Enhancing Students’ Punctuation Use through Group Work
The Case of Second Year LMD Students at Larbi Ben M’Hidi University Oum El Bouaghi

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Dedication

To my sympathetic father and thoughtful mother who made me what I am and whose love always strengthens my will, God bless them now and forever.

To my lovely sister Samra.

To the two angels Yanis and Salsabil Aridge.

To all my family.

To all my friends with whom I shared the university life with its lights and shadows especially

Hannan, Mouna, Ibtissem and Asma.

To my best friend Fatima.

To all my teachers.

To all those who love me.
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Abstract

Writing is one of the four language skills which is given emphasis in foreign language learning. However, students find it difficult when coming to the issue of where to place punctuation marks while writing. Hence, teachers adopt and adapt various methods in the writing classrooms to ensure that the students excel in putting punctuation marks. The present study aims at describing and investigating the effects of group work on enhancing students’ punctuation use. In order to check this correlation, we have hypothesized that using group work technique enhances students’ use of punctuation marks. It is by the means of two questionnaires to both teachers and students from the English department at Larbi Ben M’hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi that we verify the validity of the stated hypothesis. Teachers’ questionnaire is given to ten teachers of techniques of written expression to get insights about the techniques used in teaching writing as well as their perceptions towards group work technique and its effects on punctuation use. The students’ questionnaire is administered to fifty second-year English students at the same department during the academic year 2013-2014 to examine their attitudes towards the use of group work as a technique to help learners enhance their punctuation. The discussion of the results confirmed the stated hypothesis that using group work in writing classrooms enhances students’ use of punctuation marks.
List of Abbreviations

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**SL:** Second Language

**SLL:** Second Language Learning

**TL:** Target Language

**N:** Number of Teachers / Students

**Q:** Question

**%:** Percentage
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Introduction

Writing is considered to be the most difficult language skill, especially when it comes to the issue of where to place punctuation marks. For this reason, a need for more effective and successful ways of its teaching has been grown. Collaborative writing is one among them. There are a number of advantages to teaching collaborative writing to students. In the classroom, this strategy increases the students’ participation and critical thinking (Chan, 1996). It encourages students to continually assess their own performance and class work as well as that of their peers. Additionally, students learn to clearly express ideas through writing in groups. Furthermore, it effectively teaches the concept of teamwork. At the same time, individual weaknesses are caught by the group and revised. Ultimately, collaboration can be a form of motivation for students as they become excited about working with a group as well as the prospect of learning from other students. In fact, group work as a teaching technique is a kind of collaboration and it is believed to enhance the students’ punctuation use.

Importantly, the present study investigates teachers’ and learners attitudes towards the use of group work technique for the enhancement of students’ use of punctuation marks.

1. Statement of the Problem

Writing in a foreign language is one of the most difficult skills for almost all students. A big number of EFL learners at Larbi Ben M’hidi University encounter a lot of difficulties with the acquisition of the writing skill. Hence, they do not produce acceptable compositions. Finding difficulties when coming to the issue of where to put punctuation marks while writing is one of the factors that seems to be an impediment for learners to master the writing skill. Other reasons are the lack of motivation to write and fear of making mistakes. Thus, teachers have to select and use a method that increases the students’ involvement, participation, motivation and interest in writing. Accordingly, we believe that using ‘group work’ as a technique in teaching writing can enhance EFL students’ writing skill.
2. **Aim of the Study**

This study is meant to contribute to the improvement of learners’ writing performance in relation to punctuation marks through the use of group work technique in foreign language teaching. It aims to find out whether group work has a contribution in the enhancement of the use of punctuation marks in students’ writing.

3. **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

This research aims at addressing the following question:

1) Whether there exist a relationship between group work technique and the improvement of the students’ use of punctuation marks in writing?

2) What attitudes and opinions do second year students have about group work as a way to enhance punctuation use in writing?

In the light of the stated question, it is hypothesized that:

Using group work technique may enhance the students’ use of punctuation marks.

4. **Population**

Our sample is made up of fifty (50) students and ten (10) teachers of techniques of written expression. The students are second-year LMD in the English department at Larbi Ben M’hidi University. They will be of different ages, gender, abilities and cultural background. Both learners and teachers will be given questionnaires.

5. **Means of Research**

To carry out this study, a descriptive method will be applied. Two questionnaires are administered: one to teachers and the other to second-year students. The teachers’ questionnaire is intended for ten (10) teachers who have been teaching writing for a considerable long period of time. The students’ questionnaire aims at investigating the students’ attitudes towards the present language teaching situations. We also want to
investigate the students’ awareness of cooperation in group work. After collecting the required data for this research, they will be analysed.

6. Structure of the Study

The present study consists of three chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to the skill of writing; punctuation marks and their use. The second chapter tackles the main issue of this study: ‘group work’. It includes its definition, importance, advantages and disadvantages. It will also shed light on principles of creating groups, distribution of roles in a small group classroom as well as group work techniques. Furthermore, it will tackle the issue of collaborative writing. The third chapter will be mainly an analysis of both students and teachers’ questionnaires besides some pedagogical implications on the use of group work and its effects on the students’ punctuation use.
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PUNCTUATION AND WRITING

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Introduction

Mastering a second language (SL)/ foreign language (FL) requires learning the four skills of this language; speaking, listening, reading and writing. The latter is a crucial skill in language learning. It is the most difficult and complicated skill compared with the other language skills (Byrne, 1979). Hence, it requires great practice and efforts from learners. Moreover, teachers have to support learners and advise them so they can ameliorate and attain a good writing level.

This chapter will present the nature of writing and the reasons behind its teaching. Then, it will discuss the writing conventions; handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Besides, it will deal with the definition of punctuation and its different marks.

1.1. The Nature of Writing

Writing is merely a means of communication that employs the graphic representation of spoken language. Byrne (1991: 1) explains this saying that:

Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences.

In other words, writing is not only a matter of transcribing language into symbols. Yet, actually, it has particular rules to form words via the combination of symbols. From words we can form sentences, and then we pass to the formation of sentences from those words and with a sequence of related sentences, we can reach a text. Hence, the writer should be aware of and consider the four structural levels in writing starting with word structure, sentence structure, paragraph structure and text structure.
Neman (1995: 4) argues that writing can be learned and improved by stating that it is “a craft, an artistic process with techniques and conventions that can be learned, employing skills that can be improved”.

Writing is said to be the most complex skill. Byrne (1979) maintained that “Writing is transforming our thought into language; therefore, it is a complex skill that requires physical and mental activity on the part of the writer” (p. 5).

The idea that writing is the most complex skill compared with the other skills is supported by Horvath (2001) who states that “It [writing] involves the development of a design idea, the capture of mental representations of knowledge, and of experience with subjects” (p. 5).

Moreover, writing is considered as a means of communication in that it enables people to express their thoughts freely and hence sharing information with each other. According to Rozakis (2004), “Writing is a powerful means of communication because it forms and shapes human thought. In an open society, everyone is free to write and thereby share information with others” (p. 21).

What makes writing a complex activity, is that it has psychological, linguistic and cognitive problems for both native and non-native speakers of the language (Byrne, 1991).

Now we move on to discuss the main motives behind teaching writing.

1.2. Reasons behind Teaching Writing

Writing could not be acquired spontaneously, i.e., naturally as speaking in which children acquire their first and in some cases second language without any efforts. Writing, however, necessitates mental abilities in order to be developed. According to Harmer (2004), writing should be learnt because it could not be acquired. He suggests reasons behind teaching writing that include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a
skill in its own right. Harmer (1998: 79) offers the following reasons behind the teaching of writing:

Ø Reinforcement: Some learners acquire language in a purely oral/aural way, but most of them benefit greatly from seeing the language written down.

Ø Language development: The mental activity learners go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience.

Ø Learning style: For many learners, producing language in a slower way is something they appreciate. Writing provides time and ease for learners more than face-to-face communication does.

Ø Writing as a skill: Learners need to know how to write essays, how to put written reports together and how the written system operates (for example, in terms of conventions such as punctuation, paragraph construction) just as they need to know how to pronounce language appropriately.

After discussing the reasons behind teaching writing, it is important to have insights about its conventions.

1.3. Writing Conventions

Writing has a number of conventions that make it different from speaking. Harmer (2001: 255) points up the following writing conventions.

Ø Handwriting

Students with native-language orthography which is different from English, find it an impediment to form English letters. Handwriting is something personal. Of course, students will not use the same style. Students with badly-formed letters should be encouraged to ameliorate it.

Despite the usefulness of a computer keyboard in producing written communication, handwriting remains crucial for written assignments and exams.
Spelling

It is claimed to be difficult for students of English. One of the reasons that make it an impediment is the fact that different varieties of English do not spell identical words in the same way. Students, for instance, would be confused which is correct color or colour?

One way to overcome this problem is to make learners aware of the fact that they have to focus on a given variety of English as a model of spelling for them to follow. Extensive reading is the best way for students to improve their spelling. Teachers can also raise their awareness of spelling problems and try to explain the reason behind their occurrence.

1.4. Punctuation

1.4.1. Definition of Punctuation

To begin with, it is important to define the term ‘punctuation’. The following definitions are chronologically listed.

Partridge (2005: 3) refers to punctuation as “the art of dividing a written composition into sentences, or parts of sentences, by points or stops, for the purpose of marking the different pauses which the sense and an accurate pronunciation require”. In other words, accurate pronunciation and the sense of a written composition necessitates the use of punctuation marks since it makes it clear to understand the meaning of that written text by its different stops and pauses.

