercises, and not as materials to promote more communication in the classroom (Fattash, 2010). The report also indicated that teachers could not teach certain aspects of the curriculum because of the lack of essential equipment and resources such as audio-visual tools in their schools.

English teachers in Gaza are further constrained because they have limited access to other resources, such as the internet, books, articles, and photocopying facilities. Another challenge that English school teachers face is the unified exam for Grade 12 students. All high school students have to pass a unified final exam called General Secondary Certificate Exam, the grades of which decide their choice of university and major. This exam is prepared by the Ministry of Education. An examination of previous General Secondary Certificate Exam tests for English suggests that they mainly tested students' knowledge of grammar, sentence-level writing, and structure (Fattash, 2010). Students are not tested on their aural/oral or critical thinking abilities. The traditional approach to English teaching in Gaza Strip utilised knowledge transmission. The skills of teachers remain a major concern; teachers are not adequately trained in teaching as a whole, nor are they trained or supported to teach the curriculum (Nicolai, 2007). Although Palestinian students have spent many years learning English at school, most Palestinian students cannot communicate fluently in English and their language is largely devoid of accuracy (Project Hope, 2009). No doubt, this outcome was unexpected assuming that the intended objective of teaching any foreign language should be enabling learners to communicate fluently and accurately. Palestinian students learn English in large classes (i.e. 40 to 50 students) with limited contact hours (about three hours a week), which makes learning English challenging for them (Rose, 1999).

### ***English language teacher education programs in Gaza Strip universities***

The development of higher education in Palestine is relatively recent. In the 1950s, UNRWA established two-year colleges which focused on teacher training and

vocational trades (Al-Masri, 1993). The first university in Gaza Strip was established in 1978 during the Israeli occupation to preserve the Palestinian identity and to offer Palestinian students the opportunity to pursue higher education (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010). EFL teacher education in Palestine is confined to the faculties of education in universities. It started to evolve in response to changes in the education system, and in society. In the EFL teacher education program, the academic year is structured in two semesters, with an optional summer semester beginning in July. The academic semester lasts for 16 weeks. These EFL teacher education programs accept candidates according to the General Secondary Certificate average percentage and the university may set a certain grade limit for applications, (for instance 70% or less). They do not hold admission interviews for the student teachers. The typical programme for EFL student teachers consists of a total of 141 credit hours of coursework. EFL student teachers study 34 credit hours of cultural preparation courses (university requirements studied in Arabic), 35 credit hours educational preparation courses (faculty requirements studied in Arabic), and 72 credit hours of content subject matter courses (courses in language skills, linguistics, and English literature). It might be worthy to mention that no written philosophy or objectives exist for the departments of English at Gaza universities. Only one university provides brief course descriptions of the specialisation courses on their website. Students' success is assessed based on their performance results in the midterm and final written exams, and there is no exit mechanism from the English teacher education programs.

The MoEHE do not interfere or control the EFL teacher education programs in terms of content subject knowledge and course work, recruitment and personnel, number of candidates accepted compared to the demand in the labour force, and effectiveness of the training. English departments usually develop study plans that lead students from the time they enter university until completion of the requirements and graduation. Examining the status of higher education in Palestine, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2010) has identified two main challenges facing Palestinian universities. Some staff members take extra work, which negatively affects the quality of their teaching and research productivity. The professional development of academic staff is limited because of absence of regular fellowship and scholarship programs to develop their qualifications and

enhance their teaching skills. There is usually a shortage of funding. To sum up, learning English in the Gaza Strip has become a significant priority for individuals who want to be prepared to better survive in this highly competitive world. Possessing good English language abilities is an important tool to increase the future employability of young Palestinians in the local, regional and international job markets. The teaching of EFL writing should be part of this preparation and the skills development process.

### **Outline of the thesis**

This thesis contains seven chapters: Chapter 1 has introduced the background to the study, the aim of the study, and the overview of the context. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on teacher cognition and its influence on teaching practices, models of teaching writing, and the research approaches used to investigate the topic. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study, namely a qualitative, collective case study drawing on constructivist grounded theory for data analysis. This chapter provides a rationale for the methodology and outlines the data collection and analysis processes. Ethical issues are addressed. I also examine my own position within this study, and the trustworthiness of the research is evaluated. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the findings are presented with an in-depth description of each of the three clusters. In Chapter 7, a cross-cluster analysis is undertaken. The Cognitive-Ecological model emerges from this analysis. This model describes the interplay between teacher cognitions, pedagogical practices, and ecological contexts as constructed from the three clusters. The literature is re-examined in this chapter to discuss how the findings of this research confirm, refute or add to existing models and literature. This final chapter discusses also the theoretical and professional contributions of the current research. The limitations of the study are explained and areas for further research that expand and build upon the findings of this study are suggested. The chapter ends with a concluding statement.





## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews some of the most significant theoretical and empirical studies on themes related to language teachers' cognitions and L2 writing instruction. It highlights the relative lack of focus on research in the area of teachers' cognitions and teaching L2 writing in developing countries, such as Palestine. Because this study specifically focuses on academic writing instruction in an EFL setting, conceptualisations about academic writing are examined and distinctions between the EFL and ESL contexts are clarified. Three main approaches to teaching L2 writing are described with their theoretical underpinnings. These are followed by empirical research studies on teaching writing in foreign language contexts. Teachers' cognitions are defined drawing on relevant literature, and the sources of teachers' cognitions are considered. The relationship between teachers' cognitions and practices is scrutinised including research studies on L2 writing teachers' cognitions and practices. Three approaches have characterised research on language teachers' cognitions. These are examined before the research questions for this study are stated.

#### **Defining academic writing**

One of the most important social practices in the academy is writing. Students' academic success at tertiary level relies heavily on writing assignments, written tests, and research papers. This section defines assumptions about academic writing within English-dominant settings in order to better understand those conceptualisations as they exist within this Palestinian EFL context. The conceptualisation of academic writing has been influenced by the changing understandings of the nature of literacy (Ivanic, 2004). References are usually made to the autonomous and the ideological models of literacy (Street, 2009). The autonomous model conceptualises literacy as "a social, autonomous, decontextualised skill located in the individual", while the ideological model views literacy as "social practices, culturally situated and ideologically constructed" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 221). Depending on the literacy model adopted, there are three approaches

for conceptualising the nature of academic writing: skilled-based, text-based, and academic literacies-based.

In the skills-based approach, writing is viewed as a technical skill that involves a number of sub-skills focusing on the surface features, such as grammar, spelling, editing, text organisation and punctuation. Writing is viewed as a “generic set of skills and strategies that can be taught and then applied in particular disciplinary contexts” (Baynham, 1995, p.19). Such skills are de-contextualised (Baynham, 2000). In this model, the main factors which determine students’ learning of writing are students’ linguistic proficiency level and aptitude to learn and acquire the skills, rules, and conventions of academic writing. Therefore, students’ writing difficulties are related to their failure to acquire the required skills to be successful writers or to their immature mastery of the rhetorical structures of English texts or to the first language interference (Lea & Stierer, 2000). This conceptualisation suggests that the skill-based approach to writing detaches writing from its context and diminishes its nature as a social practice.

The text-based model conceptualises writing as a “textual product” (Hyland, 2002b, p.6) or “artifact of form and structure” (Candlin & Hyland, 1999). Writing is taught for the purpose of producing a correct, written text regardless of the contexts of their production and interpretation. Texts are produced as the result of “a coherent arrangement of elements structured according to a system of rules” (Hyland, 2002b, p. 6). Another trend in the text-based model involves analysing texts as discourse. Discourse analysis discovered that the purpose of the text was important in determining the organisation, lexis, and grammar; it sought to investigate how, why, and when written and spoken texts were used to communicate a message and convey its intentions (Olson, 1994). The essence of discourse is its communicative intentions (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Discourse focuses on the communicative purposes or functions of the texts. Writers employ various forms to convey their meanings to suit the contexts (Hyland, 2002b). They also employ linguistic forms and means to convey certain messages and achieve their intended purposes. Writing is perceived as a textual product where mastery of the language forms and genres and imitation of written models are essential (Johns, 2005). The text-based approaches consider the relationship between writing and the immediate context which is reflected in the type of genres preferred by different disciplines. There

seems to be no wider consideration of the broader ecological and contextual factors that may influence writing.

However, in the academic literacies model, writing is conceptualised as being socially and culturally-based because “the focus shifts from individual proficiencies or deficiencies to literacy practices that differ across contexts and cultures” (Maybin, 2007, p.515). Instead of conceptualising writing as the acquisition of discrete, technical skills, it is viewed as “a situated, socially constructed phenomenon” (Henderson & Hirst, 2006, p.2) taking place in a socio-cultural context that shapes the perceptions and the practices of the writers. In other words, it focuses on the role of the social and contextual factors on the production of students’ texts. Although there are some variations among writing instructors, the “social practice” (Hyland, 2003, p. 25) of the community context determines the general features of good academic writing. These practices define how the text is interpreted and evaluated by the readers from that community.

Drawing on the academic literacies perspective, I adopt Johns’ (1997) encompassing definition which portrays what academic writing includes. “Texts are social; important written and spoken discourses are situated within specific contexts and produced and read by individuals whose values reflect those of the communities to which they belong....”(Johns, 1997, p. 160). Academic writing refers to strategies for understanding, discussing, organising, and producing texts. In addition, it relates to the social context in which a discourse is produced and the roles and communities of text readers and writers. This inclusive concept encompasses learning processes as well as products, form as well as content, and readers’ as well as writers’ roles and purposes. Academic writing is not just a tool of communication, but should be understood as a powerful social practice itself, and it can be “understood only from the perspective of a society rather than a single individual” (Faigaley, 1986, p. 535). Thus, academic writing is a collective social practice in the academic discourse community. It is not an easy social practice for students because it requires cognitive, social, and psychological resources (Sternglass, 1997). The unequal power relationships in the EFL writing classroom may not allow student writers to adopt authoritative voices and see themselves as members in their prospective academic community. Besides, teachers often do not consider writing as a much broader activity influenced by ideological and socio-

cultural aspects (Kroll, 2003; Matsuda, 2003). Academic writing requires social interaction with rhetorical choices. Writers act as members of the group and communicate to their colleagues “in recognisable discursive spaces in recognisably acceptable ways, shaping their actions to the presumed understandings and needs of their readers” (Hyland, 2004a, p. xi). This means that teachers should prepare their students to use the rhetorical norms that reflect the ideology and preferences of their academic institutions. Adopting the academic literacies model is a powerful tool for understanding the experiences of students and teachers and for situating their experiences in the wider context (Lea & Stierer, 2000), and this may help us understand the teaching of academic writing in the Palestinian EFL context.

### **Second language writing instruction models**

One aim of this study is to describe and examine Palestinian teachers’ practices in the classroom. Thus, it is necessary here to review and discuss the different approaches to writing instruction and how these instructional models are utilised in L2 composition classrooms. Hyland (2003) writes that “Our classroom decisions are always informed by our theories and beliefs about what writing is and how people learn to write” (p.1). A familiarity with what is known about writing and about teaching writing can promote reflection on assumptions. There are many aspects of writing instruction that EFL teachers need to know including the nature of writing in a foreign language and sound pedagogical approaches to support students’ writing development. Teachers require knowledge about the complex process of the production of texts and methods for teaching and assessing students’ writing (Scott & Rodgers, 1995). According to Kroll (2003), writing teachers should have a rich understanding of the field to make the best possible choices in their situated teaching position.

The following is a discussion of the major pedagogical approaches to teaching L2 writing since the 1960s as presented and summarised by Silva (1990), Raimes (1991), Matsuda (2003), Hyland (2003, 2007) and Ferris and Hedgcock (2005). These approaches are the product approach, the process approach, and the genre approach; each approach has had its own theoretical preference and pedagogical emphasis as explained below. However, before presenting the common approaches to teaching writing, it is relevant to differentiate between writing in foreign language

(FL) versus second language (SL) contexts since this study took place in an EFL setting in Palestine.

### ***Writing in EFL versus ESL contexts***

The contexts in which FL writers write and learn to write shape their metacognitive knowledge about composing and textual conventions, their conception of writing, their motives for writing, and finally their approach to writing (Manchon, 2009). Furthermore, the manner in which writing is learned and taught in FL contexts where language is not widely used in the community is dependent upon social practices that do not coincide with those of SL contexts. In particular, “FL contexts show their own idiosyncrasy regarding the role that writing plays in the lives of students and teachers” (Manchon, 2009, p. 2). Ortega (2009) asserts that FL writing is learned for multiple purposes, in various socio-cultural contexts, each one shaped by its own socio-historical factors and educational purposes and values. Ortega further warns that we should take great care to avoid the pitfall of treating teachers, writers, and writing contexts across studies as belonging to an undifferentiated, homogeneous class of FL learners. For example, some FL writers must learn to write for professional or academic reasons (Sasaki, 2009). Other learners write to learn the language (Reichelt, 2009) and this may be unique to FL situation that stands in sharp contrast to writing practices in SL contexts, a setting in which writing to learn is more specifically associated with learning content not language for academic purposes to ensure academic success (Cheng, Myles & Curt, 2004; Manchon, 2009). Thus, the purposes of learning writing in a foreign language context differ from those in second language context. The distinctions between these FL and SL contexts also allow a more critical examination of research as it relates to my study.

### ***The product approach***

The product approach has a form-focused orientation. The product approach is characterised by a focus on linguistic knowledge, including the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammatical rules and cohesive devices and on rhetorical organisation of texts (Leki, 1992). In essence, the product approach sees writing as a “coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules” (Hyland, 2003, p.3). Accuracy and clear exposition are considered the main standard for good writing. This reflects a view that learning to write in a second language involves linguistic knowledge, vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and

cohesive devices. The product approach focuses also on organising texts into rhetorical patterns. Learning writing is learning the rhetorical patterns of academic paragraphs and essays. According to Leki (2006), these rhetorical patterns range from narration, argumentation, exposition, description, process analysis, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. The emphasis is to help students compose different types of paragraphs through developing topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences which paralleled the thesis statement, body paragraphs, and conclusion of the essay structure. Similarly, this approach focuses on structuring the classic three-to-five-paragraph essay following a model illustrating the correct usage of the rhetorical pattern (Young, 1978).

In the product approach, psychological and social factors are secondary, or in some cases ignored (Johns, 1997). Students are asked to write rhetorical patterns/modes without consideration of the functions that these structures serve for the roles of writer and reader, context, topics, or the many other factors that influence the nature of text processing and production. The emphasis is on the end product and not on the processes which occur to create the product. Yan (2005) agrees that the product approach ignores the actual process used by students and focuses on constant error correction, and thus affects students' motivation and self-esteem in the long run. Thus, writing instruction involves developing learners' skills in producing fixed patterns, and responding to writing means identifying and correcting grammatical errors. Hyland (2003) comments that the writing context is the ESL classroom; audience or purpose are ignored.

In addition, teachers' feedback on students' writing usually tends to focus on surface-level linguistic errors. This approach does not stress the quality of the content or ideas students write about but their mastery of linguistic features and "logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms" (Silva, 1990, p.14). In the product approach, learning to write in a second language involves linguistic knowledge, vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). The reader is the teacher in the role of editor, primarily concerned with formal linguistic features (Hyland, 2003). Accordingly, the final product which reflects the writer's language knowledge is highly valued (McDonough & Show 2003). Materials that apply the product approach are based around forms of texts such as topic sentences and description (Richards & Lockhart, 1995). This approach

viewed the learner as passive, with the teacher as the expert in a classroom. The product approach is seen to offer some advantages, such as improving learners' grammatical accuracy, especially with lower-level students; increasing the self-confidence of novice writers; and enhancing learners' stock of vocabulary (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). However, focusing mainly on forms is not enough to enhance the writing skills of learners (Hyland, 2003).

### ***The process approach***

The rise of the process approach is a reaction to the inadequacies of the product-centred approach (Crowley, 1998). This approach sees writing primarily as the exercise of linguistic skills and writing development as an unconscious process that occurs when teachers facilitate the exercise of writing skills (Badger & White, 2003; Zhang, 1995). Zamel (1983) summarises the conceptualisation of writing within the process paradigm as “a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (p.165). The main role of the writing teacher adopting a process approach is to “guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas” (Hyland, 2003, p.12). A process approach to writing emphasises critical thinking skills such as planning, drafting, understanding rhetorical problems, and organising (Raimes, 1992; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Proponents of the process approach believe that the acquisition of academic writing skills should be learner-centred with the individual learner's cognitive development during the process of creating texts being the focus (Johns, 1997a; Hyland, 2003). Cognitivists develop the cognitive processes employed in writing by making overt the strategies for good writing, such as revising texts through different phases of a process (Silva, 1990; Hyland, 2003). The process approach has changed the nature of the writing classroom into a “collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes” (Silva, 1990, p. 15). Learners are meant to feel they are part of a small community of peers as their work transforms through the different stages of writing: planning, writing, feedback, revising, and editing.

Current approaches employed in university EFL writing instruction may not actually include the process approach (Lefkowitz, 2009; O'Donnell, 2007). The principles of

the process approach may be used in the design of writing courses, but not implemented in the classroom procedures. EFL writing learners may be asked to revise their written work and some attention may be given to ideas generation, revision, and composition; however, the main objective of writing instruction would be on achieving grammatical accuracy in the second language (Lefkowitz, 2009). Likewise, Badger and White (2000) criticise the process approach for not giving students sufficient input, particularly in terms of linguistic knowledge, in order to enable them to write successfully. Swales (1990) says that process approaches “overemphasize the cognitive relationship between the writer and the writer’s internal world” (p.220). Thus, similar to the product model, the process approach does not focus on the social nature of academic writing.

### ***Genre approach***

The traditional process approach to teaching writing sees the learner almost wholly individualistically and has only considered the writing process in an abstract, internal, cognitive way (Atkinson, 2003). Atkinson (2003) has called for a theory of L2 writing teaching that depicts writing as a socially-situated activity instead of a process of “inviolable individuality” and “lonely, autonomous cognition” (p.6). The Genre approach emerged as an illustration of the changing views of learning to write which shifted towards how language is structured to achieve social purposes in particular contexts (Hyland, 2007). In their synthesis of ESL writing research, Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2008) referred to three theoretical orientations of genre. The first orientation is the New Rhetoric group which regards genre as “a socially standard strategy, embodied in a typical form of discourse that has evolved for responding to a recurring type of rhetorical situation” (p.137). The second perspective, based on Halliday’s (1994) Systematic Functional Linguistics, emphasises the importance of the social purposes of genres. Feez (2001) comments that this approach is committed to language and literacy education. The final orientation is English for Specific Purposes which emphasises both communicative purposes and formal proprieties of texts (Hyland, 2007).

Classroom applications of genre are related to current conceptions of literacy which show that writing varies with context and cannot be reduced to a set of abstract cognitive or technical skills (Street, 1995). Teachers usually draw on structural, functional, or process methods to help students in learning how to write, but cannot



teach students how to use language patterns in order to produce coherent and purposeful prose. Genre pedagogies enable teachers “to ground their courses in the texts that students will have to write in their target contexts, thereby supporting learners to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom” (Hyland, 2007, p.148). In the genre approach, learning to write is needs-oriented where effective teaching recognises the needs and prior learning and current proficiencies of students. In the genre approach, learning occurs more effectively if teachers are explicit about what is being studied, why it is being studied, and what will be expected of students at the end of the course (Hyland, 2007). Thus, genre-based approach is characterised by its strong attention to the functional relationship between the text and context.

### ***Towards an integrated approach to teaching writing***

To think of these L2 writing instruction models as competing theories is a false dichotomy. Grabe (2001) argues that there is no single grand theory of L2 writing, and there might be none because of the conflicting demands, contexts, purposes, and beliefs. Many researchers propose an integrated EFL writing pedagogy, combining genre and process approaches (Deng, 2007; Gao, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2005). Kim and Kim (2005) argue that combining process and genre approaches provides opportunities for learners to develop their individual creativity and helps them to fully understand the features of target genres. Implementing an integrated approach, Heffernan (2006) demonstrates that his students showed a dramatic improvement in their writing abilities. Given that most L2 writing instructional approaches address only a certain aspect of L2 writing (e.g., language, text, composing skills, reader expectations) adhering to any single approach can lead to a skewed perspective on the issues encountered by ESL/EFL students (Silva, 1990). ). Hyland (2011) recommended that teachers should attend to the different aspects of the five types of knowledge integral to the learning of writing which are:

1. Content knowledge of the ideas and concepts the topic will address
2. Linguistic knowledge of the syntax, lexes, and appropriate formal text component
3. Process knowledge of how to prepare and carry out a writing task
4. Genre knowledge of communicative purpose of the genre and its features.
5. Context knowledge of readers' expectations and cultural conventions

The different writing approaches need to be combined within EFL instruction as they are complementary rather than incompatible (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Hyland, 2003). Hasan and Akhand (2010) examined the effects of combining product and process approaches to writing on learners' performance. Their findings indicate that the combination of product and process outperformed the use of a single approach. Writing instruction that gives excessive attention to only one particular level of writing, be it product, process or social purpose, "gives students a limited, unbalanced and inaccurate view of how writing works" (George, 2001, p.666). Therefore, it may be better for writing teachers to consider an eclectic approach to writing instruction which considers their teaching contexts, their students' needs, and their instructional purposes (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003).

### **Research on teaching writing in EFL contexts**

Having discussed the most common L2 writing instruction theoretical models, I turn now to review empirical studies on teaching writing in four EFL contexts. These studies have investigated the instructional approaches and pedagogical practices in teaching writing in specific EFL contexts and illustrated how context may impact on EFL writing instruction (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Heffernan, 2006; Reichelt, 2006; You, 2004). My choice to review those studies wasn't so much about those countries sharing any particular educational and/or ecological context with Gaza/Palestine, but rather the fact that these particular studies addressed and discussed contextual issues whereas most of the extant literature carried out in western contexts simply were silent on the issue of context, or it was clear that contextual factors were very different. Hasan and Akhand (2010) investigated the practices of L2 writing instruction in Bangladesh with special reference to the effects of the integrated product and process approach to writing on students' performance. The first EFL writing class was taught using a product approach, and the other class was instructed using a process approach. Then an eclectic approach was adopted in both classes. Based on students' performance, combining the product and the process approaches leads to better results than a focus on one approach only. Under the product approach, students tried to recall their previous knowledge and some of them imitated model writing and some reproduced the original. Under the process approach, most of the students faced problems in brainstorming and organising their ideas cohesively as they were not familiar with the method. Using

the balanced instructional and curricular approach of the product and process approach to teaching writing helps student writers develop their skills in using language by experiencing a whole writing process as well as gain knowledge from the model texts. Such a complementary use of both approaches may help students to be authors rather than copiers thus has the potential benefit of integrating critical thinking into their academic writing. In Bangladeshi writing classes, students have a variety of purposes for attending the class, such as obtaining good academic grades to obtaining better jobs. So in EFL/ESL contexts like Palestine, where English exposure is very instrumental, more fruitful approaches to teaching writing should be applied. To do this, neither the product nor the process alone appears to be the best alternative for Bengali students if we consider students' learning habits. Instead, a balanced instructional and curricular approach integrating the product and process approach to teaching writing is preferable.

You (2004) researched a typical college English curriculum for non-majors in Chinese universities, with a focus on writing instruction. Data were collected using classroom observations, teachers' interviews, and students' interviews and selected teaching materials. The study found that English writing was taught in the product approach, focusing on correct form rather than helping the students develop thoughts. The findings also showed that writing instruction in this context is severely constrained by practice tests and various test-preparation exercises. Because of their low salaries in China and their heavy workloads, English teachers have to work extra hours and have little time to spend on giving feedback to students or on improving their writing instruction.

Reichert (2005) explored EFL writing instruction in Poland. She described EFL writing teaching at Polish schools, private institutes and universities. The data collection methods were interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. The research focused on the types of writing assignments, the classroom activities and materials, methods of providing feedback, and the context of teaching. The researcher described how EFL writing instruction in Poland is shaped by the English language testing system in Poland; there is significant pressure upon teachers at the university level to prepare their students for final exams, and this frustrates students and teachers alike. There is also an absence of

developed traditions of teaching first and foreign language writing; the dominant approach to teaching EFL writing was the product approach.

Hefferman (2006) outlines an academic writing course that was taught in Japan to 100 students who took the course as a preparation for their study abroad program in Canada. EFL writing courses in Japanese universities involve explicit instruction in the differences between English and Japanese rhetoric. The researcher found that Japanese students in his writing course were unfamiliar with terms like thesis statement, unity, coherence, cohesion. However, after explicit instruction in the features of Western academic writing during that course, the students demonstrated a great improvement in their writing skills. After finishing the writing course in the Japanese university, the participants studied for eight months in Canada. The results demonstrate that, upon returning from Canada, the students showed a dramatic improvement in their writing abilities. They displayed not only proficient writing skills but the ability to maintain satisfactory grades in their other courses while in Canada. His study discussed how to structure an academic writing course for learners who may not have the language skills and motivation to deal with such a course. He recommended that teachers who teach academic writing to their university students should approach the task with the specific contextual needs and goals of their learners in mind. Given that this course was preparatory for students planning study in Canada, it focused on how to write in an academic style as well as on primary and secondary research methods.

To sum up, the different contexts of teaching EFL writing in Poland, China, Japan, and Bangladesh have a significant impact on FL writing instruction. For example, large class sizes and the teachers' heavy workloads impact writing pedagogy significantly and may constrain the approaches taken and the introduction of innovative ways of teaching writing. Thus, considering the context of teaching EFL writing in Palestinian universities can provide a detailed, accurate description of how writing is taught and may explain the factors influences the teachers' pedagogical practices.

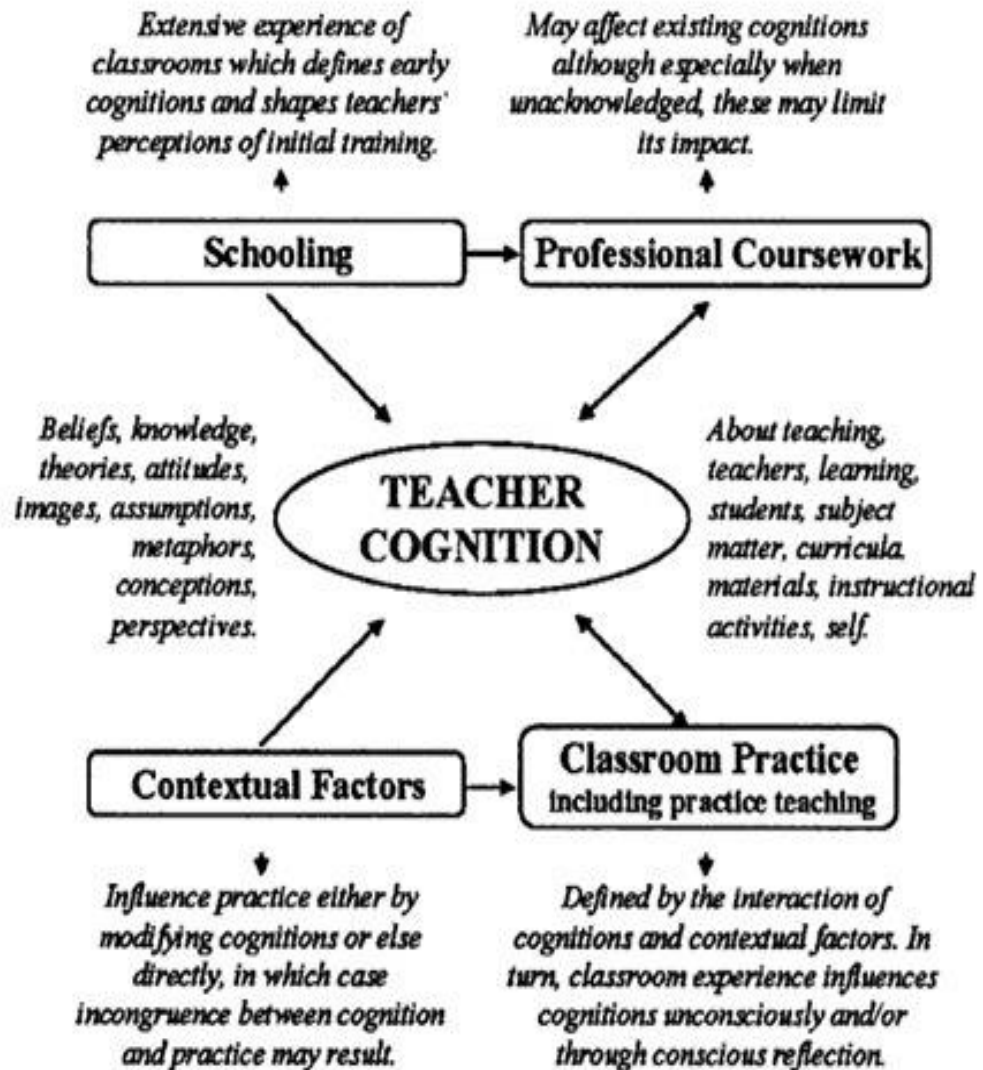
## **Language teacher cognition**

### ***Definition of teachers' cognitions***

Since cognition is the underlying concept in this study, it is relevant to provide a definition from the literature. Teacher cognition research began to find its way into the field of language teacher education in the early 1990s (Borg, 2003). In his review of literature on teacher cognition during the period 1976–2006, Borg (2006) identified the challenge of defining and labelling teacher cognition. There are various terms that have been used over the past few decades for teacher cognition: among them are “teacher knowledge” (Freeman, 2002), “teachers’ beliefs” (Burns, 1992; Richards, 1998), “beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge” (Woods, 1996), “teachers’ theories” (Borg, 1999), and “teachers’ personal theories” (James, 2001). These terms, including teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, and teacher thinking, comprise the broader concept of teacher cognition (Calderhead, 1996). According to Kagan (1992), teacher cognition includes teachers’ thoughts about instruction and beliefs about students, classrooms, learning, and their own teaching performance. Due to the difficulty of drawing clear lines between mental constructs such as beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge, I use the term teacher cognition as an inclusive term to embrace the complexity of teachers’ mental lives: “what teachers at any stage of their careers think, know, or believe in relation to any aspect of their work, and which also entail the study of actual classroom practices and of the relationships between cognitions and these practices” (Borg, 2006, p. 50). This definition emphasises the impact of cognitions on their classroom practices.

A number of generally accepted assumptions can provide some insight into the nature of cognition. Researchers in this field (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2001; Freeman & Richards, 1996) are interested in the thought processes of teachers, what teachers know, how they come to know, and how they draw on their knowledge in their classroom teaching. What language teachers think, know, believe, and do, is influenced by several areas of the teaching profession. Identifying influences on teacher cognition has been an important avenue of enquiry in the field. In his review of teacher cognition research, Borg (2006) proposes a framework of schematic conceptualisation of teaching which shows that teachers’ concepts about teaching and learning are established early in schooling experiences as shown in Figure 1. These early concepts may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives (Woods, 1996). Teachers’ concepts about teaching and learning may be

affected later by professional preparation programs in which they receive training and pedagogical orientations. However, when teachers are at work, some contextual elements such as curriculum and teaching culture also influence their practices which may be more or less congruent with their underlying beliefs. Meanwhile, teachers' experiences in classrooms may simultaneously shape their cognition unconsciously or consciously through reflection. Numerous studies have discussed the interaction and relationship between what teachers believe and their classroom contextual elements and practice (Burns, 1996; Golombek, 1998). Burns (1996) found that there are three interacting contextual levels of teacher thinking which are: thinking about the institutional culture; beliefs about language, learning and learners; and thinking about instructional activities. Burns' and Borg's frameworks will be discussed further and compared and contrasted with the cognitive –ecological model which emerged from synthesising the findings of this study (See Chapter 7, pp 190-194),



**Figure 1: Elements and processes in language teacher cognition**  
 (Borg, 2006, p. 283)

Some researchers have supported the concept that teacher cognition is situated and context-sensitive (Borg, 2006; Tsui, 2003; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Teacher cognition is situated in contexts and involves understanding the associations among context, concepts, and culture (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011). Putnam and Borko (2000) indicate that teacher cognition is situated in particular physical and social contexts. The situated perspectives indicate that what teachers do and think are intertwined with the particular context in which they work. There is ample evidence to suggest that teachers' learning, teaching experiences, and classroom contextual factors all influence their cognition (Borg, 2003; Johnson, 1994; Woods, 1996).

Research also suggests that teacher conceptions about learning and teaching drive classroom actions and influence students' learning (Andrew, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Golombek, 1998). In addition, teachers' beliefs, knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning are constructed through their experiences and interactions in their classrooms, with their students, and through professional learning and development (Meijer, Verloop, &Beijaard, 1999). Researchers have emphasised that what teachers know and believe must be considered because teachers bring these conceptions to their teaching, and these conceptions play a role in how they teach (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992).

Teachers' cognitions develop over time through "a process of enculturation and social construction" (Pajares, 1992, p. 316). Teachers hold significant beliefs about their students and how they learn, about the nature and goals of teaching, about a subject, about learning to teach, and about their role (Calderhead, 1996). Teachers' cognitions develop through a series of personal and cultural experiences, where earlier events can have a powerful role in shaping later ones (Borg, 2006; Ertmer, 2005). Early experiences as learners have a major effect on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, 2009; Lortie, 2002; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Despite these research studies, the relationship between teachers' cognitions and their practice of teaching is still unclear (Phipps & Borg, 2009). This gives rise to the need to further investigate the complex relationships between teachers' cognitions and practices (Borg & Burns, 2009). This study examines Palestinian EFL writing teachers' cognitions about teaching L2 writing. The following sections review studies about sources of teachers' cognitions and interrelationship between cognitions and practices with special reference to L2 writing instruction.

### ***Sources of teachers' cognitions***

When investigating teachers' cognitions, it is necessary to identify the sources of these cognitions. The sources impact on how these cognitions are formed and shape teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. These possible sources are apprenticeship of observation, classroom teaching experience, and teacher education (Lihua, 2010; Richards, 1998; Tsui, 2003). Lihua's (2010) study concluded that teachers' classroom practices are influenced by an intertwined convergence of their learning experiences, teaching experiences, teacher training experiences and personal experiences. Lortie (2002) coined the term the



“apprenticeship of observation” to describe the period of time an individual spends watching teachers. This is likely to amount to thousands of hours, and is largely responsible for many of the beliefs that teachers hold about teaching. Bailey et al. (1996) found that teachers’ own learning experiences not only influenced their criteria for judging things like successful or unsuccessful language learning, but also strongly influenced the way they taught. Using data from an Australian study, Ellis (2006) showed that experiential knowledge shaped by different kinds of L2 learning formed a powerful resource for ESL teachers’ professional knowledge and beliefs about language teaching. Similarly, Zeng and Murphy (2007) explored the language learning experiences and beliefs of six non-native English-speaking teachers in China. The findings of this study reflect the complex relationship between EFL learning and teaching. Junqueira and Kim (2013) employed observations and interviews to examine the relationship between previous training, teaching experience, corrective feedback beliefs, and the practices of a new and an experienced ESL teacher. The findings revealed that the apprenticeship of observation was more influential on the belief system. Teaching experience and teacher training did not seem to shape the teachers’ beliefs about corrective feedback. Hence, students’ cognitions about L2 writing may be shaped as they receive a particular instructional approach in the writing classroom.

Teachers’ classroom teaching experience is another important source of teacher cognition. Actual teaching experience provides teachers with opportunities to test the cognitions that they have gained from other sources. Actual teaching experience is usually perceived to be the most vital source of beliefs about teaching (Tsui, 2003). For instance, Burke (2006) studied the impact of a world language education methods course at an American university upon the practices of preservice teachers during a five-week field experience in secondary school classrooms. Data collection methods included lesson plans and self-critiques, language teaching philosophies, e-mails, a reflection paper, and responses to an open-ended questionnaire. The analysis of the data identified three teacher models: the communicative, a teacher who uses the communicative approach to teach a world language; the grammar-translation, a teacher who develops lessons that are centred around specific grammar forms; and the hybrid teacher, a world language teacher who uses a mixture of the grammar-translation method and the communicative approach to

teach a world language. Most of their teaching practices did not reflect the focus of the course on communicative language teaching.

Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (1999) examined teachers' practical knowledge in relation to teaching L2 reading comprehension. Teachers' practical knowledge is "the knowledge and beliefs that underlie actions; this kind of knowledge is personal, related to context and content, often tacit, and based on (reflection on) experience" (p. 60). They learned that teacher practical knowledge was not shared by all teachers and that the knowledge of some teachers was more complex than others. This knowledge was not only influenced by professional development training, but also by the amount of reflection teachers gave to issues they considered important.

Teacher education programs as being an important source of teachers' cognition has been highlighted by a recent study conducted by Nassaji. He (2012) examined L2 teachers' perceptions of the relationship between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and language teaching and the relevance and usefulness of the SLA findings for L2 pedagogy. Analyses of data revealed that most teachers believed that knowing about SLA research is useful and that it can improve L2 teaching. However, a high percentage indicated that the knowledge they gained from teaching experience is more relevant to their teaching practices than the knowledge they gained from research. They also agreed that knowing about second language acquisition research is useful and can improve L2 teaching. However, they reported that they seldom read research articles due to time limitations, the difficulties in reading research articles, and lack of interest. This finding may highlight the contextual barriers that face language teachers and how such factors constrain teachers' development and ultimately their practices.

Finally, teacher education represents a plausible source of teacher cognition development. Studies of the relationship between teacher education and teachers' cognition and classroom practices have revealed that teacher education courses have a significant impact on teachers' future teaching (Bigelow & Ranney, 2005; Bodur, 2012; Burns & Knox, 2005; Busch, 2010; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Wyatt, 2009; Borg & Wyatt, 2011). Busch (2010) explored the impact of a second language acquisition (SLA) course on the beliefs of 381 preservice teachers at a US university. The course contributes to significant changes in the participants' beliefs

in many areas including the difficulty of language acquisition, the role of culture, the role of error correction, and the importance of grammar. The preservice teachers attributed their beliefs before the course to their own language learning experience in high school and the changes in their beliefs were due to content and activities in the SLA course. Bodur (2012) also examined to what extent teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students are shaped by designed courses. Data were collected using the Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the beliefs of the teachers who received more multicultural preparation were more positive and academically-based rather than on personal experiences. Their data reflected a more in-depth understanding of how to help culturally and linguistically diverse students. Using observations, interviews, and reflective writing, Wyatt (2009) followed the practical knowledge growth in communicative language teaching of an Omani secondary teacher who was studying a part-time on an in-service BA (TESOL) programme at the University of Leeds offered in conjunction with the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. Qualitative data suggest that the teacher's practical knowledge of the role of the teacher, the nature of learning, and the importance of CLT methodology developed considerably during the course. For example, before participating in the course, the teacher perceived her role as a transmitter of knowledge who focuses mainly on accuracy. This perception began to change once she was exposed to theory on young learners and how they learn, and that was reflected on her pedagogical practices.

Similarly, in a qualitative study, Borg (2011) investigated the impact of an in-service teacher education programme in the UK on the beliefs of six English language teachers. His study findings indicated that the program contributed to the formation of teachers' beliefs through reflecting on them, modifying them, articulating them, and thinking of strategies to translate their beliefs into practices. Finally, Faez and Valeo (2012) studied the teachers' perceptions of the role of an ESOL teacher education program on preparing them to teach in adult ESOL programs in Canada and on their sense of teaching self-efficacy. Data were collected through a survey and follow-up interviews. Findings show that the course enhanced their perceptions of preparedness by gaining experience in the classroom through the practicum and the teaching experiences. Their sense of efficacy to perform within certain teaching expectations depended on the task. To sum up, each of these sources can help

teachers develop their cognitions and pedagogical practices about teaching. This research explores the perceptions of Palestinian EFL writing teachers about the extent the apprenticeship of observation, classroom teaching experience and teacher education shape their cognitions and practices.

### ***The Relationship between teachers' cognitions and teaching practices***

Little will have been achieved if research into educational beliefs fails to provide insights into the relationship between beliefs and teacher practices (Pajares, 1992). Several studies have reported significant interaction between teachers' beliefs and practice (Andon & Eckerth, 2009; Borg & Burns, 2008; Burns, 1996; Wood, 1996). Andon and Eckerth (2009) investigated task-based language teaching (TBLT) of four experienced UK-based ESL teachers and its relationship to task-based learning by drawing on teachers' pedagogic principles and practices as they relate to adopting, adapting, or rejecting TBLT in their classrooms. The interviews and the classroom observation of these teachers revealed the impact of the TBLT teaching on the students' learning. Also, through an ethnographic study, Burns (1996) examined the thinking and beliefs of experienced teachers and the effects of these beliefs on their classroom practice. Lesson observations were followed by a stimulated recall procedure to "elicit reflections and descriptions" (1996, p. 157). She stresses "the intercontextuality of thinking and beliefs, and teachers' implicit, personalised 'theories for practice' which form the motivating conceptual frameworks shaping what teachers do when they teach" (p. 175).

In a similar vein, Woods (1996) followed eight Canadian ESL teachers' decision-making through an entire course. The researcher employed a number of methods of data collection: ethnographic interviews, observation over a period of time, video-stimulated recall, logs, lesson plans and notes. Woods identifies an "interwoven network of beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge that affect how a teacher interprets teaching events and therefore the decisions made in the classroom" (p. 196). Similarly, Borg and Burns (2008) examine the reported beliefs and practices about the integration of grammar and skills teaching. The participants were 176 English language teachers from 18 countries. Data were collected through a questionnaire which elicited general beliefs about grammar teaching and specific beliefs and reported practices about the integration of grammar and skills teaching. Teachers' beliefs centred on avoiding teaching discrete grammar and preferring high levels of

integration of grammar into other activities in their teaching. However, this was self-report only; it was not supported by classroom observation so it was difficult to know the extent that these reported practices occurred in classrooms.

In contrast, some studies have found that teachers' stated beliefs are inconsistent with their teaching practices. Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis (2004) found a mismatch between L2 teachers' reported beliefs about form-focused instruction and their classroom practices. Basturkmen et al. suggest that it may be better to consider the teachers' reported beliefs as being "potentially conflictual rather than inherently inconsistent" (p. 268). They indicated that the mismatches between beliefs and practices are challenges that can be resolved. Moreover, Farrell and Lim (2005) examined the reported beliefs and actual instructional practices in regard to teaching grammar of two experienced teachers in a primary school in Singapore. The results showed that the teachers' belief system is complex and that some of their beliefs are not translated into their pedagogical practices because of contextual barriers. Furthermore, Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (2001) conducted a quantitative study to explore the similarities and differences in teachers' practical knowledge about reading instruction. Results showed that although there was shared knowledge among the teachers, there were large variations in their practical knowledge. Finally, Orafi and Borg (2009) examined Libyan EFL teachers' beliefs and their instructions in applying communicative language teaching. They investigated three teachers' implementation of a new communicative English language curriculum in Libyan secondary schools. The data were collected using classroom observation and interviews. The results showed great discrepancies between the objectives of the curriculum and the instructional practices of the participants. The teachers confess that their practices are highly influenced by their conceptions of themselves as teachers, of their students, and of the demands of the testing. The common feature between my study and the studies reviewed above is that they look at language teachers' cognitions but my study will specifically focus on the teachers' instructional practices in the EFL writing classroom and the cognitions shaping them.

### ***The impact of teaching contexts on teachers' cognitions and practices***

A number of studies have been conducted on teachers' cognitions; nevertheless, little reference has been made to the contextual factors (Borg, 2006). It is necessary

to “draw attention to significant social and psychological variables which we seem to be neglecting in our current research in language learning” (Breen, 2001, p.134). Teachers’ beliefs have been found to be highly socially constructed and contextualised. For Tsui (2003), the teachers’ sense of their work depends on their specific teaching context and how they relate to it.

A number of studies explored the relationship between teachers’ practices and context (Balçıkkanlı, 2010; Bartlett & Liyanage, 2008; Farrell & Kun, 2008; Feryok, 2008; Popko, 2005). Liyanage and Bartlett (2008) analysed the reflections of non-native English students about the extent to which they will be able to implement what they had learned in a Contextually Responsive Teacher Training programme in their local teaching contexts when they return as EFL/ESL teachers. The results revealed that the application of the new principles and strategies were constrained by lack of resources and appropriate textbooks. Similarly, Balçıkkanlı (2010) investigated student teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy in a Turkish educational context. The data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 112 student teachers and interviews with 20 of those student teachers to identify their attitudes towards learner autonomy. The results showed that student teachers are positive about the adoption of learner autonomy practices but were unwilling to let their students decide about the time and place of the course and the course textbooks because they regarded these as administrative matters.

Furthermore, Farrell and Kun (2008) examined how language policy influenced the beliefs and classroom practices of three primary school teachers concerning the use of Colloquial Singaporean English (Singlish) in their classrooms. The results show that teachers’ reactions to language policy are not a straightforward process. Feryok (2008) describes the practical theory of an EFL school teacher in Armenia who reported using a communicative approach to language teaching. The study examined her cognitions and observed practices and the contextual factors that influenced them. Data were collected through e-mail interviews, classroom observations, and one on-site interview. Analysis of the interview data showed that the teacher expressed a cohesive, coherent practical theory

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Bigelow and Ranney (2005) also showed the difficulties teachers face in transforming their declarative knowledge into classroom practice. Nishino (2012) studied the relationship among Japanese high school teachers' beliefs, their practices, and socio-educational factors regarding communicative language teaching. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. Students' communicative abilities, teachers' beliefs and communicative language teaching self-efficacy, and exams expectations shaped their pedagogical practices. Thus, these studies highlight the interplay between context, cognitions, and practices. This research attempts to explore how the context facilitates or hinders the translation of teacher's held cognitions into practices when teaching L2 writing in Palestinian universities.