Lauchman (2010: 26) defines punctuation as “a code used in writing that is often necessary for meaning and for emphasis. The code originated in attempts to capture, in text, the various stops, pauses, and inflections of speech. Today it is logical in application. Both writers and readers need to understand it and pay attention to it”.

Actually, punctuation marks are very important because they clarify meaning and they tell readers where to stop and hence writers and readers should pay more attention to them.
1.4.2. Importance of Punctuation

All punctuation exists, basically, to help readers understand what you wish to say. Lauchman (2010) gave the following points.

- Punctuation indicates how ideas relate.
- Punctuation suggests how much emphasis an idea deserves: punctuation can do much more than clarify your meaning and show precisely how ideas fit together. In the sentence below, the parenthetical phrase *to her amazement* interrupts the flow of the sentence and must be punctuated. We can punctuate it in three different ways.

1) *Commas* The medical examiner found, to her amazement, that the deceased had a diamond earring lodged in his small intestine.

2) *Parentheses* The medical examiner found *(to her amazement)* that the deceased had a diamond earring lodged in his small intestine.

3) *Dashes* The medical examiner found—*to her amazement*—that the deceased had a diamond earring lodged in his small intestine.

- Punctuation slows the reading: the primary reasons for punctuating are to clarify and emphasize your intent, but the marks have an important side effect: they slow the reading.

1.4.3. Punctuation Marks

There are commonly twelve (12) punctuation marks that should be used in writing in order to make it clear and meaningful (Lauchman, 2010).

| , | comma | ? | interrogative | ’ | apostrophe |
| ; | semicolon | ! | exclamation | - | hyphen |
| : | colon | ( ) | parentheses | _ | dash |
| . | period | [ ] | brackets | “ ” | quotation marks |
1.4.3.1. The Comma,

The comma is probably the most commonly used punctuation mark, and the most complicated one. It helps in the clarification of sentence meaning, and it tells readers to pause between words or group of words and it has several uses Suthers & Roberts (2005:17).

Furthermore, commas are used between independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

My dog had fleas, so we gave him a bath.

I was studying, and she was playing.

Comma is used to add additional or non essential information. Information that just describe and not identify. It is put between two commas in the middle of a sentence.

Bob, the black boy, has just finished his studies.

The market, which is on the corner, has been already opened for five months.

Comma is used to set off adjectives in a series modifying a noun.

The white, small, wonderful cat.

Comma is used after an introductory dependent clause (a group of words put before the subject).

If you enjoy American food, you will certainly love this restaurant.

Comma is used to separate a direct quotation from the remaining part of the sentence.

He said to his father, “I will not go to my grandmothers’ house”.

Comma is used before tag questions.

They are coming, aren’t they?

Yet, the comma should not be used in the following cases:

Do not use a comma between independent clauses which are not joined by Conjunction. Use rather semicolon or a period.
I am thirsty. I want to drink. FALSE
I am thirsty. I want to drink.
I am thirsty; I want to drink.

Ø Do not use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two words or Phrases.
My cousin is a teacher, and a writer. FALSE
My cousin is a teacher and a writer.

Ø Do not use a comma between dependent clauses.
You have to complete your work, because you need it. FALSE
You have to complete your work because you need it.

1.4.3.2. The Semicolon ;

The semicolon is the most misused and misunderstood mark of punctuation. It is used to denote a degree of separation less than that indicated by the colon, yet bigger than that indicated by the comma. According to (Lannon, 1997), an author of a text on technical writing, “A semicolon usually works like a blinking red traffic light at an intersection by signalling a brief but definite stop” (p. 1). It has many uses:

Ø Semicolon is used to separate two main clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

John watched the sunset above the mountain; he noticed the colours blending. Softly into one another.

Ø Semicolon is used before a conjunctive adverb (transitional phrases) which joins the two main clauses in a compound sentence.

The report is incomplete; for example, it doesn’t explain the rise of the price of tomatoes.

Ø Semicolon is used to separate items in a list like phrases or clauses as it helps to avoid confusion where there are already commas.
My friend has several pets: mina, his cat; betty, his dog; and kimmy, his rabbit.

1.4.3.3. The Colon :

The colon is a crucial punctuation mark in writing. It indicates a pause that is stronger than the semicolon, but not as strong as the period. Lannon (1997) states that “Like a flare in the road, a colon signals you to stop and then proceed, paying attention to the situation ahead, the details of which will be revealed as you move along” (p. 1).

According to Lannon (1997), the colon has several uses:

- Colon is used after a complete sentence to introduce a list.
  
  The Algerian flag has three colours: red, white and green.

- Colon is used before formal quotations.
  
  Write a composition on the following topic: “What is happening during the first day in the university?”

- After the formal salutatory phrase at the opening of a letter.
  
  My dear sir:

1.4.3.4. End of Sentence Punctuation . ? !

End of sentence punctuation is used to inform the reader that the idea or thought is finished. Lannon (1997) provides the following cases.

- A statement (or declarative sentence) is followed by a period.
  
  A bad workman blames his tools.

- A direct question (or interrogative sentence) is followed by a quotation mark.
  
  What is Anna’s favourite colour?

- An exclamatory sentence is followed by an exclamation point.
  
  What a nice day!
1.4.3.5. Parentheses ( )

Elements that are inside parentheses are non essential or have no important relation with the rest of the sentence (Maclin, 1992). Parentheses have various uses:

- Parentheses are used to introduce into a sentence matter which is not essentially connected with the rest of the sentence, but aids in making it clear.

  This year (1914) saw the outbreak of a general war.

- Parentheses are used to enclose the reference letters or figures used to mark division and classification in arguments or in precise statements.

  This is done because: (a) it is shorter; (b) it is clearer.

- Parentheses set off additions or expressions that are not necessary to the sentence. They tend to de-emphasize what they set off.

  We visited several European countries (England, France, and Spain) on our trip last year.

1.4.3.6. Brackets [ ]

Maclin (1992) states that “Always use brackets in pairs. They show that you have put an explanation of your own into direct quotation” (p. 271).

1.4.3.7. Apostrophe ’

The apostrophe is used to indicate that a given letter has been omitted or to show possession. Maclin (1992) gives the following uses for an apostrophe.

- Apostrophe is used in contractions, two words which have been combined into one, to mark where the missing letter or letters would be.

  I have = I’ve         Who is = who’s
  Let us = let’s       Cannot = can’t
  He is, she is, it is= he’s, she’s, it’s

- Apostrophe and s’ are used to make possessive forms of impersonal pronouns.

  Everybody’s books
Anyone’s books

Apostrophe is only added for plural possessive nouns ending in –s

My parents’ TV

1.4.3.8. The Hyphen -

The hyphen is used to join compound words; to mark the division of a word too long to
go entirely into one line. Maclin (1992: 278) offers the following uses of a hyphen.

A hyphen is used to separate parts of words as conventional spelling indicates.

Vice-president
Mother-in-law
Pre-engineering

A hyphen is used between all numbers of two words from twenty-one through ninety-nine and in compound numbers that contain them.

Thirty-three
One hundred thirty-three

A hyphen is used to separate syllables of a word between the end of one line and the
beginning of another. Always put the hyphen with the first part of the word.

He is holding his hands together, making a big fist, rhythmically rubbing one thumb
against the other.

1.4.3.9. The Dash _

Dashes connect groups of words together in order to put more emphasis on a given
point or to show that the information is not essential; they have various uses (Suthers &
Roberts, 2005).

Dashes are used around material that would normally be set off with commas, when that
material also contains commas.
They checked their camping equipment carefully – backpacks, tent, camping equipment, clothing, and food – before leaving for the mountains.

All of John’s family – his father, mother, brother, and sister – will visit him next summer.

Dashes set off additional information.

Linda, the wise woman, has just come from France.

1.4.3.10 Quotation Marks “ ”

Quotation marks are used before and after a direct quotation or to punctuate titles of magazines, chapter in a book, or poems (Partridge, 2005).

“You have to accomplish your home work”, said the teacher.

The section entitled, “Tips for Effective Writing”, was very interesting.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have put much more emphasis on the fact that for effective teaching of writing to occur, teachers should involve an effective technique to facilitate the task of learning writing since it is a complex skill that necessitates higher mental abilities. Using punctuation in a correct way is one issue that seems to be an impediment for learners. Adopting group work as a technique could lessen the difficulties students encounter while engaging in writing activities. The next chapter will be devoted to group work technique which is believed to be efficient for teaching writing.
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GROUP WORK

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Introduction

It is believed that presenting SL/FL courses following the traditional language teaching technique is the predominant process in which the teacher is the provider of information and students are just passive receivers. However, splitting the classroom into small groups, i.e., adapting group work technique increases the students’ learning level since it offers comfortable atmosphere for learning to take place. Besides, it raises and sustains learners’ motivation.

This chapter will present group work as a teaching technique including its definition, importance, advantages and disadvantages. It will also shed light on principles of creating groups, distribution of roles in a small group classroom as well as group work techniques. Furthermore, it will tackle the issue of collaborative writing.

2.1. Definition of Group Work

A group work is a classroom situation where students are put in small groups for the accomplishment of a given task. Brown (1989: 77) states that:

It is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language. It implies small group work; that is, students in groups of perhaps six or fewer.

In the above definition, there are three aspects to cast light on. The first is collaboration which is also referred to as cooperation in which all the members within the group take part for the accomplishment of the assigned task, i.e., they work together hand in hand. We can say that a group is like a machine in which each part works in its right time and the absence of any given piece may hinder its work. For the success of a particular task and for the real collaboration to take place, each member within the group has to be aware of his/her
responsibility as an active individual in an efficient group. Moreover, Kagan (1994: 10) states that:

Division of labour is often established by assigning task roles (Student One is to research the historical character’s early life; Student Two, his inventions, Student Three, his married family life; Student Four, his major inventions) or Maintenance roles (Student One, you are the Materials Monitor; Student Two you are the Quiet Captain; Student Three, you are the Task Master; Student Four, you are the recorder.

Members of the same group work together and roles within the group are changed. Hence, everyone will have a different responsibility. Kagan (1994: 7) called it interdependency: the success of every team member depends on the success of each member (if one fails, all do), then a very strong form of positive interdependence is created and team members are very motivated to make sure each student does well.

When students get better trained on successful group work, they will be able to assign roles themselves without the teacher.

The two remaining aspects in Brown’s (1989) definition are inseparable. By self-initiated language, it is meant that students are able of using the language that they have already learnt in real communication with their peers inside the classroom. For doing so, the designed groups have to be small. This is for the simple reason that in large groups some students may encounter problems such as shyness and tendency to be silent during the work and hence the most extrovert members will do almost all the work.

The point of group size is very important in that it enables learners to contribute in discussion in an active way. As Nunan (1999) suggests:

One of the classroom variables that has had a marked effect on student participation in written activities has been group size. Students who remain silent in groups of
ten or more will contribute actively to discussions when the size of the group is reduced to five or three. (p. 157)

This view converges with Harmer’s view (2001: 117) which asserts that:

In general it is possible to say that small groups of around five students provoke greater involvement and participation than larger groups. They are small enough for real interpersonal interaction, yet not so small that members are over-reliant upon each individual.

In other words, for real interaction and successful participation to occur, better to put students in small groups.

2.2. Importance of Group Work

Actually, every one of us has experienced to be a member of a group at least once. For instance, a child has experienced to be a member of a group which is his/her family; an adolescent has had experience of being a team member for playing.

Every group of people has its own rules and techniques of working with one another. Working in a group at university is crucial and of great importance, in the sense that it is another life situation that the individual requires to live in and struggle in order to be heard by his/her peers. S/he will learn through it how to negotiate authentically with his/her team members. It is preferred that they would be of different social backgrounds, cultures, and abilities so that they can exchange cultures, and help one another. It is also important because it makes the individual challenge to work with the other members to gain a solution for a given problem. It also raises and sustains their motivation (Nunan, 1999).

Another importance of working in groups is that it gives opportunity for students to make new friends, share perspectives and opinions for a given instruction, learn how to deal with a problem, develop the students’ ability to manage his/her time, discover the individuals’
strengths and skills, and to work closely with students of different abilities and cultures (Cross, 2000).

For instructors, group work can save some preparation time. Although preparing for effective group work does take some planning, it is less time-consuming than preparing a lecture (Brown, 1989).

2.3. Distribution of Roles in a Small-Group Classroom

Actually, splitting the classroom into small groups helps learners to carry out activities via offering more freedom and relaxing learning environment and it is claimed to be a learner-centered approach, yet the essential role of the teacher should not be excluded. In the present section we will cast light on both teachers and learners roles.

2.3.1. Teachers’ Role

It is claimed that the role of the teacher in whole-classroom teaching is prominently different from his/her role in small-groups classrooms. Despite the fact that small-groups classrooms are a learner-centered approach, the role of the teacher remains a crucial one for effective learning to take place. In order to achieve an accurate grouping of students, the teacher has to have sufficient information about his/her learners in that s/he has to consider their levels, personalities, and cultural backgrounds.

The teacher must provide a comfortable and a relaxed learning atmosphere for the learning process to occur, planning and building tasks, dividing students into small groups and assigning roles to group members and deciding on materials and time (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The teacher has to play the role of a facilitator in that s/he has to help his/her learners via offering the aid whenever required. According to Harel (1992), the teacher has the following role inside the classroom:

During this time the teacher interacts, teaches, refocuses, questions, clarifies, supports, expends, celebrates, and empathises, depending on what problems
The following supportive behaviours are utilized. Facilitators are giving feedback, redirecting the group with questions, encouraging the group to solve its own problems, extending activity, encouraging thinking, managing conflict, observing students and supplying resources. (p. 169)

2.3.2. Learner’s Role

The learner plays a crucial role in the learning process. The main reason behind splitting the classroom into small groups is to make him/her learn from his/her classmates. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 199) states that “the primary role of the learner is as a member of a group who must work collaboratively on tasks with other group members”. By this, it is meant that learners within the group share the activity and every member has to take his/her whole responsibility for the accomplishment of the assigned task.

For the enhancement of cooperation among members, the teacher should give to each member a specific role like leader, time keeper or illustrator. The coming table shows the main roles that students play when engaging in group work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Encourages reluctant or shy students to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praiser/cheer leader</td>
<td>Shows appreciation of other’s contribution and recognizes accomplishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate keeper</td>
<td>Equalizes participation and makes sure how one dominates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>Helps with academic content, explains concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question commander</td>
<td>Make sure all students’ questions are asked and answered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-master</td>
<td>Keep the group on task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorder</td>
<td>Writes down decisions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflector</td>
<td>Keeps group aware of progress (or lack of progress).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet captain</td>
<td>Monitors noise level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials monitor</td>
<td>Picks up and returns materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Possible Students’ Role in Cooperative Learning Groups

(Kagan, 1994; in Woolfolk, 2004: 496)
2.4. Advantages of Group Work

The use of group work technique in second language learning (SLL) has long been supported because of its benefits. It has several advantages; the most crucial ones are the following:

- Group work is one pedagogical strategy that promotes participation and interaction. It fosters a deeper and more active learning process (Brown, 2001).

- It also provides instructors with valuable demonstrations of the degree to which students understand particular topics or concepts (Harmer, 2001).

- It increases language practice opportunities for authentic negotiation in the sense that in large English as a foreign language EFL classes students do not have the chance to practise the new language (Brown, 2001).

- It is known that the traditional mode of teaching or what it might be called lockstep is the predominant one in which the teacher is the responsible for anything inside the classroom by explaining particular grammatical features, lecturing, or leading a specific task. Hence, learners do not have any opportunity to take part in the lesson. Group work can help to solve this problem entirely (Brown, 2001).

- Working with other students in groups can promote a sense of belonging that combats the anonymity and isolation that many students experience at a large campus. Some students may initially be reluctant to participate in group work, so sharing the reasons for group work with your students can help to convince the reluctant ones (Harmer, 2001).

- Working together in groups also gives students the opportunity to learn from and teach one another. Classroom research has shown that students often learn better from each other than they do from a teacher (Nunan, 1999).

- Group work promotes a positive affective climate (Brown, 2001). In other words, a lot of students experience stress when it comes to present a work or to respond to a given
instruction in lockstep classroom, especially the shy ones. Hence, group work as a teaching technique may promote positive interpersonal relations among peers.

- It promotes learners autonomy by allowing students to make their own decisions in the group without being told what to do by the teacher (Harmer, 2001).

- Teaching through group work offers the opportunity to teach turn-taking mechanisms. As Kramsch (1992) suggests:

  Teaching students how to take turns, as easy as this might seem, requires teaching a number of skills that are not automatically transferred from the mother tongue such as to tolerate silences, to direct gaze to addressees, to make use of floor-taking gambits, and to take longer turns. (p. 22)

- The encouragement of student’s autonomy and commitment is due to group work, as pointed by Brown (2001) “The small group becomes a community of learners cooperating with each other in pursuit of common goals” (p. 178).

- Group work motivates learners. When learners work together in groups, they build a sense of competition and hence their motivation will be raised and sustained. Group work also raises the quantity of talking for individual students (Harmer, 2001).

2.5. Disadvantages of Group Work

As it has several advantages, group work has also many drawbacks that have to be explored. The first shortcoming has to do with noise. Of course, when students are engaging in a group work, they speak in a loud voice and this is the product of negotiation. This fact will disturb other groups as it may be an impediment because the more noisy the classroom is the less concentration degree will be. Yet, Doff (1991: 141) states: “The noise created by group work is usually ‘good’ noise since students are using English and are engaged in a learning task”. In addition, this noise problem may be solved by making students aware of the fact that they do not need to speak loudly in order to be heard by their peers.
The second negative aspect of group work is the lack of control, i.e., the teacher must not neglect his role, he has to be the manager of the class, and the director even if the work is carried out in groups, otherwise there would be a mess in the classroom. Doff (1991) highlights that “To stop activities getting out of control, it is important to give clear instructions, to give clear defined tasks and to set up a routine so that the students exactly know how and what to do” (p. 142).

There is no reason for losing control if teachers keep on moving around the whole class. Also, they have to guide what the students are doing.

Another negative factor of group work is the tendency to use the native language. Of course, when students are working together, they switch to their mother tongue and this is also the case in teacher-fronted classes. For the elimination of this problem, Brown (2001) suggests “to encourage students to practise using the target language in face-to-face contexts and to make them aware of the importance of some real uses for English in their own lives” (p. 180).

Learners are surely going to commit mistakes when they come to work in units or groups. Yet, Brown (2001) points out that “errors are a necessary manifestation of interlanguage development, and we do well not to become obsessed with their constant correction. Well-managed group work can encourage spontaneous peer feedback on errors within the small group itself” (p. 181).