### **Studies on teachers' cognitions and writing instruction**

The studies which have investigated teachers' cognitions and practices in L2 writing instruction are limited (Borg, 2006). Researchers have addressed the issues related to L2 writing teacher cognition, including writing teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices about teaching and learning writing (Lee, 1998); writing teachers' conceptualising, planning and delivering writing courses (Cumming, 2003), teachers'

use of written language in ESL classrooms (Burns, 1992), L2 writing teachers' beliefs about and practices of error feedback (Diab, 2005; Lee, 2003), goals of adult L2 learners and their teachers for writing instruction (Zhou, Busch & Cumming, 2013) and writing teachers' perspectives about their own development as teachers of writing (Lee, 2010, 2011; Nguyen & Hudson, 2010). Other studies have focused on teachers' decision-making process on written compositions rating, on the implementation of pedagogical innovations in teaching writing, and on the mismatch between ESL teachers and students' beliefs about feedback on writing.

Burns (1992) examined the beliefs and writing instruction practices of six ESL teachers who taught ESL beginning learners in Australia. Burns found "an extremely complex and interrelated network of underlying beliefs, clustering around five major areas which appeared to influence the instructional practices and approaches adopted by the teachers" (p. 59). These teachers held different beliefs about the nature of language learning, language learning strategies, the relationship between written and spoken language, learner characteristics, and the nature of the language classroom. The differences in the beliefs teachers held about these issues were reflected in their different classroom practices. In their longitudinal study, Cumming and Shi (1995) interviewed five experienced instructors on a weekly basis about their ESL writing classes over 2 years at a Canadian university. The main purpose of their study was to understand what aspects of their instructors' belief systems and their thinking influence their pedagogical practices. It also aimed to document how the teachers' cognitions adopt instructional innovations. Data were gathered through 48 tape-recorded interviews, and they showed each instructor's conceptions of writing to match their individual, reported views about their teaching.

In some cases, teachers' own negative experiences learning L2 writing lead them to making different choices teaching it. Tsui (1996) investigated a Chinese teacher teaching writing in an EFL context in Hong Kong. Tsui (1996) focused primarily on one teacher's integration of process writing in her teaching of writing to Chinese students. Julie, the Chinese teacher who participated in the study, shaped her teaching according to her own learning English writing experience. She herself was taught using the product-oriented approach, with special emphasis on grammatical accuracy and rhetorical organisation. However, Julie was not happy with her teaching of writing, because "she knew that writing was a problem for her students



because it had been a problem for her when she was young” (p. 99). Understanding her students’ frustrations as learners of English, she tried to integrate the process-oriented approach in her teaching. Although she faced some dilemmas on the way of exploring possible methods as a writing teacher, she explored the value of mixing process-oriented approach with the product-oriented approach.

Furthermore, Van der Schaaf, Stokking, and Verloop (2008) explored the pedagogical beliefs of 18 Dutch teachers as being described in their portfolios. It also compared their beliefs with their pedagogical practices as perceived by their 317 students in a questionnaire. Results indicate that there are many inconsistencies between teachers’ beliefs and the students’ perceptions of the teachers’ practices. For example, the teachers stated that they focus on teaching their students research skills; however, their students mentioned that their teachers rarely assisted students in their classroom research activities. This study asserts that there are contradictions between writing teachers’ reported practices and their students’ perceptions of these practices.

The theme of measuring change in teachers’ conception of ESL writing instruction, ESL writers, or texts is investigated by Xiao and Sengupta (2002) and Scott and Rodgers (1995). Scott and Rodgers (1995) describe the impact of a nine-week collaborative training project on secondary school language teachers’ practices regarding the use of process approach, holistic assessment, and positive feedback of writing in the L2 classroom. Based on the pre and post assessment tools, the results showed changes in teacher attitudes toward teaching writing and changes in their assessments methods of writing assignments. Sengupta and Xiao (2002) explored how teaching experience in a university L2 writing centre shaped three teachers’ personal theories of ESL writing. Their study investigated three teachers’ changing beliefs about ESL writers, readers, texts and contexts. Presented in the form of three narratives, the study illustrated how a combination of meetings and collegial interactions can reshape teachers’ assumptions about L2 writing. Inductive analyses of the data showed that all three participants had critically examined their content and pedagogic content knowledge of ESL writing and revised it to some extent. The knowledge sharing environment facilitated the teachers’ reflections on their teaching and in learning from their teaching experiences.

Some studies revealed the differences between native and non-native L2 writing teachers' instructional practices. Pennington, Brock, and Yue (1996) compared the practices of native and non-native teachers of ESL writing in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, and Singapore. The data were collected using a questionnaire and interviews. The results revealed a gap between teachers' reported and actual practices. Whereas the most process-oriented teachers were those in Australia, those teaching in Japan were the most product-oriented. Furthermore, those teaching in the other countries showed a greater difference between theoretical knowledge and practice. In addition, there are a number of studies which investigated the relationship between writing teachers' beliefs and their written feedback practices. For example, Diab (2005) studied EFL university teachers' preferences for error correction and grading and their perceptions of effective feedback to writing. Then, she compares the teachers' preferences and beliefs to those of their students. The analysis of teacher and students' responses displayed many mismatches between teachers' and students' preferences for error correction and assessment techniques. For example, the teacher admitted minimizing her feedback on final drafts because of her belief that students did not pay as much attention to final drafts as they did to a work in progress. However, one of the students emphasized the importance of receiving comments on a final draft. L2 students expected surface-level error correction from their teachers and believed that such feedback was beneficial. Also, the teacher agreed on the importance of providing feedback on content rather than on form and on the employment of peer reviews and student-teacher conferences, nevertheless, her students expressed their need to surface-level correction.

What teachers believe about writing instruction may not be reflected in their practices in writing classrooms. In an EFL context, Pennington et al. (1996) found a gap between reported beliefs and practices in their classrooms. In this respect, Pennington et al. commented that the gap between an ideal teaching situation and actual classroom practice might be the result of contextual constraints including students' proficiency level and expectations about teaching and writing, teachers' knowledge and cognitions about writing practices, time limitation, and testing systems. Lee's (1998) investigation of Hong Kong writing teachers' beliefs about the teaching of L2 writing found inconsistencies between their pedagogical beliefs and practices. They believed that textual coherence was more important than grammar

and vocabulary in writing instruction; however, those beliefs were not evident in their classroom practices, which focused on grammar and vocabulary. Lee explains that the teachers put more focus on low-level features rather than discourse features in their teaching of writing because their major concern is students' ability to write grammatical English. In addition, Cumming (2001) interviewed 48 experienced ESL/EFL instructors in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, and Thailand to investigate their concepts of writing assessment. It was found that the writing teachers' conceptualisations of assessment varied depending on whether the courses they taught were for general or specific purposes for learning English. Conceptualising ESL/EFL writing for specific purposes (e.g., in reference to particular academic disciplines or employment domains) provided clear rationales for selecting tasks for assessment and specifying standards for achievement, but these situations tended to use limited forms of assessment. Conceptualising ESL/EFL writing for general purposes, either for academic studies or settlement in an English-dominant country, was associated with varied methods and broad-based criteria for assessing achievement and was focused on individual learners' development. Their results suggest that teachers in ESL/EFL contexts are likely to conceptualise their writing instruction based on their perceptions of students' needs and abilities even though what they do in the classroom is inconsistent with what they state in terms of theoretical beliefs. Therefore, writing teachers' perceptions of their practices, classroom management, and lesson focus are highly affected by institutional factors and social influences.

In a similar study about teacher feedback on students' writing, Lee (2008) examines Hong Kong secondary English teachers' feedback practices and factors that have shaped those practices in the context of their work. The findings indicate that teachers' written feedback focused on error correction and this is not recommended in the local curriculum. These teachers' error-focused feedback practices were shaped by their beliefs, values, attitudes to exams, and teacher power and autonomy.

Similarly, Lee (2009) investigated teachers' beliefs and practice in written feedback from two sources. The first source was analysing feedback on 174 texts collected from 26 teachers and follow-up interviews with seven of them to investigate teachers' actual written feedback. The second method of collecting data was a

questionnaire administered to 206 secondary teachers and follow-up interviews with 19 of them to find out teachers' beliefs and reported practice. Lee (2009) investigated teachers' beliefs and practice in written feedback from two sources. The first source was analysing feedback on 174 texts collected from 26 teachers and follow-up interviews with seven of them to investigate teachers' actual written feedback. The second method of collecting data was a questionnaire administered to 206 secondary teachers and follow-up interviews with 19 of them to find out teachers' beliefs and reported practice. The study revealed ten discrepancies between teacher beliefs and practice in written feedback. One mismatch is that although teachers believe in the value of accuracy, organisation and the development of ideas, they focus mainly on linguistic forms. The teachers also reported their preference for selective marking; however, they marked their students' errors comprehensively. In addition, their practices of correcting and locating errors for students, using error codes, giving scores or grades, responding mainly to weaknesses, and preferring one-shot writing over process writing did not match their beliefs about giving feedback.

Some studies have also looked at the possible reasons for discrepancies between L2 writing beliefs and practices. For instance, Lee (2011) has shifted her focus from the act of giving feedback to teachers' readiness to implement changes in their feedback instruction. Similar to most of her previous studies on written feedback, Lee's (2011) study also investigated written feedback practices of Hong Kong secondary teachers. Results revealed that while the teachers cognitively agreed on the importance of the feedback revolution, the teachers noted a number of factors that hindered their readiness to implement changes in their written feedback. Some of these factors included lack of teacher training, lack of support from key stakeholders, such as department heads, principals and practical constraints.

Zhou et al.'s (2013) study found discrepancies between teachers' cognitions and the perceptions of their students. The researchers compared L2 students' needs for improving their grammar in academic writing with those of their teachers. Semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls were conducted with 15 ESL students and five ESL teachers and nine university instructors. Results revealed discrepancies between students' and teachers' goals for grammar improvement. While students preferred improving formal grammatical features, such as verb tenses and clause structure, the instructors reported that grammar improvement is

not a priority for them and that improving grammar should be directed towards grammatical complexity and the stylistic features of texts.

Some studies have also focused on teachers' perspectives on their own development (Lee, 2010) and the developments of teachers' L2 academic literacy skills (Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011). Lee's (2010), for instance, is among the first studies that investigated teachers' perspectives on their development as writing teachers at the end of an in-service teacher education program in Hong Kong. Lee conducted interviews as the main data collection method. In addition, she used teachers' classroom research reports written for teacher training classes to triangulate the interview data. The findings showed that writing teacher training promoted the participants' learning as teachers as well as their identities as writing teachers.

Nguyen and Hudson (2010) examine 97 prospective EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences about learning to teach English writing before their practicum in Vietnamese high schools. Data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire. The data indicated that the teachers were interested in learning to teach English, especially teaching writing. They expressed their need for enthusiastic and supportive mentors to model effective teaching practices and share their teaching experiences.

While many studies in second language writing teacher cognition shed light on the importance of investigating the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching of writing and their actual practices in L2 writing classrooms, these studies are limited in terms of the methods they included. Specifically, very few studies included classroom observations to gain insight on their practices (Burns, 1992). Instead, authors conducted interviews (Cumming, 2003; Diab, 2005), administered surveys (Lee, 2011), reflected on their own development as L2 writes teachers (Blanton, Kroll, Cumming, Erickson, Johns, Leki, 2002) or combined surveys and interviews to elicit teachers' thinking and practices (Lee, 1998; 2003). The results reported in the studies with no classroom observation component remained on the self-reported level. In contrast, most teacher cognition studies in teaching other skills and aspects of language have employed a combination of observation and interview data (Basturkmen et al, 2004; Borg, 2001; Phipps & Borg, 2009).

In particular, some studies included observational data to check if what teachers report as their cognitions is tied to their teaching contexts or practices (Polat, 2009). Some researchers collected observational data first and then used that data as the basis for generating rich data in stimulated-recall sessions, and post-observation interviews (Borg, 1999, 2001; Farrell & Lim, 2005). Borg (2006) points out the crucial role of including observations in language teacher cognition studies in the following way: Can language teacher cognition be usefully studied without reference to what happens in classrooms? The ultimate goal of researching teacher cognitions is to understand teachers' pedagogical practices. Besides, the studies of writing teachers' cognitions involve issues of how L2 writing should be taught and how teachers' cognitions impact their classroom behaviour. However, the majority of these studies were conducted in ESL setting where the teachers are native speakers of English, and the common methods of data collection are questionnaires and interviews. The proposed study attempts to fill these gaps by conducting the study in an EFL setting where the teachers are non-native speakers of English. My study employed interviews, observations, and documents analysis to understand teachers' practices through their cognitions.

### **Language teachers' cognitions research approaches**

Research studies on cognitions about L2 teaching and learning have made use of three approaches: normative, metacognitive and contextual (Barcelos, 2006). Below is a brief discussion of the features of each approach, with a particular focus on the contextual approach as the one adopted for the purposes of the current study.

#### ***The normative approach***

The normative approach describes the relationship between cognitions about language teaching and learning and teaching and learning behaviours as cause-effect relationship (Barcelos, 2006). The studies adopting this approach primarily describe and categorise the types of beliefs and cognitions which students and teachers have by using Likert-scale questionnaires based on inventories on beliefs as the main instrument of data collection (Barcelos, 2006). Horwitz (1988) is credited with developing Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to explore students' and teachers' beliefs. The BALLI questionnaire was used in many studies (Horwitz, 1988; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Peacock, 2001). For example,

Peacock (2001) employed the BALLI in a longitudinal study to investigate the beliefs of 146 trainee ESL teachers over their 3-year programme at the City University of Hong Kong. It was hoped that while trainees might have had some misconceptions or inappropriate beliefs about language learning at the beginning of the program, these beliefs would change as they studied TESL methodology. There were no significant changes between their beliefs before and after the course.

Using a 36-item questionnaire of beliefs about important instructional areas, Matsuura et al. (2001) compare Japanese university EFL student and teacher beliefs about learning and teaching communicative English. Participants completed BALLI about their objectives, teaching styles, teaching materials, and curriculum related issues. They found that while the teachers surveyed preferred newer, learner-centred methods that aim to develop fluency, many students preferred traditional types of instruction, including lectures, translation, and pronunciation lessons. These results suggest that constant assessment of cognitions is essential to link ELT theories and classroom practice. Li, Zhao, and Yeung (2012) also employed surveys to examine the teacher perceptions of instructional approaches and modular curriculum implementation which was introduced in primary schools in Singapore to help Chinese students maintain their native tongue. The findings indicated that experienced teachers of the modular curriculum were less motivated to use traditional pedagogy.

Barcelos (2006) lists a number of advantages and limitations for the normative approach. The quantitative, etic research methods in the normative approach offer many advantages, such as providing clarity and accuracy through the use of well-designed questionnaires and descriptive statistics to collect and analyse data from large numbers of respondents. Nevertheless, a main limitation of beliefs studies using the normative approach is that the set of beliefs examined are only those identified by the researcher and therefore do not reflect the variety of all the cognitions students and teachers may hold about language learning and teaching. Such research studies may also have the risk of participants' misunderstanding of the wordings of the questionnaire items. Besides, it is not possible to fully capture the cognitions of people through their responses to a set of normative statements. Cognitions are emotionally and intellectually complicated. This supports the idea that cognitions cannot be studied out of context.

### ***The metacognitive approach***

Within this approach, cognition is defined as “metacognitive knowledge that learners and teachers have about language learning and teaching” (Barcelos, 2006, p.12). Studies adopting this approach collect data through semi-structured interviews and self-report. A number of researchers have employed this approach in the studies reviewed above (Andrews, 2003; Borg & Phipps, 2009; Farrell & Kun, 2008; Feryok, 2008). Adopting the metacognitive approach, Andrews (2003) examined 170 EFL teachers’ cognitions about grammar instruction in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Drawing on analyses of quantitative and qualitative data, the research examined the relationships between teachers’ cognitions about grammar, teacher experience and other background factors, and their knowledge levels of grammar. It also addressed if there were connections between teachers’ cognitions about grammar and their reported pedagogical practices. The data from the teachers revealed no significant correlations between their cognitions about grammar and their years of teaching experience. There was, however, correspondence between the teachers’ reported cognitions and the test results of their language proficiency level, grammatical explicit knowledge and grammar terminology. In addition, the interviews and classroom observation revealed patterns of cognitions about grammar which match to some extent the teachers’ classroom practices.

However, cognitivist approaches to research on cognitions have been criticised, as language is seen, according to Kalaja (2003), “as a mirror, reflecting what goes on in a person’s mind” (p.91). The metacognitive approach has been criticised because of the researchers’ single focus on beliefs as mental entities and the corresponding neglect of the social construction of language (Kalaja, 2003). More specifically, in the metacognitive approach, cognitions are not contextualised. This means that the context and its influence are ignored. Barcelos (2006) also commented that some teachers may be unaware of their cognitions and that some participants may not have the linguistic ability to express these cognitions or even be willing to express the only socially-approved beliefs. Additionally, the studies utilising the metacognitive approach may fail to capture the impact of context upon cognitions. The researchers derive the relationship between cognitions and actions from self-reports and intentions.



### ***The contextual approach***

The third common approach to studying language learning and teaching cognitions is the contextual approach which depicts cognitions as embedded in context (Barcelos, 2006). Cognitions are described as dynamic, contextual and social. The studies within this approach employ diverse methodological frameworks, such as phenomenological case studies, discourse analysis or socio-cultural methods of data collection that include interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions, document analysis, scenarios and stimulated recalls (Barcelos, 2006). Many of the research studies reviewed above (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2006; Farrell & Lim 2005; Feryok, 2008; Woods, 1996) employ qualitative design and use ethnography, narratives, and metaphors. Farrell and Lim (2005) presented a qualitative case study that examined and compared the beliefs and actual classroom practices of two experienced English language teachers with regards to grammar teaching in a primary school in Singapore. Sources of data were pre-study interview, two classroom observations followed by stimulated recall interviews, and some samples of their students' written work. The findings revealed that teachers have a set of complex belief systems that may not translate into their classroom practices, due to contextual barriers.

Furthermore, in the contextual approach cognitions are considered as dynamic and situated in nature, which implies that different contexts and experiences have an impact on the emergence and construction of cognitions (Barcelos, 2006). These studies are usually in-depth, descriptive and interpretive analyses on a small-scale. Employing such an approach may have the potential to provide a deeper understanding of the cognitions and practices of teachers working in a certain context. However, the shortcomings of these studies are selectivity of data, a degree of subjectivity in interpreting the data and the applicability of the data and results to a specific context. These result in a lack of generalisability to wider contexts.

My study employed the contextual approach and made use of a range of sources of data such as interviews, observation, and document analysis to explore how teachers' cognitions and other influential factors shape or impact the EFL writing teachers' practices. The previously mentioned disadvantages of the contextual approach are minimised through using the constructivist grounded theory approach for data analysis. In the next chapter, the selection of this research methodology,

research design, procedures, settings and participants, and the analysis of the data are presented.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions are based on the body of literature reviewed above that connects teachers' cognitions with the way they teach in the classroom.

1. How do teachers in Palestinian universities in the Gaza strip teach EFL academic writing?
2. How do EFL writing teachers report their cognitions about the teaching of EFL writing?
3. How do teachers' cognitions correspond to their L2 writing instructional practices?
4. What factors shape and inform Palestinian EFL writing teachers' cognitions and practices?

The methodology and research design that were employed in conducting this study and finding out answers to these questions are described in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter describes in detail the procedures followed in the investigation of the interplay between the cognitions of Palestinian EFL writing teachers, their classroom practices, and other factors that influence their interaction. In this study, I used a collective case study design (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003) informed by constructivist grounded theory data analysis methods (Charmaz, 2006). This chapter will, first, provide the philosophical underpinnings of the empirical study and the rationale for the choice of a multiple qualitative case study approach in the current research. Second, research site access and selection of participants, and data collection methods are outlined. Then, I present my approach to data analysis, and the strategies used for improving the trustworthiness of this study. Finally, the study's ethical considerations are discussed.

#### A constructivist research paradigm

My research study is situated within the constructivist paradigm. A paradigm is the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises (Dentin & Lincoln, 2005). The constructivist paradigm regards knowledge as a "human construction," that recognises "multiple realities," and sees the research as a process through which the "researcher and the participant co-construct understandings" (Hatch, 2002, p.13). The aim of constructivist research is to understand phenomena through the meanings people assign to them. Constructivism undertakes that the meaning of experiences and events is constructed by individuals; thus, people construct the realities in which they take part (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, research aims to find out and understand how research participants construct their individual and shared meanings in regard to a specific issue. The researcher also participates in constructing meaning; "their interpretation of the studied phenomenon is itself a construction" (Charmaz, 2006, p.187). This shared pattern permits the co-construction of meaning by participant and researcher. In other words, the constructivist research paradigm views reality and meaning making as socially constructed and that people make sense of their social realities.

My study aims to capture the richness and diversity of the teachers' cognitions, classroom practices and influential factors on them. The constructivist approach demands the researcher and the participants to be interactive. The participants attempted to understand what the researcher wanted from the exchange, and the researcher aimed to understand the world from the respondents' perspective. Meanings are co-constructed between the researcher and the participants, the researcher and the context. Thus, this thesis assumes that the world is full of personal interactions and perceptions, which are subject to multiple interpretations.

### **Researcher's positioning**

The role of the researcher in the co-construction of meanings in constructivist research requires that I conduct research in a reflective and transparent process (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). Reflection recognises that as the researcher, I am the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Acknowledging my background, my professional identity, my familiarity with the context, and biases was part of the research process (Mason, 2002). In conducting this study, developing reflexivity raised my awareness of the personal and professional biases I might have brought into the research. Smith (2008) stresses that "when one is researching one's own context, it is important to acknowledge the perspective one brings; however, the goal is not to overcome or change this perspective, but later make known how it has affected the research" (p.18). I am an EFL writer myself, and an EFL writing teacher. These experiences may have caused bias in my worldview of the EFL writing learning and teaching. Therefore, I needed to begin the study by practising reflexivity about writing teachers' cognitions. I needed to reflect on how my own feelings and beliefs might influence the data I collect, analyse and interpret. Reporting my assumptions and experiences through writing reflective and analytical memos has assisted me in achieving transparency (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

I kept a research journal where I wrote down my reflections on the research process as the study proceeded to make sure that I moved beyond my own beliefs and perspectives about L2 writing teaching approaches (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.39). One aspect of reflexivity was acknowledging the set of philosophical assumptions, or paradigm, guiding the study (Creswell, 2009). My choice of the

research topic came from my experience teaching writing to Palestinian university students for two years as a tutor and three years as a teacher. I have realised that writing skills are of great importance to students in succeeding in their academic studies. Yet students seem to encounter substantial difficulties in writing academic texts in English.

Furthermore, I realise that my teacher role in one of the research sites gave me an insider's perspective during the research process. My insider's perspective actually strengthened my perspective; my contribution to the research setting was worthwhile and positive (Creswell, 2009). In this regard, my insider status has allowed for prolonged exposure and insider knowledge of the context. Such a prolonged exposure to the research participants and site enabled better understanding and representation of multiple influences. Additionally, I was aware that my role as a former teacher may have facilitated my entry into the research sites, but at the same time I needed to ensure the confidentiality of the participating teachers' data.

My understanding of the research setting enriches my attentiveness, knowledge, and sensitivity to various challenges and issues faced by EFL writing teachers at the university setting. Throughout the research process, I developed good relationships with the participants while retaining my credibility as a researcher. I felt that the participants were not hesitant to share information and many of them also asked for help from me about best methods for teaching EFL writing. I attribute this to the rapport that was built between us. Assuring the participants that I badly needed their assistance was important and increased their willingness to help, as it suggested the significance of their role in the success of my research. I made clear to them the purpose of my research, the contributions of my research outcomes to the teaching of EFL writing, and the confidentiality of the research so as to ensure them that they will not be affected by participating in my research.

### **Qualitative methodology**

The selection of research methodology depends on the paradigm that guides the research activity. Researchers adopting the constructivist paradigm employ qualitative research methodologies to investigate, interpret and describe social realities (Cohen, et al., 2007). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research

“begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of a research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.37). Creswell comments that qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study by reporting many perspectives, identifying many factors, and sketching the larger picture that emerges. The research aimed to discover what a group of writing teachers believed about teaching and learning L2 writing and how and to what extent they translated these cognitions into practice in their teaching. Observations of how teachers operated in the context of their writing classrooms revealed how their practices reflected their cognitions and how other factors that emerged from the data could influence these practices. Thus, a qualitative approach is an appropriate choice.

Furthermore, the features of qualitative research listed by Yin (2011) are evident in this study. Yin (2011) identifies the following features of qualitative research: (1) studying the meanings of people’s life under real world conditions, (2) representing the views and perspectives of the participants in a study, (3) covering the contextual conditions within which people live, (4) contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behaviour, and (5) finally striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone.

The participants were performing their everyday role in the field where data were collected. Furthermore, the purpose of the study was to capture the perspectives of the participants about teaching approaches of L2 writing, not those of the researcher or the literature. The study also reported both the participants’ and the researcher’s meanings. The many ways that contextual factors may have influenced the participants’ teaching practices were considered in this study. Another aim of the study was to explain a human event, the teaching of writing, through emerging concepts from data analysis. Creswell (2009) comments that qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up through an inductive process of data analysis that shapes the emerging themes. Finally, this study employed multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. The data collection and analysis by the researcher were based upon triangulation of data. The complexity of the phenomena being studied and the setting called for a range of methods to collect data. The research findings in

qualitative methodology are reported through descriptions (Mutch, 2005) as it is the case with this thesis. The study relied on personal contact for the duration of around one year between the researcher and the group being studied. In addition, building a good rapport with study participants led to deeper insight into the context and the issue under study, and this enriches the data.

With these views, the researcher did not begin with a theory or pattern of meanings. Merriam (1998) notes that the design of qualitative studies is “emergent and flexible” (p. 8). The approach is primarily inductive; pulling detailed pieces of information from a few cases to paint an overall picture of a context or phenomenon (Hatch, 2002). The goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied. Here, the Palestinian English writing teachers aimed to understand the world in which they live and work. They developed subjective meanings or perspectives according to Creswell (2005) of their experiences. Their perspectives were varied, multiple and led the researcher to look for a complexity of views that depict the reality of teaching writing in Palestinian universities.

### **Multiple case study design**

In adopting a qualitative research approach, a suitable qualitative strategy of inquiry needs to be chosen. The selected strategy will shape the types of questions asked, the form of data collection, and the steps of data analysis (Creswell, 2009). Merriam notes, “A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p.19). This is done in part to be able to create a thick description to convey what the reader would have experienced if he or she had been present. A case is “a specific ... complex, functioning thing” (Stake, 2000, p. 2), such as an individual, a program or an event, like the teaching of writing. A multiple case study approach was most appropriate for this study for the following reasons. First, a multiple-collective (Stake, 2005) case study was used to help me study a number of EFL writing teachers who make up the cases for my study to gain understanding of the teaching of EFL writing in Palestinian universities. Second, multiple case studies are often considered more compelling and the overall study may therefore be considered as more robust (Yin, 2003b). Investigating multiple case studies enabled me to compare and contrast the cases to sort them into clusters to facilitate my analysis and interpretation of the findings. When more than

one case is studied, the researcher can conduct cross-case analyses for comparison purposes.

My analysis of multiple cases strove to respect the integrity of each case and sought commonalities as well as differences across cases (Stake.2005). My research involved the in-depth analysis of twelve individual cases, followed by a cross-case analysis that allows for the examination of similar or different relationships across case elements. Furthermore, the more cases in a study and the greater the variation across cases, the more compelling an interpretation can be (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Yin and Stake agree that multiple case study allows the opportunity for development and elaboration of findings among many cases (Yin, 2000; Stake, 2006). Similarly, Bryman (2004) argues in favour for the use of multiple case studies, stating that it improves theory building and thus the researcher will be in a better position to establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold. Winegardner (2007) explains that:

To build up a theory, a multiple case study requires two stages of analysis, the within-case and the cross-case analysis. In the former, each case is first treated as a comprehensive unit in and of itself, and the data are analysed and triangulated within the integrity of that case. The cross case analysis then seeks to build abstractions across the cases (p.11).

Therefore, data gathered about an individual teacher were collated and analysed as an individual case and then compared and contrasted with those of the other teachers (or cases). Finally, I used multiple case analyses to protect the identity of the participating teachers. Such an approach enabled the identity of each case member to remain protected, while still drawing on individual data to support the emergent model. I decided that this would be the safest way ethically to report the findings of the study. Almost all the writing teachers teaching in Gaza universities participated in the study. Reporting on individual cases would reveal the identities of the teachers and they might feel harmed. I promised that their identities would remain confidential.

### **Selection of teacher participants**

The screening process for potential research participants began late September, 2011, after I received Victoria University of Wellington ethics committee approval



(Appendix A). A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify teachers to participate in the study. I sought to identify informants from two universities in Gaza Strip “based on their ability to contribute to an evolving theory” (Creswell, 2007, p.125). For confidentiality purposes, I refer to the first research site as University A and to the second research sites as University B. Creswell emphasises that the sampling should be underpinned by clear criteria and rationales for these criteria. The purposive sampling in my study was based on three criteria: EFL Palestinian writing teachers who have been teaching for one year at least in the research sites; those who are employed full time; and those who got their master’s and doctoral degrees from an English speaking country. Participants with these characteristics have the potential to provide rich data about teaching EFL writing in the Palestinian universities. As I had worked in the first research site for six years and have had a colleague teaching English literature in the second research site, gaining access was not difficult.

I explained the aim and the procedures of the study to the head of the English Department in University A and University B and permission was given to me to carry out the research (Appendix B). Each head provided me with a list of the writing teachers who met the selection criteria and their contact details. They welcomed the study as it might help them become more aware of the EFL writing teachers’ cognitions, expectations and needs and thus be a useful input to improve the teaching and learning of writing. As soon as access was gained, I sent an email to the fourteen instructors. The email stated the focus, objectives, procedures, benefits and significance of the research and I sought their voluntary participation in the study through a response to this email. Twelve teachers expressed their willingness and interest to participate in the study. Seven out of the twelve teachers were teaching in the first semester which started in early September of 2011 and finished in late December of that year. The other five teachers taught in the second semester which started in early February of 2012 and ended in late May. A timeline of the data collection from the twelve teachers during the 2011/2012 academic year is provided in Appendix C.

Then, I contacted the teachers by phone to schedule up individual appointments with each teacher to meet and explain the nature of the research and what was required from them during the study. After a verbal explanation, they were given the

participant information sheet and a written consent form (Appendix D) and briefed on the data collection methods, benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality and assurance of no risk. A written consent form was also provided in which they were assured that only the researcher and/or the supervisors would have access to the data and that they would be given pseudonyms in order to preserve their anonymity. Moreover, I told them that participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time they wished. My meeting with each participant lasted approximately for one hour. We also talked about my experience studying in New Zealand. I believe that by providing detailed information about the study and myself, I gained their trust and built a good rapport with them to facilitate my collection of rich data.

### **Data collection methods**

My research employed the most common types of data collection for qualitative studies: interviewing, classroom observation, and document analysis (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). Interpretive researchers emphasise understanding of the world through first-hand experience, truthful reporting and quotations of actual conversation from inside perspectives (Merriam, 1998). I employed these data gathering methods because they are more likely to enable rich and detailed, or thick descriptions of the teaching of EFL writing and the role of cognition and other influential factors in shaping the pedagogical practices. These methods had the potential to encourage participants to speak freely about the phenomenon that they have experienced.

### ***Teachers' interviews***

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews in English with twelve writing teachers teaching EFL academic writing in the research sites. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a list of broad open-ended questions (Appendix E) which focused on each teacher participant's cognitions about L2 writing teaching and their reported classroom practices in the writing classroom. Interviews are the best means to access the minds of research participants so that their knowledge values, preferences, attitudes and beliefs could be reflected. (Cohen et al., 2007). Charmaz (2006) comments that "the in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (p.25). Each individual interview was audio-recorded by an MP3 device and transcribed, then sent for

member checking. Flexibility was built into the interview process to enable the researcher to seek further clarification of issues from the participants depending on the progress of the interviews. All person-to-person interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for the participants and were conducted in their offices in the university.

As other researchers have found, interview schedules did not always run according to plan. Sometimes interviews were delayed or postponed owing to the teachers' busy schedules. In each case, new appointments were sought until a participant was finally interviewed. Participants demonstrated commitment by participating in the research and ensuring uninterrupted interview sessions where possible. Most of the interviews held lasted more than the anticipated hour.

### ***Interview pilot***

I followed Maxwell's (2005) suggestion and conducted a pilot interview with writing teachers who were teaching L2 writing in the ESL centre to international students at Victoria University of Wellington. Dr. Tait, my primary supervisor, coached me in my first pilot interview.

### ***Non-participant observation***

Non-participant observations were specifically chosen for the current study. According to Cohen, et al., (2007), non-participant observations are advantageous because the researcher is less influenced by the group and the data are more objective because the researcher is less invested in the observed phenomenon and is less likely to overstate what is observed. The purpose of observation in my research was not to assess the teaching. Rather, observing the teachers in action enabled me to evaluate the extent to which the teachers' cognitions and reported practices corresponded to their actions in the classroom. It was also a form of data triangulation, particularly because key observations made were discussed with the teachers in the stimulated recall interviews as a means to validate the observations. Furthermore, I conducted two classroom observations for each teacher. The duration of every class ranged from fifty minutes to an hour. I asked each teacher participant to choose two consecutive classes to be observed to avoid the lack of coherence when analysing the data. During the observations, the researcher maintained detailed descriptions of the teacher's classroom practices when teaching

writing. The main advantage of using observation is that it allows direct collection of data in the natural setting. Cohen et al. (2007) noted that observational data are attractive as they afford the researcher the opportunity to gather 'live' data from live situations. The observation technique also enables the researcher to acquire data which cannot be obtained with other techniques and to verify the validity of participants' reported responses (Bryman, 2004) and to cross-check issues under study as well as to capture data that can otherwise not be collected through interviews (Creswell, 2009).

The observation notes of these lessons then formed a starting point, for the post-lesson interview; the purpose was not so much for analysing the particular lesson as for looking at the writing teachers' teaching practices and the underlying beliefs behind such practices and if any contextual factors affected their teaching. The classroom observations were scheduled when it was convenient for teachers and were conducted in the natural course of the class. As a result, no extra preparation or change in lesson plans and/or timetables was required for teachers. Sample classroom observation notes are available in Appendix F.

### ***Stimulated recall interview***

Apart from observations and interviews, I used stimulated recall interviews because I was interested in classroom context and behaviour. The main aim of stimulated recall interviews is to help the teacher recall his/her thought strategies and reflect on what was happening during his/her teaching (Borg, 2006). After observing each of the two classes for each participant teacher, I arranged a time with each participant teacher as soon as possible and got him/her to recall the actual thoughts during teaching and the beliefs behind her/his practices as well as the problems he/she encountered when teaching that lesson. I used the notes taken during the observation as the stimulus for the stimulated recall interview. Sample questions which were used in the stimulated recall interviews are available in Appendix G. The duration of the interviews varied from thirty minutes to forty minutes. I invited each teacher to talk about what s/he had done during the lesson and why (Woods, 1996, p.28) in order to investigate the interplay between the teachers' cognitions and practices. Discussion did not focus solely on the lesson content itself; rather, the lesson was used as a starting point for wider-ranging conversation which was recorded on an MP3 device. The transcripts were then provided to each individual

and the teachers were asked to verify accuracy and make comments on any points they felt were pertinent. This supported the reliability of the data.

### ***Document analysis***

Analysis of documents was another useful tool used to provide a rich source of information to complement the data collected through interviews, stimulated recalls, and observations. Yin (2011) states that documents can “yield invaluable data about things not directly observable” (p.147). Merriam (1988) also commented that data obtained from analysing documents can inform research by enhancing the credibility of the research findings and interpretations. A writing course description (Appendix H) and a sample writing test (Appendix I) were collected and analysed from each participant for any evidence of teachers’ cognitions and actual practices in the writing classroom. I also sought to triangulate my findings of the analysed documents with those resulting from the interviews and the observations. Specifically, I used the teachers’ written documents to determine if they paralleled or diverged from their interview responses and my observational notes. Weiss (1998) noted that documents are “a good place to search for answers as they provide a useful check on information gathered in an interview” (p.260). I assured the participants that the purpose of reviewing documents is confined to carrying out my research.

### ***Data management***

NVivo 9 software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2006) was used for data management. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, reviewed for accuracy and entered into NVivo 9, as were field notes from observations, and reflective memos. Electronic copies of course documents were also stored in NVivo 9.

### ***Data Analysis***

In this section, I describe how constructivist grounded theory guided my data analysis process through coding, constant comparison method, category extraction, memo writing, diagramming and memo sorting. Using this method has the potential to strengthen the analysis process while maintaining the participants’ voices. Merriam (1998) proposed that case study methodology can be used with a variety of methods of data analysis, including the constant comparative method of grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) similarly states that researchers can use grounded theory

techniques with varied forms of data collection and within different qualitative traditions. Thus, this study employed a case study design to guide data collection, and constructivist grounded theory analysis methods (Charmaz, 2006) to inform data analysis. Case study design promoted the collection of rich data from multiple sources and constructivist grounded theory approaches enabled the insightful and methodical questioning of data during analysis. The analysis process of the individual and the clustered cases aimed to generate a representative framework for the teaching of writing in Palestinian universities.

Grounded theory analysis methods were employed to facilitate the derivation of a framework for the teaching of writing grounded in the views of participating teachers. Although I had reviewed existing literature, I did not deduce hypotheses from existing literature on teaching writing which are then applied to the data. In short, using constructivist grounded theory for analysing the data of my study provided flexible guidelines which reduced the risk of forcing the data, allowing greater freedom to discover the realities of the participants and facilitate the emergence of substantive theory more than any versions of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009).

### ***Three stages of data analysis***

Data analysis occurred in three stages. The first stage involved the independent, in-depth analysis of each case; the second stage focused on the clustering of similar cases. The clustered cases were cross-analysed and interpreted in the third stage. To illustrate more, the basic research design for this study was a multiple case study design using a within- and cross-case analysis. I began the study by collecting data on individual writing teachers and writing up these data as a single case report. As I continued to gather data on other writing teachers and write case reports, I began to look for similarities and differences across the different codes and the case reports; participants folded naturally into three cluster groups based on the key similarities and differences in their classroom focus when teaching EFL writing. Teachers in Cluster A focused on the grammatical forms. In Cluster B, the participants focused on teaching their students how to organise rhetorical patterns. Cluster C paid attention to both content and form in their writing classrooms. I wrote three clustered case studies that represented a composite description of each group cognition about teaching writing and their associated classroom practices. A final component of the multiple case study design was to develop a grounded model

based on similarities and differences across the three clusters. The emerging model, described and discussed in Chapter 7 is the cognitive-ecological model of EFL writing teachers' practices.

### *Stages 1 and 2: Individual and clustered case descriptions*

The principles of grounded theory data analysis as described by Charmaz (2006, 2008) guided the analysis of the data for this research. As soon as I finished conducting the first interview with my first participant, I transcribed the interview data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) stress that the process of data coding should start after the first interview is completed because further data collection and analysis will be based on the first data. The first step of analysis was coding the data. Charmaz (2006) states that coding consists of three phases: initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding. When combined, these three stages of coding move the analysis from the "ground" to a higher, abstract theoretical level.

#### *Initial coding*

Line-by-line initial coding was the first step. Initial coding is essential, as it represents the first step towards interpreting the data. I used gerund forms when coding because coding with gerunds "helps to define what is happening in a fragment of data" and to "see implicit processes, to make connections between codes and to keep their analyses active and emergent" (Charmaz, 2008, p.164). For each case, I coded the teacher's interview data, the notes for the two classroom observations, the teacher's two stimulated recall interviews, and the data from the course description and the sample test. At this initial stage of coding, Charmaz (2006) suggests searching for implicit assumptions, illuminating actions and meanings, comparing data with data and identifying gaps in the data. As part of initial coding, in-vivo codes may be generated. These are "codes of participants' special terms", and are a means to preserve participants' views and actions in the coding itself (Charmaz, p.55).

My initial coding of the data followed Charmaz's (2006) guidelines, which suggests asking the following questions during the coding process:

- What are the data a study of?
- What do the data suggest? And
- From whose point of view?

Because of my lack of experience using grounded theory, the process of initial coding for data from the first two participants was challenging. It was at this stage that two interviews from two cases were also reviewed by one of my thesis supervisors in order to discuss potential emerging concepts and processes that informed the subsequent analysis stage. As is consistent with a constructivist approach, this informal analyst triangulation fostered further reflexivity and deeper questioning of the data as my supervisor asked for further clarification and shared her thoughts about the data. The process of initial coding of all transcripts produced over 1000 codes. The very large number of initial codes made me realise the complexity of coding and interpreting data. Some of these codes contained just a single segment of data while others contained multiple segments. A sample list of codes created during the initial coding process, including the number of references contained within each is listed in Appendix J. The greater the number of references within a single code is, the greater the density of that code would be. While the density of a code is not a necessarily an indication of its importance to the research objective, dense codes may highlight ideas, actions, or processes which are frequent in the data. Examples of initial codes and the segments of data which each represents are shown in Table 1:



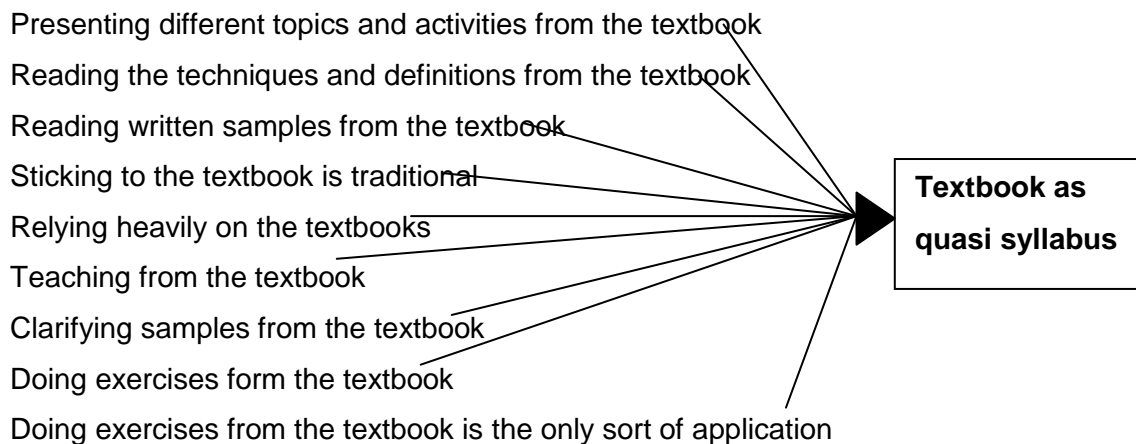
**Table 1: Examples of Initial Coding Process**

<b>Original Transcript</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>
"I will follow them-up and give them feedback. Feedback is the most important thing" (P4, Int.3).	Giving feedback on students' writing is essential.
"Classes will primarily focus on editing texts for organisational, stylistic and grammatical problems such as 'verb tense consistency, sentence structure and punctuation, word choice, collocation, writer's voice, etc. Various writing activities will be geared towards avoiding errors in those areas". (P5's course description).	Prioritising teaching grammatical forms
"They do not know how to specify themselves, they just speak in Arabic, they give me topic sentences in Arabic in a right way, but when they want to express themselves in English, they do not know how".	Teaching linguistically low level students
And also as I mentioned before, some students do not make effort, some students do not change as they come as they go. (P4, Int1)	Teaching unmotivated students
"The first moment I come inside, I need to know what their schools do for them, how they destroyed their minds and fossilised their brains". (P1, Int.1)	Traditional national educational system as a barrier
"You know yes when we teach here the number of the students is really a problem to us because this writing you need to work with students individually". (P8, Int.1)	Teaching Overcrowding classes as a barrier

*Focused coding*

The primary function of focused coding is to classify the most significant and frequent earlier codes under broader conceptual categories to facilitate theoretical development. Focused or selective coding was utilised after I established the most frequent and significant initial codes. Charmaz (2006) explains, "Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make

the most analytic sense to categorise your data incisively and completely” (p. 57). Analytic categories which enhanced the theoretical development resulted from comparing and contrasting the data. Focused coding therefore generated analytic categories, which acted as abstract umbrella concepts encompassing multiple initial codes. In other words, I analysed the lists of initial codes and identified higher categories into which initial codes can fit. Here is an example of the emergence of a category from Initial Coding.