Other drawbacks can be summarized in the following points:

- Not all students enjoy it [group work] since they would prefer to be the focus of the teacher’s attention rather than working with their peers. Sometimes students find themselves in uncongenial groups and wish they could be somewhere else (Harmer, 2001: 118).
There may exist conflicts among peers in the group. For instance, one member was once assigned to be the group leader and he wanted to remain always as such. This issue will raise problems among peers.

When working in groups, students will move around the class and this will make it a chaotic one. In addition to that, grouping students takes a lot of time.

2.6. Principles of Creating Groups

There are principles upon which we can base our decisions of how to put students into groups, and with whom they are going to work. Harmer (2001: 121-122) suggests the following principles.

Friendship

It is important to base our decision on this principle. Teachers have to make sure that they put friends with one another so that they eliminate the possibility that students will encounter problems while working with strangers. Knowing friends in the class can be achieved through observation. Yet, the problem that may be faced here is that observation cannot be always accurate. In the sense that, friendship may change over time.

One solution to that problem is to give the students the opportunity to choose their peers by themselves. Like that, we can assure that learners will choose people they like, admire, or feel comfortable to work with. Yet, these procedures may cause a mess and let the introvert students aside while the groups are already formed.

Streaming

It centres around whether to stream students according to their capacity. It has been suggested that groups of students should include a mixture of both the weaker and stronger ones. In such a way, the less able learners will benefit from the knowledgeable ones this is on the one hand. On the other hand, the stronger ones will deepen and broaden their knowledge and help them to understand more about the language.
Groups can also be streaming on the basis of participation. In the sense that, less participators could be put together. Like this, they would not be able to hide behind their more talkative peers. Moreover, we can make special groups containing only the strong participators or the most talkative ones. Because it imposes the division of students according to their behaviour or level, streaming is not an easy task. It demands a deep observation and constant monitoring in order not to aggravate the situation by putting learners in inappropriate groups, especially because their level and language may be changed as the course goes on.

**Chance**

It is claimed to be the easiest way of doing works because it does not require pre-planning. It includes grouping students by chance, i.e., for no particular friendship, or capacity.

Having learners who are sitting near to each other work in groups, is a method of grouping students. Yet, a problem may take place here with those who have never changed their sits. In other words, they will always fall in the same group and this may create boredom.

### 2.7. Group Work Learning Techniques

Cross (2000) points up the following group work learning techniques or strategies.

- **Think-Pair-Share**

  The instructor poses a question. Students are given time (30 seconds or one minute) to think of a response. Each student then pairs with another and both discuss their responses to the question. The instructor invites pairs to share their responses with the class as a whole.

- **Paired Annotations**

  Instructor or students identify a number of significant articles on a topic. Each student individually outside of class writes a reflective commentary on one article. In class, students are randomly paired with another student who has written a commentary on the same article.
The two partners read each other’s commentaries, comparing key points to their own commentary. Then the two students team-write a commentary based on a synthesis of both their papers.

**Roundtable**

Students in small groups sit in a circle and respond in turn to a question or problem by stating their ideas aloud as they write them on paper. The conversation can go around the circle, each student in turn, more than once if desired. After the roundtable, students discuss and summarize the ideas generated and report back to the class.

**2.8. Collaborative Writing**

Writing is one of the skills that is claimed to be complex since it needs efforts to be mastered and it necessitates mental abilities. Collaborative writing is one way to facilitate the task of learning writing. Collaborative practice between students is said to raise motivation and develop positive attitudes towards writing activities (Nunan 1991; Spencer, 1983).

Legenhausen and Wolff (1990) maintain that when students write in small groups, their writing abilities will be promoted and it will be an efficient activity for the development of interaction.

Harmer (2006) points out that group writing is efficient in both genre and process approaches. In terms of writing itself, learners find the activity motivating through indulging in the research, discussing about the theme, having feedback from each other and attain the desire of the group.

Teachers have to give chance to students to share their writing work with others and learners have to take responsibility on their writing. The positive reinforcement during giving feedback will sustain the learners’ motivation for collaborative writing to occur (Storch, 2005).
Research findings on collaborative writing have been positive. Research conducted with L2 learners (Donato, 1988; Storch 2002) has as a result that students also consider discourse as well as grammatical accuracy and lexis in the co-authoring process. Collaborative writing is a highly efficient method to learn effective skills of writing. It suits learners at all levels and it helps them to learn real-world skills.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, as opposed to traditional teaching methods, group work technique is believed to be efficient for teaching for the reason that it has several benefits for learners’ academic achievement and it has been proved to be successful with learners. Moreover, an awareness of how it operates and how roles are distributed among members can help for better understanding and contributes in the flow of different activities. The following chapter will be mainly an analysis of both students and teachers’ questionnaires besides some pedagogical implications on the use of group work and its effects on students’ punctuation use.
CHAPTER THREE

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Introduction
The present study was an attempt to examine second year students and teachers’ attitudes to know whether using group work as a teaching technique will enhance the students’ punctuation use. So far, we conducted a review of literature and valuable data were attained. This chapter, then, explains the method used to carry out this study. Furthermore, it identifies the sample and a description of the students and the teachers’ questionnaires as well as the analysis and the discussion of the results.

3.1. Choice of the Method

To achieve the research purposes, a descriptive research method was used in the study. The right choice of the method will help in the research completion. ‘It should be noted that a good approach of the subject greatly depends on the right choice of the research method’ (Scandure & Williams, 2002; cited in Beiske, 2002). It is descriptive since it aims at describing the correlation between two variables: group work teaching technique as the independent variable and the students’ punctuation as the dependent variable. This study is carried out by means of two questionnaires. Brown (2000) defines questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (p. 6). They have many advantages. Generally speaking, they enable us to gather a large number of data, and also they can be used easily in the classroom (Nunan, 1992).

Beiske (2002) provide the following advantages.

• The respondents’ opinions are not influenced by the researcher’s viewpoints.
• Almost all people are familiar with questionnaires, and know how to complete them.
• The respondents can fill the questionnaire at their own pace.
• Questionnaires are easy to analyse.

3.2. The Students’ Questionnaire
3.2.1. The Sample

The target population of this study is second-year EFL students at Larbi Ben M’hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi, for the academic year 2013. We have chosen second year students because they have already studied punctuation marks in their first year, and they are assumed to face problems with their various uses. Practically, it is not possible to study the whole population that is why we have selected a sample made up of fifty (50) students to represent the entire population. As pointed out by Deldime and Demoulin (1975; in Arrouf, 2009: 100), “sufficient data can be obtained through the study of a proportion of the population: a sample”.

3.2.2. Description of the Questionnaire

The students’ questionnaire (see Appendix A) composed of twenty-eight (28) multiple-choice and open-ended questions divided into four parts as follows:

Part One: Background Information (Q1-Q3)

This part consists of three questions: the first seeks information about students’ gender, the second about their age, and the third about the period of studying English.

Part Two: Students’ Attitudes towards Writing (Q4-Q8)

The aim of this part is to see how the students view the writing skill. Q3 aims at discovering which skill students like to develop most. Q5 & Q6 are about students’ interest in writing and the reasons behind their choices. Q7 & Q8 check whether they feel afraid to write and the reasons behind their answers.

Part Three: Students Attitudes towards Group Work (Q9-Q19)

This part seeks information about how students respond to group work. Q9 & Q10 are about students’ preferences in using some writing techniques (individually, pairs, groups) during the written expression session and the reasons behind their choices. Q11 checks the frequency of using group work. Q12 is about the students’ preferences in forming groups.
Q13 is about the amount of learning from group work. Q14 & Q15 seek information about how students find group work compared to individual work and the reasons behind their choices. Q16 checks the classroom atmosphere while working in groups. Q17 checks whether the activity of group work is motivating. Q18 & Q19 explore whether they have problems when working in groups and what are these problems.

**Part Four: Students’ Perceptions about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use (Q20-Q28)**

This part consists of questions seeking information about students’ views of whether group work affects their punctuation use or not. Q20 & Q21 seek information about whether students use punctuation marks while writing in groups and the reasons behind their choices. Q22 is about the amount of difficulty that students have to know the place of punctuation marks. Q23 & Q24 seek information about the punctuation mark that is problematic for students to be used and the reasons behind their answers. Q25 checks whether students find it difficult to distinguish between the various uses of punctuation marks while working in groups. Q26 & Q27 seek information about whether writing in groups offer students the opportunity to know cases where they should not put punctuation marks and the reasons behind their choices. Q28 checks whether the teacher provides students with feedback when they disagreed about a given punctuation mark while writing in groups.

**3.2.3. Administration of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered to the sample of students. they answered the Questionnaire in the session of ‘Description of Language’ at 08:00 in room 15. The answered copies were given back at the end of the session.

**3.2.4. Analysis of the Questionnaire**
Part one: Background Information

Q1: Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Students’ Gender

A glance at table 2 suggests that the great majority of students (84%) are females, whereas only (16%) are males. This may be because of the sociological reason, i.e., because the number of women is larger in society than men.

Q2: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Students’ Age

Table 3 shows that the students’ ages ranged from twenty to twenty-four. The great majority of them (44%) are 21 years old and the remaining ones 20, 22, 23, and 24 years old are between (1% and 18%). This implies that there is a kind of homogeneity with regard to age.

Q3: How long have you been studying English?
Table 4: Students’ Educational Background in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the number of years of exposure to the English language. It ranged from 2-9 years. The great majority of students (78 %) had nine years studying English; a period that is believed to be a sufficient one to have a prominent proficiency level in the language.

Part Two: Students’ Attitudes towards Writing

Q4: Which skill you think you need to develop most?

a. Writing
c. Listening
b. Speaking
d. Reading
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Speaking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The four skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: Students’ Emphasis to Develop the Language Skills**

The obtained results from table 5 show that the majority of students (22%) like to develop the speaking skill. Writing comes as the second choice of students with a rate of (12%). Whereas listening comes as third choice with very low percentage (3%). Reading has not been chosen at all with (0%). Some of the students are like to develop two skills at the same time they are respectively writing and speaking with (5%), writing and reading with (1%), and speaking and listening with (6%). Whereas only one student (2%) chooses to develop the four skills. These results are may be due to the idea that students study English only for the sake of communication.

**Q5: Is writing in English interesting to you?**

a. Yes  

b. No  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

35
Table 6 shows that more than half of students (98%) are interested in writing. Whereas only one student (2%) views that writing is not interesting. This result proves that the students are aware of the importance of the writing skill.

**Q6: Please, say why?**

Students who answered “Yes” in the previous question gave different reasons for their answers. The most important one is that they find writing an amazing tool for expressing ideas and feelings. Another reason is that they view that all skills are related so they must develop their writing skill. Some of them see that writing develops their vocabulary and helps them learn how to correctly apply punctuation marks rules. In other words, it develops their English. Other participants see that writing is their favourite skill. Those who answered “No” view the writing skill as being not necessary for them. Others did not to answer this question.

**Q7: Do you feel afraid to write?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Students’ Confidence While Writing

As shown in table 7, more than half of the students (52%) do not feel afraid to write. In contrast (48%) do feel afraid to write and this is may be due to the fear of making mistakes or lack of motivation to write.
Q8: If yes, is it because?

  a. Your fear of making spelling mistakes
  b. Your fear of making punctuation mistakes
  c. Your handwriting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your fear of making spelling mistakes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your fear of making punctuation mistakes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your handwriting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your fear of making spelling and punctuation mistakes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Reasons for Students’ Fear to Write

Having discussed the issue of students being afraid to write, it is necessary to know the reasons behind their unwilling to write. Table 8 shows that (28%) of the students do fear of making spelling mistakes that is why they feel afraid to write, (6%) of them do fear of making punctuation mistakes, and only (4%) do feel afraid to write because of their handwriting. (12%) of the students fear from making both spelling and punctuation mistakes. This may be due to lack of practice in writing.

Part Three: Students’ Attitudes towards Group Work

Q9: During the session of written expression, do you prefer working?

  a. Individually
b. In pairs

Table 9: Students’ Preferences of Writing Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individually</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In pairs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In groups</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From what is displayed in table 9, it is clearly shown that the great majority of students do prefer working individually (44%). Whereas (22%) of students choose the pair working technique and a good number of them (34%) opt for working in groups. This implies that students have different perceptions towards different writing techniques.

Q10: Please, explain your choice

Students who prefer working individually view that each one has his/her own ideas and they want to use their own information. They also see that they want to know their level and examine their capacities. Moreover, they find that writing is an activity that necessitates concentration and working in groups will mislead them. Additionally, others categorize themselves as being introvert that is why they prefer to work individually. This implies that the students are not aware of the importance of group work.

Those who opted for working in pairs view that they want to broaden their knowledge via exchanging ideas and information. Also, they find pair work as a way for increasing their level because working with high level students enables them to learn a lot of new things. Furthermore, they prefer pair work because it offers them the opportunity to be corrected by their team members rather than being corrected by the teacher in front of the whole class. The reasons of the students who preferred to work in groups were the same for pair work.
Q11: How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?

a. Always
b. Often
c. Rarely
d. Never

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Frequency of Using Group Work

From table 10, it is clearly demonstrated that only (2%) of the students choose the always option, and (36%) have selected the second option which is often. Whereas more than half (52%) of them do rarely work in groups. The remaining respondents (10%) have never worked in groups. These results reflect that teachers use the strategy, group work, in teaching writing.

Q12: Upon which basis you prefer forming groups?

a. Friendship
b. Streaming (mixed abilities groups)
c. Chance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streaming</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 shows that the great majority of students (58%), on the one hand, prefer choosing their team members on the basis of streaming. On the other hand, (40%) of them opted for the first option which is friendship and only (2%) have chosen the third option that is chance. This proves that students like to exchange ideas and abilities with their friends.

Q13: To what extent did you learn from group work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 displayed that more than half (56%) of the students have chosen the much option. Whereas (22%) view that they learn little and very low proportions (2%) see that they learn nothing from working in groups. On the other hand, (20%) find that they learn very much from group work. This implies that group work as a teaching technique is useful.

Q14: Compared to individual work, do you find group work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Very good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Excellent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Students’ Opinions about Group Work

As shown in table 13, an equivalent proportion (10%) is given to the two options of bad and excellent, i.e., (10%) of the students view that working in groups is excellent and (10%) view it as a bad activity. (26%) see that group work is a very good activity. More than half (52%) of them view that group work is good. Only (2%) did not answer to this question. These results prove that students see group work as a good activity compared to individual work.

Q15: Please, explain?

Students who opted for good, very good and excellent options gave many reasons. The first one is that they exchange ideas and information and learn from the mistakes of each other. Secondly, they find that it enhances discussion. Others see that it is not as good as individual work. Those who choose the bad option view that it misleads them and (2%) did not answer.

Q16: How do you find the classroom atmosphere when working in group?

a. **Pleasant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpleasant</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14: Students’ Perceptions about the Classroom Atmosphere When Working in Groups

From table 14, we can clearly notice that the great majority (70%) of the students find the classroom atmosphere pleasant while working in groups. Whereas (28%) of them do find it unpleasant. This ensures that students like to work in groups.

Q17: Do you find the activity, group work, motivating?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Students’ Motivation When Working in Groups

This question is meant to see whether students are motivated when they work in groups or not. It is well evident in table 15 that more than half (84%) of the students find group work as a motivating activity. Only (16%) see the opposite. The obtained results prove that group work activity is motivating for students.

Q18: Do you face problems when working in groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results show that the great majority (56%) of students do not face problems when working in groups. Whereas (44%) do encounter problems while working in groups. This implies that group work does not cause problems and those who find that it causes problems have their reasons.

Q.19: If yes is it because you:

a. Find difficulties to share your opinion with the others

b. Want to be focus of the teachers’ attention

c. Think that working in groups will mislead you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find difficulties to share your opinion with the others</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17: Students’ Problems While Writing in Groups

Table 17 shows that (28%) of the students find difficulties to share opinions with the others. However, (4%) choose that they want to be the focus of the teachers’ attention and (8%) have chosen the third reason which is their perspective that working in groups will mislead them. Only (2%) opt for both the first reason that is finding difficulties to share opinions with the others and the third reason which is the idea that working in groups will mislead them. The great majority (58%) of the students did not answer. This shows that problems struggled with while working in groups depends on students perceptions towards this strategy.

Part four: Students’ Perception about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use

Q20: When you write in groups, do you make use of punctuation marks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to table 18, more than half (76%) of the students do make use of punctuation marks when they write in groups. Whereas (24%) do not use punctuation marks while writing in groups. These results prove that students are aware of the necessity of using punctuation marks when they write in groups.

**Q21: Please, say why?**

Students who have indicated that they use punctuation marks while writing in groups provide many reasons behind their answer. To begin with, they view that they have to follow the rules of punctuation in writing since they are necessary and inevitable that is why they use them. Moreover, they use punctuation marks because they clarify the meaning and hence they help readers to understand what they write. Those who opted for the “No” option in the previous question focus more on ideas not on punctuation and others view that they do not know the appropriate places for punctuation marks. Others did not answer.

**Q22: To what extent do you find it difficult to know where to put punctuation marks?**

- a. Very much
- b. Somehow
- c. Not very much
- d. Not at all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very much</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somehow</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 19: Students’ Difficulty in Putting Punctuation Marks

As the table indicates, a large number (56%) of the students find it somehow difficult to know where to put punctuation marks. However, (28%) do not find it very much difficult and (14%) do find it very much difficult to know the correct place of punctuation marks. One respondent (2%) does not find it difficult at all. This indicates that knowing the punctuation marks’ spots is difficult for students.

Q23: Which of the following punctuation marks do you find it difficult to be used?

- a. Comma
- b. Semicolon
- c. Colon
- d. Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comma</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semicolon</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20: Punctuation Marks that Students Struggle With

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Count 1</th>
<th>Count 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma and semicolon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma , semicolon and colon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semicolon and period</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semicolon and colon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma , semicolon and period</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained in this question reveal that the great majority (70%) of the students find the semicolon difficult to be used. Whereas (10%) find difficulties with the use of the comma. Only (2%) do find the colon difficult to be used and (4%) face difficulties with the use of the period. (4%) of the respondents do find both of the comma and the semicolon difficult to be used. Whereas a small proportion (2%) do consider the comma, the semicolon and the colon as being problematic to be used. In addition to that, (2%) find both of the semicolon and the period difficult to be used. (2%) see that both of the semicolon and the colon are difficult in their use and (2%) do consider the comma, the semicolon and the period as being difficult to be used. (2%) of the students did not answer this question.

Q24: Please, justify?

Some of the students did not give reasons behind their choices in the previous question. However, others opted for the reason that they do not know the rules of using punctuation marks and some find that the comma has different uses. Therefore, they can not distinguish between the various uses of these marks. Whereas some of them view that they confuse between the comma and the semicolon. Other respondents complain that they did not study punctuation marks at all in their first year so here it is the teachers’
responsibility. Hence, teachers should do their job and teach them what they are supposed to learn in each year in order not to miss any point.