**Figure 2: Example of emergence of a category**

It is worth mentioning that during focused coding, the similar initial codes were grouped together or merged as Charmaz (2006) suggests. The process of categorisation was challenging. I was aware not to force the data into certain categories because forcing these codes into existing categories will distort the overall quality of the analysis. As Creswell (1998) indicates, not all coded data will be used in the theoretical development. Certain codes will simply not fit into the emerging conceptual categories. Creswell recommends filtering and grouping the data into 25-30 categories, which are then further distilled into 5 or 6 main categories. Throughout this process, I revisited the initial codes and checked if the categories I had assigned them were appropriate and representative. Therefore, many new categories were created, others removed, and others merged or changed, so that all relevant initial codes fit well. Overall, the process of focused coding, which produced conceptual categories to compress the existing and emerging initial codes, produced 21 categories. In this way, focused coding deepens

the analysis process of data. Many of those conceptual categories included smaller subcategories. Examples of focused codes are listed below. The next challenge was to determine how these categories related to each other. This was done using theoretical coding.

1. Focusing on teaching grammar and mechanics
2. Focusing on teaching paragraph and essay structures
3. Lack of integrating writing with other skills
4. Students' lack of knowledge about the world
5. The physical organisation of the classroom
6. The low proficiency level of the student
7. Main focus when teaching academic writing
8. Problematic course plans
9. Sources of teachers' beliefs and practices
10. Participants' conceptualisations of writing
11. Prior Experience of the student
12. Teachers' attitudes towards teaching writing
13. The impact of prior learning experience
14. The role of the writing teacher
15. Students' negative attitudes towards learning writing
16. Lack of facilities in the classroom

#### *Theoretical coding*

Theoretical coding takes the analysis towards a more abstract, theoretical level. Theoretical coding aims at exploring relationships between the conceptual categories which have emerged during focused coding and synthesise them into more abstract, core categories. Core categories are fundamental to elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation from the researcher's perspective. This stage was significant to the process of building the Cognitive-Ecological Model of EFL writing teachers' practices. When doing coding, the researcher is occasionally struck by emergent theories, theoretical formulations and ideas about data. These revelations should be documented and are referred to as theoretical memos. During the process of building the model, I strove to recognise core categories which I felt were central to understanding the phenomenon of teaching EFL writing from Palestinian university teachers' perspectives. Combined, these core categories included the categories generated during focused coding and expose links between them. Seven core categories were generated, and they are

1. Pedagogical practices
2. Teachers' cognitions about teaching and learning EFL writing
3. Sources of Cognitions and practices

4. The nature of students
5. The classroom context
6. The institutional context
7. Broader national educational context

The main challenge of theoretical coding was to create broad, solid concepts which can be synthesised in a theoretical model representing the teaching of EFL writing in Palestinian universities.

### *Memos writing*

The next step of data analysis was memo writing which assists in “capturing ideas in process and in progress” (Charmaz, 2008). Memos are “informal analytical notes” which the researcher produces during the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Memo writing “constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyse your data and codes early in the research process” (Charmaz, 2006, p.72). Writing many memos during the research process kept me involved and assisted me in deriving theoretical categories.

Memos were written during data collection and data analysis stages. During data collection, I wrote memos after I conducted the interviews to record key ideas and potential questions for follow-up, as well as emerging issues that required further exploration. During data analysis, memo-writing facilitated the reconstruction of data in new ways, making connections between categories and sub-categories. Writing memos helped me to express my thoughts and the relationships among the different categories which I identified during the data analysis. The process of initial coding produced many independent memos detailing my emerging thoughts on the nature of the phenomenon. During focused and theoretical coding, my memos were more organised and informative and assisted me to explore relations, gaps, and contradictions between codes and categories, to allow questions for future interviews to emerge, to construct my model from the abstract concepts, and thus complete my research. Writing memos also facilitated my writing of individual case reports. It is through memos that I was able to record my thoughts, capture the connections I made and direct my research process. An example of a memo on the impact of teachers’ practices on their students’ learning is provided below.

The way the teacher uses textbook is very important. For example, for writing 2, the teacher said the exam is from the book, so the students' only concern was to do all exercises even without understanding the material. Because the teacher did not do enough practice with students, students asked for the help of students in higher levels to do the exercises and just memorised the answer without understanding. This practice by students is stimulated by the teacher's way in using the textbook. This means that students are unable to handle topics that were not covered in the book. This raises an important question of whether Palestinian teachers of writing teach strategies/ skills that enable students to deal with several topics or do they just focus on certain material in the book to be memorised for the exam? (A memo on the impact of teachers' practices on students learning, December, 2011).

Much of the memo writing was concerned with making comparisons between codes and categories by employing the constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2006).

#### *Diagramming and memo sorting*

Following the examination of the different categories, the relationships among them were identified through memoing. Diagramming categories within and across cases enhanced the distilling of the main categories which made up the emerging model. In addition, the memos and summary diagrams of each individual case were examined and compared to those of other cases, allowing further grouping of similar cognitions, practices, and perceptions through sorting.

#### **Stage 3: cross-case analysis**

In the third stage of analysis, each cluster's main categories were compared to explore how different beliefs, classroom practices and perceptions varied across the cases. Key issues identified for each cluster were re-examined to distil common issues. As I proceeded to the stage of cross-case analysis, I examined cluster specific issues to identify those that affected all clusters. Memos from key categories and individual case diagrams were investigated across cases to determine shared and variant processes and to categorise the different cases into clusters. Commonalities and unique features across the clusters were identified to develop a framework representing the teaching of writing in Palestinian universities.

## **Trustworthiness**

It is crucial to maintain the trustworthiness of the research, and thus its findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (P.290). The trustworthiness criteria include the notions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2009).

### ***Credibility***

Credibility assesses whether the research findings represent a "credible" conceptual interpretation of the data based on the participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.296). I employed the following strategies to enhance the credibility of the findings of my study. Peer debriefing is the process of presenting analysis to a peer to explore meanings, interpretations, bias and inconsistencies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing was employed by presenting various parts of my data analysis to my two supervisors throughout the analytical process. After I submitted the analytical segments to my supervisor, I had to articulate and explain the process of arriving at the findings and the meaning of the findings during my supervision meetings. Then, I incorporated my supervisors' feedback into the analysis. Prolonged engagement in the field was another means to seek credibility. I was onsite for data collection for each case for two weeks so that extensive data were collected from multiple sources. Data and method triangulation was the third technique to maintain credibility. A variety of data collection methods was used at each site, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. All those techniques have strengthened the credibility of the study.

### ***Transferability***

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of this inquiry can apply or transfer beyond the boundaries of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, it is the extent to which the findings from a study can be applied to other contexts. One strategy to enhance the transferability in my study was to collect deep, thick, descriptions through using open-ended questions to elicit detailed, lengthy, and contextualized responses. Providing rich, thick description can allow readers to determine how closely their situations match and whether or not the findings of this study can be transferred to their local context. A detailed description of each cluster

aimed to provide readers with adequate information to reflect on their situations and to compare and contrast the research context with theirs. Such thick descriptions contributed to the transferability of the study. Readers might be able to transfer and implement recommendations and insights to similar educational contexts.

### ***Dependability***

Dependability is described as the extent to which the research process is consistent over time. Dependability was also achieved in this study by repeating the same procedures of data collection and analysis across all cases. This was achieved by using interview prompts, observation protocols and documents analysis to cover the same major issues in each case. Reflexivity of the researcher as described previously strengthened the dependability of the study. I kept a field journal during data collection and memoed my reactions and emerging interpretations throughout data analysis. Another technique to enhance the dependability of my research was to carefully document each stage of the data collection and analysis process through field notes and memos in order to construct an audit trail of the research process available for review by my supervisors as necessary.

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the degree to which research results can be verified, confirmed, and validated by others. It requires that the conclusions of a study are based on the participants' experiences and the data they provide rather than the researcher's intuition or own biases and agenda. Another strategy employed to enhance the confirmability of my study was keeping a reflexive journal through field notes and memos recording my personal feelings and insights that emerge throughout the course of conducting the study to ensure that the findings were based on the data and not my own beliefs and perceptions. Confirmability was also achieved by providing a clear audit trail which would describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were arrived at throughout the inquiry. Data were stored, coded and analysed using NVivo 9. This allowed data to be easily traced through codes and categories to the original sources. Examples of data analysis and coding are presented in the text and interpretations are backed up with extensive quotes from the data. Furthermore, I attached samples of observation notes, interview transcripts, and documents in the Appendices.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were of particular concern in the current study and were applied throughout the research process. In common with practices employed in most modern research involving people as participants, certain procedures were followed in this case in order to ensure the safety and respect due to the participants. Specifically, this involved gaining approval for the research from the Faculty of Education Ethical Committee in Victoria University (Appendix A). I also assured the twelve teachers through a promise of confidentiality and an openness of purpose. In addition, to protect participants' rights and feelings, care was taken to avoid leaving the teacher participants feeling that they had been instrumentally manipulated. For example, the researcher guarded against portraying participants in any way that might damage their self-esteem. It is possible that teachers would feel as if the researcher was evaluating their teaching and learning abilities, as that is often the purpose of observations in classrooms. To ensure a level of comfort, the researcher explicitly stated before, during, and after the study that the goal of the study was in no way to evaluate the teachers' teaching abilities. This was done to make the teachers feel more comfortable as well as to avoid any inauthentic teaching practices. Privacy and confidentiality of all participants was guaranteed through hiding any information or details which could identify their identities. In the research report, for example, participant teachers were referred to by numbers and thus no real names or pseudonyms were used.

## **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I explained the rationale for choosing a qualitative, collective case study design situated within a constructivist paradigm. Then, I reflected on my positioning as a researcher and how this may influence the process of conducting my research study. Then, I reported the procedures I followed to gain access to the research site and recruit appropriate participants. Interviews, observations and document reviews were conducted at each site, resulting in a total of 36 interviews with the teachers, along with almost 25 hours of formal observation and the review of 24 documents across the twelve cases. I then described how the main principles of constructivist grounded theory informed my data analysis process through the use of initial and focused coding, constant comparison method, memo writing, diagramming and memo sorting to look for encompassing categories and deepen the analysis process. Finally, I presented the criteria I used in this study to ensure its trustworthiness and ethical considerations.



## CHAPTER 4

### Overview of Findings and Cluster A: Focus On Forms (N5)

#### Overview of Findings

This chapter aims to report the findings of the first cluster of cases. After each individual case was analysed, individual cases were grouped into clusters, based on the similarities in the teachers' classroom focus when teaching writing. The clustering process led to three clusters: focus on forms cluster (Cluster A), focus on rhetorical patterns cluster (Cluster B), and finally focus on content and forms cluster (Cluster C). My description of each cluster starts with a brief biographical sketch of the teachers, outlining their educational backgrounds and experiences of working at the university to contextualise the data presentation. This is followed by a description of teachers' pedagogical practices, their conceptualisations of L2 writing, their accounts of their most pervasive beliefs about how to teach and learn writing, and their cognitions about their professional selves. Finally, I report on the teachers' perceptions of the attributes of their students and of the classroom, institutional, and broader educational contexts on and their influences on teachers' pedagogical practices.

#### Cluster A teachers' profiles

The first cluster consisted of five male teachers: P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, aged 32 to 46 years. All were educated either in American, British, or Malaysian universities for their master's degrees. Their professional profiles are provided in Table 2. The analytical process of constant comparison of the data of the five individual cases was used to arrive at six major categories for Cluster A's data: teachers' pedagogical practices, their cognitions about the nature of writing and its learning and teaching, their perceptions of the nature of their students, the physical classroom context, the institutional context, and the broader educational context. In each category, representative selections of data are presented to allow the teacher's voice to assume a prominent position.

**Table 2: Professional Profiles of Cluster A**

<b>Participant s</b>	<b>P1</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P3</b>	<b>P4</b>	<b>P5</b>
Education & qualifications	MA of TEFL	MA of Linguistics	MA of Discourse Analysis	MA of Applied Linguistics	MA of English Literature
Practice settings	University A	University A	University B	University A	University B
Years of teaching experience	6-10 years	<10 years	3-7 years	5-10 years	5 – 8 years
Courses taught	Writing, linguistics, language skills	Writing, linguistics, grammar	Writing, grammar, reading	Writing, grammar	Writing, English literature
Focus of 1 <sup>st</sup> classroom observation	Writing topic sentences	Introductory paragraph for essays	Writing topic sentences	Types of sentences	Writing concluding sentences
Focus of 2 <sup>nd</sup> classroom observation	Writing supporting sentences	Error analysis	Simple & compound sentences	Exercises on sentence problems	Exercises on paragraph structure

### **Forms-based practices to teaching writing**

Cluster A's pedagogical practices are described with special reference to their forms-based teaching approach, course materials, course descriptions, and tests.

#### ***Forms-oriented teaching approach & quasi-syllabus textbooks***

As shown in Table 2, the ten classes I observed for Cluster A teachers focused on one of the following topics: Sentence types, sentence problems, punctuation, outline, topic sentence, supporting sentences, and paragraph development. In the lessons observed, the teaching of writing followed a similar routine implemented in two stages. The first stage could be described as lecturing. The teachers defined the concepts and explained the rules related to sentence structure, sentence problems, paragraph structure, punctuation, or spelling. Then, they illustrated the concept they defined with examples on the blackboard either in the form of phrases, sentences,

or short paragraphs. They exemplified using generic topics, such as money, holidays, and sports. At this stage, teachers did most of the talking, and students were sitting passively, listening to their teacher. P1 described.

I explained writing topic sentences last class on the board and the steps and rules of writing topic sentences. I wrote topics like 'holiday', 'money', whatever, a general topic and asked them to specify the controlling idea, and then they will have a topic sentence. Today, we started doing exercises from the textbook to practise topic sentences. (P1, Int.2)

Similarly, P4 described his focus on teaching grammar, especially the tenses in English which his students avoid using when composing English sentences. For example, Arabic learners of English face difficulty in using the present perfect tense because this tense does not exist in Arabic.

I give them a lot of grammatical rules necessary for writing. Throughout my experience teaching writing over the years, I found that my students simplify things and usually write simple sentences and the present simple tense all the time. I have noticed that many tenses are never used by my students; these tenses are difficult to use. I focus on the difficult areas in grammar like the present perfect tense, not the simple areas. (P4, Int.1)

P5 explained to his students what the function of the conclusion is. Then he suggested restating the topic sentence as a way to write the concluding sentence. The teacher asked students to write a conclusion to this topic sentence "Young people are too much dependent on computers". Then, he asked students to do similar exercises from the textbook.

The lesson procedure in the second stage depended largely on the teacher's view of the status of the textbook in their writing classroom. The writing textbooks worked as a quasi-syllabus in P1's, P3's, P4's, and P5's classes. These teachers depended on the textbooks as the main sources of planning and teaching materials. After they finished lecturing, they asked their students to do the exercises, and then they answered some of the questions together as a whole class. The exercises from the textbook focused on the structural elements of paragraphs or on the forms of sentences and their punctuation. When students could not answer the exercises properly, these teachers either skipped the difficult questions or answered them for the students. In these classes, practising writing meant doing exercises from the

textbook. Whole class discussion or students' working in pairs or in groups were absent from the pedagogical practices of Cluster A teachers' writing classes. Below is a brief description of one of P3's class.

After defining the topic sentence and its two parts—the topic and the controlling ideas—the teacher gave practice exercises from the book about writing topic sentences for a list of given topics. The topics were: “Watching television; the characteristics of a good student; doing exercise; college; and my first class”. The students were hardly able to generate controlling ideas for these topics. The teacher gave his students a rule to memorise that topic sentence is always a simple statement. (My field note of P3 class, Feb, 2012)

P4 conducted his writing class on sentence problems in a similar way. He started by writing these two sentences “He is rich. He is unhappy”. He told his students that writing simple sentences all the time makes their writing childish. The teacher said that joining these sentences by connectors results in a compound sentence. As the following descriptions shows the class focuses on sentence forms; textbooks are the source of class activities, and the students' job is limited to doing exercises.

He told them about FAN BOYS coordinators. He asked his students to guess what each letter refers to. He explained F refers to “for” and it is used to express reason relationship between simple sentences, A refers to “and” and it is used when adding two similar ideas.... He also explained about punctuating the compound sentences. Students work in exercises from the textbook to join simple sentences into compound ones. As a whole class, they checked their answers. (My field notes of P4 class, April, 2012).

Unlike the other four teachers, P2 did not believe in using the textbook during the class and thought that the textbook should be used only by students at home. Instead, he would write topics on the board for the students to choose and write freely on one of those topics according to the main focus of that class. When some of his students finished writing, he asked two of them to write their compositions on the board. Then he gave them feedback on the correctness of vocabulary and structure of the sentences. This teacher believed that students should be asked to write freely and then correct their grammatical mistakes. Below is a brief description of my first observation of P2's class.

After lecturing students on how to write an introductory paragraphs and its thesis statement, the teacher wrote three topics on the board for the students to choose one and to free write an introduction for the chosen topic. The topics were about stress, writing, and tourism. The

teacher asked two of the students to write their introductions on the board to get feedback from the teacher and the classmates. The teacher picked up the grammar mistakes in their texts, such as the lack of subject verb agreement, and the lack of parallelism. He did not comment on the appropriacy and relevance of ideas, unity, coherence, and the relevance and connectedness of thoughts (My field notes of P2, March, 2012).

Another aspect of Cluster A's teaching approach is their practice of giving collective, oral feedback. Much of their feedback focused on identifying and correcting grammatical and lexical mistakes which are common in their students' writings. For instance, P2 mentioned his practice of providing oral feedback, especially on his students' grammatical mistakes.

Many grammatical problems are repeated in my students' writing. I take notes of these errors, and explain them in front of the whole class. This sort of feedback is useful but still some of these errors are fossilised. I always highlight these errors. (P2, Int.3).

Similarly, P5 reported his emphasis on correcting his students' grammatical mistakes.

I let them write freely in the classroom and I let them write at home, and then I give them oral feedback on their writing errors for the whole class, especially on grammar. I correct their grammar mistakes... I try to understand these sorts of mistakes and then talk to the whole class about them so that students stop making these mistakes again. (P5, Int.2)

Thus, the teaching materials and the classroom activities and procedures stress the value of accuracy of the grammatical forms and structural elements of paragraphs and essays to facilitate students' learning.

### ***Forms-oriented course descriptions***

There was a match between Cluster A's course descriptions and their focus on forms in their actual classroom procedures. For example, P1's course description consisted of the table of contents of the *Introduction to Academic Writing* textbook (Appendix H). The contents were divided into two parts. The first part focused on sentence types, sentence problems and punctuation. The second part was about the structures of academic paragraphs. For P1, The course objective is

...fulfilled if the students say that they know what is the topic sentence? The concept of topic sentence, they can write supporting sentences, and all of these sentences should be grammatically correct. (P1, Int.3).

His comments on the objectives of the writing course focused on “What are the elements of writing?” not the “How to write”. Likewise, P4’s course objectives highlighted the theoretical definitions of the structural components of essays and how to correct the grammatical problems made when writing in English.

- Define the different parts of an Essay: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.
- The course is also dedicated to discussing the grammatical and structural problems that appear in the text they are required to write. Students, accordingly, will have the chance to know how to avoid the mistakes they do in their writing.
- Describe the procedure for writing a number of supporting paragraphs.
- Go through the list of transition words given (P4’s course description).

These objectives seem to focus on the knowledge level but not the application and the evaluation level. Using the verbs “define, describe, and know” does not reflect students being able to compose or write. Writing is a skill that needs practice. It differs from history and other subjects that depend on memorisation.

In a similar vein, P 5’s course objectives highlighted their focus on teaching grammar and stressed the correctness and accuracy of written sentences. Editing texts on sentence structure level is a priority in his writing class.

Classes will primarily focus on editing texts for organisational, stylistic, and grammatical problems such as verb tense consistency; sentence structure and punctuation, word choice, collocation, writer’s voice, etc. Various writing activities will be geared towards avoiding errors in those areas. (P5’s course description)

These extracts of these teachers’ course descriptions highlighted the weight given to forms in Cluster A’s writing classes.

### ***Forms-based writing tests***

The five teachers’ emphasis on teaching grammatical forms and structures of texts was reflected in writing their tests. P2’s and P3’s tests were forms-oriented. Half of their test questions asked students to correct the mistakes in discrete sentences, to combine simple sentences into compound and complex ones, and to use the correct

part of speech for a group of words. Below are examples for some of the questions in their tests.

- 1) Correct the mistakes in the following sentences:
  - Despite his selfish. He is so selfish and everybody dislikes him.
  - Ali was concern about reading books and write short stories.
  - Ali lives in Gaza since 1990. Before one year, he got his high school certificate.(P2's writing test)
  
- 2) Combine each of the following pairs of sentences to make compound or complex sentences.
  - The cost of education has been rising. Many students are having financial problems.
  - He did not study hard. He did not obey his father.
  - The lazy students in this class must study hard. They will fail in the final exam.(P3's writing test)

All these sample questions focus on sentence grammatical accuracy or on sentence structure.

Similarly, P4's writing test asked students to define terms related to writing sentences, paragraphs, and essays. One question asked students to define "unity, choppy sentence, thesis statement, topic sentence, and fragment". Another question asked students to write concluding sentences for given topic sentences. This type of questions matches P4's course objective of having students define terms and concepts related to academic writing. These questions do not examine students' abilities to produce and compose comprehensible, purposeful, and extended texts in English. It highlights the "what" but not the "how".

- Everyone in a car should fasten his or her safety belt.
- My first day of school was a frightening experience.
- The cafeteria is an expensive place to eat. (P4's Writing test)

Similarly, when evaluating the students' writing, P5 mainly assessed the accuracy of sentences and students' knowledge of the structural elements in the paragraph, such as writing proper topic sentences for paragraphs.

I would be evaluating their grammar and focusing on these sides. I will be focusing on the structure of the paragraph itself. I will be focusing if they do a proper topic sentence or not. (P5, Int.1)

Most of his test questions focused on sentence correction, word derivation and writing topic and concluding sentences. Examples of P's 5 test questions are below:

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences:

- 1) I work during the months of june, july, august.
- 2) That man has living here for ten years.
- 3) Because wanted to learn fast, the girl studied all the time.  
(P5's writing test)

Another question asked to use words lists to complete the meaning of sentences.

(earth- this – it – planet's – ice)  
Although ----- is the driest continent on -----  
---, Antarctica is 98 percent covered by -----, and --  
----- contains 90% of our ----- fresh water.  
(P5's writing test)

Such questions do not test the student's ability to compose texts in English. They are mainly concerned with testing students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. To sum up, teachers in Cluster A reported and performed similar pedagogical practices which were evident in their forms-based teaching approach, course teaching materials, course descriptions, and tests.

### **Teachers' reported cognitions**

Another important category that emerged from Cluster A teachers' data was their cognitions. Teachers' cognitions are comprised of their conceptualisations of EFL writing, their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning EFL writing, their cognitions about professional selves. This section reports on findings related to these domains.

### ***Conceptualising writing as a linguistic exercise***

Teachers in Cluster A reported similar beliefs about the nature and purpose of EFL writing. They considered writing as being primarily concerned with linguistic knowledge, focusing mainly on the correctness of lexical and grammatical structures. The purpose of writing for them was a linguistic exercise to show mastery and learning of linguistic knowledge. For example, P1 thought of writing as a measure of a person's linguistic competence. He defined writing as:

The process in which you use your talents where you have the time to manipulate to correct yourself, okay. Writing is the real reflection of your competence, okay; in writing you can show your linguistic ability and linguistic competence and background. (P1, Int.1)



Likewise, P3's view of writing emphasises the linguistic constituents of writing joined according to the grammatical rules of English. He viewed writing as

A combination of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to the linguistic rules in English. Writing can help us improved our language; through writing we can apply the rules we know in grammar. You can apply the past simple tense when we write a story. This is how writing is useful. (P3, Int.1)

P3's quote may refer to a notion of the importance of learning writing as a way to facilitate and enhance linguistic knowledge of a second language.

P5 also commented that writing any text involves writing grammatical, well-structured sentences consisting of a subject and a verb and conveying a complete meaning. He further concluded that if a writer could write a series of connected, grammatical sentences, then he could write a complete book.

If you can write a good sentence, a good independent sentence, okay in grammar, we have the most important element is the finite verb. The finite verb conveys the meaning and the meaning is the finite verb. You understand that.... So writing a paragraph or essay or even a book is ultimately a group of related sentences. (P5, Int.1)

According to the quotes above, these teachers seem to consider the correct forms of sentences as the essence of writing. Their conceptualisations emphasised writing as an academic exercise rather than a communicative event.

### ***Beliefs about teaching and learning EFL writing***

Conceptualising writing as the correct forms of sentences has shaped the five teachers' beliefs about how EFL writing is taught and learnt. Their view of writing as forms was reflected in their beliefs about the importance of teaching grammar, mechanics, and the structural elements of paragraphs in their writing classes.

The five teachers believed that the foundation for learning writing in English was learning grammar, and students who do not achieve good grammatical grounding find it difficult to improve their writing. P2 stresses the importance of teaching the syntactic structures of sentences which are unique to English language, such as complex sentences.

I think you have to focus on teaching them grammar. I focus on the correct English structure. I teach them the several types of sentences then I concentrate on the complex sentence because I believe that this type of sentences characterises the English language.... I concentrate on the grammatical aspect of language. (P2, Int.1)

In a similar vein, P3 and P4 talked about the importance of teaching the structure of English sentences, tenses, and English vocabulary. P4 identified some of the sentence-level problems such as writing fragments or choppy sentences or run on ones.

They need to try to improve their writing by teaching them the correct grammar, the correct structure and the correct vocabulary; students are suffering from a big problem actually, a big problem in writing correct grammatical sentences. (P3, Int.1)

Teaching grammar is in the heart of teaching writing, you know, especially tenses—students confuse using the tenses. They also write fragments, run on, and choppy sentences. As writing teachers, we should fix these problems. (P4, Int.3)

These teachers were keen to stress the importance of a good grammatical start which would prepare students for what was to come later. Their concerns about grammatical forms are privileged over concerns about meaning, content, organisation and style. These teachers believe that students need grammatical knowledge to enable them to write. There is a complete absence of referring to writing composing processes, to purpose, to register, to audience, and to the social context of writing.

Once their students were able to write grammatical sentences, these teachers believed that they could start teaching the structural elements of paragraphs and essays. They start with the grammar at the level of sentences and then move to the discourse structure, rather than allowing the discourse to determine the forms used. An example of structural elements of paragraphs is the topic sentence as the first sentence of the paragraph followed by a few sentences to support the topic sentence and a concluding sentence where students paraphrase the topic sentence. The following quote by P1 shows that he is concerned with having his students know the concepts of the structural elements of paragraphs but not with the procedural knowledge and practical aspect.

After I teach my students grammar and improve them, I will be able to make them understand what the paragraph is, what's the topic sentence? What is the supporting sentence? What is the concluding sentence? I will be able to start talking about writing itself not about how to write a sentence. (P1.Int.1)

P3 and P4 agreed with P1 about the importance of improving their students' grammatical skills first and then moving to teaching paragraphs structures:

The ideal way is I explain everything about writing grammatical sentences. Then I will explain to them what a paragraph is. I do not need to tell you what's everything about a paragraph, you know it is a topic sentence, supporting sentences, etc. (P3, Int.1)

When my students can write simple outline of a paragraph and they can write a topic sentence and supporting sentences, I will be satisfied. This is my focus in my class after they can avoid killing mistakes of grammar. (P4, Int.1)

In these quotes, the structural prescriptive elements of paragraphs prevail over content and meaning in determining their conception of writing. Their comments stressed the importance of correct forms of the structural elements of a paragraph. Absent from their data is an understanding of how such prescriptive elements are used as guides in the development of ideas. The teaching and learning of the organisational patterns of paragraphs seem the end goal of the writing course rather than a means to an end.

### ***Cognitions about professional selves as writing teachers***

These five teachers also commented on their perceptions of themselves as writing teachers. These cognitions about professional selves were subdivided into perceptions of their roles and their attitudes, and their sense of self-efficacy as writing teachers. The next section discusses these different perceptions.

#### ***Teachers' roles***

The five teachers' views about their roles as writing teachers ranged from being teachers, error-hunters, and editors, to error correctors not especially interested in quality of ideas or expression.

### *Lecturers*

Explaining the concepts and lecturing most of the time is an important role undertaken by these teachers. This role may have stemmed from their belief that students learn to write by listening to rules and then following them. This role was evident during my observations of the teacher-centred classrooms. P1 stated:

I explain for everyone. Most time of the class I am the one who is talking and giving information. (P1, Int.3)

Students were required to listen to the teacher, and give short answers to the exercises from the textbook. Many students hardly ever spoke. The students were generally passive, unenthusiastic and remained seated at their desks throughout the lesson, with little or no interaction among them.

Similarly, P4 recalled

I instructed them to understand exactly what to do in order to come out with a proper topic sentence. (P2, Int.2)

The role of instructing students and lecturing them was also reported by P5 when he stated

No doubt our students need instructions and as I said instructions should take the most part of the writing course. (P5, Int.3)

Their teaching was simply a process of knowledge transference from the teacher and the textbook to the students. The teacher is the single source of knowledge. These teachers did not facilitate their students' learning through organising them into groups for instruction.

### *Error hunters and correctors*

As discussed previously, these teachers were primarily concerned with formal linguistic features. When being asked about his role as a writing teacher, P3 talked about his role as an error corrector.

Many of our students make big errors, a lot of mistakes in writing. We try to deal with these errors to correct them to our students we try to collect some of these errors and correct them in front of the class. Students keep making the same mistakes and this makes me angry sometimes. (P3, Int.1)

P2 and P5 similarly described their roles as error hunters and correctors when they said:

I think I am an error hunter, isolate all the errors and correct them immediately, and then students rewrite them. (P2, Int.2)

Sometimes I take the students' assignments and look for the most common errors in sentences structures, in spelling, in punctuation .... You know, it is really important to show to the students their mistakes and then they can avoid these mistakes and become better writers. (P5, Int.3)

Their role seems to match their conceptualisation of the nature of writing as being forms and structures. It is also consistent with their form-based approach to teaching writing. Their writing instruction involved developing learners' skills in producing grammatical sentences and structures, and responding to writing meant identifying and correcting grammatical errors.

#### *Feedback giver*

Giving feedback to the students on their writing is another important role. P1 and P2 stressed the necessity of giving written feedback on students' mistakes. P1 and P2 believed that teachers should show their students' their mistakes and explain them not only highlighting them.

They need to know exactly the mistakes they do. I cannot just put line or notes on what they write; they need to understand what the problem is. I need to tell them you should avoid this and avoid that. (P1, Int.2)

When students come to my office, I evaluate. I do the editing. After doing the editing, I will see a common mistake. I can just pass it but I told them not to do this mistake. (P2, Int.1)

These teachers' roles as error hunters and correctors seem to be consistent with their focus on writing forms rather than content and meaning.

#### *Teachers' negative attitudes and low self-efficacy*

As teachers of writing, these participants have similar attitudes towards teaching. They admitted that teaching writing is challenging and requires training and possession of certain skills. For example, P1 thought that writing is very difficult to

learn and to teach. When I observed his class for the first time, only two students raised their hands to answer the exercises. He seemed frustrated and shouted:

I hate teaching writing. You frustrate me. I did not want to teach this course but I had no choice. Even the worst course for me when I was a student like you was academic writing. (P's1 1st classroom observation)

P3 also seemed to lack confidence in his own abilities to teach writing. He stated that there are no magic solutions for students' linguistic problems. He concluded that teachers need orientation and training because teaching writing is not an easy process.

I am shocked with academic writing. I made a big fight in order not to teach next semester. You see I work hard in the class and in the office but there are no benefits. Teaching writing is very difficult and teachers need strong training (P3, Int.3)

When P4 was asked to give advice to other Palestinian teachers who teach writing, he responded desperately that he himself needs advice and assistance from qualified professionals.

I actually need someone to advise me, I do not know. Sometimes we really feel so desperate, sometimes frustrated. (P4, Int.1).

It seems P4 lacked a strong sense of teaching self-efficacy. Using the negative words "desperate, frustrated" may denote this teacher's low professional motivation. P5 further expressed his belief about the importance of training in how to teach writing. Training provides teachers with the necessary pedagogical knowledge to facilitate their teaching. This affects the teachers' attitudes.

P2 also mentioned that being skilled in grammar, coherence, and discourse analysis are essential skills for writing teachers.

Writing is a very difficult subject and teachers need training and that "writing is a very difficult subject to teach and learn....Writing is even difficult for native speakers. To pay attention to grammar, unity, punctuation so these things give a headache to native speakers. As I told you the teachers need orientation and training in discourse analysis— not an easy process. (P2, Int.1)

The five teachers' negative attitudes may reflect some of the challenges they faced in teaching writing. Such attitudes may affect their sense of self-efficacy, teaching agency and consequently their classroom practices.

### ***Teachers' perceptions of their students***

Another important category that evolved from the data is teachers' views of their students' linguistic skills and personal characteristics.

#### *Fossilised learners*

Cluster A teachers made many references to the low linguistic level of their students in the writing classroom. Many of them expressed their frustration about the poor linguistic background of their students, describing them as being "poor, weak, and bad" learners. According to these teachers, teaching poor students forced them to teach the basics of grammar. For example, P1 believed that the majority of his students were unable to develop their writing ability or to express themselves in English because they lacked foundational grammar and because of their poor command of English vocabulary. For him, students who did not achieve good grammatical grounding and adequate lexical knowledge found it difficult to improve in writing.

They have linguistic problem[s] not writing problem[s]. As they have a linguistic problem, a lack of vocabulary, a lack of grammar, they will not be able to write. The poverty of vocabulary and the lack of grammar make other students have a big problem in writing a proper sentence. I do believe that the low linguistic competence creates a barrier. (P1, Int.1)

Similarly, P2 expresses his dismay at the low linguistic level of his students. He perceived his students' low linguistic level as a barrier that prevents him from focusing on discourse level writing.

The students have a lot of linguistic problems. Their grammar is very poor and weak. Teaching them the grammatical aspect of language and the level of the students is very bad to teach them properly. When you teach bad students, you cannot teach them extra writing activities such as discourse....I teach my students basic grammar. (P2, Int.1)

P4 also complained about his students' weak grammatical skills. This weakness made him perceive his role as a grammar teacher.

I mean, how you can check that your students become good writer[s] when you know that a lot of them do not have the basic[s] of language. You know that you will be a grammar teacher not a writing teacher so you have the feeling that you are grammar teacher. You teach them parts of speech and grammatical rules. (P4, Int.1)

In a similar vein, P5 said that the low linguistic level of his students hindered his abilities to teach writing in an ideal way. His students' language problems made him focus on teaching grammar.

You need to know that the level of the students is bad and they will not learn. You will not be successful because you will focus on their grammar. When the students are good you will focus on the writing style but [with] weak students the focus will be on teaching them [to write] grammatical sentence. I believe that most students hate writing. (P5, Int.1)

Many of these teachers went as far as describing their students as being fossilised. One cause of P3's disappointment was the linguistic fossilisation of his students. He complained that although he spent most of his writing class time in teaching grammar, his students continued to make the same mistakes over and over again. In other words, his students were linguistically fossilised.

I am frustrated because after I correct and teach them grammar they keep committing the same mistakes. They are not serious in giving you a new writing output; you teach grammar and they will keep committing the same mistakes— they are weak. They are fossilised unfortunately. (P3, Int.1)

These teachers attributed their focus on teaching forms to their students' low linguistic proficiency level. They singled out grammar as presenting perhaps the greatest challenge to both: students in practicing writing and for them in teaching writing. The sorts and sources of linguistic difficulties their students face are related to negative interference from their first language. P2 believed that his students resort to an Arabic writing style when they write in English. The writing conventions in Arabic are very different from those in English. For example, redundancy in Arabic is preferred but considered problematic in English. P2 traced his students' linguistic problems to the rhetorical and structural differences between English and Arabic.

I noticed the problems that the students suffered from or have been suffering from in the fact that they resort to Arabic and that they have Arabic flavour in their writing. So it means that they write English in an



Arabic flavour. So their English does not sound English like the English people so we have to remedy the problem. (P2, Int.1)

P4 shared P2's view of the source of their students' weak writing abilities. Students think in Arabic, generate ideas in Arabic; then they translate the Arabic vocabulary into English. The outcome is unconventional writing style.

If you look at students' writings, you will find that these writings are English in Arabic style. I know many students write first in Arabic then they translate into English. Many times they write rubbish. They do not listen to me. Every class, I tell them think in English and write in English. (P4, Int.1)

In a similar vein, P5 talked about how his students' first language was responsible for the errors his students made. He commented that his students over generalise the grammatical rules of English and use them inappropriately. It seems his students' ignorance of the target language rules made them over generalise the rules they know, consequently making many mistakes when composing in English.

I think that there are two types of errors: interlingual errors and intralingua errors.... Most of the errors are because of using the style of writing in Arabic and transferring it to English or because of the ignorance of the English rules of grammar, vocabulary and style. I noticed that they have overgeneralisation. They overgeneralise the bad grammar for some vocabulary [and] this is why their writing sounds weird, not like English. (P5, Int.1)

The teachers' perceptions of the difficulties that their students encounter are mainly related to forms. These difficulties constitute barriers to teaching and learning writing.

#### *Unmotivated, passive students*

Additionally, these teachers believed that their students' unwillingness to learn and to exert efforts was a hindrance. They viewed these students as passive rather than active participants in the learning process. P3 thought of his students as being intimidated by writing in English. They were not willing to try to take risks in doing new writing tasks.

Sometimes students have negative attitudes towards writing and following my instructions because they are not willing to participate, they are not risk-takers, especially when it comes to use a foreign language. They do not have the courage. (P2, Int.1)

P3 and P4 viewed their students as being lazy and unmotivated. They did not want to exert effort and improve their writing skills.

But as I told you, students are fossilised, and they do not want to exert effort....They do not want to overcome their problems and their laziness, they do not want to give effort. (P3, Int.1)

Some students are not willing to prepare, they do not want to study, to give effort; the same problem .... Some students do not make effort; some students do not change as they come as they go. (P4, Int.3)

P5 also complained about his students' carelessness and unwillingness to practice writing. He thought that the difficult political situation in Gaza was a possible factor for students' weak writing skills.

You observed the class and you saw how they are sitting and how careless they are. They forgot brainstorming— they could not remember. Maybe the political situation frustrates them.... They think that writing is something easy, that you can write and that is it. They do not get the idea that they have to work hard to master the English writing. (P5, Int.2)

These quotes may show that the teachers blame their students for their unwillingness to learn to write. Cluster A teachers hinted that if students themselves are not motivated to learn and work hard, instruction can play little role in helping them improve their writing.

#### *Grade-oriented students*

Some of the teachers' comments referred to how the Palestinian students' study habits can hinder the teaching and learning of English writing. There is a problem in students' culture of study since they are grade-oriented and just rely on memorisation to get marks. They do not learn for learning itself or expanding their knowledge. P1 viewed this attitude on the part of students as an obstacle in his teaching of writing.

Because they memorise for the exam, they do not have the culture of getting information. They have the culture of how to get high marks. They do not want to be rich with information; they want to be rich with high marks. (P1, Int.1)

P3 also described how much his students frustrated him because of their

carelessness and their love of rote memorisation.

They do not like writing itself, really, and I do not know why they do not want to study. I do not know why they do not want to make effort. A few students, they come and write something and give me to check; others, even inside the class, they do not want to write... Do you know what they love is memorisation? They love it when you say to them memorise this because this will appear in the exam. (P3, Int.2)

Likewise, P4's students do not read to enrich their background information and to increase their knowledge of the world. They are not ready to work to improve their reading and thus their writing. Reading can assist students to overcome difficulty in generating ideas and writing about different topics.

Some students are excellent at grammar but they have problems in writing because they do not have information and background about the topic, they do not read, and they do not search. If you are not good readers, you will not be a good writer. They do not read at home at all. (P4, Int.1)

It seems that the teachers blame their students for not working hard and learning writing. Based on the teachers' views of the attributes of their students, I could conclude that these students' negative attitudes and carelessness as well as their poor background made it difficult for the teachers to perceive their students' potential abilities.

## **Contextual factors influencing teachers' practices**

### ***Classroom context***

The teachers within this cluster commented on how the classroom context impacted negatively on the teachers' classroom practices. The classroom context included references to the physical organisation of the classroom, the overcrowdedness of the classes, the shortage of facilities, and limited time. For example, P2 stated that there is a complete lack of technological resources, such as computers, LCDs, white boards and overhead projectors. This shortage of resources forced him to limit himself to copying texts on the blackboard which he saw as a waste of time.

There is lack of facilities that can help us in teaching. There is lack of computers photocopying machines, LCD. If I have technological equipment, I will not waste my class time copying texts. I will teach better. (P2, Int.3)

We need technology inside the classroom to help us and to save our energy and time. (P4, Int.3)

They also identified limited time as a key factor that constrained them from putting their beliefs into practice. P3 felt that considerable time was required for more learner-based approaches to teaching: time that he did not have at his disposal. He expressed the desire to conduct more modern communicative methods for teaching writing.

Writing is a time-consuming activity, so you do not have time to read, criticise, analyse, and write. The class duration is one hour, and the number of students is very huge. Writing in the board and correcting the grammar mistakes the hour will end quickly. Teaching writing is a process of pain. More time means more students' involvement, interaction, and participation. (P3, Int.1)

P5 also complained about the large number of the students, and he described his writing classroom as overcrowded. He was aware that copying texts on the board and editing them is a traditional approach to teaching writing. He asked for more resources to facilitate his teaching.

Students have to be in smaller numbers, and they have to separate between the good students and the bad students and to have computerised facility. Our way of teaching is very traditional. To write on the board and to criticise the grammar of the written texts. We need email activities. We should minimise the number of students and we should have facilities (P5, Int.3)

The way seats were organised in the classroom made it difficult for P3 to organise his students work in groups and to manage overcrowded classes.

The huge number of students in the class. You cannot control the whole, what to say, the whole class. You cannot use some techniques in order to apply things in different ways. If I want to make groups in order to... it will be very difficult because the classroom would not help you. What to say, the area is too tight. Sometimes, you have problem in chairs. And also the organisation of the class, it would not help, physically you cannot manipulate. (P3, Int.1)

When talking about the techniques he could apply in the writing classroom, P5 mentioned giving feedback to students and editing their mistakes, picking a sample of the ones he evaluated and sharing it in the classroom to help students learn from their mistakes. However, he admits that it is possible for him to do this only with a class of 15-20 students. He made it clear:

Giving feedback and interacting with students could be done with only 15 to 20 students maximum. Do not give me 60 or 70 students and ask me to do this with them. The people blamed for the miserable situation in my class is the academic affairs. They do not care about numbers. (P5, Int.1)

In addition to affecting his practices in the classroom, P5 went further in explaining the impact a large class may have upon him. Such a class would affect his attitude and make him nervous thinking of how he should handle such a large class. Mentally he will feel unable to manage the classroom or to deal with students. He recalled how one of his classes with 120 made him nervous.

One day I have taught 120 students in one class. Do not tell me that I blame the number. It's impossible. If you got a superman to teach academic writing for 120 students, you can't. You will be nervous looking at these huge numbers. Mentally I would not be able to do anything. How should I know that this student is good or not? How should I evaluate all the students? (P5, Int.1)

P4 stated that there are course objectives, syllabus and deadlines to meet which may be at the expense of the time to be given to feedback and evaluation of students' product. He points out:

If the semester is longer, I will be able to teach in a new innovative way, but again the obstacle is the number of students. (P4, Int2)

These physical factors related to classroom environment have a considerable impact on the way they taught writing. P1 labelled the conditions he worked under as "the impossible way we work under". They had very little sense of power over their teaching physical environments. The teachers had no control over the crowdedness of their writing classes. The academic affairs in the university are responsible for the enrolment numbers of students in each section. The minimum number of students is 70; otherwise, the section is cancelled and students are added to other sections. The use of techniques like peer critique, classroom feedback and group work is constrained by the availability of classrooms that are arranged in a physical way promote these techniques for the teaching of academic writing.

## ***Institutional context***

### *Courses sequencing in the study plan*

Three of the five teachers believed that the courses in the study plan for the English Language program are not sequenced in a way that promote a learning to prepare students and equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for their success in the EFL writing course. The inappropriateness of the course timetabling was a barrier facing the students and teachers alike. P2 suggested that the solution lies in a preparatory course that could prepare students for academic writing. This course should be taken in the first semester before offering the Writing Paragraphs course. He thought that the core of this preparatory course was to teach students how to write a proper sentence which, in his opinion, would be enough to make sure that students were ready to learn writing English texts. In the English department where P1 taught, students take grammar, vocabulary and reading courses after taking the first writing course. If taken before the writing course, these courses are more likely to have a role in developing students' writing skills.

The objective of the preparatory course is also to help students overcome the problems caused to them by teaching system at high school and to get prepared for college writing. (P1, Int.1)

To overcome such problems, P3 and P5 recommended that students should not take the academic writing class during the first semester. Taking a language foundation course may have the potential to equip students with basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. This may save the writing teachers' time in teaching and correcting grammatical mistakes.

Our students should take a preparation for academic writing to defeat the school system they have gone through all their life..... So they get prepared, they write a proper sentence, they only will know how to write a proper sentence—that's what I ask. (P3, Int.1)

I need them to gather vocabulary; this is why I told you from the beginning academic writing classes should not be in the first semester. They first need to take preparation classes in grammar and vocabulary, and then they come into the academic writing class because you saw we teach everything in academic writing. (P5, Int.3)

Thus, these teachers asked for the timetabling of the language skills courses to be sequenced in a way that prepares the students for the writing classroom.

### *Language placement tests*

Another contextual constraint that teachers complained about was the lack of language placements tests. P2 commented that in their departmental meetings, they agree on the necessity of preparing placement tests to help them choose students who have good aptitude to major in English. The main criterion for admission is students' average in the Third Secondary Certificate Exam regardless of their grades in English Language.

You know I do not exaggerate when I say in every departmental meeting when we complain from the low level of students, we agree on the importance of preparing and conducting placement test for students who want to major in English. Academic affairs accept according to the Third Secondary Certificate Exam. They do not care about students' English entry level. (P2, Int.3)

In a similar vein, P5 stated that the absence of placement tests to assess the proficiency level of applicants who want to major in English is a serious problem. Many of his students who start the English program cannot write correct English sentences. They major in English due to the prestigious status students get by being English language majors.

Academic affairs and admission department should understand that we do not just want quantity: "Oh many students study in our university". We need quality. We need good students who motivate us to give more. (P5, Int.3)

### ***Broader educational system***

Three of the five teachers made frequent references to the impact of the broader educational context upon their teaching practices. P1 believed that the educational context in middle and high schools is a very important factor that constrained him from implementing his plans in teaching writing. Right from the first day of class, P1 evaluates what his students learnt in writing in high schools. He believed that the schools did not prepare the students well to facilitate the learning of writing in university.

The first moment I come inside, I need to know what their schools do for them, how they destroyed their minds and fossilised their brains. They teach them, you know, capsules. Do you know what capsules? Do this and does that, when you see this, do that. So they do not know how to create. (P1, Int.1)

The first thing I do is to ask them to write introduce yourself paragraph and surprisingly I find things you will not believe. Ninety percent of the students cannot write simple sentences in the right way. (P1, Int.1)

Similarly, P3 blamed the middle and high schools for the low linguistic level of students. He maintained that schools are responsible for students' inability to create or to come up with their own writing. They are only taught "capsules." Teachers in high schools taught their students fixed formulaic expressions and encouraged them to use these when composing in English. For example, "no one can deny that" is a formulaic expression that can be used in the beginning of any paragraph.

In secondary schools, English teachers teach capsules. Capsules are doing this and do that. Start any paragraph with no doubt or no one can deny that. (P3, Int.1)

P5 also thought that it is difficult for students to overcome linguistic problems that were caused by the poor school educational system. These problems are rooted for years in school. He even pointed out that the poor linguistic ability of school teachers is responsible for students' poor linguistic abilities because many of these teachers did not know how to teach.

But it is really a problem that students themselves cannot really overcome; it is based upon years in the school.... Also you know, English language if you go to schools, UNRWA schools, the governmental schools, you cannot imagine how poor the teachers are. Many students still write in the wrong way they were taught at schools and you know year over year, they will be fossilised on this problem. (P5, Int.1)

P4 also used the term "poison" to refer to the very negative impact left by school teachers upon the way students learn and practice English, particularly English writing. He believed that before teaching academic writing, his task was to help students get rid of the negative impact left by their English teachers at schools. He points out:

"We try to, what to say, clear their minds from the poison they have put in their minds during their school life". (P4, Int.1).

He even thought that schools did not help students develop their writing skills because they only focus on a limited set of topics or what he calls "typical topics."



Ok, the first thing schools should take the first steps to teach a proper academic writing, so the students will come to us knowing what is the difference between a paragraph and an essay. What is the difference between the topic sentence and a title? Our students in school classes just, you know, just write about typical topics. Write about 'fame', write about 'pollution', and write about 'travel', etc. whatever is the topic. That is writing and that's it. (P1, Int.1)

According to these teachers, part of the responsibility for students' weak writing ability may be high school English curriculum and testing culture. They believed that all these factors related to students' experience in high school resulted in students starting college unprepared for academic writing at university.

I am familiar with schools and their system. Maybe the curriculum they follow itself. I do not know. But when students come to us, they come with nothing. Part of the students worked on themselves, they know what to do, and some do not. (P3, Int.1)

P4 also believed that teachers' practices in the high school encourage their students to memorise. He felt that this resulted in a serious problem in the way students think:

They are not motivated during their school to open their minds. At school they only ask them to memorise. The problem is in their mentality. (P4, Int.2)

Thus, many contextual factors were perceived by Cluster A teachers as being constraining to their teaching of writing in Palestinian universities.

### **Summary of cluster A findings and key features**

The findings of Cluster A shows that the teachers' classroom practices were characterised by a focus on grammatical forms and syntactic structures. Other features were teacher-centred teaching, collective oral feedback, and textbook-based exercises. Personal and contextual factors shaped and influenced these teaching practices. The personal factors consist of teachers' cognitions about writing, writing teaching and learning, their professional selves, and their prior learning experience when they were EFL writing learners. There was congruence between their instructional practices and multi-dimensional cognitions. Their beliefs about the importance of teaching grammar, accuracy of the written text, and formal structures of paragraphs and essays were reflected in their classroom activities, course materials, course descriptions and tests. The contextual factors included

teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of their students, the classroom physical context, institutional context, and the educational system. Teachers perceived all of the contextual factors as barriers that constrain their teaching in the way they desire.

## CHAPTER 5

### Cluster B: Focus on Rhetorical Patterns (N4)

#### Overview and teachers' profiles

The individual cases combined to constitute Cluster B set out to investigate the pedagogical practices, cognitions, and perceptions of P6, P7, P8, and P9. The four teachers were two males and two females whose ages ranged from 27 to 50 years. All were educated either in American or British universities where they completed their masters or doctorate degrees. Their professional profiles are available in Table 3 below. Cluster B teachers focused on teaching the rhetorical organisation of texts. Similar to Cluster A findings, this chapter describes Cluster B teaching practices, and reports the findings about their different cognitions and their impact on pedagogical practices. Finally, it reports on results of the impact of teachers' perceptions of students' traits, the classroom physical context, institutional context, and national educational system on teachers' instructional practices in the writing classroom.

**Table 3: Professional profiles of cluster B**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>P6</b>	<b>P7</b>	<b>P8</b>	<b>P9</b>
Education & qualifications	MA, TEFL	MA, linguistics	PhD, English Literature	PhD, Applied Linguistics
Practice settings	University A	University B	University B	University A
Years of teaching experience	20+ Years	>10 years	> 10 years	6-10 years
Courses taught	Writing, reading	Writing, linguistics,	Writing, reading	Writing, grammar
Focus of 1st classroom observation	Introductory paragraphs for essays	Writing comparison and contrast paragraph	Writing cause and effect essay	Writing descriptive paragraphs
Focus of 2nd classroom observation	Concluding paragraphs for essays	Writing argumentative paragraph	Writing process essay	Doing exercises on descriptive paragraphs

## **Pedagogical practices**

Cluster B teachers' classroom practices are described through their teaching procedures, course materials, course descriptions, and course tests.

### ***Rhetorical pattern-based approach to teaching writing***

The main focus in the four teachers' classes was on teaching the rhetorical and the structural organisation of texts. When teaching paragraphs, Cluster B's major concern was with the logical construction and arrangement of its elements: topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences. They focused also on transitional signals used in the different modes of development such as illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, classification, definition, cause and effect. When teaching essays, they focused on essay development through writing introduction, body, and conclusion and organising them into modes, such as narration, description, exposition, and argumentation.

I teach essay writing. So, basically we focus on the structure of essay, the introduction, the body supporting paragraphs, the conclusion, and the different types of essays; argumentative, discursive, comparison and contrast. We look on all the issues, all the topics related to essay writing. (P7, Int. 1)

In addition to teaching the rhetorical modes and the structural elements of essays, P8 and P9 focused on the mechanics of writing, on editing texts for accuracy, and on sentence problems and syntactic structures

I teach students how to write good essays. We look at the thesis statement of the essay, we look at topic sentences for the body paragraphs, and we look at the supporting details for each body paragraph, if the thesis statements are strong or not. We teach them how to write descriptive, argumentative.... You can say we teach them everything. We look at editing, the mechanics of writing. (P8, Int.1)

I focus on different types or paragraphs of different organisation. ...In addition to looking at the structure of a paragraph, topic... we give quite some quality time focusing on problems from sentence level, words level and problems related to writing issues. (P9, Int.1)

These four teachers focused on the concepts of the thesis statement and the topic sentence, paragraph unity, organisational strategies, and development of

paragraphs and essays by patterns or modes. Teachers put organisational techniques at the centre of teaching academic writing.

Learning to write, then, involved becoming skilled in identifying, internalising, and executing this pattern. The main concern of their teaching approach was the logical organisation and arrangement of discourse. The structural and rhetorical elements of paragraphs and essays prevailed over content and meaning in determining what is writing. Absent from their data is an understanding of how such prescriptive elements are used as guides in the development of ideas. The teaching and learning of the organisational patterns of paragraphs seem the end goal rather than a means to an end. Their selection of the teaching materials, their course descriptions and their writing tests reflected their focus on rhetorical organisation of texts.

The four teachers followed similar teaching procedures when teaching the different rhetorical structures and patterns. Their classroom routine consisted of four stages: familiarisation of organisational patterns, linguistic analysis of rhetorical patterns, controlled practice, and free writing. P6 summarised her daily routine.

First I define the concept that the class would focus on: for example what is a descriptive essay? What is an expository one? What is unity? etc. That is something typical then we move into a sample and we discuss the sample together and answer the questions that follow. As homework, students have to write similar essays. (P6, Int.1)

The above quote shows that P6 started with theoretical knowledge about different types, aspects and components necessary for writing essays; then, she asked her students to look at samples from the textbook and finally to do the exercises on the book. The real practice of the technique occurs at home where students are asked to write an essay organised in the mode explained in class.

Similarly, P7 followed a four steps routine when she taught her students how to write a comparison and contrast paragraph. First, she defined from the textbook what is meant by comparing and contrasting.

Then, she explained to her students how to organise the ideas when comparing or contrasting things, methods, and people. She discussed the block and the point-by-point organisational patterns. Then, she asked her students to read a model paragraph which contrasted reading a story from a book or watching it being acted in a movie.

- **Paragraphs that compare and contrast**  
 To *compare* means to discuss how two people, places, or things are *similar*: *Both teachers and students need to spend a lot of time preparing for classes.* To *contrast* means to discuss how two people, places, or things are *different*: *One main advantage of a bicycle over a car is that a bicycle doesn't create any air pollution.*

**Comparison / contrast organization**

➤ **Two methods for organizing a comparison / contrast paragraph**

**Method 1: Block organization**  
 First, write about supporting points for the first topic. Then compare or contrast those same points to the second topic. This type of organization could be outlined like this:

- Topic sentence comparing / contrasting two topics (A & B)
- Points of comparison / contrast about Topic A
- Points of comparison / contrast about Topic B
- Concluding sentence

*Reading a story in a book is often very different from seeing it as a movie. When you read a story, you need to use your imagination. A book usually gives a lot of description about the people, places, and things in the story, so you can create pictures in your mind. In addition, the conversations between people are always written with details that describe how the people look or feel while they are talking. When you read, you use a lot of imagination to help "see" the characters in the story. However, when you see a movie, it is a different experience. When you watch a movie, you don't need to use your imagination. The pictures on the screen give all the details about the people, places, and things in the story. The conversations are spoken out loud, so you just listen and watch. The feelings of the people come through their faces, body movements, and voices. Although a book and a movie might tell the same story, reading a book and watching a movie are very different experiences.*

(Zemach & Rumisek, 2002, p.18)

This paragraph was followed with a list of questions about its structure and how to organise the ideas into an outline. Then the teacher listed a number of comparison and contrast transitional signals. In the controlled practice stage, students were asked to fill in the spaces with appropriate transition signals to complete the

meaning of isolated sentences. Towards the end of the class, students did another exercise which provided students with a list of ideas about golf and tennis. They were asked to categorise which ideas expressed similarities and which ideas expressed differences. In the final stage, the teacher asked her students to free write on one of the following topics listed in the textbook and to use either point-by-point organisation or block organisation.

**Write one or two paragraphs comparing or contrasting topics of your choice or one of these.**

- action movies / romantic movies
- the advantages and disadvantages of living abroad
- living in a small town / living in a big city
- playing sports / watching sports on TV
- the advantages and disadvantages of having a job while in college

(Zemach & Rumisek, 2002, p.21)

Likewise, when P8 explained how to write the cause and effect essays, he started with familiarising his students with the definition, the organisation, and the features of the cause-effect essay pattern.

You can use cause/effect organisation to answer typical questions such as these: Explain the causes of decline in reading ability among Palestinian students. Discuss the effects of smoking on health.... (P8, 1<sup>st</sup> Classroom Observation)

P8's comments may denote that students learned the cause-effect essay pattern for academic purposes to answer questions, not for real life purposes. After he exemplified to the cause-effect possible topics, he explained how to organise this pattern. He talked about block and chain organisational patterns for cause-effect essays.

You can organise a cause/effect essay in two main ways: "block" organisation and "chain" organisation. In block organisation, you first discuss all the causes as a block in one, two, three, or more paragraphs, depending on the number of causes. Then, you discuss all the effects together as a block. (P8, 1<sup>st</sup> Classroom Observation)

Then, he asked his students to look at the diagrams in the textbook about the possible organisational patterns for the cause-effect essay. In the controlled stage, he asked his students to read a model essay from the textbook about the causes

and effects of shyness. He asked them to identify the type of organisation on. This model was followed by a list of questions about the structure.

1. Is the topic of this essay primarily the causes or the effects of shyness?
2. Which paragraph(s) discuss (es) the causes?
3. Which paragraph(s) discuss (es) the effects?
4. What two subtopics are named in the thesis statement?
5. Which paragraph(s) discuss (es) the first subtopic?
6. Which paragraph(s) discuss (es) the second subtopic?
7. What is the function of paragraph 3? (P8's course material)

In the third stage, the teacher asked his students to underline the cause/effect signal words and phrases. A chart listing the most common transitional signals is provided in the textbook. The controlled practice involved doing exercises on recognising cause-effect signals, and a second exercise on combining disconnected sentences to show either cause or effect relationship. These exercises usually consisted of discrete sentences.

**Step 1** Decide which sentence in each item is a cause and which is an effect. Write C for cause or E for effect next to each sentence.

**Step 2** Combine the sentences in each item into a new sentence that shows a cause/effect relationship.

*Some breeds of dogs have a stronger desire to perform a service than other breeds.*

*They are more suitable as search-and-rescue animals.* (P8's teaching materials)

In the fourth stage, students were provided with a sample essay representing the studied pattern accompanied with a list of questions about the organisation of ideas. This stage is very important. The teachers emphasised the organisation of ideas rather than the ideas themselves. Finally, during the free writing stage which took place at home, students were asked individually to select a topic from the list provided in the textbook and to use the organisation skills, structures and vocabulary they had been taught to produce a cause/effect essay.

These descriptions captured the way writing classes were taught at the research sites of this current study with there being an emphasis on the patterns of organisation. The teachers believed that these patterns are important for logical development. The classroom focused mostly on simple recognition of such patterns, and the manipulating of the organisation techniques to produce a rhetorical product



occurred at home. The classroom observations showed that during the two weeks of data gathering, the rhetorical patterns were taught without consideration of the functions that these structures serve, for the roles of writer and reader, context, topics, or the many other factors that influence the nature of text processing and production.

### ***Patterns-based textbook as a quasi-syllabus***

The main source of the teaching materials and procedures described was the writing course textbook. The four teachers organised and rationalised their teaching in reference to lessons in specific textbooks. P7 and P9 used a textbook entitled *College Writing: from Paragraph to Essay* (Zemach & Rumisek, 2002). This textbook focuses on the structure of paragraph and on five of its rhetorical patterns: Description, process, opinion, cause and effect, and problem and solution. P6 and P8 taught *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Oshima & Hogue, 1991). This textbook is designed to help students master the standard organisational patterns and the basic concepts of the paragraph and essay writing. P7 described the contents of her writing course textbook as being a good source of providing different types of paragraphs on a variety of topics:

It has process paragraphs, argumentative paragraphs, definition paragraphs. Also it has description paragraphs comparison and contrast paragraphs. The book was good at giving different types of paragraphs and of course when you are teaching all of these different types of paragraphs you have to explore different topics. (P7, Int.1)

The textbooks are the most useful source for teaching writing.... My course textbook is very interesting and organised. It does not need you to be a hero to add something to it; it covers all the parts I am interested in. It explains the structure and the development of paragraphs and it has all the types of the paragraphs. It also gives exercises on mechanics and on transitional signals. (P9, Int.1)

The textbook is the guide and is the source of definitions, guidelines, text samples and exercises. The important role of the textbook in these teachers' writing classes was evident during the classroom observations and how it facilitated the delivery of the different lessons.

It is all in the book. The book offers definitions; I just clarify these definitions from the book then we look at the samples. Then in the last part I give students the chance to practice writing on their own and to do writing exercises from the book. Each chapter of the

textbook focuses on one step in the process of writing a research paper starting from choosing. (P6, Int.2)

This quote may reflect how satisfied P6 was with the course textbook. However, she contradicted her dependence and satisfaction with the textbook when she talked about the necessity of using supplementary materials to enrich the contents of the textbook. P6 thought that the textbook should not be the only source of material to be taught because it can be boring since it uses the same format of explaining the patterns and similar question types. She believed that teachers' dependence on the textbook is determined by the training s/he has. She stated that it would be easy for trained teachers to supplement their students with supplementary materials, while untrained teachers would use the textbook as their only source of information. When she was a student, P6 felt that following the book closely was boring because of its systematic organisation.

I love to use a lot of supplementary materials in my writing classes. If you do not have the teacher training you may stick to a certain approach or a certain textbook where the textbook the main source of information. I used to create a variety of questions. When I was a student we used to follow the book as it was and that was quite boring, so I try to add different varieties of questions. (P6, Int.3)

A similar contradiction occurred when P8 expressed the important role of supplementary materials in his writing classes. Students who do not attend the class regularly would miss important information from the supplementary materials. Questions related to the supplementary materials may appear in the exam. P8 seemed to talk about writing as acquiring information not as learning a skill.

I use supplementary materials that are not available in the textbook. Students have to listen carefully to take notes. They miss important points....When they are not there they will not learn writing at all. They will be weak in the exams they will not know how to answer because they were absent [and] students cannot find answers to these questions in the textbook. (P8, Int.1)

The contents of the textbooks in these teachers' writing classes matched to a large extent their classroom focus on rhetorical patterns and the organisation of ideas to help students learn writing. Based on the descriptions of the four teachers' classroom procedures provided in the previous section, one can say that the textbook works as a quasi-curriculum.

### ***Rhetorical patterns-oriented course descriptions***

The teachers' classroom practices and their beliefs about the merit of teaching rhetorical patterns and structural elements of paragraphs and essays were consistent with their course descriptions. P6 listed the following objectives that she aimed her students to achieve by the end of the course. These objectives focus on the structural elements and the rhetorical organisation of paragraphs and essays.

- Narrow down topics onto thesis statements that can be developed and supported.
- Be able to evaluate thesis statements, topic sentences.
- Build a traditional academic essay with different patterns, such as argumentative, definition, cause and effect
- Spot issues re. cohesion, mechanical use of cohesive devices, sentence errors. (P6's Course Description)

Similarly, P7's aimed at teaching students how to write different patterns of traditional essays. By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Use prewriting strategies as a first step to producing a clear and well-organised essay outline.
- Write a focused and clear thesis statement.
- Write an introduction, using an effective hook.
- Write essays, using five rhetorical patterns (classification, process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and argumentation)
- Produce a variety of sentence types, using an academic style.
- Use appropriate grammar in writing.
- Demonstrate logical transitions (P7's Course Description)

Likewise, P8's interest and orientation towards teaching text patterns shaped the main objectives and the general descriptions of their writing courses. By the end of the course, students are expected

- To write well-organised formal essays with an introduction, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- However, they will be able to go beyond this type of essays by studying model essays representing different patterns of development that show variations, such as descriptive, process, definition, example, and argumentative essays. (P8's course description)

Likewise, P9's course description highlighted the focus on writing different types of paragraphs in accurate English. Basics of grammar, such as tenses and the different parts of speech are emphasised throughout the course.

This course reviews sentence writing and focuses on the paragraphs, using six rhetorical patterns: classification, process, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, argumentation, and description. It continuously reinforces accurate use of language mechanics and adequate style. Verb tenses, modifiers, rules of punctuation, relative pronouns, and prepositions will all be especially stressed. (P9's course description)

The four teachers copied the contents of the writing textbook as their detailed course outlines. This is an evidence of the significant role played by the textbook as the course organiser and guide. Their objectives of the writing course were reflected in their focus on teaching rhetorical patterns and emphasising ideas organisation expressed in error free forms.

### ***Rhetorical patterns-based writing tests***

The teachers' emphasis on teaching rhetorical patterns and structural elements of texts was reflected in their writing tests which aimed at evaluating their students' learning in the writing course. Each of the four teachers' exams included either a sample paragraph or an essay followed by a number of questions. Those questions focused on the organisation of ideas, thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting paragraphs, and unity in texts, transitional signals, rhetorical pattern type, and some sentence forms-related problems.

The first question in P8's writing exam consisted of a written essay about preparing for an entrance exam in Turkey. Students were required to read the essay and to answer questions about the structural parts of essay, its type, its structure, and its features.

1. The essay has some errors in the format. What are they?
2. Write the thesis statement and the topic sentences
3. What is the type of this essay?
4. Write the general idea in the third paragraph
5. Write the irrelevant idea in the second paragraph
6. Add a plan to the thesis statement
7. Which method is used in the introduction?
8. Which method is used in the conclusion?
9. Is the essay unified? Why? (P8's Test)

Another question specified the rhetorical pattern type but not the topic to write about “Write an example essay about any topic of your choice” (P8’s test). No space was left for the students to brainstorm, draft, and organise their ideas. The third and the fourth questions were on correcting parallel structures and writing concise sentences.

Some of P7’s test questions were similar to P8’s. Half of the test questions asked students to

Choose one of the following topics to write a good cause and effect essay of 4 paragraphs; your essay should include an introduction, two supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. (P7’s writing test).

Another question asked students to

Write an expository five paragraph essay in relevance to the following topic: The Internet. State an introduction including a thesis related to the idea, 3 supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion (P7’s writing test).

In summary, the major features that characterise Cluster B’s classroom practices was their tendency to give instructions and guidelines about writing specific patterns of paragraphs and essays. There was less emphasis on the content and communicative purpose of written texts. Teachers in this cluster mainly played the role of teacher more than the role of facilitator. There was a clear match between these teachers’ course objectives, tests, and classroom focus.

### **Teachers’ cognitions**

A main category that emerged in this study is teachers’ cognitions which were subdivided into teachers’ conceptualisations of writing, their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning EFL writing, and their views of their teaching roles and self-efficacy.

#### ***Conceptualising writing as a cognitive process***

Cluster B teachers shared similar beliefs about the nature of EFL writing. Their conceptualisation of second language writing centred on the cognitive processes of organising coherent paragraphs and essays into different rhetorical patterns. These

rhetorical patterns range from narration, argumentation, exposition, process analysis, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. P6's comment highlights the cognitive aspect of writing when generating and organising ideas.

Writing is a cognitive skill moving from what is declarative to what is procedural, and is a cognitive process which helps students organise their ideas and thoughts in coherent texts in patterns. (P6, Int.1)

P7's view of the nature of writing is similar to that of P6. He perceived writing as a difficult cognitive skill that takes time. It involves thinking, generating, organising, and analysing.

I am not looking at writing as a mechanical process. It is a recursive process, not a linear one. It takes time and teachers should be patient aware of that. Writing is a difficult process. It needs thinking first of all; it needs organising and it needs analysing. (P7, Int.1)

P8 talked about how ideas organisation into different rhetorical patterns is the essence of writing. Perfect grammar does not guarantee good writing.

Writing is to think about a topic to get ideas ....writing is not just writing perfect grammar. You need to organise the grammatical structures into patterns and to follow the rules of these patterns of essays or paragraphs. (P8, Int.1)

P9 maintained that organising mental information into recognised patterns is the basis of writing. He stated that writing essays are very similar to writing paragraphs and that the main difference is in organising the ideas into larger patterns. Combining words together does not have the potential to result in strong writing.

Writing is the process of organising. Through writing, we try to synthesise the mental information we have into an outline or a mental outline. And then we move into the actual writing.... Writing is not just a matter of putting words and putting sentences together. It is organising information coherently. (P9, Int.1)

In summary, these teachers conceptualised writing as basically a matter of thinking, of arranging and fitting ideas and sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. Their conceptualisation lacked references to the communicative, social purpose of writing.

### ***Pedagogical beliefs about writing instruction***

Conceptualising the essence of writing as organising ideas and structures into rhetorical patterns influenced the four teachers' beliefs about how EFL writing is learnt and how it should be taught. I discuss their set of core beliefs supported by a substantial amount of data.

#### *Prioritising ideas organisation over grammatical accuracy*

Based on their conceptualisation of writing discussed above, the four teachers thought that the writing teachers' focus during the early stages of teaching writing should be on organising ideas and later on producing grammatically correct text. P6 and P8 expressed similar opinions about organisational skills as the essence of teaching writing.

The first step to learn writing is to get ideas to organise the ideas into coherent patterns.... Students should be able to write on any topic and to use suitable types of texts so that their writing will be strong. (P6, Int.1)

P8 added that teaching writing is not basically to go to the class and to say to the class "You have a topic. Write about it" and then to take their writing and correct their grammatical mistakes. He believed that this is not going to help the students to learn how to write:

Writing is not just writing perfect grammar. You should teach them organisation techniques, how to write different types, and how to connect ideas together. (P8, Int.2)

These two teachers expressed their awareness that writing cannot be equated with mechanics, such as grammar and punctuation. Students need instruction on different aspects of writing to enable them to write. P9 also agreed with P6 and P8 about the necessity of teaching students ideas organisation.

Try to prioritise things when you teach writing. There are many things to teach writing; there are idea generation, grammar, punctuation, structure, vocabulary and a lot of things. They need to prioritise things based on their importance, for example I would focus on teaching how to write the different paragraphs, essay modes and patterns and how to organise them. This is the most important aspect of writing. (P9, Int.1)

Thus, these teachers believed that learning writing involves mastering organisational techniques rather than grammatical accuracy. For them, grammar should not be the focal point.

#### *Reading and imitating written models*

In addition to their teaching focus on organisational patterns, these teachers believed that organisational skills can be learnt through reading, analysing, and imitating written models of paragraphs and essays. P6 thought that written samples of essays helped her students to see how texts are structured. Written samples gave her students the opportunity to see how other writers organise their ideas which, in turn, helps students to do the same. P7 also stated that her students should be able first to imitate the written models of others and at a later stage students would be able to edit their imitated texts.

A good writer is a good reader as I told you; writing depends on reading models and samples by people. Writing is reading what others write and trying to imitate their writing in the style or the organisation technique they are using and this only comes with reading. (P7, Int.1)

P8 shared P7's opinion about the importance of using written models for students to imitate and learn from. He reported that the starting point for him to teach writing is analysing written models and identifying their organisational techniques. After that, he gives his students the chance to write similar texts.

My role would be just to give them you know model writing... and we take it from there. We analyse the structure the main characteristics of the model. Afterwards I get them to write similar paragraph or essay similar to the model on any topic in academic or about life and get them to write. (P8, Int.1)

P9 showed similar attitude towards utilising written models of essays and paragraphs in his writing classes. Reading these samples provides students with ideas, structures, to enable students to examine and imitate

Well, there are a lot of written texts, sample essays and sample paragraphs in our books, and sure if students read these writings, they will get many topics, many ideas, besides they can write similar texts using similar styles. (P9, Int.2)



These teachers believed that reading written models, examining their structures, and imitating them may facilitate their students' learning of writing.

### *Practice makes perfect*

All the teachers within Cluster B believed in the necessity of giving students the opportunity to practise writing and apply the organisational techniques they learned. P6 commented that practice gives students insight into the progress they are making. Students should be encouraged to write regardless of the mistakes they make. Otherwise, they will not develop beyond the level of linguistic utterances.

Practice provides them with feedback and this can give them insight into how they are developing. They could spot the differences between their writings and these differences are the result of their continued practice; it is like any other skill that becomes automatised by practice. (P6, Int.1)

P8 and P9 were also aware of the importance of practising writing to help students become better writers. P8 attributed the students' weakness in writing to the possibility that students do not practise writing. These teachers believe that the scope of writing should not be diminished to writing accurate sentences.

I believe in practice. This is a word I always mention and I really like it because most of the time our problem is the lack of the practice of writing. Writing is really a skill that can be learned through practice. Many students are weak at writing because they do not practice enough writing. (P8, Int.3)

To develop their writing, students need to be given the opportunity to practice writing complete texts, not just to be restricted to writing correct sentences. Students need instructing on organisation and style. We need to give them the chance to practice real writing whole texts. (P9, Int.1)

These quotes may reflect the importance of practising writing and organising whole texts in enabling students to become better writers.

### *Giving feedback on students' written work*

In addition to the benefits of practicing writing, Cluster B teachers commented on the importance of giving students different types of feedback. P6 believed that giving feedback to students' writing output is necessary to help them learn writing. When students receive feedback from their teachers, they see whether what they write is acceptable and if there are things that they still need to work on and improve.

I urge the writing teachers to give feedback to the whole class on a weekly basis after they collect their assignments and correct them .... This feedback draws the student's attention to their errors. They need to learn to overcome these errors to be good writers. (P6, Int.1)

P7 also commented on the value of giving feedback on students' writing to facilitate their learning and ultimately the quality of their writing. She believed that when she reads her students' writing and gives them feedback, her students pay more attention and they are more likely to take the writing task more seriously instead of just filling the lines.

My feedback helps them to avoid the errors they make. Over time, they learn from the feedback. Many of my students' writings were vague and not clear but I found that because of my feedback they improved and overcame this problem. (P7, Int.1)

P8 believed that students should be aware that when they receive negative feedback, it is still a source of learning to know what problems they have. Some of his students tore up their papers. He stated that positive feedback all the time is not going to work. Teachers should draw their students' attention to the most common mistakes, and try to remedy them. Negative feedback is as important as positive.

Many students wanted to receive positive feedback because to them negative feedback is humiliating to them. Students are afraid of negative feedback; they want their writings to be full of positive words. Our students do not want to be criticised. (P8, Int.3)

Thus, giving feedback to the students is an important practice that teachers should consider to help their students become better writers.

#### *Utilising contrastive rhetoric*

In addition to these teachers' beliefs about the role of practice and feedback, two of the four teachers believed that their students' linguistic backgrounds and first language writing learning experiences influence the text structure when they compose in English. P6 thought that a writing teacher should raise their students' awareness of the differences in the writing conventions between English and Arabic and discuss them with their students. She recommended that before teachers ask their students to write anything, they should tell them in what ways English writing is different from Arabic writing.

I believe it will be good to provide students with a kind of theoretical understanding and awareness of the sort of differences that exist between English and Arabic. It is time to know the area of differences. (P6, Int.1)

P9 similarly believed that raising students' awareness of the differences should be the first step to help students overcome their errors and the difficulties they encounter when they write in English.

Many of my students make errors because they follow an Arabic rhetoric style rather than an English rhetoric patterns. Teachers should teach their students the main differences between Arabic and English to help them not to write in Arabic style. (P9, Int.1)

These two teachers thought that the rhetorical structures used when writing in a second language might be carried over from the native language. They believed that the rhetorical differences create difficulties and the rhetorical similarities facilitate learning.

P6's students seemed to struggle with using the funnel technique when writing introductory paragraphs because they do not use this technique when writing introductions in Arabic. The funnel technique involves starting the introduction with general statements and then narrowing them down in the subsequent sentences. (P6's, 1st classroom observation).

P9 shared P6's view about the role of contrastive rhetoric when teaching writing. He thought that interference from Arabic writing conventions extended beyond the sentence to paragraphs and longer text. She said that

The linguistic differences and similarities between Arabic and English in composing and organising texts should be taught in the class. Raising student's awareness to the differences is very important to help students understand the skills involved in writing. (P9, Int.2)

To summarise this section, Cluster B teachers' beliefs centred on teaching organisational patterns and contrastive rhetoric, practising writing, receiving feedback, and imitating written models are more likely to lead to skilled writers.

### ***Cognitions about professional selves***

The teachers commented on their perceptions of themselves as writing teachers. Their perceptions were further subdivided into perceptions of their roles in the

writing classroom, their attitudes and feelings of being writing teachers, and the sources of their pedagogical knowledge about teaching writing.

### *Teachers' roles*

#### *Lecturers and clarifiers*

The most common role reported by the four writing teachers was lecturing students and facilitating their understanding of the textbook materials. The translation of this role into practice was evident when I observed their writing classes. P6 and P7 talked about providing their students with guidelines and rules for organising the different paragraph and essay types.

By giving them guidelines, steps and rules, some pieces of advice, some instruction, I help them to learn. When there is a new topic, we define it, I explain what is it and how to write it and organise it by analysing the organisation of the sample essay. (P6, Int.1)

P7 exemplified to her role of explaining through writing the argumentative essay. She would usually give her students the rules, the transitional signals, the block organisation or the point by point organisation, and then work on the application of these rules and guidelines through writing on given topics.

I start my classes by explaining the lesson first, and give them the rules. Then I read and explain what is written in the textbook and analyse the model; if there is a difficult word or expression, I translate it. Then we answer the exercises from the textbook. (P7, Int.3)

P8 and P9 also stated that they needed to lecture their students on the different topics and to provide them with necessary definitions and guidelines to raise their students' awareness. He aims to fill the gaps his students' have about writing different types of texts.

They need instructions. Their minds are empty about the patterns, about how to write different types of essays, about unity, about many things. As I said instructions should take the most part of the writing course. They should know. They should be able to answer when someone asks them. (P8, Int.2)

Thus, these teachers saw instructing their students on how to write and providing them with theoretical knowledge and guidelines as a key role that facilitates the learning of writing.

### *Motivators and encouragers*

Another role adopted by these teachers was motivating their students and encouraging them to work hard to learn writing. P7 encouraged her students to read before they write and to practice writing more often. She reported that she is aware of the fact that writing is not simple but with instruction and hard work, students can learn and improve.

I always motivate them...to provide them with incentives and to tell them that their work is excellent, yeah. I encourage them to read, I encourage them to write as much as they can. I do not want them to think of writing as complicated. (P7, Int.2)

P8 also believed in the important role of motivating students to have a clearer image of the nature of writing. He thought of writing as having mysteries and that the students' role is to discover the secret and the beauty of writing. Having motivated students means that they would be willing to practice writing and to spend more time and effort

I tell them that writing is more interesting. I try here to draw a better image in their minds to discover the mysteries of writing. Some students think of writing as spelling, grammar, and transitional signals. I encourage them to write as much as they can...they even exert more effort and time. (P8, Int.2)

P9 tried to motivate his students by giving them the chance to write on topics that appeal to their students' interests and to their living context. Giving students the chance to write about interesting topics has the potential to motivate students.

I choose interesting topics to motivate my students. Students would be very motivated to write about a topic that they can identify themselves with and relate to so choosing the right kind of task. If they write about the situation in Gaza it would be more relevant than writing about somewhere else. (P9, Int.2)

In short, Cluster B teachers reported their role in motivating their students to help them become active participants in the learning process and thus better writers.

### *Feedback givers and error correctors*

Another important role for the writing teacher reported by the four teachers is giving feedback to their students and correcting their errors. P6 stated that she explained to her students the type and the sources of her students' errors. Her students' errors

were usually due to the differences between Arabic and English rhetorical conventions of writing.

I was trying to give them some theoretical background information; for example I tell them that you make this error because you are following an Arabic rhetoric style rather than an English rhetoric patterns. (P6, Int.3)

P8 talked about giving his students collective oral feedback about the common lexical and grammatical errors made by his students. His comments show that his feedback was forms-oriented.

Many of our students make big errors, a lot of mistakes in writing. We try to deal with these grammatical and vocabulary errors to correct them [for] our students. We try to collect some of these errors and correct them in front of the class and give them oral feedback on these errors. (P8, Int.2)

In a similar vein, P7 and P9 reported that they provided feedback to their students with prioritising commenting on the organisation and application of writing techniques rather than on correcting grammatical errors. For example, when giving feedback on writing introductory paragraphs for essays, she tends to comment on the technique being used to catch the attention and interest of readers, and on the appropriateness of the thesis statement. Commenting on and correcting grammatical mistakes is her last priority.

Normally I give feedback to the whole class on a weekly basis.... On the introductory paragraph, I would give them comments on the technique being used on the thesis statements whether the technique is obvious in the introduction ... I may correct the grammar or vocabulary but these normally come at the end. (P7, Int.2)

P9 shared P7's attitude towards teaching and correcting grammatical and lexical mistakes. He was willing to highlight grammatical mistakes which distort text meanings, and that it is his students' responsibility to correct those grammatical mistakes. When giving feedback, he paid attention to ideas organisation, connectedness, and relevance.

I would not focus on the grammar, to be honest, in my writing classes because they have already taken grammar courses. I would focus and correct the grammar errors that impede communication. I give them feedback on the way they connect the ideas and organise them,

and on whether what they are writing meets the features of the type of essay I asked them to write. (P9, Int.3)

Teachers' reported roles in the writing classroom may have stemmed out from their beliefs about how writing can be learnt and from their perceptions of their students' characteristics. Instructing students, giving them feedback, and motivating them may be considered traditional roles for the writing teachers.

### ***Teachers' views of the attributes of their students***

#### *Linguistically and culturally poor learners*

The four teachers talked about the low linguistic level of many of their students. Their students were unable to develop their ideas due either to their lack of knowledge about the world or to their poor command of vocabulary and structures. P6 and P9 expressed their concern about their students' poor lexical and grammatical knowledge which hindered their abilities to develop their writing skill.

They have the big idea but they do not know how to elaborate or they do not know how to bring examples. They do not have the vocabulary or they do not know how to use the words appropriately....They do not have a wide range of lexical items. Even if they know, they cannot use it in a right context. (P6, Int.2)

P7 shared P6's opinion about the weak linguistic level of their students. Their low level forces teachers to give feedback on the accuracy of sentences rather than the appropriateness of the content.

My biggest problem is the weakness of their language. So sometimes you feel that you are not yourself. Sometimes you feel disoriented [so] instead of looking at the writing technique you would correct the grammar, the vocabulary, the structure [and] language that interrupt my feedback [at] which I did not plan to work.(P7, Int.2)

P8 and P9 similarly expressed their frustration about the poor linguistic background of their students. They believed that some of their students are linguistically fossilised because they keep making the same errors regardless of the feedback they receive from their teachers on these errors. P8 thought that some students have negative perceptions about writing and that many students are weak before they join the English department. They do not possess a good command of English vocabulary and how to put words in sentences.

Many of our students make big errors, a lot of mistakes in writing. Some problems are repeated in their writing in their assignments some of these errors are fossilised. ...I think many students are fossilised; they cannot make any progress because they suffer from the weak language, bad ideas, bad grammar, and punctuation. (P8, Int.3)

Many times, P9 is forced to go down to the level of students focusing on the grammar on the vocabulary and other sentence level issues. He does not think that it is helpful to work on text level when his students are struggling on the sentence level.

Basically the proficiency level of the students sometimes is not really helpful because we spend the time focusing on the structure or the grammar not the higher level issues of academic writing .... It is difficult to get the students to think holistically at the text level. (P9, Int.2)

The weak linguistic level of many students was depicted by the teachers as a barrier that constrains them from teaching writing in an ideal way. These teachers attributed their students' weak writing skills of their students to the students' low linguistic proficiency level.

#### *Unmotivated, passive students*

Additionally, cluster B teachers also described their students as being unmotivated and passive. P6, P7, P8, and P9 believed that their students' weakness at writing is due partially to their lack of motivation to participate actively in the writing classroom. Their students are unwilling to work hard because of their expectations of teachers and their own perceptions of their duties as students.

I think that people have the idea that the time in the class is for the teacher to lecture and for students to receive the information.... When it comes to writing class which is a productive skill they are not willing to take part in the process of producing linguistic output because in the usually classroom the students are only receptive but this cannot be the case in the writing classroom. (P6, Int.1)

P9 had the same problem as P6. His students are reluctant to write inside the class or to participate actively in the different tasks. Many of them are not even willing to read the sample paragraphs or essays to do the questions that follow.

Students have this belief that class time is a period where you are given information [and] receiving information. Things are different; it is



more productive than receptive on behalf of the students and they are not willing to produce to write during class time. To some they say I cannot focus in class; even many are not ready to read the sample essay claiming... only few students would genuinely try to write during the class time. (P9, Int.3)

P8 saw the absence of some of his students as a sign of their lack of motivation. Not attending classes regularly creates difficulties for the students to catch up with the topics they missed.

Well, many students are not motivated. They do not like to attend the lecture. Attendance is a problem and when they miss a class and come to the following class they will find it difficult to know what we are talking about; they will not have enough practice. After two classes they will be weak because they were absent. I observed that students who are absent are the weakest. (P8, Int.1)

P6 gave an example on how her students' interaction and involvement in the writing class influenced her teaching. She preferred using the inductive approach when teaching writing; however, she found that this approach did not work with her students because they could not move beyond the linguistic structure. All their interests were focused on the literal meaning of words.

I am used to using a mixture of techniques but I felt that students were not very responsive when looking at samples and then try to think again our students are not familiar with the culture of being productive in the class.... Even when they are given a text to read they even do not move to the second level of thinking; they look at its literal meaning; they are not willing to move beyond the linguistic level. (P6, Int.3)

These quotes may show that the teachers seemed to blame their students for their unwillingness to learn writing. According to these teachers, since students themselves are not motivated to learn and work hard, then, instruction may play a little role in helping them improve their writing skill.

#### *Weak readers*

Cluster B teachers also complained about their students' negative attitudes towards reading. Reading has the potential to increase students' knowledge of the world and enhance their critical thinking. P7 criticised her students for being bookish and lovers of memorisation for the sake of getting grades in exams. This orientation diminished their critical thinking skills which are necessary in today's world. She said

that her students are not aware of what is going in the world in the different field of life about technology about environment about wars, etc.

Okay, because our students do not read they do not have background about anything; our students are bookish, only bookish. Yes, really they want to pass exams—even the family, the parents, they want their children to pass exams, to have a very high average. There is no focus on the critical thinking; there is no focus on the general culture. (P7, Int.1)

Similarly, P8 expressed her distress from his students' poor knowledge of the world. His students face difficulty in generating ideas and supporting their main point. His students seem to know the theoretical knowledge of the structure of texts but not how to apply this knowledge and translate it into practise.

Students do not have enough information to express their information and ideas. Students lack information about pollution, for example, [or] about the siege in Gaza—about anything. They know mathematics like  $1+1$  equals 2. They know they need a topic sentence and a controlling idea but when they come to the supporting sentences they have nothing to say. (P8, Int.3)

P9 believed that reading can facilitate the learning of writing. He also saw that his students' unwillingness to read contributed to their negative attitudes towards writing. Such negative attitudes reduced the quality of writing and made the task of writing in a second language more difficult.

Many of our students do not read and thus find writing really difficult and I always encourage them that writing is something that we can learn by reading others' writing and practice so the more you read and practice the better your writing gets. Students who have negative attitudes towards writing and think that it is very difficult, you will find their writing is very poor and weak. (P9, Int.1)

Thus, these students' weak reading abilities may be another obstacle in their way for learning writing.

## **Sources of teachers' cognitions and practices**

The four teachers in this cluster made many references to two major sources of their cognitions about teaching writing and their classroom practices. I report below on those sources supported with substantial data.

### ***Teaching experience sharpening teaching skills***

The main source for the four teachers' knowledge was their teaching experience. P8 described the changes in his classroom procedures and the development of his knowledge as a result of his long working experience where he taught from different textbooks and benefited from the advice of other writing teachers. P8 stated that he used to talk and lecture most of the class time, but now he has changed and he provides his students with much more feedback. During the early years of his teaching, he focused on grammar and accuracy.

Well, most of the change comes as an influence of my teaching experience. Well I feel there is a good more difference now than teaching from the way I taught before .... I still remember the first years when I start teaching; I focused mainly on grammar and sentence writing. I used to discuss the topic in the class [90%] of the time. (P8, Int.1)

P9 shared a similar view about the role of his teaching experience in shaping his classroom practices and improving his delivery of courses.

The learning curve is a sort of a process definitely; with time it gets improved [and] polished up. Every time when I teach something the first time and when I teach it the second time, I feel that there is something that I learned that there is something that I need to improve. It is a matter of practice and practice makes perfect as they say. (P9, Int.1)

Thus, the teachers' teaching experience may have a significant impact upon their own teaching practices and beliefs.

### ***Prior learning experience as a student***

All four teachers reported that their English writing learning in undergraduate programs in Gaza universities was centred on grammar and mechanics. P6 described her early writing learning experience as being traditional. Her writing teachers were lecturing most of the time and this is why she strove to give her students the chance to practice writing either in class or at home.

As I told you, I was taught writing in a very traditional way—for example the lectures were controlled by the teacher and the textbook. But because I believe that writing can be learned only through writing, I ask my students to write at home and imitate the sample texts from the textbook. (P6, Int.1)

P8 was more specific about his experience at the tertiary level. He is trying to avoid what his teachers did with him when he was a student.