Q25: While writing in groups, do you find it difficult to differentiate between the various uses of punctuation marks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Students’ Opinions towards the Difficulty of Distinguishing between the Various Uses of Punctuation Marks

As shown in table 21, more than half (54%) of the students find it difficult to differentiate between the various uses of punctuation marks while writing in groups. Whereas (46%) of the respondents do not face difficulties in distinguishing the various uses of punctuation marks when they write in groups. Implementing group work as a way of teaching it may reduce the students’ problems with the use of punctuation marks.

Q26: Does writing in group offer you the opportunity to know cases where you should not put punctuation marks?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 22: Students’ Opinions about the Effect of Writing in Groups on Knowing the Misuses of Punctuation Marks

The results show that only 13 students (26%) ticked the second option ‘No’. Where as, (72%) find that writing in groups do offer them the chance to know cases where they should not put punctuation marks and (2%) did not answer. This reinforces what is mentioned in chapter two (p.29) that collaborative writing is a highly efficient method to learn effective skills of writing.

Q27: Please, say why?

In this question, those who answered “Yes” in the previous question find that writing in groups has benefits since they correct each others’ mistakes, so when they discuss, they know the correct places of punctuation marks. Additionally, they can learn from one another and if they do not know cases where they should not put punctuation marks, their team members certainly do. However, some of them see that putting punctuation marks needs individual decision. Moreover, they have the opinion that they care about ideas rather than punctuation. Others did not answer this question.

Q28: When you write in groups and you disagree about a given punctuation mark, does your teacher help you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23: Teachers’ Help to Students to Make an Agreement about Punctuation Marks’ Use

This question aims at checking whether the teacher provide the groups with help when they do not agree about the use of a given punctuation mark while writing in groups. The results show that (78%) of the students make certain that their teachers help them and (22%) consider that their teachers do not provide them with feedback. This implies that teachers are playing their roles as it is supposed to be and this helps in the enhancement of the students’ punctuation use.

3.2.5. Discussion of the Results

On the light of the obtained results from the students’ questionnaire, we note that:

1. FL teaching is a process that creates situations where students can exchange ideas and express thoughts using the TL and not the one that is merely transforming knowledge.

2. The majority of students express their requirements in terms of the speaking skill and the writing skill comes just after. Students do not seem to be aware of the fact that learning one language skill necessitates the learning of the other language skills, i.e., they are interrelated.

3. More than half of the students have argued that the writing skill is interesting to them because they find it an amazing tool for expressing ideas and feelings.

4. Although the majority of the students are interested in writing, they feel afraid to write it because of their fear of making spelling and punctuation mistakes. Teachers have to encourage students to be involved in writing activities and raise their awareness concerning the fact that the most important thing is to learn and master the language.

5. Concerning teaching writing, students seem to have different perception towards different teaching techniques. Some students are interested in writing in groups because they can exchange ideas and thoughts and writing in groups is a way for increasing their level since working with high level students enables them to learn a lot of new things. In addition, they believe that group work offer them the opportunity to be corrected by their peers rather than
being corrected by the teacher in front of the whole class. Students find the classroom atmosphere pleasant while working in groups and they find the activity, group work, motivating.

6. Students have shown different attitudes towards preferences for forming groups (Friendship, Streaming and Chance). However, the teacher has to select the most appropriate one because s/he knows his/her students.

7. Some students claim that they do face problems when working in groups because of many reasons: some of them find difficulties to share their opinions with the others; others think that working in groups will mislead them or they want to be the focus of the teachers’ attention.

8. The great majority of the students note that they make use of punctuation marks while writing because they are aware that it is inevitable, important and clarifies the meaning. However, students do encounter impediments with the use of some of punctuation marks such as the comma, the semicolon and the colon since they have different uses and students are not able to distinguish between their various uses. Yet, they claim that writing in groups could lessen the encountered difficulty through discussion.

9. Results regarding the last question which is whether teachers help their students when they write in groups and disagree about the use of a given punctuation mark or not have clearly shown that, while writing in groups, teachers do provide students with feedback when they disagree about the use of a given punctuation mark. This implies that the teachers are playing their roles. In other words, they are doing well-structured group work with its main issue which is giving feedback to students. From all what is mentioned, it is clearly noted that writing in groups enhances the students’ punctuation use.

3.3. Teachers’ Questionnaire

3.3.1. The Sample
Since it is quite difficult to elicit information from the whole population, a sample of ten (10) teachers of written expression has been chosen to represent the whole population in the English department at Larbi Ben M’hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi. We have chosen teachers of written expression for the simple reason that they have enough experience in teaching this module and they can provide us with sufficient information about group work technique and its effects.

3.3.2. Description of Teachers’ Questionnaire

The teachers’ questionnaire (see Appendix B) is composed of (17) multiple and open-ended questions divided into three sections as follows:

Section One: Background Information (Q1-Q3)

The first section is made up of three questions: the first one seeks information about teachers’ gender, the second is about their degrees and the third one strives at knowing the teachers’ experience in teaching.

Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards Group Work (Q4-Q11)

This section aims at gathering information about group work. Q4 seeks the frequency of using group work. Q5 is about group size. Q6 investigates the basis upon which groups are set up. In Q7, teachers are asked to describe the relationship between the students in the classroom. Q8 & Q9 check whether teachers help students see the value of group work and the reasons behind their choices. Q10 & Q11 check if the students have any problems when working in groups and the reasons behind their teaching.

Section Three: Teachers’ Perceptions about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use (Q12-Q17)

This section seeks to investigate teachers’ use of group work to enhance students’ punctuation. Q12 checks whether students are motivated when they write in groups. Q13 seeks the frequency of committing mistakes in writing conventions: punctuation, spelling and
grammar. Q14 seeks information about the punctuation mark that is problematic for students to be used. In Q15, teachers are asked if they provide students with feedback when they disagree about the use of a given punctuation mark. Q16 & Q17 seek whether teachers think that group work technique helps students to enhance their punctuation and the reasons behind their answers.

### 3.3.3. Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to teachers of written expression in the English department at Larbi Ben M’hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi who have been teaching it for a considerable period of time and hence they have the experience that makes their answers beneficial for the completion of the present research.

#### 3.3.4. Analysis of the Questionnaire

**Section One: Background Information**

**Q1: Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 24: Teachers’ Gender*

Table 24 shows that more than half (70%) of teachers are females. Whereas (30%) are males.

**Q2: Degree(s) held**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA (Licence)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA (Magister)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As table 25 indicates, the highest percentage (80%) is that of teachers who have got a Magister degree. Only one teacher (10%) has a Doctorate degree. Finally, only (10%) of the teachers have got Licence.

**Q3: How long have you been teaching English at the university?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 26: Teachers’ Experience in Teaching English**

This question is aimed at knowing teachers’ experience in teaching English. The most experienced (50%) have been teaching for more than 10 years. We can see that (30%) have no more than 10 years experience in the field of teaching. Finally, the lowest percentage (20%) is for teachers who have been teaching for 1 to 5 years. This implies that most of the teachers have enough experience in English teaching.

**Q4: How long have you been teaching techniques of written expression?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27: Teachers’ Experience in Teaching Techniques of Written Expression

Table 27 shows that (20%) of the teachers have taught techniques of written expression for 5 years. Whereas a similar proportion (30%) is given respectively to the second (4 years) and the third (3 years) options. (10%) of the respondents have been teaching this module for two (2) years and (10%) of them have taught it for one (1) year. These results indicate that teachers have considerable experience in teaching this module.

Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards Group Work

Q5: How often do you have your students work in groups?
   a. Never                       c. Sometimes
   b. Rarely                      d. Always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Frequency of Using Group Work

A glance at table 28 suggests that the great majority (80%) of teachers sometimes use group work sometimes and (10%) do always use it. Whereas (10%) of them do rarely use group work. No respondent did not use group work. All teachers use group work and this reveals that they know the importance of group work.

Q6: How about group size?
As shown in table 29, more than half (70%) of teachers prefer to put their students in small groups of 3 to 4. This can be due to the belief that small groups allow students to exchange more information and new ideas. Whereas (30%) of them choose the first option that is working in pairs. It seems that teachers view pair working more suitable for students’ involvement. Concerning putting students in large groups, no one opted for it and this is may be due to teachers’ fear of loosing control and arising noise.

Q7: Do you set up the groups on the basis of?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30: Teachers’ Preference in Setting up the Groups

The results obtained from this question show that a large number (40%) of teachers set up the groups on the basis of friendship and (40%) of them do form groups basing on chance. However, (20%) prefer to set groups on the basis of students’ proficiency. Finally, no one choose the first option which is gender. This implies that teachers know that students like to work with their friends.

Q8: Does the relationship between your students in the classroom express?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of them</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Teachers’ Opinions about the Students’ Relationship

From table 31, we can easily notice that the great majority (80%) of teachers view that the relationship between the students express cooperation and competition at the same time. Whereas only (10%) of them notice that the relationship between students express competition. (10%) opted for the first option which is cooperation. May be the motive behind this is that students only care about academic grade rather than gaining knowledge and new information.

Q9: Do you help your students see the value of group work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 32: Teachers’ Help to Students to See the Value of Group Work

Table 32 shows that more than half (90%) of teachers do help their students see the value of working in groups. However, only very low proportions (10%) of them do not make them see the value of group work. This indicates that teachers know the importance of making students see the value of group work.