In my writing class I felt bored; I felt there is some sort of repetitions would not do or repeat the same thing I was suffering from. Actually, for my experience, I can say that in my BA, I was not introduced to new ways and methods of learning. Our dependence was on the textbook. I always encourage my student to learn from different books, different materials. (P8, Int.1)

Similarly, P9 perceived his past learning experience as a negative one. What made it negative is his teacher's focus on grammar and sentence types. He believed that focus should be on ideas organisation, coherence, and cohesion. He believed in the importance of grammar, of connectors and signposts, but for him this is not enough to learn writing.

I learned in Gaza. Here in Gaza like we have professors who are good but they teach in the traditional way. They taught us the complex sentence, compound sentences, punctuation... mainly we were taught how to write a good and grammatical and a well-punctuated sentence. When it comes to writing you need to know how to organise your ideas and how to get new ideas. (P9, Int.1)

The past learning and the current teaching experiences influenced some of Cluster B teachers' cognitions and classroom practices.

## **Contextual factors influencing cognitions and pedagogical practices**

### ***Classroom conditions***

The four teachers shared similar views and perspectives about how the physical factors related to the classroom context affected their teaching practices. These factors included over crowdedness of the classroom, with at least seventy students in the class; the poor ventilation and lighting facilities; the lack of technological equipment and resources; time constraints; and the rigid physical organisation of the classroom. P6 thought that the physical conditions in the writing class were discouraging and frustrating to teachers and students alike.

There was real crowdedness which hinders my teaching. Also about the lighting the power cuts off regularly in the classes. I would also consider the heat as a factor where I teach in summer time the general atmosphere is not encouraging to produce good pieces of writing....Another reason is time constraint; you do not have a lot of time during the class. (P6, Int.1)

Lack of writing centres and tutors of writing in Gaza universities makes the writing teachers' job of giving feedback on students' assignments challenging. P7 perceived the lack of these facilities as a sign of universities' negligence of writing.

Over crowdedness is a major problem. We do not have writing centres or writing tutors at universities to help our students and to help the teacher with correcting assignments. Writing is neglected at universities and schools. (P7, Int.21)

The big class size was also perceived as a hindrance to P8's teaching practices. He aspired to achieve good quality in his teaching but this was very difficult when students do not have a chair to sit on in the classroom. He stated that the big number meant a lot of noise sometimes as it is very difficult to control the huge number of students to keep them silent.

You know, yes when we teach here the number of the students is really a problem to us. You need to work with students individually ...remember when you give one page assignment this means you need to evaluate 180 pages in one assignment. (P8, Int.1)

P9 commented about the lack of technological resources and the large number of students constituted a barrier that faced him when teaching writing. He preferred to give individual attention to his students but with a class of seventy to eighty this seemed to be impossible.

We have structural barriers such as not all classrooms are equipped with LCD...Overcrowded classes ... make our work much more difficult than working with small number of students. In a class of seventy students... you will not have a chance to deal with the class; it takes a lot of effort. (P9, Int.1)

These teachers pointed out that having a smaller number of students would certainly influence the way they teach. Teaching large classes makes giving feedback and practicing writing inside the class a difficult task. For instance, in case of teaching a smaller number of students, P7 would have her students do writing assignments inside the classroom where the atmosphere would be competitive instead of taking

them home.

Having smaller number of students would influence my way of teaching tremendously. I mean most of the things I assigned students to work at home I would have the students to do the exercises inside the class because we will have smaller number of students and the atmosphere would be even more competitive. (P7, Int.1)

P8 found it difficult to have his students practice writing inside the class and to give feedback to each, and read each other's work. The teacher cannot follow up with every student to make sure that he or she is doing the assigned task. He also talked about the difficulty of collecting many journals for large numbers of students and reading all the time to give feedback, because only five students will take the exercise seriously and the others will be talking.

With sixty students in one class, I found asking students to write in the class, comparing what they did with a classmate and giving and receiving peer critique, discouraging. Also, it is very difficult for me to give feedback. (P8, Int.1)

P9 expressed the conflict between his interest in improving his students' writing and the hindrances created by the classroom context. To give feedback on every student's writing would be a very daunting task.

Writing is the type of course that needs some personal attention from the teacher to provide guidance and correction and to help the students to better their writing and it is difficult to do this to a class of seventy students to provide individual attention. This will drive me crazy. (P9, Int.1)

These quotes may show how the context of the writing classroom may create barriers to the writing teachers and reduce their opportunities to implement more desirable techniques and strategies for teaching writing.

### ***Broader educational system***

The four teachers commented on how the broader educational systems and their students' previous learning experiences at schools influenced and shaped their students' academic attributes and habits. P6 believed that her students show more fluency when writing about familiar topics, mainly the ones they wrote about in high school. However, when she asked her students to write about new topics which required searching and collecting information from different sources, they were stuck

and did not know what to do or how to proceed. When she asked her students to write about the Arab Spring, the task was quite challenging to them.

The problem I think is related to their learning experience in high schools. They were given very traditional topics and these topics were recurring throughout the three years of secondary schools. Because they were used to memorise chunks related to those topics but when I ask them to write topics they do not know.... (P6, Int.1)

The traditional education system at school affected students' mentality and ways of thinking. That negative effect contributed to students' resistance to follow the guidelines of their writing teachers at university. P7 believed that the educational system in schools made students grade-oriented. They relied on memorisation to get marks.

They are only concerned about passing exams. They want to pass the exam only. They want everything to be ready made and written and all they need is to memorise the texts and write them in the exam paper. I always try to remind my students that English language will stick with them till their death.... (P7, Int.1)

P8 also thought that the low standard of learning in high school limited their students' creativity and narrowed their horizon and expectations.

If the students are taught and brought up mentally in a way, and you come and tried to change it is difficult to change the students' attitudes, thinking, mentality change.... They were not taught to think in the secondary school; they were not taught how to write. . (P8, Int.3)

P9 expressed his opinion of the restricted use of English in the Gaza society. English as a foreign language is used mainly inside the classrooms for exam purposes. It is difficult for students to understand the importance of English in their daily life until they finish university and start looking for salaried, prestigious jobs.

Do you know that the main problem is that students in schools do not have opportunities to use English in their daily life or for real communication. Students may spend their whole life without talking to English native speakers. I cannot deny English writing is important but students will realise this after they graduate, not now. (P9, Int.3)

Thus, the traditional school system may have played a role in forming students' way of thinking, personal traits, and academic habits. According to the teachers, these

factors have a negative impact on the process of teaching and learning English writing.

### **Cluster B's summary and key features**

This chapter reported the findings that emerged from Cluster B data. It described their teaching approach which focused on the rhetorical organisation of texts. Their teaching approach was consistent with other aspects of their writing course, such as their course descriptions, tests, and textbooks. They were all characterised with a focus on patterns. Similarly, their view of the nature of writing as a cognitive process of organising information and ideas shaped, to a large extent, their pedagogical beliefs about learning and teaching EFL writing. Their pedagogical cognitions centred around the importance of teaching writing the different rhetorical patterns, use of written models, giving their students the chance to practise writing and to providing their students with feedback on their written assignments. Cluster B teachers held also cognitions about professional selves. Their professional roles ranged between lecturing, motivating, and feedback giving. These teachers seemed to have negative perceptions of their students' skills, aptitude, and their degree of motivation. They also complained about the difficult conditions in their classrooms, institutions, and local educational system.



## CHAPTER 6

### Cluster C: Focus on Forms and Content (N3)

#### Cluster Overview

This cluster is composed of three writing teachers: P10, P11, and P12. The three teachers were two females and one male whose ages ranged from 31 to 47 years. All were educated either in American or British universities where they completed their master's or doctorate degrees. Their professional profiles are provided in Table 4 below. In contrast to the forms-based and the organisation-based clusters described above, Cluster C teachers combined teaching forms and content. Their data describe a unique, distinct set of personal beliefs, practices and conceptions about EFL writing instruction. This section reports the findings of these teachers' cognitions about writing instruction, depicts their classroom practices, and describes their perceptions of their students' characteristics. Finally, it documents the teacher' perceptions of the impact of their multiple-layered teaching context upon their instructional practices.

**Table 4: Professional profiles of cluster (C)**

Participants	P 10	P11	P12
Education and qualifications	MA of TESOL & Linguistics	PhD in Teacher Education	MA of TEFL
Practice settings	University A	University B	University B
Years of teaching experience	1-6	>10	6-10
Courses taught	Writing, linguistics, oral communication, grammar, reading	Writing, grammar, pronunciation	Writing, grammar, reading
Focus of 1st classroom observation	Argumentative writing	Writing descriptive paragraphs	Comparison & Contrast paragraphs
Focus of 2nd classroom observation	Argumentative writing continued	Describing places	Opinion Paragraphs

## **Pedagogical practices**

### ***Communicative-based approach to teaching writing***

This section describes Cluster C classroom practices with special reference to their classroom teaching procedures, course objectives, tests, and course material. To begin with, the teachers were observed to follow a routine pattern of instruction. One key feature of their teaching procedures is the use of written models to illustrate the features of different genres. The written models were analysed with special reference to their purposes, audiences, organisation, structures, and the linguistic features specific to that type of text. In a later stage, there was collaboration between the teacher and students in producing a text similar to the model, and finally giving students the chance to produce their own texts going through the different steps of brainstorming, drafting, revising and applying the linguistic rules related to that text type. Also, within this pattern of instruction, the teachers provided their students with collective oral feedback inside the class and individual written feedback after collection of the assignments. Whole class discussion and peer collaboration were evident throughout the lessons.

For example, P10 started her class on writing argumentative texts by writing the following statement on the board: "Should university students be allowed to bring their laptops to university and to use them inside the class". She asked her students to give their opinions in this issue and address them to the administration. She asked her students about the purpose of this discussion.

Many students realised that they need to argue in favour or against using laptops inside the class. Then, she asked her students to read a sample argumentative text about banning cell phone use by drivers. She wanted them to answer the following questions: 1. what is the purpose of this text? Who is the target audience? Has the writer been successful in persuading his audience? (P10, Field notes, November, 2011)

Then, she discussed with her students about the ideas, the relationship among the ideas, about the purpose and the linguistic features of that text and the appropriate language being used, the organisation of the arguments. After that she asked her students to answer another exercise from the textbook about an argumentative paragraph about school uniforms. The text was followed by a number of questions.

The teacher asked her students to work in pairs. Then they answered the questions as a whole class. After that the teacher prepared for the joint construction of a text about using the laptops. They started to brainstorm ideas on the topic with the help of their teacher. The teacher told them that they would complete the construction of the text next class. (P10, Field notes, November, 2011).

When being asked to recall the objective of her lesson, P10 aimed that her students would be able to compose argumentative texts based on the conventions of this genre.

I wanted my students to understand the purpose and structure of the argumentative writing genre. Then, I wanted them to write their own arguments following the conventions they learnt in today's class through following the processes of brainstorming, composing, drafting, revising, and then editing. (P 10, Int.2)

Likewise, P11's class on writing descriptive paragraphs employed written models to facilitate his students' learning. He also gave his students the chance to practice writing, encouraged his students to go through the different composing processes, and to make use of peer feedback. His classes were also featured for integrating speaking and reading with writing. P 11 started his class with a scenario: "Suppose that you went shopping to buy a dress to attend your best friend's wedding party. You do not have enough money and you want to convince your mom to buy the dress for you, how are you going to describe the dress?" He stimulated a lot of ideas from his students and listed them on the board. After that, the teacher asked his students to look at page 99 in the textbook entitled *First Steps in Writing* and to read a descriptive paragraph about a shared refrigerator. With his students, he analysed the features of the text. He drew his students' attention to the different adjectives that appeal to the senses of sight, smell, touch, and taste, and analysed the different structures and techniques employed. Most of the supporting sentences in the model paragraph started with prepositional object phrases. P11 highlighted the word order. Afterwards, P11 asked his students to

Practice describing their home with the purpose of selling it. He asked his students to free write first to generate ideas. After 10 minutes, he called some students' names and asked them to read aloud what they wrote and asked the other students to give them oral feedback on what they heard. He asked his students to bring their first draft for peer edit next class for revision. (P11, Field notes, 2011).

Similarly, P12's writing classes focused on analysing and imitating written models, practising writing, giving feedback, brainstorming ideas collaboratively and writing many drafts. In the beginning of her class, P12 collected comparison and contrast paragraphs from her students to give them written feedback. The main topic for that class was writing argumentative texts. She defined arguments literally and linguistically. P12 listed on the board a number of principles her students need to decide on before writing an argument, such as their opinion, audience, age, background, level of language. She used a lot of exemplification to convey the concepts to her students.

Now give me examples of argumentative topics in the Palestinian society. You have two minutes to brainstorm some controversial topics. (P12, 2<sup>nd</sup> classroom observation)

Furthermore, P12 stressed the importance of reading to gather information. She asked her students to read a model paragraph from the textbook about whether parents should allow kids to own a pet, and she assigned them a task to identify the main arguments in that text and to look at the supporting ideas and text organisation. They discussed the answers as a whole class. The teacher wrote two arguments on the board about studying abroad and studying at one's home country. She collaborated with her students and brainstormed a number of arguments to support studying abroad and studying in one's country. She asked her students to work in pairs and to decide on an argument and to develop it in a draft to share with the rest of the class.

Any volunteers to write their drafts on Bristol papers. Those who share writing will receive feedback from me and from their classmates.... Your homework is to revise and edit your paragraphs and to bring them next class for peer feedback. You know I have tens of assignments to check for you. (P12, Field notes, April 2012)

The above descriptions show that Cluster C teachers care about feedback, about genre analysis, about purpose of texts, about whole class discussion.

### ***Congruence between teaching approach, course descriptions and tests***

There was a match between the course objectives and the three teachers' actual classroom practices. P10's course objectives centred on developing students' grammar, mechanics, and composition skills necessary for successful written communication.

1. Develop composition skills necessary to plan and write unified, logically organised, satisfactorily developed paragraphs
2. Develop cohesion and style so that ideas are logically arranged
3. Develop grammar skills necessary for written communication.
4. Develop usage skills necessary for written communication.
5. Develop skills in mechanics (spelling, capitalisation, punctuation) necessary for written communication. (P10's course description)

In a similar vein, P11's course objectives matched his focus on teaching grammar, mechanics, composing processes, and appropriate language used by the academic discourse community. The sixth objective about reading, analysing, and responding to assigned tasks is similar to those objectives offered in English for Academic Purposes course. It may also show integrated tasks orientation to teaching writing.

1. Employ the various stages of the writing process, including pre-writing, writing and re-writing;
2. Demonstrate ability to write for an academic audience;
3. Demonstrate understanding of and apply the principles of effective paragraph structure;
4. Recognise and correct basic grammatical errors, specifically errors of subject/verb agreement, verb tense, pronoun agreement, usage of prepositions and articles;
5. Employ socially appropriate language;
6. Read, analyse and respond to assigned readings with an understanding of structure and mechanics. (P11's course description)

In addition to the convergence between their pedagogical procedures and course objectives, the content of P10's, P11, and P12's writing tests were different in the degree of their consistency with their approach to teaching writing. For example, most of P10's test questions assessed students' ability to produce different types of texts. One of the questions asked students to write a cover letter to be attached with language teacher job application.

Use the following information to write a cover letter for a language teacher vacancy in the Future Private School. Clare Genner aims at being a language instructor at this school in Gaza city. She has a BA in Language and Linguistics from Southampton University – the UK (2005-2009). She graduated with distinction and has two-years of teaching experience at Melton College- Southampton (2009-2011). She took two courses in language programming and using virtual learning environments. She speaks English and Spanish. (P10's Test)

Another question asked students to write an argumentative paragraph to the Mayor in Gaza municipality to remove trash from the streets and to punish those who throw rubbish. She listed a number of guidelines for the students to consider while writing. These sorts of questions mirrored P10's belief in the importance of writing for a specific audience to achieve a defined goal. Even the questions that tested students' knowledge of writing mechanics asked students to correct the mistakes in a text not in a group of isolated sentences.

However, more than half of the questions in P11's and P12's writing tests focused on testing students' understanding of the structural elements of texts and on their knowledge of grammatical structures of sentences and rhetorical structures of short paragraphs. Their tests showed that the teachers were concerned with forms as well as having a meaning focus. For example, one question in P11's sample tests asked students to write two topic sentences for two written paragraphs. Another question asked students to cross out the irrelevant sentences in paragraphs. The third question in P11's asked students to read a paragraph and then to answer questions about the patterns used in the topic sentence, the supporting sentences, and the transitional signals. Punctuating discrete sentences properly was a common question in P11's and P12's tests. Another question in P12's test asked students to complete a number of sentences with the most appropriate transition signals from the list provided. An example of those sentences was "James has never been a very skilled mathematician. -----, he performed very well on Tuesday's exam". P12's test has only one question that reflects the focus of her writing instruction. She asked her students to write an argumentative paragraph about whether female students studying in Palestinian universities should wear uniform. Students were provided with plenty of space to brainstorm ideas and to draft their arguments before they wrote the final copy in the specified space.

## **Teachers' cognitions**

### ***Conceptualisation writing as a communicative act***

For Cluster C teachers, writing is a means of communicating ideas through forms. According to P10, the conceptual essence of English writing is expressing ideas and thoughts where vocabulary and structures are tools to form the content with the purpose of communicating one's ideas to his or her readers.

Yeah. For me writing is not only forms and structures and words and vocabulary. Writing is thoughts and ideas transferred through good organisation, vocabulary and structure.... Writing is not only filling the lines.... All I write should be related to support my main idea...to convey the message to their readers. (P10, Int.1)

Similarly, P11's guiding conceptualisation of EFL writing centred on the organisation of one's thoughts, beliefs, and ideas through the medium of appropriate language to achieve a specific purpose. Writing is meant to have some impact on readers.

Okay, writing is putting your thoughts on paper; this is one main thing here. Writing is what you think, what are your beliefs, what you know; you should put it on papers and it is not just putting anything but it is putting your thoughts in an organised way using correct language , and suitable structures and vocabulary [to] achieve your purpose and communicate it with your audience. (P 11, Int.1)

The view that writing underpins communicating one's ideas is also shared by P12. Her view of writing combines the fluency of ideas and the accuracy of forms.

Writing is the fluency of the ideas, accompanied with the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary. We have to pay more attention to the accuracy and ideas so that our readers understand our intention (P12, Int.1).

These teachers' comments may reflect the social nature of writing where communication is the purpose and language is the tool. As will be discussed below, their communicative conceptualisations of writing appeared to inform their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning writing.

### ***Pedagogical beliefs about writing instruction***

This section presents these teachers' most pervasive beliefs about second language writing instruction.

#### *Teaching composing processes and linguistic features of texts*

The three teachers believed that teaching writing should focus first on teaching students how to brainstorm, generate, collect, organise, revise and edit their ideas. P10 and P11 believed that students should not start writing until they gather their own thoughts and information from other sources which would certainly make writing much easier. Then students should compose according to the conventions. In later

stages, mechanics of writing, such as grammatical forms, punctuation, and transitional signals can be taught to enable students to polish their texts.

I want them first of all to brainstorm ideas. If they have ideas they will be able to write. I do not expect my students to write well without brainstorming ideas, organising them, and then revising what they composed. When I am sure that my students follow the steps, I teach them the style of the different types of English texts what to include and how to punctuate and to correct grammatical mistakes. (P10, Int.2)

P11 also believed in the importance of focusing on the forms at a later stage after students implement the different stages of the writing process and learn the different styles for different texts types.

Here grammar, punctuation, these mechanics of writing I believe should be taught later. Here we concentrate first on the process of writing; I need to see outlining, questioning, specific genre style. Grammar has a role but it should not be the main focus or the most important one. (P11, Int.1)

P10 and P11 further believed that the writing teachers' orientation when teaching writing influences their students' learning of EFL writing. For example, if the teacher focuses on grammar and on the mechanics of writing, the students' main concern would be on writing error-free sentences. However, when the teacher focuses more on the quality of ideas and on the composing processes, the students' focus would be centred on giving ideas and writing multiple drafts.

So it is all about the focus used by the teacher which determines and influences the way students learn how to write. For example, if the teacher's main focus is on grammar, you will notice that students begin writing their first sentence with focus on grammar which may hinder the flow of ideas or constrain developing a good text. (P10, Int.1)

P11 commented that if the teacher has taught students to focus on the flow of ideas going through the writing process and then paying attention to structure and grammar within the revising and editing step, you will find these students brainstorm and write their drafts without being constrained by making sure that every sentence they write is correct because they were taught that revising and editing can come later.



I strongly think that the approach and teaching methods used by writing teachers greatly shape students' ideas and practices on how to write. (P11, Int.1)

In contrast, P12 believed that grammar and other mechanics on sentence level should be taught before the techniques of generating, organising, drafting, and revising ideas. She thought that improving students' linguistic forms first can help them generate, compose, organise, and revise their ideas. Her view seemed like a focus on form in the start that then becomes a focus on communication.

Okay, actually when we teach writing, we should focus first on the linking devices, on punctuation and how to create well-structured grammatical sentences at the beginning so we can start gradually from the sentence level and then to move gradually to the paragraph and the essay level, and the purpose and the communicative function. It will be easy for the students then to write paragraphs by generating ideas and structuring and drafting them. (P12, Int.1)

Thus, in order to learn writing, students need instruction on the genre-specific style, steps and strategies of the process of writing as well as on how to achieve the accuracy of linguistic forms.

#### *Integrating reading with writing*

Another belief held by this group of teachers was the importance of integrating reading with writing. Reading is a vital source of providing input of information and ideas that students need when they compose in English. They believed that being a good reader help students to become skilled writers. These teachers also talked about reading model texts which exemplify the types of texts which the students are supposed to produce. Model texts help students figure out how such types of texts should look and which features are typical of these types of texts. P10 stated that in order to write a particular pattern of text, reading similar texts can help student writers organise their own texts.

I believe when they read, they can see how other people write and how they use particular style of language. If they want to write about a new topic, how will they write without enough information and ideas? Tell me how. They will write trash. Writing and reading are related. People who read a lot can improve and learn writing quickly. I urge my students to read if they want to have strong ideas and arguments. (P 10, Int.1)

P11 realised the benefits of integrating reading with writing to improve his students' writing skills. He believed that reading gives students the chance to look at other skilled writers and probably imitate their style. He does not support the idea of listing the rules of writing. He prefers to look at a text first, analyse it, and then deduce the conventions of academic writing. This provides more concrete evidence instead of learning abstract rules.

When students read good written models, they see how skilled writers write and they can imitate them.... I think this is much better than spoon-feeding them with the rules of writing.... I always encourage my students to read outside resources to support evidence to their arguments. (P 11, Int.1)

For P12, reading is a good source of getting information and gaining knowledge. This teacher prepares a collection of useful articles for her students to read and to use to support their main ideas. Also, such articles have the potential to improve her students' general linguistic skills. When her students are not aware of what is going on in the world, their schemata would be empty or distorted about new issues in the world.

Reading, okay, because reading will supply them with the ideas that they can write about any topic they are interested in. I prepare a collection of articles for students to photocopy and read at home. Based on the writing topic, I specify a specific article to read, sometimes to summarise. Then, in the class, we will brainstorm more ideas on these topics, and we will focus on the purpose and on how to use the language to achieve our purpose. (P 12, Int.1)

So, reading can assist with a focus on forms and as a source of ideas. These teachers discussed the value of reading as a way to increase the students' knowledge of the world and to help them gain and collect information that could be used when writing about similar topics.

*Practice accompanied with feedback makes perfect*

The three teachers agreed upon the invaluable role of practising writing and giving feedback to students on their writing. For these teachers, real practice of writing did not mean merely listening to lectures about writing, doing grammar exercises, or reading the guidelines from the textbook. The real practice of writing involved producing texts and conveying messages to readers. Writers who write a lot learn

more about the difficulties and strategies of writing because they have had more experience completing different writing tasks. P10 advised teachers to give their students the chance to write inside and outside the class not only in the exams.

The best way to learn writing is through practice. Practice makes perfect. The more they write, the better they get. Writing needs training and training occurs through practice. When they write, they become aware of the problems and difficulties they face. They will be able to apply strategies and techniques. (P 10, Int.1)

Similarly, P11 emphasised the essential role for practising writing; otherwise, writing learners will not be able to make progress. Even if students are not willing to practice writing or they hold negative attitudes towards writing, teachers should be strict and find ways to make sure that their students do enough practice.

Here I think writing is the most difficult skill to master.... If you do not write much this means that you will not make a good writer—yes at English in our case. Yes, you may feel that they have negative attitudes but we should not leave it up to them because if you want to teach them writing they have to write and we should find that means that make them write. (P11, Int.1)

P12 commented on the importance of learning writing through practising writing. She suggests that teachers should orient their students towards the key role of practice. Theoretical knowledge or memorisation of writing rules is in no way enough to improve writing skills. Writing is a productive skill, so the most important aspect of writing is to give your students the chance to practise and produce written texts. If their writing is good and at a satisfactory level, then students have learnt English. She commented that the more students write, the more they will be able to evaluate the progress in the fluency of their ideas and the accuracy of their grammar and vocabulary.

The simplest answer to your question is that writing is acquired through writing. It requires practice and practice and even more practice. They need to be informed about writing they should know why they are doing it in this way but knowledge about writing is not enough. Knowledge of writing is more important. It can be achieved through many tasks of writing (P12, Int.1)

According to these three teachers, practicing writing would be useful when students receive feedback on their writing from their teachers and their peers. It is not a matter of how often or how much you write. P10 believed that practice and feedback

should accompany each other for the learning of writing to take place. When students receive feedback on their writing, they are more likely to take the writing task seriously. In addition, when teachers read their students' writing and give them feedback, teachers will identify their students' writing problems. Thus, they are able to help their students overcome them.

I believe that practice makes perfection but also you have to comment on their own writing. To ask your students to practice writing without giving feedback is a waste of time. If you ask them to write without giving them feedback, that would be really useless and a waste of your and their time. Students need to know the problems they have and to find solutions to these problems. (P 10, Int.1)

P11 talked about peer and teacher feedback as an effective way to improve students' writing skills. He recommends that teachers should supervise their students when they give peer feedback to each other. He recalled once he discovered that some students thought their peers' writing was poor, but in reality it was an excellent essay.

Yes, peer feedback, teacher feedback, this is effective. I try to make use of it. If I cannot give feedback to everyone on a daily basis I use peer feedback but I make sure that the peer feedback is the right one. (P11, Int.1)

P12 perceived the value of feedback as a way where students take the task of writing more seriously and thus exert more efforts, and as a way for the teacher to assess his or her students' learning, and thus remedy the problems they have and the errors they have. She mentioned a story of a writing teacher who asks her students to write eighteen essays and then she collects these essays at the end of the semester without giving them any feedback on any of these topics.

P12 was wondering how students would improve and be aware of their mistakes.

Knowing in their inside that they have readers in the classroom, students will do writing as a more serious task. You have to give your students the feedback....Here is the value of feedback. How I would guarantee that my students understood the topics I explained to them and how would I know about the problems they commit in their writing. (P12, Int.3)

To sum up, their beliefs about teaching and learning writing can be represented as a model of how writing should be taught and learnt. These three teachers believed that writing instruction should focus on teaching cognitive processes of composing in

a second language and on teaching the linguistic forms and mechanics of writing. Teachers also should integrate reading in the writing classroom to increase the knowledge of their students about the world and about the different features of texts. Besides, students should be given the chance to practice writing because practice gives them the opportunity to apply the strategies, guidelines, and rules they learn in the class. Finally, students should receive feedback on the outcome of their practice either from their teachers or their peers. To conclude this section, P10, P11, and P12 held similar beliefs about the nature of second language writing, its teaching, and its learning.

### ***Perceptions of self as a writing teacher***

Integral to the discussion of P10's, P11's, and P12's beliefs and classroom practices are their perceptions of themselves as writing teachers. Their perceptions of themselves were further subdivided into perceptions of their roles as writing teachers, the source of their pedagogical beliefs and practices, and finally their attitudes and sense of teaching self-efficacy as writing teachers.

### *Teachers as modellers, feedback givers, and need analysts*

Cluster C teachers shared similar perceptions about their roles as writing teachers. Their roles were consistent with their pedagogical beliefs and teaching approach. P10 expressed her role in the writing class as being coach, modeller, collaborator, feedback giver, need analyst, and encourager. She describes herself as a coach since she prepares activities and supports her students and builds good rapport with them to encourage them to improve their abilities. She also perceives her role as an assessor as she evaluates her students' learning, problems, and progress. She assesses them every class to see if they understood what she wanted them to learn or not and if they face any difficulties. Collaboration is another key role for P10. Finally, she described her role in changing the way her students think about writing.

I can think of myself as a coach....I am assessor when I evaluate my students learning, problems, and progress. ... Collaborator... You know another role for me is that I always try to change the way they are thinking about writing; it is not just to ask some questions or to write few sentences. (P10, Int.1)

In a similar vein, P11 described his role in the writing classroom as a stimulator, as a motivator, as a guide, as an organiser, and as an assessor. He stimulates his

students' thinking, and motivates them to use the different steps of composing and applying the linguistic conventions of writing the different genres. He also guides his students towards a better way of writing English texts. In addition, he assesses his students' progress and organises the different activities in the writing class.

I am aware of my different roles when I teach writing. I do not say I tell them but I guide them to follow a good way of writing. So I can be considered a guide yes... as an assessor...as an organiser...as a motivator...(P 11, Int.1)

P 12 similarly talked about her role as a writing teacher whose aim is to help her students be comfortable when writing in English. She perceived her role as being a scaffold, an evaluator, an organiser, a supporter, a helper, a modeller, and an assistant. Those roles vary depending on the stage of teaching. In the beginning of the semester when P12 have new students, she diagnoses their weakness and their strengths. She aims to see what they need to learn and what problems they need remedy for. Then, she models to her students the process of writing because this is new to them. During the process of instruction, she needs to assess if she has achieved the objectives of her course and if her teaching approach works well for her students. She also prepares the teaching materials and the tasks for her students, and she is there to advise her students.

I believe that any writing teacher has the biggest role in the learning process of writing. I cannot think of one main role. There are many overlapping roles at different stages of teaching writing. Needs analyst... assessor....modeller...course designer...academic advisor.... (P 12, Int.1)

Cluster C teachers' roles seem to match their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning EFL writing.

### *Challenging but can-teach attitude*

Related to Cluster C perceptions of being writing teachers are their attitudes towards teaching this skill. The three teachers revealed similar personal attitudes to teaching writing. They admit that teaching writing is challenging; however, they enjoy teaching writing and they possess the skills that enable them to be successful writing teachers. For example, P11 thought of writing as being a difficult skill to teach and that it requires the writing teacher to be a skilled, experienced writer

himself or herself. He compares between writing and speaking. He stated that when a person speaks; he may not care about grammar, about punctuation, about style. It is easier to convey your message even through facial expressions and body language.

Writing is the hardest skill to teach and learn because it is a productive skill. You know you need to be good at reading, at grammar, at world knowledge, and you need to know about the style of writing in the language. It is more difficult than speaking....Still I enjoy teaching this skill and to see how my students are developing. (P10, Int.1)

P11's attitudes towards teaching writing are similar to those of P10. He believed that teaching writing requires that the teacher himself or herself is a skilled writer and that he or she has the pedagogical knowledge for teaching this difficult skill.

I always say writing is the most difficult skill to teach. Not any English teacher can teach writing, this is true. The teachers of writing should not be only those who have majored in writing....So it is just knowledge about something and knowledge of the thing itself. (P11, Int.2)

These teachers believed that the writing teachers should have enough knowledge and experience to help their students learn and overcome their difficulties.

### ***Teachers' learning experiences and overseas professional training improve their teaching***

Although teaching writing is challenging, these teachers expressed a high rate of self-efficacy in their abilities to teach writing. They feel confident about their own effectiveness as teachers. Personal experiences, mainly the teachers' own experiences as students and as teachers are possible determinants of how they think and what they do in the writing classroom. For instance, P10 developed her professional identity during her postgraduate study in an American university. Her experience helped her to learn about issues related to academic writing, such as purpose, audience, academic honesty, intertextuality, as well as pedagogical and theoretical knowledge about teaching L2 writing. She tries to apply what she learnt in her writing classes. She found big differences between her traditional experience learning writing in Gaza in the undergraduate program and her professional training and learning in an American university. In Gaza, her teachers focused on

correctness, grammar rules, and punctuation; ideas generation and organisation had no place in her writing class at that time.

I got my master's degree from the U.S where great importance is placed on academic writing, academic honesty, academic discourse.... I teach the skills that help my students to avoid plagiarism. Also, I studied a course entitled "Teaching of Writing". It was very helpful to me. I learnt about the importance of giving feedback and how to give feedback, about new rhetoric, the process approach and the genre one.... (P10, Int.2)

P 11 also mentioned his writing learning experience as the most influential source in forming his pedagogical knowledge about teaching writing. He went through many difficulties, and now he sees that those difficulties have helped him in understanding his students' problems.

When I was a master's student, I had to learn it myself. I was doing my assignments and writing short research papers and the difficulties I encountered helped me to know how to learn writing through following many steps, reading different sources, looking at similar samples of the research paper genre, all of this encouraged me then I discovered that I was a good writer. (P11, Int.2)

In a similar vein, the experience of learning to write played a key role in shaping P12's beliefs about teaching writing and her classroom practices. She tried to utilise the fruitful practices of her previous writing teachers during her undergraduate degree. She traced her success as a writer herself because of her writing teacher's approach, especially the importance of giving feedback to students

It actually influences it a lot. I learnt English at Bir Zeit University and we did not have big number of students in the class. We were around twelve students. I got plenty of feedback on my papers in the exams in the activities in everything; our classes did not have the crowdedness here. This is why I believe in the value of feedback. (P12, Int.1)

P12 also appreciated the knowledge and skills she gained from her overseas teacher education program. During the Teaching of Writing course, I gained a lot of skills and knowledge about teaching writing, and I use them in teaching my students and solving their writing problems. The idea of brainstorming, summarising, paraphrasing and quoting from other sources are essential when teaching academic writing.



I benefited a lot from the teacher training workshops that I attended in Britain during my master's degree. I highly believe that you teach the way you learn. This is typical for me. In the workshop, we used group work and discussion and learner-centred, so I try to implement and use these techniques when I teach. I found it really helpful I used them with my students when doing exercises and activities. (P 12, Int.1)

To summarise, the three writing teachers' knowledge about writing teaching is developed by drawing on a variety of sources. They viewed previous English writing learning experience during their undergraduate and postgraduate education and their writing teaching experiences as the two predominating sources of knowledge about writing instruction.

### ***Teachers' views of the attributes of their students***

Cluster C teachers made many comments about their views of the characteristics of their students. Following is a detailed description of these teachers' perceptions of their students' habits, traits, and problems.

#### *Grade-oriented, unmotivated students who need orientation*

P10 depicted her students as being grade-oriented. Their main concern in the writing classroom was getting high marks, not to learn writing as an important life skill. When they start the writing course, they were worried about grades because writing is difficult.

My problem with my students was that they care a lot about grades. Right from the first class, they asked me if I give high marks. Even when I explain, they would ask "Will this appear in the exam?" They needed orientation of the importance of writing. It took me time and efforts, but they are much better now. (P10, Int.3)

P10 thought of many of her students as being unmotivated, unwilling to exert efforts, apprehensive and resistant to the communicative approach to teaching writing. In the early stages of the course, they preferred the traditional approach of focusing on writing sentences and applying the rules of grammar and punctuation that they had experienced in high schools or university.

In the beginning of the course, they were not ready to work hard, unaware of the difference between writing and other skills; they were not willing to do practice on their own. They required a lot of time to change the way they thought of writing and of practicing it. They resist

the change. They had to work hard with me, and now I can see a lot of improvement (P10, Int.1)

She believed that her students had formed a habit of depending on the teacher to explain everything to them, a habit which developed, it seems, with the earliest formal education. However, she felt that she is able to change the attitudes and the orientations of her students so that they could match her expectations and her communicative teaching approach.

Likewise, P11's interview data revealed his view of his students' attitudes towards practicing writing. He believed that the writing teacher's role is to find ways to make his students write regardless of what negative attitudes they have.

Yes, you may feel that they have negative attitudes but we should not leave it up to them.... They have registered and these courses are compulsory, this means that they do not have a choice except complying with the requirement of the course. They are not writing for pleasure or for fun. So, yes they know that this is a writing course and that if they want to learn writing they have to practise writing. (P11, Int.2)

He forced everyone to practise writing by calling out their names randomly so everyone should be ready to share her writing with the rest of the class. His students also had to put their drafts, assignments, and answered exercises in the course portfolio to get feedback from their teacher.

P12 also referred to modifying her teaching approach according to the level of her students and to the timing of the class.

Even when I teach two different classes, here the techniques I use differ. The approach I use with certain class may differ from the ones I use with other classes depending on the time of the day sometimes, depending on the setting of the classroom, depending on the nature of the students, level and the nature of my students. (P12, Int.3)

In another instance, P12 described a number of her students as being lazy. Also some students leave the whole job to other students to work and they just sit listening to them or reading what they wrote.

Some of my students are lazy. I want them to take their ideas into a higher level to improve their own English, but they do not want to

work. Also some students they leave the whole job to other students to work. (P12, Int.2)

This data may suggest that Cluster C teachers are motivated and feel able to facilitate the teaching of L2 writing. They also seem to be aware of their responsibilities towards their students.

#### *Diverse linguistic level of students*

Cluster C teachers expressed their dismay from the differences in their students' proficiency levels. Many of P12 students' linguistic skills are weak and she has to work hard to remedy them; still, she has a group of students whose written texts are as excellent as pieces written by native speakers.

Okay, teaching low proficiency level students and other excellent students in the same class. I complain actually about it. That is right I taught writing and in my classes I have different levels of students. Some of my students struggle in choosing vocabulary, structure of sentences, ideas. The level of their writing is not as it supposed to be. While others have strong style of writing... (P12, Int.1)

Such variation in students' level led to the dominance of linguistically proficient students over their weaker peers when working in pairs or in groups. P12 reported facing this problem, and to make sure that everyone practised writing, she assigned some writing tasks to be accomplished individually by students.

Also, I have some students who are intimidated [at] working with others so they prefer to work individually. Another point is that when I ask them to work in pairs, I noticed that one of the students over dominates the session. One student will be the one who thinks and writes while the other person is listening or just looking. (P12, Int.2)

This situation made her assign individual tasks to make sure every student practices writing, and thus develop her writing skills.

This is why I assign individual work also. Cooperation among students is great but unless I asked them to work individually, I will not overcome the over dominance of one student over the other so it is the individual work at the end. (P12, Int.2)

To conclude, Cluster C teachers seem to encounter some constraints due to their students' linguistic level, and attitudes towards learning and practising writing;

however, these teachers have not surrendered; instead they have tried to find ways to overcome these barriers.

## **Contextual Factors**

### ***Classroom context***

The classroom context emerged from the data as a key factor that influenced the three teachers' practices in the writing class. Manifest in the data were several ways in which the classroom context constrained the teachers' classroom procedures.

#### *Overcrowded, physically rigid classrooms*

P10, P11, and P12 referred to the huge number of students, the rigid physical organisation, the lack of teaching resources, and the shortage of time as barriers that constrained their writing teaching. According to these teachers, these aspects of the classrooms hindered them from teaching in an ideal way. These teachers had to adapt their teaching methods to overcome these barriers. P10 realised these physical factors made it difficult to teach in the ideal way and even if teachers were able to do so, she stated, they may not get the outcome they expected or worked for. P10 commented also on time limitation and how her teaching is restricted by not having enough time to teach the different topics in the course.

Sometimes I may not be able to teach in the ideal way because of physical factors like the large numbers of students, small classrooms, not having a photocopier that is always available to share students' writing to receive feedback from their classmates.... I am still bound by finishing a certain amount of the curriculum. (P10, Int.1)

Having big number of students in the writing classroom hindered P11's ability to give his student adequate feedback on their writing. Also, he was not able to give his students the chance to write on topics of their choice because he would not be able to read and comment on hundreds of different topics. This factor has precluded him from giving his students the chance to write on interesting topics that appeal to them. Also, this situation made him either give quick feedback that was not detailed or to employ a great deal of peer feedback in his writing classes. He cannot correct 200 papers every week; he has to prepare for other classes too.

Yes, over crowdedness is a problem. When I have big number of students, I usually avoid giving them many topics to write about. I limit the number of topics that my students can write about. Even when I correct the texts, I do not give much feedback. If I [had fewer]

students, I would give better feedback. I also focus on peer feedback. (P11, Int.3)

P12 made use of peer feedback since the huge number of students did not allow her to give written feedback on every student's writing on a regular basis.

How I overcame this problem at least I need to go around it, I asked my students to correct for each other and to give feedback on each other's work. Also, sometimes I [work] with my class [to] correct two texts in front of the whole class so students can learn from each other's mistakes. I cannot do it individually. (P12, Int.3)

To overcome the problem of lack of resources and technological equipment that were necessary in the writing classroom, P12 used big paper sheets and markers where some students wrote their texts to share with the rest of the class. When her students finish writing their texts, they rewrite the draft on a big sheet so she can show to her class more than one model of her students' writing.

When I ask my students to write, I find it difficult to show their writing on the board. When I write many students' texts on the board this means that I will take time. So, I just depend on one of the examples. I tried to use simple ways. For example sheets of papers, they work well in classes when we do not have equipment like LCD or the overhead projector. (P12, Int.2)

Although the conditions of the writing classrooms were not optimal, the three teachers found some ways to overcome the constraining conditions and tried some solutions to their classroom problems.

#### *Unavailability of culturally-appropriate textbooks*

Related to the teachers' perceptions of the classroom context is the selection of suitable teaching materials. Sometimes, it is difficult to find culturally-appropriate textbooks that do not contradict the Islamic culture of the Palestinian community. P11 and P12 agreed that although the textbook content may meet the needs of the course, the images or the examples might be offensive to the Islamic culture of the students.

Another constraint may be choosing a suitable textbook that goes with our context. You may like a specific book, but [the] photos, the topics; the themes may not be culturally suitable to our Islamic culture. (P11, Int.1)

Actually the ideas and the topics offered are not in many times related to the students' culture. Some of the topics are about English culture, American culture. Sometimes try to bring it to a more practical level. I try to bring more from their own life. (P12, Int.1).

Finding culturally appropriate writing teaching materials might be one of the barriers that faced these teachers.

### ***Institutional context***

#### *Disorganised study plan*

All the teachers in this cluster expressed their concern from the way the language courses are organised over the four years of the language program. Freshman students have to study their first writing course right from their first semester. These students are already weak in English language in general. P10 believed that students need a foundation course to improve their grammar and reading skills. Once students improve their grammar and reading, they can use the skills and the knowledge in their composition classes. She advised that students should study reading and grammar before writing. When they read, they can be aware of how native speakers write and they would become knowledgeable of the distinctive features of texts.

It does not make sense to teach the most difficult language skill before the easy ones. Do you think students will find [it] easy to write texts when they do not have good command of vocabulary or they make many grammatical mistakes? This will be very difficult for the teachers to deal with. (P10, Int.1)

P11 also complained from the sequence of courses in the study plan. He suggested integrating writing and reading in one formal course. He referred to well-known universities and how they organise their language programs. Many of them integrate reading with writing, with grammar. Students need input to write.

I always tell my colleagues that the way courses are organised in the study plan should be changed. This causes learning problems to the students and at the same time creates difficulties for teachers. Why not teach writing and reading in one course...? My colleagues and I discussed this issue during our department meetings, but no changes occurred till now. (P11, Int.1)

P12 reported that he tries to integrate reading in his writing classes as much as he can but this is not enough. The integration of language skills should be built in the main organisation of the course and this should be shared by the writing teachers in the English department. Thus, the way courses are sequenced in the study plan for the EFL program is perceived as a constraint to students' improvement and to teachers' classroom practices.

#### *Lack of coordination among writing teachers*

P10 and P12 also thought that lack of coordination among the teachers of the different writing courses constitutes a barrier facing their endeavours to improve their students' writing skills. Writing courses should be coordinated in a way that results in developing better writing skills for students.

Teachers' different styles and methods and lack of coordination among the teachers of different writing courses and even other language skills teachers are partly responsible for students' writing problems. I think that it is the context and the way they were taught at other writing courses and even schools. (P10, Int.1)

P12 encountered a similar issue with her students due to lack of cooperation among the different writing teachers on the teaching approach to be used, on the learning objectives of the different writing courses. This lack of coordination creates discrepancies between students and teachers' expectations and confused students

Once I taught Writing II courses, my students suffered a lot , were confused, and had big problems in writing because their teacher in Writing I did not give them any chance to write. Their main source of information and material was the textbook. So, I exerted huge efforts helping them overcome the writing problems they have because of the writing one course. (P12, Int.3)

It took P12 time and effort to work with her students to help them adapt to her teaching approach which is different from their previous teachers.

#### ***Broader educational system***

Teachers in Cluster C thought of their students' learning experiences in high schools, in previous writing courses with other teachers and their experience in other language courses as a source of discrepancy between their expectations of their students and their students' expectations from the writing courses. The majority of their students are used to lecturing and to teacher-fronted classes throughout

their school years. P10 blamed the testing culture that controls the performance of language teachers and schools. This is why many teachers strive to give their students expressions to memorise to help them succeed in the composition task in their general secondary certificate exam.

In schools, teachers focus on teaching students to memorise information to pass tests, especially third secondary school teachers give their students expressions and formulas to memorise that can be used for any topic. They are mostly concerned with their students' success rate. (P10, Int.1)

In the early stages of P11's writing course, there was some sort of discrepancy between his students' expectation and his teaching approach. He perceived this discrepancy as a factor that created a difficulty in teaching his students.

In the beginning of the course you know the most important thing for them was to have a correct simple grammatical sentence that is it. I think this was my difficulty with my students because their main focus was only on writing good grammar, writing good sentences even though in many times they do not make sense. This is what they have been learning in Gaza schools. (P11, Int.1)

Similar to P11's experience with his students, P10 recalled how she faced the influence of her students' past learning of writing on her writing classes.

They thought that they will only be asked to write about life in a city, about, holiday, etc. This is what they learnt in secondary school. I told them these topics were good but you are big now. We need to write about more serious topics [but] they did not know how to do it. (P10, Int.3)

P10's students were not willing to go through the different steps for composing texts; simply they were not used to it during their writing classes. She had to make her students aware of the importance and benefits of outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. She reported that her students' first draft was their final draft. Writing for them was quantity and page length but not ideas quality. They did not go through the process of writing; brainstorming, pre-writing, writing rough and second drafts and then editing. They did not do that; they just wrote one draft:

In the beginning, I found that students did not see the importance to brainstorm or narrow down the topic; they think it is a waste of time. They said if you are good at writing, you can write your final draft directly. It took me some time to help them realise the importance of writing different drafts. (P 10, Int.2)



P12 described her students' writing learning experience in schools as being poor and destructive to students' creativity. In schools, teachers do not give adequate attention to writing. They teach grammar and translate vocabulary from English into Arabic.

You know our English teachers in school use the grammar-translation method. As you know this is very traditional approach... They do not try to improve their students' communicative skills. This is our big problem. They spend the whole year on tenses, direct and indirect speech, passive, etc. Still students cannot learn this grammar. (P12, Int.3)

P12 blamed the universities for graduating unqualified language teachers. Universities should equip their students with the most recent teaching approaches and knowledge that would help them teach school students.

I tell you, once English departments graduate qualified teachers, school students will learn all the basics of language. This will facilitate our tasks and will make university teacher focus on high level skill. (P12, Int.1)

Another issue that emerges from the broader educational context is the lack of opportunities for students to use the language outside the classroom. Even if some students want to practice their English with their friends, others make fun of them.

We have to be realistic; our students are oppressed, they do not have chances to talk, or to learn from native speakers or to travel.... This makes learning English more difficult and students unmotivated. (P10, Int.2)

Thus, Cluster C teachers put more blame on the difficult contextual conditions rather than on their students, who are the product of these conditions.

### **Cluster C's summary and key features**

This cluster features shared conceptualisation, shared beliefs, shared attitudes and professional motivation which were all oriented towards writing as a social act. Because of those shared aspects, teachers within this cluster delivered similar instructional practices that manifested in their classroom procedures, course designs, writing tests, and textbook selection. There was a strong degree of consistency between their cognitions and their pedagogical practices which valued integrating reading with writing, giving different forms of feedback, using written

models, and teaching a variety of genres. Although Cluster C teachers perceived their students' characteristics as a barrier, their high sense of agency and self-efficacy made them look at their students' negative traits as being modifiable. The difficult physical conditions of the classroom, including overcrowdedness, lack of resources, and environmental conditions, worked as a hindrance to those teachers' ideal teaching practices, especially those which were formed from participating in an international postgraduate teacher education program. The institutional context and the national educational contexts acted as obstacles.

## CHAPTER 7

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the interplay between EFL writing teachers' cognitions, their classroom practices, and any other emerging influential factors. A qualitative, multiple case study design was used. Data analysis was informed by constructivist grounded theory data analysis methods (Charmaz, 2006) to develop a model capable of describing the teaching of EFL writing in Palestinian universities. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, stimulated recall interviews, and a review of course documents. Data were transcribed, coded, and analysed first through the development of twelve individual case reports. Then, these twelve cases were restructured into Cluster A, Cluster B, and Cluster C based on the similarities in the teachers' classroom focus drawn from their coded data. The value of this research lies in the qualitative insights it provides into what EFL writing teachers actually do in their classrooms and into how teachers rationalise their practices. This chapter presents an overall synthesis of the findings from the three clusters by encapsulating key features of writing teachers' cognitions, classroom practices, and emerging influential ecological factors in a cognitive-ecological model (CEM). The CEM acts as a framework within which to discuss the synthesised findings with reference to the literature of language teacher cognition and models of L2 writing instruction. The chapter also compares the emerged CEM with Borg's (2006) and Burns' (1996) models of language teachers' cognition. It concludes with study limitations, theoretical and professional implications, and directions for future research.

#### Revisiting the research questions

The examination of findings across Clusters A, B, and C taken together addresses the overarching research questions that have guided this investigation throughout its various stages.

1. How do teachers in Palestinian universities in the Gaza Strip teach EFL academic writing?
2. How do EFL writing teachers report their cognitions about the teaching of EFL writing?

3. How do teachers' cognitions correspond to their L2 writing instructional practices?
4. What factors shape and inform Palestinian EFL writing teachers' cognitions and practices?

A summary of these findings is provided next.

***Question one: Describing teachers' practices***

There were clear variations in the teachers' instructional practices as shown in Table 5. There were differences in their classroom procedures and activities, selection criteria of course textbooks, feedback practices, course descriptions and testing. Cluster A teachers focused on sentence-level writing, on grammar, punctuation, and structural elements of paragraphs. Cluster B teachers focused on the rhetorical organisation of traditional paragraphs and essays. Their course textbooks, classroom activities, tests and course descriptions reflected these teachers' prioritising of forms. Writing teaching involved a routine pattern of rule explanation followed by practice exercises. These teachers generally provided limited feedback on forms. They did not employ communicative approaches to teaching writing. The examined aspects of their writing courses reflected the importance of the correctness and the grammaticality of the written product. In contrast, Cluster C participants showed a balance between forms and content. They focused on composing processes, on writing different genres, on audience and text purpose as well as on accuracy. They strove to provide their students with peer and teacher feedback on different aspects of the text. Their communicative approach to teaching writing was reflected in their selection of the textbook, writing test, class activities, and objectives outlined in the course syllabus.

**Table 5: Teachers' Pedagogical Practices**

Pedagogical Practices	Cluster A Teachers (N5)	Cluster B Teachers (N4)	Cluster C Teachers (N3)
Teaching Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grammar, punctuation &amp; spelling.</li> <li>- Accuracy of forms</li> <li>- Structural elements of paragraphs &amp; essays</li> <li>- Knowledge –transmission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on rhetorical organisation of paragraphs &amp; essays.</li> <li>- Focus on accuracy of written texts.</li> <li>- Analysing texts structures.</li> <li>- Knowledge – transmission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Composing processes and genres.</li> <li>- Forms accuracy and ideas fluency.</li> <li>- Use of written models</li> <li>- Knowledge-constructivist model of instruction</li> <li>- Emphasis on practice.</li> </ul>
Textbook selection & use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forms-oriented textbook</li> <li>- Textbooks focus on writing different types of sentences, on sentence problems, and punctuation, and on paragraphs and essays structures</li> <li>- Textbook as Quasi-syllabus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each chapter focuses on rhetorical patterns of essays.</li> <li>- Textbook as Quasi-syllabus</li> <li>- Textbook provides sample essays, and structural analysis of texts organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of supplementary materials...</li> <li>- Includes material written by previous students.</li> <li>- Textbook as Quasi-syllabus.</li> <li>- Focus on the composing processes and the linguistic features of different genres.</li> </ul>

Feedback Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oral collective feedback.</li> <li>- Feedback focuses on forms-related problems.</li> <li>- Seeking feedback is optional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oral collective feedback</li> <li>- Feedback in the form of a grade.</li> <li>- Some Feedback focuses on students' applications of organisational rules</li> <li>- Seeking feedback is optional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combinations of oral collective feedback with individual written feedback.</li> <li>- Employment of peer feedback.</li> <li>- Periodic assessment of students' writing.</li> </ul>
Course Descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textbook-based course outline. Assessment is through tests.</li> <li>- Tests focus on grammar, vocabulary, sentence-level writing, and paragraph structure,</li> <li>- Exams and course descriptions emphasised using grammar correctly, punctuating discrete sentences appropriately, and spelling words accurately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Textbook-based course outline.</li> <li>- Writing different rhetorical patterns of texts as the main objectives.</li> <li>- Tests focus on analysing the structure and organisation of essays and paragraphs, on sentence correction, and writing a specific pattern of text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objectives highlighted the integrated approach.</li> <li>- Assessment is through written assignments &amp; tests.</li> <li>- Tests focus on different writing skills and text types. Space was provided for brainstorming and outlining</li> </ul>

### ***Question two: Teachers' cognitions***

A major force that influenced and shaped the various practices of the EFL writing teachers and that guided their performance in the classroom was their different cognitions. They held a range of cognitions about the nature of L2 writing. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers conceptualised writing as a linguistic exercise rather than a communicative act. However, Cluster C teachers' data emphasised the communicative nature of EFL writing. Participants also held various beliefs about teaching and learning L2 writing. Cluster A teachers believed that the main focus of the writing course should be on teaching grammar, mechanics and sentence level writing. According to Cluster A teachers, students learn writing when they are able to construct correct grammatical sentences. Cluster B teachers thought that writing teaching should focus on teaching different rhetorical modes of paragraphs and essays. Cluster C teachers' beliefs focused on teaching the linguistic forms and their communicative functions as well as the composing processes. It was clear from the teachers' data that their pedagogical beliefs represented an interconnected system where their conceptualisations influenced their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning writing. These teachers also held varying cognitions about their professional selves, mainly about their roles, their attitudes towards teaching writing, and their sense of teaching self-efficacy. These aspects of their cognition were important for determining their teaching approach. Table 6 summarises the variations in the multi-dimensional cognitions among the three clusters.

**Table 6: Teachers' Cognitions**

<b>Teachers' Cognitions</b>	<b>Cluster A Teachers (N5)</b>	<b>Cluster B Teachers (N4)</b>	<b>Cluster C Teachers (N3)</b>
Conceptualisations of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing as a linguistic exercise.</li> <li>- Grammar and vocabulary are the essence of writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing as a cognitive process of organising ideas into patterns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing is socio-cognitive a process of composing and communicating a message to an audience</li> </ul>
Cognitions about teaching & learning EFL writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on improving students' grammar, and sentence-level writing.</li> <li>- Learning the structural components of paragraphs is necessary.</li> <li>- Students learn writing through practicing writing.</li> <li>- Giving students feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on teaching different rhetorical patterns of texts.</li> <li>- Analysing the organisation of ideas in texts is the first step to learn writing.</li> <li>- Imitating written essays and paragraphs.</li> <li>- Students learn writing by writing.</li> <li>- Giving feedback to students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on content quality, forms accuracy, and composing processes.</li> <li>- Using written models is necessary.</li> <li>- Integrating reading with writing facilitates learning.</li> <li>- Peer feedback and teachers' feedback should be combined.</li> <li>- Teachers should collaborate with their students.</li> </ul>
Cognitions about professional selves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing teachers as teachers, motivators, error hunters, errors correctors, and feedback givers.</li> <li>- Teaching writing is frustrating, tiring, and difficult.</li> <li>- Professional training is needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing teachers as teachers, motivators, errors correctors, feedback givers, and assessors.</li> <li>- Teaching writing is difficult.</li> <li>- Negative attitudes towards teaching writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing teachers as guides, facilitators, feedback givers, motivators and progress assessors.</li> <li>- Teachers responsible for students learning.</li> <li>- Writing teaching is not easy and</li> </ul>



- 
- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| - Negative attitudes towards teaching writing         | - Professional training.  | requires a lot of effort and skills.                            |
| - Low sense of teaching self-efficacy.                | - Early EFL writing Learning Experience influenced their teaching | - Teachers should find ways to adapt to their teaching context. |
| - Early learning experience influenced their teaching |   | - High level of teaching self-efficacy                          |
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### ***Question three: The relationship between practices and cognitions***

Teachers' pedagogical cognitions about themselves and about teaching and learning mediate practice and account for variation among teachers in this respect. Most of the cognitions reported by teachers were congruent with observed practices. Teachers in the three clusters showed correspondence between their cognitions about their work and the ways in which they taught in the writing class. Course material selection, classroom focus, and instructional procedures may be active expressions of different underlying conceptualisations of writing and pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning. Some incongruence was also noted, pertaining to many teachers' beliefs about the value of giving feedback to students and providing students with opportunities to practise writing. Those beliefs were not translated into practices during the two week observation period.

### ***Question four: Factors influencing cognitions and practices Ecological factors as main determinants of teachers' cognition and practices***

The findings showed the entwined relationships between the practices and the cognitions of the participants and their ecological contexts. As presented in Table 7, the cognitions and the practices they developed were influenced by the classroom physical and social context, institutional context, broader educational context, and global community knowledge of teaching L2 writing. The physical reality of the classroom with its limited resources, large numbers of students, and space and seating inflexibility acted as a hindrance for many desired classroom practices, such as the use of group work and giving written feedback. Similarly, the classroom social context including perceptions that students had low level linguistic abilities and negative personal characteristics is an influential source for teachers' cognitions and instructional practices. Teachers often described students as being linguistically weak, careless, lazy, unmotivated, passive, and bookish. The realities of the institutional context which determined the physical and social aspects of the classroom were perceived as a constraint. Lack of placement tests before admitting high school graduates into the EFL program meant that unqualified students could enter the program. These students did not seem to possess the necessary aptitude and attitude to succeed in learning the foreign language. Also, not all of the teachers were trained in teaching EFL writing. These ecological factors may have forced the teachers to adopt the straightforward nature of teacher-fronted lessons. This approach is usually favoured by teachers who face difficult working conditions and who tend to have low levels of professional motivation.

The broader educational context created a barrier for the writing teachers in Palestine. The general learning culture in Palestinian schools stresses memorisation and tests. The use of English as a foreign language is restricted to the classroom and opportunities to use the language on an everyday basis in society is very rare for school students. In addition, the most widely-adopted teaching methodology is the Grammar-Translation method where the focus is on teaching grammar and vocabulary, and translating the meaning in Arabic. Students experience this educational system for twelve years prior to tertiary study, so they expect to encounter a similar educational system when they enter university. Ecological factors also played a role in explaining dissonance between teachers' cognition and classroom practices. For example, many teachers who reported a belief in the necessity of providing their students with written feedback stated they were unable to do so due to lack of time and large class sizes.

Thus, these challenges mediate the teaching practices and teachers' choices of materials, roles and tasks. The only ecological factor which acted as a facilitator to the teaching of writing was the participation of some teachers in international language education programs. In this broader ecological context, teachers were introduced to the most recent research based trends in teaching L2 writing, and they reported that were equipped with many skills to facilitate their teaching in their home country. Taking courses dedicated to the methods of teaching L2 writing was a valuable source of pedagogical content knowledge for these teachers.

**Table 7: Teachers' Perceptions of Ecological Factors**

<b>Ecological Contexts</b>	<b>Cluster A Teachers (N5)</b>	<b>Cluster B Teachers (N4)</b>	<b>Cluster C Teachers (N3)</b>
Teachers' Perceptions of Students (Social Context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative perceptions of students' characteristics.</li> <li>- Fossilised learners, linguistically weak, unmotivated, careless, grades-oriented, passive recipients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative perceptions of students' characteristics.</li> <li>- Fossilised learners, linguistically weak, unmotivated, careless, grades-oriented, passive, and bookish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers are responsible for improving the linguistic level of their students.</li> <li>- Teachers should motivate their students.</li> <li>- Passive students are obliged to work.</li> <li>- There is always hope</li> </ul>
Classroom Physical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult working conditions.</li> <li>- Overcrowded classes,</li> <li>- Limited classroom resources.</li> <li>- Space inflexibility.</li> <li>- Heavy teaching loads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult working conditions.</li> <li>- Overcrowded classes,</li> <li>- Limited classroom resources.</li> <li>- Bad environmental conditions</li> <li>- Rigid physical organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficult working conditions.</li> <li>- Overcrowded classes.</li> <li>- Limited classroom resources.</li> </ul>

Institutional Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unorganised study plan</li> <li>- An institution controls the classroom context.</li> <li>- Lack of Placement tests</li> <li>- Understaffing of writing teachers</li> <li>- Lack of professional training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unorganised study plan for the English program</li> <li>- An institution controls the classroom context.</li> <li>- Lack of Placement tests for students</li> <li>- Understaffing of writing teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of placement tests.</li> <li>- Unorganised study plan for the English program</li> <li>- An institution controls the classroom context.</li> <li>- Lack of Placement tests for students</li> </ul>
Broader Educational Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional Educational system.</li> <li>- Restricted use of English.</li> <li>- Unqualified English school teachers.</li> <li>- Forms-oriented high-stake tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traditional educational system.</li> <li>- Restricted use of English.</li> <li>- Unqualified English school teachers.</li> <li>- Forms-oriented high-stake tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restricted use of English.</li> <li>- Unqualified English school teachers.</li> <li>- Forms-oriented high-stake tests.</li> <li>- Dominance of grammar-translation methods in schools</li> <li>- Emphasis on memorisation not creativity.</li> </ul>

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Global Community Discourse	NA	- NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- International scholars propose and develop models to teaching writing.</li><li>- International empirical research on teaching EFL writing is useful.</li><li>- Pedagogical content knowledge which facilitates their teaching.</li></ul>
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### *Personal factors*

Personal factors emerged in this study as contributing to the formation of cognitions and the shaping of pedagogical practices. These personal factors include the prior learning experience in domestic pre-service language teacher education programs and teachers' reflectiveness about their teaching. Teacher cognition and pedagogical practices were shaped by early learning experiences. Apprenticeship of observation represented by the thousands of hours that teachers spend in classrooms provided mental images of teaching and learning, and informed their practice afterwards. Some teachers' reflections on their teaching practices influenced their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning writing.

### ***Cognition mediates the influence of the ecological contexts on teachers' practice***

Teacher cognition about professional self also determines the weight that practitioners assign to different constraining ecological factors. For example, teachers who reported high degrees of self-efficacy, positive attitudes and professional motivation were able to mitigate the impact of the contextual constraints and adopt alternative strategies to overcome the barriers; they seemed better able to make use of the pedagogical content knowledge they gained during their postgraduate programs. The majority of lecturers who expressed negative attitudes and a low sense of teaching efficacy blamed the ecological contexts and did not report that they took any action to mitigate the contextual constraints.

### **Synthesising the findings into a cognitive-ecological model of teaching EFL writing**

The interplay between the pedagogical practices, cognitions, and ecological contexts (summarised above) are synthesised in an emerging cognitive-ecological model (CEM) of teaching EFL writing (Figure 3). The CEM is employed to frame and organise the discussion. It emphasises the impact of EFL writing teachers' cognitions and the multiple contexts within which they operate on their instructional practices.

The CEM postulates that teachers' cognitions and instructional practices develop as a result of the interaction and the interrelationship between teachers and their multi-level environments during their learning and teaching experiences over time. The term cognitive is used to signify the influence of teachers' cognitions on their teaching behaviours and classroom practices. The term ecological is used to denote the nested contexts that shape teachers' cognitions and influence their teaching practices. This model also aims to provide an insight into the realities of EFL writing teaching and the structures within which the teachers in Palestine operate.

The pictorial representation of the CEM is a comprehensive rainbow-like figure of seven bands as shown in Figure 3. It is comprehensive because it extends beyond the classroom into the context where the teaching is occurring. At the core of the model are the teachers' instructional practices in the writing classroom. The other six bands can be thought of as filters to classroom practices which operate at different levels with a degree of overlap. The term filter is used to reflect the subtle impact of these factors on practice. The first filter is teachers' cognition, and it operates at the intrapersonal micro level of individual teachers. The intrapersonal level refers to the micro personal factors that influence the teachers' practices, such as their attitudes, pedagogical beliefs, conceptualisations and their perceptions of themselves as professionals. The classroom social environment, the third band, involves teacher-student interpersonal relationships and teachers' perceptions of their students' characteristics. This filter impacts on how teachers act on the classroom and orient their focus. The third filter to practice is the classroom physical environment. The teachers' perception of the classroom physical environment operates as a hindrance to the implementation of desired classroom practices. The classroom-related barriers were class size, space availability, environmental conditions, teaching materials, and classroom resources. The last three filters are the macro ecological factors. These macro ecological factors are the institutional context, national educational context, and global community discourse. They are the major, external factors that influence teachers' cognitions and practices.

The CEM highlights the interaction between the individual cognitions and multiple-layered environments within which cognitions are shaped and given expression. Teaching practices, the core of the model, are seen as a product of the influences of individual cognitions and ecological factors. Within the CEM, some ecologies play a pivotal role in supporting teacher cognition and its impact on teaching EFL writing, but others create dissonance between them. Global community discourse ecology enhances its members' knowledge and skills and promotes their teaching self-efficacy. However, the classroom physical environment with its limited resources, large class size, and seating inflexibility was perceived as a constraint. The mediating positioning of the teacher cognition band between practices and the different contextual contexts may show that cognition determines the weight that teachers assign to different ecological constraints. This may explain why teachers working under the same conditions may exhibit different teaching practices. In other words, cognition filters the effect of the ecological contexts on instructional practices. The extent to which this study's findings as synthesised in the CEM confirm, refute or supplement existing literature will be discussed next.



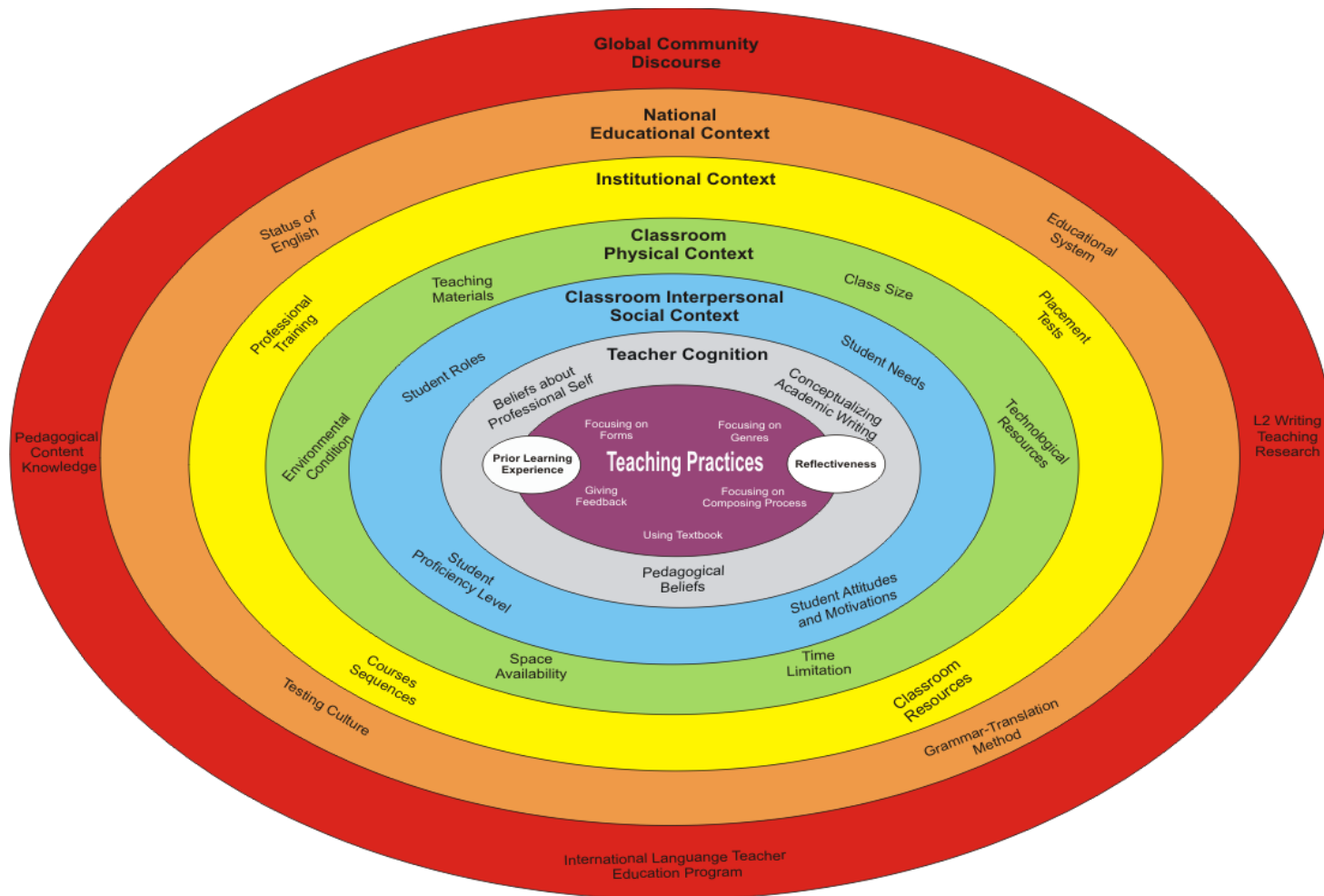


Figure 3: A cognitive-ecological model (CEM) of teaching EFL writing

### ***Variations in teachers' pedagogical practices***

Pedagogical practices are the core of the CEM and are shaped and filtered by the different aspects of teachers' cognitions and surrounding ecological factors. There were clear variations in the instructional practices of the participants. This section discusses these variations and the appropriateness of their pedagogical practices in relation to the research literature on teaching L2 writing.

#### *Teachers' instructional approaches: Product versus Integrated*

The findings from my study suggest that there are variations in the teachers' instructional approaches. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' pedagogical practices aligned closely with the product approach (reviewed in pp.16-17) where "language and textual forms are central" (Johns, 1997a, p. 7). There was little attention paid to the relationship between grammatical form and function; forms were separate from context (Badger & White, 2000). This is congruent with Muncie's (2002) comment that EFL students taking composition courses are likely to be more familiar with traditional grammar instruction and forms, rather than language functions. These teachers' course descriptions and tests prioritised structure, mechanics and linguistic knowledge over the social nature of writing as communication. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' teaching approach is similar to the teaching approach described in research studies of EFL writing teachers in Chinese (You, 2004; Yang et al. 2006) and other Arab universities (Ezza, 2010). Chinese instructors focus on teaching students to write traditional three- to five-paragraph essays with the format of introduction-body-conclusion (You, 2004); the focus of instruction is the written product, with students usually writing only one draft on a certain topic (Yang et al., 2006). In many Arab universities, writing teaching assumes a bottom-up approach, emphasising the sentence and its constituents at the expense of the skills needed to write coherent paragraphs (Ezza, 2010). These teachers' course descriptions and tests matched to a large extent their product-oriented teaching. Their tests and course descriptions emphasised grammar and language mechanics. They might be unaware of the other methods of teaching writing. In other words, they seem to lack the developed traditions of EFL writing instruction (Reichelt, 2005).

As argued in Chapter 2, L2 writing research has not considered the product approach adequate to provide a complete understanding of the skills involved in writing. The product approach does not allow much of a role for the planning of a text nor for other process skills (Badger & White, 2000). Adopting the product approach in teaching will not encourage students to practice writing, because it does not expose them to the writing processes (Matsuda, 2003). In addition, the aim of teaching L2 writing can never be limited to

instruction in grammar and accuracy. There are examples of students who can structure complex grammatical forms but are unable to develop a well-written text (Hyland, 2003). More importantly, a controlled focus on linguistic forms as a way to develop writing ignores the nature of written texts as being culturally and contextually determined (Leki, 2006). Thus, these teachers' product-oriented approach to teaching writing seems to be contributing to their students' poor writing ability. On the other hand, Cluster C teachers' pedagogical approach to teaching writing was integrated; it incorporated many features of the product, process, and genre approaches.

Many researchers propose an integrated EFL writing pedagogy, combining product, genre, and process approaches (Deng, 2007; Gao, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2005) as they are complementary rather than incompatible (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Hyland, 2003). Combining the process and genre approaches provides opportunities for learners to develop their individual creativity and helps them to fully understand the features of target genres (Kim & Kim, 2005). The value of implementing an integrated approach is examined by Heffernan (2006). His study demonstrates that his students showed a dramatic improvement in their writing abilities. Hashemnezhad and Hashemnezhad's (2012) findings also revealed the priority of the process-genre approaches over the product approach. Knowing how to use the language properly, including grammar and punctuation, is very important for learning writing; however, this is not enough to be a skilled writer in a foreign language. Hasan's and Akhand's (2010) findings indicate that the combination of product and process outperformed the use of a single approach.

Given that most L2 writing instructional approaches address only a certain aspect of L2 writing (e.g., language, text, composing skills, reader expectations), adhering to any single approach can lead to a skewed perspective on the issues encountered by ESL/EFL students (Silva, 1990). Besides, writing instruction that overemphasises one aspect of writing, be it product, process or social purpose may provide students with a confined, narrow view of writing. To sum up, teachers in Palestinian universities adopted different instructional approaches when teaching writing in the classroom, but the one implemented by the majority was the product approach which is form based. The use of this form-based approach may be contributing to current weaknesses in the writing skills of Palestinian students.

### *Variations in giving feedback practices*

Teacher feedback is a key factor in students' learning of academic writing (Ferris, 2002; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Ashwell, 2000) because it makes the students evaluate their writing, motivates them to do something different in the next draft, makes students realise the level of their performance, and shows them how to improve. Although Cluster C teachers provided their students with oral and written feedback, the majority of participants represented by Cluster A and Cluster B were not able to give written feedback on their students' writing. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' feedback practices (summarised in Table 5) are similar to those in the Japanese context described by Casanave (2003). Many Japanese students do not revise, do not peer-read, do not get substantive feedback, and may not see their written work again after they submit it (Casanave, 2003). Hyland (2003) argues that teacher feedback should address structure, organisation, style, content and presentation as well as grammatical or mechanical issues. Providing local feedback on student writing can improve learners' ability to identify and correct their own mistakes. Despite the time-consuming nature of providing written feedback, teacher written feedback is both helpful and desirable because it is considered to be the best way for communication with individual students (Goldstein, 2004; Lee & Schallert, 2008). For example, English major Saudi students desired and expected written feedback from their writing teachers (Grami, 2005). In this study, Cluster A and Cluster B did not get regular opportunities to receive feedback from their teachers.

Teachers' "feedback is used to scaffold learning, build learner confidence and the literacy resources necessary to participate in their target communities" (Hyland & Hyland 2006a, p.83). Not providing students with feedback may cause confusion, leaving them unaware of the aspects of their writing that need to be improved (Miao et al., 2006; Hyland, 2003; Ferris, 2002). Moreover, feedback is helpful not only for students who receive it, but also for teachers as well, because it gives them the opportunity to diagnose and assess the problematic issues in learners' writing, and allows them to create a supportive teaching environment (Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Miao et al., 2006). Through feedback, students can learn how successful their assignments are and what aspects of their writing need improvement.

Cluster C teachers also implemented peer feedback in their classes. Many studies have recommended the use of peer feedback in ESL writing classes for its valuable social, cognitive, affective and meta-linguistic benefits (Ferris, 2003; Lundstorm & Baker, 2009).

Peer feedback in the writing classroom can build local communities of writers (Storch, 2005). Hyland (2000) also adds that peer feedback encourages more student participation in the classroom, gives the students more control and makes them less passively teacher-dependent. In addition, peer feedback helps learners become more self-aware, in the sense that they notice the gap between how they and others perceive their writing, thus facilitating the development of analytical and critical reading and writing skills, enhancing self-reflection and self-expression, and promoting a sense of co-ownership (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Many other researchers recommend the use of peer feedback in the writing classroom (Mo, 2005; Ting & Qian, 2010; Yang et al., 2006). Ting and Qian's (2010) study's results showed that students considered most of their peers' feedback when revising their drafts, especially with respect to accuracy. Their study also indicated that peer-review activities could lead to autonomous learners and critical readers and writers. Mo (2005) argues that peer feedback can play an important role in writing instruction, especially given instructors' heavy workloads. In spite of the many advantages for employing teacher and peer feedback in the writing classroom, feedback was not implemented widely by the participants.

#### *Variations in selecting and using textbooks*

As summarised in Table 5, textbooks acted as semi-syllabus because they provided content and teaching-learning activities, which shaped much of what happened in the classroom (Celle-Murcia, 2001). However, there were differences in their textbook selection criteria. Teachers are recommended to choose a textbook that corresponds with their own views of writing and most effectively meets the objectives of a course (Hyland, 2003). There was a high degree of consistency between each teacher's classroom focus and course objectives and his or her chosen textbook. The textbook needs to address a reasonable number of course objectives to make it a worthwhile purchase (Ur, 1996). The features of most of Cluster A and Cluster B forms and rhetorical-based textbooks are similar to the textbooks used in other Arab universities as examined by Ezza (2010). Ezza applied content analysis to existing writing courses in three Arab universities. The examination of these courses has revealed that English departments adopted approaches and materials characteristic of the 1940s and 1950s. She stated that unless the new developments into the linguistic and writing theories and approaches are incorporated into the writing syllabus, Arab EFL learners will continue to experience writing problems. Probably Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' limited pedagogical content knowledge in teaching writing and their low professional motivation (which will be discussed later) meant that their chosen textbooks became not just a course resource, but instead became the entire writing course (Hyland, 2003). This feature of their teaching is consistent with Akbulut's (2007) study of thirteen Turkish novice EFL

teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Akbulut found that their teaching was almost always textbook-based because they did not feel confident to move beyond the textbook and to try out innovative techniques and methods. Teachers in Cluster C supplemented their course textbook, which included different genres and emphasis on composing processes, with authentic materials to stimulate their students' interests and meet their learning needs. Hyland (2003) which was Cluster C's L2 writing textbook had "clear models of the genres they wanted their students to learn and reproduce, contained varied activities and provided strategies with culturally appropriate materials" (p.97). Thus, there are wide differences in the teaching practices of the participants. Many of their practices are traditional and criticised by L2 writing researchers because implementing such practices do not lead to improved writing skills. The factors that may have shaped teachers' practices and created differences in their instructional practices are considered in the following sections.

### **Teachers' intrapersonal cognitions and their relationship with pedagogical practices**

The findings from the data suggested that teachers' cognitions, the second band in the CEM, were a major factor that shaped the classroom practices of the different participants. There were variations in the participants' cognitions, and these variations contributed to the implementation of different teaching approaches in the research sites. Everything teachers do in the classroom, the methods and materials they adopt, the teaching styles they implement, and the tasks they design, are informed by practical and theoretical knowledge (Hyland, 2003). Teachers' cognition plays an important role in their teaching practice, because it impacts on the teachers' decisions, such as the appropriate teaching materials for their students (Freeman, 2002). The following section discusses how teachers' different cognitions influenced their pedagogical practices.

### ***Confining conceptualisations of academic writing***

"Our classroom decisions are always informed by our theories and beliefs about what writing is and how people learn to write" (Hyland, 2003, p.1). My study showed that participants' conceptualisation of the nature and purpose of L2 writing played a role in their pedagogical practices. The differences in the participants' conceptualisations of writing are similar to the various conceptualisations of ESL writing teachers in Cumming and Shi's (1995) study. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' forms-based view of the nature of academic writing is aligned with the principles of the skill-based approach. These teachers viewed writing as a "coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules" (Hyland, 2003, p.3). However, it is important to relate linguistic structures to meaning because language forms perform communicative functions (Hyland, 2003). Their

conceptualisation detaches writing from its contexts and seems to overlook the complexities of the process of writing and its nature as social practice (Street, 2003). As will be discussed later, their skill-based conception may explain why these teachers attribute their students' difficulties to their inability to master the skills necessary to be successful writers or to their immature mastery of the rhetorical structures of English texts or to the first language interference (Lea & Stierer, 2000). Their views were consistent with those in the early stage of ESL writing instruction in the twentieth century when writing was regarded as complex bits of grammar, and teaching writing was actually teaching linguistic forms (Leki, 1992) as reviewed in Chapter 2. Cluster B teachers thought of writing as the logical organisation and arrangement of discourse into rhetorical patterns. Focusing on rhetorical forms and structures may reveal a simplistic view of writing, because it assumes that written communication does not take place (Silva, 1990). Their conceptualisations lacked a consideration of the functions that these structures and rhetorical patterns serve, for the roles of writer and reader, context, or topics.

Cluster C teachers' central belief about writing is that people write to achieve certain purposes. Consistent with the text-based view of academic writing, Cluster C teachers connected linguistic forms, context, and the social purpose of writing (Hyland, 2002b). Their views of writing are similar to those in Cumming's study (2003). The 17 experienced writing teachers' conceptualisations of English writing curricula centred on writing processes and genres. It seems their communicative-oriented orientation towards writing shaped Cluster C's integrated approach to teaching writing.

The teachers' conceptualisation matched the autonomous model of literacy in which writing is a social, autonomous, decontextualised skill located within the individual. Their views about the nature of writing may reflect their narrow understanding of fundamental current assumptions about English writing, especially as advocated for in the new literacies approach (reviewed in Chapter 2). The participants did not refer to the socio-cultural context that contributes to form the views and practices of writers (Henderson & Hirst, 2006). Although there will be some individual differences among writing teachers, the "social practice" (Hyland, 2003, p. 25) of the community context shapes the general features of good academic writing. These practices determine how the text is interpreted and evaluated by the readers from that community. The findings showed a lack of a unified coherent conceptualisation and approach to teaching English writing. The lack may impact on students who will not be able to construct a consistent conceptualisation of writing. This is part of a perpetuating cycle of teacher to student, who then becomes a teacher, and so on.

### ***Variations in teachers' pedagogical practices***

Differences in teachers' conceptualisations led to differences in their pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning EFL writing. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' forms-based beliefs about teaching and learning writing emerged from their skills-based conceptualisations. This finding is similar to Cumming and Shi's (1995) findings which showed each instructor's conceptions of writing to be highly consistent with their individual, expressed views about their teaching.

These teachers' beliefs echoed those of the Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction in Khanalizadeh and Allami's (2012) study. Results suggest that the form-based view was the dominant one. Cluster C participants also displayed a fairly consistent relationship between the ways they thought about writing, its learning, and teaching, and the ways in which they acted in the writing classes. For example, Cluster C teachers' communicative conceptualisations of writing and their pedagogical beliefs were consistent with their focus on the quality of ideas, linguistic and rhetorical features of texts, composing processes, text purpose and audience. Their use of peer feedback, providing written models to their students, their giving of written feedback were consistent with their pedagogical beliefs.

As shown in Table 6, teachers in the three clusters shared a number of beliefs, especially about the importance of practice and feedback in facilitating students' learning of writing. Writing skills are practiced through the act of writing. Their beliefs are stressed in the literature of learning L2 writing. Writing is a set of skills which must be practiced and learned through the act of writing (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). At the same time, writing skills cannot emerge by practice alone. The ability to compose in L1 or L2 cannot develop without knowing the linguistic forms, patterns, and purposes of written language (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

### **Consistency between beliefs and practices**

The consistency between teachers' reported beliefs and actual classroom practices is supported in many research studies (Burn, 1992; Chou, 2008; Farrell & Patricia, 2005; Mellati, Fatemi & Motallebzadeh, 2013). The results of my study revealed a significant relationship between teachers' beliefs about language teaching and their real practices in classrooms. As displayed in Tables 5 and 6, Cluster A and Cluster B teachers translated their forms-based conceptualisations and beliefs into their classroom procedures, course descriptions, teaching materials, and tests. Burns (1992) found a very complex and



interconnected network of underlying beliefs which seemed to influence the pedagogical practices and approaches adopted by the six ESL teachers. These teachers held different beliefs about the nature of language learning, language learning strategies, the relationship between written and spoken language, learner characteristics, and the nature of language classrooms. The differences in the beliefs teachers held about these issues were reflected in their different classroom practices. This finding is also supported by Chou's (2008) investigation. Chou (2008) conducted a study based on the assumption that teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs. The findings showed that there were no significant differences between the participants' beliefs and their use of each reading approach. Farrell and Lim's (2005) study suggests that what teachers say and do in the classroom are shaped by their beliefs. They focused on the impact of teachers' beliefs on their practices when teaching grammar. They found that teachers' theoretical beliefs influenced their classroom practices. Thus, my study supports previous studies' findings about the impact of teachers' cognitions on their instructional practices in the writing classroom.

### **Cognitions about professional self-shape practices**

An important component of the participating teachers' cognitions is their perceptions of themselves as EFL writing professionals. Participating teachers made many references about their roles, attitudes, and sense of self-efficacy. These teachers expressed variations about their perceptions of their roles, attitudes, and sense of teaching self-efficacy. These cognitions are closely associated with cognitions about teaching and learning discussed. In this section, I discuss how their perceptions of themselves influence their practices in the writing classroom.

### ***Teachers' views of their roles guided instruction***

The writing teachers' main role should not only be on what to teach; rather they should seize every opportunity to instruct students on the need to learn to compose in English as it has become the undisputable medium of communication on the globalisation age (Leki, 2001). Teachers held varying beliefs about their roles as EFL writing teachers. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers perceived their main role as lecturing students on linguistic and rhetorical organisation knowledge and explaining and clarifying points from the textbook. Cluster B teachers instructed their students on how to write the different types of traditional paragraphs in essays. However, Cluster C teachers talked about their roles in facilitating students' learning and scaffolding them through using written models and supplementing the textbook with authentic teaching materials. Like the Turkish teachers in Saban, Kocbeker and Saban's (2007) study, the majority of the teachers in my study saw their roles as knowledge

provider and thus students as passive recipients of knowledge. These teachers' perceptions of their roles contrasted with those reported in Farrell's (2011) study where the three Canadian participants' roles were clustered into "teachers as manager, teacher as professional, and teacher as acculturator" (p.1) which is more relevant to ESL/EFL teachers. Cluster A and Cluster B's traditional method of teaching language made the teacher an all-powerful authority in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). These teachers seemed to believe that teaching is a didactic activity, so they appeared to teach in a way quite consistent with their belief system. However, Cluster C teachers who believed learning takes place in a student-directed-activity organised their teaching around appropriate learning activities and encouraged student participation (O'Loughlin, 1989).

### ***Teachers' sense of teaching self-efficacy influences their pedagogical practices***

Teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional decisions by drawing on "complex practically oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p.81). Teachers' sense of teaching self-efficacy is another aspect of teacher cognitions about professional selves which contributed to variations in their teaching practices. Teacher self-efficacy is "a teacher's perceived capability to impart knowledge and to influence student behaviour, even that of unmotivated or challenging students" (Tschannen-Morann & McMaster, 2008, p. 228). Cluster A and Cluster B teachers experienced partial disappointment and frustration, and expressed negative attitudes towards teaching writing. They also expressed their need for professional training on teaching writing. Their assessment of their own pedagogical skills may reflect their low level of teaching self-efficiency. Their attitudes towards teaching writing were often accompanied by frustration with their teaching situation. This finding is consistent with Bandura's (2006a) contention that how people behave is often better predicated by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are capable of accomplishing. Teachers in Cluster C showed that they had confidence in their ability to teach writing, and they also had the ability to translate this confidence into scaffolded instruction that gradually releases the responsibility to the student through using models, collaborative modelling, and peer feedback. Cluster C teachers' perception of their ability to teach writing made them focus on teaching writing as a process, empowering themselves and their students to use writing for communicative purposes rather than just assessment. Teachers must believe in their abilities to accomplish desired outcomes in order to carry out tasks successfully, and to perform actions that lead to student learning (Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001).

## **Personal Factors mould cognitions and inform practices**

### ***Teachers' prior learning experiences***

Teachers' prior learning experience emerged in this study as a main contributor to their cognitions and instructional practices. Its dual influence on cognition and practices is represented in the CEM by intersecting with both the cognition and the practices bands. Teachers' prior learning experiences about learning and teaching is an essential contributory factor which is grounded in their memories as EFL writers. Probably the main sources of knowledge for teaching writing are teachers' experiences when they were students in writing classrooms or through apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 2002). Their prior learning experiences as language students are likely to inform their cognition and act as a filter to their subsequent practices as teachers (Ariogul, 2007; Borg, 2006).

My study found that teachers' early learning experiences shape beliefs and attitudes toward writing and often determine the pedagogical choices made in their own classrooms in regard to writing instruction (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Street, 2003). Participants reported that their personal learning experiences of EFL writing during their English Language Bachelor degree are largely responsible for many of their own beliefs and the practices they adopt in the writing classroom. These beliefs are carried into their in-service practice (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008). For example, Cluster A teachers' beliefs and focus on sentence types, mechanics, and other grammatical topics stemmed from their own experience of learning writing during their undergraduate degree. Their writing classes at that time focused on the linguistic aspects of English writing. Cluster's B teachers taught rhetorical patterns of essays in a similar way to the one they were taught. Some of these teachers used the same textbook they studied. Cluster C teachers referred to the positive impact of their own learning experience in postgraduate programs. The impact of their postgraduate experience where they became involved with their field global community discourse will be discussed towards the end of this chapter. They also mentioned the value of sharing their own experiences as L2 writing learners by telling students stories of what worked best for them and what did not. They thought that this helped them to motivate their students to overcome their weaknesses and thus become self-confident.