Q10: If yes, is it by:

a. Merely explaining why you are doing group work

b. Doing a brainstorming session on the value of group work

c. Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merely explaining why you are doing group work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing a brainstorming session on the value of G.W</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33: Techniques of Making Students See the Value of Group Work

As shown in table 33, more than half (70%) of teachers, who answered yes in the previous question, do merely explain why they are doing group work. Only (20%) of them give too much emphasis to it to the extent that they would sacrifice whole sessions on that. These results imply that teachers do make efforts to help learners see the value of group work.

Q11: Do you encounter impediments while having your students working in groups?

a. Yes

b. No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 34: Teachers’ Perceptions of their Problems in Group Work

The results obtained from this question show that the great majority (60%) of the participants do not encounter impediments while having their students working in groups. This may be due to the fact that they practise it frequently and hence they have an idea about its strategies. Whereas the remaining ones (40%) of them find difficulties when they engage their students in such an activity.

Q12: If yes, is it because:

a. You find the activity chaotic

b. You find it difficult to manage the class

c. Your students switch to their mother tongue while discussing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You find the activity chaotic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You find it difficult to manage the class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your students switch to their mother tongue while discussing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: Problems of Group Work

Table 35 shows that (20%) of the teachers who answered yes in the previous question view that they find the activity chaotic. However, (20%) see that their students resort to their mother tongue while discussing. Whereas no one opted for the second option which is that of finding it difficult to manage the class. May be this is because they do not use group work a lot. Hence, they find difficulties in managing the class.

Section three: Teachers’ Perceptions about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use

Q13: Are your students motivated when writing in groups?
It is clearly illustrated in table 36 that the whole numbers (100%) of the teachers find that their students are motivated when they write in groups. This confirms what has been already mentioned in the present study (p: 28), collaborative practice between students is said to raise motivation and develop positive attitudes towards writing activities (Nuan 1991; Spencer, 1983).

**Q14: How often do your students commit mistakes in the following writing conventions?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Spelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 37: Teachers’ Opinions about Students’ Writing Challenges

Table 37 shows that (50%) of the teachers find that their students do always commit mistakes in punctuation and (50%) of them note that the students often commit punctuation mistakes. Concerning spelling, the same proportion (20%) is respectively given to never, rarely and often option. Whereas (40%) of the respondents notice that their students do always commit spelling mistakes. However, more than half (60%) of the teachers note that the students do always commit grammatical mistakes and (40%) view that their students do sometimes commit grammatical mistakes. This implies that students do really struggle with the above writing conventions (punctuation, spelling and grammar). May be the extensive practice in writing will overcome these challenges.

Q15: Which of the following punctuation marks do your students face problems with most?

- a. Comma
- b. Semicolon
- c. Colon
- d. Period

The results obtained from table 38 show that (30%) of the participants see that their students face problems with the comma and the semicolon and (30%) notice that the students
struggle with the four punctuation marks mentioned above. Whereas the same number (10%) of teachers find respectively that their students encounter difficulties with (the comma, the period, the semicolon and the period; the comma, the semicolon and the colon). These results do match with those of students in the sense that both of them find that the comma, the semicolon and the colon are the most problematic punctuation marks. Hence, teachers should put more emphasis on those punctuation marks for their mastery to take place.

Q16: When your students write in groups, and they disagree about the use of a given punctuation mark, do you provide them with feedback?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 39: Teachers’ Help to Students to Make an Agreement about Punctuation Marks’ Use

From table 39, we can easily notice that the whole sample (100%) do provide their students with feedback when they write in groups and do not agree about the use of a given punctuation mark. These results converge with those of the students’ questionnaire regarding this question and this reflects what has been already mentioned in this research (p: 21), the teacher has to play the role of a facilitator in that s/he has to help his/her learners via offering the aid whenever required.

Q17: Do you think that group work technique helps students to enhance their punctuation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 40: Teachers’ Perceptions about the Effect of Using Group Work on Enhancing Students’ Punctuation Use**

From table 40, we can clearly notice that all teachers (100%) find that group work technique helps students to enhance their punctuation. The reasons behind their choices are stated in the following question. These results confirm the stated hypothesis that is using group work technique enhances students’ punctuation use.

**Q18: Please, say why?**

Teachers who answered “Yes” in the previous question argue that group work creates a cooperative atmosphere where the students can discuss different punctuation marks’ spots; they may even revise and edit the use of each punctuation mark. Others find that group work make the students learn from each other through discussion and hence their punctuation use will be enhanced. Additionally, they find group work helpful for learners to learn where to place punctuation marks because it gave them opportunities to discuss different rules of punctuation marks.

**3.3.5. Discussion of the Results**

On the basis of the analysis of teachers’ questionnaire, we can notice that:

1. Concerning teaching writing, the majority of the teachers opted for group work. Like this, teachers would help students see the value of group work and enhance their punctuation use because students can discuss different punctuation marks’ spots.

2. The relationship between the students expresses cooperation and competition. This may be due to the fact that students are aware of the benefits of working with each other and learn from one another and this creates a kind of competition which paves the way to better learning to take place.
3. The majority of teachers seem not to encounter difficulties while having heir students working in groups. Whereas others do face problems such as the noise and the difficulty to manage the class and hence teachers should be attached with those problems and try to mitigate them.

4. Although students are motivated when writing in groups, they struggle with the various uses of punctuation marks and their teachers always provide them with feedback.

5. Finally, teachers’ evaluation of group work as a teaching technique for enhancing students’ punctuation use reveals their recognition of the effectiveness of such a technique. Legenhausen and Wolff (1990) maintain that when students write in small groups, their writing abilities will be promoted and it will be an efficient activity for the development of interaction.

Conclusion

To sum up, all the obtained results in this study concerning the influence of group work on enhancing the students’ punctuation use have confirmed our hypothesis. This indicates that there exists a positive relationship between group work and punctuation use. Sufficient information about group work as a teaching technique, its effect on students’ writing was shed light on. Next, we will provide some pedagogical implications.
Pedagogical Implications

Writing is a crucial skill for the learning of a SL/FL and it should be taught in such a way that helps students for its learning especially when it comes to the issue of where to put punctuation marks. Teachers, therefore, should examine their ways of teaching and make some changes if necessary. Group work is one strategy that is believed to lessen the students’ faced difficulties regarding placing punctuation marks. However, it should be noted that it is not just a matter of setting students in groups and assigning a given task to them to complete. For this reason, teachers should care about this teaching technique for the attainment of good results in writing classrooms.

There are several reasons for using group work to enhance students’ punctuation use. To begin with, group work, as it has been mentioned in this study, makes them aware of the necessity of using punctuation marks through discussion and exchanging ideas. Moreover, it helps them to mitigate their faced difficulties while using punctuation marks since they have several uses. Furthermore, writing in groups has an effect on knowing the misuses of punctuation marks in the sense that students can correct one another’s mistakes, so when they discuss, they know the correct places of punctuation marks. Additionally, they can learn from each other and if they do not know cases where they should not put punctuation marks, their team members certainly do.

The results obtained from the students’ questionnaire have shown that (34%) of the students opt for writing in groups and they argued by providing the following causes. They want to broaden their knowledge via exchanging ideas and information. Also, they find group work as a way for increasing their level because working with high level students enables them to learn a lot of new things. Furthermore, they prefer working in groups because it offers them the opportunity to be corrected by their team members rather than being corrected by the teacher in front of the whole class.
As shown in the results of the teachers’ questionnaire, teachers find that group work enhances students’ punctuation use and they gave many reasons. The first is that group work creates a cooperative atmosphere where the students can discuss different punctuation marks’ spots; they may even revise and edit the use of each punctuation mark. Besides, group work makes the students learn from one another through discussion and hence their punctuation use will be enhanced. In addition to that, they find group work helpful for students to learn where to place punctuation marks because it gives them opportunities to discuss different rules of punctuation marks.

In order to get successful group work in foreign language classes, many strategies should be taken into consideration. As Brown (2001) suggests.

- Having special sessions to talk about the advantages of group work and its aims for the learners to become aware of the values of this teaching technique.
- Caring about group size: small or large groups.
- Setting the time required to the completion of the activity.
- Assessment: it involves peer- and self-assessment which deepen students’ learning experiences.
- Assigning roles: it would be better if the teacher says what every member of the group is responsible for.
- Checking for clarification: it is important to check whether students have understood what they have to do or not.
- Monitoring the task: it would be better if the teacher walks around the room to check what students are doing.
- Giving feedback: the teacher should provide feedback for each activity.
- Caring about students’ preferences while forming the groups.
Using group work as a teaching technique may enhance students’ learning and academic success when it is well structured. However, a careful consideration is required because it is not easy to apply as it is thought. Teachers should use some strategies to help students use this technique. This converges with Crandall’s view. He (1990) gives the following.

- Assigning learners to specific and meaningful tasks. For cooperative tasks to be successful, they have to be interesting, and can push students to think and use their intelligence. Therefore, teachers should design learning tasks carefully.

- Involving learners in evaluating individual and group contribution. This strategy leads to develop a sense of responsibility in students, and helps them see the value of what they are doing.
General Conclusion

The results obtained from this study give evidence for the effectiveness of the contribution of group work as teaching technique in the enhancement of students’ punctuation use. In other words, it creates a cooperative atmosphere where the students can discuss different punctuation marks’ spots; they may even revise and edit the use of each punctuation mark. In addition to that, it helps students to learn where to place punctuation marks because it gives them opportunities to discuss different rules of punctuation marks.

Another benefit of the use of group work is that it helps students to mitigate their faced difficulties while using punctuation marks since they have several uses which pave the way to students’ confusion about the appropriateness of each use.

The limitations of the present study such as the relatively small number of the subjects, time constraints that hinder the use of an experimental design must be acknowledged. Future experimental studies will correct these limitations, and will help firmly to define the effects of group work on enhancing students’ punctuation use. Furthermore, the use of group work remains an interesting proposal in need of future study.
List of References


Appendix A

Students’ Questionnaire

Dear students, this questionnaire is designed for the sake of collecting information about your attitudes towards the use of group work technique and its effects on punctuation use. You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire and we would be so grateful if you could do so.

Your answers are very important for the validity of the undertaken research. Hence, we need your full interest and attention.

Please, tick the box that fits your answer and make full statement whenever necessary.

Thank you in advance.

Miss Rokaya Amiar
Second Year Master
Part One: Background Information

1. Gender
   a. Male ☐  b. Female ☐

2. Age ☐

3. How long have you been studying English?
   .......................................................................................................................................................

Part Two: Students’ Attitudes towards Writing

4. Which skill you think you need to develop most?
   a. Writing ☐  b. Speaking ☐  c. Listening ☐  d. Reading ☐

5. Is writing in English interesting to you?
   a. Yes ☐  b. No ☐

6. Please, say why
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................

7. Do you feel afraid to write?
   a. Yes ☐  b. No ☐

8. If yes, is it because of?
   a. Your fear of making spelling mistakes ☐
   b. Your fear of making punctuation mistakes ☐
   c. Your handwriting ☐

Part Three: Students’ Attitudes towards Group Work

9. During the session of written expression, do you prefer working?
   a. Individually ☐
   b. In pairs ☐
   c. In groups ☐

10. Please, explain your choice
    .......................................................................................................................................................
    .......................................................................................................................................................
    .......................................................................................................................................................

11. How often does your teacher ask you to work in groups?
   a. Always □
   b. Often □
   c. Rarely □
   d. Never □

12. Upon which basis you prefer forming groups?
   a. Friendship □
   b. Streaming (mixed abilities groups) □
   c. Chance □

13. To what extent did you learn from group work?
   a. Very much □
   b. Much □
   c. Little □
   d. Nothing □

14. Compared to individual work, do you find group work?
   a. Bad □
   b. Good □
   c. Very good □
   d. Excellent □

15. Please, explain:

   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................

16. How do you find the classroom atmosphere when working in groups?
   a. Pleasant □
   b. Unpleasant □

17. Do you find the activity, group work, motivating?
   a. Yes □
   b. No □

18. Do you face problems when working in groups?
   a. Yes □
   b. No □

19. If yes, is it because you:
   a. Find difficulties to share your opinion with the others □
   b. Want to be the focus of the teachers’ attention □
   c. Think that working in groups will mislead you □

Part Four: Students’ Perception about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use

20. When you write in groups, do you make use of punctuation marks?
   a. Yes □
   b. No □

21. Please, say why?

   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .....................................................................................................................................................
22. To what extent do you find it difficult to know where to put punctuation marks?
   a. Very much ☐
   b. Somehow ☐
   c. Not very much ☐
   d. Not at all ☐

23. Which of the following punctuation marks do you find it difficult to be used?
   a. Comma ☐
   b. Semicolon ☐
   c. Colon ☐
   d. Period ☐

24. Please, justify
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................

25. While writing in groups do you find it difficult to differentiate between the various uses of punctuation marks?
   a. Yes ☐
   b. No ☐

26. Does writing in groups offer you the opportunity to know cases where you should not put punctuation marks?
   a. Yes ☐
   b. No ☐

27. Why?
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................
   .......................................................................................................................................................

28. When you write in groups and you disagree about a given punctuation mark, does your teacher help you?
   a. Yes ☐
   b. No ☐

Thank you for your collaboration
Appendix B

Teachers’ Questionnaire

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a research work. It aims at investigating teachers’ attitudes towards using group work to improve students’ punctuation.

You are kindly requested to answer the questions below. We would appreciate if you could take time to share your experience. Your answers are of a great importance and will be valuable for the completion of this work.

Thank you in advance.

Miss Rokaya Amiar
Second Year Master
Section One: Background Information

1. Gender
   a. Male [ ] b. Female [ ]

2. Degree (s) held:
   a. BA (Licence) [ ]
   b. MA (Magister) [ ]
   c. Ph. D (Doctorate) [ ]

3. How long have you been teaching English at the university?
   a. 1-5 [ ]
   b. 5-10 [ ]
   c. More than 10 years [ ]

4. How long have you been teaching techniques of written expression?

Section Two: Teachers’ Attitudes towards Group Work

5. How often do you have your students work in groups?
   a. Never [ ] c. Sometimes [ ]
   b. Rarely [ ] d. Always [ ]

6. How about group size?
   a. pairs [ ]
   b. Small groups (3-4) [ ]
   c. Large groups [ ]

7. Do you set up the groups on the basis of?
   a. Gender [ ] c. Proficiency [ ]
   b. Friendship [ ] d. Chance [ ]

8. Does the relationship between your students in the classroom express?
   a. Cooperation [ ]
   b. Competition [ ]
   c. Both of them [ ]

9. Do you help your students see the value of group work?
   a. Yes [ ] b. No [ ]

10. If yes, is it by:
    a. Merely explaining why you are doing group work [ ]
    b. Doing a brainstorming session on the value of group work [ ]
    c. Others [ ]
11. Do you encounter impediments while having your students working in groups?
   a. Yes                           b. No

12. If yes, is it because
   a. You find the activity chaotic
   b. You find it difficult to manage the class
   c. Your students switch to their mother tongue while discussing
   d. Others

Section three: Teachers’ Perceptions about the Effect of Group Work on Punctuation Use

13. Are your students motivated when writing in groups?
   a. Yes                           b. No

14. How often do your students commit mistakes in the following writing conventions?

   Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Always
   a. Punctuation
   b. Spelling
   c. Grammar

15. Which of the following punctuation marks do your students face problems with most?
   a. Comma                                b. Colon
   b. Semicolon                            d. Period

16. When your students write in groups, and they disagree about the use of a given punctuation mark, do you provide them with feedback?
   a. Yes                           b. No

17. Do you think that group work technique helps students to enhance their punctuation?
   a. Yes                           b. No

18. Please, say why?

Thank you for your collaboration
Résumé

L'écriture est l'une des quatre compétences linguistiques qui est mis au centre de l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère. Toutefois, les étudiants trouvent qu'il est difficile en venant à la question de savoir où placer les signes de ponctuation lors de l'écriture. Par conséquent, les enseignants adoptent et adaptent diverses méthodes dans les classes d'écriture pour faire en sorte que les élèves à exceller en mettant des signes de ponctuation. La présente étude vise à décrire et étudier les effets de travailler en groupe sur l'amélioration d'utilisation de la ponctuation des élèves. Afin de vérifier cette corrélation, nous avons émis l'hypothèse que l'utilisation de la technique de travail en groupe améliore l'utilisation de signes de ponctuation des élèves. C'est par le biais de deux questionnaires pour les enseignants et les étudiants du département d'anglais de l'Université Larbi Ben M'hidi, Oum El Bouaghi que nous vérifions la validité de l'hypothèse. Le questionnaire des enseignants est donné à dix enseignants de techniques d'expression écrite pour obtenir un aperçu sur les techniques utilisées dans l'écriture de l'enseignement ainsi que leurs perceptions à l'égard technique de travail en groupe et de ses effets sur l'utilisation de la ponctuation. Le questionnaire destiné aux étudiants est administré à une cinquantaine d'étudiants anglais de deuxième année dans le même département au cours de l'année scolaire 2013-2014 afin d'examiner leurs attitudes envers l'utilisation du travail en groupe comme une technique pour aider les apprenants à améliorer leur ponctuation. L'analyse des résultats a confirmé l'hypothèse déclaré que l'utilisation des travaux en groupe améliore l'utilisation de signes de ponctuation.
الكتابة هي واحدة من المهارات اللغوية التي يتم التركيز عليها في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية. ومع ذلك، يجد الطلاب صعوبة عندما يتعلق الأمر بموقع وضع علامات الوقف أثناء الكتابة. وبالتالي، اعتمد المعلمون أساليب مختلفة في الفصول الدراسية للتأكد من تفوق الطلاب في وضع علامات الوقف. الدراسة الحالية تهدف إلى وصف وتحري آثار العمل الجماعي على تعزيز استخدام علامات الوقف لدى الطلاب. من أجل التحقق من هذا الارتباط، افترضنا أن اعتاد تقنية العمل الجماعي تحسن استخدام الطلاب الوقف لعلامات الوقف. عن طريق تجميع الاستبيانات لدى كل من المعلمين والطلاب من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة العربي بن مهيدي، أُم الباقري تنقصي من صحة الفرضية. استبيان المعلمين سلم إلى عشرة منهم للحصول على رؤى ومبادئهم حول الطريقة المستخدمة في تدريس الكتابة فضلا عن العمل الجماعي وأثاره على استخدام علامات الوقف. أما بالنسبة لاستبيان الطلاب الطلبية، فقد تم توزيعه على خمسين من طلبة السنة الثانية من نفس القسم خلال العام الدراسي 2013-2014 لدراسة مواقفهم نحو استخدام العمل الجماعي باعتباره تقنية مساعدة لتعزيز علامات الوقف. أكدت المناقشة النتائج صحة الفرضية القائلة بأن استخدام العمل الجماعي يحسن استخدام الطلاب لعلامات الوقف.