Teachers bring a wealth of knowledge, prior experiences and established conceptions of teaching and learning to their teaching practices (Farrell, 2006; Johnson, 1999; Peacock 2001). The teachers' learning experiences as students can provide teachers with strategies for teaching specific content, can form their beliefs about students' understanding, and create assumptions about learning processes (Johnson, 1999). Writing teachers would have

an abundance of writing instruction experience both as students and witnesses of their own teachers.

This finding of the impact of teachers' own learning experience on their cognition and practices is consistent with other research studies (Ellis, 2006; Farrell, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Rayati & Rushdi, 2013). Ellis (2006) found that teacher language learning experience influences their professional practice and beliefs about language teaching. Johnson (1994) explores the impact of teachers' past learning experiences upon their teaching practices. Johnson's four preservice teachers expressed their negative attitudes towards teacher-centred instructional models which were prominent during their schooldays. However, during their practicum, the participants reverted to their models from their schooldays because the trainees felt powerless to change because of the lack of alternative instructional models. Rayati and Rushdi's (2013) study presented prior language learning experiences as a major source of teachers' conceptions about language instruction. These experiences were found to be as influential as their teaching experiences.

### ***Teachers' reflectiveness on their practices contributes to cognition***

The findings of this study showed that there is a reciprocal relationship between cognition and practices. Teachers' cognitions do not only inform practice, but practice also shapes and influences cognitions through teachers' reflectiveness on their teaching. In reflective teaching, "teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching" (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p.1). There is mutual relation between teachers' knowledge and their teaching practices in which teachers' reflections on their practices and their work environment contribute to their understanding of teaching and learning (Tsui, 2003). It is important for teachers to assess their current level of competence and to identify possible challenges that one could undertake.

Cluster C teachers referred to themselves as reflective practitioners. They reported that they frequently reflected on their teaching and on what worked and what did not work with a certain group of students. Reflection helped them to test out different techniques and ultimately decide on the effective ones. Teaching practice gives teachers opportunities to try out methods or techniques to help them adopt what works best in their contexts, and thus develop and modify pedagogical beliefs (Richardson, 1996). Data from Cluster A and Cluster B teachers showed less evidence of reflection. Their prior learning experience was possibly more influential on their writing instruction rather than their reflection on their teaching. Reflection on practice is very necessary for those who tend to teach as they were taught,

because it might help them to replace traditional teaching techniques with more effective ones (Akbari, 2007). Teachers will improve their performance when they find out explicit answers for questions, such as “How do I know what I know?” This requires both reflections on practical experience and reflection on theoretical knowledge (Shulman, 1988). Farrell (2011) also commented that when teachers reflect on their roles and attitudes, they can inform educators and policy makers of how teachers construct and reconstruct their views of their roles as language teachers in their context.

Critical reflection is essential in teachers’ knowledge construction (Crookes, 2009). Teacher learning in an area depends on how much time and effort a teacher exerts to find solutions and strategies to overcome difficulties; teachers who do not search for knowledge will not get it (Borg, 2005). Actual teaching practices provided Cluster C teachers with opportunities to design their situated practice based on their working conditions. Cluster C teachers’ reflection on their teaching experience seemed to enable them to develop pedagogical content knowledge which does not seem to develop from teachers’ education courses (Hashweh 2005). The influence of reflection on teacher cognition is consistent with many researchers’ findings (Breen et al., 2001; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Kumazawa, 2013; Mok, 1994). Crookes and Arakaki (1999) found that accumulated teaching experience was a main source of the teachers in their study. Kumazawa’s (2013) study revealed that teachers’ self-reflection facilitates the young teachers’ reshaping of their self-concepts and enhancing their professional motivation. Thus, reflection is an important feature of teachers’ work because it helps teachers make sense of their experiences, be aware of their beliefs, and improve their teaching practices.

### **Ecological contexts contribute to teachers’ cognitions and practices and influence their interaction**

The five layers of ecological contexts in the CEM emerged from the study’s data to contribute to the formation of teachers’ cognitions and the shaping of their classroom practices. These ecological factors situated in the outer bands represent their influence on both cognitions and practices. These contextual factors are classroom social context, classroom physical environment, institutional context, broader educational contexts, and the global community discourse context. Teachers’ cognitions developed over time through their participation in the surrounding environment. Borg (2006) and Farrell and Lim (2005) commented that teachers’ cognitions are highly context-sensitive and that the social, institutional and physical settings influence their cognitions and practices. The workings of a foreign language classroom are inevitably shaped and constrained by context (Hu, 2005b).

In the same vein, Flores and Day (2006) highlighted the strong influence of the contextual factors of the workplace. The following section discusses how these contexts shaped teachers' cognition and influenced instructional practices in Palestinian EFL writing classrooms, and sometimes led to mismatches between beliefs and practices.

### ***The impact of the classroom social context on cognition and practice***

In the CEM, the first ecological factor that influenced teachers' cognition and teaching practice is the classroom social context. This context is concerned with teachers' perceptions of their students' needs, attitudes and linguistic level. Students' language proficiency level, learning styles and needs influence teachers' use of methodologies (Burgess & Etherington, 2002). Many participating teachers reported that one of the biggest barriers facing them when teaching writing is their students' negative attitudes towards writing. They felt that such negative attitudes made teaching writing a daunting task. They described their students as being passive and unmotivated. Clusters A and B teachers' perceptions of their students' carelessness and unwillingness to participate during the class may have facilitated their adoption of teacher-fronted classes. They also thought that their students' main problems are grammatical, and this perception may have made these teachers believe that teaching grammar is the best way to help students write correct sentences and paragraphs. Teachers may have to modify their teaching practices in order to meet their students' expectations and needs (Schulz, 2001). This finding about the influence of teachers' perceptions of their students on their pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices supports Cumming's (2003) study of the teachers who reported that they conceptualised writing instruction according to their perceptions of students' characteristics. Cluster A and Cluster B's descriptions of their students' characteristics were similar to those in Pennington and Cheung's (1995) study. Pennington and Cheung (1995) identified several student-related factors which inhibited teachers from implementing a process approach, including: low language proficiency of students; passive and dependent student behaviour; and a dislike of writing in English. Also, their view of their students as being hopeless cases contributed to these teachers' negative attitudes towards teaching writing and made them frustrated. Canh and Barnard (2009a) found that teachers' beliefs about the students' proficiency levels and motivation had a strong influence on their delivery of the student-centred curriculum, which caused deviations from the curriculum requirements. Arab students' low aptitude, motivation, and low proficiency are main challenges facing EFL teaching (Fareh, 2010). Large classes in which teachers have trouble maintaining discipline, inadequate teacher preparation, and resistant student beliefs and attitudes cause limitations to implementing communicative, process writing and task-based approaches (Hao et al., 2004).

On the contrary, Cluster C teachers believed that although their students come to the writing course with weak linguistic skills and negative attitudes, it is their teachers' responsibility to improve their weak writing skills by motivating them and employing a number of useful strategies to facilitate their learning of writing. These teachers believed that their awareness of the complexity of the writing process and the help students receive determine their students' confidence, self-esteem, and attitudes towards writing (Hyland, 1998). Cluster C teachers' reactions to their students' negative attitudes were shaped by these teachers' perceptions of their professional roles in influencing their students' learning. Their perceived professional roles are similar to those reported in Cowie's (2011) study where the EFL teachers working in Tokyo University described their roles as carers and moral guides. How professional cognitions mediate contexts will be discussed later.

The conclusion of my study about the impact of teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities on their beliefs and practices is supported by many studies (Canh & Barnard, 2009a; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Cumming, 2001, 2003; Orafi & Borg, 2009). Cumming's (2001) study of an experienced Thai EFL teacher revealed that tertiary EFL instruction is conceptualised as teaching students to write for general purposes rather than for academic purposes because of the students' deficits in English language ability and a lack of writing experience. Students' limited language background has affected writing instruction. Difficult conditions, including uncooperative students, negatively affected teachers' instructional practices (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999). Likewise, Orafi and Borg (2009) found that teachers' beliefs about their role, their ability, and about students' proficiency in English influenced significantly their instructional behaviours, which differed considerably from the requirements of the intended innovation. To conclude, what happens in class is affected by teachers' perceptions of their students' motivation, linguistic ability, and perseverance.

### ***Dissonance between cognitions and practices***

Another important ecological factor which resulted from my study as influencing the teachers' pedagogical practices is teachers' perceptions of the classroom physical environment, the fourth band of the CEM. It is in the physical context of the classroom that most of the teachers' cognitions are given expression in terms of classroom practices. Researchers in the field have stressed the influence of the classroom contexts on teachers' understanding of their work (Bartlett & Liyanage, 2008; Balçıkkanlı, 2010; Borg, 2006a; Farrell & Kun, 2008). All the teachers in my study identified a number of factors in the classroom physical context as hindrances to teaching writing. These factors included the lack of resources and technological equipment, space flexibility, class size, physical organisation,

time availability, environmental conditions, and teaching materials. Casanave's (2009) study refers to these barriers as diverse realities. Contextual factors – such as insufficient weekly class times, big classes, students with multiple levels of motivation and English competence, teachers' workload, and teachers' motivation – may act as barriers that prevent teachers from enacting their beliefs (Mohammed, 2006). Other challenges facing the teaching of EFL writing can include coping with large class size, time constraints, and teachers' lack of experience teaching L2 writing and students' lack of instruction in first language writing (Leki, 2001).

All teachers in this study complained about the large number of students in their writing classes. Overcrowding in their classes affected the teachers' instructional practices in different ways. The large class size may have caused many teachers to adopt the lecture method which requires the teacher to present lessons over one or two hours in class, and do exercises from the textbook. This lecturing style may mean that students were not given opportunities to practise composing texts.

In this study, the classroom ecological barriers contributed to the dissonance between teachers' cognitions about the teaching of writing, and their actual classroom practise. Cluster A and Cluster B teachers reported that the huge number of students made it very difficult for them to let their students practice writing inside the class. Frequent writing practice requires that teachers would need to give feedback and grade students' texts; where classes are large, then teachers have problems. Other teachers are concerned about the noise and chaos caused by students if they let students practise writing inside the class. Likewise, teaching overcrowded classes made Cluster C teachers specify the topics to write about. They considered that they could not allow their students to choose their own topics because of the difficulties of reading so many different topics and giving feedback to hundreds of students. The rigid physical organisation did not give many teachers the chance to use group work.

Evidence of such classroom physical factors and their role in creating divergence between teachers' beliefs and work has been noted in previous research (Andrews, 2003; Feryok, 2008; Li & Walsh, 2011; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). In Feryok's study (2008), although the teacher showed that she translated many of her stated cognitions into practice, some cognition was inconsistent with her pedagogy. Her perception of the context shaped her cognitions and caused the divergence between cognitions and practices. Liyanage and Bartlett's (2008) results revealed that the application of the new principle and strategies their participants have gained will be hindered by pragmatic issues in their local contexts



concerning resources generally and textbooks particularly. Thus, these difficult working conditions inside the class may limit teachers' instructional abilities and contribute to explain the mismatch between these teachers' cognitions about teaching writing and their classroom practices.

All teachers believed that having technological resources has the potential to make their job easier, their teaching more effective, and their students more interactive. The lack of resources may have forced many teachers to limit themselves to rely solely on textbooks. Large class sizes and overloaded teachers also impact writing pedagogy significantly because these factors can make it difficult to employ various aspects of process approaches to writing (if desired) and can make it almost impossible for instructors to provide individualised attention to students' writing (Reichlet, 2009). The impact of the classroom conditions on teachers' instructional practices is also consistent with Pennington and Richards' (1997) study findings. They pointed out that contextual barriers such as heavy teaching load, large class size, low student motivation, and lack of classroom discipline may force teachers to adopt traditional views of teaching and learning.

### ***Institutional context filters practice***

This study also found that the institutional context, the fifth band of the CEM rainbow, acted as a barrier that constrained the practices of the writing teachers. The impact of the institutional context cannot be minimised. Cognitions are mediated by the socio-cultural settings in which teachers work (Johnson, 2009). It is, therefore, important to examine these cognitions within their particular "ecologies" (Zhao & Frank, 2003) and to recognise the relationship between teacher cognition and institutional culture. If the classroom, for teachers, is the major site of connection with students, the institution is the site of higher-level decisions. The university as an institution handles teaching-related business, such as room allocation, classroom resources, courses sequencing in the study plan, and hiring of qualified writing teachers.

As shown in the CEM, the institutional context surrounds and determines the entities in the classroom context. Responsibility for what happens in the classroom must be shared with the institution within which the teachers work (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Teachers in the three clusters reported that the institutional context determined to a large extent the social and the physical aspects of the classroom which in turn influenced both teachers' cognitions and teaching practices. They talked about many institutional factors that hinder practices, such as lack of placement tests for English language students in the English department, inappropriate course sequencing in the study plan for EFL students, the enrolment of very

large numbers of students in each writing class, and understaffing of teachers specialised in teaching EFL writing. Some teachers who majored in literature are forced to teach EFL writing due to the unavailability of specialised EFL writing teachers.

The teachers in my study complained also about the lack of a placement test to help English departments choose qualified students. The absence of clear criteria led to the admission of linguistically weak students. The wide range of language abilities made it difficult to teach the classes. As mentioned in Chapter 1, EFL programs accept candidates according to the General Secondary Certificate (the university entrance examination) average; for example, the university may set 75% for applications regardless of their grade in the English exam. They do not hold admission interviews for the student teachers. In most of the Arab universities, secondary school graduates are accepted into English Language programs, in spite of their weaknesses in that language (Ezza, 2010). The criteria for admission are usually based on the national exam, not the students' proficiency level in language

The findings of my study that indicate that the role of institutional context in constraining teacher's practices has been supported in many studies (Burns, 1996; Borg, 2005; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Ng & Farrell, 2003). Many of the participants were not happy with the way language courses were sequenced. Teachers asked for the grammar, reading, and vocabulary courses to be studied first to prepare students to write in English. Burns (1996), for example, talked about the "organisational exigencies of the context in which the teacher she reports on worked, and of the ways the teacher's awareness of the broader institutional context had an impact on decisions about lesson planning and content" (p.162). For example, in Singapore, time-constraints, students' expectations, and the institutional policy are the contextual factors exerting a powerful influence on their classroom practices which contradicted their beliefs (Ng & Farrell, 2003).

Cluster C teachers were not satisfied of the lack of coordination among the writing teachers, an aspect of the institutional context. If the ESL writing class is one of a series in a writing program, it is necessary to know not only the performance objectives for the single course but also the overall goals for the writing program and the objectives for the other classes. Such coordination can allow the teacher a clear vision about the objectives and the focus of the writing course; the teacher will then communicate that vision and direction to the students (Leki, 1993).

### ***National educational context***

A more macro force that affected the pedagogical practices of the writing teachers is the national educational context in the Palestinian society. This context is concerned with the

culture of learning in Palestine. The culture of learning refers to the “philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, learning strategies encouraged, and qualities valued in teachers and students” (Hu, 2002b, p.93). The findings of my research concerning the role of the learning culture echo Andrews’ (2003) study. Teacher beliefs and practices are partially shaped by the macro-culture of society. As shown in the fifth band of the CEM, this context has a role in determining the characteristics of students, their language abilities and attitudes towards learning English, teachers’ and students’ roles, and the status of EFL writing in the society. The educational system in Palestine is a traditional one which values memorisation and receptivity.

The participants in my study thought of the broader educational context as a constraint. Palestinian students who join universities are the product of an educational system which values grades, tests, teacher-centeredness and students’ passivity. Students in schools are used to teacher-dominant classes where teachers have all power and students sit passively. The educational system in Palestine is remarkably similar to the Chinese system described by He (2002). He (2002) found that in China the classroom context is not favourable for students to develop their linguistic competence because of the dominant traditional teaching methodologies. “Structurally-based knowledge-oriented method of assessment encourages narrowness and dependency by concentrating on rigid textbook knowledge” (Hu, 2002c, p. 41). The examination system views English as only knowledge, rather than a communication system. The prevalent image of teachers is that of knowledge providers who are responsible for explaining the course materials to their students. This may justify why many students are unwilling to practice writing inside the class. They are used to a spoon-feeding teaching style.

Similar to the traditional approach to English teaching in China, the method of teaching English in Palestinian schools featured knowledge transmission (Wu, 2005). The teacher controls the class and the students sit passively (Weng, 1996). The main focus of the class is analysing grammar items, explaining grammatical rules, vocabulary and sentence structures (He, 2002; Tsui, 2007, Fareh, 2010). The washback effect (Bailey, 1999) of General Secondary Certificate Examination has a prominent effect on the status of teaching and learning English in secondary schools in Palestine. The design of the exam determines to a large extent the teaching materials and the teaching methods in the classroom (Qi, 2005). In the Arab world, language education focuses on memorisation and rote learning (Fareh, 2010). This is notable in the English language exams that ministries of education prepare for students at the end of high school.

Teachers provide students with formulaic expressions to memorise and use in any composition topic that may appear in the third secondary certificate exam. The results of this exam decide students' entry to university.

Another serious problem in English language education in Palestine is the shortage of EFL qualified teachers. It seems that the Palestinian universities offering a bachelor degree in English Language cannot prepare qualified language teachers (Al-Masri, 2010). This may explain the reason behind the prominence of the Grammar Translation method by most school teachers. Students enter universities with their high school expectations and learning experience. Students' language problems may be due to the unsuitable methods of language teaching and the learning environment which does not support learning a foreign language (Al-Masri, 2010).

In the Palestinian community, motivation to improve one's writing in a foreign language may not be feasible or profound for young students who do not have such intensive experiences of language contact and the resulting opportunities to construct audiences for their writing (Manchon, 2009). As explained in Chapter 1, students do not have opportunities to communicate in English with an authentic audience; English use is restricted to the classroom in this foreign language context. English is not used in Palestinian students' everyday life or for communication with others. Although people and policy makers in Palestine recognise the importance of English, it has very restricted use in the wider society. This may explain why students in such a context may not be motivated to develop high levels of writing ability in a foreign language. Palestinian students do not have any contact with L2 native speakers, and this is more likely to affect their proficiency and motivation. New students who major in English in university are faced with the challenge of adhering to the rules and conventions of academic writing for which they usually receive no prior training (Harklau, 2009). Thus, the broader educational context does impact the teaching practices through inadequate preparation of teachers, lack of motivation on the part of the learners, restricted-language use, teacher-centred methods and traditional assessment techniques.

### ***Global community discourse shapes cognitions and practices***

The fifth and outermost band of the CEM rainbow which played a role in the development of some participating teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices was their exposition and involvement in the global community discourse. During their overseas professional training in American and British universities, some teachers were introduced to the most recent international research based trends in teaching L2 writing. They reported

that they were equipped with many skills to facilitate their teaching in their home country. Taking courses dedicated to the methods of teaching L2 writing was a very valuable source of these teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

Teachers' cognitions can undergo significant changes as a result of professional training (Guskey, 2000; Borg, 2003, Hobbs, 2007; Mattheoudakis, 2007). In this study, teachers who took professional courses on the methodology of teaching EFL writing and who read research literature on teaching writing appeared to be more equipped with skills and knowledge that facilitated their teaching of writing. International teacher education programs have sharpened the pedagogical content knowledge of Cluster C teachers in comparison to Cluster A and Cluster B teachers who did not participate in such courses. Pedagogical content knowledge represents teachers' own form of professional understanding. It has subject matter components, pedagogy components, and beliefs components (Shulman, 1986). Cluster C teachers reported that such courses assisted them in adapting and compromising the deterministic context and ultimately improving the teaching of writing in their respective universities. Casanave (2004) points out that reading literature is an important resource for language teachers to get more knowledge about their fields. Through these courses, they enriched their knowledge of the process and genre approach, and the socio-cultural nature of writing and its learning and teaching. This study may have the potential to confirm Casanave's (2009) speculation that teachers who took professional courses on teaching writing were more likely to adopt a social orientation to teaching writing while teachers who did not are more likely to hold form-oriented beliefs.

The teacher cognition literature provides us with evidence on how teacher education programs shape teachers' cognitions and practices. Hall (2005) commented that teacher education programs equip teachers with professional knowledge and the knowledge that teachers have about subject matter and teaching methods; this knowledge then guides them in adjusting their prior beliefs and determining which approaches to employ. While teachers may hold beliefs about ideal teaching methods, they may not have the knowledge and skills to apply them in their classes (Wu, 2006). Casanave (2009) argues that the training that teachers receive in FL writing instruction also impacts how FL writing is taught. Teachers with little preparation in teaching FL writing may minimise FL writing instruction or focus primarily on grammatical form (Casanave, 2009), and this is exactly the case with the majority of Cluster A and Cluster B teachers. Many of them majored either in linguistics, or critical discourse analysis or literature. Their unfamiliarity with genre and process approaches to teaching writing may have led them to the traditional product approaches to teaching writing. Unfortunately, little emphasis is placed on writing in most teacher education

programs (Hall & Grisham-Brown, 2011). Johnson (2006) recommended that teacher preparation programs should facilitate prospective teachers' work in their local contexts and implement alternative professional development training to equip teachers with skills and strategies to overcome their local obstacles.

Other research studies of the interplay between teacher education, cognitions, and classroom practices have shown that teacher education courses have a powerful influence on teachers' performance in the classroom (Burns & Knox, 2005; Borg, 2005a; Busch, 2010; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Freeman, 1991, 1993; Junqueira & Kim, 2013; Lee, 2010; Wyatt, 2009; Wyatt & Borg, 2011). In Busch's (2010) study, the participants' pre-course beliefs were shaped by their language learning experience in high school. However, those initial beliefs changed due to the Second Language Acquisition course content and experiential activities. This finding is also consistent with Lee's (2010) study results. Her study examines how the teachers' perceived their development as teachers of writing at the end of an in-service writing teacher education program. It also investigates how writing teacher education promotes teacher learning. The findings of my study show that writing teacher education can expand teachers' perspectives on teaching writing and help them construct their professional identity as writing teachers. Freeman's study (1991) examined teacher thinking and perceptions focusing on how the teachers modified and improved what they did through formal education. He stated that the use of shared professional discourse in this formal education program contributed to the increase of the complexity of the teachers' thinking about their teaching. In a similar vein, Freeman (1993) described how a language postgraduate program impacted on in-service teachers' beliefs with some evidence of behavioural change. Sendan and Roberts (1998) provide further evidence of the positive effects of teacher education on teachers. Their study explored how a trainee's personal theories of effective teaching had changed over the course of 15 months. The courses added new concepts to his existing belief system and reorganised existing constructs. My study results about the importance of teacher training support the findings of Yildirim and Ates' (2012) study. They investigated how Turkish pre-service teachers' knowledge and perceived self-efficacy beliefs changed toward using expository texts in their prospective teaching. The results indicated a small but positive correlation between the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs level and the knowledge test scores, and that the teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs and knowledge varied significantly from each other based on their training programs.

Likewise, Faez and Valeo (2012) revealed that the TESOL course enhanced their participants' perceptions of preparedness by gaining experience in the classroom through

the practicum and the teaching experiences. Thus in this study, the teacher education programs which introduced their participants to the scholarship on L2 writing and helped them become a member in that global community discourse played a pivotal role in mediating teachers' cognitions and ultimately influencing their instructional practices.

### **Teachers' cognitions mediate reactions to perceived ecological challenges**

Although most ecological factors discussed above are perceived by participating teachers as barriers to EFL writing teaching practices, teachers reacted differently to these constraints. The most important contribution of my study is its potential to explain why teachers' interactions with and reactions to the previously discussed ecological barriers vary although they work within the same context and are subject to similar constraints. Differences in how teachers respond to ecological constraints may be explained by differences between teachers' cognitions about themselves as professionals and their sense of teaching self-efficacy. As depicted in the CEM, the cognition band occupies an intermediary position between the different ecological factors and classroom practices. It is positioned in such a way as to highlight that ecological factors are filtered by cognition before they affect teachers' practices. Teacher self-efficacy has a strong influence on language teachers' pedagogical practices, especially those of foreign language teachers (Chaco'n, 2005). Self-efficacy emphasises the exercise of human agency which influences people's actions (Bandura, 2006a). Johnson (2006) notes that the challenges imposed on teachers mostly result from their working context. Therefore, teachers need to learn how to deal with those challenges within their own local settings where they can implement their alternative professional experiences that may enable them to look beyond local obstacles. Self-efficacy is considered a powerful organisational facilitator that allows developing actions and effective strategies to overcome or mitigate the problems caused by the pedagogic barriers interfering with teachers' performance. Further, teacher efficacy has been linked to teachers' enthusiasm for teaching (Allinder, 1994), teachers' high confidence levels and positive attitudes (Guskey, 1988), their willingness to experiment with new methods (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997), and their commitment to teaching and the amount of effort and persistence a teacher demonstrates (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2008). Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and how they behave.

Self-efficacy beliefs determine how environmental opportunities and obstacles are viewed (Bandura, 2006a). Cluster A and Cluster B teachers reflected low levels of professional motivation as well as low levels of confidence in their abilities of teaching EFL writing. They did not report on trying new strategies for overcoming the ecological constraints. Low self-

efficacy contributes to avoidance of instruction where teachers lack teaching confidence (Draper, 2008; Hall, 2005; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). These teachers may lack adequate pedagogical content knowledge and this affected their teaching confidence, and ultimately their abilities to use innovative teaching strategies to mitigate the influence of the ecological constraints. They attributed the low level of student achievement to external factors such as their students' previous learning experiences and to the classroom and institutional contexts. Even if these factors did play a part in the process, changing their own teaching may have had a direct impact on the students' learning.

However, teachers with a high degree of self-efficacy exert more effort to overcome the problems they face, and they can keep these efforts longer (Bandura, 2006a). Cluster C teachers employed a number of strategies in their teaching of writing to adjust their beliefs and instruction according to the perceived affordances and limitations of their teaching environment. For example, because of their inability to give feedback on every piece of writing for students, they employed peer review where students could read each other's writing and give feedback. They expressed their passion about their work. Dissatisfied with using only the textbook activities, Cluster C teachers sometimes used some supplementary materials. They were more capable of ensuring student participation. They stressed their role in motivating their students. Their reactions to the ecological barriers are similar to those reported in Farrell's (2006a) study. The teacher did not give up his beliefs which were not applicable in his teaching context, and tried to search out a balance between his beliefs and the institution's policies and expectations.

High self-efficacy can also enable teachers to face the challenges in teaching and to try out creative ideas (McCormick, Ayres & Beechey, 2006). Because of their heavy workloads and the overcrowding in their classes, Cluster C teachers employed group work to facilitate their pedagogical practices. In a South African university, Boughey (1997) chose a group-work approach to teaching academic writing, creating a compromise between requirements of the process approach and large size classes. In contrast, people low in self-efficacy get away from difficult tasks which they perceive as personal threats (Bandura, 2006a). To conclude, teachers' reactions depended on the weight they assign to the ecological constraints. Teachers' beliefs of their teaching efficacy determine the weight that they assign to different contextual factors. Being confident in their teaching abilities and being aware of their responsibilities has the potential to make teachers understand that context is not deterministic. Rather than accepting any perceived constraints imposed by the context, teachers can become more aware of how their views, perceptions, beliefs and practices can shape their working environment. This study shows that higher self-efficacy beliefs in



teachers are connected with higher ambition to use the proven strategies and successful methods and techniques in their classes; higher motivation and self-esteem in engaging the students; higher knowledge about their subject matters; and more student-centred teaching practices (Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Cluster C teachers' perceptions of themselves as being efficacious seem to enable them to figure out ways to mitigate the influence of the institutional barriers or change them by collective action. Conversely, Cluster A and Cluster B teachers' view of themselves as being inefficacious made them easily discouraged by institutional constraints.

### **Comparing the CEM with other models of teachers' cognitions and practices**

The second part of this chapter compares the CEM with other models of teachers' cognitions and practices. In the literature review of Chapter 2, references were made to several models of language teachers' cognitions and classroom practices, including those of Borg (2006) and Burns (1996). These models of teachers' cognition and instructional practices have the potential to provide points of comparison for the Cognitive-Ecological Model (CEM) of teaching practices depicted in Figure 3. The CEM highlights the interaction between the individual cognitions and multiple-layered environments within which cognitions are shaped and given expression. Teaching practices, the core of the model, is seen as a product of the influences of individual cognitions and ecological factors. Within the CEM, certain ecologies play a pivotal role in supporting teacher cognition and its impact on teaching EFL writing, but others create dissonance. Teacher cognition also determines the weight that teachers assign to different ecological constraints. This may explain why teachers working under the same conditions may exhibit different teaching practices. The CEM also shows that affordances and constraints for teaching practices are formed by the overlapping ecologies. Global community discourse ecology enhances its members' knowledge and skills and promotes their teaching self-efficacy. However, the classroom physical environment with its limited resources, large class size, and seating inflexibility were perceived as constraints. Cognition filters the effect of the ecological constraints and affordances on instructional practices. The following table compares and contrasts the CEM with Borg's (2006) and Burns' (1996) models in order to show the unique contribution of this study.

**Table 8: Comparing and contrasting the CEM with other models of teachers' cognitions**

Issues	Borg's Teacher cognitions (2006)	Burns' Intercontextuality (1996)	CEM
Structural Components	Consists of five elements: Teacher Cognition, Schooling, Professional Coursework, Contextual Factors, and Classroom Practice.	Three major contextual levels: the institutional culture, teachers' beliefs about learning, learners and language, teachers' beliefs about specific instructional behaviours in the classroom.	Rainbow-like seven bands figure. Teaching practices is the core surrounded by one band for intrapersonal cognitions, and five bands for ecological contexts
Relationship between cognitions & Practices	Bidirectional relationship: They influence each other.	Teachers' beliefs influence their performance in the classroom.	Reciprocal relationships: Cognitions influence practices and practices influence cognitions through reflectiveness
The interplay between cognitions, practices, and context	Contextual factors influence cognitions & practices	Institutional context as the highest level influences both cognitions and practices	Multiple-layer ecological contexts influence both cognitions and practices. Cognitions mediate the impact of contexts on practices and decide reactions to the contextual

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constraints.

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Sources of cognitions and practices	Schooling , professional education, and reflection on practice	Not mentioned	Global community discourse, prior learning experience, reflectiveness on teaching experience
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### **Borg's teacher cognitions elements and processes and CEM**

Borg's framework consists of five elements: Teacher Cognition, Schooling, Professional Coursework, Contextual Factors, and Classroom Practice. According to his framework, teachers' pedagogical beliefs and concepts about teaching and learning start to develop early in life during the schooling stage. The formed cognitions may be affected later by professional preparation programs in which they receive training, teaching apprentices, and new pedagogical orientations. However, when teachers are at work, some contextual elements such as curriculum and teaching culture also influence their practices which may be more or less congruent with their underlying beliefs. Meanwhile, teachers' ongoing experiences in classrooms may simultaneously shape their cognition unconsciously or consciously through reflection. Both Borg's model and the CEM emphasise that teacher cognitions impact teaching practices, and that practices influence cognition through reflectiveness. In both models, contextual factors are depicted as influencing cognitions and practices. They also agree on the sources of teachers' cognitions and practices.

CEM differs from Borg's framework in the depiction of the relationships among teachers' cognitions, teaching practices, and contextual factors, and the terms to be used to refer to them. Borg's model situates teachers' cognition at the centre, but the CEM considers teaching practices as the core because practices are the outcome of the interaction of the influential elements of cognition and ecological factors. Furthermore, the CEM used prior learning experiences instead of Borg's term of schooling. Prior learning experience encompasses learning experiences in schools and tertiary institutions. CEM used the term teacher education instead of professional coursework for a more precise description within the context of this study. Borg's model describes the contextual factors as barriers or as being in conflict with teachers' cognitions, but in the CEM they act as both barrier and facilitators. In the CEM, the multiple-layered contexts are positioned around both language teacher cognition and practice rather than just around practice as in Borg's framework. As cognitions are shaped and translated, and investigated in context, CEM represents them within rather than outside the bands of contextual factors. Borg's model depicted the influence of context on cognitions but not the opposite.

### **Burns' intercontextuality and the CEM**

Burns proposed the operation of "networks of intercontextuality" (p. 158), such that thinking and beliefs at one level affected those at the others. She found that teachers' beliefs are extremely complex and compounded by a series of different and inter-related levels of influence which go beyond the level of the classroom. Three major contextual levels which

operate interactively, both across and within levels, influence teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices. The highest level is the institutional culture with which teachers interpret the institutional ideologies and philosophies. This contextual level creates the cognitive frameworks for teachers' beliefs about specific teaching programs. At the second contextual level are teachers' beliefs about learning, learners and language, which guide teacher decisions on what to teach and how to teach it. At the third and most specific contextual level are teachers' beliefs about specific instructional behaviours in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs at all these three levels are interdependent, creating "the intercontextuality of teachers' thinking and beliefs" (p. 158).

CEM resembles Burns' Intercontextuality conceptual framework in the sense that several layers of context contribute to a teacher's cognitions. The CEM is also similar to Burns' model in its representation of the influence of social norms existing in and beyond the micro-level of the classroom. As with Burns, these layers are embedded, one within the other. Both models recognise the social reality of language teaching. Teaching practices as a human activity have meaning only when understood in relation to their broader ecologies. However, there are some differences between the Intercontextuality models and the CEM. The widest level of context described in Burns' (1996) framework is that of the institution. In the CEM, the broader national educational context and the international language teacher education programs were not only influential, but necessary to offer more explanatory power to the variations in teachers' cognitions and practices.

As shown in Table 8, the three models agree that teachers' cognitions influence teacher instructional practices. Many elements and processes of Borg's and Burns' models do map onto some of the bands of CEM. However, the CEM seems to offer a more holistic framework depicting the interplay between language teacher cognitions, classroom practices, and their working contexts. The CEM has the potential to account for differences in teachers' cognitions and practices working in the same context. Besides, the CEM can illustrate that the impact of the different ecological contexts into practice is filtered and mediated by teachers' cognitions, and that cognitions shape reactions to perceived ecological constraint.

### **Study limitations**

This qualitative case study has three major limitations. The first limitation is related to findings' generalisability. Although adopting multiple case studies may "lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake,

2005, p.446), case studies are limited in proposing and assessing general models and theories. Qualitative research generates rich, thick descriptive and comprehensive data, but the generalisability of these results to other cases in other contexts may not be feasible. The thick description of the teachers' cognitions and practices comprising the three clusters and their ecological contexts can allow readers to determine the applicability of findings to their particular situations, and the description may be of interest to other researchers conducting similar research in other settings.

A second limitation is that member checks are absent in the current study. Member checks refer to the process in which participants are asked to check emerging categories and themes (Willis, 2007). The twelve teachers checked the accuracy of the transcription of their interviews. However, they were not provided with opportunities to check and express their thoughts about the emerging categories and theme. I explained to the participants that I would make my thesis available to them once it was completed. However, the triangulation, verification and rich description of the data enhance the validity of the analysis that was carried out, and make it possible for others to judge to what extent the findings may be applicable to their own contexts.

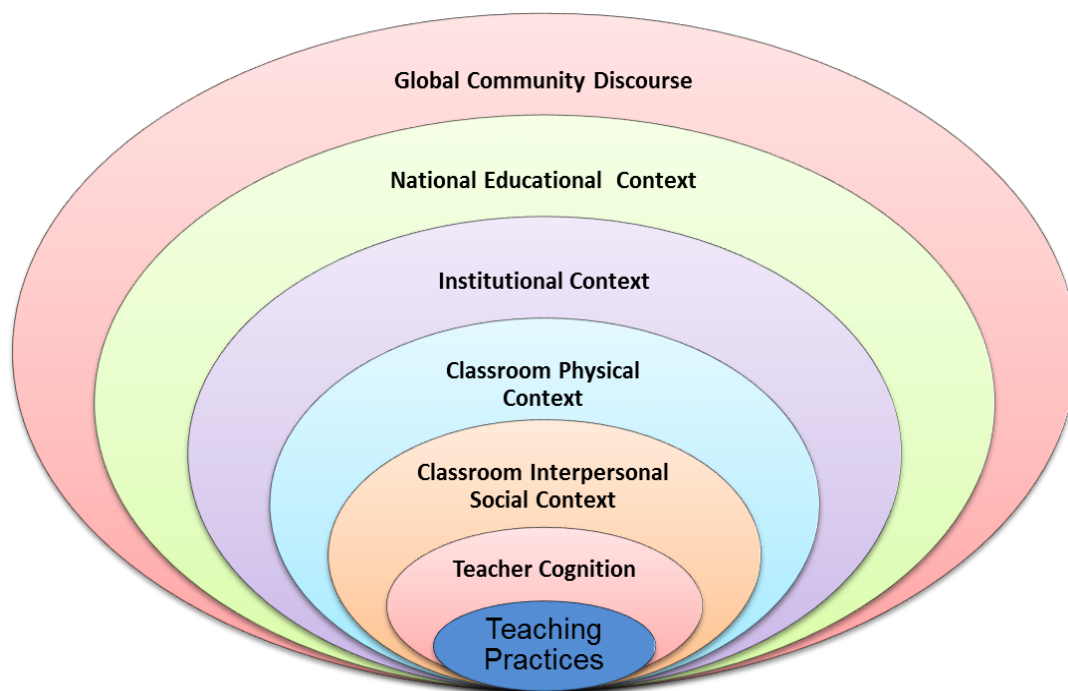
The third limitation is related to the insider status of the researcher that may have affected the analytic distance to the data. Being a member of the community under inquiry presented familiar conditions. The familiarity in the context gave me a greater understanding of the issues raised by participants, mainly the role of ecological contexts. In addition, the consideration of data distortion due to insider relationships has been minimised by the data triangulation. Unlike outsider researchers who gain participant trust over the course of their fieldwork, established trust for insiders is the foundation upon which they build their entire project. When trust is reinforced it is likely to result in an atmosphere of collaboration especially if the informants feel that their participation in the research will make a difference to their current situation. This collaboration between the inquirer and the informants is a pathway to generating candid accounts (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### **Contributions of the research**

Although the findings of this study relate specifically to the teaching of EFL in Gaza Strip universities where the study was based, it has been argued that many of these recommendations may be relevant to other similar EFL educational contexts. This study has the potential to make two main contributions: theoretical and professional.

### ***Theoretical contribution***

My study contributes to the research on teaching second language and teacher cognition by articulating the cognitive-ecological model (CEM) (Please See Figure 4). This model describes and explains teachers' practices through the interplay of their cognitions with their surrounding ecological contexts. Teachers' cognitions are complex and situated in their local teaching contexts, and their core practices are shaped by their cognitions and ecological contexts as well as in their own previous learning and teaching experiences. This model signifies the need to consider the role of ecological contexts more seriously in studies about teachers' cognition and practices. The ecological framework has relevance for the two theoretical frameworks, teacher cognition and L2 language teaching research, that this study initially draws on to unfold the complexities of teachers' cognitions and different practices of teaching EFL writing. Using these three frameworks, it is argued, has the potential to capture both internal and external perspectives of teachers' professional lives for a better understanding of teachers' practices and cognitions. These three frameworks are complementary to each other. The CEM with its main categories (as shown in figure 4) could be thought of as a comprehensive framework that can be employed to investigate the interplay between teacher cognition, instructional practices, and ecological factors in any teaching context. The elements in each band vary, depending on the unique features of each research study. The cognitive-ecological framework recognises that in order to create optimal teaching-learning conditions and support the effective teaching of EFL writing, all entities involved in the educational system must work together. The CEM can contribute to an understanding of the challenges and dilemmas teachers face in teaching writing and, in particular, inform a critical analysis of the forces and the factors influencing teachers' practices.



**Figure 4: A general cognitive–ecological framework to study teaching practices**

The findings from my study indicate that elements in the global discourse community in the outer circle of the CEM (for example, pedagogical content knowledge of teaching L2 writing, second language acquisition theories, and published scholarship) influence the cognitions and the practices of its members who participated in professional teacher education programs which expose its members to the various trends available in the language teaching field. However, where teachers have very limited or almost no access to second language acquisition theories, they tend to rely on their own experiential knowledge and their prior learning experience as students when teaching EFL writing. This may highlight the value of professional training in developing the cognitions and practices of teachers. My research could add to our understanding of teachers' cognitions and practices in the area of academic writing instruction in underrepresented foreign language contexts, by focusing particularly on teachers whose context has seldom been a site of research. The teachers' external world is complex, so is the internal world which this research tried to glimpse.

Finally, the study provides empirical evidence that it is necessary to uncover teachers' cognitions underlying their instructional practices in order to understand properly how teachers teach in the classroom and why they teach the way they do (Borg, 2009; Borg & Burns, 2008; Farrell & Lim, 2005). Without adequate understanding of what shapes their teaching practices, any intervention to develop teachers professionally, including formal training, would be of limited impact. As indicated in the study, most participants hardly ever



used technical language to articulate their cognitions about teaching writing and the rationales underpinning their teaching, such as focus in form, process approach, genre approach, peer feedback, audience, purpose, and register, which are frequently studied in the literature on second and/or foreign language writing instruction. This reflects a gap between expert theories of practice and teachers' personal theories for practice. This is especially true in under-resourced contexts like Gaza Strip where many teachers may not be aware of the recent developments in the global discourse community of L2 education. Therefore, if teachers do not have the opportunities to articulate their cognitions in a manner open for challenge, those cognitions will automatically be routinised into taken-for-granted instructional behaviours and personal theories for practice.

### ***Professional contributions***

#### *Implications for EFL teacher education programmes and professional development*

This study has implications for Palestinian EFL teaching programmes. Teacher education programmes are recommended to consider ways to develop in-service EFL writing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge. These programmes should provide professional development opportunities for their instructors. The concept of professional development usually refers to an ongoing, planned, collaborative, and participatory process aimed at the professional development of individuals and groups to meet their needs and help them upgrade the quality of their professional practices to a high level of efficiency and effectiveness (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). Specifically, this study highlights the need for professional development which aims to enhance teachers' learning about the process of writing, the learning of L2 writing, and the teaching of writing to tertiary level students. The actualisation of informed professional development will help meet the needs of instructors of teacher preparation programmes and the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes so as to keep abreast with educational developments. Examination of teachers' cognitions and practices is the first step to gain insights into their teaching. Professional development would aim at transforming personal beliefs arising from individual experience into cognitions which are aligned with evidence-based practices promoted in the global community discourse. Making teachers aware of alternative models and approaches may help them reconceptualise their theories of EFL writing learning and teaching. As the findings of this study show, assuming that teachers' MA/PhD degrees in linguistics or literature are sufficient for being qualified EFL writing teachers may not be true. Many participants asked for professional training on how to teach EFL writing because they lack alternative teaching models to the one in which they were taught. In-service teachers require meaningful professional development schemes which are crucial for them to align their instructional

practices with providing examples of how to teach EFL writing have the potential to support teachers to reflect on their own teaching process.

In addition, instructors for teaching EFL writing in teacher preparation programmes need current professional knowledge and positive attitudes towards teaching writing. If these instructors have negative attitudes toward teaching writing, they will first hinder their student teachers' learning of English writing, and secondly student teachers may consciously or unconsciously adopt and reflect such negative attitudes when they become EFL teachers themselves.

#### *Implications for EFL writing teachers*

This research has the potential to encourage teachers to look into their pedagogical beliefs, and their understandings about learning and teaching EFL writing in their contexts. It may also stimulate them to look for ways to improve their teaching, and to become more aware of their cognitions and practices. In this way, teachers can begin the process of uncovering their assumptions about teaching English writing. Thus, this study may act as a catalyst to enable other teachers to reflect on and examine their own cognitions about their teaching of writing in other academic contexts. Teachers' practices in the writing classroom are deeply rooted in their values, beliefs, intentions, experiences, and attitudes. This study may provide other teachers with a chance to reflect upon their own practice against those reported by the participants and the literature referenced in this study. It is suggested that such reflection may help them become more aware of how their beliefs influence their teaching, and how their classroom practices eventually affect their students' learning outcomes.

This research suggests that teachers can become more aware of how their views, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and practices can shape their working environment. Some participants in this study reported on practices and strategies that facilitated their instructional practices and helped them to mitigate the influence of the difficult working conditions. It would be useful to develop situated teaching methods and strategies based upon understanding of Palestinian EFL teachers' beliefs, practices, perceptions, and working realities. Nishino and Watanabe (2008) advocate that "FL countries should establish English teaching theories and practices that have local ecological validity" (p.136). Teachers working in the same local context and observing and coaching each other could identify context appropriate L2 writing teaching pedagogies.

### ***Implications for international language teacher education programmes***

The findings of the present study may also have implications for people working within international language teacher education programmes. These programmes usually have many international students from different EFL countries. Thus, ESL programmes may need to design a curriculum with the potential to enable students from EFL contexts to function effectively when they return to their countries and become involved in the unique working conditions and the local practices of EFL teaching. By gaining an understanding of the characteristics of EFL contexts, teachers in these programmes can take into account how the most recent theories and teaching models can be compromised with the contextual barriers in the EFL local contexts. This will even be useful to native speakers who plan to teach English in EFL settings.

### ***Recommendations for university leadership***

Identifying the difficulties that the teachers face is an initial step in considering how these challenges might be addressed. Continuous professional development opportunities would allow university staff to continue to engage with empirical research in a wider global teacher discourse community. Accurate selection procedures would allow only students with good attitude and aptitude to major in English studies. Some universities could also increase the level of learning materials and resources and improve the classroom working conditions by consulting teachers. Such improvements may contribute to make the classrooms more encouraging for teaching and learning.

### ***Recommendations for the Palestinian directorates and departments of education***

Palestinian directorates and departments of education may need to consider ways to develop the teaching and learning of English among Palestinian EFL teachers and students. Palestinian directorates and departments of education could provide language teachers with professional training aimed at improving the teacher's practices. High-stakes entrance examinations are recommended to be re-examined so that they are designed to evaluate students' writing, not just their decontextualised knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary.

### **Recommendations for future research**

My study suggests that one way to resolve the inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practice and to improve the teaching of writing in Palestinian universities is to implement professional development programmes. Teachers' cognitions and practices are situated in

their own unique teaching contexts. Future research, then, might be needed to investigate how to implement professional development which considers the uniqueness of the Palestinian educational contexts. Another research direction is to explore the possible changes and influences of professional development on the cognitions and the pedagogical practices of the teachers participating in professional development. Future studies might investigate students' assessment and perceptions of the practices of their teachers who take part in the professional development in order to measure the effectiveness of professional development. Another way to examine the outcomes of professional development is to compare the students' perceptions of the pedagogical practices of teachers who undertake professional development and those who do not. This area of research may have the potential to reflect the impact of professional development on the teacher's classroom behaviours (Patrick, 2008).

Furthermore, students' cognitions need to be researched because they will likely influence how the students learn writing. For example, if their conceptualisations of writing centred around memorisation of grammatical rules, vocabulary, and punctuation rules, they will not be motivated to improve their writing skills when their teachers focus on composing processes, genres, and discourse-level writing. In this regard, it is recommended to explore writing learners' experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and practices, which will in turn inform the teacher's multi-dimensional cognitions and pedagogical practices. Also, research could be conducted to compare writing teachers' cognitions with those of their students and to investigate the students' perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices.

This study was conducted with university EFL writing teachers. Thus, my study might be replicated to examine the interplay between teacher cognition, pedagogical practices and ecological contexts in other subjects as well as in other levels of education. Including other sources of data from students and policy makers would enable a greater variety of perspectives. Finally, it is hoped that the contextual approach adopted in my study will be considered when researching teachers' cognitions and practices to understand the ways teachers shape their working contexts and respond to contextual barriers. Such research would provide a more complete picture of Palestinian EFL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and practices, and thus inform teacher educators, policy makers, and other EFL stakeholders when making decisions about situated educational policies, teacher education, and teaching methods.

## **Final thoughts**

The process of completing the PhD was a great learning experience for me professionally and personally. On a professional level, I gained theoretical knowledge and practices in regard to conducting qualitative research. Furthermore, the findings of the study and the extensive reading about teachers' cognitions and instructional practices of teaching academic writing gave me insights that I would attempt to implement when I return to Palestine. On the personal dimension, I felt that I contributed to the foreign language education in my country. My research gave me the opportunity to focus attention on teachers engaged in practicing their profession in a context which may not be familiar to the ELT world at large, and to which relatively little research attention has been directed. By listening carefully to the voices of Palestinian teachers, observing their classes, and analysing their course documents, I have been able to theorise the complexity of factors that shape and impact these teachers' pedagogical practices when teaching EFL writing. Conducting this research that spanned over the last three years of my life has also enabled me to know myself better as an EFL writing teacher and as an emerging researcher.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethical Approval Letter



## Appendix B: Head of English Language Department Information Sheet and Consent Form



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Title of project:** Exploring the interplay between EFL writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their practices in Palestinian universities.

**Researcher:** Eman Ishaq Alzaanin, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

### **Research Information Sheet: Head of English Language Department**

I am a PhD student at the School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. I am undertaking research in the interplay between EFL writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their practices in Palestinian universities for my PhD dissertation. This research is supervised by Dr. Carolyn Tait and Prof. Luanna Meyer.

Please accept this letter as my written request for your permission to involve English as a foreign language writing teachers from the English Department in the Faculty of Arts in your university in the data collection phase for my dissertation research. The study examines their beliefs about approaches to teaching EFL writing and their classroom practices of these approaches. Responses will be elicited from full-time EFL writing teachers' participation in a series of interviews and classroom observations and the participation of some of their students in the focus group interviews. I need your consent for me to contact the English as a foreign language writing teachers in your department in order to select participants. I also need your consent to allow me to conduct classroom observations, collect student work samples (such as writing drafts and tests) conduct interviews with teachers and students, and refer to relevant course documentation (such as course outlines and assessments).

### **What happens if you give your consent for me to conduct the research?**

All participants who volunteer for this study will be required to give written informed consent. The teachers' and their students' participation in this research may provide valuable information to improve the teaching of English as a foreign language writing in Palestinian universities.

All participants involved in this research have the right to decline participation and withdraw themselves or any information provided from the research at any time before data collection and analysis is complete. The participants can ask questions about the study at any time throughout their participation and have the questions answered to their satisfaction. Participants will be notified when data analysis is about to be completed. They can also decline to answer any particular questions. Participants will receive feedback or a summary of the research findings when the research is concluded.

Data gathered in this study will be kept confidential. My supervisors will have access to the data. Participants will not be mentioned by name in any written or oral presentation of the findings. Participants will be known by pseudonyms. If there is information that they prefer to keep in confidence or information that might jeopardise confidentiality, that information will be deleted from the transcripts. All audio and transcript files will be kept on password protected systems and deleted five years after the research is completed. All hardcopy written materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed five years after the research is completed. The data will be pooled and findings discussed in an aggregated manner with no reference to educational facility.

**What happens to the information you provide?**

The participants' coded data will be used in writing my doctoral dissertation. The PhD dissertation will be submitted to Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the university library (student research). Papers will be written to be presented at conferences and articles submitted to academic journals. A copy of the final PhD thesis will also be submitted to the Gaza Strip universities' libraries.

If you require any further information or clarifications about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors at Victoria University of Wellington.

<p><b>Prof. Luanna Meyer</b>  Faculty of Education  Victoria University of Wellington  PO Box 17-310  Karori, Wellington 6147 New Zealand  Email: <a href="mailto:Luanna.Meyer@vuw.ac.nz">Luanna.Meyer@vuw.ac.nz</a>  Ph: +644 463 9598</p>	<p><b>Dr. Carolyn Tait</b>  Faculty of Education  Victoria University of Wellington  PO Box 17-310  Karori, Wellington 6147 New Zealand  Email: <a href="mailto:carolyn.tait@vuw.ac.nz">carolyn.tait@vuw.ac.nz</a>  Ph: +644 4639590</p>
<p><b>Eman Ishaq Alzaanin</b>  38/10 Fayez Hamad st, Beit Hanoun,  Gaza, Palestine  Email: <a href="mailto:Eman.Alzaanin@vuw.ac.nz">Eman.Alzaanin@vuw.ac.nz</a>  Ph: +972 8 2482 148 (home)  +9725 99 669009 (cell-phone)</p>	

**Title of project:** Exploring the interplay between EFL writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their practices in Palestinian universities

**Researcher:** Eman Ishaq Alzaanin, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

### **Heads of English Department Consent to Participate in Research**

Please Tick each box to signal your agreement to participate:

I have been given the information about this project and I understand the explanation of this research project.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that students and teachers will be individually approached for their informed consent.

I agree to the participation of the teachers and language learners in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

I understand that information will not be used for any purpose other than what consent is given for.

I am assured that any information given will be treated with respect and confidentiality, and that the participants will not be identified in reports or publications.

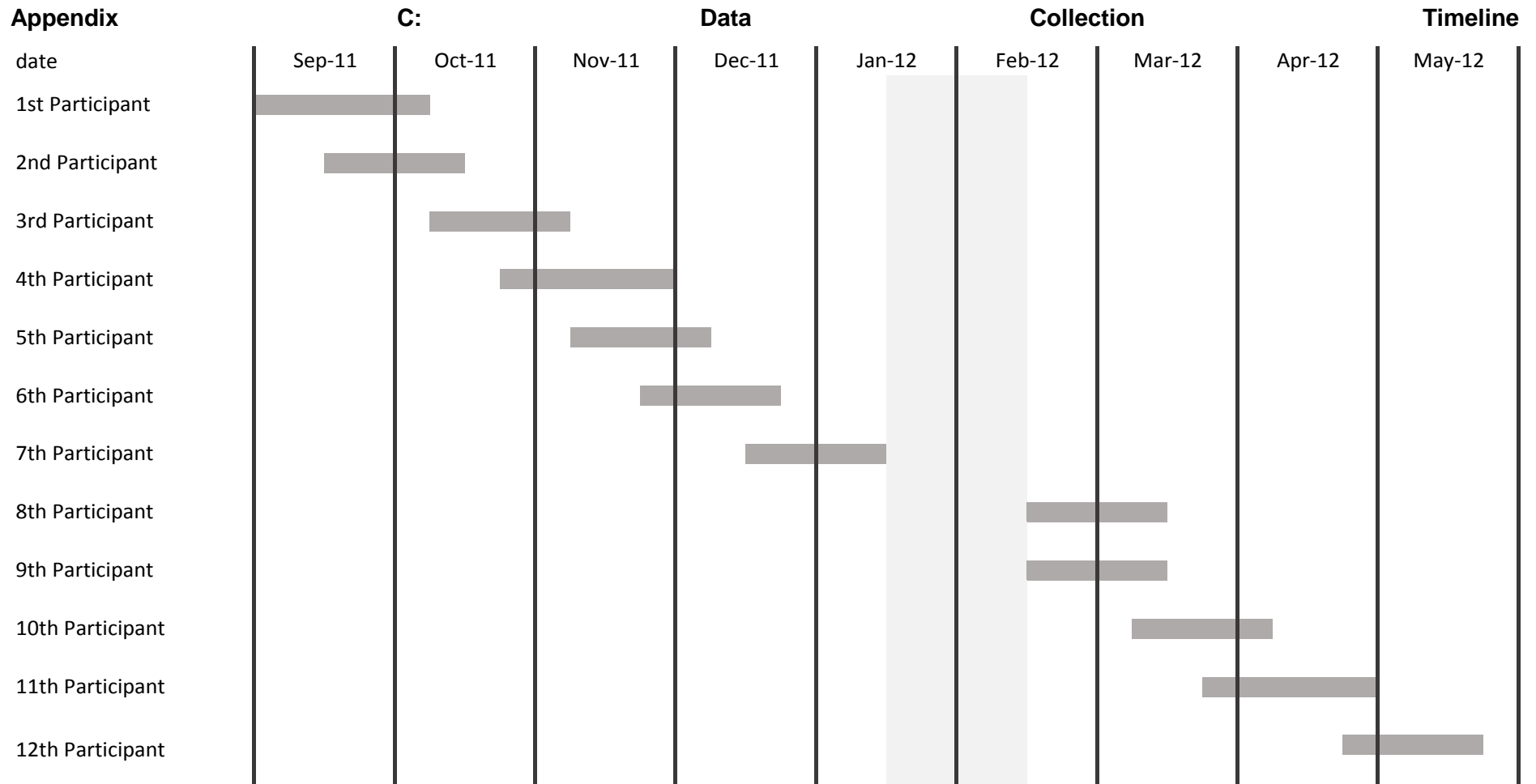
I give consent for Eman Ishaq ALzaanin, PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington, to invite students and teachers at \_\_\_\_\_ (name of language department) to participate in her research project.

I would like to receive feedback from this project by being sent a summary of the research via email: Yes/No

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Participants	Semi Structured Interview	Classroom Observation	Stimulated Recall Interview	Tests	Course Descriptions
12	12	2x12=24	2x12=24	12 documents	12documents

## Appendix D: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Cases studies



## FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Title of project:** Exploring the interplay between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their practices in Palestinian universities.

**Researcher:** Eman Ishaq Alzaanin, School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

### Information Sheet: Teachers

I am a PhD student at the School of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. I am undertaking research on the interplay between EFL writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their classroom practices in Palestinian universities for my PhD dissertation. This research is supervised by Dr. Carolyn Tait and Prof. Luanna Meyer.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research. Your participation is voluntary and you will not be identified in my thesis or in any other presentation or publication. All research findings will be put together and reported on an anonymous basis. Your name will not be revealed and it will not be possible for you to be identified personally. The research aims to contribute to the improvement of teaching second language writing in Palestinian universities.

#### **What happens if you give your consent for me to conduct the research?**

As an EFL writing teacher, you are invited to take part in my research and I would appreciate any assistance you can offer me. Your assistance would involve the following. As a first step to gaining insight into your views and beliefs about the instructional approaches of L2 writing, I would like to conduct two interviews, each of which would last approximately for one hour, and would be audio recorded with your consent.

I would like to observe your teaching throughout four classes and audio record you, in order to better understand what happens inside the EFL writing classrooms. Each observation session will last the duration of the lesson (approximately 55 mins). During the observation I will also take notes. As a follow up to three of the classroom observations, I will conduct post-lesson interviews as soon as possible to discuss the lesson that has been observed. These interviews will also be audio recorded.

I will transcribe the audio recordings. You will be invited to verify the transcriptions, to make any changes that you wish, and to make comments on ongoing analysis.

I will seek your assistance to select a group of eight students of varying proficiency levels from among those who volunteer to participate in the focus group interviews. I will also seek



your permission to access some student work, such as writing drafts, and refer to relevant course documentation, such as course outlines and tests.

**How will I ensure that your privacy, rights and confidentiality are protected?**

You have the right to decline participation and withdraw from the research at any time before data collection and analysis is complete. You will be notified when data analysis is about to be completed. You can ask questions about the study at any time throughout your participation and have the questions answered to your satisfaction. You can also decline to answer any particular questions.

Data gathered in this study will be kept confidential. My supervisors will have access to the data. All audio and transcript files will be kept on password protected systems and deleted five years after the research is completed. All hardcopy written materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed five years after the research is completed. The data will be pooled and findings discussed in an aggregated manner with no reference to educational facility. You will not be mentioned by name in any written or oral presentation of the findings. You will be known by a pseudonym. If there is information that you prefer to keep in confidence or information that might jeopardise confidentiality, that information will be deleted from the transcripts.

**What happens to the information you provide?**

Your coded data will be used in writing my doctoral dissertation. The PhD dissertation will be submitted to Victoria University of Wellington and deposited in the university library (student research). Papers will be written to be presented at conferences and articles submitted to academic journals. A copy of the final PhD thesis will also be submitted to the Gaza Strip universities' libraries.

If you require any further information or clarifications about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors at Victoria University of Wellington.

<p><b>Prof. Luanna Meyer</b> Faculty of Education Victoria University of Wellington PO Box 17-310 Karori, Wellington 6147 New Zealand</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:Luanna.Meyer@vuw.ac.nz">Luanna.Meyer@vuw.ac.nz</a> Ph: +644 463 9598</p>	<p><b>Dr. Carolyn Tait</b> Faculty of Education Victoria University of Wellington PO Box 17-310 Karori, Wellington 6147 New Zealand</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:carolyn.tait@vuw.ac.nz">carolyn.tait@vuw.ac.nz</a> Ph: +644 4639590</p>
<p><b>Eman Ishaq Alzaanin</b> 38/10 Fayez Hamad st, Beit Hanoun, Gaza, Palestine Email: <a href="mailto:Eman.Alzaanin@vuw.ac.nz">Eman.Alzaanin@vuw.ac.nz</a> Ph: +972 8 2482 148 (home) +9725 99 669009 (cell-phone)</p>	

**Title of project:** Exploring the interplay between EFL writing teachers' beliefs about L2 writing instructional approaches and their practices in Palestinian universities.

### Teacher's Consent to Participate in Research

Please tick each box to signal your agreement:

Eman Ishaq Alzaanin has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction.

I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time up to the final analysis and to discontinue my participation in the study without prejudice to me or any penalty of any sort. My data would also be withdrawn and destroyed.

I understand that the interviews and the classroom observations will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher and I have given my consent.

I understand that I have given the researcher permission to access and copy my class notes, my course work, my assignments and tests.

I understand that any information or opinion I provide will be kept confidential. No Information which identifies me individually will be used and no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.

I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project, publications and presentations arising from this research.

I understand that the information will be stored securely either in a locked cabinet or password protected and five years after this research is completed the information will be destroyed.

I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the supervisor, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

I agree to take part in this research under the conditions set out in the information sheet. I have been provided with sufficient information regarding the nature and objectives of this research.

I would like to receive feedback from this project by being sent a summary of the research via email: Yes/No

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix E: Teachers' Interview Guide**

1. What would you say is the focus when you teach EFL writing? Please give examples.
2. What are the most important aspects of English writing / academic writing? Can you further explain what you mean by -----?
3. Could you please describe a typical routine for conducting your writing class?
4. What are the factors that constrain you from teaching in a way that you consider ideal? What are these barriers?
5. How would you characterise their influences? education, language learning experience, and work experience.
6. In your opinion, how should writing teachers teach English writing to Palestinian EFL university students? Why? Please explain in detail.
7. How do you think EFL students learn English Writing?
8. If at the end of the school term you were to overhear a student discussing your class with another student, what would you most like to hear that student saying was learned in your class?

## Appendix E: Sample Classroom Observation Notes.

Name of Teacher:	SC
University	B
Date of Classroom Observation:	15/3/2012
Topic	Introductory Paragraph
Date of Scheduled Post-Observation Conference:	15/3/2012
Number of students	70

Time	Actions, Statements & Questions by Students and Teachers
9:00-9:25	<p>T greeted his students, and returned the assignments to them after he checked their mistakes and writing problems.</p> <p>T asked his students to edit their work before they submit or to ask their classmates to edit for them.</p> <p>T revised the previous class topic which was about the structure of an academic essay. They talked about introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. The revision was theoretical.</p> <p>Ss collectively answered the theoretical questions about how to structure an academic essay.</p> <p>T told his students that today he will teach them writing an introductory paragraph for academic essays.</p> <p>T wrote on the board that the introductory paragraph consists of general statements and thesis statement. He said that "you can write any general three to five sentences about the topic. It is not difficult, you just write freely. Whatever you write is correct. He asked his students to write three general statements about the topic of reading. He advised his students that they can write whatever comes to their minds.</p> <p>T said that "the most important component of the introduction and the whole essay is the thesis statement", and he listed on the board the characteristics of good thesis statements.</p> <p>T wrote on the board that the thesis statement should be specific, flexible, not a fact but opinion, and it should not be an announcement. The teacher gave examples on thesis statements to illustrate the criteria of good thesis</p> <p>T advised his students that they can write whatever comes to their minds. Then, he told his students that they will practice now writing an introduction on the topic entitled reading.</p> <p>T &amp; Ss cooperated together in generating general statements about the topic. When they wrote a number of simple sentences, the teacher said that the most important guiding principle when writing the thesis statement is using parallel structures. "Reading increases our knowledge and improves our university studies.</p> <p>T commented that the most important technique is free writing.</p> <p>T wrote three topics on the board for the students to choose one and to write an introduction for the chosen topic. The topics were about stress, writing, and tourism. Ss started writing the introduction for the chosen topics.</p> <p>Five students were able to finish their paragraphs and asked the teacher to check their paragraphs. I heard the teacher talking about the grammar and telling them t about the subject verb agreement. And other grammatical issues.</p> <p>Many students were just chatting with each other and some were playing in their mobiles.</p>

	<p>The teacher then asked for volunteers to read their paragraphs, and the teacher corrected the grammar mistakes in the students' paragraph as they were reading them. There was no single comment on ideas, unity, coherence, and the relevance and connectedness of thoughts. T asked other students to finish their paragraphs at home and to put them in the portfolio or file because the teacher intends to collect the files next week. Many students were just copying. He asked his students to put it on file and he told them that he will do a lot of these exercises because this is the most important aspect of writing.</p> <p>T did not correct or draw his students' attention to the irrelevant sentences, the unity, the coherence, etc. There was full lack of focus on ideas.</p>
--	--

## **Appendix F: Stimulated Recall Sample Questions**

1. What were you doing here?
2. What was the purpose? / Why were you doing this?
3. Why did you teach this topic here?
4. Do you think that you were successful in achieving the objectives of the lesson?
5. How do you think you got the idea about using X to teach Y?
7. Could there have been a different way to teach this lesson?
8. Would this have had the same effect in the classroom?
9. How do you think the students felt when you handled the lesson in this way?
10. Overall, how successful was the lesson?
11. In light of your instructional goals, how do you think this lesson went?
12. What do you think of the teaching methods you used?
13. What do you think the activities you designed went?
14. What do you think the teaching materials you used went?
15. Did you depart from anything you had planned to do during the class period? If so, when and why?
16. If you could teach this class period again to the same class,
  - a) What would you do differently? Why?
  - b) What would you do the same? Why?
17. What was the main problem you faced teaching this lesson?

## Appendix G: Sample Course Description

### Course Description:

This writing course is designed specifically for academically-oriented students of English as a foreign language. The course aims to enable student writers to have confidence in their ability to write academic English. The course focuses on skills necessary for essay writing. Patterns of essay organization that students will receive writing training in will include descriptive, discursive, compare/contrast and argumentative essays. Elements of coherence, unity, style, grammar and mechanics will receive due attention in the course.

### Course Objectives:

- To write the main parts of an essay such as writing a thesis statement, supporting a thesis with specific evidence and writing an introduction and a conclusion.
- To focus on key elements of an essay including unity, coherence, support and stylistic features.
- To practice writing different patterns of essay organization.
- To practice editing essays for grammar, spelling and punctuation.

### Tentative Syllabus

#### Class Topic

**Week One** Course introduction

Revision, paragraph-level writing

#### Week Two

Sentence Structures

**Week Three** The structure of the academic essay:  
introduction, body and conclusion

**Week Four** Writing Introductory paragraphs;  
Writing a good thesis statement

**Week Five** Supporting Paragraphs: What are they? How can we write them?  
Using transition words and sentences

**Week Six** Concluding paragraph: What does it do? How do I write one?

#### Midterm exam

**Week Seven Weeks 7-10** Classes will primarily focus on editing texts for organizational, stylistic and grammatical problems such as 'verb tense consistency, sentence structure and punctuation, word choice, collocation, writer's voice, etc. Various writing activities will be geared towards avoiding errors in those areas

**Week eleven** Writing a compare-contrast essay

**Week twelve** Writing a cause-effect essay

**Week thirteen** The argumentative essay

.

**Week 14** Revision

Final Exam

Required Textbook: *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Anne Hughes, Oshima, 1991)

## Appendix H: Sample Writing Test

Important note: Please, DO NOT EXCEED the space provided and DO NOT WRITE more than one answer for each question!!

- 1) Read the following essay and answer the questions bellow (15 marks)

## Preparing for the university entrance exam

In Turkey, getting accepted to the university you want requires a difficult and serious preparation period, as you have to take a 3-hour difficult exam in which you are competing with about one million eight hundred thousand people. Although such a huge number of people are taking the exam, only three hundred thousand of them can be admitted to a university. It means that preparing for this exam, which is called the OSS, involves a number of important steps that you must be careful about.

The first step of the OSS preparation marathon is choosing your division in high school. There are four divisions called “science studies”, “social studies”, “Turkish and math” and “languages”. Making a decision of your division is very important because your choice of division in high school determines which fields of study are open to you in college. For example, the “science studies” division gives you the chance of choosing many engineering departments and medicine, whereas the “Turkish and math” division has the options like economics and administrative sciences, international trade etc. Also your decision determines which lessons you will take in your second and third year of high school. For instance, you won’t take any geography lessons in school if you are a science studies student. If you want, you can change your department in the last year of high school but then you will have to pass the exams of the other lessons, which you didn’t take in your ex-division. So it is absolutely vital that you make the right decision. Remember, once a friend of mine has chosen the best divisions and succeeded. You’d better talk with a counselor in the second term of your first year. And you should follow the system changes very carefully. You ought to listen to the ideas of your family and counselor but you must make your own decision in the end.

The second step is enrolling in an OSS course. I advise you not to think very much about which course you will enrol in because in general they actually are the same. So you can choose one according to your location and income. Another decision to make is in which year of high school you should start to go to a course. I went to “Fen Bilimleri Merkezi” in both second and the last year of high school. It was boring to go to a course for two years but on the other hand it was good for me to plan my study program. In fact, it is a good idea to decide it according to your personal circumstances. And this course will be so beneficial in the future.

The third step is studying for both OSS and school. In OSS there aren’t any questions from the second and the last year of high school. But you shouldn’t give up studying for school lessons because your high school grade in Turkey also has a big effect on your OSS scores. You shouldn’t give up studying for school completely. Just listen to your teachers carefully. They will be giving you the clues for the exams. Also I can add, “studying at home” stage to the studying step. You continue to study at home. These days are very important because you have more time to study and the exam day is coming. So you should always study according to your program.

The most important step is taking the exam. Although I went out on the day before the exam, I couldn’t sleep all night. I was excited. So I advise you to overcome your excitement if you can. A good sleep is going to be an advantage to you. You should have breakfast and check the documents necessary for the exam. Also you’d better see your exam building a few days before so as not to get lost and panic on the exam day. During the exam you must try to be as calm as possible. You can take a deep breath and start answering the questions. After the exam you should at least be able to say that you have done your best.

The last step is making your choice. You get an exam score and you’ll make choices. You must be realistic according to your score but also you shouldn’t lose sight of your aims. You ought to consider all the conditions while you are making your choices. You should answer



questions like “Can I stay in a dormitory?” or “Can I be happy if I choose this department?” I believe this is one of the hardest steps so you should talk with your family and counsellors before you make a decision. After making your choice, you start to wait for the news from ÖSYM. During this waiting period it’s a good idea to go on a holiday if you can. Finally, you get the results.

In conclusion, after following all these steps, luckily all my efforts had a happy end. I reached one of the most important goals in my life. And I believe that by following these steps in the OSS marathon you can make one of your dreams come true too!

1. The essay has some errors in the format. What are they?  
-----
2. -----
3. Write the thesis statement and the topic sentences  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----
4. What is the type of this essay? -----
5. Write the general idea in the third paragraph-----
6. Write the irrelevant idea in the second paragraph-----
7. Add a plan to the thesis statement -----  
-----  
-----
8. Is the essay coherent? If no, why?-----  
-----
9. Which method is used in the introduction? -----
10. Which method is used in the conclusion? -----
11. Is the essay unified? Why? -----  
-----

II) Correct the Parallel Structure? (10 marks)

1. The teacher told me to think better and having more focus.  
-----
2. I really like playing chess, walking my dog, and vacations in Florida.  
-----
3. Late for the bus and to get something to eat, I decided to walk to the mall  
-----
4. She likes to listen to music and reading the latest novels  
-----
5. He spent his time studying Spanish, working at the convenience store, and he jogged every afternoon  
-----
6. The dog was excited: running, barking, and he chased after the boys  
-----
7. The apartment was filled with old newspapers, broken bottles, and the ashtrays were overflowing.  
-----





	Awareness of the differences between English and Arabic
	bad experience in learning writing frustrates future teachers
	being affected by past learning experience
	being affected by their previous teachers
	Being afraid of committing mistakes hinders students' creativity
	Being aware of the value of reading
	Being creative is not accepted by our teachers
	Being good at grammar and vocabulary facilitates writing learning
	Being good at grammar helps students to focus on generating and organising ideas.
	Being in shortage of time to cover enough material
	Being influenced by the students' context and background
	Being patient is very important when teaching writing
	big focus on paragraph and essay writing
	Big number of students is discouraging
	Building on students' schemata may help the writing teacher
	Changing mind about good writing
	Choosing topics should be based on students interests not textbooks options
	Clarifying points in the textbook is the teacher role
	Clarifying samples from the textbook
	Clarifying what is in the book is the teacher role
	Comparing their writings throughout the semester can help students to be aware of their improvements and the problems and errors that they overcome
	complaining from having many handouts
	Complete absence of reading in the writing classroom
	Conducting the writing class
	Contrasting the rhetoric systems of English and Arabic facilitates the teaching of writing
	Creating a variety of exercises is important to keep the students interested
	Crowdedness and big number of students is a problem
	Crowdedness in the class hinders students from focusing and writing
	Current teacher focuses in all aspects of writing
	Deciding on a topic is a problem
	Declarative knowledge of EFL writing is not enough
	Declarative knowledge of rules should be transformed into procedural
	Developing the writing students' confidence is the role of their teacher
	Differences between English and Arabic rhetoric is a big source of problems
	Differences between Arabic and English in their rhetorical styles is one source of problems
	Differences between English and Arabic rhetoric is a problem to students
	Different teachers have different practices of feedback
	Different teachers have totally different trends
No.	Sample initial codes
54	Different teachers uses different techniques
55	Different teachers with different backgrounds to teach writing 1,2, 3 can be a problem
56	Differentiating between writing and academic writing
57	Disliking writing make it difficult
58	Doing exercises from the textbook
59	Doing exercises from the textbook is the only practice in the class

60	Doing simple easy exercises do not improve writing
61	Drawing students ' attention to contrasting rhetoric between English and Arabic
62	Drawing students attention to the value of reading but without any follow up from the teacher part
63	Emphasising the importance of content and ideas
64	Emphasising theoretical knowledge of EFL writing
65	Emphasising unity and coherence when teaching writing
66	Employing students' experience in writing introductions in Arabic may help
67	Enriching the textbook is very important and using worksheets
68	Serious topics makes writing academic
69	Evaluating students' writing makes it serious
70	Exercises are given to assess grasping of the concept not real application through authentic writing tasks
71	Explaining the new lesson through models and examples
72	Facilitating and constraining factors to the ideal approach
73	Facing a problem because of course plan
74	Facing a problem in organisation and ideas generation
75	Facing difficulty in outlining and starting writing
76	Feedback would focus on the ideas and meaning and I may correct the grammar or vocabulary but these normally come at the end.
77	Focus mainly on essay writing to third level undergraduate students.
78	Focus on Forms and formulas
79	Focus on oral feedback rather than written feedback
80	Focusing more on ideas rather than on grammar is preferred
81	Focusing on correct English hinders writing
82	Focusing on ideas develops students style
83	Focusing on teaching academic writing
84	Focusing on teaching the academic essay
85	Focusing on the final product
86	Focusing on the quantity of writing and ignoring the quality
87	Focusing on the skill of brainstorming by first teacher
88	Focusing on the structure of the essay
89	Focusing on thought ideas and style makes writing academic
90	Focusing on topics that we would be asked to write about in the exam
91	Focusing on writing correct sentences hinders creativity in writing
92	Doing exercises from the textbook is a sort of application
93	Following a deductive approach to teaching writing does not meet the students' needs and preferences
94	Following a routine when teaching writing
95	Following a routine when teaching writing
96	Following a structure in academic writing is essential
97	Following an Arabic rhetoric style hinders writing learning
98	Following rules gives comfort and safety to the students
99	Following the book is quite boring
100	Following the organisation of the book because the book was itself divided and organised
101	Following the textbook in dividing the course into sub topics and themes
102	Getting able to write about specific topic
103	Getting an MATESOL from the US
104	Getting answers for teachers' questions from the textbook
105	Getting aware to what they r doing in the writing class

106	Getting my students to realise that writing is thinking and thoughts
No.	Sample initial codes
107	Getting theoretical information about EFL writing from the textbook
108	Give those models samples then the students induce the rules.
109	Giving examples and models are very essential
110	Giving feedback and editing some students' work
111	Giving feedback is an important role for the writing teacher
112	Giving feedback to students from time to time
113	Giving general oral feedback as they answer the exercises from the textbook
114	Giving rules of how to write
115	Giving students feedback on their answers
116	Giving students some options to choose their own topics
117	Giving students the chance to participate
118	Giving writing homework is important to practice writing
119	Going over homework
120	Guiding students is the teacher role
121	Giving students rules, techniques, and samples is the role of the writing teacher
122	Having a negative attitudes towards writing and participating in the classroom is a problem
123	Having a reader makes the writing a serious task
124	Having a TESOL degree is better for teaching writing that being literature majors
125	Having an MATESOL from a British university
126	having different writing teachers
127	having difficulty in getting books which follow the process approach
128	Having negative attitudes and writing apprehension because of teachers' negative written feedback
129	Having negative attitudes towards teachers' grading of written tasks
130	Having negative attitudes towards writing is a problem
131	Having negative feedback towards feedback
132	Having small number of students gives chance to write during the class time
133	Having their native culture
134	Having unfamiliar topics to write about
135	Having wrong assumptions about the English rhetoric
136	Having writing apprehension is a hindrance
137	High dependence on the textbook in organising the lesson
138	High dependence on the textbook
139	If you do not have knowledge of the world or you have limited knowledge of the world you cannot elaborate any topic ideas into a whole essay and that is the main issue.
140	Imitating good written models and samples improves and teaches students good writing
141	Imitating the samples facilitates and improves writing ability
142	Improving students' linguistic skills should precede teaching them ideas generation and organisation
143	In the exams there are a lot of theoretical questions that are not useful for us. They just depend on memorisation of definitions.
144	Individual feedback is given on students' homework
145	Inductive approach is appropriate with short samples
146	It is a recursive process not a linear one it takes time
147	It is the teacher role to ask students to write about difficult unfamiliar topic

148	Knowing that my text will be read and assessed motivates me to write well.
149	Knowing the rule does not mean being able to apply it
150	Lack of coordination among writing teachers and literary courses teachers
151	Lack of feedback from the teacher
152	Lacking facilities
153	Lacking good command of vocabulary is a problem
154	Lacking knowledge of the English language is a problem
155	Learning about academic writing this semester
156	Learning about mechanics of writing such as punctuation and sentence types and problems
157	learning how to write essays is very important
158	Learning rules looking at samples and doing exercises is a typical routine for our writing class
159	Learning writing involves memorizing theoretical information and rules
160	Learning writing needs continued practice
161	Limited topics to write about
162	Literature major teach writing to complete their work loads
163	Little focus on grammar because students already studies grammar
164	Long experience teaching writing
165	Looking at sample occur after theoretical definitions and techniques are provided
166	Looking at samples after discussing the technique
167	Looking at samples is the best way to learn writing
168	Looking for creative writing courses
169	Looking for positive feedback through not committing mistakes hinders creativity
170	Low linguistic levels distracts the writing teacher
171	Majoring in EFL writing
172	Matching techniques with samples does not give real practice to the techniques
173	Miscommunication between teachers and students
174	Most focus is on essay writing
175	My feedback would focus on the ideas and meaning and I may correct the grammar
176	Negative feedback discourages students
177	negative influence of Arabic upon their beliefs about EFL academic writing
178	Negative language transfer is a problem
179	Neglecting the factors that make a good text when teaching writing
180	No chance to practice writing in the classroom
181	No reading about related topics
182	No time to look at different drafts written by students
183	Not developing students' thinking in previous writing courses
184	Not experiencing topics and running out of ideas
185	Not focusing on grammar at early stages improves writing
186	Oral collective feedback is not enough at all
187	Oral collective feedback to the whole class is the main mood of feedback

188	Organising ideas properly
189	Orienting students about the linearity of the English writing rhetoric and the zig zag in Arabic writing style
190	Orienting students to the value of the writing course
191	Orienting writing students
192	Orienting your students about the differences between Arabic and English rhetoric
193	Overcrowdedness is a problem
194	Patience is important for the writing teachers
195	Paying attention to the audience , the context and the purpose of writing when teaching students
196	Physical factors like the large numbers of students, small classrooms, not having a photocopier
197	Plagiarising from other sources
198	Plenty feedback is the teachers' role
199	Poor command of vocabulary and structure
200	poor knowledge of the world hinders students to generate and develop ideas
201	Poor reading leads to poor idea generation skills
202	Practice is limited to the exams
203	Practice is the key
204	Practicing real writing occurs at home according to the students choice
205	Practicing real writing occurs at home
206	Practicing the rules is very important for learning to take place
207	Practicing writing at class is a waste of time because students do not take it seriously
208	Practicing writing at home without receiving feedback is not useful
209	Practicing writing is required to be done at home
210	Practicing writing provides students with feedback on their progress and development
211	Preferring to be recipient of information in the writing classroom is a problem
212	Preferring to look at essays written by native speakers
No.	Sample initial codes
213	Preferring to read and write at home hinders practicing writing in the classroom
214	Preferring to write simple sentences avoids students the grammatical mistakes
215	Preferring to use common techniques
216	Preparation at home is necessary
217	Presentation of topics and the source of activities are the textbook
218	Previous experience entails writing without specifying academic writing
219	Previous writing courses was free writing
220	Prioritizing the topics and the aspect of language when teaching writing is the role of the writing teacher
221	Problems in the course plan
222	Procedural knowledge of EFL results from declarative knowledge as a result of practice
223	Producing written work is important in the writing classroom



224	providing students with examples is the teacher role
225	Providing students with samples facilitates their understanding
226	Providing students with texts to read is the teacher role
227	Put ideas together with rules paying attention to organization and relatedness of my sentences
228	Raising students attention to the purpose of their writing
229	Raising students consciousness to the differences between English rhetoric and that of Arabic
230	Raising students' consciousness towards contrastive rhetoric s important
231	Raising the students awareness to the step of narrowing a topic
232	Reading from the writing textbook characterizes teaching writing in Palestinian universities
233	Reading is a great source of input of style patterns vocabulary ideas
234	Reading is very essential in the writing classroom
235	Reading should be integrated with writing through purposeful written tasks
236	Reading the techniques and definitions from the textbook
237	Reading written samples from the textbook
238	Receiving feedback improves students writing
239	Receiving input from the writing teachers
240	Receiving training during the MATESOL was most helpful
241	Redundancy characterizes writing in previous course
242	Refusing to learn in a new way because of their previous experience
243	Resisting to write in the class is a problem
244	Revising and editing can come later.
245	Revising what students learnt last class
246	Samples are used from the textbook
247	Selecting materials that is relevant to the students' background and major
248	Sharing some students' writing to get feedback from their classmates
249	Shortage of time hinders practicing writing during the class
250	Shortage of time is a problem in the writing classroom
251	Showing students their mistakes is the role of the teacher
252	Similar rhetoric between Arabic and English facilitates students learning
253	Some errors are due to the differences between English and Arabic
254	Starting the lesson with theoretical information about introductions
255	starting with the declarative theoretical knowledge
256	Stating the purpose of the lesson
257	Sticking to one approach of teaching writing or teaching from the textbook is traditional
258	Stimulating thoughts and answers from students through brainstorming
259	Students should be given the chance to write on topics of their interests
260	Students' preference to receive the information from the teacher is a problem
261	Students act according to the requirements of their teachers
262	Students are aware of the differences between the two languages

263	Students are aware of the importance of practicing writing during the class
264	Students are aware of the inefficiency of the textbooks
265	Students are aware that their low command of vocabulary is a problem when they write
266	Students are dissatisfied with their teachers' approach to teaching writing
No.	Sample initial codes
267	Students are not familiar with the culture of being productive in the class they are always receptive of the information.
268	Students are not happy with their teacher' approach to teaching writing
269	students are not risk-takers lest they commit mistakes
270	students are not willing to think about the written samples
271	Students are unwilling to practice writing in the class
272	Students asking for a creative writing course to meet their needs and interests
273	Students' awareness of the importance of feedback
274	Students' awareness of their poor linguistic abilities cause their writing apprehension
275	Students have negative attitudes towards critical thinking and the inductive approach
276	Students have negative attitudes towards feedback
277	Students need teachers to teach them
278	Students' needs to learn creative writing and to be given space to practice their interests in the writing classrooms
279	Students negative attitudes and demotivation is a barrier to real practice of writing
280	Students reject detailed feedback because they are aware of their writing problems and mistakes
281	Students' resistance to produce a written output is a problem
282	Students running out of ideas
283	Students' samples are full of problems and are used to give oral collective feedback on students' errors
284	Students should correct their errors
285	Students should correct their grammatical errors
286	Students' unwillingness to learn
287	Students' visions about a good approach to teaching writing
288	Students' writings can-not be used as models
289	Teacher training program would provide theoretical as well as pedagogical background
290	Teachers are frustrated from students' negative attitudes
291	Teachers should teach based on students written samples not according to the book
292	Teaching all elements that make good texts
293	Teaching basic grammar and vocabulary to help the students in the writing classroom
294	Teaching different patterns of essays is the teacher role
295	Teaching free writing
296	Teaching from the textbook

297	Teaching grammar is the first step to teaching students writing
298	Teaching rules about the placement of the thesis statement in the essay
299	Teaching skills and techniques for writing a research paper
300	Teaching students how to choose their topics, how to brainstorm, how to write drafts and revise them
301	Teaching students how to use other references
302	Teaching students techniques and strategies of writing introductions
303	Teaching students to organize ideas into English patterns is the writing teacher role
304	Teaching students to think about their writing
305	Teaching students with low proficiency level is a barrier
306	Teaching students writing research papers
307	Teaching the step of choosing and narrowing down a topic
308	Teaching the structure and format of essays
309	Teaching the technique of brainstorming
310	Teaching writing is teaching strategies and techniques
311	Teaching writing as a process
312	Teaching writing as a process involves many steps
313	Teaching writing as a process of many steps
314	Teaching writing determines students' learning
315	Teaching writing in a native-like way
316	Teaching writing involves dividing the process of writing an essay in to steps of writing introduction, supporting paragraphs
317	Teaching writing is teaching rules
318	Teaching writing should include contrastive rhetoric and discourse analysis
319	The atmosphere would be even more competitive.
320	The book provides theoretical knowledge and definitions
321	The cutting off of power, the high humidity and temperature are barriers
322	The difficulty of the textbook samples and language may hinder the students from learning
323	The effect of language transfer on writing
324	The exercises focus on the understanding level of Knowledge not the application or production level
325	The first important role is to give feedback
326	The general atmosphere is not encouraging to produce good pieces of writing.
327	The impact of previous writing learning experience on students' expectations
328	The importance of teachers' background
329	The lack of familiarity to these techniques.
330	The low linguistic level of the students is a hindrance to understand the samples and to apply the concepts
331	The main importance of the feedback is to make students reflect on their work.
332	The physical factors of health and ventilation are a problem
333	The practice of raising students consciousness to the differences between English and Arabic is rarely done by Palestinian teachers

334	The problem I think is related to their learning experience in high schools.
335	The role of Arabic in EFL writing courses
336	The role of Practice in the writing classroom
337	The role of the writing teacher
338	The rules are abstract
339	The students' low proficiency level as a barrier to teaching writing
340	The teacher did most of the talking
341	The textbook is everything
342	The textbook is the main guide
343	The textbook is the source for examples and exercises
344	The textbook provides different patterns of essays
345	The theoretical knowledge was not enough
346	The way it is designed to approach writing as a process regardless of the seriousness of topics makes it good
347	The weakness of their language
348	The writing teachers' role is not to teach grammar
349	Theoretical knowledge is the first step when I teach writing
350	They did not accept the idea of repeating the main ideas to echo in the conclusion.
351	Thinking about audience in academic writing
352	Thinking in Arabic is a problem
353	Thinking in English improves my writing
354	Thinking of the audience when writing
355	Thinking of their previous writing teachers approaches as ideal
356	Too much emphasis on teaching grammar in the writing classroom
357	Too much focus on the essay writing
358	Transferring my learning about EL writing to my students
359	Trying to collect material from the internet
360	Unhappy with theoretical definitions because do not help them to write
361	Unmotivated irresponsible students is a problem
362	Unwilling to go beyond the linguistic level of the text
363	Using technical terms related to the academic essay writing
364	Using the book is boring and routine because of the lack of variety in the exercises
365	Using the technique of questioning to narrow the topic
366	Using the techniques and samples written in the textbook
367	Using the textbook as the main source for definitions, samples, and exercises
368	Very traditional topics in the writing class is a problem
369	Weak linguistic skills hinder students ' creativity
370	Weakness of students in grammar is a problem
371	Writing means good quality of writing
372	Writing about general topics
373	Writing academically means using certain vocabulary and specific style
374	Writing as a process is a waste of time to many students

375	Writing as expressing thoughts
376	Writing depends on reading models and samples by people.
377	Writing different types of texts
378	Writing involves composing and revising
379	Writing is a cognitive process
380	Writing is a difficult process.
381	Writing is a one step process and one final draft
382	Writing is a process of brainstorming of ideas and organising them
383	Writing is a skill
384	Writing is adding something new and supporting main idea
385	Writing is both content and form
386	Writing is not a matter of quantity it is also a quality
387	Writing is not a mechanical process
388	Writing is not only filling the lines or quantity but it is organisation connection of ideas and that all I write should be related to support my main idea
389	Writing is not only forms and structures and words and vocabulary.
390	Writing is providing evidence to support specific ideas
391	Writing is reading what others write and trying to imitate their writing in the style or the technique they are using and this only comes with reading.
392	Writing is thinking , following techniques, and reflecting on ideas
393	Writing is thoughts and ideas transferred through good organization, vocabulary and structure.
394	Writing learning is learning rules
395	Writing needs continued practice. We also have to read.
396	Writing should involves good grammar and rich ideas
397	Writing teacher being more theoretical
398	Writing was error free sentences. Also the teacher focused on error free sentences. She always asked for correct grammar and structures. The teacher was focusing on the structure not our ideas. Writing to us was putting words into grammatical sentences.
399	Writing was memorizing chunks and formulas
400	Writing was translating the Arabic ideas into English
401	Writing apprehension is a common phenomenon among students
402	Wrong assumption and stereotype that writing in a second language is just translating texts from the students' native language
403	Written samples and models are very necessary to understand the abstract rule